CHAPTER -FIVE

**Theme of Love, Life and Death**

Love is the light and sunshine of life. No wonder, the theme of love figures most prominently in almost all the literary genres of all the languages. In poetry, particularly lyrical poetry, it acquires greater veracity and significance, being the genuine expression of the poet's profound emotions. Though there are many male poets who have written very rich love poetry, the poems of love by women acquire a special significance because as Byron wrote:

> Man's love is of man's life a thing apart,  
> 'Tis woman's whole-existence.

*(Don Juan I. Cxciv)*

The love poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Emily Dickinson is not only deeply touching but also imbued with feminine point of view, which makes it specially significant.

Love is the dominant theme of Sarojini Naidu's poetry. There are a sizeable number of poems in *The Sceptred Flute* and *The Feather of the Dawn*, dealing with the theme of love in its varying moods and aspects. Prof. Rameshwar Gupta has correctly pointed out:
Sarojini's love poetry traverses Love's almost whole expanse—'the fifty different sharps and flats of this ecstasy and pain'; except that we may not find the neo-modernist's naked sex and the Freudian subtle anatomization. There may be little of intellectual companionship too. Sensuousness, of course, is there, but not the 'shameless sex'; subtleties of love are there, but not the Freudian mode; and company is there but it involves constant mutual sacrifice; and always it is love from the woman's angle of vision.⁠¹

In the poem, "Immutable", Sarojini glorifies all pervading value of love in human life and nature:

Love O'er the rose-white alleys  
That flower on pale desert sands,  
Love through the rose-red valleys  
That burgeon in southern lands,  
In cities ashine with pleasure  
On the edge of a sea- girt clime,  
Or mountains whose dim caves treasure  
The temples of moon- crowned time,  
On errands of joy or duty,  
Wherever the ways you tread,  
A carpet of ageless beauty  
Is my heart for your feet outspread.

The poet then points out that whatever may be the attitude of people towards love, she will always lay her heart at its feet:

¹ Rameshwar Gupta, p. 64.
Love, whether Life betray you
And the malice of black-winged Fate
Shatter your dream and slay you
With talons of fear and hate,
Or whether yours the story
Of triumph and loveliest fame,
And the stars inscribe your glory
In lyric and legend of flame,
On errands of joy or duty,
Wherever the ways you tread,
A carpet of ageless beauty
Is my heart for your feet outspread.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p.34)

In the poem "The Festival of Memory", love does not remain a
mere abstract idea worthy of worship, but appears as a
reality to be experienced with its "bliss and agony":

What know the world's triune
Of gifts so strange as this
Twin-nurtured boon of Love,
Deep agony and bliss,
Fulfilment and farewell
Concentrated in a kiss?
No worship dost thou need,
O miracle divine!
Silence and song and tears
Delight and dreams are thine,
Who mak'st my burning soul
The sacrament and shrine.

(pp. 206-207)
Though Sarojini Naidu was a great feminist and indefatigable champion of the woman's emancipation, and equal privileges with men, yet when it came to love she stood for the traditional Oriental point of view of woman's complete self-abnegation and self-surrender before her beloved. The sense of complete merger with the personality of beloved is the highest ideal of love for her. She shares this conception of love deeply felt and realized in life with Indian classical and medieval poets as well as Persian poets. The emotions expressed by the lover "A Persian Love Song":

O Love! I know not why, when you are glad,
Gaily my glad heart leaps.
O Love! I know not why, when you are sad,
Wildly my sad heart weeps.

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

(p. 82)

are similar to those that Radha feels during her quest for Kanhya. Kanhya teases her and says:

Then didst thou mock me with thy tender malice,
Like nectar bubbling from my own heart's chalice.
Thou saidst- O faithless, one, self-slain with doubt,
Why seekest thou my loveliness without,
And askest wind or wave or flowering dell
The secret that within thyself doth dwell?

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

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

In "Song of Radha, The Milkmaid", Radha identifies herself with her beloved Krishna or Govinda to such an extent that she forgets everything except the name of her beloved. Even when she goes to the Mathura shrine to participate in the worship of the divine deity in it, she chants the name of Govinda to the anger of other worshippers:

But my heart was so lost in your worship, Beloved,
They were wroth when I cried without knowing
Govinda! Govinda!
Govinda! Govinda!

How brightly the river was the flowing!

(p. 113)

The poem, "The Flute-Player of Brindaban", describes how the lover Radha is unable to resist the call of the flute played by her beloved Krishna. She wanders about helplessly following the "poignant melody" of her beloved's matchless flute:
Why dist thou play thy matchless flute
   Neath the Kadamba tree,
And wound my idly dreaming heart
   with poignant melody,
So where thou goest I must go,
   My flute-player, with thee

(p. 161)

Unheading the dangers in her way, she yearns to drain the nectar of her beloved's flute:

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

(p. 162)

In "Unity", the soul of the lover attains such union with the soul of her beloved that all her thoughts, joys and sufferings are identical with those of her beloved. Even death cannot separate them:

   You permeate
   With such supreme, profound and intimate
   Knowledge, possession, power, my life's domain!
   O are you not
   The very text and title of my thought,
   The very pattern of my joy and pain?
   Shall even Death set free
   My soul from such intricate unity?

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 29)
Sarojini's love poetry embodies different moods and attitudes: ecstasy, eagerness, concern, expectation, hope, despair, pretended anger and irony. Sometimes the love shared by lovers is ecstatic, sometimes full of pain and joy, sometimes depressed, sometimes romantic or spiritual. The poet also presents it in different situations—the situation of conjugal felicity, or of separation, temporary or permanent, or of suspicion and jealousy. It is, however, always love in a state of eagerness, and intense desire of union.

