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## **Sarojini Naidu as a Nature Poet**

**N. Murali, M.A., M.Phil., B.Ed.**

**G. Natanam, M.A., Ph.D.**

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### INTRODUCTION

Poetry is a pleasure-giving medium. This medium is handled by different poets in the world. Most of the poets in India present their poetry in their mother tongue only. Those who present poetry in languages other their own have not succeeded so well as Sarojini Naidu.

There are not many in India who have written poetry in English. Among them, Sarojini Naidu stands first. Her poems are praised not only in India, but all over the world.

Though she has written poems on religion, country, women's freedom, etc., her poems on nature occupy the first place in her poetry. Even in sorrow, her nature poems glow with a touch

of her suffering. To strengthen this idea, a detailed discussion is undertaken in this work. It contains six chapters as detailed below.

- Chapter 1 It gives an introduction to poetry, types of poetry, its divisions and a brief history of Sarojini Naidu's life.
- Chapter 2 Life of Sarojini Naidu
- Chapter 3\_ In this chapter, Sarojini Naidu's role in Indian English Poetry is discussed.
- Chapter 4 This chapter discusses the variety of Sarojini's poems.
- Chapter 5 In this chapter, some of her nature poems are discussed.
- Chapter 6 Summing up.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

Poetry is a medium through which the poets express their emotion and thought with a musical tone by words. In the words of Wordsworth, poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings recollected into tranquillity.

Poetry treats of two kinds of subject matter – that which is supplied by the external objects, such as deeds, events and the things we see around us and that which is supplied by the poet's own thoughts and feelings. The former gives rise to objective poetry, the latter to subjective. In the first, it is about what he has seen or heard; in the latter he brings to bear his own reflections upon what he has seen or heard. The same subject may be treated either way. If the poet views it from without, confining himself that is to say, merely to its externals, his treatment is objective; if he views it from within, giving expression, that is to say, to the thoughts and feelings it arouses in his mind, his treatment is subjective. Simply, it can be said in yet another fashion, i.e., objective poetry is impersonal and subjective poetry personal. In the former, the focus of attention is something that is outward – a praiseworthy act, a thrilling occurrence, a beautiful sight; in the latter, it is the poet himself; whatever the subject may be, his mind is centered round his own thoughts and feelings.

Though, theoretically, subjective and objective poetry belong to two distinct categories, in actual practice, it is almost impossible to separate the one from the other.

Poetry is divided into several types. The major types are given below;

1. The Lyric
2. The Ode

3. The Sonnet
4. The Elegy
5. The Idyll
6. The Epic
7. The Ballad
8. The Satire

Poetry is the effective medium to express the ideas or feelings, which are experienced by an individual, through whom the same experience is aroused in the readers. It is common to all people in the world.

Regarding English poetry, since the medium, i.e. language, is very flexible, all the literary works of certain writers/poets of the world are presented in the English Language. It may also be due to the impact of the English rule all over the world for a certain period.

### **Indian English Writing**

Besides the railway system, the civil service, the game of cricket, IT development and a host of other distinctive aspects of Indian life today, the British bestowed upon us the aspiration of creating literature in the English language. The other British-bestowed elements acquired Indian reincarnations without much effort or delay; but creative writing in English by Indians had to struggle long and hard to obtain a separate identity.

At the beginning, the term Anglo-Indian literature subsumed the early attempts by the Indians to write poetry, drama or fiction in the English language. Edward Farley Oaten's prize-winning essay '1907' at Cambridge did not actually discuss any Indian writing, but the appendix provided at the end of his book lists eleven Indians among the authors of Anglo-Indian works.

In the opening chapter of his massive Indian Writing in English, K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar has given an account of how the Indian writer of English was weaned terminologically away from the 'Anglo-Indian' fold to the 'Indo-Anglican' flock with an involuntary but happily brief sojourn in an 'Indo-Anglican' realm.

Today, the term 'Indo-Anglican' is more or less accepted without dispute as descriptive of original literary creation in the English language by the Indians. Its status in relation to other literatures in the Indian languages continues to be as undefined as the status of English itself in relation to other Indian languages. But, R.K.Narayan's novel, The Guide (1958) has been made into an expensive and popular Hindi film, and this may well be taken as one kind of public approval of Indian writing in English.

The establishment of Indo-Anglican literature as a valid and distinct form of Indian literary writing has not, however, solved the epistemological problem of such Indian writing as is available in translation in English. Oaten's 1907 list includes Michael M.Dutta's Is This Called Civilization? as an Anglo-Indian Work' without conceding that it is a translation of the original Bengali play Ekeyi ki beley savyata?

As recently as 1960, Dorothy M. Spencer's introductory essay to her annotated bibliography, Indian Fiction in English makes no serious distinction between Indian novels written in English and Indian language novels translated into English. V.K.Gokak, in concluding his powerful plea in favour of recognizing what he calls 'Indo-English literature', says,

"I cannot help thinking that one of the befitting ways of honouring the message and significance of Gitanjali is to create a body of Indo-English writing, which will wear Gitanjali as a jewel in its crown. I cannot help thinking that the area so

persuasively opened by Prof.Gokak needs to be sharply defined and delimited in order to forestall any boundary disputes” (1972,p.22)

Those who have read and invariably derived benefit from Gokak’s pioneering book, English in India, will have noticed that he has devoted a separate chapter to Indian Literature in Translation wherein he has argued that scholarly translations into English from classical Indian literary works – not only in Sanskrit, but in the older regional languages as well – should constitute valid post graduate work towards the doctoral degree in the department of English or of Comparative Literature in Indian Universities.

The historical evaluation of Indian writing in English is also bound to deal with the patterns of continuity and differentiation which have marked out the various phases and movements in its complex and often overlapping, growth. Literary history does not flow so smoothly, for the progression of creative concentrations and transitions reveals the operation of a multiple causation, of which the individual personality or achievement is but one, if readily discernible factor.

The Carlylean approach to literary history as primarily a collective literary biography has no doubt done its necessary service in the cause of identifying and establishing an essential frame of reference for the appreciation of Indo-Anglican literature as a coherent, self-consistent and autonomous tradition; but it must now give room for a more comprehensive and qualitative historiographical and comparativistic strategy. Indian writing in English, produced over the last hundred odd years, does not reveal a homogenous continuity, but rather a complex cyclical continuity.

In its initial stages, one witnesses a self-conscious approximation of the ‘singing strength’ to the ferment of ideas and the corresponding upheaval of talents during the so-called Indian Renaissance. The Indian mind was at this time concentrating on a patriotic rediscovery of a national identity and a national destiny. The first writers like the writers of colonial and revolutionary America, or the expatriates of Colonial Australia, had used the gift of the English language of a direct descriptive statement of the physical discovery of a newly accessible experience. They were engrossed in the immediacies of political argument, social rethinking, and dissemination of modern enlightenment and revaluation of the Indian Spirit. Their rhetorical simplicity and forthrightness were more conducive to effective debate rather than to an imaginative discourse.

The Indo-Anglican pen was employed in the battle of wits and in the collision of arguments and perspectives with a simple urgency commensurate with the new-won power of an expressive resource. The process has continued, with the result that it overlaps the next successive phases.

From Vivekananda to Aurobindo, from Raja Ram Mohan Roy to Tagore, from Tilak, Gokhale, and Gandhi to Nehru, Radhakrishnan and Rajaji, the Indian writers of English Prose have been primarily concerned with the exploration of thought on a level of stylistic empiricism rather than with the pursuit of vision on the level of creative imagination. Nevertheless, the polemical effectiveness and the empirical vitalism of their writing have tempered and refined the linguistic idiom itself. In a sense, their writings represent a substantial frame work of preparation for the aesthetic and creative transformation of our interest in the English language.



The next distinctive, chronological phase in the growth of the Indo-Anglican literature reveals our writers aiming at a consciously enhanced and heightened discourse, and their literary production reflects the whole process of absorption, assimilation, synthesis and creative tempering of the language.

At the same time, Indian writing in English enters the mainstream of modern Indian vernacular literatures, adumbrating, within the specific structures of its own distinctive myth, discourse and logos the same cyclicity of influences, movements, dimensions and extensions.

First, Romanticism appears in a variety of local habitations and their co-ordinate mutations. From Toru Dutt and Sarojini Naidu and Derozio to Armando Menezes, Bhushan and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, one finds the activation of the romantic impulse with its mixed vintage of idealism, mysticism, regionalism and nationalism.

With the fading away of the romantic impulse, the Indo-Anglican sensibility seems to have turned increasingly towards Realism and its ancillary modifications of Regionalism and Naturalism.

Further, it is considered that there has been Indian literary activity in English for the past 200 years. It began with the insistence of the reformist Rajaram Mohan Roy and other like-minded Indians that for India to take its rightful place among nations, a knowledge of education in English was considered essential. English literary activity took on a new aspect with the independence movement whose leaders and followers found in English the one language that united them.

Among the first poets were Henry Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghose and Michael Madhusudan Datta, all of whom wrote narrative verse. In the following generation, there was Toru Dutt, the

most important among the women poets in this genre. Carrying on this tradition was Sarojini Naidu, judged by many as the greatest of women poets; among her poetic collections may be mentioned The Golden Threshold (1905), The Bird of Time (1912) and The Broken Wing (1917). Best known of the Indian poets in English was the Bengali Rabindranath Tagore, who, whoever, wrote most of his verse first in Bengali, and then translated it into other languages including English. A very different figure from Tagore is Sri Aurobindo.

