Chapter - VI

Nationalism in Sarojini Naidu’s Works

ABSTRACT

In this chapter, the researcher has made an effort to present Sarojini Naidu’s secular outlook, patriotic ardour and a veritable picture gallery of Indian life. The researcher has made a serious effort to depict the complex and the multi-tudinous aspects of Indian life, traditions, and mythology and memorial verses through Sarojini Naidu’s poems to bring out the depth of her patriotism for the country ‘India’.
Chapter - VI

Nationalism in Sarojini Naidu’s Works

“You’ll never have a quiet world till you knock the patriotism out of the human race.”

… George Bernard Shaw

Sarojini Naidu is one of the most illustrious daughters of India who combines in her an intense poetic temperament and a strong patriotic urge. She is an ardent worshipper of beauty. She longs to remain in her ivory tower of beauty and romance, but she is never indifferent to the Social, moral or political issues facing her country and countrymen. She holds the view that a true poet cannot sit content with the attempt to create pure poetry untouched by the interest of the life of the people. Sarojini Naidu is a poet of beauty, but she never turns cold and indifferent to the problems of her country. She, like her “wandering singers” wants to move around her country singing causelessly the timeless song of fundamental unity and universal brotherhood.
She views her own role and function as a poet, from the higher altitudes of universal feeling and commitment. The self image projected in a speech at Kanjeevaram reflects a marked growth in Sarojini Naidu’s awareness of the poet’s function as benefit and reducer of mankind:

“I have seen once more the vision beautiful to which my life is dedicated. Why have you come out of the ivory tower of dreams to the market place? Why have you deserted the types and flute of the poet to be the most strident trumpet of those who stand and call which my life is dedicated? Why have you deserted the types and flute of the poet to be the most strident trumpet of those who stand and call the nation to the battle?  

The poetic self merges into the universal self. The tender little wants of the lyric, of a child are now identified with the crying need of humanity. The vision beautiful is no longer a product of the poet’s isolated passion.

It is a creative encounter with passion and purpose. Joachim Alva observes: “She is the wandering minstrel of India singing the joys and sorrows of her motherland from the Himalayas to cape Co Morin. She is the messenger of her master, whose supreme word she carried from town to village, from peasant to prince.” In a speech, the poet remarks:
“I came in your midst as a stranger, a wandering singer that had brought to you the message of unity which is the only message today that may be uttered from the lip of man or woman.”³ Sarojini’s ideals are very high for, she feels concerned not only with her own people but humanity at large.

She says in ‘Wandering Singers’: “All men are kindred, the world is our home”. She is the most cosmopolitan of India’s political leaders. Here is a nationalism that readily flows into the broad international current.”⁴ Sarojini Naidu is fully aware of her poetic gift and wants to use it in a spirit of dedications for her motherland. She wishes to serve her country with her song. That is the real mission of her life. She loves her country and is passionately interested in the sufferings of her people.

Prof. K.R.S. Iyengar rightly observes: 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 hopes, and gallantly straining to redeem the Mother and redeem the time.”⁵ Sarojini Naidu, possessed with a sensitive heart of a woman and a genius’s urge of a poet, loves to experience, enjoy, celebrate and worship her motherland. India is, to her, an ever present, ever felt reality. It is everywhere in the fields, gardens and sea beaches; it is in the
thoughts, feelings, crafts and pursuits of her people. Sarojini Naidu has displayed all the energy of her passionate soul into the service of her motherland.

Poets are inspired to work for great cause and it is to this cause of blast that Sarojini Naidu has dedicated herself. In one of her fiery speeches she says “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, the shield of fortitude and as a poet; I fling out the banner of song and sound of bugle-call to battle. How shall I kindle the flame which shall waken you men from slavery.”

