

THE COSMOPOLITAN NATIONALISM OF SAROJINI NAIDU, NIGHTINGALE OF INDIA

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SAROJINI NAIDU (1879–1949), THE ENGLISH-language Indian poetess and politician, appears before the viewer in the frontispieces to her first two collections of poetry, *The Golden Threshold* (1905) and *The Bird of Time: Songs of Life, Death and the Spring* (1912).¹ She presents herself in print, as in her oratory, as both a figure of nineteenth-century verse culture and a cosmopolitan nationalist. *The Golden Threshold* includes a now well-known introduction by Arthur Symons and a sketch of a young Naidu by J. B. Yeats (father of W. B. Yeats). [See Figure 1.] Arrayed in a voluminous and ruffled white dress, distinctly “Western” in style, with hands clasped together, Naidu’s youthful yet grave face stares directly at the viewer. She appears here as a precocious, prepubescent Victorian poetess captured within a private setting. Yet when this volume was published in 1905, the picture, drawn during Naidu’s sojourn in England in the mid-1890s when much of the poetry included in the collection was composed, must have been almost a decade old. The only sign of racial difference in the sketch is her lightly shaded skin and dark hair. The blurred sketch echoes Naidu’s own ambiguous position at this time: she is neither wholly Indian nor wholly English, and she navigates uneasily between the roles of naïve student of poetry and accomplished poetess.

Naidu’s second collection, *The Bird of Time*, includes more frankly nationalist poetry, an introduction by Edmund Gosse, and a “portrait of the author.” The juxtaposition of the photographic “portrait” against a blank white background inscribes both gender and race more starkly than the picture in the earlier volume. [See Figure 2.] Naidu’s hair is partially veiled but her face (presented in profile) is not. Draped in Indian garments and jewelry, Naidu’s native dress, which identifies her as an Indian woman, carries a double significance. For Indian readers, she performs a nationalism she has increasingly come to embrace through her involvement in politics. For English readers of her verse, she performs her exoticism.

In presenting the different faces of Naidu – as the private singer of Indian-English poetry and the public face of Indian nationalism – these frontispieces expose what might be seen as the contradictory nature of cosmopolitanism in the context of empire.² As evidenced in the sketch, Naidu’s global success as a poetess of the English language depended upon her representation as an identifiably Westernized figure whose racial difference was subtle, contained, and unthreatening. As evidenced in the photograph, such success also depended

upon her representation as a figure of cultural and national difference; she is a product of and about India, itself a representative of the Orient.

Hailed as the “Nightingale of India”³ for her remarkable lyrical and oratorical gifts, Sarojini Naidu’s qualified acceptance by the literary and political establishments of both India and England has resulted in a near-canonization of her work. Yet the very lyricism that brought international recognition to her poetry simultaneously undermined Naidu’s status as politician, making her seem less than fit for the weighty and masculine work of nation-building. Acclaimed early in life as a poetic genius, she was awarded a scholarship to study at King’s College, London and Girton College, Cambridge. In England, where she resided from 1895 to 1898, she was both influenced by and marginally associated with the Aesthetic and Decadent circles. While she was encouraged in her poetic endeavors, her work was at times cast by critics as technically proficient but superficial, pretty, and thus feminine.⁴ After returning to India, she threw herself into the Indian struggle for independence and various women’s causes tied to the nationalist movement, such as women’s suffrage,⁵ by taking on the rhetorical role of representative Indian woman for Indian women. Not only did she “sing” for the nation, she spoke on its behalf in public forums around the world (including South Africa, England, France, and the United States) as an ambassador and spokeswoman of Indian nationalism. Naidu also acted in an official capacity as the first female Indian president of the Indian National Congress in 1925⁶ and the appointed governor of the United Provinces, now Uttar Pradesh, in 1947.

Despite, or perhaps due to, her belief in and embodiment of female exceptionalism, the gendered critical assessments of Naidu’s work as fanciful and romantic haunted her critical legacy throughout much of the twentieth century.⁷ Naidu’s exoticization of India, and by extension her exoticization of herself as a representative of India, brought her the fame she so greatly desired but which she believed she should, as a woman, rhetorically deny. Indeed, her necessarily gendered engagement with the gendered discourse of Orientalism reveals the cost of womanhood in a world of British imperialism and Indian masculine nationalism. Naidu’s strategic co-optation of the relatively non-threatening, because feminized, language of Orientalism allowed her to circulate the world – both through her poetry and through her corporeal body – as a gendered subject speaking of the duties and rights of Indian women. But such subjecthood came at a price: the construction of Naidu as an exotic object of desire by her British male patrons and the later deployment of Naidu as an object of dismissal by Indian nationalists and literary critics who questioned her commitment to both poetry and politics.

But these evaluations fail to recognize Naidu’s refusal to untangle the threads of poetry and politics, public and private, cosmopolitan and nationalist. The circulation of both Naidu herself and her poetry, speeches, and dramatic and declamatory personal letters, which were often addressed to public figures, challenges those putatively separate spheres of public and private maintained by both Indian nationalists and Victorian traditionalists.⁸ Naidu’s public recitations of poetry, often given as part of speeches on national issues, intentionally blurred the established boundaries between political rhetoric and lyric poetry.

Naidu’s initial publication in England depended upon her deployment of a strategic Orientalism that relied on and subverted the gendered Orientalism cultivated by her British literary mentors Arthur Symons and Edmund Gosse, who cast her in the role of unthreatening sexual and literary exotic. Their patronage, reflected in the prefaces to her publications, helped secure her access to English cultural institutions. Yet Naidu used her formidable rhetorical

and poetic skills to shape her own Orientalist representations for her Western audiences. Naidu's practice of strategic Orientalism paradoxically made possible her nationalist claims by allowing her to glorify both an essential Indianness as well as an ancient Indian past, constructing that past as alive and present for nationalist purposes. As she claims in a December 1917 speech, the "5,000 years of Vedic culture that absorbed and enriched itself within the Aryan culture, Buddhist culture, and European culture of the world" speaks to the greatness of India's living history as a unique cultural amalgamation (Naidu, *Speeches* 153). At moments such as this, Naidu endorses a model of cosmopolitan practice that, as Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo has argued about the global response to European cosmopolitanism more generally, "respon[ds to] and resist[s] . . . totalizing and hegemonic cosmopolitanisms" (9).

