

and economic life in the late Qing and Republican eras. The latter half of the book, especially chapters 13 and 14, joins recent works such as Peter E. Hamilton's *Made in Hong Kong* (2021) to foreground the role of Hong Kong in knotting together the global networks of human, capital, and technology in the second half of the twentieth century.

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Naoroji: Pioneer of Indian Nationalism. *By Dinyar Patel.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020. ix + 355 pp. Photographs, notes, index. Hardcover, \$35.00. ISBN: 9780674249080.

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Reviewed by Chinmay Tumbe

Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917), an Indian of Parsi faith, teacher, businessman, social reformer, writer, administrator, political leader who became the first-ever elected Indian member of the British Parliament and cofounder of the Indian National Congress, led a truly extraordinary life. It is a life that was chronicled in 1939 by R. P. Masani, who knew Naoroji and his family personally. Since then, Naoroji's aura has waned under the shadow of Mohandas Gandhi (1869–1948) and other luminaries of India's freedom movement, and today's generation would be hard-pressed to specify Naoroji's contributions. Dinyar Patel's book seeks to restore the "Grand Old Man of India" (the subtitle of Masani's book) as the "Pioneer of Indian Nationalism." A decade-long book project that also grew out of the author's PhD dissertation at Harvard University, it consults a wide range of sources that go far beyond the collection of Naoroji's private papers stored at the National Archives of India. There is even, for instance, a charming reference to dietary habits, citing a literary outlet called *The Vegetarian* in London in 1898 (unlike Gandhi, Naoroji did eat meat).

The book begins by pointing out that Naoroji was "a seminal figure in the history of modern India, Victorian Britain and the British Empire" and that at a global level he should rank "among the great non-European thinkers and reformers of his era" (p. 8). How did a person with humble roots rise to such staggering prominence? The book follows Naoroji's life chronologically in seven chapters, starting from his exposure to liberal ideas in mid-nineteenth-century Bombay and early career in academia

teaching mathematics. In 1855, Naoroji set sail for Britain to establish “what was reputed to be the first Indian mercantile firm in Great Britain” along with the Camas, another Parsi family from Bombay (p. 13). His business had its ups and downs over the years and was eventually wound up in 1881. Somehow, this has been ignored in standard accounts of Indian business history and, while not the focus of the book, should be of great significance for business historians.

The second chapter, titled “Poverty and Princes,” lays out some of Naoroji’s key intellectual contributions. His first major contribution was to illustrate the extent of poverty in colonial India. Even after taking into account recent advancements in measuring living standards of the past, Naoroji’s estimates on per capita incomes appear to have stood the test of time. But the most influential legacy was his theory of the drain of wealth from India to Britain, best exemplified by the outflow of salaries of British officials serving in India and the corollary of appointing Indians in key administrative positions to stem the drain. Naoroji also argued that this “drain” was the cause of impoverishment in India. Patel shows how Naoroji arrived at these conclusions but does not engage enough with recent assessments by economic historians such as K. N. Chaudhuri and Tirthankar Roy, who point out the methodological problems in interpreting the drain and its seeming insignificance when compared with the size of the Indian economy as a whole. “Drain” provided the firepower for the political rhetoric in India’s freedom movement and Naoroji was the architect of the theory, but whether it actually did occur is widely contested. Indeed, what the book successfully conveys is, first, that while Naoroji was obsessed with the “drain” theory, his views were tactical and, second, that his broader message was that India would be better governed by Indian administrators. Naoroji, in fact, became an administrator in the princely state of Baroda, to practice what he preached.

The book is at its best when Patel describes Naoroji’s activities in Britain. From Naoroji’s teaching Gujarati at the University College in London to founding the East India Association in 1866, and from his political campaigning to helping Indians in need in Britain, the book paints a vivid account of the numerous interactions he had in his long career. It is evident that Naoroji was truly “an Indian emissary in the heart of Empire,” as one of the chapters is titled. The narrative arc on how Naoroji garnered support for his causes, networking with leading feminist groups, Irish nationalists, and a whole range of actors, reveals a remarkable individual who eventually got elected (by a narrow margin of five votes) from the Central Finsbury constituency on a Liberal Party ticket. That achievement against all the odds made Naoroji—or “Black Man,” as lampooned by a British politician—a global celebrity.

It is not easy to write the biography of a polymath who lived for over nine decades across two continents and also surpass previous biographers who had the luxury of interviewing their subjects. Patel's *Naoroji* is a well-researched and well-written biography that also serves as an important history of imperialism, nationalism, and globalization.

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