The independence movement gave a strong impetus to expository prose. Important contributions to this genre were Bal Gangadhar Tilak, who edited an English journal Maharatta, Lala Lajpat Rai, Kasturi Ranga Iyengar and T. Prakasam. Mahatma Gandhi, too, wrote widely in English and edited Young India and The Harijan. He also wrote the autobiography My Experiments with Truth (originally published in Gujarati, 1927-29), now an Indian classic. In this he was followed by Jawarhalal Nehru, whose Discovery of India is justly popular.

Prose fiction in English began in 1902 with the novel The Lake of Palms, by Romesh Chunder Dutt. The next important novelist is Mulk Raj Anand, who fulminated against class and cast distinction in a series of novels, The Coolie (1936), Untouchable (1935), Two Leaves and a Bud (1937) and The Big Heart (1945). Less fierce, though a better craftsman, is R.K.Narayan, who has published nine novels (as well as many short stories) among them The Guide (1958), The Man-Eater of Malgudi (1961) and The Vendor of Weets (1967) are famous; his work has a wider circle of readers outside India than within. Other Indian novelists in the English medium are Santha Rama Rao, Manohar Malgonkar, Kamala Markendeya and Khshwant Singh. The most popular is Raja Rao, whose novels Kanthapura (1938), The Cow of the Barricades (1947) and The Serpent and the Rope have attracted a wide audience.

## CHAPTER 2

### LIFE OF SAROJINI NAIDU

Of all the celebrated women of modern India, Mrs. Sarojini Devi Naidu's name is at the top. Not only that, her birthday is celebrated as 'Women's Day'. She was born on February 13, 1879 in Hyderabad. Her father, Dr. Aghornath Chattopadhyaya, was the founder of Nizam College of Hyderabad and a scientist. Her mother, Mrs. Varasundari was a Bengali poetess. Sarojini Devi inherited qualities from both her father and mother. Sarojini was a very bright and proud girl. Her father aspired for her to become a mathematician or scientist, but she loved poetry from a very early age.

When her father saw that she was more interested in poetry than mathematics or science, he decided to encourage her. With his support, she wrote the play "Maher Muneer" in the Persian language. Dr. Chattopadhyaya distributed some copies among his friends and sent one copy to the Nawab of Hyderabad. Reading a beautiful play written by a young girl, the Nizam was very impressed. The college gave her a scholarship to study abroad.

At the age of 16, she got admitted to King's College of England. There she met Dr. Govind Naidu from Southern India. After finishing her studies at the age of 19, she got married to him during the time when inter-caste marriages were not allowed. Her father was a progressive thinking person and he did not care what others said. Her marriage was a very happy one.

Sarojini was brought up in the liberal intellectual and imaginative milieu of her father's home at Hyderabad steeped in both Hindu and Muslim cultural traditions. Her vast reading in English Literature prompted the early fluttering of the Nightingale, Hindu mythology and Urdu and Persian folklore.

Sarojini wrote her first published poem The Song of a Dream as a college girl at Cambridge. Subsequently, she published a series of poems exhibiting a mixture of romanticism and idealism in the manner of Keats and Tennyson.

The early poems show a strain of melancholy born out of loneliness, a combination of fantasy and delight and an unbelievable command over words, phrases, rhythm and rhyme – traits which would be developed to perfection in her later poems.

The English critics, Edmund Gosse and Arthur Symons, were struck by the charm of Sarojini's poems. They noted her passionate delight in the beauty of the sounds and words. However, they advised her not to be skylarks and nightingales. She was told to stir the soul of the East to reveal the heart of India to the westerners. Edmund Gosse asked her to set her poems firmly among the mountains, the gardens, the temples, to introduce to us the vivid population of her own and unfamiliar province, in other words, to be a genuine Indian poet of the Deccan, not a clever machine-made imitator of English classics.

After her return to India, Sarojini decided to confine herself to Indian themes. The next twenty years of her life was dedicated to writing poetry, fulfilling an ardent mission of introducing the exotic oriental world of beauty and mystery to the English speaking world.

Though several of her themes are light and ephemeral, Sarojini's poetry is intensely Indian. She has poetised the sights and sounds, situations and experiences familiar to us.

Though she reached the peaks of excellence only rarely, for sheer variety of themes, range of feelings, colour, rhythm, fancy and conceit, metaphor and similies Sarojini remains unsurpassed even today.

In 1905, her first collection of poems, The Golden Threshold was published. Subsequently, she published The Bird of Time, The Broken Wings, The Magic Trees, The Wizard Mask and A Treasury of Poems.

Gandhi whom she addresses as a ‘Mystic Loyus’ in her famous sonnet, was to transform her from a romantic singer of life’s beautiful ephemerality to a determined and impassioned fighter for her country’s liberation. Ten years younger to the Mahatma and ten years elder to Jawaharlal Nehru, Sarojini entered the vortex of the freedom struggle immediately after the publication of her last collection of poems The Broken Wing in 1917.

During the next thirty-two years of her life, Sarojini did not write any substantial poetry; she gave place to the fiery patriotism. Sarojini met Gandhi for the first time in 1914 in England and was impressed by his simplicity and singleness of purpose. Later, she met Jawaharlal Nehru at the Lucknow Congress in 1916. In fact, her place in the national struggle for freedom was exactly equidistant from both. She was seen along with Gandhi in the thick of the protest against the visit of the Prince of Wales in November 1921. Later we could see her reading out the presidential address of Deshbandhu C. R. Das at the Ahmedabad session of the Indian National Congress at the Kenyan Indian Congress in 1923. She was elected President of the Indian National Congress at its Kanpur session in 1925 and she took over the Presidentship from Mahatma Gandhi himself.

In that session, in her message to the country she said, “Mine, as a woman, is a most domestic programme merely to restore to India her true position as the supreme mistress in her own home, the sole guardian of her own vast resources and the sole dispenser of her own hospitality” (1987, p.90). Her emphasis was always on communal harmony, removal of untouchability and emancipation of woman.

In all the phases of Gandhi’s movement Sarojini stood like a rock beside him and courted arrest and imprisonment several times. She attended the Round Table Conference along with Gandhi in 1931. Her flawless English, grasp of the subject, and oratorical power got interlinked with flashes of wit. She was applauded and admired wherever she spoke. In The Battle of Liberty she says that fear is the one unforgivable treachery and despair, the one unforgivable sin.

Sarojini was, by all accounts, a warm and gracious personality. She loved good food, attractive clothes and good company. Sarojini fully enjoyed the abundance of life in spite of her ill-health. She was like her master, an adherent to ahimsa, but was not a vegetarian.

What brought Sarojini and Gandhi together, apart from their patriotism, was their sense of humour. Both loved a joke especially at themselves. “Of all the Things”, wrote Sarojini to Arthur Symons, “that perhaps life or my temperament has given me as I prize the gift of laughter as beyond price” (1987, p.91). She used to enliven the high level parleys of Congress leaders including Gandhi and Nehru with her witty comments and humorous anecdotes. In fact, Sarojini was often described, as the licensed jester of the Mahatma’s little court. Gandhi on his part was indulgent and affectionate towards her and warm-heartedly tolerated all her jokes at his expense. She called him the ‘Mickey Mouse’ of Indian politics and remarked that “it costs a great deal of money to keep Gandhi living in poverty” (1987, p.91).

Though Gandhi always insisted that his visitors sit cross-legged on the floor, he made an exception in the case of Sarojini and always kept a stool ready at the Sevagram Ashram for her because she had difficulty sitting on the floor. Even Morarji Desai, that indomitable Gandhian, remembers Sarojini's 'kindness' when he first met her to invite her to speak in Wilson College, Mumbai, "Smt.Naidu talked to us" he writes, "in her beautiful sweet and inspiring style. We were tremendously inspired by her speech" (1987, p.91). Aldous Huxley who met her in the twenties thought of her as "a woman who combines in the most remarkable way great intellectual power with charm; sweetness and earnestness with humour" (1987, p.91).

Jawaharlal Nehru considered her as a humanist full of compassion. He called her an interpreter of India, "an ideal ambassador and the ideal link between the East and West" (1987, p.91).

Delivering the commemorative speech in the Constituent Assembly of India on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 1949, a after the death of Sarojini Naidu, Jawaharlal Nehru said that she was a person of great brilliance, vital and vivid. She had been a poet, political agitator and administrator. There is no better way to sum up the deeply human, volatile and nobler aspects of Sarojini Naidu than what Nehru said in his impassioned speech:

"So we think of her as a brightness, as a certain vitality and vividness, as poetry infused into life and activity, as something tremendously important and rich and yet something which in terms of the material world is rather insubstantial, difficult to grasp and difficult to describe, as something which

you can only feel, as you can feel beauty as you can feel the other higher things in life” (1987, p.92).

In 1935, Sri Aurobindo observed that Sarojini’s poetry was among the lasting things in English Literature and that she would take her place among the immortals. The prophecy has come true.

Today Sarojini is among the immortals not only because of her great services to the country as a soldier of freedom and a builder of modern India but also because of her enchanting poetry that has thrilled several generations.

Several admirers of her work were encouraging her in all her walks of life. One day she met Gopal Krishna Gokhale. He asked her to use her poetry and her beautiful words to rejuvenate the spirit of Independence in the hearts of villagers. He asked her to use her talent to free Mother India. Then, she totally directed her energy to the fight for freedom and she was roaming around the country like a general of army along with Mahatma Gandhi and pour enthusiasm among the hearts of the Indians. The independence of India became the heart and soul of her work.

