

**Classic Poetry Series**

# **Sarojini Naidu**

**- poems -**

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## **A Love Song from the North**

Tell me no more of thy love, papeeha,  
Wouldst thou recall to my heart, papeeha,  
Dreams of delight that are gone,  
When swift to my side came the feet of my lover  
With stars of the dusk and the dawn?  
I see the soft wings of the clouds on the river,  
And jewelled with raindrops the mango-leaves quiver,  
And tender boughs flower on the plain.....  
But what is their beauty to me, papeeha,  
Beauty of blossom and shower, papeeha,  
That brings not my lover again?  
Tell me no more of thy love, papeeha,  
Wouldst thou revive in my heart, papeeha  
Grief for the joy that is gone?  
I hear the bright peacock in glimmering woodlands  
Cry to its mate in the dawn;  
I hear the black koel's slow, tremulous wooing,  
And sweet in the gardens the calling and cooing  
Of passionate bulbul and dove....  
But what is their music to me, papeeha  
Songs of their laughter and love, papeeha,  
To me, forsaken of love?

Sarojini Naidu

## A Rajput Love Song

(Parvati at her lattice)

O Love! were you a basil-wreath to twine  
among my tresses,  
A jewelled clasp of shining gold to bind around my sleeve,  
O Love! were you the keora's soul that haunts  
my silken raiment,  
A bright, vermilion tassel in the girdles that I weave;

O Love! were you the scented fan  
that lies upon my pillow,  
A sandal lute, or silver lamp that burns before my shrine,  
Why should I fear the jealous dawn  
that spreads with cruel laughter,  
Sad veils of separation between your face and mine?

Haste, O wild-bee hours, to the gardens of the sun set!  
Fly, wild-parrot day, to the orchards of the west!  
Come, O tender night, with your sweet,  
consoling darkness,  
And bring me my Beloved to the shelter of my breast!

(Amar Singh in the saddle)

O Love! were you the hooded hawk upon my hand  
that flutters,  
Its collar-band of gleaming bells atinkle as I ride,  
O Love! were you a turban-spray or  
floating heron-feather,  
The radiant, swift, unconquered sword  
that swingeth at my side;

O Love! were you a shield against the  
arrows of my foemen,  
An amulet of jade against the perils of the way,  
How should the drum-beats of the dawn  
divide me from your bosom,  
Or the union of the midnight be ended with the day?

Haste, O wild-deer hours, to the meadows of the sunset!  
Fly, wild stallion day, to the pastures of the west!  
Come, O tranquil night, with your soft,  
consenting darkness,  
And bear me to the fragrance of my Beloved's breast!

Sarojini Naidu

## **Alabaster**

LIKE this alabaster box whose art  
Is frail as a cassia-flower, is my heart,  
Carven with delicate dreams and wrought  
With many a subtle and exquisite thought.

Therein I treasure the spice and scent  
Of rich and passionate memories blent  
Like odours of cinnamon, sandal and clove,  
Of song and sorrow and life and love.

Sarojini Naidu

## **An Indian Love Song**

He

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

She

How shall I yield to the voice of thy pleading,  
how shall I grant thy prayer,  
Or give thee a rose-red silken tassel,  
a scented leaf from my hair?  
Or fling in the flame of thy heart's desire the veils that cover my face,  
Profane the law of my father's creed for a foe  
of my father's race?  
Thy kinsmen have broken our sacred altars and slaughtered our sacred kine,  
The feud of old faiths and the blood of old battles sever thy people and mine.

He

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

Sarojini Naidu

## **Autumn Song**

Like a joy on the heart of a sorrow,  
The sunset hangs on a cloud;  
A golden storm of glittering sheaves,  
Of fair and frail and fluttering leaves,  
The wild wind blows in a cloud.

Hark to a voice that is calling  
To my heart in the voice of the wind:  
My heart is weary and sad and alone,  
For its dreams like the fluttering leaves have gone,  
And why should I stay behind?

Sarojini Naidu

## **Corn Grinders**

O little mouse, why dost thou cry  
While merry stars laugh in the sky?

