Sarojini Naidu had a great passion for poetry but her greatest love was her motherland. She described it once as her "love-affair with India". Emphasizing her passion for poetry she prays to God in the poem "Guerdon", to grant her the rapture of love, the rapture of truth and the rapture of Song:

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

(PP. 140-41)

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

Sarojini is keen to use her supreme gift for natural song for the service of her motherland and the good of the mankind. She, like her "Wandering Singers", wants to move around her country singing ceaselessly the eternal song of fundamental unity and universal brotherhood. She considers her own role and function as a poet, from the higher attitudes of universal feelings and commitment. The exhortation of her mentor Gopal Krishna Gokhale who asked her to consecrate her life and her talent, her song and her speech, her thought and her dream to the motherland, continues to echo in her ears: "O poet, see visions from the hilltops and spread abroad the message of hope to the toilers in the valleys."¹ Sarojini made a confession of her view and vision as a poet in her memorable address to the Madras Provincial conference held at Conjeevaram in May 1918:

---

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

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

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

I say that it is not your pride that you are a Madrasee, that it is not your pride that you are a Brahmin, that it is not your pride you belong to South of India, that it is not your pride you are a Hindu, but that is your pride that you are an Indian. I was born in Bengal. I belong to the Madras Presidency. In a Mahomedan city I was brought up and married, and there I live; still I am neither a Bengalee, nor Madrassee, nor Hyderabadee, but I am an Indian, not a Hindu, not a Brahmin but an Indian to whom my Mahomedan brother is as dear and as precious as my Hindu brother.¹

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

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

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

O'er Italia's sunny plains
All aglow with rosy flowers
I wander now 'mid fallen fanes
And now amid the myrtle bowers.

But wheresoever I may roam
I long for thee, my dear dear home.
A year later she expressed her admiration for Sir Edwin Arnold who had portrayed the picture of India in his English poems:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(p. 150)

¹ Quoted by Vishwanath S. Hararvane, Sarojini Naidu (New Delhi: Orient Longmans Limited, 1960), p. 75
Sarojini has an unflinching faith in the indomitable soul of India, endowed with "a perennial vitality and an unmeasured power of ultimate self-renewal, able and ready after each dark epoch of political tribulation to fulfil the prophecy of her own Sri Krishṇa, and 'be born again and again for the establishing of the national righteousness'." 1 Occasionally she becomes prophetic in her pronouncements: "The Dawn of her deliverance is at hand. For imperishable are the prophecies of time and eternal the pledges of the Soul." 2

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(p. 58)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Our shrines, our sacred streams, our sumptuous art,
Old hills that scale the sky's unaging dome,
Recalled some long lost rapture to your heart,
Some far-off memory of your spirit's home,
(p. 70)

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

Stay the relentless anger of thy hand
Thine awful war, O Lord, no longer wage
Against our hopeless hearts and heritage,
Nor rend with ravaging doom our ancient land.
Cease lest thy maddened creatures turn from thee
And in the midnight of deep wild tavail
Mock thee with mouths of bitter blasphemy.
(The Feather of the Dawn, p.5)

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

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

Is there aught you need that my hands withhold,  
Rich gifts of raiment or grain or gold?  
Lo! I have flung to the East and West  
Priceless treasures torn from my breast,  
And yielded the sons of my stricken womb  
To the drum-beats of duty, the sabres of doom.  
(p. 146)

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

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

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

(p. 146)

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

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

(p. 147)

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

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

   Fain would I dwell where your wild doves wander,
   Your palm-woods burgeon and sea-winds sing ...
   Lulled by the time of the rhythmic waters,
   In your island of Bliss it is always spring
   (p. 121)

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

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

   Into the strife of the throng and the tumult,
   The war of sweet Love against folly and wrong;
   Where brave hearts carry the sword of battle,
   'Tis mine to carry the banner of song.
   (p. 121)
She wants to serve her motherland with her songs conveying message of love and faith to the depressed hearts and distressed people:

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

(An Anthem of Love"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(p. 129)

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

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

( pp. 129-130)

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

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

(p. 125)

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

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

The poet whose heart burns with patriotic fervour answers:

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

(p.145)

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

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

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

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

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

Are we not thine, O Belov'd, to inherit 
The manifold pride and power of thy spirit? 
N'er shall we fail thee, forsake thee or falter, 
Whose hearts are thy home and thy shield and thine altar 
Lo! we would thrill the high stars with the story, 
And set thee again in the forefront of glory. 
(p. 180)

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

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

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

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

**All Creeds:** Shall not our dauntless devotion avail thee? 
Hearken! O queen and O goddess, .
We hail thee! (pp. 180-181)
The poem, "The Call to Evening Prayer", reveals Sarojini's faith in the emotional oneness behind all religions. It is a powerful poem on the theme of unity and brotherhood. It describes the devotees of the four different religions of India - Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism and Hinduism - chanting their prayers at the evening time. The prayers of these devotees convey the essence of their creed and faith separately but taken collectively they reflect the religious ethos of whole India, where all religions are bound by the bonds of love and devotion to God.

The first stanza captures the Muslim religious spirit at the time of evening prayer, when the resounding calls of "Allah ho Akbar! Allah ho Akbar!

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

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

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

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

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

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

(p. 136)

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

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

(p. 68)

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

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

(pp. 68-69)

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

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

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

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

(p. 77)

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

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

(p. 78)

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

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

advised her, "Consecrate your life, your thought, your song, your charm to the Motherland". Before his death he again told her: "I do not think we shall meet again. If you live, remember your life is dedicated to the service of the country. My work is done". In a letter of homage in Gokhale written on November 28, 1917, she described him "a beacon light, and a symbol of national service." In her "Reminiscences of Gokhale" she wrote: "And of him surely, in another, age, and in another land were the prophetic words uttered 'Greater love bath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends'."

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

---

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

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

    (p. 159)

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

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

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

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 1)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(pp. 1-2)

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

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

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

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

(p. 167)

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

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

(p. 167)

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

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

(p. 167)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 3)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(p. 160)

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

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

---

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

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

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

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

(The Feather of the Dawn, p. 31)

---


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

Sarojini had developed cosmopolitan outlook on life from her very childhood owing to the influence of her great father who believed in universal brotherhood. Referring to her father she said in one of her speeches: "It is because that my beloved father said, 'Be not limited even to the Indians but let it be your pride that you are a citizen of the world', that I should love my country". Exhorting young students she further added in that speech:

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

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

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

(p. 4)

1. Speeches and Writings, p. 8.
2. Ibid.