Love for motherland is a passion with Sarojini Naidu, and throughout her life she was seen struggling with the two equally powerful forces in her – her craving to sing songs of beauty, love and life, and her urge to serve her country. It is because of this attachment towards the country that she forgoes the desire for personal fulfillment and individual life and instead takes up with the impersonal desire to devote and dedicate herself to her country and her people. Her passion as a poetess is disturbed again and again until one fine day when she finally decides to ignore the urges of her poetic self for the call of her nation. Sarojini Naidu is a great dreamer in a dreamless
As Mira dedicated her life to the service of Lord Krishna; She consecrates her life to the service of the nation. Patriotic urges were equally strong in Rabindranath Tagore too. His soul groaned in the chain of slavery and his only dream was a liberated India. He says in Gitanjali: “where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening thought and action into that heaven of freedom, my father let my country awake.”

The sentiment of love and reverence for motherland is always surging in Sarojini’s Naidu’s heart. The prayer of goddess Lakshmi, on behalf of the motherland, shows her intense love and sincere attachment with her land:

“For our dear land do we offer oblation,
O keep thou her glory unsullied, unshorn,
And guide the principle hope of our nation,
Hearken, O Lotus-born.”

Sarojini Naidu’s best poems are a magnificent album of Indian life. She has vividly recreated the multitudinous panorama of Indian life with all its variegated pageants. Her popularity as a poetess is quite clear mainly on her skilful treatment of Indian themes, and by her representation of these in a genuinely oriental light. Toru Dutt was the first to find in her own land an inspiration for her genius, and her achievement is being triumphantly repeated in the work of her accomplished successor, Sarojini Naidu. She
sings to us Songs of India, Indian Springs and summers, Indian love lores, the pledges of the sons and daughters of the Mother to her, Indian streets and bazaars, Indian scenery and sight - these she attempts to transform into words aglow with the fires of real passion and with a genius quick at metrical inventions.

Indo-Anglian poetry is mostly an echo of the English muse. It has very little that is indigenous. Even Greek myths and continental absurdities are not forgotten. For those Indo-Anglian poets, there are no Indian birds and flowers, no typical Indian scenes and sights, nothing essentially Indian. A new light dawned on Indo-Anglian poetry when Rabindranath Tagore gave it an Indian background and Sarojini Naidu wove Indian birds and flowers in the texture of her poems, and broke the rigidity of English metres by setting them to the tune of Indian folk songs and Bengali metre...”  

Her outlook as a poet of Indian life is secular. She concentrated on all the Major Indian religions - Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Buddhism, all segments of Indian society and all aspects and modes of life like the Palanquin Bearers, the Corn Grinders, the Wandering Singers, the Wandering Beggars, the Indian Dancers, the Snake Charmers, the Seasons - Spring, Summer and Autumn, Indian traditions, customs and festivals occupy a conspicuous place in her poetry. She also wrote about Indian
leaders – Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Mahatma Gandhi, and about Indian cities - Delhi and Hyderabad. Her poetical genius blossomed in Indian atmosphere and attained abiding fame in the temple of Muses. Her depiction of Indian life is highly romantic.

Sarojini Naidu has a few and limited number of themes which recur in her poems. They are mainly lyrics and time-less ones. Patriotism is not a theme in her poetry but there is no doubt it is the moving spirit behind it. Earlier, in her life she wished to use her poetic gifts for the service of her motherland and her countrymen. She later on proved her zeal and dedicated herself to both song and service of her country. According to her, a poet’s destiny lies in the dust of highway and battle-fields. This idea is expressed in her well-known poem, ‘The Faery Isle of Janjira’ which reveals that Sarojini Naidu is not a poet hidden in the light of her romantic dreams and fancies though she is a poet of romanticism. When the moment of need arose, when the country needed her she sacrificed her song for service. But it is quite true that even while she was a poet, she was guided by her love for her country. This spirit behind her poetry is obtained from her foreword to the third and last volume of Sarojini’s Naidu’s poems entitled ‘The Broken Wing’, published in 1917. Apart from the patriotic poems, her poetry unlike Manmohan Ghose’s is truly native to her motherland, her poetry is Indian
and despite being a romantic, she is eminently Indian in sensibility and temperament.