"Indian Love-Song" is in the form of duet in which the beloved and the lover express their feelings of ecstasy and intense joy in their blissful union. The poem introduces an idyllic world of romance and dalliance, where the night-wind, like a lover, leans above his jasmine gardens and sirisha boughs; where on ripe branches of many-coloured fruits bright parrots cluster like vermillion flowers. The lover full of deep feelings of love, tells her beloved:

Like a serpent to the calling voices of flutes,
Glides my heart into thy fingers, O my Love!
Where the night-wind, like a lover, leans above
His jasmine-gardens and sirisha-bowers;
And on ripe boughs of many-coloured fruits bright parrots cluster like vermillion flowers.

As the love lies in the arms of her beloved, he says to her:
Like the perfume in the petals of a rose,  
Hides thy heart within my bosom, O my love!  
Like a garland, like a jewel, like a dove  
That hangs its nest in the asoka-tree  
Lie still, O Love, until the morning sows  
Her tents of gold on fields of ivory.

(p. 16)

Prof. A.A. Ansari praises this poem for its imagery and the sentiments of love expressed in it:

In "Indian Love-Song", the imagery in which the emotion of love shared by both the man and the woman is steeped has an Indian colour. Moreover, she (Sarojini) seems to be fully aware of the nice distinction in the shades of feeling as experienced by both owing to the fact of their having a separate psychophysical constitution. The similes used by the woman reflect abandon, concentration and continuity, while those employed by the man imply freedom, expansiveness and transience.¹

"An Indian Love Song", written to an Indian tune, is also in the form of a duet. It describes the passionate longing of a Muslim lover for her Hindu beloved. The lover yearns to see the "luminous face" of his beloved and implores her to come closer to him so that he may revive his soul by "the magical nectar" of kiss:

Faint grows my soul with thy tresses' perfume and the
song of thy anklets' caprice,
Revive me, I pray, with the magical nectar that dwells
in the flower of thy kiss.

(p. 68)

The beloved though eager to respond to his love finds
herself helpless by the taboos of her society and religion
and the memory of the cruel deeds of her lover's kinsmen
against people of her own faith:

The kissmen have broken our sacred altars and
slaughtered our sacred kine,
The feud of old faiths and the blood of old battles
sever thy people and mine

(p. 69)

In the third stanza the lover tries to remove the
hesitations of the beloved by telling her that love does not
know the differences of religion or care about the feuds and
follies of "comrade or kin". It has the power to "cancel the
ancient wrong" and bind people in the ties of brotherhood:

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

(p. 69)

"A Rajput Love Song" is in the form of two monologues
of the beloved and the lover, who are unable to endure
separation from each other even for a brief time. The
beloved, Parvati sitting at her lattice yearns for the return of her warrior lover with whom she has spent her night.

Come, O tender night, with your sweet, consoling darkness,
And bring me my Beloved to the shelter of my breast!

(p. 81)

The Rajput warrior lover, Amar Singh, is equally eager to return to his beloved after his day's adventure.

Haste, O wild-deer hours, to the meadows of the sunset!
Fly, wild stallion day, to the pastures of the west!

(p. 81)

He spurs on his stallion to hurry up and bear him to the fragrance of his "beloved's breast"

"Humayun to Zobeida" is another love poem written from the point of view of man. In it Humayun, the lover, entreats his beloved Zobeida with anxious eagerness to unveil her face and grant him "one tender moment's grace". He is unable to understand why she separates herself from him when they are one in heart and soul:

What war is this of Thee and Me? Give O'er the wanton strife,
You are the heart within my heart, the life within my life.

(p. 22)
Sarojini Naidu has written a large number of love poems from the point of view of a woman expressing her impassioned and selfless love for her beloved. Some of these embody her own authentic emotions of love. The four poems "Suttee", "A Love Song from North", "Vasant Panchami" and "Longing" - describe the sorrow and misery of women who have been separated from their beloveds by the vagaries of destiny or cruel hand of death. A Hindu woman who prepares herself to end her life along with her dead husband, expresses her deep affliction as she finds herself lonely and bereft of all happiness:

Tree of my life, Death's cruel foot
Hath crushed thee down to thy hidden root;
Nought shall restore thy glory fled ...
Shall the blossom live when the tree is dead.

(p. 18)

"A Love Song from the North" reveals the misery of a lover who has been forsaken by her beloved. She is now no more able to respond to the sweet music of birds or take part in the joys of the spring:

Tell me no more of thy love, papeeha,
Would'st thou recall to my heart, papeeha,
Dreams of delight that are gone,
When swift to my side came the feet of my lover
With stars of the dusk and the dawn?

(p. 75)
"Vasant Panchami" depicts the lament of the Hindu widow Lilavati who is barred from participating in the joyful festivities of the feast of spring festival:

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

(p. 91)

The poem, "Longing", also deals with the poignant sorrow of a widow who yearns for her lost husband and hopes to meet him after her death.

Love, beyond these lonely years
Lies there still a shrine of tears,
A dim sanctuary of sorrow
Where my grieving heart may rest,
And on some deep tide of slumber
Reach the comfort of your breast?

(p. 204)

In the poem, "Blind", the beloved who has been separated from her lover by the cruel hand of destiny, finds herself incapable of enjoying the beauty of nature and life around her. She feels as if she has lost the light of her eyes and become blind to all the joys of life:
I pray you keep my eyes
Till I return one day to Paradise.
Bereaved of you, Beloved, I am blind.
A broken petal drifting on the wind,
A slightless Shama with a broken wing,
Forlornly wandering.