Alas! alas! my lord is dead!  
Ah, who will ease my bitter pain?  
He went to seek a millet-grain  
In the rich farmer's granary shed;  
They caught him in a baited snare,  
And slew my lover unaware:  
Alas! alas! my lord is dead.

O little deer, why dost thou moan,  
Hid in thy forest-bower alone?

Alas! alas! my lord is dead!  
Ah! who will quiet my lament?

At fall of eventide he went  
To drink beside the river-head;  
A waiting hunter threw his dart,  
And struck my lover through the heart.  
Alas! alas! my lord is dead.

O little bride, why dost thou weep  
With all the happy world asleep?

Alas! alas! my lord is dead!  
Ah, who will stay these hungry tears,  
Or still the want of famished years,  
And crown with love my marriage-bed?  
My soul burns with the quenchless fire  
That lit my lover's funeral pyre:  
Alas! alas! my lord is dead.

Sarojini Naidu

## **Coromandel Fishers**

Rise, brothers, rise; the wakening skies pray to the morning light,  
The wind lies asleep in the arms of the dawn like a child that has cried all night.  
Come, let us gather our nets from the shore and set our catamarans free,  
To capture the leaping wealth of the tide, for we are the kings of the sea!

No longer delay, let us hasten away in the track of the sea gull's call,  
The sea is our mother, the cloud is our brother, the waves are our comrades all.  
What though we toss at the fall of the sun where the hand of the sea-god drives?  
He who holds the storm by the hair, will hide in his breast our lives.

Sweet is the shade of the cocoanut glade, and the scent of the mango grove,  
And sweet are the sands at the full o' the moon with the sound of the voices we love;  
But sweeter, O brothers, the kiss of the spray and the dance of the wild foam's glee;  
Row, brothers, row to the edge of the verge, where the low sky mates with the sea.

Sarojini Naidu

## **Cradle Song**

FROM groves of spice,  
O'er fields of rice,  
Athwart the lotus-stream,  
I bring for you,  
Aglint with dew  
A little lovely dream.

Sweet, shut your eyes,  
The wild fire-flies  
Dance through the fairy neem;  
From the poppy-bole  
For you I stole  
A little lovely dream.

Dear eyes, good-night,  
In golden light  
The stars around you gleam;  
On you I press  
With soft caress  
A little lovely dream.

Sarojini Naidu

## **Damayante To Nala In The Hour Of Exile**

SHALT thou be conquered of a human fate  
My liege, my lover, whose imperial head  
Hath never bent in sorrow of defeat?  
Shalt thou be vanquished, whose imperial feet  
Have shattered armies and stamped empires dead?  
Who shall unking thee, husband of a queen?  
Wear thou thy majesty inviolate.  
Earth's glories flee of human eyes unseen,  
Earth's kingdoms fade to a remembered dream,  
But thine henceforth shall be a power supreme,

Dazzling command and rich dominion,  
The winds thy heralds and thy vassals all  
The silver-belted planets and the sun.  
Where'er the radiance of thy coming fall,  
Shall dawn for thee her saffron footcloths spread,  
Sunset her purple canopies and red,  
In serried splendour, and the night unfold  
Her velvet darkness wrought with starry gold  
For kingly raiment, soft as cygnet-down.  
My hair shall braid thy temples like a crown  
Of sapphires, and my kiss upon thy brows  
Like çithar-music lull thee to repose,  
Till the sun yield thee homage of his light.

O king, thy kingdom who from thee can wrest?  
What fate shall dare uncrown thee from this breast,  
O god-born lover, whom my love doth gird  
And armour with impregnable delight  
Of Hope's triumphant keen flame-carven sword?

Sarojini Naidu

## **Ecstasy**

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

Sarojini Naidu

## Harvest Hymn

Mens Voices:

LORD of the lotus, lord of the harvest,  
Bright and munificent lord of the morn!  
Thine is the bounty that prospered our sowing,  
Thine is the bounty that nurtured our corn.  
We bring thee our songs and our garlands for tribute,  
The gold of our fields and the gold of our fruit;  
O giver of mellowing radiance, we hail thee,  
We praise thee, O Surya, with cymbal and flute.