Sarojini was responsible for awakening the women of India. She brought them out of the kitchen. She travelled from state to state, city after city and asked for the rights of the women. She re-established self-esteem within the whole of India. In 1925, she chaired the summit of Congress in Kanpur. In 1928, she came to the USA with the message of the non-violence movement from Gandhi. When in 1930, Gandhi was arrested for a protest, she took the helms of his movement. In 1931, she participated in the Round Table Summit, along with Gandhi and Pundit Malaviya. In 1942, she was arrested during the “Quit India” protest and stayed in jail for



21 months with Gandhi. After the independence she became the Governor of Uttar Pradesh. She was the first woman Governor.

She lives ever enshrined in the Oxford Book of Mystic Verse. Most of her volumes are sprinkled frequently with a deep philosophy of life and other worldly vision that carry her into the very heart of the great English mystic poets. Sarojini's language is crystal clear because she never strove to be obscure like the Georgian School of Poets. Her lyrics are sombre yet sonorous.

As a young woman, Sarojini Naidu defied the bonds of caste by her marriage. Small and vivid with luminous eyes of liquid brown, she was a feminist, lyric poet, singer of songs and above all, a mother (of four). She was also a scholar, mystic and philosopher, whose "turbulence of heart and turmoil of the senses were translated into music". In this respect she resembled the two most bellowed of the English poets, Shelly and Keats. Like Keats, she suffered poor health. Unlike her fellow poet Rabindranath Tagore, she sang directly in English. The English language, she said, was more naturally her mother tongue than Hindustani.

Sarojini Naidu has been participating freely in social and political activities and lecturing frequently in various places. Some are thrilled to hear that this has led her to comparative sterility of poetic accomplishment for many years past and disapprove of her seeking fresh fields and pastures new. But, her contributions towards the evolution of a higher social and political life in India are valuable in themselves though they have certainly had the result. Her public utterances on various platforms are all characterised by an intense patriotism and a desire for national upheaval.

Sarojini is a very good orator. In her closing address to the 40<sup>th</sup> Indian National Congress, she said, "as long as I have life, as long as blood flows through this arm of mine, I shall not leave

the cause of freedom... 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..." (1982, p.20). On Sarojini's The Sceptred Flute, Joseph Auslander wrote, "... it is the true India. For if we would know the truth about India, as about all things, we must go to the poets. And here at last is a poet who shall tell us" (1982, p.10).

By her powerful oratory, Sarojini awakens the people from slavery and gets the people ready for the struggle for freedom. Thus, from her childhood to her deathbed, her life was for the people. She is the first woman who fought for the freedom with the help of her oratorical power and poetic sense. Thus, she finds a place in the pages of the Indian History.

On March 2, 1949, the Nightingale of India flew away from the earth and India lost her beloved child. Nevertheless, her name will always be remembered in the golden history of India as an inspiring poet and a brave freedom fighter.

## CHAPTER 3

### SAROJINI'S ROLE IN INDIAN ENGLISH POETRY

Sarojini Naidu was always interested in poetry from her childhood days itself. It may be due to the fact that her mother was a Bengali poetess and also her father. Also, her father, Dr.Chattopathyaya encouraged and supported her to compose poems. This enabled her to proceed in her way in poetry without any obstacles.

Mentioning about her life, Sarojini writes “He (Sarojini’s father) was determined that I should be a great mathematician. But, the poetic instinct which I inherited from him and also from my mother proved stronger. One day when I was eleven, I was sighing over a sum in Algebra; it wouldn’t come right; but instead a whole poem came to me suddenly. I wrote it down. From that day my ‘poetic career’ began. At thirteen I wrote a long poem ‘A Lady of The Lake’ – 1300 lines in six days”. (Web). All her published poems were short and lyrical and she never ventured on writing ballads and sonnets.

Sarojini Naidu, like her predecessor Toru Dutt, will always be remembered a first rate poet of English verse. She is an incomparable poet so far and will be. Like Dylan Thomas, who did not write in Welsh, James Joyce, who did not write in Polish, and unlike her fellow Bengali poet, Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini never wrote in Bengali. She wrote poetry directly in English.

Sarojini Naidu distinguished herself both as a poet and a patriot. After Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu was the first great Indo-Anglican poet who attracted worldwide attention. Born

in 1879, two years after the death of Toru Dutt, Sarojini Naidu was brought up in the liberal intellectual milieu of her father Aghorenath Chattopadhyaya's house in Hyderabad. She imbibed that aerial passion for poetry and art, that cosmopolitan outlook and sense of humour from the Hindu-Muslim cultural traditions for which Hyderabad was famous. She stood first among the candidates who appeared for the matriculation examination from the Madras Presidency. At the age of sixteen she was sent to England for higher studies.

When Sarojini Naidu was in England, she began to write poetry. In her early poems we can see the combination of fantasy and delight, a Keatsian sensuousness and resonance. As Edmund Gosse said, her poems were falsely English. She was advised to stir the soul of the East by confining to Indian themes instead of writing about English landscapes and flowers, skylarks and nightingales. The poems written after her return from England are all about Indian themes.

Sarojini Naidu's poetry is intensely Indian. The four volumes, The Golden Threshold (1905), The Bird of Time (1912), The Broken Wing (1917) and The Feather of Dawn (1961) of her poems present a clear picture of Indian scenes, sights and experiences transmuted into a fantastic vision of colour, sound and rhythm.

In the early years, poetry was the main focus of Sarojini Naidu's intellectual life; the centre of her inner being. This was understandable, living as she did in the heart of the finest Islamic culture; for Hyderabad had retained all the glamour and value of princely Persia and its ruling Prince was a poet of great distinction. Here, as in the past in Islamic societies, poets were the conscience and sensitive heart-strings of the people.

They used the technique of versifying to explore the depths of the soul and emotions, all of which was closely akin to the Bhakti element of the Indus in their search for higher consciousness. Poetry to them was linked also with song and played a great role in community life as the 'Mushaira' of today continues to do in a rather limited way. Poets could do no wrong; their vision was acclaimed; their wisdom and insight became the catchwords of the people. It is not surprising that all this should sub-consciously affect her choice of poetry as the vehicle for her deep and passionate emotions and under the influence of the English language and the poets of another land; she began to write her colourful melodious verse.

Sarojini is the only Indian poet who wrote in English during 1900. Edmund Gosse put his finger exactly on the reason why her early work was stilted, derivative and without life when he told her to write of what she knew. Her return from England to everything – love, happiness, family and homeland – was also a key that unlocked the door to her inner self. It was then that her rich treasure-house of words – for she revelled in the richness of words for their loveliest lyrics in the language. At times she could be so carried away by words, however, that meaning itself was lost, such as in her celebrated poems on Indian dancers.

The extraordinary dimension which she was able to give words leapt, in later years, from poetry to such oratory that audiences were caught, swept away, bewitched and so bemused that they often ended up with knowing what it was that she had actually said.

Her volume The Golden Threshold was published in 1905 and became a best-seller in England, earning reviews of great acclaim from all the leading journals and literary critics. In 1912, William Heineman published The Bird of Time and in 1917 The Broken Wing.

There had been, of course, early writings when she was a girl, some of which were published in local papers. In the archives of the National Library, Calcutta, are some of her earliest poems dated October 3, 1896, and include “Traveller’s Song” written when she was thirteen, a verse on her own birthday when she was fourteen, and poems written in Hyderabad and at the summer holiday resort of Shorapur, near Hyderabad, which reveal her budding love for her future husband. In a prose poem “Nilambuja”, she wove a fantasy of lush, eloquent, bejewelled prose which described her own dream world set in princely romance and splendour. But, the dreamer is along and apart. Here was the lyric child who saw the world with clarity and foretold in poetic language her own future.

In the introduction of her collected poems published many years later under the title The Sceptred Flute, Joseph Auslander wrote;

“for this lady, who is conceded to be the greatest loving poet of India, is, in spite of the apparent contradiction, a passionate philosopher. From the first to last, she is the lyric poet, the singer of songs. Like Keats she has suffered ill-health almost all of her life. We detect this in a certain strange feverishness of texture. Her poems flush. If she sings as the birds do, she sings out of a darker passion. Her song is not ephemeral. For that matter neither is the bird’s song. It is no more transitory than truth and her bird music was always true. She never writes for the mere sake of writing. There is no artifice in her poetry. She sings from the heart”.

Edmund W.Gosse points out in his introduction to Sarojini Naidu's volume of verse entitled The Bird of Time how her earliest efforts in verse were Western in feeling and in imagery and were founded on reminiscences of Tennyson and Shelley and how he induced her to drop this falsely English vein. The following extract from his introduction is valuable not only because of its beauty of style but of the insight it gives us into the growth of Sarojini Naidu's art. He says:

“I implored her to consider that from a young Indian of extreme sensibility, who had mastered not merely the language but the prosody of the West, what we wished to receive was, not a rechauffe of Anglo-Saxon sentiment in Anglo-Saxon setting, but some revelation of the heart of India, some sincere penetrating analysis of native passion, of the principles of antique religion and of such mysterious intimations as stirred the soul of the East long before the West had begun to dream that it had a soul. Moreover, I entreated Sarojini Naidu to write no more about robins and skylarks, in a landscape of our midland countries, with the village bells somewhere in the distance calling the parishioners to church, but to describe the flowers, the fruits, and the tree, to set her poems firmly among the mountains, the gardens, the temples, to introduce to us the vivid populations of her own voluptuous and unfamiliar province; in other words, to be a genuine Indian poet of the Deccan, not a clear machine-made imitator of the English classics. With the docility and the rapid appreciation of genius, Sarojini instantly accepted and with as little delay as possible acted upon this suggestion. Since 1895, she has written, I believe, no copy of verses which endeavours to conceal the exclusively Indian source of her inspiration. She springs from the very soil

of India; her spirit, although it employs the English language as its vehicle, has no other tie with West” (1998, p.215).

