Chapter - I

Introduction

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the researcher has made an attempt to trace the origin of Indo-Anglian poetry and for the sake of convenience the researcher has also discussed the development of Indo-Anglian poetry during different stages. A brief outline of the various branches of Indo-Anglian literature – prose, poetry, drama and fiction are discussed.
“What is wonderful about great literature is that it transforms the man who reads it towards the condition of the man who wrote.”

… E.M. Forster

India is a legend in England before the two countries came face to face through trade, military and politics for about three and a half centuries. Today, India remains a member of the English speaking world (countries) and also contributes to a distinct genre of English literature called ‘Indo-Anglian Literature’.

“Indo-Anglian literature” can be described as literature produced in the English language by Indian authors.” ¹ It was coined to distinguish Indian writing in English from another kind of Indian writing called ‘Anglo-Indian’ which implies the literary works of English authors in India dealing with Indian themes. Thus we have two distinct literatures motivated by Indian culture.
(i) Indo-Anglian literature of which the present monograph is a bird’s eye view and

(ii) The Anglo-Indian literature which is the literature dealing with Indian subject, colour or theme produced by Englishmen.

Indian writing in English drew attention towards the end of the nineteenth century, but it was only after independence, that Indian English literature flourished with leaps and bounds. Independence really brought in new confidence to the Indo-Anglian writers. Today, English is a vehicle of creative expression for many Indian writers. Most of the educated Indians today prefer English as the medium of expression. Their writing has now developed into a great literature in its own right and it is this substantial body of literature which is referred to as ‘Indo – Anglian’ literature or as Indian English literature.

Sir C.R.Reddy in his foreword to K.Srinivas Iyengar’s work on Indo-Anglian literature points out “Indo-Anglian literature is not essentially different in kind from Indian literature. It is a part of it, a modern facet of that glory which, commencing from the Vedas, has continued to spread its mellow light, now with greater and now with lesser brilliance under the inexorable vicissitudes of time and history and increasingly up to the
contemporary time of Rabindranath Tagore, Iqbal and Aurobindo Ghose and bids fair to expand with our and humanity’s expanding future.” ²

Indo-Anglian literature shows unprecedented signs of promise and progress in various branches Viz. Prose, Poetry, fiction, drama and criticism. It is primarily an integral part of Indian literature like other literatures in Indian languages. The impulses behind Indo-Anglian literature are essentially Indian. It presents a synthesis of our ancient cultural heritage and the awareness of present social and humanistic outlook. Mysticism, Humanism and Socialism are the impulses that govern Indo-Anglian literature. K.R.S. Iyenger has said “We cannot have Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo, Lokmanya Tilak and Gokhale, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi in the calendar of our prophets and yet cultivate a blind antipathy towards the language they used as the forceful means of communicating their meaning and message to India and the world. These stalwarts were among the makers of modern India, and what they said and wrote must therefore be cherished as our national literature. English, then, is one of our national languages and Indo-Anglian Literature too, is one of our national literatures.” ³
A brief outline of the various branches of Indo-Anglian literature is presented:

**Prose:** Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) a pioneer of English education of India used English as his mother tongue. His English is notable for vigour and lucidity, oratorical power and persuasiveness. A social reformist, he used English for social reformation. Humanism and social reformation are wedded together in the prose. He was not only the creator of Indo-Anglian prose but also the maker of Indo-Anglian literature. It was only because of Raja Ram Mohan Roy that the Indo-Anglian prose and this literature came into existence.

**Mohandas Karmchand Gandhi** (1869-1948), the Father of the Nation, wrote his famous autobiography ‘The story of My Experiments with Truth’ in his native language Gujarati, yet in his speeches and articles which reflect his deep humanism he skillfully utilised English language. Late Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru (1889-1964), the first Prime Minister of India and author of ‘Glimpses of World History(1939),’ ‘Discovery of India(1946)’ and his ‘Autobiography(1936)’ wielded English with command, precision and vigour, sometimes his prose style has rhythmical felicity and poetical touch. Sri Aurobindo’s works of prose especially include:
The Life Divine
- The Synthesis of Yoga
- The Secret of the Vedas
- Essays on the Gita
- The Future of Poetry
- The Foundation of Indian Culture
- The Human Cycle and
- The Ideal of Human Unity both in his prose and poetry. Sri Aurobindo evinced metaphysical learnings. Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was a distinguished author whose prose style is flowery, colourful and rhetorical. He stands a match with the most celebrated English authors. Nirad Chaudhari who wrote ‘A passage to England Autobiography of an unknown Indian’ is an acclaimed master of English prose. Dr. Chakravarti Rajagopalachari (1878-1972), the first Indian Governor General of Free India, was a renowned prose writer and orator.

**Drama:** Indo-Anglian writers did not contribute much to dramatic literature. Rabindranath Tagore’s plays include -

- The Post office
- Chitra
- Sacrifice
Malini

Karun and Kunti are powerful and highly moving plays, but in them the poetical quality and the lyrical element pre-dominate the dramatic verse. Sri Aurobindo’s plays-

- The Delinerer
- Radogune
- Eric
- Vasavdutta and
- Persius were written in blank verse and are highly symbolic and express mystical message. T.P. Kailasam’s plays – The Purpose (1944), Fulfilment (1933), Karma (1946) and Keetchaka (1949) are based on epic themes. A.S.P. Iyyar and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya chose contemporary social themes and the former can easily be termed as the creator of the problem play in Indo- Anglian literature. Iyyar’s best play is ‘Sita’s Choice.’ Harindranath Chattopadhyaya’s ‘The Parrot and The Window’s’ deal with the life of the under dog and ‘The Evening Lamp and The Coffin’ deal with social revolution. Bharati Sarabhai who wrote, ‘The Well of the People and Two women’ was a successful dramatist.
The main cause of the paucity of goodactable dramas in Indo-Anglian Literature was that the natural medium of conversation with the people was the mother tongue rather than English.

**Fiction:** The Pre-Independence Anglo-Indian fiction was influenced by the Three Musketeers of Bengal literature - R.C. Dutt, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore. Rabindranath Tagore’s novels ‘Gora,’ ‘The Home and the World,’ ‘The Wreck’ and short stories were originally written in Bengali but later on they were translated into English. His translations brought to Indo-Anglian novel realism and social purpose. He gave emotional and psychological depth to character portrayal. His short stories – ‘Home coming,’ ‘Victory,’ ‘Mashi,’ ‘Renunciation,’ ‘Kabuliwallah,’ etc. reveal a range in height that makes them some of the best specimens of forms in world literature. He attains in them higher and even more standard of excellence, being entirely free from the structural looseness of his longer series. Ahmed Ali, the author of ‘Twilight in Delhi’ (1940) and ‘Ocean of Night’ (1964) impressively spans the imperial past and the independent present. Mulk Raj Anand, who wrote ‘Untouchable’, ‘Coolie’ etc. is a novelist of peasant life and the champion of the underdog. The era of freedom struggle deeply influenced Indo-Anglian
fiction. Many facets of freedom struggle and contemporary social problems became the themes of new novels.

The origin of poetry dates back to the twenties in the nineteenth century:

I.A. Richards defines a poem “as a class of experiences which do not differ any character more than a certain amount, varying from each character, from a standard experience. We may take this standard experience as the relevant experience of the poet when contemplating the completed composition.”

According to Sanskrit literature the function of poetry is to cater to the universal well-being and the poets are endowed with the art of prophecy.

Indo-Anglian poetry can be divided into the following stages:

1. The Age of pioneers (1820-1870)
2. The Era of Indian Renaissance (1870-1900)
3. The Era of political awakening (1900-1947)

or

1. The Gandhian Era and
The Age of pioneers: (1820-1870):

Early nineteenth century poetry closely paralleled what was being produced at the same time in Britain. It was mid-century that found Indo-Anglian poets getting familiar with a variety of Verse, forms—Sonnets, elegies, ballads and odes. This era is termed as the Age of Derozio and Dutt as they were the first great protagonists of Indo-Anglian poetry.

**Henry Louis Vivian Derozio** (1801-1831) who ‘aspired to be India’s national bard’ was the earliest Indo-Anglian poet. His sonnets and lyrics with Indian imagery, mythology and themes show a remarkable command of language and beauty of expression. He was the moving spirit of the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In his short span of 21 years he had an extraordinary career as a journalist, teacher, poet and leading intellectual of his day. His long poem ‘The Fakeer of Janjira’ (1828) is an attempt to fuse the Byronic romance with social criticism of contemporary Indian modes.

**Michael Madhusudan Dutt** (1824-1873) occupied a position of eminence of the poetry of his age. He was a more gifted poet artist than Derozio. Like Derozio he, too, was influenced by Byron and Scott. His long narrative poem ‘The Captive Lady’ (1849) narrates the heroic exploits of Prithviraj closely imitating the style of Byron and Scott. This poem is
remarkable for its flawless beauty and the smooth narration. His famous sonnet ‘Satan’ is an imitation of Miltonic imagery and simile. Reffering to this process of imitating in Indo-Anglian poetry Dr. M.K. Naik writes : Dutt’s sonnet is an extremely competent imitation of Milton, an almost exact echo of Milton’s voice.'5 and hence during his time he was called the ‘Milton of Bengal’ by the Bengali poets.

**Kashi Prasad Ghose** (1809-1873) was a contemporary of Henry Derozio. He was a minor poet who skillfully imitated English prosody and versification. His memorable poem ‘Shair’ (1830) seems to have been modelled after Walter Scott’s minstrel of the ‘The Lady of the Last Minstrel’(1805) .His best poem ‘To a dead crow’ is a semi comic poem and a parody. His poetry may be said to be more imitative and derivative than original.

**The Era of Indian Renaissance (1870-1900)**

In the sphere of Indo-Anglian poetry, the era of Renaissance may also be termed ‘The Age of Dutts’ for, the two sisters Aru Dutt and Toru Dutt and the renowned intellectual Romesh Chandra Dutt dominated the poetical scene.
Toru Dutt (1856-1877) had a different order of intellect and exhibited great ability and originality in bringing Indo-Anglian poetry on a high level of poetic excellence. Her English poetry displayed pure creativity and imagination and almost flawless technical skill. In her English translations ‘A sheaf Gleaned in French Fields’, and in her ‘Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan’ she almost achieved a striking success as to make one regret that our language is essentially unsuited to the riot of imagery and ornament which form a part of the natural texture of the oriental mind. Her early death in 1877 at the age of twenty one was a loss both to her and to our race, but her life and literary achievements were an earnest of the more remarkable results which were likely to ensure, and are ensuring, from the fusing of western and eastern culture. In her short life span of twenty one years she created a body of poetry which, in the words of Milton ‘the posterity will not willingly let die.’ Toru Dutt published A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields (1875) which also featured eight pieces by Aru Dutt. Her second volume of poems was published under the title Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan (1882) with an Introduction by Edmund Gosse who claimed that if modern French literature were entirely lost, it might not be impossible to construct a great number of poems from this Indian version. She wrote two novels, one in English Bianca, and another in French ‘Le
Journal de Mademoiselle d’ Arvers’. She also wrote short lyrics and sonnets. The most significant aspect of Toru Dutt’s literary career was her use of the rich Indian heritage of myth and folklore. Her well known poems ‘Sita’ and ‘Our Casuarina Tree’ need a special mention as they reflect her own life. She is a poet of senses par excellence.

**Swami Rama Tirtha** (1873-1906) was a poet endowed with romantic vision and deep feelings. His contribution to Indo-Anglian Poetry was expressed in simple, lucid and highly effective style and language. His soul stirring poems written in moments of inspiration and ecstasy cannot fail to produce similar effects on the innermost recess of the reader’s heart.

**The Era of Political awakening or The Gandhian Era (1901 -1947):**

The poetry of this period reverberates with intense patriotism and political awareness. Although the poets of this period were influenced by romanticism. Yet they display a fondness for the eighteenth century English poetic diction.

**Manmohan Ghose** (1869-1942) elder brother of the more famous Aurobindo Ghose was associated with Laurence Binyon and Stephens Philips. He was a poet with commitment unlike Aurobindo Ghose. Manmohan Ghose did not get attracted to politics. “I must leave my unhappy
country to her own woes”, he wrote to Binyon in 1887; “I shall bury myself in poetry simply and solely.” His promising and ambitious works include ‘Perseus’, ‘The Goorgan Slayer’, ‘Nala and Damayanti’. He wrote on love, death, nature and sickness of soul. George Sampson writes that “Manmohan was the most remarkable of Indian poets who wrote in English. A reader of his poems would readily take them as a work of an English poet trained in the classical tradition.” “In his later, mature poetry Manmohan Ghose renders the whole art of love, life and death, and we have here the true pathos and outline of poetry.” The tragic circumstances like the feeling of alienation, the sickness of his wife and lack of social sympathy could not suppress the poetic frenzy in him. Sarojini Naidu opted out of poetry in favour of politics, but Manmohan Ghose stood by his Muse or rather the English Muse stood by him. The lyrical intensity of his poems is touching.

**Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)** was an all round creative genius. He is a great phenomenon in the Indian literary renaissance He was primarily a Bengali writer; the only poem he composed originally in English was ‘The Child’, written towards the end of his life. It was noticed by the critics that the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore tends to be monotonous deriving its effects “from a handful of illustrations.” Lack of concreteness has also been noticed. But “his greatest contribution is the importation of an
incantatory rhythmic prose which he almost perfected as a medium for rendering of his own poetry into English and by which thought not consciously and deliberately he demonstrated that the English language could be a suitable vehicle of Indian sentiment, thought and imagery. The symbols and imagery in Rabindranath Tagore’s poetry has spiritual significance. Rabindranath Tagore’s collection ‘The Gardener’ contains some of his notable Nature poems. According to K.R.S. Iyengar, “the poems are the recordations of the poet’s experience of flowers, clouds, all the wealth of spring, all the glory of the earth. But all things pass and change, and so the flowers fade, and the clouds scatter away. Yet the poems themselves may very well remain after a hundred years. Thus it is a song of songs charged with ambrosial significance.”

His appeal is universal. “As the generations pass” say W.B.Yeats, “travellers will hum them on the highway and men rowing upon rivers, lovers while they await and one another shall find in murmuring them. This love of God a magic gulf where in their own more bitter passion may bathe and renew its youth.”

Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950) the great seer of Pondicherry presents a glaring contrast to his brother Manmohan Ghose. A poet of eminence, Sri Aurobindo made abiding contribution to Indo-Anglian poetry. It is with
him that Indo-Anglian poetry became mature and something more than mere lyrical outpourings on love, nature and death which can be clearly seen in Savitri, Love and Death, Songs To Myrilla… ‘Savitri’, an epic, is Sri Aurobindo monumental work. It was praised by both foreign and Indian critics. Noted among them are K.R.S Iyengar and Raymond Frank Piper. According to Iyengar, “What is so striking about this epic is its sheer sweep, its amazing modernity, its pervasive mystical quality and its singular poetic power.”

The Times Literary Supplement noted, “It cannot be said that Sri Aurobindo shows any organic adaptation to music and melody. His thought is profound, his technical devices commendable, but the music that enchants or disturbs is not there.Sri Aurobindo is not another Rabindranath Tagore or Iqbal or even Sarojini Naidu”.

On the other hand, critics like C.Paul Verghese and P.Lal have found in his poetry not poetry but a heavy dose of mysticism.

*Sarojini Naidu* (1879-1949) 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. Her poetry is pictorial and melodious. She is rightly called ‘The Nightingale of India.’ She describes typical Indian scenes in her poetry. Her lyrics are full of magic and melody. Thoughts of love, nature and death form the
themes of her many poems. The three volumes of her poems ‘The Golden Threshold’, ‘The Bird of Time’, and ‘The Broken Wing’ published between 1905 and 1920 testify her splendid poetic achievement. The faliicity and charm of Sarojini Naidu’s lyrics make her the rightful heir to Toru Dutt, whom she has recalled as a lyrical poet. Dr. Naik observes: Inspite of the strong romantic influence the early Indian writers of English verse show a fondness for Eighteenth Century poetic diction, Sarojini Naidu speaks of bangles as ‘rainbow-tinted circles’. Kashi Prasad Ghose describes the Moon as ‘irradiated gem of night’ in the last volume published in 1917. Till the end, she continued to sing like the song-bird, the Nightingale.

**The Era of Independence:**

The body of Indo – Anglian poetry has certainly been greater in the Era of Independence than in any preceding epoch. The poets of this period have attained a fusion between substance and medium of expression. The poets, it seems have availed the right to change and recreate language. The poetry of this period ranges than in any preceding epoch. The poetry of this period ranges from personal emotion and lyricism to complex linguistic experiments, dry intellectual time, pungent satin and nursery rhyme
In Professor V.K.Gokak’s opinion twentieth century Indo-Anglian poets can be divided into ‘Neo-modernists’ and ‘Neo-symbolists’. “Dom Moraes and the poet critic Nissim Ezekiel are the two Indo-Anglian poets most known in the west.”  

The latter is a poet of outstanding merit and renown. Hence this epoch is called as the Age of Ezekiel in Indo-Anglian poetry. Jayant Mahapatra, P.Lal, Kamala Das, Dom Moraes and R. Pardha Sarathy are some of the famous Indian Poets of this age.

*The Indian Nightingale:*

A brief look at the personal background of Sarojini Naidu throws light on the development of her poetic career and patriotism. Like Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo, Sarojini Naidu, 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 hope and gallantly striving to redeem the Mother and redeem the time. It was as an English poet that Sarojini Naidu first caught the attention of the public, but that was only the beginning. In course of time the patriot exceeded the poet and Sarojini Naidu came to occupy some of the highest unofficial and official positions in the public life of India.
Sarojini Naidu, a woman of versatile genius and achievements was born on February 13, 1879 at Hyderabad (Deccan). She had two sisters and brothers Virendranath Chattopadhyaya who spent most of his life as a patriot, revolutionary exile in Germany. He too was a linguist like his father and won as an acknowledged master of the English language, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya the youngest of all, achieved distinction as a composer, actor, playwright and above all as a poet.

‘The Nightingale of India’ has achieved spectacular success as a poetess and as a patriot. As a luminous star in the sky of Indo-Anglian literature, she scattered the light of her poetic achievement in the international sphere. She enjoyed the privilege of having a good number of wise friends and celebrated acquaintances, who quickly recognized her poetic talent and introduced her to literary circles of the west.

Her father wanted her to be a mathematician, but under her mother’s strong influence chose to be a poet. Her entry in the realm of poetry is both a gesture and a mode of self-expression. Sarojini Naidu began writing verses at an early age. The poems written in her teens were collected and published privately by her father under the title ‘Songs.’ These reveal her simple and fanciful nature, but appeared as highly influenced by English romantic and Victorian poets and as such, lacked originality. Critical opinions reveal that
she entered the mainstream of English poetry. For example, George Sampson, the author of ‘The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature, says; “Sarojini Naidu made a definite contribution to English poetry. She came to England in 1895 and went to Girton. Her ardent literary temperament was fired by the poetic spirit of the Nineties and she began writing verses that are entirely English in matter and form, but was advised to turn to her native land for themes. Some of her songs are little more than exotically sentimental utterances that might have come from an English writer who knew the East by hearsay; but others give vivid vignettes of native life and some embody the spirit of Oriental devotion. In general her work is more remarkable for its command of English than for any revelation of India.”

Her chief work is contained in the volumes called ‘The Golden Threshold’ (1905). It carried a valuable introduction by Arthur Symons. It is titled after the name of her house at Hyderabad’, ‘The Golden Threshold’ which she dedicated to Edmund Gosse. ‘The Bird of Time’ (1912), the second volume of her poems was published in England after a gap of six years. She chose the title from the immortal lines of Omar Khayyam

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

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This volume was dedicated to her parents. This book has an introduction by Edmund Gosse and The Broken wing (1917), the third and the last volume of her poems published in her life time. The title is symbolic and was taken from G.K. Gokhale’s question as to ‘Why should a song bird like you have broken?’ which serves as an epigraph to her title poem containing two parts, question and answer.

Padmini Sengupta says, “Like the twenty-four poems in The Temple, Sarojini’s was a life of sadness and gladness, of tears and laughter, of pain and pleasure, but in the end, love which reigned in her heart was more for mystic lover, than a human being.”

The poems contained in these three volumes were later on re-arranged and put together in one big volume under the title, ‘The Sceptred Flute’, which was published by Dodd, Mead and co., in America and then in India by Kitabistan, Allahabad in 1943.

The Feather of the Dawn (1961) It was in the year 1920 that Sarojini Naidu opted out of literature and took active part in politics but she never ceased to be a poet. This book was edited and collected under the title ‘The Feather of the Dawn’ by Padmaja Naidu, Sarojini Naidu’s daughter.
Edmund Gosse who earlier discovered Toru Dutt, could recognize in Sarojini Naidu a poetic potential and promise, and advised her to ground her poems firmly on her native soil. Sarojini Naidu took his suggestion in all seriousness and vernacularised her themes and motifs. The poems she wrote after Edmund Gosse’s piece of advice represent India in scene and spectacle with occupations, faiths and festivals, its legends, myth and rituals. She has composed a number of poems which appeared in various periodicals in England and India, and which has been widely appreciated. But with the publication of ‘The Golden Threshold’ in 1905, she reached the height of poetic fame. The volume on its appearance took the English speaking world by storm. With the poems showing individual vision and voice, Sarojini Naidu made her mark in the literary world. Critics like Arthur Symons and Edmund Gosse could discover in her poetry a great promise and poetic potential.

Some of the poems of the volume like:

- Indian Weavers,
- Coromandel Fishers
- Wandering Singers,
- Palanquin Bearers,
- Indian Dancers and
- To a Buddha seated on a Lotus are memorable poems.
‘The Bird of Time’ published in 1912 was greeted by the reviews as enthusiastically as the earlier volume. The poems comprise the dualities of life and death, joy and pain. They were highly acclaimed by both Indian and British critics. Lyrics on Nature, The Folk Songs like ‘Bangle Sellers’, ‘Songs of Radha, the Milkmaid’, and ‘The Old Woman’. The poems inspired by her mystic urge like ‘The Soul’s Prayer’ and ‘In Salutation to the Eternal peace’, established Sarojini Naidu’s status for all.

In 1917, Sarojini Naidu published her third collection of poems, ‘The Broken Wing’, which was anxiously awaited in the literary circles. There is more maturity, more warmth in ‘The Broken Wing’, ‘In Salutation To My Father’s Spirit’, ‘The Flute Player of Brindaban’ and ‘The Temple: A Pilgrimage of Love’ are very intense poems. ‘The Temple’ is one of the most comprehensive statements of love, and is a great achievement in itself.

‘The Feather of the Dawn’ written in 1927 and published posthumously has a devotional note- a note of withdrawal from the fires of life.

The poems included in ‘The Golden Threshold’ and other volumes were highly appreciated by critics here and abroad, as it introduced altogether a new voice, original and striking in it. Critics have made efforts
to analyse the structural charm and aesthetic beauty of Sarojini’s individual poems. Almost all of her poems are lyrical, in which she records her emotional responses to various sights and sounds of nature, the colour and movement of love and life though it is unfair to agree with Professor William Walsh who describes her poetry as ‘Emotional Tuberculosis’\textsuperscript{19}.

Although Sarojini Naidu rose in her life to be one of the greatest figures in the modern Indian literary scene, her development as a poet came to an end as soon as she entered the national movement for independence. But during this brief span she composed poetry which would be remembered long for its delicate fancy, haunting melody and lyrical grace.

Her poems are a product of a fine sensibility, having an internal consistency and visionary appeal but, at the same time, these do not show much progression. Yet Sarojini Naidu’s poetry has the strength of her own dreams and aspirations which K.R.Srinivas Iyengar has termed it as the obscure infinities of her heart.

With wonder and excitement, Sarojini Naidu looks towards the sights, sounds, colours and tones of nature. She is particularly fascinated by the joys and surprises of spring; the cyclical extension and renovates, which the season lends to the land. Though she shows Wordsworthian enthusiasm
towards nature and finds it a sacred and solitary retreat from the pressing worldly life. She does not betray faith in the pagan religion nor does she attribute any moral sanctity to nature. The impact of Indian devotional poets and Sufi-mystics is tremendous on Sarojini Naidu’s mind, but her conception of nature does not correspond to that of the classical Indian poetry, where nature is treated just as the physical environment of man and not as an automatic force. Her conception of nature is neither completely Wordsworthian nor exclusively classical Indian but a blend of both. Her inner self responds with admirable suddenness enriching the experience of beauty, harmony and meaning. Sarojini Naidu’s conception of nature lacks philosophical foundation, but her poems reveal a spontaneous understanding of the Indian point of view.

Sarojini Naidu wrote many lyrics on the theme of love, describing the various moods and emotions that love evokes in the human heart, ranging from passionate desire to mystic communion. She expresses that love is a gift of nature and an expression of the beautiful. It is the agent of spiritual ecstasy. Sarojini Naidu’s poetry unfolds the drama of love. Her poems like ‘The Temple’, ‘An Indian Love song’, ‘The Song of Radha, the Milkmaid’ mainly emphasize on communicating a deeply felt experience.
Sarojini Naidu is firmly rooted to her soil, to its faiths and festivals, folk-life, culture and their tradition. She has vividly recreated the multitudinous panorama of Indian life with its variegated pageants. She discovers a strange significance in the commonest of sights and sounds, the festivals and the life of her people. Every aspect of Indian life attracts her, and this attraction has found expression in a kind of poetry which is unique unto itself. She is a great artist, and possesses in ample measures of all those qualities that have the potential to transform little airy things into objects of greatness and dignity. Paul Varghese and Lotika Basu criticize Sarojini Naidu for falsifying the Indian scene by filling it with romantic characters like ‘Beggars’ and ‘Pardah Nashins’. The Pardah Nashins and Palanquin Bearers may remind us of Rudyard Kipling’s India, but the weavers, the bangle sellers, the fishermen and the snake charmers still form the vital part of Indian folk lore. They are presented not as faded types, but as live individuals, participating in the general drama of life, with its ever changing notes of joy and sorrow.