Sarojini Naidu’s patriotic ardour is expressed in

- To India,
- An Anthem of Love,
- The Broken Wing,
- The Gift of India and
- Awake.

This group may also include her memorial poems on national figures such as

i. Memorial Verses: ‘Gokhale’,

ii. The Lotus (To M.K. Gandhi),

‘Lokmanya Tilak’, etc., All of these poems do not evoke patriotism but they are inspired by it. In the poem ‘To India’ where India is personified as the Mother who is both ancient and young. Sarojini Naidu addresses her and supplicates her to regenerate from the gloom of slavery and beget new glories from thine ageless womb. There is intense patriotic fervour in the following lines:
“Thy Future calls thee with a manifold sound
To crescent honours, splendours, victories vasts;
Waken, O slumbering Mother, and be crowned,
Who once wert empress of the sovereign past”

‘To India’ is a poem composed before the attainment of Independence. The poem is addressed to Mother India with a hope that she should rise from the bond of slavery as the other slave nations are looking at her with ardent hope and expectation and wish her to lead them in the struggle for freedom.

“Mother, O Mother, wherefore dost thou sleep?
Arise and answer for thy children”

Mother India was crowned with matchless glories in the past and now in the future in laying in store new honours and victories for her. The poem contains a prophetic note because sometime after its composition India became a free country:

‘The Gift of India’ is a noble tribute to the brave Indian soldiers and sons of India. The poem has a raging world war as its background. It is in a form of address by Mother India to the world. The country is personified and identified with the poet. Her tender and sensitive soul leaps forward to
sympathize with the heroes who displayed their valour on different battlefronts fighting for Allied forces. The boundless grief of mother India for her heroic sons, who were killed in alien lands, is poignantly expressed in the poem. The brave sons of India were killed in different climate and in strange lands. Their bodies were burnt in “alien graves’ without any concern or love or a tear. They attained martyrdom in the World War I (1914-1918). It depicts the chivalry of the Indian soldiers killed in that war and it is a reminder to the world of the brave who fought and fell a prey for the cause of the allies:

“Gathered like pearls in their alien graves
Silent they sleep by the Persian waves”\(^1\)

It is hard to assuage and “measure” the grief and pathos of the mother who is compelled to send her beloved sons to the battle-field in the name of duty, to be killed in war. Her tone gets very pathetic:

“Can ye measure the grief of the fears I weep
Or compass the woe of the watch I keep?”\(^1\)

The poet is haunted by the great sacrifice India experienced in the First World War, and wants to remind the world of the blood of the
“martyred sons” of India. A strong note of protest against the imperialists can be seen in the following lines:

“And you honour the deeds of deathless ones,

Remember the blood of my martyred sons.”

When ‘the terror and tumult of hate shall cease’ and place would reign supreme, the names of the “martyred sons” would forever be remembered.

It has been called a “war” poem but critics divided their opinion on this point. In fact, it is a patriotic poem which is filled with deep love for motherland. It is written to attract the attention of the world to the brave soldiers of India who served the Allies in the First World War.

In ‘An Anthem of Love’ Sarojini Naidu pledges her love and patriotism to the nation where the latter is more glaring and evident here.

It is a sincere expression of the poets’ deep love and divine duty towards her land. She experiences an intense patriotic urge and surrenders whole-heartedly to the cause of freedom. She was ready to undertake any amount of strain or sacrifice. Her deep respect for her motherland attains the intensity of love of a devotee here in an undivided, invisible soul by and by one hope, one rising towards the future as glorious as the past. The following line portrays the patriotic feelings:
“Bound by one hope, one purpose, one devotion

Towards a great, divinely-destined goal”

All these poems on India and Indian heroes are very inspiring and reflect patriotic fervour. It can be seen here that the main motive of patriotism and love for the motherland first found expression in the poems of Henry Derozio. Apart from Henry Derozio no other Indo-Anglian poet has been inspired by patriotism except Sarojini Naidu who expresses her love for India not in the spirit of propaganda but as a genuine urge. Her love for India continues as a strain in her poetry which is truly native in ethos and setting. Nationalism is revealed in her poems which present the diverse panorama of Indian life in all its beauty and colour. This feature of her poetry is also a manifestation of her love for India.