The darkness of agony which has enveloped her life, cannot
be dispelled by any light till her lover redeems her eyes
by his presence:

No lambent rays retrieve
The brooding dark in which I grope and grieve
Exiled, remote from the miraculous grace,
The wise compassionate glory of your face.
When will you call me back to Paradise
Love, to redeem my eyes.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 27)

The poems, "Ecstasy", "Poet's Love Song", "Alone",
"To Love", "In a Latticed Balcony", "Caprice", "Destiny",
and "Ashoka Blossom", describe the different moods and
emotions of the lover seeking union with her beloved. In
"Ecstasy" the lover longs for the ecstasy of being
completely submerged in the kisses and embraces of her
beloved.

Cover mine eyes, O my Love!
Mine eyes that are weary of bliss
As of light that is poignant and strong,
O silence my lips with a kiss,
My lips that are weary of song!
Shelter my soul, O my Love!
    My soul is bent low with the pain
And the burden of love like the grace
    Of a flower that is smitten with rain:
O shelter my soul from thy face!

(p. 25)

In "The Poet's Love-Song", the lover describes her impatience and need for the company of her beloved in "the desolate hour of midnight", though "in noon-tide hours" she can afford to remain away from him because she has then her mad dreams to bind the world to her desire:

    But in desolate hour of midnight, when
    An ecstasy of starry silence sleeps
On the still mountains and the soundless deeps,
And my soul hungers for thy voice, O then,
    Love, like the magic of wild melodies,
Let thy soul answer mine across the seas.

(p. 36)

"Alone" deals with the loneliness of the lover who is unable to get tidings about the whereabouts of her beloved. She remains lost in day dreams or swings in the feelings of delight and pain or desire and hope as she waits for the arrival of her beloved:

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

(p. 7)
The lines are also redolent of mystic yearning of human soul for the divine soul.

The poem "To Love" describes the lover's complete surrender before her beloved. Whatever treasure she owns and prizes highly, she gifts to her beloved:

O Love! of all the treasures that I own,
What gift have I withheld before they throne?

(p. 83)

Another poem "The Gift" in The Feather of the Dawn, echoes similar feelings of the lover who sacrifices her all to please her beloved:

Have I not poured my life in proud libation
   Like pure vermilion wine,
And swung the censers of my adoration
   Sleepless before your shrine,
And of my days made a mellifluous paean
   To you who dwell apart
In the untrod, enchanted empyrean
Of my surrendered heart?

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 24)

In the first poem of Songs of My City, "In a Latticed Balcony", The lover desires to feed her beloved On goldenred honey and fruit" and please him "With the voice of the cymbal and lute". On his arrival she will garland his tresses "With pearls from the jessamine close" and perfume his fingers "With th' soul of the Keora and rose". She will adorn him with the hues of peacock and lute and woo him with her silent love:
How shall I deck thee, O Dearest?
   In hues of the peacock and dove.

How shall I woo thee, O Dearest?
   With the delicate silence of love.

"In A Persian Lute Song" also the lover is shown to have
made preparations with garlands and music to welcome her
beloved. She, however, waits for the display of her
preparations till the "golden hour" of the arrival of her
beloved" for whom the lutes are strung/For whom the feast
is set."

Who holds my trembling heart in thrall
Who is whose name I may not name,
His voice is like a battle-call,
His eyes a beacon flame.
His vital hands command and keep
The issues of my fate,
With power tenderer than sleep.

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 11)

While "Caprice" shows the hard-heartedness of the
lover towards the beloved, "Destiny" deals with his
selfishness and betrayal. The indifferent lover in the
former poem pays no heed to the softer sentiments of his
beloved:  
You held a wild flower in your finger-tips,
Idly you pressed it to indifferent lips,
Idly you tore its crimson leaves apart ...
Alas! it was my heart.
You held a wine-cup in your finger-tips,
Lightly you raised it to indifferent lips,
Lightly you drank and flung away the bowl ...
Alas! it was my soul.

The selfish lover in "Destiny", feels no qualms of conscience in betraying and deserting his beloved:

Love came, with his ivory flute,
His pleading eye, and his winged foot:  
"I am weary", he murmured;" 0 let me rest
In the sheltering joy of your fragrant breast."
At dawn he fled and he left no token ...
Who cares if a woman's heart be broken?

In "Ashoka Blossom", The lover longs for the magic touch of the beloved's foot in her breast to revive joyous fancies in her heart. In the first stanza the poet alludes to an ancient belief that if a lovely maiden's foot treads on the Ashoka root, its branches blossom into gleaming flowers. A similar magical revival will be possible in the case of the lover also if the beloved touches her breast with his foot:
If your glowing foot be prest
O'er the secrets of my breast,
Love, my dreaming heart would wake,
And its joyous fancies break
Into lyric bloom
To enchant the passing world
With melodious leaves unfurled
And their wild perfume.

(p. 202)

There are some very touching love lyrics in *The Feather of the Dawn*. The most prominent among these are: "The Amulet", "Blind", "Devotion", "Unity", "Entreaty", and "Conquest". In "The Amulet" The lover desires to gift her eyes to act as her beloved's amulet to save him from dangers and guide him:

Beloved take my eyes with you
Jewel-wise, and set
Their beauty on your heart to be
A living amulet.

They shall be your torch to slay
The dark with steadfast beams,
They shall be your stars to keep
Soft vigil O'er your dreams.

My eyes shall burn like beacon fires
To guard your battle camps,
And light your secret sanctuaries
With quenchless altar lamps.