So, many great scholars have praised her writing in and outside India. Sir C. P. Ramaswamy Iyer who had known her since her school days in Madras (Chennai) gave the significant features of her writings. According to him, the first volume, The Golden Threshold was linked to her happy domestic phase, the second The Bird of Time to her developing phase when the great noble ideals of humanity began to move her directly and she started work for the emancipation of women. The last The Broken Wing was the sage of her emotions. It was during this phase that her passionate devotion to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity centered itself first on Gokhale and later on Mohammed Ali Jinnah whom she was to acclaim in writing as the ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity.

Her poem in response to Gohale’s question “Why should a song-bird like you have a broken wing?”, significantly underlines the triumph of her spirit, for the poems that follow are with few exceptions songs of life, death and love.

Questions:     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 of renascent light  
                    Light and our land await their destined Spring  
                    Song-bird, why dost thou bear a broken wing



Answer:        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!

(2000, p.35)

In some ways it is fortunate that her poetry was published before the birth of modern poetry, with its harsh emphasis on truth without philosophy and meaning without lyricism. Her era was that of the sonnet with its disciplines of form, the ode with its call to higher thought and the small gem of verse with its emphasis upon imagery and colour. It has been said she wrote at a time when English poetry had touched the rock-bottom of sentimentality and technical poverty and it is certain that her gem-like use of words would at a time like that have touched many chords, particularly in England, not only because they had intrinsic merit but because they came from a very young woman from a very old country. She was convinced and told the author so herself in 1946, that modern poetry had no future and the trend would inevitably return to the disciplines and beauty of the metrical form of lyrics. Such a statement did not imply that she had greater prescience about the future of poetry than others, but that she sincerely believed modern

permissiveness and lack of form to be a passing fad. What is more, like many people of her generation who find modern art hideous simply because it is not visually beautiful, so too did she feel that modern poetry honestly lacked her concepts of beauty.

In a letter to Arthur Symons, Sarojini wrote:

“I am not a poet really. I have the vision and the desire, but not the voice. If I could write just one poem full of beauty and the spirit of greatness, I should be exultantly silent for ever; but I sing just as the birds do, and my songs are as ephemeral”. (1987, p.93)

The ephemerality of her poetry appears striking to a reader well versed in the poetry of the West. Sarojini was the last of the romantics in Indo-Anglican poetry and she was unaffected by the modernist revolution in the West produced by Ezra Pound, Yeats and Eliot. So, her poetry may appear outdated but it has an intrinsic value and historical importance. By getting recognition in England, she brought prestige to Indian English writing long before Tagore received the Nobel Prize; and her best poetry is not just a faded echo of the feeble voice of decade not romanticism, but an authentic Indian English lyric utterance exquisitely tuned to the composite Indian ethos, bringing home to the unbiased reader all the opulence, pageantry and charm of traditional Indian life and the splendours of the Indian scene.

Broadly speaking, the poems of Sarojini Naidu could be classified into five categories though she never did so. At least one-third of Sarojini’s poems deal with love and its various manifestations, next some those dealing with nature and then those dealing with the problems of life and death. The fourth group consists of songs on folk themes and Indian scenes and finally

there are patriotic poems including those addressed to national leaders. However, in The Bird of Time, she hints at the variegated panorama of her themes.

In the later half of the nineteenth century, there were two plants of exotic growth, bringing to it a new colour and a strange beauty to which it was hitherto unused. One was the lily of Toru Dutt, pliant and fragile, but stately, graceful and delicate as the critic D.Anjaneyulu said (1998, p.391). The other was the rose of Sarojini Naidu – tiny, bright, sweet and fragrant.

For changing the metaphor, one could think of Toru Dutt as the skylark, singing loud and clear, soaring high into the sky, like a star of heaven in the broad daylight. The other was the nightingale, more familiar and melodious, tiny but powerful. One was the ‘blithe spirit’ with a strain of sadness, “the unbodied joy whose race is just begun” (1998,p.391). The other was the happy, light-winged dryad of trees.

In considering the poetry and personality of the two, in Indian English writing, in more specific terms, we might remember that Toru Dutt was almost classical in her sense of form, her restraint and reserve. Sarojini was obviously and impenitently romantic in her outlook – her sense of colour, her wide-eyed wonder at the world and her spontaneous ecstasy. One had a flair for the narrative and ambitions for the epic achievement. The other was lyrical in her impulse, with a natural lilt in her song.

Like that the other famous Indian English poet is Rabindranath Tagore. There is a more radical difference between them; the work of Rabindranath, as it appears in English, is a translation, all done by the poet himself and its title of poetry through the medium of rhythmic

prose. Sarojini's work is English poetry in form and diction, and, as an art, subject to all the laws and ordinances of that particular common instrument for the expression of individual souls.

If we have still to wait for Sarojini's complete expression there is beneath our hand sufficient work in quantity and kind to justify on a larger scale than a mere book review, a study of her development to the point indicated in her new book, The Broken Wing, which has recently been published by William Heinemann of London.

Sarojini has given a series of deliberate presentations of phases of Indian life that have come under her eye and touched her heart and not the least successful are those that try to do no more than catch the simplest fancies or emotions of familiar scenes. Palanquin Bearers, for example, rests on no more substantial basis than the likening of a lady in a palanquin to a flower, a bird, a star, a beam of light, and a tear; there is not a thought in it: it is the slightest suspicion 'literature', yet its charm is instantaneous and complete. Dirge so vividly expresses the sorrow of bereavement that a recent English critic mistook it as indicating that the poetess was a widow.

Indeed in this latter respect, that is, in her expression of the feminine side of Indian Life, our poetess brings us up at times against a threatened discussion of the problem of sex in poetry. We have to concede to her as much freedom to sing of human love from the woman's side as the poets have from the man's side. But, there is a deeper aspect of the matter, an enlargement of consciousness beyond mere sex which strikes poetry from the best expressions of love and without which so-called love-poems are merely poems above love, an object which, though in ironical contradiction to the facts of the marriage tie, is capable of influencing an adjustment of the facts nearer to the heart's desire. But, this is not the case with much of Sarojini's love poetry.

It is curious to observe that while, in both her private and public life, Sarojini has broken away from the bonds of custom, by marrying outside her caste, and by appearing on public platforms, she reflects in her poetry the derivative and dependent habit of womanhood that masculine domination has sentimentalised into a virtue: in her life she is plain feminist, but in her poetry she remains incorrigibly feminine: she sings, so far as Indian womanhood is concerned, the India that is, while she herself has passed on into the India that is to be. It is not often in literature that an artist is in front of his or her vision; but it is safest to leave the artistic implications of the circumstance for the fuller illumination of future volumes.

It is in such poems as those just referred to that we find those flaws of structure and expressions which suggest a not quite authentic inspiration, a mood worked up till it becomes hectic and unbalanced; but she discloses a fine power of phrase, a clear energy of thought, a luminosity and reserve that reach the level of mastery. Such qualities are seen in the verses addressed To a Buddha Seated on a Lotus.

There we have the poetess rejoicing in the Shelleyan stretch of ‘inaccessible desire’ and ‘heavenward hunger’; and there we have the Indian poetess, singing ostensibly of the Buddha, yet throwing the whole philosophy of the Vedanta into the last two lines. Thus Sarojini Naidu glitters in all faces of literature than other poets in the Indian English history.

It was only in the lyric period, however, from the time of her marriage in 1898 till her emergence into full-fledged national poet in 1915 that Sarojini Naidu was whole-heartedly wife, mother and poet – all in one.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE POEMS OF SAROJINI NAIDU

Sarojini has written a variety of poems. Her poems are available in four volumes – The Golden Threshold (1950), The Bird of Time (1912), The Broken Wing (1917) and The Feather of Dawn (1961). The name of Sarojini's bungalow in the city of Hyderabad is "The Golden Threshold".

Most of her poems were written at a comparatively tender age when she was in England for study. Her poetry is said to have sprung from Mathematics, but it does not smack of the latter's abstruseness. She acquired surprising mastery over the English language even at that age. Even a casual study of her poems convinces about her large stock of words and their sensitive application. It is no wonder that she later grew to be one of the best orators in English in this country.

All her poems taken together show a carefully maturing poetic personality. We observe the steady growth of her poetic sensibility and imagination which at first found delight in observing a 'magical wood' or a 'wandering firefly' towards a serene but delightful mood of mysticism as in To a Buddha Seated on a Lotus and The Soul's Prayer. Sarojini's poetry presents a kaleidoscope of Indian scenes, sights, sounds and experiences transmuted into a fantastic vision of colour and rhythm. Her themes are mostly familiar and even insignificant but for the fact that they are vivified through the magic glass of her imagination. There are in her poetry Indian dancers and wandering signers, weavers and fishermen, palanquin bearers and bangle merchants, milkmaids and boatmen, to mention only a few. There are poems addressed to prominent

personalities ranging from Mahatma Gandhi and Gokhale to Mohammed Ali Jinnah and the Nizam of Hyderabad.

Men and women, peasants and priests, poets and patriots, maidens and brides, kings and queens throng her poetic world. Gods and prophets of Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism, Indian festivals like Raksha Bandan, Vasanth Panchami, Diwali and Indian customs and traditions about birth, marriage and death are mentioned repeatedly in her poetry. Sarojini' poetry is a highly imaginative and colourful commentary on the multitudinous Indian life. Yet, Sampson, one of the English critics, wrote that "in general, her work is more remarkable for its command of English than for any revelation of India" (1987, p.93). Mulk Raj Anand remarked that "although Sarojini had a western language and technique to express herself, she is in the main a Hindustani like Ghalib or Iqbal" (1987,p.93).