Lord of the rainbow, lord of the harvest,  
Great and beneficent lord of the main!  
Thine is the mercy that cherished our furrows,

Thine is the mercy that fostered our grain.  
We bring thee our thanks and our garlands for tribute,  
The wealth of our valleys, new-garnered and ripe;  
O sender of rain and the dewfall, we hail thee,  
We praise thee, Varuna, with cymbal and pipe.

Womens Voices:

Queen of the gourd-flower, queen of the harvest,  
Sweet and omnipotent mother, O Earth!  
Thine is the plentiful bosom that feeds us,  
Thine is the womb where our riches have birth.  
We bring thee our love and our garlands for tribute,  
With gifts of thy opulent giving we come;  
O source of our manifold gladness, we hail thee,  
We praise thee, O Prithvi, with cymbal and drum.

All Voices:

Lord of the Universe, Lord of our being,  
Father eternal, ineffable Om!  
Thou art the Seed and the Scythe of our harvests,  
Thou art our Hands and our Heart and our Home.  
We bring thee our lives and our labours for tribute,  
Grant us thy succour, thy counsel, thy care.  
O Life of all life and all blessing, we hail thee,  
We praise thee, O Bramha, with cymbal and prayer

Sarojini Naidu

## **Humayun To Zobeida (From the Urdu)**

You flaunt your beauty in the rose, your glory in the dawn,  
Your sweetness in the nightingale, your white-ness in the swan.

You haunt my waking like a dream, my slumber like a moon,  
Pervade me like a musky scent, possess me like a tune.

Yet, when I crave of you, my sweet, one tender moment's grace,  
You cry, "I sit behind the veil, I cannot show my face."

Shall any foolish veil divide my longing from my bliss?  
Shall any fragile curtain hide your beauty from my kiss?

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

Sarojini Naidu

## **In Praise Of Henna**

A KOKILA called from a henna-spray:  
Lira! liree! Lira! liree!  
Hasten, maidens, hasten away  
To gather the leaves of the henna-tree.  
Send your pitchers afloat on the tide,  
Gather the leaves ere the dawn be old,  
Grind them in mortars of amber and gold,  
The fresh green leaves of the henna-tree.

A kokila called from a henna-spray:  
Lira! liree! Lira! liree!  
Hasten maidens, hasten away  
To gather the leaves of the henna-tree.  
The tilka's red for the brow of a bride,  
And betel-nut's red for lips that are sweet;  
But, for lily-like fingers and feet,  
The red, the red of the henna-tree.

Sarojini Naidu

## **In Salutation to the 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 weariness,  
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 heart is drunk and drenched with Thee,  
O inmost wind of living ecstasy!  
O intimate essence of eternity!

Sarojini Naidu

## **In The Forest**

HERE, O my heart, let us burn the dear dreams that are dead,  
Here in this wood let us fashion a funeral pyre  
Of fallen white petals and leaves that are mellow and red,  
Here let us burn them in noon's flaming torches of fire.

We are weary, my heart, we are weary, so long we have borne  
The heavy loved burden of dreams that are dead, let us rest,  
Let us scatter their ashes away, for a while let us mourn;  
We will rest, O my heart, till the shadows are gray in the west.

But soon we must rise, O my heart, we must wander again  
Into the war of the world and the strife of the throng;  
Let us rise, O my heart, let us gather the dreams that remain,  
We will conquer the sorrow of life with the sorrow of song.

Sarojini Naidu

## **Indian Dancer**

EYES ravished with rapture, celestially panting, what passionate bosoms aflaming with fire  
Drink deep of the hush of the hyacinth heavens that glimmer around them in fountains of light;  
O wild and entrancing the strain of keen music that cleaveth the stars like a wail of desire,  
And beautiful dancers with houri-like faces bewitch the voluptuous watches of night.

The scents of red roses and sandalwood flutter and die in the maze of their gem-tangled hair,  
And smiles are entwining like magical serpents the poppies of lips that are opiate-sweet;  
Their glittering garments of purple are burning like tremulous dawns in the quivering air,  
And exquisite, subtle and slow are the tinkle and tread of their rhythmical, slumber-soft feet.

