Chapter - I

Introduction

“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.

¹
(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.”

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.”
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.Sarvapalli 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 renouned 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 Keechaka (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. Referring 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." 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 ecstacy 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.”\(^{14}\) 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”.\(^{15}\) 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 falcity 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.”\footnote{16} 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 exotic sentimentally 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”. 
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’.

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 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 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 legendry 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 legendry 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?”23

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.”  

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?  

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
REFERENCES

1. Dr.R.K.Badal : Indo-Anglian Literature (Prakash publications,Bareilly
5. Dr.M.K. Naik, Echo and Voice in Indian Poetry in English, Journal of The Karnataka University (Humanities) 1969, P.108
7. K.R.S. Iyengar: Indian writing in English (New Delhi: SterlingPublications Pvt. Ltd; 1962, Pg.84


15. The Times Literary Supplement, July 8, 1944.


23. Sarojini Naidu, “Suttee” from the Sceptred Flute, p.18

24. Toru Dutt “Yama” from “Her Ancient Ballads and Legends of
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

30. Sarojini Naidu, “To a Buddha Seated on A Lotus” from The Sceptred Flute, p.61