The poems of Sarojini Naidu can be classified into five categories. But, she never did so. One-third of Sarojini's poems deal with love and its various manifestations. Next come those dealing with nature and then those dealings with the problems of life and death. The fourth group consists of songs on folk themes and Indian scenes and finally there are patriotic poems including those addressed to national leaders. However, in The Bird of Time, she hints at the variegated panorama of her themes.

Love has always inspired the best and the majority of the world's literary works. Sarojini is no exception; her love-poems outnumber all others. Sometimes their sincerity and her romantic approach to love remind one of the romantic poets of England. The following stanza from The Sins of Love is an instance for the above;

Forgive me the sin of mine eyes.

O Love, if they dared for a space  
Invade the dear shrine of your face  
With eager, insistent delight,  
Like wild birds intrepid of flight  
That raid the high sanctuaried skies –  
O Pardon the sin of mine eyes!

Or we may quote the first stanza of her poem entitled Devotion:

Take my flesh to feed your dogs if you choose.  
Water your garden trees with my book if you will.  
Turn my heart into ashes, my dream into dust,  
Am I not yours, O Love, to cherish or kill?

And in her love-poems what surprises is a strain of melancholy, a sigh for unfulfilled desire and for absence of reciprocation. Such attitude is born of wide experience, which is not expected in a young poet. In Caprice, she compares her heart and soul with a ravished dower and an emptied wine-cup, flung away:

You held a wild flower in your finger tips,  
Idly you pressed it to indifferent lips,  
Idly tore its crimson leaves apart,  
Alas! It was my heart,  
You held a wine-cup in your finer-tips,  
Lightly you raised it to indifferent lips,



Lightly you drank and flung away the bowl,  
Alas! It was my soul.

Or, in Destiny, the unfaithfulness of man and the consequent suffering of the woman are described in these touching lines:

Love came with his ivory flute,  
His pleading eye and winged foot.  
“I am weary,” he murmured, “O 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?

This tone of frustration in love dominates her poems. The reader hardly comes across one, which gives expression to the joy of love and life.

Through some poems vibrates the heart of a loving mother. Her son Dr. Jayasurya, ex M.P., and daughters Ms. Padmaja, ex-Governor of West Bengal and Ms. Lilamani are well known today. Her other son Ranadhera died prematurely. She has dedicated some of her poems to them. She wished Jayasurya, whom she affectionately called “Golden Sun of Victory, born in my life’s unclouded morn, in my lambent sky of love”. (1998, p. 359)

And for Limpid Jewel of Delight, Living Jewel youngest Ms. Lilamani, she wished that she would be ‘securely set in love’s magic coronet’ and be ‘laughter-bound and sorrow-free’. Some other poems such as The Queen’s Rival or The Cradle Song are also projections of her

loving heart. In the former, Gulnar, queen of Persia, ill at ease, could find her rival in her baby only and not in the seven most beautiful bides brought for the king.

Sarojini's love poems are noted for their rare tenderness and delicacy of passion. They are autobiographical in tone and a note of melancholy and soulful tenderness is hidden behind the apparent spirit of joy and ecstasy, despair and jealousy, suspicion and anxiety, separation and union. For Sarojini, love is a cooperative act and the realization of love comes through the dissolution of the self in the ecstasy of togetherness. The harmony and oneness of hearts in love is suggested in Sarojini's poetry by the metaphor of the mingling melodies or the mingling of rivers.

In the creative process of love, there is both rapture and agony. The great paradox of love is that it is a craving for completeness, which is never achieved. It is a passionate desire, which is perpetually aching for expression and communication. She had an imaginative understanding of the power and vicissitudes of love and her impersonal experiences also marked the changes into the personal through catalysis of sympathy. The Festival of Memory is a record of the poet's rapture and sorrow, the paradox of love. The sweetness of love outlasts the changing winds of Time. But, it is a twin-nurtured boon.

There is a softness and nimbleness about Sarojini's love lyrics. She weaves a colourful but filmy kaleidoscope of conceit, fancy, dream and poetic ensembles that the reader is truck by the very gloss and glitter of that love vision. Poems like To Love, The Feast, and The Temple are suffused with a spirit of devotional love that they remind us of the classical and medieval devotional love poetry of Jayadeva, Vidyapati and Mirabai.

In the final invocation to the spirit of universal love, the poet chants a desire that she should get redeemed through sorrow and sanctified through suffering. Ultimately, the divine identification takes place.

Another dominant theme in Sarojini's poetry is her concern with Time, Death and Suffering. While enumerating the several themes in her poetry, Sarojini mentions Death also as one of them. Even in her early poems Sarojini shows us anguished awareness of the ravages of Time and the inevitability of Death. Indian Weavers suggests the three stages in the life of man – birth, youth and death. The poem is a stage by stage measure of man's progress through this journey called life. A complete picture of man's life, happiness and sorrow is visualized in terms of the break of day, the fall of night. In Corn Grinders the poet presents Death as an invincible power that causes grief to all living creatures. The little mouse, the little deer and the little bride encompass the whole range of living creatures perpetually at the mercy of Death. The unpredictability and unassailability of Death are suggested in Wandering Singer.

The nascent awareness of Death and its implacability that we find in the earlier poems not only deepened but also became a haunting passion with the poet after the death of her father in 1915. Her mentor, Gopala Krishan Gokhale also died in the same year increasing her agony.

Sarojini accepts the reality of Death but she does not surrender to it or wait for its arrival, which is revealed in the following stanza of her poem, To a Buddha Seated on a Lotus;

Tomorrows unborn grief depose  
The Sorrows of our yesterday  
Dream yields to dream, strife follows strife,  
And Death unweaves the web of Life.

In The Soul's Prayer, the poet finds solace in the knowledge that Life and Death are merely the two faces of God-His Light and His Shadow. We can find the same in the following lines of The Soul's Prayer;

Life is a prism of My light,  
And Death the shadow of My face

In To a Buddha Seated on a Lotus, Sarojini has touched a new level of consciousness of death and suffering. With no bitterness or despair, she accepts the transience of life and commends the soul in its 'heavenward hunger' for nirvana. Sarojini expresses a mysterious longing for death in some of her poems like Autumn Song.

Sarojini's acute awareness of life as an experience of sorrow and pain is revealed in To the God of Pain. She has been a priestess in the temple of the 'pitiless God of Pain'. Suffering and perpetual weariness have crushed her life down and proved how she has nothing more to offer to this insatiable God of pain.

However, this mood of easeful love with death is temporary. Though painfully conscious of the suffering, fear, pain, pride, hate, weariness, fret and fever of life, Sarojini would rather live a life of struggle and hope. Sarojini's love of life with its manifold experiences is so intense that she would implore Death.

She protests against the tender but beguiling advances of Death who promises to redeem her from the pain of life. The absurdity in the process of life slowly progressing towards death does not diminish the sanctity or significance of human existence.

Throughout Sarojini's poetry there is an effervescent touch of optimism, faith and courage. Her acute awareness of sorrow on the one hand and her intense desire to overcome its tumult on the other create a pleasing paradox of grief and courage, despair and hope, doubt and faith in several of her poems. In the Forest she exemplified this paradox. At first, the poet wants to make a funeral pyre of all her dreams and scatter the ashes away. But, suddenly this mood changes into one of faith and courage and she exhorts her heart to rise up to gather the dreams together and walk into the war of the world and the strife of the throng.

In A Challenge to Fate, the poet asserts the indomitable power of her spirit against the brandishes of Fate; in Transience, sorrow is treated as ephemeral and in Ecstasy she echoes Omar Khayyam.

In spite of the frequent preoccupation with death, suffering and sorrow, Sarojini is not a poet of melancholy. She has nothing of the brooding profundity of Emily Dickinson or the thoughtful pensiveness of the metaphysicals. She had an intense love of life and her spirit of optimism was infectious. She rejoices at the very thought of being born and alive. Though her wings are broken in an attempt to reach the high realms of unfulfilled desires, she would not rest. She would scale the stars upon her broken wing. In Wandering Beggars, this vociferous optimism and courage are expressed with Browning-like éclat.

The characteristic of her poetic style is her exquisite melody of rhythm and consummate mastery of metrical form. She has tried many metres and has succeeded in all of them. One of her favourite metrical devices is the introduction of anapaestic feet in the middle of iambic measures. To do this successfully one should have an unerring ear for the finest cadences and

harmonies of language. This device enables her to give a lilt to her song, and a quickness of movement, that are exquisitely melodious and delightful to trained ears.

The Indian Dancers shows her mastery of ever complex and long metrical structures which are apparent. She has not attempted much in blank verse or in the sonnet form as yet. But, her poems exhibit a marvellous melody and rhythmical grace, and cling to the mind long after they are read.

Further, there are beautiful usages of phrase and imaginative temperament that make her illuminate by a single flash of epithet, a world of new ideas and feelings and unfamiliar relations between familiar things and spiritual meanings and joys in facts which convey no messages to ordinary ears.

Sarojini is a poet of extreme lyrical sensibility. She has an eye for the most delicate aspects of beauty, an ear for the music of life and nature and a superb sense of rhythm, rhyme and cadence. She scatters memorable phrases over a page like stars and was so filled with rhythm and romance of life that lyrics sang in her mind and overflowed from her exotic and passionate nature into song. By the use of jewelled phrases and epithets she could throw open a new world of experience and feelings. The ornate adjectives, dreamy similies and liquid phrases enhance the romantic unearthliness of her themes.