For Naidu, cosmopolitanism was not incompatible with nationalism.⁹ In her poetry as well as in her politics, Naidu promoted cosmopolitan nationalism as a stance she believed could accommodate both "home and the world."¹⁰ She proclaims this philosophy of a unifying Indian nationalism in a 1903 speech delivered to a group of young Madrassi college men: "I was born in Bengal. I belong to the Madras Presidency. In a Muhammadan city [Hyderabad] I was brought up and married, and there I lived; still I am neither a Bengali, nor a Madrasi, nor a Hyderabad, but I am an Indian (*Cheers*), not a Hindu, not a Brahmin, but an Indian to whom my Muhammadan brother is as dear and as precious as my Hindu brother" (Naidu, *Speeches* 6). While she may be Bengali in "ethnic" identification, Madrassi in regional political affiliation, and Hyderabad in upbringing, she strategically locates herself as "Indian" more generally. Yet even "Indianness" is ultimately confining since "it is better that your ideals of patriotism should extend to the welfare of the world and not be limited to the prosperity of India," because caring only for one's country would mean "it would end where it began, by being a profit to your own community and very probably to your own self" (Naidu, *Speeches* 7). She fears provincialism and individualism, which she equates with self-interest. She favors a nationalism tempered by the demands of global humanism, which takes into consideration interests beyond one's "own community" and one's "own self." Naidu's ideal of the harmony of various "creeds" and peoples unified under the sign of an Indian nation highlights the central paradox of cosmopolitan nationalism as a political ideology under British imperial rule, which relied on Indian communalism¹¹ and English jingoism.

It is worth noting, however, that Sarojini Naidu's cosmopolitan nationalism was made possible by her relative privilege, despite her colonized subject position, in education, caste, and class, and by her access to cultural and political institutions both at home and abroad. Naidu structures her cosmopolitan stance through the double consciousness of England as the place of her literary language and initial literary aspirations and India as the place of her national belonging. Naidu thus extends our understanding of "Victorian" into the global reach of empire and complicates our understanding of "cosmopolitanism" by taking into account the rhetoric of Orientalism and the designs of imperialism.

"Noblesse oblige!"

AFTER "CONSIDER[ING] THE QUESTION of publication very carefully," Naidu sent Edmund Gosse a letter from Hyderabad dated January 1905 agreeing to compile a collection of

poems and justifying her concession to publish (Naidu, *Letters* 44). What decided her, she claims, was the realization of the extent of her existing fame, as made apparent at the annual meeting of the Indian National Congress held in December 1904 in Bombay: “To my great amazement – it was nothing less – so far from being the insignificant little provincial I had thought myself I was treated almost as a national possession. I!” (Naidu, *Letters* 45). She explicitly links politics and national life to poetry in her claim that the “tribute” she receives from “the great Indian public,” who see her as “almost as a national possession,” is what prompts her “to say ‘Yes’” to Gosse’s “suggestion” of poetic publication. Although she disingenuously attributes such accolades “[p]artly” to her gender (the “chivalry” is due to her “matronly proportions”), these accolades also allow her to displace her desire for publication onto the Indian public (Naidu, *Letters* 45). By satiating an existent public rather than creating one, she fulfils a responsibility to that public: “My public was waiting for me – no, not for me, so much as for a poet, a national poet, and it was ready to accept me if I would only let it” (Naidu, *Letters* 45). Leaving her “sleepbound little city of Hyderabad” for the urban environs of Bombay reflects her sense that her poetic duties extend beyond her locality to her nation and its place in the world (Naidu, *Letters* 45). In realizing this responsibility she has to the Indian people through her poetry, through “Art [as a tool] for good or evil,” she begins to formulate the ethic that would inform the remainder of her life and career as both poet and politician (Naidu, *Letters* 45).

Naidu’s belief in the mandates of *noblesse oblige* as an unofficial and yet institutionalized caretaking and accepted responsibility for those “below,” harkens back to a benevolent feudalism exemplified by the contemporary rule of the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Mughal ruler Mir Mahboob Ali Khan (1869–1911), who presided over the city of her birth and residence. Naidu claims the Nizam was loved and respected by his subjects despite the archaism of his role as ruler of a nominally princely state within the modern “nation.”¹² Yet, for Naidu, *noblesse oblige* is also essentially modern insofar as it structures the nation-state and the role and duties of the newly emerging educated Indian elites to the Indian masses. This ethic imposed itself as a measure of propriety as well as a means of constraint on Indian elites, including the Nizam and Naidu herself.

Naidu first uses the term *noblesse oblige* with her friend, the nationalist leader Gopal Krishna Gokhale (1866–1915), in a 1914 letter written from Hyderabad after a brief trip to London. She notes that she is “humbled, proud, and grateful” that her return to India was met with such happiness by friends and family and “feel[s] more and more keenly the fact and significance of the great old saying *noblesse oblige* and expanding it to the widest and highest capacity of responsibility and scope . . . in relation not merely to my home or city or state but to my India, my India” (Naidu, *Letters* 99). In an emphatically possessive rhetorical gesture (“my India, my India”) that is simultaneously feudal and maternal, Naidu explains that people of privilege are obligated to enact their duties to, show their care for, and bestow their munificence upon their nation and their people.

Naidu condemns the failure of *noblesse oblige* by the most privileged and powerful of all, the British Empire, in “The Gift of India,” a poem included in Naidu’s most explicitly nationalist collection, *The Broken Wing: Songs of Love, Death and Destiny, 1915–1916* (1917). This poem was also delivered orally at a meeting of the Hyderabad Ladies’ War Relief Association in December 1915 and is included in her collected speeches. Both rhetorically and literally addressed to an audience of Indian women, it details the sacrifice made by Indian mothers on behalf of an ungrateful Empire:

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

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.