Indian folk culture is dominated by rituals as evolved in temples and shrines, in domestic and collective rites and festivals and pageants which mark the passage of both the individual personality and the institutional structure in time and space. The individual passes from the ritualized order
and pattern of daily life to regenerative flux through the sacred continuum. The seasonal festivals of ‘Vasant Panchami’, ‘The Festival of Serpents’ , ‘Nariyal Purnima’, ‘The festival of lights’ etc., figure frequently in Sarojini Naidu’s poetry, both as themes and as symbolical plots of human experience. Sarojini Naidu understood the broad sweep of India’s cultural history very well. This understanding was enriched by a deep love of the variety and multiplicity through which the fundamental unity of India has found expression.

Sarojini Naidu expresses in her poetry a strong sense of life, at once elemental and heroic. She views life as a great comrade and welcomes death as a constant companion. The individual human being is presented not as a victim, but as the ally of the life-force, in the sense that the desire to live and believe urges him to grow, mature and fulfil himself in the flow and flux of existence and encourages him to come closer to death in a positive attitude. Life is an act of devotion and worship. Life is a holy sacrament, a gift of the divine.

Patriotism has been quite strong in Sarojini Naidu since her childhood days. Love for motherland is a passion with her, and throughout her life she is seen struggling between two equally powerful forces in her – her craving to sing songs of beauty, love and life and her urge to serve her
country. Some of her lyrics like ‘Gift of India’, ‘To India’, ‘Anthem of Love’ and her invocations to the national leaders like Gopala Krishna Gokhale, Mahatma Gandhi and Bal Gangadhar Tilak are charged with intense patriotic feelings fully justifying the title ‘Nightingale of India’ lovingly conferred on her by Gandhiji. At times, it appears that she is translating people’s suffering into a gesture of revolt. In this connection K.K. Mehrotra says, “One will find in her poetry again and again the announcement that she wished to serve her countrymen by her songs.” Many of her poems express patriotism, hope and optimism. In her address at the Kanpur session she said, “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. As a poet I fling out the banner of song and sound the bugle call to battle.” She played an important role in bringing about amity between the Hindus and Muslims.

The great gifted and glorious daughter of India breathed her last on March 2nd, 1949 causing pain to every soul.
A Comparison of the Poetry of Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu:

Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu are two prominent figures in Indo-Anglian poetry. Both the poetess interpreted Indian life before the Western world. In her ‘Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan’ (1882) Toru Dutt wrote about the legendary past of India. Besides seven non-mythological pieces, it contains nine ballads or legends in which she wrote about

- Savitri
- Lakshman
- Jogadhya Uma
- The Royal Ascetic and
- the Hind
- Buttoo
- Dhruva
- Sindhu
- Sita and Prahlad. With her superb narrative and descriptive power she vividly recreated and delineated these legendary characters.

She has very graphically portrayed Lakshman’s character:
“Swift in decision, prompt in deed,
Brave unto rashness, can this be,
The man to who all looked at need?
Is it my brother that I set.22

The characters of these legendry figures are vividly portrayed and they have life quality and charm.

Sarojini Naidu too, wrote about India, but not about her legendry past. Her poems depict the diverse charm of Indian life. She writes about the Indian philosophy and mysticism and is content merely to point the multiudinous panorama of Indian life in the poems

- Corn Grinders
- Snake Charmers
- Palanquin Bearers
- Wandering Singers
- Indian Weavers
- Bangle Sellers
- Indian Dancers
- Suttee
- The Festival of Serpents
- The Evening Prayer
- Rakshabandan
- The Old Woman
- The Wandering Beggars
- The Pardah-Nashin
- Vasant Panchami
- Kali-the Mother
- The Rajput Love Song
- The Temple.

With her innate faith in secularism she describes all sections of Indian life, Indian customs and traditions in her poems as no other Indo-Anglian poet had done. ‘Nala to Damayanti’ is a heroic legendry poem.

Her twelve-line poem on ‘Suttee’ throws a spiritual glamour over a rite hitherto confessedly incomprehensible to the western mind:

“Rent us in twain who are but one

Shall the flesh survive when the soul is gone?”

In her equally brief poem, ‘The Pardah Nashin’ she realized the romantic appeal of oriental seclusion but lifted the veil in full realization of the inevitability of life. It is significant that the task of wedding the rich
vocabulary of English poetry to purely oriental themes had been accomplished by two Indian women. The feminine imagination would not endure expatriation, and cling tenaciously to subtle memory of its origins. After half a century of literary exercise, Toru Dutt was the first to find in her own land an inspiration for her genius, and her achievement in being triumphantly repeated in the work of her accomplished successor.

Toru Dutt excelled in narrative and descriptive art, whereas Sarojini Naidu was a lyrical poetess par excellence. Dr. A.N. Jha says that if Toru Dutt lived longer she would have attained distinction in narrative verse and descriptive verse. She had a rare gift of story-telling, of arousing interest and curiosity, of creating suspense, and so drawing character. But perhaps in descriptive power she was even superior, which is quite clear in the way she described Yama, the God of Death in the poem ‘Yama’.

*His eyes had much of love and grace,*

*But glowed so bright, they filled with fear.”* 24

Sarojini Naidu was not endowed with descriptive power and the gift of character delineation, but in the sphere of lyrical poetry, with all its charm, lifting melody, spontaneity and musical flow of verse. She has no
peer and no follower. Her genius is essentially lyrical and her poetry full of music.

Who can forget the rhye and the haunting and melodious flow of verse in ‘In Salutation to the Eternal Peace”?

“Man says the world is full of fear and hate,
And all life’s ripening harvest-fields wait,
The restless sickle of relentless fate,
But I, sweet soul, rejoice that I was born”25

In ‘Savitri’, Toru Dutt appears as a poet. Savitri’s love is firm and unchangeable. Inspite of the tough opposition of Narad Muni and her own parents, she makes up her mind once and for all to marry Satyavan, who was destined to die within a year. Unruffled by Narad’s fatal prediction, she calmly and patiently avows her love for Satyavan. As was predestined Satyavan dies after a year and Savitri, the devoted and faithful wife, persuades Yama, the God of Death, to resuscitate her husband and He yields to her supplication. Savitri triumphs over Death and, hence she has become immortal:
“to this day

Her name is named, when couples wed,

And to the bride the parents say,

Be thou like her, in heart and head.” 26

Her conception of love is ideal and spiritual after India’s hoary love tradition. True love is beyond time and destruction. Sarojini Naidu, too, is pre-eminently a poetess of love. Although her conception of love is ideal, yet her love poems are often full of ornamental verbiage which we do not find in Toru Dutt’s ‘Savitri’.

To Sarojini Naidu physical love leads to spiritual love. Physical love is the foundation of spiritual love, True love is the complete identification of two ardent souls and unconditional self surrender is its corner stone. In her love poems-

- An Indian Love Song
- A Rajput Love Song
- Song of Radha, the Milkmaid and in the triology

The Temple - love is expressed as an ideal, founded on self surrender and complete identification. ‘The Song of Radha, The Milkmaid’ expresses the ecstasy of love which the beloved feels by realizing her lover’s presence
wherever she goes. Radha is the eternal divine of Lord Krishna. Her longing for getting immersed in his love is so intense that it reaches the state of self-effacement in love.

Here, the poet has identified herself with Radha, the milk-maid -

“They were worth when I cried without knowing

Govinda! Govinda!

Govinda! Govinda”

The idea of union of true lovers cannot be severed even by death. This idea is beautifully expressed in her short lyric ‘Suttee’. Sarojini Naidu’s conception of love is vaster and of ampler sweep than that of Toru Dutt. She was keenly alive to the rapture resulting from union, the pathos and unbearable agony of separation. We can mark the rapture of love in the poem ‘Ecstasy’

But sweeter madness drives my soul to swift and swifter doom

For I have drunk the deep, delicious nectar of your breath!”

The following lines in the poem ‘Ecstasy’ reflect painful agony, resulting out of separation:
And tossed upon dim pools of weariness

Mute to the winds of gladness or of grief.” 28.

Toru Dutt, inspite of her Western influences was an Indian out and out. Many passages in her Ancient Ballads and Legends of Hindustan bear the unmistakable stamp of Vedanta and are the best expositions of the Hindu view of life. Like Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu too was deeply influenced by Indian thought. The transience of life and its pageant is the theme of her numerous lyrics. In the folklore songs, she writes:

“The bridal songs and cradle songs have cadences of sorrow,

The laughter of the sun to-day, the wind of death tomorrow” 29

‘To a Buddha Seated on a Lotus’ is suffused with mysticism, typical to Indian way of life. The mystic, immutable and ultimate rapture that Lord Buddha owns is out of the Ken of human life which is marked by the ‘travail and heat’, the broken secrets of pride,’ ‘the strenuous lessons of defeat’ and ‘the desire of the moth for the star’. Men try their utmost to attain divine summits with faith that sinks and feet that tire. All their endeavours to attain peace end in smoke can be clearly noted:
How shall we reach the great, unknown
Nirvana of thy Lotus-throne?"30

In the poems of both Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu, depiction of
nature occupies a large space. In Toru Dutt’s poems depicting Indian
legendary themes like Nature is portrayed as background for the enactment
of the human drama of the sufferings of Savitri, Buttoo and Sindhu. Her
description of Nature is characterized by a sharp power of observation and
sensitiveness to colour.’In the midst of calm and tranquil natural
surroundings Satyavan and Savitri enjoy Arcadian love.

The poetic achievement of Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu is limited.
Toru Dutt is mainly a translator. Her few, original pieces are simple,
flawless expressions which cannot claim to be of great poetic value, the only
possible exception being her ode, ‘Our Casuarina Tree’. The narrative
pattern of her translations from Sanskrit is based on the style of William
Wordsworth, St. Coleridge and John Keats.

Sarojini Naidu’s preoccupation with love suggests her relationship
with the romanticism. Her romanticism tends to be decadent because of her
love for the music of words and her exclusive aesthetic appreciation for the
beautiful aspects of Indian life and nature. Both the romantics bypass the
tensions of their personal lives and social milieu in their poetic works. But their achievement becomes vital in view of the fact that they were the first authentic Indian poets in English.

Padmini Sengupta Says “Both Toru and Sarojini Naidu are simple; but the former is more natural and at the time more mature, the latter is conventional and also sings songs.” If she has a fine command of the art of lyrical balladry, her shorter poems reveal her real and creative instincts. Her exquisite talent, her keen observation of roots, her command of traditional metre and her return to roots— all these are reflective in her immortal poem ‘Our Casuarina Tree’. It is the most revealing of Toru’s verses, with its nostalgia for the past and an ‘inner vision’ of sublime beauty. This poem alone can number her with the immortal English poets of her age.”

As a poet of the immutable, Sarojini Naidu wrote hundreds of lyrics occasioned by her sense of wonder of the outward scene or by her sense of anguish at the threshold of self and spirit. The study of Sarojini Naidu’s poems puts her vision in perspective, and also helps trace the interlacing connections between the Indian tradition and her own poetic individuality. The following chapters concern themselves with the coordinates of her inner vision, as it grew around the universals of all human experience. Nature, Love, Life and people are the circles which man finds
drawn around him, defining his consciousness of the Universe which is discussed in the next chapter.

“Literature is a state of culture; poetry is a state of grace, before and after culture.”

…. Juan Ramo Jinez
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25. Sarojini Naidu, “In Salutation To The Eternal Peace”, from The Sceptred Flute, p.187


27. Sarojini Naidu “Song of Radha, the Milkmaid” from the Sceptred Flute, p. 112


29. Sarojini Naidu, “Village Songs” from the Sceptred Flute, p.11

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Chapter – II

Nature and Sarojini Naidu

ABSTRACT

In this chapter the researcher has tried to depict the theme of nature through Sarojini’s Naidu’s poems and endeavoured to reflect as to how nature in its human context, and man in his natural context are integrated into a simple unity in Sarojini Naidu’s poems. The researcher has made a sincere effort to show that man may need nature for his sustenance but nature also needs man as its instrument of self-expression.
Chapter – II

Nature and Sarojini Naidu

“And Hark! How blithe the thrrostle sings! He, two, is no mean preacher: Come forth into the light of things, Let Nature be your teacher.”

..William Wordsworth

The relationship between man and nature has been an intimate one ever since the beginning of life. In the primitive age, his aesthetic pleasures and physical needs were gratified by nature. He must have appreciated the snow-clad mountains and sweet carols of various birds and must have dipped into sparkling streams and basked under the Sun.

In the Vedic age, nature was raised to the status of a deity. All elements of nature like Sky, Fire, Air, Water and Earth were worshipped as the divine powers. The Sun was prayed for repelling all evil forces and for absolving one’s sins.
It was in the nineteenth century, where it was English poetry, which influenced Indian English nature poetry, the most. William Wordsworth’s Pantheism, P.B.Shelley’s Mythopoetic Imagination, John Keat’s Sensuousness and St.Coleridge’s heuristic vision influenced the Indian poet to a great extent. They began to interpret nature in terms of mankind. The Victorians and the Pre-Raphaelites augmented the process of re-orientation. English romanticism paved a new creative ground for Indian poets. They found their critical inspiration in nature. The rich Indian landscape, radiant flowers and their colours, the murmuring rivers, the snowy mountains and the melodious songs of birds caught the imagination of Indian English poets who looked at nature with a new vision.