Her poems on the panorama of Indian life celebrate various cultures—Hindu and Muslim life particularly. The theme of religious tolerance and wide sympathy is not her major poetic concern but it finds magnificent expression in many poems particularly in “The Call To Evening Prayer” where the poem refers to the prayers of Hindu, Muslim, Parsi and Christian creeds and it is a celebration of “the fraternal co-existence of diverse creeds” in a single place.
The theme is again taken up in a love-poem “Indian Love-Song”, in which the lover is a Muslim and the beloved a Hindu. Obviously, the poetess questions the barriers of caste and creed and pleads for Hindu-Muslim Unity. Therefore, her poems on the Indian scene abound in pictures of Muslim life and Hindu life and Hindu gods and goddesses.
The poems that present pictures of Muslim life and Islamic culture include

i. The Pardah Nashin

ii. A Song from Shiraz,

iii. The Imambura,

iv. The Prayer of Islam,

v. Wandering Beggars and

vi. The Old Woman

Regarding these poems of the Muslim pictures of life, P.E.Dustoor says that “this avowedly Hindu poet also gives evidence of Muslim sympathies and here and there responds to the call of Islam. For, she was a Hindu very much at home.in her Muslim environment.Consequently, she was able to reflect in her work some of the outlook and faith of islam and the spirit of Islamic culture” 17

The picture of the muezzin calling Muslims for prayer from the minaret of the mosque is quite frequently drawn, as in “Nightfall in the City of Hyderabad”.

“Hark, from the minaret, how the muezzin’s call

Floats like a battle-flag over the city wall” 18
Her poems are a lyrical recreation of Indian scenes. She knew the legends and mythology of India. Toru Dutt, whose poetry is essentially native in genre and outlook, wrote the legends and ballads of Hindustan and thus became a representative of Indian life and culture. Hindu ideas and mythological characters struck to her imagination. Sarojini Naidu had logical characters struck to her imagination. She had her own limitations and she did not write narrative poems on religious themes, Hindu gods and goddesses and mythological characters.

Dr. P.E. Dustoor says, “It is, of course, only to be expected that Hindu myth and legend, Hindu belief and attitudes, should find a reflection in Sarojini Naidu’s poetry. Poem after poem reveal, whether in its basic inspiration and theme or in its incidental imagery and allusions, the native Hindu mind and outlook of the poet”.  

Dr. Narsingh Srivastava also says, “Sarojini Naidu is generally described as a great humanist who expresses in her poetry a genuine reverence for all religious feeling which finds emotional expression mainly in her poems on Hindu deities, especially in her lyrics on Sri Radha and Krishna. In this respect, she is a true child of the age, as besides writing poems of nature and village life, folk songs and songs of life and Death, she celebrates the theme of religious devotion with equal emotional fervour and
remarkable poetic sensibility. Sarojini Naidu began her poetic career in an age in which, owing to the impact of religious revivalists as well as of great saints like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, religious themes had as great appeal for the poets as for the common people”.  

In her well-known nature lyric “Nasturtiums” she refers to the well-known heroines of Indian mythology.  

This category consists of poems like

- Harvest Hymn
- Suttee
- Damayanti to Nala in the Hour of Exile
- To a Buddha Seated on a Lotus
- Vasant Panchami
- The Festival of Serpents
- Songs of Radha, the Milkmaid
- Spinning Song
- Hymn to Indra, Lord of Rain
- The Temple
- Lakshmi, the Lotus-Born
- The Flute-Player of brindaban
• Kali, the Mother
• Raksha Bandhan
• Kanhaya and
• The Festival of the Sea and
• The songs of Radha
• At Dawn
• At Dusk and
• The Quest.

These nineteen poems have variety of approach and content. They reveal Sarojini Naidu’s roots on the most superficial level even if we set apart her overt Indianness; these are the poems of basic Indianness as the titles indicate.