Seven similies are used in the dreamy lyric Palanquin Bearers to suggest the beauty of the bride whom the palanquin bearers carry like a 'pearl on a string'. These similies and imagery are suggestive of the delicate beauty of the bride and the hope of happiness that fills her soul. This is spontaneous poetry, poetry of emotion and music, poetry of sound and meaning behind the sound.

The Queen's Rival is a poetic fantasy with romantic associations. The beautiful queen Gulnaar, tired of her own matchless beauty, desires a rival. Neither the richly jewelled walls of her bedchamber nor the delicately hued glowing clothes that adorn her could satisfy her.

The seven queens that shine round her ivory bed are no match for her. She sat dissatisfied demanding a rival. She soon discovers that her own two-year old daughter who is in blue robes bordered with tassels of gold is the only rival to her in beauty. The poem overflows with lyric beauty and exotic charm.

This poem is of romantic superfluity, colourful fancy and pleasing conceit. It has the dazzle of a multicoloured jewel, the tremulous pattern of a seven-petalled rose and the colour symphony of a painted natural scene. Queen Gulnaar's state of mind touches on the abnormal. It passes from the consciousness of the possession of beauty to the conceit about the possession of beauty. The conceit destroys her happiness and all the resources of a kingdom do not restore it to her. The poem suggests the deeper meaning that ultimately satisfaction for a frustrated soul comes from within.

Though Sarojini is not a mystic poet, there are glimpses of her concern with man's protean relationship with the universe in her poetry. The other-worldliness of the poems is not a sustained experience, her dreams get resolved too soon to allow our spirit's flight into the Incomprehensible. There is a fatal duality in Sarojini's poetry that prevents her from becoming a mystic.

As a poet Sarojini has no desire to grapple with the social or political problems of the day. Though deeply affected by the forces released by the struggle for India's freedom, though

greatly influenced by two of the political activities of the day, Sarojini's poetry is mercifully free from political claptrap. However, she is sensitive to human problems not in the national context alone, but in the context of the world as a whole. The hate, fear and suffering about which she speaks in her poems are the very evils that keep humanity divided and dissatisfied. She has a vision of humanity at once noble and idealistic.

Sarojini is a poet with a cosmopolitan and secular outlook. Yet she is essentially Indian. There is hardly any aspect of Indian life that she has left untouched in her poetry. Her poems are a veritable picture gallery of Indian life in all its beauty and complexity. Her interest in national affairs began as early as in 1903 when she attended the Bombay session of the Indian National Congress and read out a short poem entitled To India. Thus, her poetry began to reflect more and more the hopes and aspirations, despair and resolution of a nation that was struggling to free herself from the yoke of foreign rule.

To India is the first among Sarojini's patriotic poems. It is an invocation to the Mother recalling her past glory and future promise. An intimate sense of wounded-pride mingles with hope to create a pattern of animated devotion to the motherland. We can find it in the following stanza of her poem To India:

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

Awake dedicated to Mohamed Ali Jinnah and recited at the session of the Indian National Congress in 1915 is an exhortation to the Mother by her children who belonged to



several creeds. The vision of a united, secular India emerges as Hindu, Parsees, Muslims and Christians pray in union for the freedom and resurgence of the Mother.

The prayer for the country's freedom takes a filial tone of emotional concern. In Sarojini Naidu's creative work, the affectionate voice of the Mother is interwoven with the passionate voice of patriotism addressed to her motherland.

The mother image of the country is cherished in An Anthem of Love. The following two lines of An Anthem of Love describes that two hands and two feet, two ears and two eyes unite with one heart in a supreme dedication to the cause of the motherland.

Bound by one hope, one purpose, one devotion

Towards a great, divinely destined goal.

The Gift of India is a highly sensitive tribute to the Indian soldiers who laid down their lives during the First World War. The supreme sacrifice of the Mother is commended and the bold sons who responded to the 'drum-beats of destiny' with their lives are remembered in the following stanza of The Gift of India.

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.

Sarojini wrote a few memorial verses on Indian leaders. Though they form a strange assortment ranging from a tribute to the Nizam to an emotional panegyric on Gandhi, their essential inspiration is patriotism. The best among them is The Lotus addressed to Mahatma Gandhi. The poet achieves a symbolic identification of Gandhi with the lotus, the flower that represents India's spirit of sanctity and nobility. The poem invokes the ageless beauty of the lotus, which has a divine origin.

In Salutation to My Father's Spirit is a glowing poetic tribute to Sarojini's father, Agorenath Chattopadhyaya whom she calls "a splendid dreamer in a dreamless age". In Gokhale, she pays homage to the memory of Gopal Krishna Gokhale, the great patriot, scholar and saint who was her first mentor.

As significant and valuable as this wonderful volume and sweetness of lyric appeal and achievement is Sarojini's lyrical rendering of Indian folk songs. These folk songs written by Sarojini show how fully she has entered into the innermost life of the India's heart from the day when his eyes open on this beautiful earth till his eyes are closed by the hands of death are all described in sweet and musical and passionate verses by the gifted poetess.

Her poem entitle, A Cradel-Song, has an inimitable appropriateness and sweetness. Another trait that we must note in Sarojini's poetical nature is her subtle perceptions of delicate and evanescent shades of feeling and ecstasy and the rendering of such emotions in verses that have a magic vagueness and sweetness. There are numerous single lines and stanzas scattered throughout her poems that thrill us with new and mystical, but true and sincere, renderings of sweet and noble emotions.

## CHAPTER 5

### SAROJINI NAIDU'S POEMS ON NATURE

Sarojini's poems on nature are replete with her innate bent of romanticism. She is attracted by the sights and sounds, colours and odours of natural objects. She has a keen sense of observation and her fine sensibility responds more emotionally than intellectually to the sense impressions from nature. In her love of nature there is no mark of mysticism of Tagore or Wordsworth. Sarojini's nature poetry is a mosaic of colour, sounds and odours that reminds us of Keats, Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites. In her nature poems, there are two predominant traits – a sensuous appreciation of nature's beauty and an unmistakable ability to express her concepts in a most picturesque manner through metaphors, similes and symbols.

There are poems which have sole devotion to gulmohar flowers, champak flowers and cassia flowers. There is a rut of sensuous imagery and the various elements are so beautifully interwoven that we are conscious of a network of exotic combination of two or more sense impressions. There are repeated references to flowers like champa and jasmine, rose and lotus, poppy and cassia, lily and hyacinth, sirisha and neem. Kingfishers and koels, peacocks and pigeons, nightingales and bulbuls flutter through her lines. Bridal songs and cradle songs, song of the gypsies and the milkmaids, song of the lovers and the song of the seasons; musical instruments like the flute, and the lute, cymbals and pipes, drums and tumbrels; precious stones like rubies and jades, agate and porphyry, gems and jaspers and fragrance of musk and myrrh, sandal and clove are all there in Sarojini's nature poems.

The Songs of Springtime contains some of Sarojini's finest nature lyrics. She moves joy-drunk in her spring garden and the beautiful Indian landscape exercises a spell on her. The colour, sound, warmth and lusciousness of the spring spread through her songs of the season.

Sarojini has an uninhibited joy in the colours and rhythms of nature's opulence. The lure of the magic flute of spring is irresistible; even the 'burgeoning leaves on the almond boughs' excite her poetic fancy, woodland flowers and fruits, birds and insects evoke a sympathetic chord in her imagination. There is a carnival of colours, sounds, taste and beauty in her nature poems.

Spring is the predominant metaphor throughout Sarojini's nature poetry. Her soul goes into rapture at the sight of spring's elegance. Much of the invincible rhetoric of her poetry is reserved for the delineation of the beauty of that season. The pageantry and charm of the Indian countryside, hills and valleys, the magnificence of Indian trees and flowers, the awakening sense of mystery that abides in Indian colours and sounds and the unquestionable affinity of man with Mother Nature are the easily perceptible experiences of Sarojini's nature poetry.

Sarojini has nothing of the mysticism of Wordsworth or Tagore in the appreciation of nature's beauty. Nor is her attitude to nature ambivalent as in Robert Frost. Though primarily she is a poet of the outward beauty of nature, Sarojini often retires into the quietness and solace of nature when weighed down with the pain of existence. In June Sunset, a consummate expression of the poet's search for tranquillity is given.

Sarojini is fascinated by the beauty and energy of nature, but she is indifferent to any divine spirit that might lurk behind the immeasurable panorama of nature. She finds peace in the

sanctuary of nature, peace from the boil and weariness, the praise and prayers of men. She would like to lose herself in that whirlpool of nature's bounty and be born once again as a moonbeam, a delicate bloom or a gurgling stream. The rapture and ecstasy of that romantic adulation of nature is expressed in several of her poems.

There is also a note of poignant melancholy and even pain in some of Sarojini's nature poems. Observing the objects of nature in their several stages of birth, growth and death, the poet becomes painfully conscious of the evanescence of life and beauty. Though she retains the ebullience of spirit till the end, often she dons the mantle of a romantic seeker of some vanished glory from both nature and life. There is a Wordsworthian wistfulness in poems like The Coming of Spring and The Magic of Spring. The former is an anguished confession of inability to respond to the enchanting call of a spring festival. The poet fears that she has become insensitive to the vernal joy of spring. In the latter poem, the sentiments expressed are the same. Even the glimmering woods and the singing of passionate koels do not excite the slumbering heart of the poet into ecstasy.

We can take 10 poems from Sarojini's collection of poems titled The Bird of Time to understand her vision of nature.