In the classical Indian poetry nature was treated as a background, and never an automatic force by itself. Poets like Henry Derozio, Kashi Prasad Ghosh and others could just become derivative romantics. It was for the first time, in the poetry of Toru Dutt and Manmohan Ghosh that the genuine native tone could be heard. Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo appeared to be influenced by the Western Romanticism, but the stress in their poetry was always on the resonance of their souls.

The scenery of nature is used only to illumine their inner world, and they seem to be emanating out of their own native tradition. Sarojini Naidu
unlike Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo show any constituent view of the world in which the role of man and nature in the cosmic scheme may be defined. Their poetry is based on a philosophy, which presents God, Man and Nature in their integral relationships. Sarojini Naidu’s conception of nature lacks philosophical foundation but her poems reveal a spontaneous understanding of the Indian point of view.

Sarojini Naidu’s conception of nature is laced with her innate best for romanticism. The colours, the sounds and lights, the scents and the touch of natural objects fascinated and thrilled her. Her poems reveal a spontaneous understanding and acceptance of the Indian point of view on the question of man’s relationship with nature. This point of view is seen throughout the Indian literature and mythology from the Vedic hymns right up to the poetry of the modern age. In the Indian tradition man’s superiority is not explained in terms of his unique ability to express creatively the harmony between his own life and the life of nature. Man and Nature enrich and complement each other. Their dependence is mutual. There is a common stream of life, a rhythmic power, which animates both nature and man. Her early English poetry is mostly imitative of English colours and odours of skylarks and nightingales and is reminiscent of the English poetry of John Keats, P.B.Shelley and Alfred Lord Tennyson, the poet Laureate of England. But to
the great surprise of Sarojini Naidu it was Edmund Gosse who advised her to write about things, Indian. She immediately acted on his advice and began to write about Indian flowers and Indian seasons. Her poems on nature are rich in oriental colours and magnificence.

Sensuousness is the predominant quality in her nature poetry. Her poetic world is the ordinary world clarified and enriched by the sensitivity and delicacy of her imagination. The subject of her poetry is the simple, familiar and unpretentious world of natural feelings and emotions, simple joys and sorrows, vivid memories and reveries, poignant recognitions all characterized by the rich naturality and poise of the Indian life and landscape.

Her nature poems employ rapture and ecstasy to bring a wealth of internal reference to the outer world. The landscape of things is modified by the inscape of the perceiving mind. In the midst of her small world of flowers, birds and the gems, she weaves the glitter and glow of bangles, brocades, bells and murmurs the shadows of windows, balconies, groves and shrines, thereby humanizing the child-like pictures of actual perceived naturality. She views it as a manifestation of the Cosmic Being, as a creative dance in which man and nature unite amidst the medley and interplay of natural forces. From childhood innocence to erotic ecstasy of youth, Sarojini
exemplifies the inclusion of the natural world of change and growth into the human awareness of being. Thus nature and everything in it emerges as a symbolic manifestation in Sarojini’s Naidu’s poetry reflecting the exquisite flow of contrasts and possibilities in human life towards an archetypal union. We may get an idea of her passionate and sensitive response to the beauty of nature from what she wrote to Edmund Gosse. “Come and share my exquisite March morning with me; this sumptuous blaze of gold and sapphire sky; the voluptuous fragrances 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 of life in resting 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 any heart’s blood, these little quivering birds are my soul made incarnate music; these perfumes are my emotions dissolved into aerial essence, this flaming gold and blue sky is the every me’ that part of me which incessantly, yes, and a little deliberately, triumphs over that other part … a thing of nerves and tissues that suffers and cries out and must die tomorrow perhaps or twenty years hence,”  

Sarojini Naidu’s sympathy for nature is expressed more directly in her description of farms, orchards, groves and forests than in her poems about
rivers or lakes. She took great delight in the renewal and change that earth undergoes from season to season. All her affection was concentrated on spring (Rituraj), the Monarch of the seasons — spring rather than the other seasons.

Sarojini Naidu’s love for self, love for the concrete as manifested in its various flowers, birds, seasons and fragrances inspired the two series of nature poems:

(a) *Songs of The Spring Time contains*

- Spring,
- A Song in spring,
- The joy of the spring time,
- Vasant Panchami,
- In a time of flowers.
- In praise of Gulmohar blossoms,
- Nasturtiums,
- Golden Cassia,
- Champak blossoms and
- Ecstasy.
(b) *The Flowering Year contains*

- The Call of Spring
- The Coming of Spring
- The Magic of Spring
- Summer Woods
- The June Sunset and
- The Time of Roses etc.

‘The Magic of Spring’ sends Sarojini Naidu into raptures and the individual manifestation of nature’s beauty attracts her imagination. ‘The June Sunset’ makes the reader soar and deeply immersed in the world of nature.

*“Here shall my soul find its true repose*

*under a sunset sky of dreams*²

The poet here seeks repose in a peaceful country-scene under the colours of a June sunset. The sight and sounds of the country side, both those of wild nature and of human life are described, till the stars begin to gleam. The poetess does not keep in mind the negative aspect of the scorching heat in the early June but tries to depict the positive later part of
June, when there have been a few monsoon showers, the clouds saunter about and the sky is aglow at the hour of sunset.

Normally a poet writes a poem which truly is the reflection of a particular sight seen on a particular day by the poet as in the case of John Keats in ‘To Autumn’ when the scene struck him on a Sunday’s walk, but this is conspicuous by its absence in June sunset. The poet writes what she sees at the particular moment.

The poem reminds us of John Keats ‘odes’ where every rift is loaded with lore. In the second line the ‘rush-fringed rivers’ and ‘rain-fed streams’, the consonance of the ‘r’ and the ‘S’ and the ‘sh’ sounds, ‘double alliteration in ‘fringed’ and ‘feel’ and the word ‘glimmer’ in the palm, turning the rivers and streams running through the meadows into an impressionistic picture revealing an artistic or rare workmanship unmatched anywhere except in John Keats.

“Of swift wild wings in their home ward flight,
Sapphire, emerald, topaz and pearl,
A float in the evening light”

A veritable feast of rich colours, diaphanous, amber and rose which richly coincide with the sky of dreams and Sapphire, emerald, topaz, and
pearl of the birds flying in the air and reflecting the colourful splendour of
the scene. The faint stars gleaming in the sky, the objects, particularly the
quail, the bullock-cart, the pipal (tree), the Banjarin (gypsy) and the way,
have been grouped together, to portray sunset.

Sarojini Naidu always had an abundant capacity to ally herself with
the very spirit of her surroundings. By blending ‘memory and desire’ the
music of the earth and the magic of the heaven. She could project every
natural thing as an image of pure delight and profound beauty. The laws of
nature are manifest in the transparent forms of sensuous actuality. The
sunset is brought in a cup of flowers. The rays of moon light are caught by
the gossamer threads of fancy.

Sarojini Naidu had a woman’s and a poet’s weakness for spring. Many of her poems even when they are not actually on that season are
redolent with the imagery of ‘Vasanta’ (spring). She draws a loving picture
of all the natural objects and makes the world a wonderful place to live in.
She provides us a chance to listen to the melodious songs of various birds
and the buzzing of bees. It is altogether a picture of lost innocence to us in
modern India, caught up as we are in the fever and fret of a culture
increasingly entrapped in materialism and modernity. Her song is ablaze
with Gulmohar and Cassia, with the Champak and Jasmine. We wander with
her into Pomegranate gardens of mellowing to watch a June Sunset, Fawn feed on Scented grass and the bees on Cactus Gold. The Koels invite us to the summer woods.⁴

There are no ideas or sentiments or feelings that wake up from the poems that imply the plain, palpable, concrete objects on the land and in the air, which have been objectively depicted and made lively in the poem ‘June Sunset’ to constitute a genuine, poetic picture.

“An Ox-cart stumbles upon the rocks,
And a wistful musk pursues the breeze
From a Shepherd’s pipe as he gathers his flocks
Under the pipal-trees”⁵

Apparently superficial as simply enumerating some sights or sounds. A scene compelling silence is suggested by the wistful music from the shepherd’s pipe, the singing of the banjarin against a background of faint stars gleaming in the sky.

The above poem is clearly a reminiscent of the poem of William Wordsworth’s. ‘The Solitary Reaper’, the gentian pushing through the wet earth conjures up in the second stanza, as image which is kinetic. It is followed by a metaphor-the foot of the shower passing through the fields.
The third and the last stanza contain references to Banjarin’s ballad of love and battle, set to delicate, mystic tune. The poem presents a glimmer everywhere. With the sunset gleam there is repose and peace in the sky and everywhere.

According to Westermark, among the Aryans who inhabited the plains of the North, the spring or Vasantha celebrated in a song by the poets, and the time for marriages and feasts. Sarojini Naidu’s nature-poems are mostly in praise of spring but at times her approach to it is conventional, as for example in ‘Vasant Panchami’ which is the festival of spring. Here, Lilavati, a widow is sad and the spring season has no charm for her.

‘Vasant Panchami’ - It is the festival of spring whenever 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, but unfortunately her Hindu tradition has come into action as widows cannot take part in any ceremonies or festivals. For them it is sorrow and austerity. Here the voice of a widow literally makes a person imagine the agony she undergoes or experiences.

Sarojini Naidu handles the natural scene with a loving delicacy, producing a variety of effects-pictorial, elegiac, meditative and symbolic.
Although much of her poetry today appears to be worn-out, and full of romantic stock-in-trade, and without any authentic individuality but it did compel attention and admiration in the ‘Twenties’.

“O quench your flame, ye crimson gulmohurs,
That flaunts your dazzling bloom across my doors”

Here Lilavati, a widow laments at ‘feast of the spring’. Being a widow she cannot partake in the celebrations of spring and there is poignant sorrow in her heart for the days that are no more. The melodious songs of Koels, Dadikulas and other birds absolutely bring no joy into her life. On the other hand their dull notes are like poisoned arrows in her heart.

Crimson Gulmohar, sweet Champa buds and Sirisha trees embitter her heart with bitter memories. They cast a sorrowful impact on her mind constantly reminding her that she is a widow.

“I pray you dim your voices when you sing
Your radiant salutation to the spring”

She requests the joyous girls and young brides who carry the gifts of lighted lamps and new-blown wheat to worship spring, to subdue their voices when they sing their radiant salutations to the spring. The joys of spring is meant only for the happy women .Her heart is like a sere leaf and
all the joys and beauties of nature are strange to her. She is not jealous but there is a deep sense of pathos reflected in this poem:

Lilavathi’s life is doomed to be sad and ruined like withered blades of grass. She is past all joys and passionate feelings that pulsate in other blessed women’s heart. Her grief stricken heart is compared with a faded flower or a sere life just as a faded flower or a sere leaf is plucked by merciless wind and flutters hither and thither.

Similarly her heart has been broken by grief and all its feelings flutter in vain. Out of her days and nights a joy has taken flight. Like every lone and wither thing she can no more enjoy the splendid beauties of spring. Here simile and metaphor has been very beautifully mused for sorrow-trodden. For e.g. poisoned arrows ‘Plucked by the wind of grief’. Here Sarojini Naidu has expressed the feelings of a widow who is quite helpless very beautifully. She has no right over nature. The plight of a widow was portrayed very pathetically in this poem

Nature to Sarojini Naidu is a charming objective reality, a vast limitless storehouse of beauty, colour and splendour and is to be enjoyed as it is for its glory and pageantry. She is enamoured by the beauty of spring which is the season of flowering and a reformation of life in nature on the arrival of spring. The poem has a very simple arrangement in description of
the nature and scenery of our countryside during spring. The subject was dealt with, by almost all poets of the world who have endeavoured to recreate in their poetry the spirit and splendour of spring. The poetess objectively describes the magnificent beauty of nature, as John Keats did in his famous poem ‘Ode to autumn’.

The poem ‘spring’ is the season of revival of a new life in nature. The honey birds’ pipe to the budding figs and honey-blooms call the bee. Green leaves grow on the banyan twigs and red on the peepal tree. Poppies glow with delicate golden colour, multi-coloured lilies bloom. The kingfishers ruffle the feathery sedge. The air is filled with butterfly wings in the wild-rose hedge. The earth is filled with the luminous green of the hills. Spring is the harbinger of joy and novelty. It kindles the life-fuse in the trees, flowers and birds and butterflies. It draws the human beings into the eddies of the vital flood. Spring is the moment, the season, and the cycle of Love, while Kamala slowly lingers in the grove where temple bells ring and “Krishna plays on his bamboo flute an idol of love and spring.”

“Kamala tinkles a lingering
In the grove where temple-bells ring,
And Krishna plays on his bamboo flute
An idyl of love and spring”

10
Her description is marked by romantic charm and grace. The poem contains sensuous and rich colour affects which add to the beauty of the poem and which illustrates her poetic craftsmanship. It arouses the emotion of love in the heart and invites us to sing in ecstasy the ‘idyls of love’. She loved the beauty of nature as selflessly, passionately and sensitively as John Keats did. There is nothing abstract, philosophical or intellectual in her poetry, but has only tender feelings and sensitive emotions. The setting of the last stanza is pastoral. Kamala and Krishna seem to be the characters of Indian pastoral beauty. Two notes of joy and melancholy run in her poems of spring-time. The transience of beauty and the profound anguish caused by the absence of the beloved annihilate the deep joy of spring. This streak melancholy is conspicuous in her later nature poems like June Sunset and Summer Woods, whereas the early nature poems are characterized by a cheerful mood.