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

When the terror and tumult of hate shall cease
And life be refashioned on anvils of peace,
And your love shall offer memorial thanks
To the comrades who fought in your dauntless ranks,
And you honour the deeds of the deathless ones
Remember the blood of thy martyred sons! (Naidu, *Broken*; quoted in full)

In its critique of Empire and imperialism, this poem lays bare the dark side of cosmopolitanism or, in Nwankwo's words, it exposes a "form of European cosmopolitanism, and more specifically [one] of the ways Europeans constructed their definitions of self and community in relation to and through their relationship to the broader world" (9). Imperial rule means the death and sacrifice of young male imperial subjects on foreign shores, on the "blood-brown meadows of Flanders and France." India and, more specifically, India's mothers have sacrificed not only the fruits of their lands but the fruits of their "stricken womb[s]." The sacrifice of motherhood is performed for the never-specified addressee, the British Empire, which demands but does not depend upon such sacrifice and, therefore, remains unappreciative. Indeed, the forced sacrifice of the speaker, the representative of Indian mothers, violates the benevolently hierarchical relations of *noblesse oblige*, which holds that the Empire, as patron and ruler, should sacrifice for its subjects; subjects should not sacrifice for Empire (in contrast to the Indian nation, which is constructed in nationalist discourse as a feminized cause unable to survive without Indians' care and sacrifice).

The startlingly intimate nature of the questions posed in the first and third stanzas, addressed from a "me" to a "you" in a tone simultaneously plaintive and accusatory, personalize and individualize the anger and despair of Indian mothers. Yet the speaker also self-consciously stages a rhetorical and rhythmic disciplining of this emotion. In her lyric identification as a representative mother, the speaker wonders whether the addressee is

able to “measure the grief of the tears I weep/ Or compass the woe of the watch I keep” just as the poet herself “measures” out the line and “compass[es]” her emotion. The aestheticization of sons’ corpses, which are compared to “shells on Egyptian sands” and are “strewn like blossoms,” distances and thus contains grief. This containment also occurs in the rhetorical control of the second and fourth stanzas, which are each single sentences structured by the accretion of description in the former and the accretion of independent clauses in the latter. The piling up of description and clauses, which mimics the piling up of male Indian bodies, starkly delineates the limits of *noblesse oblige* as ethic and practice.

Yet, for Naidu, the right practice of these complex relations of obligation, especially by elites, was necessary for promoting a just society and in structuring a nation. As she writes in a 1921 letter to one of her daughters: “You are not free – one is – in the sense of being a law unto yourself in defiance of all existing tradition in our country – for freedom is the heaviest bondage in one sense – since it entails duties, responsibilities and opportunities from which slaves are immune . . . *Noblesse oblige!*” (Naidu, *Letters* 157). Although Naidu passionately advocated for women’s rights in the nation, those rights were subordinate to women’s responsibility as daughters, wives, and mothers to the national project. The foreword from *The Broken Wing* issues a paean to womanhood that also enjoins women to rise and heed the call of the nation, personified as the “Great Mother.” This figure expects, if not demands, tributes of love and loyalty in the form of “song or speech, service or self-sacrifice” (Naidu, *Broken* 7) – all of which Naidu herself willingly offers up. For Naidu, self-sacrifice does not preclude or erase self-advancement; the more one advances, the more one can and should sacrifice.

The Nightingale of India Sings

IN A 1905 LETTER TO EDMUND GOSSE, written immediately preceding the publication of her first volume, Naidu detailed the difficulties of separating a life of poetry from a life of politics: “I wonder if you can realize how difficult it is for any one to keep ‘merely’ to the ‘primrose path’ of Art – in India There is a tacit understanding that all talents and enthusiasms should concentrate themselves on some practical end for the immediate and obvious good of the nation” (Naidu, *Letters* 47). She simultaneously explains, justifies, wonders at, and bemoans the inability to practice *ars gratia artis* in “Modern India” when pressured by “[t]he leader of a ‘religious reform,’ the prophet of ‘social progress,’ the editor of a political journal, the worker in the cause of ‘female education’” to devote oneself to their causes (Naidu, *Letters* 47). Yet such supposed “difficult[y],” perhaps persistent in the elite nationalist circles in which Naidu moved at the time, also allowed Naidu to use her poetry for political purposes as well as to politicize her poetry. Her self-justification for not following a purist aesthetic philosophy advances a muted and somewhat tentative critique of that philosophy’s lack of social engagement. It also points to the difference of art practiced in the colonies, where aesthetic concerns were less easily divorced from politics. Later Anglophone writers – Leopold Senghor, for example – would more forcefully condemn the separation of art and politics that Naidu here critiques. But for Naidu, this letter marks the beginning of a life-long struggle to reconcile the roles of poet and politician.

Because Naidu’s self-identification as a lyric poet of the English language was seen to be at odds with the political commitments in which she became actively involved, she often

felt the need to justify her work in both professions, as she did in a speech delivered at the Madras Provincial Conference in May 1918:¹³

Often and often have they said to me: "Why have you come out of the ivory tower of dreams to the market place? Why have you deserted the pipes and flute of the poet to be the most strident trumpet of those who stand and call the nation to battle?" Because the function of a poet is not merely to be isolated in ivory towers of dreams set in a garden of roses, but his place is with the people; in the dust of the highways, in the difficulties of battle is the poet's destiny. The one reason why he is a poet is that in the hour of danger, in the hour of defeat and despair, the poet should say to the dreamer: "If you dream true, all difficulties, all illusions, all despair are but *Maya*: the one thing that matters is hope. Here I stand before you with your higher dreams, your invisible courage, your indomitable victories." Therefore, to-day in the hour of struggle, when in your hands it lies to win victory for India, I, a weak woman, have come out of my home. I, a dreamer of dreams, have come into the market place, and I say: "Go forth, comrades, to victory." (Naidu, *Speeches* 188–89)

Naidu leaves the "they" of the first sentence unspecified, and one can only conjecture as to "who" might question her thus. In answering, she abjures the stereotypical role of the poet as one who lives always, like Tennyson's "The Lady of Shalott," in an "ivory tower" since, in times of difficulties, "his place is with the people, in the dust of the highways." For Naidu, her role as poet is inflected, in complicated ways, by her gender: she uses the supposedly neutral masculine pronoun to describe the poet in the abstract ("his place is with the people"), but genders her own work as a poet as female ("I, a weak woman"). As such a "weak woman," she has left the domestic space and "come out of" her "home" and, as a poet ("a dreamer of dreams"), she has left the "ivory tower" and "come into the market place."