Sarojini Naidu was well versed with Hindu religion and its ancient lore. She evinces her knowledge of and insight into Hindu religion. “Kali, The Mother” is a chorus of adoration in praise of Goddess Kali. She is also known by various names- Uma Haimavati, Ambica, Parvati, Girija, Shambhavi, Kali and Mother in a chorus. She is invoked by maidens, brides, mothers, widows, artisans, peasants, victors, vanquished, scholars, priests, poets and patriots bring their humble tributes to the supreme mother and implore her to shower blessings which is reflected in the following lines:
“O Terrible and tender and divine!

O mystic mother of all sacrifice,

We deck the somber altars of thy shrine

With sacred basil leaves and saffron rice,

And gifts of life and death we bring to thee”  

In the poem, ‘Hymn to Indra, Lord of Rain’ both men and women worship Indra, the national god of war according to Rig-Veda and the protector and enricher of those who worship Him. It is a choric chant celebrating the bounty and plentitude of Nature and Man’s gratitude and thanksgiving to the primary essences of Fire, Water and Earth, personified (as in the vedic litanies) as Sūrya, Varuna and Prithvi. He is also a god of thunder, lightning, storm and rain. It has the grandeur and poetic beauty of Vedic hymns.

The poem, ‘Lakshmi, The Lotus Born’ also known as goddess of fortune, was composed on Lakshmi Puja Day in the year 1915. Here the poetess invokes goddess Lakshmi to shower her blessings and prosperity on her and all the devotees. There is also a note of patriotism in the last stanza of this poem:
“Prosper our cradles and kindred and cattle,
And cherish our hearth-fires and coffers and corn,
O watch o’er our seasons of place and of battle,

Hearken, O Lotus Born!

For our dear Land do we offer oblation,
O keeps thou her glory unsullied, unshorn,
And guard the invincible hope of our nation,

Hearken, O Lotus Born! ”

The poems ‘The Flute Player of Brindaban’ and ‘Song of Radha, The Milk Maid’ are the expression of Krishna lore. The poem “The Flute player of Brindaban” expresses the deep emotions of Lord Krishna’s beloved (may be Radha) who is enchanted with the sweet and smooth music of his flute. The poem is an example of true love which is the marriage of true minds. True love is spiritual and calls for sacrifice which is reflected in the given lines:

“Still must I like a homeless bird
Wonder, forsaking all;
The earthly loves and worldly lures
That held my life in thrall,
And follow, follow, answering
Thy magical flute call”.24
In the poem, ‘Raksha Bandhan’ the poetess has stressed upon the sacred bond of love between a brother and a sister. ‘Rakhi’ is a tender bracelet of floss, yet it is strengthened by true love and friendship. It is a powerful symbol to unite two loving souls with unbreakable and steadfast bonds of love. The delicate lassels of ‘Rakhi’ have as powerful an effect as magical circles and signs are believed to have. It is a sacred festival of Hindus. In this festival women, especially sisters, tie a thread around the wrist of their brothers as a token of their love. In return the brothers offer a silent pledge to render all help to the sisters when they need it.

In her twelve line poem ‘Suttee’, she reveals the pathetic status of an Indian widow whose husband has just expired. The poem portrays the selfless and highly devoted love of an Indian woman. She sings this song, before offering herself to the flames burning her husband’s pyre. The life of an Indian Hindu widow is dark and dreary without any ray of hope. The following lines mark the pathos:

“Life of my life, Death’s bitter sword
Hath severed us like a broken word,
Rent us in twain who are but one…
Shall the flesh survive when the soul is
gone?”25
In the poem ‘Vasant Panchami’, Lilawati, a Hindu widow, expresses her deep suffering which is enhanced by the approaching spring. Vasant Panchami is a festival of spring when Hindu girls and married women carry gifts of lighted lamps and new grown corn as offerings to the goddess of the spring and set them afloat on the face of the water. As being a widow she cannot participate in the celebrations of spring. She feels sad and recollects her marital days that are no more. Her portion is a picture of sorrow and austerity.