In the Poem ‘A song in spring’, Sarojini Naidu introduces a personal element. Her dreams are deferred and her heart has grown old. Naturally she feels depressed. But depression is incompatible with the mood of nature during the spring. So, the poet cheers herself up. The bees and birds and fireflies cannot answer her questions, for they are but brief visitors, they come with the spring and go with the spring. These temporary visitors
can have no wisdom because wisdom comes with the experience of age. But the winds are wiser and omniscient, since they blow all over the universe. They are a symbol of wisdom. They have followed the hurrying feet of the pilgrims. They have observed the changing sorrow of the human souls.

“*Their wings have winnowed sorrow of the garnered sunlight,*

*Their lips have tasted the purple sea.*”

The winds know of dreams deferred and a heart grown old they know the causes of past frustration. But they also know the future and the fulfillment of desires that is to be. They divine the magic unblown lilies. They foretell the stars of unborn night. The wise winds have permanence. They have witnessed the ageless drama of human existence on the earth. So, their unimaginable knowledge and experience give them wisdom. And the wise winds seem to tell to the poet that there is no reason to be depressed, for the desires that are hither to be fulfilled shall be fulfilled one day. Countless lilies have unblown. Countless starry nights have come and gone, but still there are starry nights that are yet to be reborn. Birds, animals, flowers enjoy themselves in spring, they are free from worry, but it is different with men and women whose joy is marred by some fear, doubt or unfulfilled dreams. Such a mood is depicted in ‘A Song in spring’
Nature’s loveliness in spring which is reflected in the hope of a bride or in the dream of a maiden is revealed in the poem ‘The Joy of Spring Time’. The poet fails to understand the mysterious secret of spring’s magical mirth that fills the morning with splendorous beauty and sprouts all seeds to grow into beauty and abundance. Spring is here addressed directly and asked to reveal the “essence” of its mysterious power. The poet herself tries to explore the mystery behind the beauty that spring sprinkles all around it. It is beauty and joy which unfolds them in the life of a Bulbul, the laugh of a rose and the dance of dew on the wings of a moon beam. Indian traditional life also stresses the importance to seasons especially spring which comes in the months of March and April.

Sarojini Naidu loves nature in all its manifestations - the beautiful and the ugly, the kind and the cruel aspects of nature make their impact on her and find a place in her poetry. She is not a poet of strong and violent emotions, but a tender poet of mystery and dreams, love and joy, sorrow and strife. Her nature poems reveal her general buoyancy, her sensitiveness to all forms of beauty, and her great zeal for life.

‘Leili’ is one of the best nature poems of Sarojini Naidu where ‘Night’ is personified. ‘Leili’ is a Persian word for night. Here the aim of the poet is the creation of the impression of silence of muteless night by a wonderful
and unique combination of images, metaphors and symbols, and of consonant and vowel sound.

“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” 12

The approach of the night is mentioned by concrete events and images viz, the Serpents fallen asleep among the poppies, here poppies having association with sleep and dreams. The fire flies, which are visible only during the night light the path of the Panther. The night’s quietude is further accentuated in by the lotus bird, stirring upon the streams like dreaming maidens, subdued and soft sounds and the device of contrast used for the same suggestion in the parrot, plumes outshining the dying day (the dying day is grey).

“O soft! The lotus-buds upon the stream
Are stirring like sweet maidens when they dream” 13

Here, it makes one feel the nightly presence of mighty pervading everywhere. Here, the atmosphere imparts her sublime holiness. The forest is the temple, where she is avidly enshrined and the moon shining like a cast
mark on the brows of heaven, actually having like a luminous mark on the brows of night herself. The winds like maidens in temple swoon at her holy feet, and mystic voices sing in its silence and offer incense to the gods. Here one is simply left wondering at the cast-mark, the winds dancing and swooning, the mystic voices, the incense being offered to gods, without mentioning their names. All is vague and romantic and aims to produce surrealistic effects. The myth, metaphor, symbolism, subdued sound and wonder are used in just measure to create an impression of some kind of ‘mysterious’ and ‘wondrous’ suggestion.

The nature poetry of Sarojini Naidu reflects two different moods. One is of the joys and delight, and the other of sorrow and melancholy. The former which can be noticed in ‘The Call of Spring’ which is addressed to her daughters Padmaja and Leelamani who are flower like and fleet-footed maidens. Addressing her daughters she says that spring calls through the dawn and the day time “for flower-like and fleet-footed Maidens like you.” Over hillside and valley through gardens and groves, Bulbuls, Mainas and Doves are singing carols to welcome the spring. Sweet-fragrance and lovely flowers are blooming everywhere. Joy is reigning supreme in the realm of nature in the spring time.
O, come let us go and play with the spring
Like glad-hearted children together.”¹⁵

‘Autumn’ to Sarojini Naidu, is not a season of joy or fulfilment, as it is to John Keats. Autumn, though a time, a colour and transformation, is full of melancholy suggestions for the poet. It is like a joy on the heart of a sorrow. Autumn with its paltriness revives in the poet the memories of broken dreams. Like pale, fluttering leaves her dreams also seem to have been swept away, leaving behind a strange sense of sadness.

The poet utters in a mood of dejection

“My heart is weary and sad and alone,
For its dreams like the fluttering leaves have gone” ¹⁶

The Rainy season, which has been a perennial source of inspiration to Rabindranath Tagore, seldom attracts Sarojini Naidu. In ‘Hymn to Indra’, Lord of Rain,(Varun) she invokes Lord Indra for blending the vedic myth and folk lore.

Apart from these hymns, there is hardly any poem worth mentioning which reflects Sarojini Naidu’s love and enthusiasm for the rainy season. It appears rather surprising considering the importance of rain in the Indian folk poetry and in the legend of Radha and Krishna with which she has been
so thoroughly familiar. The predominant quality of Sarojini Naidu is the habit of viewing the natural world and its manifestations as events of personal emotion and individual awareness.

The importance of Wind, Cloud and Sea in Sarojini Naidu’s poetry: Sarojini Naidu visualizes the winds as an experienced traveler who, during their journeys over Earth and Sea, has accumulated a lot of knowledge.

This can be clearly seen in the following lines:

“The wise winds, as they pause to slacken
The speed of their subtle, omniscient flight
Divining the stars of the unborn night” 17

Unseen and unheard, the wind penetrates all the mysteries of variegated life. This idea is expressed in the opening stanza of ‘The Garden Vigil.’ Sarojini Naidu describes the wind in close association with clouds, as in the lines from ‘Song of Radha’

I wanted to cry, who will buy, who will buy,
These curds that is white as the clouds in the sky,
When the breezes of shravan are blowing” 18
But even the wind, the busy body which chases the clouds and pries into other people’s affairs, must have its hours of relaxation. Here is a beautiful stanza from Coramandel Fishers in which Sarojini Naidu describes the wind at rest.

“The Wind lies asleep in the across

The wind lies asleep in the arms of the dawn,

Like a child that has cried all night” 19

Sarojini Naidu has written very little about the sea. Some of her earlier poems and letters, written during her travel in southern Europe contain vivid descriptions of the Mediterranean. In her nature poetry, then, sea does not occupy any place of importance.

Sarojini Naidu enjoys nature and feels it, and she has an aesthetic kind of reaction. She is very easily responsive to ‘loveliness’ soft colour, melody of things and wherever nature shows these virtues, the poet tries to recapture them in her poetry. Her poetry on nature is full of vivid and concrete imagery. The images used by her in her treatments of nature are sensuous, impassioned, rich and romantic. They are derived mostly from the Indian legend, history, mythology and life as a whole. She is an Indian John
Keats and has strong affinities with the English romantics in her love for nature.

Sarojini Naidu’s lyric sentiment for Nature is not, of course limited to the rural or pastoral scene; it is extended to the city also. In fact there are in fact very few poets in India who can view the city scene as fondling and with understanding as Sarojini Naidu does. The Romantic tradition set up the city as a soul-destructive antithesis to the countryside, which is identified with the harmonious and creative aspects of Nature. With the exception of Charles Lamb and Whitman, it is the underside of the city that is played up.

T.S. Eliot seems to have perpetuated the city as a symbol of man’s magnificent irrelevance and futility. On the contrary, Sarojini Naidu has a strong feeling of love, admiration and identity for the city. Her own City of Hyderabad is the Queen of the Deccan, a confluence of cultures, historical memories and folk-customs. The city is an extension and fulfillment of Nature and vital urges of beauty, purpose and continuity. Sarojini Naidu’s poems ‘Songs of My City’, ‘Street Cries’ and ‘Nightfall in the City of Hyderabad’ are poems of endearment, gratitude and pride. Particularly in ‘Nightfall’, she projects an Arabian-Nights picture of the city, endowing it with an active, vibrant personality of its own, employing scintillating images to emphasize its continuity in, and its contiguity with, Nature. The City is
both in nature and nurtured by Art, and Art fostered by nature. Its towers and
minarets, its gates and balconies, its roads and bridges rise out of the
landscape like bird and tree and star. The sky, the land and the river so engirt
the city as though it were a lover’s embrace.

The city is a bridge with a fondness for ornament, coquettishness and
coy forgetfulness, all veiled in bashful mystery. The city of Hyderabad is
dominated by the Musi River, exactly curved like a tusk from the mouth of
the city-gates. The image is at once precise and evocative. Besides, it
connects the city to the riparian landscape, suggesting how the wild river has
been tamed into the city’s culture, while giving life to it.

*See the white river that flashes and scintillates,*

*Curved like a tusk from the mouth of the city gates.*  

The sky at nightfall in the city, looks like a pigeon flown from one of
the towers on the river-side, burning like a pigeon’s throat; perhaps like the
thought of a city-bride whose throat quivers and burns with ornaments of
opal and peridot. The city is a frame of beauty and reverence, power and
glory, history and destiny. The city is solid, active, curious, unhurried and
even self-indulgent, reflecting the spacious and anachronism in the survival
of this feudal city even in modern times. But there is no scene of abruptness
in the steady flow of its life. The Presiding Deity of the city is the Goddess of Love, and living, there, is in itself an act of love.

The night sky is the latest votary, a nature summoned to celebrate the royalty of the sky and the sovereignty of man.

“Over the city bridge Night comes majestical

Borne like a queen to a sumptuous festival”

In the poem, Sarojini Naidu captures fully the flavour of the City of Hyderabad in all its dreamy opulence, wistful splendour and humanizing eccentricity. The portrait is refreshingly free from the oppressive modern sense of citified separation from Nature. Sarojini’s Naidu’s city includes, and is included in nature, both by its personality and its history. Sarojini Naidu’s nature poetry has none of the mystical leanings that distinguish Rabindranath Tagore’s nature poetry. Devoid of deep thoughts and the mystical interpretation, her nature poetry is superb in the sphere of sensuous depiction of various natural objects and seasons. With her no considerations of theology, humanity or metaphysics mingle with nature. She viewed with child-like delight at the objects of nature, and her whole being was thrilled by what she saw and heard. She loved nature for her own sake, and not for the sake of any idea that the human mind can read into her with its own
working and aspirations. She was stirred to depths by the colour and fragrance and music in nature.

Sarojini’s Naidu’s limited awareness of nature makes it difficult to accept Ms. P.V.Rajyalakshmi’s conclusion that her ‘response to nature is radical, elemental and total.’

Sarojini Naidu’s poetic sensibility is essentially lyrical. The typically recurrent images in her poems are those of dream, song, silence and shrine. But her passion for sensuous imagery weakens her ability to explore experience. She offers a surprising variety of metrical patterns within the framework of traditional English stanza forms. The cloying music of her alliterative verse often results in stifling the sense.

There is a note of change in the poem, ‘The Coming of Spring’, written on Vasanta Panchami day. The poet speaks of herself as a middle aged woman no longer able to participate in the festival as enthusiastically as she did as a girl. The passage of time has created the necessity of decorous distinctions, vicarious thrills of experience, and surrogate emotional outlets. Age, having lost the reckless splendour of juvescence, resorts to the artifices of structured response and controlled emotions. It is
through empathy that the mind guides the heart to assert its feelings, and not by the instant upsurge of sympathy as in youthful times.\textsuperscript{24}

‘In Magic of Spring’, the poet is in despondence mood. Spring brings about a magical transformation in nature but, at times, it fails miserably in cheering a human heart buried under ‘a secret hill of pain’

\begin{quote}
“I buried my heart so deep

Under a secret of hill of pain”\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

But soon the shadow of melancholy is dispelled. Her depression vanishes when the ‘March woods glimmer with opal rain and passionate Koels sing. She returns to her usual mood of joy and Ecstasy and cries “my heart leapt up in its grave and cried. /is it spring, the spring? Here Sarojini Naidu comes very close to P.B.Shelley and John Keats whom she admired much. Melancholy is an inherent temperament of P.B. Shelley. He says in ‘Ode to the West Wind’

\begin{quote}
‘Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud,

I fall upon the thorns of life: I bleed’\textsuperscript{26}
\end{quote}

John Keats feels pain because of excess joy. Joy, by its intensity, turns into pain. He says in ‘Ode to a Nightingale’
'My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains/my sense’ 27

The veil becomes a mask, as reality in one’s life usurps romance. But she allows now a chance to the younger girls to participate in the same manner as she did as a young maiden. She asks spring not to think her untrue and unkind, in case she lags behind, leaning to rest against a sheltering wall. There was a song she used to sing, but now she has forgotten it. There is only the desire, but not the power, to sing. She is only a coeval, not a colleague, of her comrade spring, of whom she begs forgiveness. 28

But soon after comes the joy, after the pain; the return, after the withdrawal; the letting-go of feeling, after the hushed anguish; the strains of thawed music, after the toneless pause of tautened nerves. Sarojini’s depression vanishes when the March woods glimmer with opal rain, and the passionate Koels sing, the Kimshuks burst into dazzling flower, and the soft clouds break in a twinkling tide.