Although she remains a woman and a poet and thus a private individual, she practices those roles in a public economy. Her poetry evinces a communal function; the poet has "deserted pipes and flute" to rally the public, or "the people," as the "most strident trumpet of those who stand and call the nation to battle." The position of the poet is thus not dissimilar to that of political activists: both engage the masses through their rhetoric. The poet must engage with the marketplace, even if such actions run contrary to gendered expectations. Though the exact nature of the "victory" Naidu proclaims in the closing line remains unclear, it is clearly national in scope. Naidu explicitly situates herself against the ideology that poetic concerns are private ones – the lyric as private utterance, in J. S. Mill's well-known 1833 formulation¹⁴ – by claiming the poet's place "with the people" in the public sphere. In doing so, she participates in what Anne Janowitz, writing about the tradition of British Romanticism, has described as a "literary form of a struggle taking place on many levels of society between the claims of *individualism* and the claims of *communitarianism*" (13). Naidu's position as a colonial subject caught in the pull of competing literary identifications further complicates this "struggle" of individual feeling and social responsibility. As exemplified in her 1918 speech, Naidu desires to be seen as an Indian-English poet working within English literary traditions, *even as* she sees herself as an Indian poet of an Indian nation writing for the Indian "people."

In the poem "Awake!" Naidu's political and poetic commitments coalesce around an apostrophe to a slumbering India. Published in Naidu's last collection, *The Broken Wing*, with a dedication to the Indian nationalist and Muslim leader Mohamed Ali Jinnah (1876–1948),¹⁵ the poem was first "[r]ecited at the Indian National Congress, 1915" held in Bombay where

Naidu served as a delegate for the United Provinces. The Indian National Congress (INC), which held its first meeting in 1885 and met annually every year after, was an institution comprised of Indian nationalist elites. Its meetings, largely conducted in English, addressed “three broad types of grievances – political, administrative and economic.”¹⁶ It would grow into a formidable national institution, advocating first for limited self-government¹⁷ and later for independence. Naidu’s participation in the 1915 gathering marks an early association with an institution that would be central to her career; she was to become its president in 1925.

Although Naidu dedicates and addresses a number of poems to male leaders, such as Gopal Krishna Gokhale and M. K. Gandhi, she always genders India as female in her poetry. Like Naidu herself, the men to whom she dedicates her political poetry were associated with the INC. While the poems represent these men as leaders, they also construct Naidu as a poet-cum-politician, establishing and publicizing her intimacy with India’s foremost political figures. The poems thereby mediate Naidu’s own crossing between the roles of poet and politician.

The transcript of Naidu’s 1915 speech to the INC supporting the resolution for self-government recounts that she “was received with an ovation” upon standing to deliver her speech. According to the same transcript, Naidu recited “Awake!” at the conclusion of the speech. Naidu’s oral delivery of the poem as the capstone to the speech blurs distinctions between rhetoric and lyric, speech and poetry, public and private.¹⁸ In the speech, Naidu declares that self-government means the desire to “be free not only from the despotism of political domination, but from that infinitely subtler and more dreadful and damning domination of your own prejudices and of your own self-seeking community or race” (Naidu, *Speeches* 147). She ends with the plea that her audience support “the larger hope and the higher vision of the United India” so that they “will be able to say with one voice as children of one Mother: –” (Naidu, *Speeches* 147). In following this statement with a recitation of the poem, Naidu enacts Indian unity through voice as well as affect.

The first stanza of the version of “Awake!” included in *The Broken Wing* presents India, in a well-rehearsed nationalist trope, as a mother who, like a goddess, must be worshipped and attended to:¹⁹

Waken, O mother! thy children implore thee,
Who kneel in thy presence to serve and adore thee!
The night is aflush with a dream of the morrow,
Why still dost thou sleep in thy bondage of sorrow?
Awaken and sever the woes that enthral us,
And hallow our hands for the triumphs that call us! (Naidu, *Broken* 1–6)

The poem is driven along by its dactyls, which Naidu breaks across each line: the “Who” of line two, for example, finishes the closing dactyl of the preceding line, “*plore thee, / Who.*” The first six-line stanza is a call from Indians as “children” to a slumbering “mother” India. Yet her children also exist in a metaphorical darkness from which they must be saved. While India is enchained by a “bondage of sorrow,” her children are imprisoned by “the woes that enthral” them.

The second stanza reiterates this mutual dependence and relation but blurs the metaphorical distinctions between the feminized India as mother, deity, and lover:

Are we not thine, O Belov'd, to inherit
The manifold pride and power of thy spirit?
Ne'er shall we fail thee, forsake thee or falter,
Whose hearts are thy home and thy shield and thine altar.
Lo! we would thrill the high stars with thy story,
And set thee again in the forefront of glory. (Naidu, *Broken* 7–12)

The children, here both lovers and devotees, will never “fail,” “forsake,” or “falter”; their “hearts are thy home and thy shield and thine altar.” These hearts are a place of comfort, protection, and worship. As an abstract entity physically yet not biologically apart from those that implore her to “awaken,” mother India is tied by affect to her children and yet is still greater than and apart from those that supplicate her.