#### The Bird of Time

O BIRD of Time on your fruitful bough  
What are the songs you sing? . . .  
Songs of the glory and gladness of life,  
Of poignant sorrow and passionate strife,

And the lilting joy of the spring;  
Of hope that sows for the years unborn,  
And faith that dreams of a tarrying morn,  
The fragrant peace of the twilight's breath,  
And the mystic silence that men call death.

O Bird of Time, Say where did you learn  
The changing measures you sing? . . .  
In blowing forests and breaking tides,  
In the happy laughter of new-made brides,  
And the nests of the new-born spring;  
In the dawn that thrills to a mother's prayer,  
And the night that shertes a heart's despair,  
In the sigh of pity, the sob of hate,  
And the Pride of a soul that has conquered fate.

In this poem Sarojini Naidu compares time with a bird. The songs by the bird are about glory, gladness, sorrows and the rhythmic joy of the spring and about hope for future and faith for eternal peace and finally of death which she calls 'mystic silence'. She is talking with the bird to know as to how it learnt to give as songs about all the above things in the forest where the wind is driven, in the waves which have the splitting current by the wind, in the mirth of a new-

bride of her marriage and in the spring. She also says that the morning is for prayer to God and the night for shelter at rest.

### Spring

YOUNG leaves grow green on the banyan twigs,  
And red on the peepul tree,  
The honey-birds pipe to the budding figs,  
And honey-blooms call the bee.

Poppies squander their fragile gold  
In the silvery aloe-brake,  
Coral and ivory lilies unfold  
Their delicate lives on the lake.

Kingfishers ruffle the feathery sedge,  
And all the vivid air thrills  
With butterfly-wings in the wild-rose hedge,  
And the luminous blue of the hills.

Kamala tinkles a lingering foot  
In the grove where temple-bells ring,  
And Krishna plays on his bamboo flute

An idyl of love and spring.

This poem gives a total picture of scenarios during the Spring season. During that time, the branches of the Banyan trees wear the green colour since they are armed with new grown leaves. The honey-birds are invited by the fragrance of blooming of figs and they come and such the honey from them. The poppies have a gold colour with transparency, the aloe has silvery colour and the lilies are having ivory and coral colours. The kingfishers are ruffling their wings on the sedge to comfort themselves. The butterflies are flying round the wild-rose hedges. The hills have the blue shade and they reverberate with the sound of trickling from the people who are going for prayer after the noise of the temple-bell, is heard. The air coming through the bamboo hedges raises the sound as if coming from the flute like the one Krishna plays.

#### A Song in Spring

Wild bees that rifle the mango blossom,  
Set free awhile from the love-god's string,  
Wild birds that sway in the citron branches,  
Drunk with rich, red honey of spring.

Fireflies weaving aerial dances  
In fragile rhythms of flickering gold,  
What do you know in your blithe, brief caston  
Of dreams deferred and a heart grown old?



But the wise winds know, as they pause to slacken  
The speed of their subtle, omniscient flight,  
Divining the magic of unblown lilies,  
Foretelling the stars of the unborn night.

They have followed the hurrying feet of pilgrims,  
Tracking swift prayers to their utmost goals,  
They have spied on Love's old and changeless secret,  
And the changing sorrow of human souls.

They have tarried with Death in her parleying-places,  
And issued the word of her high decree,  
Their wings have winnowed the garnered sunlight,  
Their lips have tasted the purple sea.

Sarojini Naidu portrays the scenes during the spring in this poem. The bees make the mango bloom by going from one to another. The birds take rest on the citron branches. The flying of the fireflies during night time in spring is just like gold flickering. The wind has the ultimate power to make the birds to fly slowly. It knows the blooming of lilies and stars of the night. The other scenes in this season are the pilgrims who are embarking on a pilgrimage in this season; their prayers could be heard; and the sunlight, which is spread out everywhere and makes the sea, grows purple in colour.

## The Joy of the Springtime

SPRINGTIME, O Springtime, what is your essence,  
The lilt of a bulbul, the laugh of a rose,  
The dance of the dew on the wings of moonbeam,  
The voice of the zephyr that sings as he goes,  
The hope of a bride or the dream of a maiden  
Watching the petals of gladness unclose?

Springtime, O Springtime, what is your secret,  
The bliss at the core of your magical mirth,  
That quickens the pulse of the morning to wonder  
And hastens the seeds of all beauty to birth,  
That captures the heavens and conquers to blossom  
The roots of delight in the heart of the earth?

Sarojini Naidu deals with those things that give joy in spring in this poem. The sweet songs of the bulbul are heard. The bloom of the rose is seen everywhere. The dews on the light of the moonbeam reflect beautifully. In this season only, the brides are hopeful of their future and the maidens are dreaming of the faith that in spring, everything will come true. But, we do not know the secret behind the bliss and mirth of this season which spreads heavenly beauty all over the earth.

Vasanth Panchami

Go, dragon-fly, fold up your purple wing,  
Why will you bring me tidings of the spring?  
O Liltng koels, hush your rapturous notes,  
O dhadikulas, still your passionate throats,  
Or seek some further garden for your nest . . .  
Your songs are poisoned arrows in my breast.

O quench your flame ye crimson gulmohors,  
That flaunt your dazzling bloom across my doors,  
Furl your white bells, sweet champa buds that call  
Wild bees to your ambrosial festival,  
And hold your breath, O dear sirisha trees . . .  
You slay my heart with bitter memories.

O joyous girls who rise at break of morn  
Qirh sandal-soil your thresholds to adorn,  
Ye brides who streamward bear on jewelled feet  
Your gifts of silver lamps and new-blown wheat,  
I pray you dim your voices when you sing  
Your radiant salutations to the Spring.

Hai! What have I to do with nesting birds,  
With lotus-honey, corn and ivory curds,  
With plantain blossom and pomegranate fruit,  
Or lintels and rose-scented lute,  
With lighted shrines and fragrant altar fires  
Where happy women breathe their hearts' desires?

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

The Vasanth Panchami is the spring festival when Hindu girls and married women carry gifts of lighted lamps and new-grown corn as offerings to the goddess of spring and set them afloat on the face of the waters. Hindu widows cannot take part in any festive ceremonies. Their portion is sorrow and austerity. In this poem, Sarojini Naidu expresses her sorrows for the plight which makes her not to take part in the festive season during the spring as well as the joyous scenes of the season. Could she not break this tradition that imposes sorrow on widows, with reason and determination? What stops her from doing it?

The dragon-flies are flying with purple wings. The koels sing sweet and the dhadikulas with beautiful throats. Gulmohors bloom in crimson colour and chamba flowers with white pedals which attract the bees. The sirisha trees are recalling the past memories. The women and girls who participate in the festival arise from bed early in the morning, wear ornaments and carry holy lamps and new-grown wheat for the adornment to the Goddess and go to the riverside singing all along the way. The birds are nesting after taking honey from the lotus flowers, the corn and the ivory colour curds are full of plantain blossom. The pomegranate fruits are rose-scented. The women and girls are happy and hopeful that their desires will come true in this season. But, all the above joyous things now increase the sorrow of the poet since she is a widow. Her longing for the enjoyment of the season is hereby expressed.

In a time of Flowers

O LOVE! Do you know the spring is here  
With the lure of her magic flute? . . .  
The old earth breaks into passionate bloom  
At the kiss of her foot, gay foot.  
The burgeoning leaves on the almond boughs,  
And the leaves on the blue wave's breast  
Are crowned with the limpid and delicate light  
Of the gems in your turban crest.  
The bright pomegranate buds unfold,  
The frail wild lilies appear,  
Like the blood-red jewels you used to fling

O'er the maidens that danced at the feast of spring  
To welcome the new-born year.

O LOVE! Do you know the spring is here? . . .

The dawn and the dusk grow rife

With scent and song and tremulous mirth,

The blind, rich travail of life.

The winds are drunk with the odorous breath

Of henna, sirisha, and neem . . .

Do they ruffle your cold, strange, tranquil sleep,

Or trouble your changeless dream

With poignant thoughts of the world you loved,

And the beauty you held so far?

Do you long for a brief, glad hour to wake

From your lonely slumber for sweet love's sake,

To welcome the new-born year?

The things that are seen in Spring are again portrayed in this poem by Sarojini Naidu. In this season, the earth takes new birth. The burgeoning leaves are found on the boughs of almond. The sea tides have the blue colour. These are dainty and transparent gems in the crown of the spring. The pomegranates are bright and their buds are blooming. The lilies take birth with red colour. These are welcoming the New Year. During this season, everyday is full of

scent, joyous songs and mirth. The wind is filled with odours of henna, sirisha and neem, which ruffle the sleep with dream, in which the worldly sorrows are always played.

Hymn to Indra, Lord of Rain

MEN'S VOICES:

O THOU, who rousest the voice of the thunder,  
And biddest the storms to awake from their sleep  
Who breakest the strength of the mountains as under,  
And cleverest the manifold pride and rife  
Dost nourish the heart of the forest and plain,  
Withhold not Thy gifts O Omnipotent Giver!

WOMEN'S VOICES:

O Thou, who wieldest Thy deathless dominion 'O'er mutable legions of earth and the  
sky,  
Who grantest the eagle the joy of her pion,  
And teachest the young of the koel to fly!  
Thou who art mighty to succour and cherish,  
Who savest from sorrow and shieldest from pain,  
Withhold not Thy merciful love, or we perish,  
Hearken, O Lord of Rain!

This poem is composed when the Hindu farmers are praying for rain to the rain god Indra. It is believed by the Hindus that the rain, thunder and lightning occur by the grace of

Indra. Hence, this poem is composed as the villagers pray to Indra for rain for their agricultural purpose.