Now silent, now singing and swaying and swinging, like blossoms that bend to the breezes or showers,  
Now wantonly winding, they flash, now they falter, and, lingering, languish in radiant choir;  
Their jewel-girt arms and warm, wavering, lily-long fingers enchant through melodious hours,  
Eyes ravished with rapture, celestially panting, what passionate bosoms aflaming with fire!

Sarojini Naidu

## Indian Dancers

EYES ravished with rapture, celestially panting, what passionate bosoms aflaming with fire  
Drink deep of the hush of the hyacinth heavens that glimmer around them in fountains of light;  
O wild and entrancing the strain of keen music that cleaveth the stars like a wail of desire,  
And beautiful dancers with houri-like faces bewitch the voluptuous watches of night.  
The scents of red roses and sandalwood flutter and die in the maze of their gem-tangled hair,

And smiles are entwining like magical serpents the poppies of lips that are opiate-sweet;  
Their glittering garments of purple are burning like tremulous dawns in the quivering air,  
And exquisite, subtle and slow are the tinkle and tread of their rhythmical, slumber-soft feet.

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Their jewel-girt arms and warm, wavering, lily-long fingers enchant through melodious hours,  
Eyes ravished with rapture, celestially panting, what passionate bosoms aflaming with fire!

Sarojini Naidu

## Indian Love Song

She

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

He

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

Sarojini Naidu

## **Indian Weavers**

WEAVERS, weaving at break of day,  
Why do you weave a garment so gay? . . .  
Blue as the wing of a halcyon wild,  
We weave the robes of a new-born child.

Weavers, weaving at fall of night,  
Why do you weave a garment so bright? . . .  
Like the plumes of a peacock, purple and green,  
We weave the marriage-veils of a queen.

Weavers, weaving solemn and still,  
What do you weave in the moonlight chill? . . .  
White as a feather and white as a cloud,  
We weave a dead man's funeral shroud.

Sarojini Naidu

## LEILI

THE serpents are asleep among the poppies,  
The fireflies light the soundless panther's way  
To tangled paths where shy gazelles are straying,  
And parrot-plumes outshine the dying day.  
O soft! the lotus-buds upon the stream  
Are stirring like sweet maidens when they dream.

A caste-mark on the azure brows of Heaven,  
The golden moon burns sacred, solemn, bright  
The winds are dancing in the forest-temple,  
And swooning at the holy feet of Night.  
Hush! in the silence mystic voices sing  
And make the gods their incense-offering.

Sarojini Naidu

## **Life**

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

Children, ye have not lived, ye but exist  
Till some resistless hour shall rise and move  
Your hearts to wake and hunger after love,  
And thirst with passionate longing for the things  
That burn your brows with blood-red sufferings.

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

Sarojini Naidu

## **My Dead Dream**

HAVE YOU found me, at last, O my Dream? Seven eons ago  
You died and I buried you deep under forests of snow.  
Why have you come hither? Who bade you awake from your sleep  
And track me beyond the cerulean foam of the deep?

Would you tear from my lintels these sacred green garlands of leaves?  
Would you scare the white, nested, wild pigeons of joy from my eaves?  
Would you touch and defile with dead fingers the robes of my priest?  
Would you weave your dim moan with the chantings of love at my feast?

Go back to your grave, O my Dream, under forests of snow,  
Where a heart-riven child hid you once, seven eons ago.  
Who bade you arise from your darkness? I bid you depart!  
Profane not the shrines I have raised in the clefts of my heart.

Sarojini Naidu

## **Nightfall In The City Of Hyderabad**

SEE how the speckled sky burns like a pigeon's throat,  
Jewelled with embers of opal and peridote.

See the white river that flashes and scintillates,  
Curved like a tusk from the mouth of the city-gates.

Hark, from the minaret, how the muezzin's call  
Floats like a battle-flag over the city wall.

From trellised balconies, languid and luminous  
Faces gleam, veiled in a splendour voluminous.

Leisurely elephants wind through the winding lanes,  
Swinging their silver bells hung from their silver chains.

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

Over the city bridge Night comes majestic,  
Borne like a queen to a sumptuous festival.