(pp. 25-26)
The poem "Devotion" expresses the lover's spirit of complete abnegation and self-sacrifice for the service of her beloved. She does not expect anything of her love from the beloved. She is content to serve and fulfil his will:

I ask thee no reward,
Content am I, O Love, Anointed Lord,
Unknown to thee to serve, confirm, fulfil,
Thy daily word and will.

My dreams unknown to thee
Are thy spread carpet and thy canopy,
To shield from life's inclement cold or heat
Thy forehead and thy feet.

(p. 28)

In "Entreaty" the lover implores her beloved not to revive in her once again, the flaming passions of love which she has overcome with great difficulty. She does not want her beloved to come near her again lest her weak will gives way and her "hungering heart" succumbs to his desire:

O Love, I tremble lest my will grow weak,
If your deep honey-breath caress my cheek.
How shall my sacrificial strength compete
Against a foe so deadly and so sweet?

Save me from the keen rapture of your touch,
My courage, Love cannot endure e'en such
Light pressure as the zephyrs' kiss that stirs
The dream of slumbrous moon-kissed nenuphars.
(p. 30)

She humbly begs of him to leave her alone:

Leave me, O Love, in God's compassionate name,
Ere Once again the old, blind, revening flame
Smite me and slay in a consuming sea
Of dread desire and bitter ecstasy.
(p. 30)

The poem "Conquest" depicts love as harbinger of
pain and distress in a person's life. God who grows
jealous of the poet because of her joy, laughter, dreams
and fame, breaks her pride and conquers her by making her
a victim of love:

Life gave me joy and song for dower,
Laughter and grace and shining fame
Hope like a forest tree in flower,
dreams with reverberant wings of flame.
God troubled in His high demain,
Sent you, O Love, from starry spheres
With quick and ardent gifts of pain,
To teach me tears, to teach me tears.

You took my chalice'd joy and spilt
Its honey in the sands of drouth,
stole from my song its silver lilt,
Smote lyric laughter on the mouth.
You took fame's beacon torch that threw
Worldwide the lustre of its beams,
Plucked bare the bouglis of hope and slew
My winged dreams, my minged dreams

(p. 32)
"The Temple: A Pilgrimage of Love", the last section of Sarojini Naidu's anthology of poems, The Broken Wing, is a series of twenty-four love poems. It is a trilogy whose three parts are entitled "The Gate of Delight", "The Path of Tears" and "The Sanctuary"; each part has eight poems. Thus there are twenty-four poems in all, which comprise twenty-four arches of the temple. Three parts of the poem - "The Gate of Delight", "The Path of Tears" and "The Sanctuary" - allude to the three parts of the temple according to classical Hindu architecture: the torana (entrance-way), the pradakshima-patha (circumambulatory passage-way) and the garbha- griha (inner sanctuary).

The sub-title "A Pilgrimage of Love" suggests the pilgrimage towards the temple of love. Love is the gate through which one can enter the temple - God's sanctuary. The poet is the pilgrim lover passing through the different gates of the temple or the stages of love, and ultimately reaching the sanctuary, the Divine. The epigraph of the poem:

My passion shall burn as the flame of Salvation.
The flower of my love shall become the ripe fruit of Devotion.
is from Rabindranath Tagore. Its idea is based on Vaishnavism which denies salvation through renunciation and lays stress on its attainment through love.

The poems of "The Temple" have aroused conflicting critical opinions. An Indian critic, Mr. R.G. Rajwade sees in the trilogy "more rhetoric than poetry ... more violence than strength."¹ Mr. Gawsworth, on the other hand, declares that the Temple is Sarojini Naidu's "greatest regulated success.... Apart from Mrs. Browning's Sonnets from the Portuguese, I know of no poetical sequence in English of such sustained passion addressed by a woman to a man."² One is, however, at a loss to say with certainty, if these poems are an authentic expression of the poet's personal emotions of love or her mystic vision of the Supreme Self. K.R.S. Iyengar has rightly pointed out: "What are we to make of this group of 24 lyrics? Is it the description of an imaginary situation, or is it - in some measure of least - the lacerating recordation of a personal experience?"³

1. Iyengar, p. 218.
2. Ibid., p. 219.
3. Ibid., p. 220.
Ram Ratan Bhatnagar discerns foreignness in the sentiments of love as expressed in the trilogy. He remarks:

The imagery in most of these poems is foreign to both English and Indian spirit of love. It is borrowed from Persian and Urdu poetry of which Sarojini knows a lot. There the beloved is stone-hearted. He is the slayer. The Urdu poet is reminded of the blood of the lover by the henna-coloured hands of the beloved. Sarojini puts the same thing in another image to give it a Hindu atmosphere but she is led away from the spirit of Hindu poetry where blood-thirst is not a characteristic of the beloved.¹

He refers to the poem, "Love Transcendent" of the section, "The Sanctuary", and asserts that it is based on the semitic conception of the Day of Judgement²:

When Time shall cease and the world be ended
And fate unravel the judgement scroll,
And God shall hear - by His Host attended -
   The secret legend of every soul,

And each shall pass to its place appointed
And yours to His immost paradise,
To sit encrowned 'midst the pearl-mounted,
   O my saint with the sinless eyes!