Nature is a relief from the conflicts of the worldly life. In “Summer Woods”, the poet says:

“O, I am tired of painted roofs and soft and silken floors
And long for wind-blown canopies of crimson Gulmohar” 29
She expresses her longing to fly where cassia-woods are breaking into flame, and koels call from flowery glade and glen. She wishes to lie beneath the boughs of Tamarind, and Molsari and Neem. She wants to bind their brows with jasmine sprays and play on carven flute; to roam along the river’s bank and bathe in the water-lily pools.\(^{30}\) For Sarojini Naidu, Nature is a ‘Sanctuary of Peace.’

In another poem, written on the day of Lakshmi Puja (a worship of Goddess Lakshmi). The goddess of prosperity is addressed as Lotus-born\(^ {31}\) There are four stanzas in this poem, and each of these concludes with the line: ‘Hearken, O, Lotus born!’ Apart from the mythical association of the lotus Sarojini Naidu praises the inherent beauty and elegance of the lotus flowers, its leaves, buds and blossoms. Addressing her ‘Fairy fancies’, she regrets that she can no longer like lotus leaves enfold you in the tangles of my tresses.\(^ {32}\) In another poem she refers to lotus honey in yet another, the gentle swaying of lotus buds in the wind is described in these lines:

“\textit{O soft! The lotus buds upon the stream}

\textit{Are stirring like maidens when the dream}” \(^ {33}\)

A clear picture of the flower lotus can be seen in Sarojini Naidu’s poem addressed to the Buddha, seated upon his Lotus. But nowhere has
Sarojini Naidu expressed symbolism of lotus, more effectively than in her poem addressed to Mahatma Gandhi. The Mahatma is here compared to the mystic lotus, sacred and sublime, in myriad petalled grace inviolate. Rooted in the waters of eternity, unaffected by transient storms of tragic fate, the lotus withstands the attacks of wild bee hordes and hungry winds many have tried:

“To devastate thy loveliness, to drain
The midmost rapture of thy glorious heart,
But who could win thy secret, who attain
Thine ageless beauty born of Brahma’s breath,
Or pluck thine immortality”  

Mahatma Gandhi has been eulogized by Indian poets in a dozen languages. But rarely has his purity and spiritual beauty been conveyed so gracefully as in this poem by Sarojini Naidu, in which the ancient symbol of the myriad-petalled lotus has been so imaginatively employed.

Besides the lotus other Indian flowers that have been fascinated poets since ancient times are the Sirisha, Kadamba, Champak, Kimshuka and Ashoka. Sarojini Naidu has introduced all the themes in her poems. The Sirisha is mentioned by Kalidasa as one of the flowers with which the
maidens of Alakapuri loved to deck their ears\textsuperscript{35}. Even in Sarojini Naidu’s poem ‘Vasanta Panchami’ the beauty of the Sirisha is painful to the widow who exclaims:

\textit{“Hold your breath, O dear Sirisha trees,}

\textit{You slay with my heart bitter memories”}\textsuperscript{36}

Sarojini Naidu draws inspiration from the world of animals and birds and insects. Her poems are full of references to gazelles, deers, elephants, serpents, fire-flies, gloworms, dragon-flies, bulbuls, koels, papihas, peacocks, pigeons, doves and vultures. But she is somewhat partial to the birds like the eagle maybe for its force and energy or to the bulbul for its grace and delicacy. Birds are the messengers and envoys of love, pain and joy. The bird is also a code for the poet, signifying flight or ascent, escape or transcendence, aspiration or memory. In fact three of her poetical collections have their titles drawn from the bird imagery: ‘The Bird of Time,’ ‘The Broken Wing,’ and ‘The Feather of Dawn.’

Sarojini Naidu shows feminine fascination for flowers. Her path to Nature is strewn with flowers of rich hue and intense smell. No matter, whatever be the theme, flowers must appear in abundance. There are many poems which are dedicated to individual manifestations of nature’s beauty.
‘In Praise of Gulmohar Blossoms’ the poet discovers Gulmohar blossoms as ‘Gorgeous boon of the spring’. They are so lovely that nothing can rival them in their rich hue neither ‘The glimmering red of a bridal of a bridal robe’ nor ‘the rich red of wild bird’s wings’. Perhaps ‘the mystic blaze of the gem that burns on the brow of a serpent king” can measure up her beauty or perhaps only

“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?” 37

Nasturtiums are exquisite, luminous and passionate blooms. Their leaves are interwoven of fragrance and fire and recall the immortal women which are depicted in the lines:

“…Savitri’s sorrow and Sita’s desire,
Draupadi’s longing, Damayanti’s fears,
And Sweetest Sakuntala’s magical tears.” 38

There is a quick transition from the natural to mythic imagery which intensifies the poignancy of the scene. The reference to the immortal women
of old legends and songs recall the sorrows and virtues which still inspire the loves of Indian Women. The floral setting is extended into a symbolic landscape which has modified and tamed the topography in the ‘Golden Cassia’. We have a flood of metaphors. They are more than mere wood-land flowers strewn on the way. They may be compared to fragments of some new- fallen star on account of their resplendence as they are portrayed here:

“Golden lamps for a fairy shrine
Or Golden pitchers for fairy wire” 39

They have been aptly likened to ‘bright anklet sells from the wild spring’s feet’ or to ‘the gleaming tears that some fair bride shed’. Here metaphors are not quaint but quite natural in the background of Indian scene. They convey the poetic sensibility and romantic imagination of the poetess.

Sarojini Naidu, in her use of simile and metaphor, may often appear to be natural from the point of view of English rhetoric. But she is altogether natural in terms of the traditional Indian sensibility. Intelligence, perception, feeling and imagination are blended, not so much into a line as into a unit of consciousness crystallizing itself around the evocative image of the world as a garden of flowers. Mediating between experience and vision, the image is
further sharpened into a symbol. The ‘Champak Blossoms’ are a joy forever, P.B. Shelley, too, appreciated their fragrance:

“The champak odours fail
Like sweet thoughts in a dream” 40

Along with their fragrance, Sarojini Naidu also appreciates their petals. They are like amber petals, ivory petals, petals of jade. Their sweetness charms forest and field and valley. But their beauty is evanescent. Their glory is but for an hour. They are foredoomed to shrivel and shrink and fade. Experiences like this made Walter de la nare generalize that:

“But beauty vanishes; beauty passes;
However reare; rare it be” 41

The poem brings out the idea that beauty, inspite of the fact that objects of beauty are perishable, exists for its own sake. The mango blossom and orange blossoms have vanished since long, but the champak blossoms have come and, when their delicate bloom is over, they will also be reckoned among the dead. They adorn the dark tresses of a gird. They make no boast of serving or profilling the world. Though their glory is temporary, these flowers are praised much by maidens and minstrels. They have a sacerdotal
function too. They are offered at God’s altar as tokens of devotion, faith and adoration. Their beauty is purposeless.

“Your rich, voluptuous, magical perfume
To ravish the winds of spring” 42

‘The Glorissa Lily’ beautifully captures the magic and colour of the flower. It brings out in the profusion of rich similes and metaphors and its unique charm. The description as usual is romantic.

The poem ‘The Time of Roses’ reflects intense perfume of lovely roses which can be seen anywhere in abundance. The crimson roses with their magical perfume captivate the poet so intensely that she measures woman’s entire life with the season of flowers:

“Bind me on the pyre of roses,
Burn me in a fire of roses,
Crown me with the rose of love!” 43

Though the poem lacks the logical sequence, as there cannot be any crowning for a person after being burnt and reduced to ashes, it enchants us with the floral setting.

J.H. Cousins, disgusted with the poem, comments:
“It may be too much to expect sequence in so abandoned a mood, but the mend sees something unworthy of good art or even of common surface of the pool, though ‘alluring’ in splendour destroys everything else. The poem beautifully reveals the destructive aspect of nature by describing Hyacinth’s strange trade of death and destruction.

“Is your loveliness displayed

Death in Beauty masquerade”

‘The Water hyacinth’ appears here as a dangerous weeds which drains and sucks the vitality of water. It portrays in the lines:

“Like a winged, insidious fate

Exquisite, insatiate”

Unlike John Keat’s ‘Nightingale’ and P.B. Shelley’s ‘Skylark’ Sarojini Naidu’s ‘bird world has a sensuous and geometrical solidity’. Sarojini Naidu’s birds, though take dizzy flights, return again and again in the familiar world of gardens, Minarets and Courtyards.

Birds are the great messengers or envoys in classical Indian poetry. Sarojini Naidu’s birds become reliable messenger of human joy and pain. They are friends of the lyric spring, bringing bridal joy or mystic communion. They are so civilized that they appear to be man’s partners
rather than rivals. They stand as appropriate symbol of all the contradictory pulls of pleasure and pain that effect human destiny.

The time bird’s song in ‘The Bird of Time’ represents the song of nature as well as of human life. Time fleets and never fluctuates. Change and fluctuation is the theme of the time-bird, as also of human life.

Birds acquire a special significance in Sarojini’s love world. An entire poem ‘A Love Song from the North’ is addressed to the ‘Papeeha’, in the manner of Indian love poetry. Papeeha’s handling calls are at once sweet and painful to the lovers separated, for they arouse in them strange feelings of longing which is depicted in the following lines:

“Tell me no more thy love, Papeeha,

Wouldst thou recall to my heart, Papeeha” 47

According to Thomas H. Johnson, “Almost all the birds that have drawn the attention of Indian poets, singers, myth-makers and story tellers have a unique status in Sarojini’s poems: the Koel or the Kokila, the Parrot, the Maina, the Papeeha, the Eagle, the Halycon, the Crane, the Swan, the Dove and the Peacock. Sarojini Naidu derives some striking images from peacock plumes, the dove’s speckled throat, the Halycon’s blue wings, the bright parrots which cluster like vermilion flowers, the black birds gathering
like evening shadows.”  But she has special affection for the Koel. When the mango trees put forth springs first blossoms, Koels begin their raptures melody. Sometimes Koel calls from a henna spray: “Lira! Lira! Lira! Liree!” her song is now a ‘slow, tremulous wooing’ now a full throated paean of love. And what a beautiful sight it is when a baby Koel, a mere fledgling, makes her first attempt to fly.

There are some fine descriptions of animals in Sarojini’s Naidu’s poems: a magnificent stallion spurred on by a valiant Rajput Knight; godless panthers drinking at water lily pools; cows returning to the village at dusk, serene and contented; shy gazelles disappearing into the jungle when they hear the chatter of monkeys; The following lines portray these feelings:

“Leisurely elephants…through the winding lanes

Swinging their silver bells hung from their silver chains.”

But her best poems on animals are the two poems on serpents. They reflect the typical Indian attitude to these unique specimens of our jungle life. In the west, the serpent is looked upon with horror, as a vicious and deadly creature. The serpent is the tempter, the embodiment of evil and cruelty. In Indian myths, on the contrary, the serpents are guardians of their life. They implore them to guard their helpless lives and guide their
patient labours. Like other creatures, they are willing to lend their services for a good cause.

Literature in Indian languages is rich with serpent lore, and in many parts of India the snake charmers are very much in demand. In Sarojini Naidu’s poems, serpents are given positive attitude and treated as deities.

Sarojini Naidu’s nature poetry rests on a less ambitious plane. The impression of novelty and freshness her poems created on their appearance was pronouncedly due to the new romantic sensibility. In fact, in her treatment of nature, she stands in a closer and more direct relationship than others to both the English Romantics and the Hindu-Sufi Mystics. Her attitude towards Nature is not muscular but meditative. She describes the scenery and spectacles of the natural world with a sense of primal wonder and joy, combined with pensive reverie and melancholy. Even her adjectival excess and hyperbolic ornateness catch the essence of the magical spell cast by nature. The individual consciousness responds to the enriching experience of beauty, harmony and meaning which permeate man’s inaugural world. In describing a scene or mood of Nature, the poet imagines a situation in which the scene or mood is absent. She contrasts the presence and the absence, as though the substance and the shadow together constitute a single reality. Her lyrics thus assume a meditative sensitivity, and a strange
brooding quality which draws the variant emotions of the lover into the patterns of Nature. The separation of the beloved from the joys and delights of Nature humanizes her own loneliness. The arrivals and departures of revenants, arising from the crosslights of memory and fancy, trace a pattern of the inner life. Nature is bountiful which, for the poet, finds meaning and fulfillment only in the context of the human aspiration. Man may need Nature for his sustenance, but Nature too needs man as its instrument of self-expression. The pearl is nature self distilled and self-revealed.