Sarojini Naidu

## Ode to H.H. The Nizam Of Hyderabad

DEIGN, Prince, my tribute to receive,  
This lyric offering to your name,  
Who round your jewelled scepter bind  
The lilies of a poet's fame;  
Beneath whose sway concordant dwell  
The peoples whom your laws embrace,  
In brotherhood of diverse creeds,  
And harmony of diverse race:

The votaries of the Prophet's faith,  
Of whom you are the crown and chief  
And they, who bear on Vedic brows  
Their mystic symbols of belief;  
And they, who worshipping the sun,  
Fled o'er the old Iranian sea;  
And they, who bow to Him who trod  
The midnight waves of Galilee.

Sweet, sumptuous fables of Baghdad  
The splendours of your court recall,  
The torches of a Thousand Nights  
Blaze through a single festival;  
And Saki-singers down the streets,  
Pour for us, in a stream divine,  
From goblets of your love-ghazals  
The rapture of your Sufi wine.

Prince, where your radiant cities smile,  
Grim hills their sombre vigils keep,  
Your ancient forests hoard and hold  
The legends of their centuried sleep;  
Your birds of peace white-pinioned float  
O'er ruined fort and storied plain,  
Your faithful stewards sleepless guard  
The harvests of your gold and grain.

God give you joy, God give you grace  
To shield the truth and smite the wrong,  
To honour Virtue, Valour, Worth.  
To cherish faith and foster song.  
So may the lustre of your days  
Outshine the deeds Firdusi sung,  
Your name within a nation's prayer,  
Your music on a nation's tongue.

Sarojini Naidu

## **Palanquin Bearers**

Lightly, O lightly we bear her along,  
She sways like a flower in the wind of our song;  
She skims like a bird on the foam of a stream,  
She floats like a laugh from the lips of a dream.  
Gaily, O gaily we glide and we sing,  
We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

Softly, O softly we bear her along,  
She hangs like a star in the dew of our song;  
She springs like a beam on the brow of the tide,  
She falls like a tear from the eyes of a bride.  
Lightly, O lightly we glide and we sing,  
We bear her along like a pearl on a string.

Sarojini Naidu

## **Past and Future**

The new hath come and now the old retires:  
And so the past becomes a mountain-cell,  
Where lone, apart, old hermit-memories dwell  
In consecrated calm, forgotten yet  
Of the keen heart that hastens to forget  
Old longings in fulfilling new desires.

And now the Soul stands in a vague, intense  
Expectancy and anguish of suspense,  
On the dim chamber-threshold . . . lo! he sees  
Like a strange, fated bride as yet unknown,  
His timid future shrinking there alone,  
Beneath her marriage-veil of mysteries.

Sarojini Naidu

## **Song Of A Dream**

ONCE in the dream of a night I stood  
Lone in the light of a magical wood,  
Soul-deep in visions that poppy-like sprang;  
And spirits of Truth were the birds that sang,  
And spirits of Love were the stars that glowed,  
And spirits of Peace were the streams that flowed  
In that magical wood in the land of sleep.

Lone in the light of that magical grove,  
I felt the stars of the spirits of Love  
Gather and gleam round my delicate youth,  
And I heard the song of the spirits of Truth;  
To quench my longing I bent me low  
By the streams of the spirits of Peace that flow  
In that magical wood in the land of sleep.

Sarojini Naidu

## Street Cries

WHEN dawn's first cymbals beat upon the sky,  
Rousing the world to labour's various cry,  
To tend the flock, to bind the mellowing grain,  
From ardent toil to forge a little gain,  
And fasting men go forth on hurrying feet,  
Buy bread, buy bread, rings down the eager street.

When the earth falters and the waters swoon  
With the implacable radiance of noon,  
And in dim shelters koils hush their notes,  
And the faint, thirsting blood in languid throats  
Craves liquid succour from the cruel heat,  
Buy fruit, buy fruit, steals down the panting street.

When twilight twinkling o'er the gay bazaars,  
Unfurls a sudden canopy of stars,  
When lutes are strung and fragrant torches lit  
On white roof-terraces where lovers sit  
Drinking together of life's poignant sweet,  
Buy flowers, buy flowers, floats down the singing street.