². Ibid., p. 21.
It appears that Sarojini Naidu being the poet of the cosmopolitan outlook freely gleaned her sheaves from distant lands and thus added a new colour to the already rich harvest of lovelore in India. Dr. D. Prasad has rightly observed:

It ("The Temple") shows a pleasant confluence of different cultures and conventions—Hindu, Buddhist, Sufi and Christian.... Though the Hindu atmosphere dominates, the ultimate vision of love is the outcome of the pleasant synthesis of different religions. Sarojini's achievement as a love poet does not lie in exhausting the resources of the Hindu tradition, but in invigorating them by thoughts and insights from other traditions with which she was quite familiar. The Temple thus stands as a true symbol of this union of faiths in her worship.¹

"The Gate of Delight", The first part of the trilogy The Temple, has eight poems—"The Offering", The Feast", "Ecstasy", "The Lute Song", "If you Call Me", "The Sins of Love", "The Desire of Love", and "The Vision of Love". Each poem has its own particular rhythm, stanza form and rhyme scheme, and its own particular mood. The general theme is love which is treated as the gate that leads to delight. All the poems are in the form of an address by the woman lover to her beloved, man. Her love

1. Dr. Prasad, p. 92.
is such as asks for no return. It is total self-surrender, a state of complete abandon. Her ego melts completely and she moves with her "heart's deathless passion" to win the heart of her beloved. She is content to wait in proved and lowly fashion to kiss the shadow of "Love's passing feet" as shown in the poem "The Offering":

But I have naught save my heart's deathless passion
That craves no recompense divinely sweet,
Content to wait in proud and lowly fashion,
And kiss the shadow of Love's passing feet.

(p. 211)

The image of 'camphor' and 'curds' being poured and proffered before "Love's bright and sacrificial flame", creates the devotional atmosphere of the 'offering' in the temple.

In "The Feast", the lover asks her beloved to bring no fragrant sandal to decorate her forehead with, or a scented lotus wreath to put round her neck, nor any pearl to wear on her breast. Dust touched by her beloved's feet, she would apply to her eyelids and head; on her breast she would bear his foot-prints alone; and in her heart she would carry but his sorrows and secrets. Such would be her feast of worship. She desires nothing more:
Bring no fragrant sandal-paste,
Let me gather, Love, instead
The entranced and flowering dust
You have honoured with your tread
For mine eyelids and mine head.

Bring no scented lotus-wreath
Moon-awakened, dew-caressed;
Love, thro' memory's age-long dream
Sweeter shall my wild heart rest
With your foot-prints on my breast.

(pp. 211-212)

In "Ecstasy", The lover pays no head to the beauty, fragrance and melodious music scattered by spring all around her because she has been roused to ecstasy by the nectar of her beloved's breath and the sweet music of her beloved's touch:

Let spring unbind upon the breeze tresses of rich perfume
To lure the purple honey-bees to their enchanted death
But sweeter madness drives my soul to swift and sweeter doom
For I have drunk the deep, delicious nectar of your breath!

(pp. 212-213)
"In The Lute Song", The lover tells his beloved that he should not need any burnished mirror to reflect the glory and grace of his face, her eyes would do it; her own song, rather than ivory lutes, would sing of his valour; and her heart will serve as pavilion, pillow and foot-cloth for his feet to rest on:

Why need you pavilions and pillows of silk,
Soft foot-cloths of azure, O Sweet?
My heart be your tent and your pillow of rest,
My heart be your tend and your pillow of rest,
And a place of repose for your feet!

(pp. 213-214)

In "If you Call Me", The proud lover simply waits for the call from his beloved to reach him at the swiftest speed without caring for any hazards on the way:

If you call me, I will come
Swifter than desire,
Swifter than the lighting's feet
Shod with plumes of fire,
Life's dark tides may roll between
Or Death's deep chasms divide-
If you call me I will come
Fearless what betide.

(p. 214)
In the poem, "The Sins of Love", The woman lover begs the pardon of her beloved though her only sin is that her eyes tried to gaze on his face, her hands tried to clasp him, her mouth tried to ravish his lips and her heart tried to lure his love:

Forgive me the sin of my hands...
Perchance they were bold overmuch
In their tremulous longing to touch
Your beautiful flesh, to caress,
To clasp you, O Love, and to bless
With gifts as uncounted as sands-
O pardon the sin of my hands!

(p. 215)

In "The Desire of Love", The lover shows her preparedness to make any kind of sacrifice to provide her beloved strength, freedom, immortality and Godhood. "The Vision of Love" shows how being overpowered by her profound love for her beloved, the lover loses all knowledge except of her beloved:

O Love! my foolish heart and eyes
Have lost all knowledge save of you,
And everywhere- in blowing skies
And flowering earth- I find anew
The changing glory of your face
The myriad symbols of your grace

(pp. 216-217)
She finds in her beloved the cause of all her joys and wores:

O poignant sword! O priceless crown,
O temple of my woe and bliss!
All pain is compassed by your frown.
All joy is centred in your kiss.
You are the substance of my breath
And you the mystic pang of death.

(p. 217)

The second section of the trilogy, "The Path of Tears", describes the progress of love from the gates of delight to the path of tears. The dominant note of all the eight poems of this section is of grief and suffering. The poems are entitled "The Sorrow of Love", "The Silence of Love", "The Menace of Love", "Love's Guerdon", "If You Were Dead", "Supplication", "The Slayer", and "The Secret". The lover is deeply afflicted by the estrangement from the beloved who in his pride turns indifferent to the heart-broken maiden. "The Sorrow of Love" shows that even when they come across each other by chance, the beloved to the great grief of the lover, turns his face away:

Why did you turn your face away?
Was it for grief or fear
Your strength would fail or your pride grow weak,
If you touched my hand, if you heard me speak,
After, a life-long year?

(p. 218)
The lover doubts if in spite of this indifference even death can set their suffering spirits free:

From the passionate bondage of Memory
Or the thrall of the old desire?

(p. 218)

In "The Silence of Love", though the lover is in miserable condition and languishes because of the beloved's enforced withdrawal from her, yet she does not want to beset his heart by the remembrance of their earlier love when she betowed upon him the whole joy of her flesh and treasure of her soul:

Give what you will... if aught be yours to give!
But tho' you are the breath by which I live
And all my days are a consuming pyre
Of unaccomplished longing and desire,
How shall my love beseech you or be set
Yours heart with sad remembrance and regret?