The final stanza of the poem appears as a determinedly secularized religious chant with its repetition of sounds through feminine rhymes (crowned thee/surround thee; defend thee/attend thee; avail thee/hail thee); its dactyls ending each line with the measured optimism of a trochee; its reiteration of the call to “Mother”; and the tribute it offers through the objects (flowers, flame, sword, and song) and the sentiments (worship, hope, love, faith, and devotion) it lays before her. The stanza thus telegraphs its orality – it was, after all, written to be “sung” by Naidu – and then ends with a series of lyric cries:

Hindus: Mother! the flowers of our worship have crowned thee!
Parsis: Mother! the flame of our hope shall surround thee!
Mussulmans: Mother! the sword of our love shall defend thee!
Christians: Mother! the song of our faith shall attend thee!
All Creeds: Shall not our dauntless devotion avail thee?
Hearken! O queen and O goddess, we hail thee! (Naidu, *Broken* 13–18)

Naidu differentiates India’s children by religious type, including Hindus, Parsis, “Mussulmans,” and Christians, who are separate and yet united in their speech. Each of their cries begins with a call to the “Mother!” and ends with an extended exclamation for that “Mother” through the pronoun “thee.” Each line links to the next to construct a lyric chain that “crown[s]” the Mother in controlled rhetorical extravagance. In the last couplet of the stanza, “All Creeds” sing merged in their desire for their “queen” and “goddess.” Their love of Mother India exceeds any communal religious identification even as the religions therein identified constitute the nation.

The transcript of the poem delivered in the 1915 speech differs insofar as it does not individually list the various voices – of Hindus, Parsis, “Mussulmans,” and Christians – included in the published poem. Thus, the published poem strives to represent textually the unification of these creeds through their naming by the singular and abstract voice of the poetic speaker. This religious unification would have been visually embodied by Naidu herself during her oral recitation and somewhat mirrored by the religious composition of her audience of INC delegates.

In the speech, Naidu notes that while she is asked to speak on behalf of a province that is not her own, she does so “since it is the desire of so many people here present that some woman from amidst you, some daughter of this Bharat Mother, should raise her voice, on behalf of her sisters, to second and support this resolution on Self-Government” (Naidu, *Speeches* 145). She bestows her “individual support” but also “speak[s] in the name of many

millions of my sisters of India, not only Hindu, but Mussalman, Parsi, and other sisters” (Naidu, *Speeches* 146). She uses this role to impress upon others the importance of unity across religious differences.

Hyderabad as Cosmopolitan State

THE RELIGIOUS UNITY SHE EXHORTS in her 1915 speech is exemplified for Naidu by the city of Hyderabad, which is cosmopolitan in the harmonious coexistence of its diverse religious population (even if feudal in structure). While Naidu is a poet of India, she is also a poet of Hyderabad. She imagines this city as an “Oriental” city-state: capricious, as characterized in British colonial discourse, but tolerant of all cultures, religions, and peoples as well as a patron of the arts under the direction of the Nizam. Through her poetry, then, Naidu employs the princely state of Hyderabad as both a symbol and ideal of cosmopolitan nationalism. Like India, and much like Naidu herself, Hyderabad negotiates between Hinduism and Islam, between the real and ideal, between the poetry and politics, and between the local, the national, and the global.

Both Naidu’s letters to her poetic patrons and her poetry disseminate Orientalist images of her home-city of Hyderabad as a place of fading princely power and prerogatives but also of sensual, mystical beauty. In an August 1899 letter to Edmund Gosse, Naidu claims that Hyderabad both inspires and allows her to engage in unmediated sense perceptions: “[I]like Gautier, I am one for whom the visible world exists . . . this definite, dramatic world of so varied and fiery beauty: colour, music, perfume, and vivid human faces” (Naidu, *Letters* 39). Despite the supposed lack of “intellectual life” and “ardent, vital ‘movement’” Naidu finds there, Hyderabad allows her poetry, inspired both by Urdu literature and by Symbolism, to flourish through its cultivation of an Orientalist mode that unites both her influences (Naidu, *Letters* 39). Her interest in experiencing (and describing) a sensual, material world tempers the inherent mysticism of her “Eastern birthright” by allowing her to apply the intellectual life of England – in the “form” of a literary movement – to this city supposedly defined by its sensuality (Naidu, *Letters* 39). In this “marvelous, fantastic, physical world, where everything resolves itself into material situations, sensuous enjoyments,” there seems to be no escape from its fabulous ontology (Naidu, *Letters* 40). Life in Hyderabad is removed not only in time but also in space (“like a representation of some old esoteric faery tale on the stage”) (Naidu, *Letters* 40). Though she seems to criticize the “detached” and unhurried quality of Hyderabad in this letter, she recuperates that very quality in her poetry on Hyderabad (Naidu, *Letters* 40). Naidu’s representation of Hyderabad allows her to conceptualize *remove* as a rhetorical strategy, in the supposed surface quality, or superficiality, of her poetry. It also allows her to conceptualize *remove* as a political philosophy, in her advocacy of a cosmopolitan nationalism that is at once deeply committed *and* disinterested, as articulated in the ethic of *noblesse oblige*.

Naidu attempts to retain difference as a category by recognizing, and sometimes even reinscribing, the “otherness” of the “other.” She does so, in part, through her embrace of an Islamic culture and an Urdu poetry that was part of Hyderabad’s culture under the Nizam and that relies on the use of the symbol – in particular the moth, flame, bulbul, and rose. Naidu’s early poetry, and especially her poetry on Hyderabad, also uses the language of sense perception found in Orientalism and Symbolism. Naidu’s aesthetic practice might be read as a response, at least in part, to her marginal association with the English Symbolist

movement, established primarily through her friendship with Symons, as well as through her acquaintance with the Rhymer's Club. In Symons's formulation, poetry should approach the condition of music through a reliance on symbolic rather than descriptive language in order "to spiritualize literature, to evade the old bondage of rhetoric . . . the regular beat of verse is broken in order that words may fly, upon subtler wings" (1415). Naidu's prosody, though unwilling to dismiss "description" or "the regular beat of verse," certainly invests itself in such sensory evocation of beauty.