Sarojini Naidu

## **Suttee**

LAMP of my life, the lips of Death  
Hath blown thee out with their sudden breath;  
Naught shall revive thy vanished spark . . .  
Love, must I dwell in the living dark?

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

Life of my life, Death's bitter sword  
Hath severed us like a broken word,  
Rent us in twain who are but one . . .  
Shall the flesh survive when the soul is gone?

Sarojini Naidu

## **THE INDIAN GIPSY**

IN tattered robes that hoard a glittering trace  
Of bygone colours, broidered to the knee,  
Behold her, daughter of a wandering race,  
Tameless, with the bold falcon's agile grace,  
And the lithe tiger's sinuous majesty.

With frugal skill her simple wants she tends,  
She folds her tawny heifers and her sheep  
On lonely meadows when the daylight ends,  
Ere the quick night upon her flock descends  
Like a black panther from the caves of sleep.

Time's river winds in foaming centuries  
Its changing, swift, irrevocable course  
To far off and incalculable seas;  
She is twin-born with primal mysteries,  
And drinks of life at Time's forgotten source

Sarojini Naidu

## **The Pardah Nashin**

HER life is a revolving dream  
Of languid and sequestered ease;  
Her girdles and her fillets gleam  
Like changing fires on sunset seas;  
Her raiment is like morning mist,  
Shot opal, gold and amethyst.

From thieving light of eyes impure,  
From coveting sun or wind's caress,  
Her days are guarded and secure  
Behind her carven lattices,  
Like jewels in a turbaned crest,  
Like secrets in a lover's breast.

But though no hand unsanctioned dares  
Unveil the mysteries of her grace,  
Time lifts the curtain unawares,  
And Sorrow looks into her face . . .  
Who shall prevent the subtle years,  
Or shield a woman's eyes from tears?

Sarojini Naidu

## **The Poet To Death**

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

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

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

Sarojini Naidu

## **The Poet's Love Song**

IN noon-tide hours, O Love, secure and strong,  
I need thee not; mad dreams are mine to bind  
The world to my desire, and hold the wind  
A voiceless captive to my conquering song.  
I need thee not, I am content with these:  
Keep silence in thy soul, beyond the seas!

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

Sarojini Naidu

## **The Poet's Love-Song**

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Sarojini Naidu

## The Queen's Rival

QUEEN GULNAAR sat on her ivory bed,  
Around her countless treasures were spread;

Her chamber walls were richly inlaid  
With agate, porphory, onyx and jade;

The tissues that veiled her delicate breast,  
Glowed with the hues of a lapwing's crest;

But still she gazed in her mirror and sighed  
"O King, my heart is unsatisfied."

King Feroz bent from his ebony seat:  
"Is thy least desire unfulfilled, O Sweet?"

"Let thy mouth speak and my life be spent  
To clear the sky of thy discontent."

"I tire of my beauty, I tire of this  
Empty splendour and shadowless bliss;

"With none to envy and none gainsay,  
No savour or salt hath my dream or day."

Queen Gulnaar sighed like a murmuring rose:  
"Give me a rival, O King Feroz."

II

King Feroz spoke to his Chief Vizier:  
"Lo! ere to-morrow's dawn be here,

"Send forth my messengers over the sea,  
To seek seven beautiful brides for me;

"Radiant of feature and regal of mien,  
Seven handmaids meet for the Persian Queen."

. . . . .

Seven new moon tides at the Vesper call,  
King Feroz led to Queen Gulnaar's hall

A young queen eyed like the morning star:  
"I bring thee a rival, O Queen Gulnaar."

But still she gazed in her mirror and sighed:  
"O King, my heart is unsatisfied."

Seven queens shone round her ivory bed,  
Like seven soft gems on a silken thread,

Like seven fair lamps in a royal tower,

Like seven bright petals of Beauty's flower

Queen Gulnaar sighed like a murmuring rose  
"Where is my rival, O King Feroz?"

III

When spring winds wakened the mountain floods,  
And kindled the flame of the tulip buds,

When bees grew loud and the days grew long,  
And the peach groves thrilled to the oriole's song,

Queen Gulnaar sat on her ivory bed,  
Decking with jewels her exquisite head;

And still she gazed in her mirror and sighed:  
"O King, my heart is unsatisfied."