(p. 219)

In "The Menace of Love" the suffocating anguish of the lover bursts into a vindictive fury:

When youth and spring and passion shall betray you
And much your proud rebellion with defeat,
God knows, O Love, If I shall save or slay you
As you lie spent and broken at my feet!

(p. 220)
The "Love's Guerdon", the lover prefers the sufferings inflicted on her by the beloved to the praises showered on her by others:

You plucked my heart and broke it, O my love,
And bleeding, flung it down!...
Sweeter to die thus trodden of your feet,
Than reign apart upon an ivory seat
Crowned in a lonely rapture of renown.

(p. 221)

In the poem, "If You Were Dead", the lover tells his beloved that she will not weep if he dies because Death will give them an opportunity to unite again:

If you were dead I should not weep -
How sweetly would our hearts unite
In a dim, undivided sleep,
Locked in Death's deep and narrow might,
All anger fled, all sorrow past,
O Love, at last!

(p. 221)

In "Supplication", the afflicted lover does not supplicate her beloved to restore to her ecstasy, hopes, and dreams. She only supplicates him to:

Grant in the brief compassion of an hour
A gift of tears to save my stricken soul!

(p. 222)

In "The Slayer", the lover asks her beloved to confess before others that his garments are not wet with morning dew but:
"These be the death-drops from sad eyes I slew
With the quick torch of pain".

(p. 223)

In "The Secret", the lady-lover tells her beloved that those who bring their garlands and gifts to her, do not know that she had been dead to all such praises long ago:

How can they know I have been dead, Beloved,
These many mournful days.

(p. 223)

The irony is that he alone knows the tragic secret that she is dead:

For none save you may know the tragic secret
0 Love, that I am dead!

(p. 224)

The third section, "The Sanctuary", attempts to restore love's joy after a long spell of suffering, sacrifice and atonement. The poems of this section - "The Fear of Love", "The Illusion of Love", "The Worship of Love", "Love Triumphant", "Love Omnipotent", "Love Transcendent", "Invocation", and "Devotion" - burn with the fire of devotion. The lover grows emotionally mature to feel that love can transcend the present woes and suffering, hence the resentment is meaningless. Thus this section describes the culmination of the tragic drama of love. After traversing the path of tears the pilgrim reaches the "Sanctuary" of love.
In "The Fear of Love", the lover feels a secret fear lest her love be corrupted by desire, envy, praise or even prayer. As a Hindu devotee, she expresses the religious fear of pollution and in order to save her love from Time and Fate, builds up:

A secret, sealed, invulnerable shrine
To hide, you happy and inviolate,
From covetous Time and Fate.

(p. 225)

In "The Illusion of Love" Sarojini describes how love may spiritualise the soul which communes with Truth or divinity directly in consequence:

Beloved, you may be as all men say
    Only a transient spark
Of flickering flame set in a lamp of clay -
    I care not .... since you kindle all my dark
With immortal lustres of the day.
And as all men deem, dearest, you may be
    Only a common shell
Chance-winnowed by the sea winds from the sea
    I care not .... since you make most audible
The subtle murmurs of eternity.
And tho' you are, like men of mortal race,
    Only a hapless thing
That death may mar and destiny afface-
    I care not .... since unto my heart you bring
The very vision of God's dwelling place.

(p. 226)
In "The Worship of Love", the lover wishes to be one with her beloved even if she has to sacrifice herself.

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In "Love Triumphant", the lover desires to yield her beloved solace and succour, and to hush his anguish on her breast. She is confident that her steadfast love will shield her beloved from all dangers:

Should not my deep unchanging love atone
And shield you ....

"Love Omnipotent" describes love as a powerfully inspiring force. It is the fundamental principle of human life by which all progress is achieved. Its understanding implies to the lover the understanding of the secret of the living universe around her. In "Love Transcendent", the lover feels happy that though on the Day of Judgement when divine justice is dispensed, she will be doomed for her passionate sin, yet her beloved will be safe in God's mystic garden. She will, however, crave no pardon for committing the sin of passionately loving her "saint with the saintless eyes".
In the poem "Invocation", the lover feels convinced that love will raise her struggling spirit clean from the dust. Through unmurmuring endurance of the beloved's wrath and scorn her love will grow holy. Through sorrow her love will find deliverance from mortal pride. And so her soul will be redeemed and reborn and attain its deserved place by the side of the beloved:

So shall my yearning love at last
Grow sanctified,
Thro' sorrow find deliverance
From mortal pride,
So shall my soul, redeemed, re-born,
Attain thy side.

"Devotion" describes the beloved's complete merger with the beloved:

Why should my true lover falter or fear or rebel?
Love, I am your to lie in your beast like a flower....

The lover pilgrim at last reaches the sanctuary and the shrine and attains divine love by merging completely with the Cosmic Soul. The earthly relationship between the two lovers is raised to the level of God and man, and thus becomes an object of mystic contemplation. Love, in Sarojini's poetry, starts as a passionate urge which culminates in mystic union, after undergoing a series of trials.
Poems of Life and Death:

Though Sarojini Naidu was well-versed in the philosophy and spiritual wisdom of India, she did not treat in her poetry the problems of life and death from the point of view of a philosopher or metaphysician. The ultimate questions of life and death and immortality and soul and God do not work out in her poetry with the same metaphysical and symbolic tension as they do in Sri Aurobindo's or in Tagore's poetry. Her attitude to life and death is similar to that of a realistic who faces the change of life and death with courage and fortitude and love's life in spite of all its pains, sufferings, despair, and disillusionment. She sums up her attitude to life and death in her poem, "The Soul's Prayer". The poem describes how the poet in her innocent pride asks God, the creator of human life, to reveal to her His "inmost laws of life and death":

In childhood's pride I said to Thee:
"O Thou, who mad'st me of Thy brea,
Speak, Master, and reveal to me
Thine inmost laws of life and death.