Naidu's melding of Urdu poetry and Symbolism to produce her version of Orientalism emerges distinctly in *The Golden Threshold's* "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 the 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. (Naidu, *Golden*; quoted in full)

The concrete, adjectival images that are never only themselves but always "like" something else are rendered vividly: the "speckled sky" that "burns like a pigeon's throat," the river that is "[c]urved like a tusk from the mouth of the city-gates," and the night that is "[b]orne like a queen to a sumptuous festival." The poem asks the reader/listener to visualize the city through its injunctions to "[s]ee," along with the "hark" that calls the reader to "the *muezzin's* call" in the third stanza. The closed rhyming couplets of this poem, a seeming reworking of the sonnet, both close off and invite further description. As in "Awake!" the poem is propelled by the mostly dactylic meter, which here is occasionally disrupted at the beginning of a line by a stressed syllable followed by an iamb (as in the third, seventh, eighth, and eleventh lines). Naidu's rising and falling rhythms echo the movement of the "white river that flashes and scintillates," "the *muezzin's* call" that "[f]loats like a battle-flag," and the "[l]eisurely elephants [that] wind through the winding lanes."

Despite such movement, the subjects of this action – the river, elephants, and so on – are nevertheless strangely arrested insofar as they seem to serve as a sign of a frozen past or a permanent exoticism. The poem's seemingly apolitical representation of a Hyderabad

untouched by historical or contemporary political realities is, in fact, politically motivated. Stasis, generally a negative phenomenon in British Orientalist discourse,²⁰ here takes on the positive quality of stability. In other words, while English audiences would read “Nightfall in the City of Hyderabad” as a conventional Orientalist representation of a mystical but static Eastern realm, elite Indian audiences could interpret it as the lovingly rendered portrayal of a consistently beautiful and wondrous India untouched by the West. Naidu plays with Orientalist tropes, and she composes in English with English metrical forms, but her poems work cleverly to suppress, or at least to transform into something distinct, those overt Western influences. Naidu, poetess of India, calls forth and contains a magical world seemingly untouched by the West in which Hyderabad, a place simultaneously encompassing and delineating the wide range of cultures and religions within and despite imperial territorial boundaries, stands as synecdoche for India – past, present, and future.

In her poetry on Hyderabad, Naidu produces a cosmopolitan view through the manufacture and circulation of difference as profound, immutable, and ultimately unknowable. In other words, difference can be perceived and accepted without being understood – an attitude Naidu appropriates for yet another patron, whom she also employs as poetic subject, the Nizam. For Naidu, the Nizam, who presides over this “strange” and beautiful city, epitomizes such difference. As an authentic literary trope, the figure of the Nizam relieves Naidu of some of the responsibility of her orientalizing. As Naidu writes in a 1903 letter to Edmund Gosse:

The court of the Nizam is the only true eastern court left in India. It still retains all the barbaric splendour that recalls the stories of the Arabian Nights, and, I think among all the princes of India, you cannot find a figure more picturesque, more brilliant and alas more pathetic than the Nizam of Hyderabad. He affects all the dazzling caprices and follies of a potentate to hide the real loneliness of a poet: under happier circumstances of race and opportunity he would have been a leader among men, but now he is merely the eastern Hamlet. (Naidu, *Letters* 41)

The Nizam presents a sublime figure. For Naidu, his poetry seems to indicate a sensitivity of soul: one that does not replace politics but acts as a supplement to it. His “exquisite and moving” songs are sung “alike by courtier and peasant for they appeal equally to both,” indicating a democracy in art at odds with “all the dazzling caprices and follies of a potentate” which the Nizam “affects” in the impotency of his governance of a nominally independent princely state that was nevertheless subject to British influence. Her subdued yet cutting political critique notes that while “race and opportunity” have kept him from being the “leader among men” he could have been, his supposedly “picture[esque]” qualities nevertheless inform her art (Naidu, *Letters* 41).

Naidu addresses the Nizam directly in her “Ode to H. H. the Nizam of Hyderabad (*Presented at the Ramzan Durbar*).” In the aforementioned 1903 letter to Gosse, she notes that the poem was presented to the Nizam at the Durbar “with superb translation in Urdu verse by a well-known Mohammedan poet. He took the plain robe of my English verse as it were and embroidered it with all the gold and jewels of eastern eloquence and imagery” (Naidu, *Letters* 41). Yet the supposedly “plain robe” of Naidu’s original poem is not actually quite so plain or without “eastern eloquence and imagery.” Written in iambic tetrameter, the self-identified “lyric” speaker of this five-stanza poem establishes herself as singer of the court by alluding to an older set of feudal relations:

Deign, Prince, my tribute to receive,
This lyric offering to your name,
Who round your jewelled sceptre 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[.] (Naidu, *Golden* 1–8)

Naidu presents the poem, which repeats many of the images used in the letter to Gosse, as a “tribute” or “lyric offering” to the Nizam in his public political role as ruler of Hyderabad. The poem also allows a public function for the poet herself even if this function is not that of the more traditional court poet, a role assumed by the Nizam (as the poem subsequently notes). Naidu may need the Nizam to call her forth into poetic address but, as a figure of the modern nation, she replaces the Nizam. The Nizam’s status as a poet-prince of a city-state renders him archaic; he requires a singer, such as Naidu, the poetess-politician of the Indian nation, to render that archaism acceptable within the framework of Indian cosmopolitan modernity (as opposed to the relative parochialism of Hyderabad).

The two strands of Naidu’s cosmopolitan nationalism become evident in the second and third stanzas of this poem:

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. (Naidu, *Golden* 9–24)

On the one hand, Naidu promotes an ethic of global humanism that posits religious co-existence in Hyderabad as an attainable possibility for the Indian nation. On the other hand, she strategically employs the language of Orientalism not only to appeal to a Western audience but also to construct Hyderabad as a glorious, if somewhat archaic, symbol of modern India for an Indian audience. The second stanza enumerates the diverse creeds, including Muslims, Parsis, Hindus, and Christians, that make up the cosmopolitan nature of the city of Hyderabad, in which peaceful multitudes co-exist harmoniously.