Queen Gulnsar's daughter two spring times old,  
In blue robes bordered with tassels of gold,

Ran to her knee like a wildwood fay,  
And plucked from her hand the mirror away.

Quickly she set on her own light curls  
Her mother's fillet with fringes of pearls;

Quickly she turned with a child's caprice  
And pressed on the mirror a swift, glad kiss.

Queen Gulnaar laughed like a tremulous rose:  
"Here is my rival, O King Feroz."

Sarojini Naidu

## **The Royal Tombs Of Golconda**

I MUSE among these silent fanes  
Whose spacious darkness guards your dust;  
Around me sleep the hoary plains  
That hold your ancient wars in trust.

I pause, my dreaming spirit hears,  
Across the wind's unquiet tides,  
The glimmering music of your spears,  
The laughter of your royal brides.

In vain, O Kings, doth time aspire  
To make your names oblivion's sport,  
While yonder hill wears like a tier  
The ruined grandeur of your fort.

Though centuries falter and decline,  
Your proven strongholds shall remain  
Embodied memories of your line,  
Incarnate legends of your reign.

O Queens, in vain old Fate decreed  
Your flower-like bodies to the tomb;  
Death is in truth the vital seed  
Of your imperishable bloom

Each new-born year the bulbuls sing  
Their songs of your renascent loves;  
Your beauty wakens with the spring  
To kindle these pomegranate groves.

Sarojini Naidu

## **The Snake Charmer**

Hi There! I see you're enjoying the site, and just wanted to extend an invitation to register for our free site. The members of oldpoetry strive to make this a fun place to learn and share - hope you join us! - Kevin

Sarojini Naidu

## **The Song Of Princess Zeb-Un-Nissa In Praise Of Her Own Beauty**

WHEN from my cheek I lift my veil,  
The roses turn with envy pale,  
And from their pierced hearts, rich with pain,  
Send forth their fragrance like a wail.

Or if perchance one perfumed tress  
Be lowered to the wind's caress,  
The honeyed hyacinths complain,  
And languish in a sweet distress.

And, when I pause, still groves among,  
(Such loveliness is mine) a throng  
Of nightingales awake and strain  
Their souls into a quivering song.

Sarojini Naidu

## **To A Buddha Seated On A Lotus**

LORD BUDDHA, on thy Lotus-throne,  
With praying eyes and hands elate,  
What mystic rapture dost thou own,  
Immutable and ultimate?  
What peace, unravished of our ken,  
Annihilate from the world of men?

The wind of change for ever blows  
Across the tumult of our way,  
To-morrow's unborn griefs depose  
The sorrows of our yesterday.  
Dream yields to dream, strife follows strife,  
And Death unweaves the webs of Life.

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

With futile hands we seek to gain  
Our inaccessible desire,  
Diviner summits to attain,  
With faith that sinks and feet that tire;  
But nought shall conquer or control  
The heavenward hunger of our soul.

The end, elusive and afar,  
Still lures us with its beckoning flight,  
And all our mortal moments are  
A session of the Infinite.  
How shall we reach the great, unknown  
Nirvana of thy Lotus-throne?

Sarojini Naidu

## **To India**

O YOUNG through all thy 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!

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

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

Sarojini Naidu

## To My Children

Jaya Surya

GOLDEN sun of victory, born  
In my life's unclouded morn,  
In my lambent sky of love,  
May your growing glory prove  
Sacred to your consecration,  
To my heart and to my nation.  
Sun of victory, may you be  
Sun of song and liberty.

Padmaja

Lotus-maiden, you who claim  
All the sweetness of your name,  
Lakshmi, fortune's queen, defend you,  
Lotus-born like you, and send you  
Balmy moons of love to bless you,  
Gentle joy-winds to caress you.  
Lotus-maiden, may you be  
Fragrant of all ecstasy.

Ranadheera

Little lord of battle, hail  
In your newly-tempered mail!  
Learn to conquer, learn to fight  
In the foremost flanks of right,  
Like Valmiki's heroes bold,  
Rubies girt in epic gold.  
Lord of battle, may you be,  
Lord of love and chivalry.