In the poem ‘To a Buddha Seated on A Lotus’, Sarojini Naidu writes about Lord Buddha, the founder of Buddhism. In the first stanza the poetess describes Lord Buddha, seated on the lotus throne in meditation. In the second, third and fourth stanzas the poetess describes the sorrowful conditions and sordid realities of life. Poor, helpless mortals have to pass through the tumultuous and ever-changing path of life. One sorrow leads to another and cherishing unfulfilled longings and frustrated dreams, men have to face strife one after the other and ultimately, without attaining peace, they die. Supreme peace is out of the ken of human life:
“For us the travail and the heat,
The broken secrets of our pride,
The strenuous lessons of defeat,
The flower deferred, the fruit denied;
But not the peace, supremely won,
Lord Buddha, of thy Lotus throne”.

Sarojini Naidu developed a cosmopolitan outlook, though a Bengali Brahmin she grew up in Muslim environment. She was quite broad-minded in her poetic outlook and approach to different religions of India. It is a well-known fact that she is a true patriot who worked for Hindu-Muslim unity. Therefore, her poems not only reveal pictures of the Indian scene and life but also pictures of Muslim and Islamic culture. The following poems of Sarojini Naidu portray pictures of Muslim life and Islamic culture in the Indian scene:

- The Pardah Nashin
- The Imambara
- A Song from Shiraj
- The Prayer of Islam
- Wandering Beggars and
- The Old Woman
‘The Prayer of Islam’, which was composed on Id-uz-Zoha, in the year 1915 shows the acquaintance of Sarojini Naidu with the Islamic mode of worship. God is omniscient; omnipresent. This poem mentions some of the 99 beautiful Arabic names of God as used by the followers of Islam such as Hameed, Hafeez, Ghani, Ghaffar, Wahab, Waheed, Quadeer, Rahman and Raheem. This poem expresses the Islamic faith and is, therefore, significantly titled. ‘Wandering Beggars’ presents Muslim Fakirs who roam here and there uttering the name of Allah:

“From the threshold of Dawn
On we wander, always on
Till the friendly light be gone
Ya’ Allah! Ya’ Allah!”

The poem throws light on the conception of God in Islam. The followers of Islam praise Allah because He is Hameed, one to who all praise is due. He is Hafeez, the protector. He is the master of life and time and fate, the lord of the labouring winds, and seas. He is Ghani, the Bountiful, and Ghaffar, the forgiver. He is the “kindly Light” in the words of John Henry New Mans:
“Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling of gloom,

Lead thou me on”\textsuperscript{28}

He is the Radiance of our ways, the pardon of our errors, one whose name is known from star to star. God is warab, the Bestower of happiness and sorrow, the principle underlying all Universes, the source from which all things emanate, the life found in the sun beam and the seas. He is Quadeer, the almighty, and Quavi, the powerful. Nothing is beyond his power. He can transmute the weakness of human beings into their strength, their bondage into liberty. God, being the merciful, the compassionate, will surely respond to the cry of those who call him,

“Ya Rahman! Ya Rahman!”\textsuperscript{29}

Lokmanya Tilak, was one of the greatest freedom fighters, a man of versatile genius and achievements. He was a great scholar, thinker and politician with full of patriotic zeal. He rendered selfless sacrifice to liberate the motherland (India) from fetters of slavery. Sarojini Naidu was deeply impressed by such a glowing personality and so with her poetic sensitiveness and her own patriotic fervor she wrote this poem. The poem “Lokmanya Tilak” is an apt and beautiful tribute to the great son of India, who was the beacon of hope and heroic courage to the teeming millions of India and
pillar of national unity. The poetess welcomes him as a fearless soldier and wise sage who taught India the real meaning of freedom in his famous slogan ‘Freedom is our birth right’. This poem makes him immortal.