Man, in Sarojini Naidu’s Poetry, is constantly under the impact of nature in its varying and variegated moods, responding to its flux. Nature, in its human context and men in his natural context- These are the two themes integrated into a single unity in her poetry of all our early Indian poets of this century. Sarojini Naidu has beautifully recaptured the autochthonous response to natural environment.

In conclusion, Sarojini Naidu’s conception of nature is neither completely Wordsworthian nor exclusively classical Indian. For her, nature is a sacred, solitary retreat from the struggle and strife and conflicts of human life, a sinless Eden. It is a Mystic Brindaban as she describes in ‘Summer Woods’ where innocent lovers like ‘Krishna and Radha’ appear engrit with low voiced silences and gleaning solitudes and are ever
encompassed with delight. It is a world of garden away from menacing human crowds, a place very safe for love. Nature is the external environment of Man, and the manifestation of beauty, harmony and continuity. It is a symbol of mysterious forces breaking into the emotional life of the individual as well as the race. It is a retreat from strife and conflict, encouraging solitary contemplation, and renewing man’s connection with the world.

Love is the main theme of Sarojini Naidu’s poetry. Her poetry on love does not enunciate any philosophy of love. It is simple and straightforward expression of the vision of love of the poetess, who had her own intense experience of the rapture and sadness of love. According to the poetess true love is immortal. In the brief span of life true lovers may be parted by hard necessities, worldly obstacles, pride etc., but they realize the fulfillment after death. Death is accepted as an inevitable fact which unites two loving souls, which is portrayed in the next chapter.

“Read nature; nature is a friend to truth.”

… Edward Young
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Chapter - III

Sarojini Naidu: A Love Lyricist

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the researcher tried to depict Sarojini Naidu as a poetess of love through her many lyrics on the theme of love describing the various moods and emotions her love evokes in the human heart ranging from passionate desire to mystic communion. The researcher has also tried to show how commitment to her own self enabled Sarojini Naidu to bring out emotion of love in a variety of contexts and situations and objectify it as an adventure of the universal soul.
Sarojini Naidu: A love Lyricist

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever: its loveliness increases; it will never pass into nothingness.”

...John Keats

Sarojini Naidu wrote many lyrics on the theme of love, describing the various moods and emotions that love evokes in man ranging from passionate desire to mystic communion. Love is the gift of nature and an expression of the beautiful. It is an agent of spiritual ecstasy. Love is the essence of a woman’s existence. It knows no boundaries and barriers which were proved by Sarojini Naidu, who is a lyricist. Love has both beauty and charm, delicate fancy and gossamer imagination, emotional fervour and sensuousness. Her poems reflect her tender and passionate women.

Talking of them Arthur Symons wrote: “It is for this bird-like quality of song… that they are to be valued. They hint in a sort of delicately evasive way, at a rare temperament of a woman of the East, finding expression through a Western language and under partly Western influences. They do
not express the whole of that temperament, but they express, I think, its essence and there is an Eastern magic in them.”

In the poem ‘Alabaster’ she provides us a clear description of her heart. Her heart is like the alabaster box, engraved with delicate designs. The box of her heart is:

“Carven with delicate dreams and wrough
With many a subtle and exquisite thought”

Sarojini Naidu always views love from the woman’s point of view and therefore there is rare sensitivity and charm in her poems on love. Her vision of love is more comprehensive and wider than that of Toru Dutt. Her expression of love is powerful love in various moods - irony, hope, despair, expectation, challenge and ecstasy; in its various states - depressed, ecstatic, romantic, spiritual, and a mixture of pain and joy, and in various situations - separation, temporary or by death, suspicion or jealousy.

Love is seen both in its aggressive and sensious forms. Her poetry on love thus covers a wide range of subjects and themes and addresses all kinds of readers by its truth of observation, variety of experiences, depth of feeling and sympathetic presentation of human nature. Her poetry on love is autobiographical in tone and nature. There is intensity and depth of feeling
in her poems on love, which clearly suggests a personal experience of love on the part of the poetess. She had a deep and genuine love for Dr. Govinda Rajulu Naidu, whom she married despite parental and caste opposition. She was separated from him for some time when she went to England for higher studies, but she did not forget him, her love for him remained constant, true and firm which made her marry him immediately after her return. Her feelings on love are reflected in the following lines from the poem ‘An Indian Love Song’:

“For love shall cancel the ancient wrong and
conquer the ancient rage,
Redeem with his tears the memorial sorrow that.
Sullied a bygone age”

Her poetry on love is also influenced by the medieval devotional poetry on love for India. She is fascinated by its glory, romance, depth, and sincerity. Her poems on love especially in the triology, ‘The Temple’ are intermingled by her personal experiences and the romanticism of medieval devotional love poetry containing three parts viz., ‘The Gate of Delight’, ‘The Path of Tears’ and ‘The Sanctuary’. Each part has eight poems- 24 in all, the 24 arches of the temple. It is subtitled as ‘A Pilgrimage of love’ and
begins with an epitaph from Tagore which contains its central theme as follows:

“My passion shall burn as the flame of Salvation,
The flower of my love shall become the ripe
fruit of Devotion.” 4

‘The Temple, A Pilgrimage of Love’ is Sarojini Naidu’s most comprehensive statement of love. The poem attempts to organize the lyrical impulses and emotions into a unified structure of experience. The motif of pilgrimage and the centre symbol of the temple bind the poet-lover’s insight and magian intuitions to the flood of passion. The images and metaphors used to describe the poet’s love and its progress are mostly conventional but the interplay of different conventions- Hindu, Buddhist, Sufi and Christian- creates something new and positive, extending and diversifying the vision of love as a sacred and ritual experience.

The poet does not relish salvation which comes to him through renunciation of the world; he would rather know and relish the world through his senses- sight, sound, smell and touch-know it fully and enjoy it intensely. The world is to be enjoyed not clumsily but in an aesthetic manner through love, as it is, it is in the highest sense, aesthetic and ultimately spiritual.
Sarojini Naidu has linked the chain of love in a beautiful manner. According to her, Love is the gate through which one has to enter the Temple- God’s Sanctuary, and it is the Gate of Delight, one has to go across the path of tears. Once the Sanctuary is reached, there is nothing but whole-hearted worship and devotion.

The first part enacts the drama of self-assertion. The lover makes a gift of her passion. It is a sovereign offering above everything that Nature, Life or Culture can ever bestow. The idea of love is ultimately bound up with personal passion.

In the opening poem ‘The Offering’ which is a devotional song of love where the maiden has neither beauty nor youth nor greatness, which she may offer to her beloved, but above them all, she has her heart’s undying passion, which is the most precious gift of her. She asks for nothing in return, she would be fully satisfied if she simply kisses the shadow of her lover’s passing feet.

The maiden in the next poem ‘The Feast’ would not need for her lover of any sandal-paste, or lotus-wreath, or pearls, or gems, but she would apply to her eye the dust touched by his feet, bear on her breast his footprints, and share all his sorrows and mysteries. On receiving his touch in the
third poem ‘Ecstasy’, the poetess Sarojini Naidu expresses a change in her mood from cheerfulness to gloominess. She is lost in the rapture of love. Her eyes are weary of bliss and her lips are tired of singing dulcet songs. Her soul is burdened with the pain of love and love’s shelter alone can protect her. According to Sarojini Naidu just as the graceful beauty of a flower is spoiled when it bends down under the burden or rain a drop, similarly her soul is bent low with the pain of love. It can find release only in the fulfillment of love. As the title suggests the poem is a feast of worship and in this poem too she has recreated the devotional atmosphere of India by using apt words and phrases; ‘fragrant sandal paste’, ‘lotus wreath’, ‘pearls’, ‘priceless boon’.

In the ‘Lute Song’ which follows, she describes that her eyes, and not mirror, shall reflect his glory, not the lute but her own voice, shall sing of his valour and fame, and not on the pillow of silk but on her heart would rest his head and instead of penance, prayer, or pardon, her suffering soul would be the atonement for all sins.

‘Ecstasy’ is one of Sarojini Naidu’s beautiful lyrics. In spring hills and the Valleys of the South bloom with multi-coloured, sweet smelling flowers. The enchanting and ravishing atmosphere around her cannot divert her attention because she is lost in the ecstasy of love.
‘In the Sins of Love’ she begs him to forgive her, if her eyes ever tried to stay on his face, hands clasp his body, mouth ravish his lips or heart lure his love. And if she could instill immortal breath into his mortal body and fashion him into a God, this sacrifice on her part as expressed in ‘The Desire of Love’ would indeed be incomparable. In the poem ‘The Vision of Love’ she is forgetful of all, but her lover, who is now the substance of her breath as well as the mystic pang of Death.

The Second part of the triology is ‘The Path of Tears’ and its dominant note is suffering. It describes the progress of love in the world of contradiction, ambivalence and polarity. The nature and quality of experiences coming to the self from outside are explored. The path of tears is a route of evanescence, but it ultimately leads to introspection and self-realisation. The lover has turned away his face from the maiden. The maiden is confident even in her sorrow that neither death nor sorrow could separate and take them away from their longing of love. This she has expressed very beautifully in the first poem, ‘The Sorrow of Love’.

In ‘The Silence of Love’, she depicts that she would give her love the whole joy of her flesh and the entire treasure of her soul and demand nothing in return, not even a single hour from his resplendent years, not a shower from his full rivers.
In ‘The Menace of Love’, she touches the different chords and expresses her love and sorrow in the low wailing sound. The frustrated maiden is quite confident that some day when the winds of sweet memory of the days that are no more will blow his ruthless pride and the shield of wisdom will flutter away. In spring the unbearable agony of her sorrowful heart will bloom in red flowers which will reproach him for his treachery. Her indescribable sorrow will find voice to condemn him ‘in the low mwailing of the midnight seas’. The commotion in his own heart will smite him and he will remain sleepless and restless due to the passionate longing and hunger of love which he in sheer stupidity has abandoned. Ultimately he will face defeat and fall on her feet supplicating for mercy.

The last poem in this session entitled ‘The Secret’ introduces us to friends who bring the gifts of garlands, songs of praise, saffron veils and silver sandals for the maiden, but it is all of no purpose. They do not delight her, for though apparently alive, she is actually dead, and this fact is known only to the lover.

The third section in ‘The Temple’ entitled ‘The Sanctuary’ also contains eight poems. It intensifies the symbolic action of the poem. Love is neither a possession of the self, nor the glory of the renouncing self. The
maiden is in the sanctuary of love with a desire to build an invulnerable shrine for her lover.

In the next poem ‘The Illusion of Love’, it reflects that love may be as transient as a spark, a flickering flame, a common shell chance winnowed by the sea-winds, a hapless mortal thing, but it alone kindles all her dark passages with the immortal luster of the day. It expresses the maiden’s intense love.

In the poem ‘Worship of Love’ the maiden gladly offers her body and soul for the worship of love, the noblest of all worships. It is a charming love lyric. It reveals the intensity of love for which every sacrifice even that of life and soul is negligible. True love is the highest and noblest form of devotion.

In the poem ‘Love Triumphant’ the maiden takes an oath that she will not leave her beloved in bad times. Her love will not altar, if his fair mind loses its gaiety and suffers from a dark distress. She will be his main support when he is found guilty of criminal offence or suffers from a deadly disease. In such an hour of distress she with all her might will protect him. She will endeavor her best to comfort him with the balm of her love.
In ‘Love Omnipotent’ her love for the beloved shall endow him with the mightest powers. She tells her beloved that love would still omnipotence into her. Her frail hands will have the invincible power to control dawn and darkness, to break the mountains like sea-shells and crush the fair moon like a flower. She would proudly and triumphantly execute all commands for his sake. She would have complete sway over Time and Death.

The poem ‘Love Transcendent’ depicts that when Time will cease and the lover is encrowned by God’s side and she is thrown into the deep ages.

‘In Devotion’ the last poem of this section she reflects her entire devotion to her lover and she expresses that she is insignificant and is nothing without him.

This triology is Sarojini Naidu’s monumental contribution to Indo-Anglian love-poetry. Love, as viewed by her, is a superb power which transforms all mean passions into pure gold and through suffering leads to a transcendental state. Joy emanates from self surrender. These poems are marked by intensity which indicates that they are a record of her own personal experiences.

In the above poem, Sarojini Naidu refers to ‘Love’s radiant hour of Praise’ and the ritual offerings presented at the shrine. The poet can offer
only her broken lute and wounded heart as gifts of adoration. She is aware that love is the part and means in search of the complete. ‘The Temple’ is the most adequately structured of her poems, illuminating a complex experience in a sustained manner. It is a complete testament of love in its myriad moods and manifestations. It presents love in all its diversity, paradox and contradictions, in all its tensions and liberations. It reveals all the stages of love, from the profane to mundane and the sacred.