The third stanza romanticizes, indeed orientalizes, the current Nizam, who supposedly retains the practices of his ancestors and thus allows others, especially those Western audiences familiar with Orientalist tropes, to “recall” them. Naidu draws the stanza’s litany of objects from *The Rubaiyat* (either Omar Khayyam’s original or Edward Fitzgerald’s translation), signifying an Eastern sensuality and mysticism: the *Thousand Nights*, Saki-singers, *ghazals*, and Sufi wine.²¹ Yet the “wine” here is not literally a libation, but the Nizam’s poetic productions, the “love-*ghazals*” he pens but which – in the space of Naidu’s poem – must necessarily remain unread and unrecited.

Naidu’s poem is an ode to both the Nizam, enactor of the duties of *noblesse oblige* as protector of this city-state, and the Nizam’s poetry. He watches over the city and its wealth, which is also his own wealth, as the fourth stanza details:

Prince, where your radiant cities smile,
Grim hills their somber 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. (Naidu, *Golden* 25–32)

The second hailing of its subject, the “Prince,” recalls the first stanza and pays tribute to the Nizam’s own tributes, in the form of “ancient forests,” “birds of peace,” “harvests of gold and grain.” As caretaker and owner of the city, which is “acknowledged” in the references to “your,” the Nizam’s wealth and, by extension, the state’s wealth is both literal (the “gold and grain”) and metaphorical (the rich history and culture epitomized by “ruined fort and storied plain”). The speaker’s hailing of the Nizam as “Prince” refers not to the actual Nizam but to an ideal of sovereignty that can only come into being through the invocation of the poet, who in turn can only function as poet by invoking the Nizam, her “Prince,” as sovereign.

The “Ode” ends with these lines on the orality and aurality of poetry:

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,²²
Your name within a nation’s prayer,
Your music on a nation’s tongue. (Naidu, *Golden* 33–40)

Although the poem clearly places the ruler of a princely state within the more general category of nation, the last stanza leaves ambiguous the composition of that nation. The Nizam will be offered the praise of the nation, which contains him “within” its prayers and “on” its tongue. The nation, through the body and voice of the poet, Sarojini Naidu, produces the Nizam just as the invocation of the Nizam as well as the nation allow her body to perform and her voice

to sing. Naidu, the modern singer of the modern nation, bestows upon the Nizam a modern setting of his own.

“[T]he true nation-builders”

NAIDU'S VOCATION AS A POET was inextricably intertwined with her vocation as a nationalist. To bifurcate Naidu's career into an earlier stage of English poetry and subjection to empire and a later stage of Indian politics and nationalist freedom-fighting would be to simplify the complexity of her work and commitments.²³ Paroma Roy argues in *Indian Traffic* (1998) that the first allowed for and made possible the second. Roy writes that Naidu's poetry “does not simply constitute an account of willing feminine sacrifice; the poet herself must enact the renunciation she describes, if not by reproducing the submission of her meek heroines, then by abjuring the poetry that has made her famous. The poetry is an offering to the cause of (a masculine) nationalism; the renunciation of the poetry is no less so” (Roy 139). As a woman, Naidu needed authorship to authorize her entry into the public sphere where she could engage in politics. Shifting Roy's reading, I argue that Naidu does not renounce poetry for politics or womanhood for patriotism: for Naidu, these are not mutually exclusive categories. Rather, she constantly performs her role as globally circulating poetess²⁴ of India, which allows her simultaneously to inhabit (and not just build up towards, as Roy argues) the role of a globally circulating Indian patriot-politician.

Naidu's role in conceptualizing women's engagement in the nation on a national scale also complicates the broad picture of the “woman question” painted by scholars such as Partha Chatterjee, Radha Kumar, and Tanika Sarkar. Like other Indian nationalists, Naidu championed women by defining their place in the nation through what she defines as the “essentially” female quality of spirituality and the “essentially” female capacity to nurture. But she does so partly in response to a fear that the emerging Indian nation would be legislated by and for men. In a 1916 lecture, she declares to the Hindu Ladies' Social and Literary Club of Bombay that “The real test of nationhood is the woman . . . In India, this problem can be solved by bringing upon the woman the sense of responsibility and impressing upon her the divinity and the conscientiousness of her power and work of motherhood. The work of nation-building must begin from the woman unit” (Naidu, *Speeches* 59). The “power and work of motherhood” depends on the special qualities of women, including their capacity to nurture and guide future generations of Indians. It also depends on assigning these qualities to *all* women, since a woman's personal interest is always formulated in terms of the collective.

The abstract and undifferentiated “woman unit,” a term which refers to women not as individuals but as a sex, builds the nation. Similarly, as Naidu declares in a later speech delivered to students in December 1917, the measure of the “average man” is the measure of the nation: “The real measure of a nation is the measure of average action, of average man: it is not the great man or the great genius who is the true standard of a nation's capacity or worth” (Naidu, *Speeches* 129). Naidu's own exceptionality, in both her privilege and her life's work, stands as an ironic commentary on such a statement. Yet it indicates a philosophy both political (that the individual person composes and accounts for the larger good) and poetic (that the individual unit – or foot – “measures” out the nation). Naidu gives poetic form to the abstract measure of the nation; her poetry builds the nation just as her people do. In a further irony, however, what she defines as “average” is not quite “average” insofar as her audiences consist of the English-educated elite. And Naidu stands above even that

“average” in rhetorical abilities and political influence – she is more exceptional and therefore required, by her own “measure,” to sacrifice more. The scale, if not the type, of one’s sacrifice is determined not by one’s sex but by one’s status, even if it is the gendered construction of India as a dormant mother in need of revitalization that entitles her to such sacrifice.