“Lo! Let the mournful millions roung thy pyre
Kindle their souls with consurated fire
Caught from the brave torch fallen from thy hand,
To succour and to serve our suffering land,
And in a daily worship taught by thee
Upbuild the temple of her unity”  

“The Lotus” (To Mahatma Gandhi) is a sonnet dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation. If Gokhale initiated Sarojini to the path of politics, it was Mahatma Gandhi who gave her the direction. Sarojini Naidu chose the title “The Lotus” as the lotus is a sacred flower and it is associated with Hindu gods and goddesses – Vishnu, Brahma and Lakshmi. Mahatma Gandhi is addressed as the flower lotus due to his sacred and sublime character. The name of Gandhiji does not occur anywhere in the poem but the mystic lotus symbolizes Gandhiji. The lotus The mystic lotus symbol stands for Gandhiji whose name does not occur in the body of the poem.
The lotus symbol is used to elevate the character and personality of Gandhiji to sublime heights. The versatile genius of the Mahatma Gandhi was not shaken by the temporary storms of misfortune and difficulties. Mahatma Gandhi was the pillar of strength for India and its people. Mahatma Gandhi, though physically dead, has become immortal, an incarnation of Brahma, due to his noble thoughts and sacred deeds:

“But who could win thy sevret, who attain
Thine ageless beauty born of Brahma’s breath,
Or pluck thine immortality, who art
Co eval with the Lords of Life and Death?”

Sarojini Naidu portrays the personality of The Nizam of Hyderabad in her “ode to H. H. The Nizam of Hyderabad” in a colourful way who stood for the principles of brotherhood of diverse creeds and harmony of diverse races:

“The votaries of the Prophet’s faith,
Of whom you are the crown and chief
And they, who bear on Vedic brows
The mystic symbols of belief”
The Royal Tombs of Golconda glorifies the Qutb Shahi dynasty of Golconda which was founded in the year 1572 A.D. The Qutb Shahi Sultans are remembered for their glorious achievements and their queens for their stunning beauty:

Her poems on Indian cities – Nightfall in The City of Hyderabad and imperial Delhi also reveal her love for India. She spent her major portion of life in Hyderabad and was familiar with all facets of its life. In the former poem she describes the spectacle of Hyderabad at Nightfall.

“Round the high Char Minar sounds of gay cavalcades
Blend with the music of cymbals and serenades”

Hyderabad was a prominent seat of medieval Muslim Culture and Sarojini lived in the Islamic atmosphere of delicacy, oriental splendour and richness of Persian poetry. Hers was a royal and beautiful city whose glory she has recorded in her two poems “Nightfall in The City of Hyderabad” and in “The Bazaars of Hyderabad”.

Dr. Dustoor calls her “a Hindu very much at home in her Muslim environment.”
Islamic culture and Persian poetry influenced her and her poetry abounds in pictures of Muslim life and images borrowed from the Persian poetry. Here is typical picture of Muslim life.

“Hark, from the minaret, how the muzzein’s call

Floats like a battle-flag over the city wall”\(^35\)

In Imperial Delhi the poetess describes the historical background and rich traditions of Delhi. The splendid tragedy of ancient things and regal woes of many a vanquished race are hidden in Delhi’s past. Death cannot cast its black shadow over this majestic city.

Sarojini grew up in the cosmopolitan atmosphere of the chattopadhyaya home and was under the loving care of her father, who was an embodiment of truth, love, justice and patriotism. Sarojini is completely free from provincial linguist, religious and patriotism. She inherits catholicitic views, and freedom from communal passions or her father, and the greater gifts of grace and benevolent nature from her mother. In one of her earliest speeches exhorting students to shed sectional prejudices and think of India as a whole, she says:
“I am born in Bengal, I belong to Madras presidency
In a Mohammedan city, I was brought up and married,
And there I lived still I am neither a Bengali, nor
a Madrasi, nor a Hyderabadi, but I am an Indian, not
a Hindu, not a Brahmin, but an Indian to whom my
Mohammadan brother is as dear and precious as my
Hindu brother.”  