"Give me to drink each joy and pain
Which thine eternal hand can mete,
For my insatiate soul would drain
Earth's utmost bitter, utmost sweet.
"Spare me no bliss, no pang of strife,
Withhold no gift or grief I crave,
The intricate lore of love and life
And mystic knowledge of the grave."

(p. 123)

God grants her prayer and tells her:

"Thou shalt drink deep of joy and fame,
And love shall burn thee like a fire,
And pain shall cleanse thee like a flame,
To purge the dross from thy desire.

"So shall thy chastened spirit yearn
To seek from its blind prayer release,
And spent and pardoned, sue to learn
The simple secret of My peace.

"I, bending from my sevenfold heit
Will teach thee of My quickening grace,
Life is a prism of My light,
And Death the shadow of My face".

(pp. 123-124)

Sarojini Naidu is very much attached to life and very much involved in it, eager ever to taste it through all her senses. She wants to face all its joys and sufferings as they come in her life. Though a poet she does not want to escape to the ivory tower of dreams but to involve herself in the struggle of life with all its perils and fears. In the poem "In the Forest", she asks her heart to bid farewell to its treasured dreams and come out to face the strife of life with courage.
But soon we must rise, O my heart, we must wander again
Into the war of the world and the strife of the throng:
Let us rise, O my heart, let us gather the dreams that remain,
We will conquer the sorrow of life with the sorrow of song.

(pp. 32-33)

In the poem, "Life", Sarojini expresses her deep concern about children. She forewarns them saying that life is not merely a stalactite of dreams or a carnival of joys; it is also full of burning passions and sufferings and strifes:

Children, ye have not lived, to you it seems
Life is a lovely stalactite of dreams,
Or carmival of careless joys that leap
About your hearts like billows on the deep
In flames of amber and of amethyst.

Till ye have battled with great grief and fears,
And borne the conflict of dream-shattering years,
Wounded with fierce desire and worn with strife,
Children, ye have not lived: for this is life.

(p. 35)

In the poem "To the God of Pain", the poet describes how she has undergone great suffering and strife in her worship of the "God of Pain":

[Further text not provided]
Unwilling priestess in thy cruel fame,
Long hast thou held me, pitiless god of Pain
Bound to thy worship by reluctant vows,
My tired breast girt with suffering, and my brows
Anointed with perpetual weariness.
Long have I borne thy service, through the stress
Of rigorous years, sad days and slumberless nights,
Performing thine inexovable rites.

(p. 37)

In "Three Sorrows", the poet describes sorrows of life as both terrible and dear:
And thou, sweet sorrow, terrible and dear,
Most bitter and divine?
O I will carve thee with deep agony
Into a deathless shrine!

(p. 176)

In "To A Buddha Seated On A Lotus", the poet contrasts the serenity and mystic rapture on the face of Buddha seated on a lotus with the miseries and despair of human life:

The mind of change for ever blows
Across the tumult of our way,
To-morrow's unborn griefs depose
The sorrows of our yesterday.
Dream yields to dreams, strife follows strife,
And Deth unweaves the webs of life.

For us the travail and the heat,
The broken secrets of our pride,
The strenuous lessons of defeat,  
The flower deferred, the fruit denied;  
But not the peace, supremely won,  
Lord Buddha, of thy of lotus-throne.  
(p. 61)

The poems, "Farewell" and "The Challenge", describe the poet's feelings of despair in life. In "Farewell" she expresses her helplessness that she is unable to enthuse youths by her songs because her heart is full of despair:

O Golden lamps of hope how shall I bring you  
Life's kindling flame from a forsaken fire?  
O glowing hearts of youth, how shall I sing you  
Life's glorious message from a broken lyre?  
(p. 163)

In the poem "The Challenge", The poet tells the sea, the earth and the sky that they in spite of their precious gifts cannot bring solace to her pain and despair:

Sweet Earth, though in thy lustrous bowl doth shine  
The limpid flame of hope's perennial wine,  
Thou art too narrow and too frail to bear  
The harsh, wild vintage of my heart's despair.  
(p. 164)

In the symbolic poem, "The Pearl", Sarojini emphasizes that a man who remains confined to his sorrow, private and selfish interests and refuses to identify himself with wider and richer world of human brotherhood, is like a pearl which hides its brilliance till it comes out of its shell:
Or wilt thou self-denied
    Forgo such sweet and sacramental ties
    As weld Love's delicate bonds of ecstasy,
And in a barren pride
    Of cold, unfruitful freedom that belies
    The inmost secret of fine liberty
    Return unblest into the primal sea?

(p. 175)

In "Silver Tears", The poet considers tears of sorrow to be the best gift life has given to her:

    Many tributes Life hath brought me,
    Delicate and touched with splendour...
    Of all gracious gifts and tender
    She hath given no gift diviner
    Than your silver tears of Sorrow
    For my wild heart's suffering.

(p. 199)

The poems, "Transcience", "A Challenge to Fate", "In Salutation to the Eternal Peace", and "Invincible", Sarojini Naidu expresses her love for life in spite of all its pain and despair. The poems are full of robust optimism. In "Transcience", The poet points out that one should not grieve though "Life be full of sorrow" for sufferings and griefs are transitory and pass away with time:
Nay, do not pine, tho' life be dark with trouble,
Time will not pause or tarry on his way;
To-day that seems so long, so strange, so bitter,
Will woon be some forgotten yesterday.