It is characterized by a strong undercurrent of personal crisis which cannot be traced to any particular known event in the life of Sarojini Naidu. Her own married life was a perpetual idyl of love, understanding and harmony. It was one long epithalamium full of joy and fulfillment. Nevertheless, there is as elegiac sadness and tragic agony in her poetry on love. Sarojini Naidu’s ‘long-term self’ seems to have been shut in by a secret sorrow which she was under sentence never to disclose.

Dr. K.R Srinivas Iyengar questions, “What are we to make of this group of twenty-four lyrics? Is it the description of some imaginary situation, or is it, in some measure at least, the lacerating recordation of a personal experience?”

5
The following lines vibrate with romanticism and devotional quality of Indian poetry on love.

“Bring no fragrance Sandal-paste

Let me gather, love instead”

Sarojini Naidu’s early love poems are:

- An Indian Love Song
- Humayun to Zubeida
- The Poets’s Love Song
- The Dance of Love
- A Rajput Love Song
- Persian Love Song and
- The Song of Radha, The milk-maid is suffused with the spirits of joy and some of them are highly imaginative. It occupies a prominent-place in Sarojini’s love poetry which is portrayed very clearly:

“But my heart was so full of your beauty, Beloved

They laughed as I cried without knowing:

Govinda! Govinda!

Govinda! Govinda!”
Radha, the Milk-Maid occupies a prominent place in Sarojini’s Naidu’s poetry on love. Radha, the divine beloved attains absolute unity with her divine lover, Krishna. It is a state of beauty and ecstasy. Radha, the Milk-Maid carries curd to the Mathura fair, but instead of shouting ‘Who will buy these curds that are white as the clouds in the sky?’ She unconsciously cries ‘Govinda! Govinda! Her heart is filled with love upto the brim of her lover’s beauty. When her companion calls her to play with them and participate in spring festivities, she unknowing utters these words ‘Govinda! Govinda! ‘This is reflected in the poem:

“How softly the river was flowing!

How gaily the rowers were rowing

Her absorption with Lord Krishna is so complete that in the Mathura Temple she folds her hands to pray the ‘Shining ones’, but instead of offering her prayer to them she instantaneously cries ‘Govinda! Govinda!

Here she describes the transcendental experience of love in the following lines:

“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” 8.
The beautiful song adapted from ‘The Bird of Time’ is highly symbolical. In this song, Radha emerges as the eternal feminine, seeking for complete identification with Govinda. Both the setting and the symbols are purely Indian and its setting is in Mathura, the Chief Centre of the mystic worship of Krishna.’

Love treated in this poem is not Sensual and Physical. It is a Spiritual experience that admits no impediments. Sarojini Naidu has transferred her personal desire of love into divine love. Love has been romantically treated in this poem. It abounds in ornate epithets like ‘Saffron garments,’ ‘Shining ones’ and similes like ‘white clouds in the Sky.’

Imagination which is the Cardinal feature of romanticism casts a transfiguring charm over her poems on love. An aerial charm which clearly reflects different moods of lovers- ecstasy, depression, joy and pain can be clearly seen in ‘A Rajput Love Song’ which is a romantic ballad on love. It takes us back to the medieval times in Rajasthan. The bards composed songs and ballads on the theme of Chivalrous love in various regional dialects. In this enchanting song, Sarojini Naidu has skillfully used the ballad metre which was commonly used in the medieval love songs. The richness of imagination, the depth of emotions, the musical flow of verse, ornate diction, colourful epithets and romance deepens the note of romanticism. It
is a duct (a Piece of music for two voices or for two plays) and each part consists of twelve lines in the typical style of a ballad.

“O Love! Were you the Keora’s soul that haunts

my silken raiment

A bright, vermillion tassels in the girdles that I

weave;”

Parvati, the Love-lorn princess, appears at the lattice of her chamber and sings to her lover, Amar Singh, the gallant youth, who is in the saddle. They have spent the night in each other’s loving and joyous company and they have to part in the morning. They will however, rejoin in the night. Even this brief separation of two hours is irksome to them. She imagines his presence and in a bossil wreath among her tresses, bangles of ‘shining gold’, keora’s scent haunting her silken raiment, ‘the scented fan that lies upon her pillow; ‘a sandal lute’, and Silver lamp. The poetess has portrayed it in the following lines:

“O love! Were you the scented fan that lies upon

my Pillow,

A sandal lute, or silver lamp that burns before my

shrine”
Amar Singh replies that he too will feel her presence in the hooded hawk upon my hand, a turban spray, the radiant, swift, unconquered sword, a shield and an amulet finds the fleeing hours of separation unbearable. The refrains of the song conveys the agony of separation.

Here, Parvati is afraid of the dawn which is personified as a jealous person - jealous of their love and happiness and spreading the veil of separation between them. Night brings them together, while the dawn separates them. She wishes that the hours would fly swiftly like bees or like parrots, they can re-unite. These lines are highly figurative and conveys the intensity of the beloved’s emotion forcefully and effectively.

The poem is remarkable in several ways. It evokes for us the romantic medieval world of Rajput Chivalry and knight-errantry. There are several metaphors and similes in the poem. There is a wealth of images which makes the poem rich. The image in the first part of the poem has feminine tenderness and delicacy, as ‘wild-bee hours’ and ‘wild parrots-day’, whereas in the second part they are derived from the brave warrior’s world, as ‘wild-deer hours’ and ‘wild-stallions day’.

The romantic sheltered world evoked by the ballad is now a thing of the past, but once it was a reality and Sarojini Naidu has endeavoured to
capture this reality in her poem. In ‘A Rajput Love Song’, for instance Parvati at her lattice and Amar Singh in the saddle, express their love.forms and precious stones (a jewelled clasp of shining gold and an amulet of jade against the peril of the way) Both the bride’s palace and the soldier’s battlefield (the jealous dawn and the consenting darkness) are linked up by the magical potency and ornaments and weapons, both elaborately decorated and studded with jewels. The heraldic and heroic emblem of scented form and sandal lute are woven into an auriferous mosaic. Sarojini Naidu Presents a latticed world through which we receive glimpses of love, glory and ecstasy.

In this respond to its irresistible call Sarojini Naidu responded to it, at the age of sixteen by passing all the barriers of caste and creed.

But what distinguishes Sarojini Naidu as a writer of Love-lyrics from Manmohan Ghose, Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Harin all of whom wrote love-poetry, is her capacity to capture emotions and present situations with all their ecstacies and pathos. This is indeed a unique feature of her love-poetry. Sarojini Naidu’s love poetry is a composite product of her ramblings in Persian Love-poetry and Indian Love-poetry-classical and medieval, but the subjective feelings also loom large in them. This may partly explain the absence of originality in her approach to love. From this
view-point, Manmohan Ghose is a much better poet as his love-lyrics are intensely original, whereas Sarojini Naidu’s images in her love-lyrics is also borrowed from Persian and Indian love-poetry. ‘A Persian love-song’ and ‘A Love Song from the North’ bear this out.

‘A Love Song from the North’, ‘My Dead Dream’ and ‘The festival of Memory’ - reveals the suffering and agony of love and express man’s helplessness in the face of Fate and Death. A Love from the North is replete with poignant pathos. The beloved’s heart ardently yearns for her lover’s company when she sees the soft wings of the clouds on the river, jeweled with raindrops the mango leaves quiver and the entire atmosphere becomes redolent with the music of papeeha that calls, ‘Pi-Kahan, Pi-Kahan’ (Where is my love?) koels and bulbuls. The joyous spectacles are quite tormenting and painful to the love-lorn maiden.

‘My Dead Dream’ embodies her own intense love for Dr. Naidu. She had to leave him in her thoughts and affections. Dream symbolizes her love affair which in the beginning could not come to fruition.

The poem ‘An Indian Love Song’ is written to an Indian tune. In this charming poem the poet describes that true love is above family feuds and social customs. Here the lover reveals the nature of true love. It depicts a
Hindu beloved and a Muslim lover. The latter says, “Love recks not of feud and bitter follies, of stranger, comrade or kin, alike in his ear sounds the temple bells and the cry of the muzzein.”

The lover is extremely enamoured of his beloved’s beauty and he asks her to remove the veil which conceals her luminous face. He desires to smell the keora scent in her pinioned curls and to drink deep the magical nectar that dwells in the flower of thy kiss.

“Lift up the veils that darken the delicate moon of thy glory and Grace”

Withhold not, O love, from the night of my longing the joy thy luminous face”

The poem hints at true love and its sincerity. The beloved questions her lover’s sincerity and earnestness by telling him that he is an enemy of her father’s race. At this the lover reveals the nature of true love. It is ‘an ever fixed mark that looks on tempests and is never shaken’. Bitter follies and family feuds do not obstruct the path of true love. Thus in her treatment of love Sarojini Naidu reinforces the traditional insights and conventions of love. There is a quick succession of beautiful similes, ‘Swifter than a trembling forest deer’, ‘Swifter than a Snake that flies’, Swifter than the
lightening’s feet.’ It may appear physically impossible, but it is possible for a maiden whose heart burns with the intensity.

“For Love shall cancel the ancient wrong and conquer the ancient rage,
Redeem with his tears the memoried sorrow that sullied a bygone Age”

The poem is written in a simple, sensous, graceful and metaphorical language. Metaphors and images that appeal to the sense of smell, touch, sight and taste are aptly and remarkably used. The metaphor, ‘the delicate moon of thy glory and grace appeals to the sense of sight’, ‘a spear of the scented keora’ and ‘the magical nectar that dwells in the flower of thy kiss’ appeals to senses of smell and taste respectively.

Love, for Sarojini Naidu, is not much the source and object of desire as of memory. Love as memory is a ‘twin-natured’ boon of agony and bliss. It is in love that the lover has a choice of roles as bride and votary, saint and martyr, poet and prophet. Yet, love is all notations of conscious will and more. It demands nothing short of a total human response. Prayer, not praise, is the proper tribute to Love."
Sarojini Naidu as a poet speaks for the life of the affection, drawing her theme from the privacy of her emotions and informing it with a sense of mystery, wonder, torment and adoration. The main fount of her inspiration is love and whether she writes of Nature, Man, or God, it is love that comes first, rendering everything else as a background, a setting. When we talk of love and death- it is a romantic vision of love’s conquest over death. Indeed true love is above time and mortality which is very aptly presented in ‘Love and Death’ – who are no strangers in poetry.

Sarojini Naidu individualizes her own fable of love, by drawing upon the cosmological idiom of Srishthi - Sthithi - Laya to impart both a pattern and an ethos to her poem.

“I dreamed my love had set thy spirit free,
Enfranchised thee from Fate’s o’ermastering
power
Of rich and joyous immortality”; 14

The beloved dreamt that her lover had liberated love from ‘Fate’s over mastery power’ and had endowed it with ‘rich and joyous immortality’. Like Savitri she too conquered Death by Love. When she woke up she
found that there was no exemption of any kind from the universal lot of human kind.

Love in her dream was merely an evanescent dream. There is a note of poignant pathos in her realization of truth. Love cannot protect against the decrees of death. Man is mortal, and he must die, love or no loves.

\[ O \ Love, \ alas, \ that \ love \ could \ not \ assuage \]
\[ The \ burden \ of \ thy \ human \ heritage, \]
\[ Or \ save \ thee \ from \ the \ swift \ decrees \ of \ Death. "^{15} \]

Sensuousness is a representative trait of Sarojini Naidu’s poetry, be it nature poetry, love poetry or poetry of Indian scenes. This quality is which she shares with John Keats whose influence is traceable in her poems. In others also she is comparable to him, as for example, she loved the beauty of nature selflessly, passionately and sensitively as John Keats did. There is nothing philosophical, abstract or intellectual in her poetry.

Padmini Sengupta rightly says:

“Too much ink, perhaps, has been wasted in striving to create out of Sarojini Naidu, a profound poet, a thinker, a philosopher through glimpses of all these and even mysticism are revealed in her songs. But she is
euphemeral, and her lyrics are as light as the burden which the ‘Palanquin Bearers’ in her poem of that name bore”

The poem ‘If you call me’ also expresses the force of love. In this beautiful song the maiden expresses her eagerness to meet her lover. She is so conscious of self-respect that she will not go to him uninvited. Sarojini Naidu gives full vent to her artistic and lyrical genius in portraying love that is a human desire, but she also shows the triumph of divine love over the temptation of human desire. The Radha-Krishna legend provided her with a theme where she could successfully mingle human and spiritual love.

“If you call me I will come
Swifter, O my love,
Than a trembling forest deer
Or a panting dove”

Braving all obstacles and dangers she will heed to his call by outrunning all the swiftest things like a deer, dove, the snake flying to the call of the charmer.

The poem is remarkable for its Clarity and Plainness of expression highly and suggestive similes are used to express the maiden’s deep love and her intense eagerness to meet her lover. It may appear physically
impossible, but it is possible for a maiden, whose heart burns with the intensity. She would not admit any kind of impediments to her love, not even the life’s dark tides, not even chasm caused by death. The song is charming for its simplicity and ambiguity.

The main aim of Sarojini Naidu is to depict India and its rich heritage to the Europeans and in this respect she merely painted in rich colours the Indian spring and flowers, customs and traditions through various facets of life, which is vividly expressed in radiant diction in her poetry which is crystal clear in the next chapter.

“Love of beauty is taste. The creation of beauty is art.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson
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