Sarojini displays a rare confluence of diverse currents of culture and tradition. She is a Hindu, very much at home in her Muslim environment and a Brahmin bound by bonds of marriage to non-Brahmin. Here P.E. Dustoor offers a decent estimate of the poet:

“In her outlook and temper, the old and the new,
Hindu and Muslim, east and west and mingled
Without clash or incongruity she was; too a patriot whose
Sympathies did not include people and cultures other
Than her own;
She was an action of the world that yielded
To none in her attachment to Motherland”

Sarojini Naidu is fascinated by the diversity of religions of India and tried to understand each of them with sympathy and love. Her contribution to Hindu, Muslim unity is very valuable. This passion for Hindu-Muslim
unity she shares with Mahatma Gandhi and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. In most of her patriotic songs which are in the form of prayers to mother India, She expresses her belief in all faiths living together, and through their acts of love and sacrifices building up a new image of united India. She is committed to the Gandhian ideal of freedom, unity and progress of all without any greed or violence. “Her nationalism is not a confined humanism born of universal feeling.”

Sarojini Naidu has not left any aspect of Indian life untouched. The radiant beauty of spring when the earth is appalled in a celestial light especially lures her and she wrote many a poem on springtime.

Spring, A Song in spring, The Joy in springtime, vasant Panchami, A Song in spring, The Call of Springtime and The Magic of Spring are sensuous expressions of the beauties of springtime. Her poetry is a colourful album of the many divisional aspects of Indian life. Some of those aspects which she vividly depicts have now become obsolete but as pictures of India’s romantic past they still have their own significance. The Palanquin Bearers highly bearing the beautiful maiden along ‘like a pearl on a string: The wandering singers joyously singing the glories of old cities, the laughter and beauty of women long dead, the battles and the crown of old kings and ‘ happy and simple and sorrowful things ; Indian Weavers weaving three
different varieties of cloth for different purposes; Coromandel Fishers going
to capture the leaping wealth of the tide’, the snake charmer, the corn
grinders singing pathetic songs; the young village boy disillusioned by the
false shows of the world and lured by the calm and beauty of nature; village
folks singing harvest hymn the loving mother singing cradle song; Suttee
sacrificing herself on her dead lord’s pyre; Indian dancers ravished with
rapture; the Indian Gypsy in tattered robes; Indian lovers and beloveds; the
bangle sellers carrying their ‘shining loads to the temple fair’ , men and
women invoking Lord Indra and devout worshippers offering tributes and
prayers to Kali occupy a prominent place in her poetry.\textsuperscript{39}

Sarojini Naidu’s poetry is a veritable picture gallery of Indian life. Toru Dutt, her illustrious predecessor India’s mysticism and Sarojini Naidu
skillfully presented the complex texture of Indian thought and life, traditions
and mythology.

Sir Edmund Gosse aptly wrote in his Introduction to her poems, “If
the poems of Sarojini Naidu are carefully and delicately studied they will be
found as luminous in lighting up the dark places of the East as any
contribution of servant or historian”.\textsuperscript{40}
In conclusion, Sarojini has brought to the Indian nationalism a point of view that is not only poetic but also feminine. She is shocked by the plight of woman in society and fights all her life for their rights. In one of her speeches she remarks. “Does one man dares to deprive another of his birth right to God’s pure air which nourishes his body? How, then, shall a man dare to deprive a human soul of its immemorial inheritance?

Therefore, I charge you; restore to your woman their ancient rights.”

The duty and privilege of women, according to her, is to keep the safety of the men in all their battles of public good. Sarojini Naidu accepts the traditional view of women’s place in society and, particularly, in the family. In her poems, she shows admiration and sympathy for the virtuous women of Indian mythology, legend and history. Sita, Savitri, Padmini, Damayanti and all others connected in this emotional war of sustenance are her ideals. This has led some of her critics to condemn her as perpetuation of an outmoded view of womanhood.

“Patriotism is, fundamentally, a conviction that a particular country is the best in the world because you were born in it.”

... George Bernard Shaw
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