Lilamani

Limpid jewel of delight  
Severed from the tender night  
Of your sheltering mother-mine,  
Leap and sparkle, dance and shine,  
Blithely and securely set  
In love's magic coronet.  
Living jewel, may you be  
Laughter-bound and sorrow-free.

Sarojini Naidu

## **To My Fairy Fancies**

NAY, no longer I may hold you,  
In my spirit's soft caresses,  
Nor like lotus-leaves enfold you  
In the tangles of my tresses.  
Fairy fancies, fly away  
To the white cloud-wildernesses,  
Fly away!

Nay, no longer ye may linger  
With your laughter-lighted faces,  
Now I am a thought-worn singer  
In life's high and lonely places.  
Fairy fancies, fly away,  
To bright wind-inwoven spaces,  
Fly away!

Sarojini Naidu

## **To The God of Pain**

UNWILLING priestess in thy cruel fane,  
Long hast thou held me, pitiless god of Pain,  
Bound to thy worship by reluctant vows,  
My tired breast girt with suffering, and my brows  
Anointed with perpetual weariness.  
Long have I borne thy service, through the stress  
Of rigorous years, sad days and slumberless nights,  
Performing thine inexorable rites.

For thy dark altars, balm nor milk nor rice,  
But mine own soul thou'st ta'en for sacrifice:

All the rich honey of my youth's desire,  
And all the sweet oils from my crushed life drawn,  
And all my flower-like dreams and gem-like fire  
Of hopes up-leaping like the light of dawn.

I have no more to give, all that was mine  
Is laid, a wrested tribute, at thy shrine;  
Let me depart, for my whole soul is wrung,  
And all my cheerless orisons are sung;  
Let me depart, with faint limbs let me creep  
To some dim shade and sink me down to sleep.

Sarojini Naidu

## **To Youth**

Hi There! I see you're enjoying the site, and just wanted to extend an invitation to register for our free site. The members of oldpoetry strive to make this a fun place to learn and share - hope you join us! - Kevin

Sarojini Naidu

## **Transcience**

Nay, do not grieve tho' life be full of sadness,  
Dawn will not veil her splendor for your grief,  
Nor spring deny their bright, appointed beauty  
To lotus blossom and ashoka leaf.

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

Nay, do not weep; new hopes, new dreams, new faces,  
The unspent joy of all the unborn years,  
Will prove your heart a traitor to its sorrow,  
And make your eyes unfaithful to their tears.

Sarojini Naidu

## Village Song

HONEY, child, honey, child, whither are you going?  
Would you cast your jewels all to the breezes blowing?  
Would you leave the mother who on golden grain has fed you?  
Would you grieve the lover who is riding forth to wed you?

Mother mine, to the wild forest I am going,  
Where upon the champa boughs the champa buds are blowing;  
To the kōil-haunted river-isles where lotus lilies glisten,  
The voices of the fairy folk are calling me: O listen!

Honey, child, honey, child, the world is full of pleasure,  
Of bridal-songs and cradle-songs and sandal-scented leisure.  
Your bridal robes are in the loom, silver and saffron glowing,  
Your bridal cakes are on the hearth: O whither are you going?

The bridal-songs and cradle-songs have cadences of sorrow,  
The laughter of the sun to-day, the wind of death to-morrow.  
Far sweeter sound the forest-notes where forest-streams are falling;  
O mother mine, I cannot stay, the fairy-folk are calling.

Sarojini Naidu

## **Wandering Singers**

WHERE the voice of the wind calls our wandering feet,  
Through echoing forest and echoing street,  
With lutes in our hands ever-singing we roam,  
All men are our kindred, the world is our home.  
Our lays are of cities whose lustre is shed,  
The laughter and beauty of women long dead;  
The sword of old battles, the crown of old kings,  
And happy and simple and sorrowful things.  
What hope shall we gather, what dreams shall we sow?  
Where the wind calls our wandering footsteps we go.  
No love bids us tarry, no joy bids us wait:  
The voice of the wind is the voice of our fate.

Sarojini Naidu