"A Challenge to Fate", reveals the poet's indomitable courage to face all the blows delivered by fate in her life. She declares emphatically that all attempts made by fate to wreck her life, will prove futile:

Why will you vex me with your futile conflict,
Why will you strive with me, O foolish Fate?
You cannot break me with your poignant envy,
You cannot slay me with your subtle hate:
For all the cruel folly you pursue
I will not cry with suppliant hands to you.

Fate may deprive her of her power to see or hear, or snatch away her speech and "power of articulate words", and inflict physical afflictions on her, she will not lose her courage. Her triumphant mind will not submit before Fate's cruel buffets. She will forget her personal sorrow by identifying herself with universal joy:

Tho' you deny the hope of all my being,
Betray my love, my sweetest dream destroy,
Yet will I slake my individual sorrow
At the deep source of universal joy....
O Fate, in vain you hanker to control
My frail, serene, indomitable soul.

The poem "In Salutation to the Eternal Peace" is rich in mystic thought. Being drunk with the "inmost wine of living ecstasy" and "intimate essence of eternity", the poet pays no heed to the fears and pains of life:

Men say the world is full of fear and hate,
And all life's ripening harvest-fields await
The restless sickle of relentless fate.

But, I, sweet Soul, rejoice that I was born,
When from the climbing terraces of corn
I watch the golden orioles of Thy worn.

What care I for the world's desire and pride,
Who know the silver wings that gleam and glide,
The homing pigeons of Thine eventide?

What care I for the world's loud weariness,
Who dream in twilight granaries Thou dost bless?
With delicate sheaves of mellow silences.

"Invincible" reveals the poet's faith in changing all the blows of fate in her life to her advantage through her hope and love. Notwithstanding all the tortures inflicted by fate in her life, she will remain invincible:
O Fate, betwixt the grinding-stones of Pain,
Tho' you have crushed my life like broken grain,
Lo! I will leaven it with my tears and knead
The bread of Hope to comfort and to feed
The myriad hearts for whom no harvests blow
    Save bitter herbs of woe.

Tho' in the flame of Sorrow you have thrust
My flowering soul and trod it into dust,
Behold, it doth reblossom like a grove
To shelter under quickening boughs of Love
The myriad souls for whom no garden bloom
    Save bitter buds of doom.

(p. 174)

Since Sarojini Naidu believes that both life and
death weave our pattern of existence, she is not afraid of
death. It is the oneness of life and death that gives her
strength to look straight in the eyes of death. Death
holds no terror for her because she looks for "peace in
the hands of Death".

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

    ("Medley", p. 138)

In the poem, "To the God of Pain", she welcomes
death because she has attained fulfilment in her life and
gifted all her treasure to the god of Pain:
I have no more to give, all that was mine
Is laid, a unrested tribute, at thy shrine;
Let me depart, for my whole soul is wrung,
And all my cheerless orisons are sung;
Let me depart, with faint limbs let me creep
To some dim shade and sink me down to sleep.

(p. 37)

The poem "Welcome" also expresses the poet's desire for death because after it she will get "Vision of Love Immortal".

Welcome, O tranquil Death!
Thou hast no ills to grieve me,
Who com'st with freedom's breath
From sorrow to retrieve me.

(p. 205)

Being a realist Sarojini knows that death is inevitable. All her efforts to save her beloved from pain and death by the power of her profound love, have proved futile. In her dream she feels that she has "conquered Death by Love, like Savitri", but when she wakes she finds her love was vain:

When I awake, alas, my love was vain
E'en to annual one throe of destined pain,
Or by one heart-beat to prolong thy breath;
O Love, alas, that love could not assuage
The burden of thy human heritage,
Or save thee from the swift decrees of Death.

("Love and Death", p. 72)
In the poems, "The Poet to Death" and "Death and life", Sarojini though aware of Death's all-conquering power, wants it to wait till she has completed her mission in life. In "The Poet to Death", she remarks:

Tarry a while, O Death, I cannot die
While yet my sweet life burgeons with its spring,
Fair is my youth, and rich the echoing boughs
Where dhadikulas sing.

Tarry a while, O Death, I cannot die
With all my blossoming hopes unharvested,
My joys ungarnered, all my songs unsung,
And all my tears unshed.

(p. 49)

She is not prepared to die till all her "human hungers are fulfilled":

Tarry a while, till I am satisfied
Of Love and grief, of earth and altering sky;
Till all my human hungers are fulfilled,
O Death, I cannot die!

(p. 49)

In the poem, "Death and Life", Sarojini describes how seeing her afflicted with unbearable pain, Death whispers tenderly in her ears:

"Poor child, shall I redeem thee from thy pain,
Renew thy joy and issue thee again
Inclosed in some renascent ecstasy..."
She, however, spurns the offer of Death and tells:

I said, "Thy gentle pity shames mine ear,
O Death, am I so purposeless a thing,
Shall my soul falter or my body fear
Its poignant hour of bitter suffering,
Or fail ere I achieve my destined deed
Of song or service for my country's need?"

(p. 119)

Sarojini is not awed by death but wishes to embrace it willingly only when her mission of life is fulfilled. Her poetry reveals a great enthusiasm and healthy desire to enjoy the very process of life. She is sensitively alive to life, its colour and beauty, its joys and sorrows. She turns to life with almost the same enthusiasm and excitement as she turns to the beautiful world of nature. Life unfolds for her diverse miracles to be celebrated and sung, enjoyed and experienced.