The farmers pray to Indra to make the thunder which is described as His voice, to wake the storm up from sleep which can break even the mountains by its force and split the waves of the sea. Indra is the maker of streams and rivers. They flow through the forest and plain lands which is utilised for cultivation. He is omnipotent and has the ultimate power over the earth and sky and he grants joy to the eagles and teaches the young koel to fly. He helps everyone as and when he needs His help or his suffering. He loves everyone and saves all from sorrows and protects from pain. Hence, they surrender themselves to him and ask him not to leave them without rain.

### Solitude

LET us rise, O my heart, let us go where the twilight  
is calling  
Far away from the sound of this lonely and menacing  
crowd,  
To the glens, to the glades, where the magical darkness  
is falling  
In rivers of gold from the breast of a radiant cloud.  
Come away, come away from this throng and its  
manifold strife  
Where the halcyon night holds in trust the dear



songs of the morrow

And the silence is but a rich pause in the music of life.

Let us climb where the eagles keep guard on the

rocky grey ledges,

Let us lie 'neath the palms where perchance we may

listen, and reach

A delicate dream from the lips of the slumbering sedges,

That catch from the stars some high tone of their

mystical speech.

Or perchance, we may glean a far glimpse of the

Infinite Bosom

In whose glorious shadow all life is unfolded or furled,

Thro' the luminous hours ere the lotus of dawn shall

re Blossom

In petals of splendour to worship the Lord of the world.

In this poem Sarojini expresses her desire to be alone with nature which gives peace and joy. She wants to go away from the crowd where there is always full of confusion and quarrels, to the places where nature lives in the form of a valley and glades where the heavenly twilight calls those who are impatient and the riverside where the rivers have gold shade by the clouds which console one heart's despair. These places give trust and peace for future. She also wishes to climb up the rockside where there are green ledges. She wants to lie beneath the palm tree

where delicate dreams are aroused by seeing the sedges, which reflect the stars. By these methods, she is able to be in the Infinite bosom of God.

In Salutation to Eternal Peace

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 morn.

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 wariness,  
Who dream in twilight granaries Thou dost bless  
With delicate sheaves of mellow silences?

Say, shall I heed dull presages of doom,  
Or dread the rumoured loneliness and gloom,

The mute and mythic terror of the tomb?

For my glad hear is drunk and drenched with Thee,

O inmost wine of living ecstasy!

O intimate essence of eternity!

Here Sarojini Naidu says that all are thinking that the world is full of fear and sorrow and she compares human life to a harvest-field and fate with a sickle. But, she says that since she was born among the nature's scenes, she enjoys all the landscapes of nature without worrying of the worldly quarrels. The pigeons which are nesting with their silver wings and the twilight which has collected the light as granaries collecting corns, with silence give her joy. The tomb foretells death. But, she does not bother about the death since she is enjoying with nature, the gift of God. By these beautiful gifts of God, everyone's life is made a new. Sarojini knows it and hence, she has the ecstasy.

#### Medley

THE poppy grows on the roof-top,

The iris flowers on the grave;

Hope in the heart of a lover,

And fear in the heart of a slave.

The opal lies in the river,  
The pearl in the ocean's breast;  
Doubt in a grieving bosom,  
And faith in a heart at rest.

Fireflies dance in the moon-light,  
Peach-leaves dance in the wind;  
Dreams and delicate fancies  
Dance thro' a poet's mind.

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

It is a Kashmiri song on nature. The natural scenes are compared with human activities in this poem. The poppy plant grows on the top of the house-roof and the Irish flowers on the grave like hope in the heart of a lover about his marriage with his sweet heart and fear in the heart of a slave about death. The opal lies in the river and the pearl in the sea as doubt and suffering in a relentless heart and faith in a peaceful heart. The fireflies dance in the moonlight and peach leaves move in the wind like joy in the eyes of children who are ignorant of right and wrong and peace in the Death.

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMING UP

Sarojini Naidu, the Nightingale of India, was the first great Indo-Anglican poet after Toru Dutt, who attracted world-wide attention. To achieve immortality in this ephemeral world is an extraordinary feat. Sarojini Naidu was one of those figures in India's history and she achieved immortality on two counts. She was a fearless and undaunted freedom fighter ready to face the heaviest odds for the cause of India's freedom. She was also a talented poetess in the English language.

This rich foreign language had been literally tamed by her and turned into a bondsman. Her command over this language was superb. It was profound and subtle. Her poetry in this language was a powerful medium for highlighting the call of freedom. Poetry provoked her, inspired her and sustained her during her crowded life.

Sarojini Naidu began to write poetry when she was in England. Even her early poems showed a combination of fantasy and delight, a Keatsian sensuousness and resonance. She was advised to stir the soul of the East by confining to Indian themes instead of writing about English landscapes and flowers, skylarks and nightingales.

After her return to India, Sarojini Naidu decided to confine herself to purely Indian themes. The next twenty years of her life were dedicated to writing poetry, fulfilling a mission of introducing the exotic oriental world of beauty and mystery to the English speaking world.

Sarojini's poetry is intensely Indian. Her poems present a kaleidoscope of Indian scenes, sights and experiences transmuted into a fantastic vision of colour, sound and rhythm. In her

poetry there are Indian dancers and wandering singers, weavers and fishermen, palanquin-bearers and bangle-sellers, snake charmers and flower girls, milkmaids and boatmen, street-vendors and merchants. Men and women, peasants and priests, poets and patriots, maidens and prides, kings and queens parade through her poetic world.

Tinged with fantasy and a dream like quality, Sarojini Naidu's poetry is a highly imaginative and colourful commentary on the multitudinous Indian life.

Sarojini possessed a few other outstanding qualities as well. She was a gifted orator. She was a matchless speaker who could hypnotize the audience. Words and the choicest epithets came to her in her extempore, speeches like torrents even like a tornado with selected pungent piercing strokes. Sarojini Naidu's second gift was her starting humour and her infinite capacity to peer into the funny-side of human life to jest even at her own expense. She has candidly often served to fulfil on this aspect. She has in a high degree that sense of beauty and mystery which is too rare. Sarojini Naidu is more than the poet of the moment, of its splendour and transience, its burden and its rapture.

Sarojini Naidu is known in our country more as a patriot than as a poet. In fact, her poetry, or rather her genius for poetry, was one of the forces that intensified the progress of the national movement in India.

Regarding Indian English poetry, two persons naturally come to our mind. One is Rabindranath Tagore and the other is Sarojini Naidu. Though Tagore is praised for his English poetry, they are only the translations of his Bengali poems. But Sarojini Naidu wrote poetry in

English directly. She glitters as a successful woman-poet who opposed castes and creeds and remained a mother, freedom-fighter, speaker, orator and above all a poet. She is a poet from her childhood. It is the poetical instinct that induced her to become an orator, freedom-fighter and the nightingale of India.

Since she was a freedom-fighter and capable of attracting the audience by her speech, she had to travel all over the country, by which she could enjoy the landscapes everywhere in the country. As said earlier, the day-to-day life of the people in India is portrayed in all her poems, viz. all her nature poems. Her inner feelings on sorrow and happiness and her mood on various things are revealed in her nature poems only.

Sarojini's poems are mostly "short swallow-flight of song". Some are full of the rapture of spring. Some lead us into a world of inner ecstasy and spiritual emotion. Others are quivering with passion of love. Some others lead us with eager hands into the heaven of India's luminous past. The lyric appeal is various and wonderful and full of the magic of melody.

We can find the sweetness of lyric appeal and achievement in her folk songs. These folk songs show how fully she has entered into the innermost life of India's heart. The various joys and sorrows that thrill and agitate on India's heart from the day when the eyes open on this beautiful earth till the eyes are closed by the hands of death, are described in sweet and musical and passionate verses by the gifted poetess. Another trait we can find in her poetical nature is her subtle perception of delicate and evanescent shades of feeling and ecstasy and the rendering of such emotions in verses that have a magic vagueness and sweetness.

The nature poetry of Sarojini Naidu deserves all praise. Nature is to her a background for the portraiture of human emotion. But the ecstasy of the heart that wakes into being at the

sight of the loveliness of the world is beautifully expressed in words that thrill with a passion of happiness in Sarojini Naidu's verses.

Sarojini Naidu's concept of nature is tinged with her innate bend of romanticism. In her love of nature, she had nothing of the mysticism of Tagore or Sri Aurobindo. Her nature poetry is a mosaic of colour, sound and odour that reminds us of Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites. The various elements in nature are so beautifully interwoven in her nature poetry. In poems like, The Coming of Spring, there is a note of melancholy and pain. Observing the objects in nature in their several stages of birth, growth and death, the poet becomes painfully conscious of the evanescence of life and beauty.

In her poetry, it can be seen how Sarojini shares her feelings of happiness with the scenes of nature and sorrows with her earthly life. Hence, there is justification in calling her as Nature Poet.



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### **M. Murali, M.A., B.Ed., M.Phil.**

Department of Science & Humanities  
Sri Ramanujar Engineering College  
Kolapakkam, Vandalur  
Chennai-600 048  
Tamil Nadu, INDIA  
[mmurali1999@yahoo.com](mailto:mmurali1999@yahoo.com)

### **G. Natanam, M.A., Ph.D.**

Department of English  
Government College for Men (Autonomous)  
Kumbakonam-612 001  
Thanjavur District  
Tamil Nadu, INDIA  
[gnatanamenglish@yahoo.com](mailto:gnatanamenglish@yahoo.com)