The spirit of self-sacrifice was also exemplified in the well-circulated stories of ancient Sanskrit heroines such as Sita and Savitri, who were constructed in nationalist discourse as icons of feminine duty.²⁵ These figures allowed nineteenth- and twentieth-century advocates for women’s education to make claims for women’s rights based on ancient precedent. Naidu relied on this logic in poems such as “To India” and in her political speeches. In one such speech, delivered in December 1906, she notes the irony of having to plead for women’s education in the early twentieth century “in all places in India, which, at the beginning of the first century, was already ripe with civilization and had contributed to the world’s progress radiant examples of women of the highest genius and widest culture” (Naidu, *Speeches* 11). She argues that women “are the true nation-builders,” since educated women are better able to educate their sons to lead (Naidu, *Speeches* 11). Her calls for female enfranchisement, though similarly structured, ask for concessions for women that reached beyond the accepted boundaries of nationalist discourse, which focused on self-government and called for concessions for certain classes of Indian *men*. In a speech at the Bombay Provincial Conference in 1918, Naidu speaks on behalf of those Indian women demanding full enfranchisement by asking her largely male audience to “look at Europe, where there is the great tradition of comradeship between the sexes. In India, it is not more than a ‘Renaissance’” since women were widely influential “in bringing about political and spiritual unity in ancient India” (Naidu, *Speeches* 196).

Naidu palliates the radicalism of such calls for the full enfranchisement of women with reassurances that such rights would not entail an undue assertion of female power or a derogation of male privilege. As she notes at the Bombay Special Congress in September 1918, “we ask for vote, not that we might interfere with you in your official functions, your civic duties, your public place and power, but rather that we might lay the foundation of national character in the souls of the children that we hold upon our laps and instill them with the ideas of nationality” (Naidu, *Speeches* 200). This tempered advocacy was a practical necessity in gaining women some rights when, according to many nationalists, all interests should be subsumed to the cause of national self-determination.

As Partha Chatterjee has shown, male nationalists used the “woman question” to show the superiority of Indian spirituality, located in the figure of the woman and in the space of the domestic, over Western materialism. Naidu’s espousal of such a philosophy, which cautiously avoids threatening a masculine Indian nationalism, enabled her to insert herself into nationalist politics in an explicitly gendered role as the representative Indian woman. Naidu’s arrogation of political power arises from her rhetorical skill, a function of her poetic fame; her breeding as an English-educated, well-traveled upper-middle class Brahmin woman; and her access to cultural and political institutions.

Since much of the rhetoric Naidu voices fits acceptably within the parameters of national discourse, she fashions herself into an important national icon and tool. Even her glorification of an ancient Indian past through the language of Orientalism, which she uses to forward a cosmopolitan nationalism, was tied distinctly to nationalist rhetoric. Yet Naidu’s use of strategic Orientalism in her poetry, itself a decidedly frivolous enterprise

when juxtaposed against the masculine work of nation-building, marked her as suspicious to Indian nationalists. Even more damning was her person which, circulating as it did in a global public sphere, partook in an economy of consumption and exchange. Most male nationalists located women within the domestic space and away from the sullyng material transactions of the marketplace. Thus, her embodied voice, both poetic and political offers a radical challenge to her own rhetoric – despite her constructions of herself and other women in maternal terms as nurturing and dutiful servants to the national cause. Naidu constructs her nationalism globally through a strategic Orientalism acquired outside India and negotiated through the medium of English. As she writes to her daughter in a 1921 letter from Marseille: “Now I am glad to set my face homewards once more to serve India with speech and song and struggle” (Naidu, *Letters* 156). She may be “glad” to “face homewards” but one can only face home from elsewhere in the world.

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NOTES

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1. Many of Naidu’s poems were initially published in periodicals such as the *Indian Ladies’ Magazine*, a Madras-based English-language magazine for and by Indian women.
2. In postcolonial literary studies, cosmopolitanism has been critiqued for its implied elitism – as a designation invoking the postcolonial migrant, in figures such as Salman Rushdie, who is assured in his/her education, socio-economic status, and national origins. Although a variety of arguments are made for the “origins” of the word (see Van der Veer and Mignolo), in the era of the nation-state, cosmopolitanism is constituted by and exists in tension with nationalism.
3. See Roy, 130.
4. See, for example, Anand 111–13.
5. Sengupta notes that the women’s movement in India developed “[p]arallel to the Freedom Movement” (147); women were granted universal adult franchise after Independence in 1947.
6. The London-born Annie Besant, a women’s rights advocate, theosophist, and champion for Indian Home Rule, was elected first female president of the INC in 1917.
7. For example, Sharma writes that while Gandhi was too taken up with “the country’s struggle for freedom” to care for such things as poetry and music, Naidu’s politics were subsumed to her primary interest in lyric utterance (i). See Mishra and Rajyalakshmi for more favorable, if traditional, treatments of her work.
8. See Chatterjee for a discussion of Indian nationalists’ construction of the separate spheres of the public and private, material and spiritual, outer and inner.
9. Gikandi emphasizes the complex interdependence of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, the local and the global (614).
10. This phrase is drawn from the title of Rabindranath Tagore’s Bengali novel, *Ghare Baire* (1915), translated into English as *The Home and the World*. Tagore and Naidu were occasional correspondents.
11. The 1905 partition of Bengal, for example, was viewed by many Indian nationalists as perpetuating communalism within India for imperial purposes.
12. See Ramusack, 7. Ramusack writes that Hyderabad’s administrative structures, including its increasing bureaucratization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, were determined in large part by British influence and by reaction against that influence.

13. Many of Naidu's speeches plead for Muslim-Hindu unity. Over the years her speeches also began to increasingly promote *swadeshi* (home manufactures), *satyagraha* (non-violent resistance), and *swaraj* (self-rule) and to criticize the violent response of the British government to native movements.
14. See Mill, 1216.
15. Though initially a proponent of Hindu-Muslim unity and a leader in the All India Home Rule League, Jinnah later became a leader of the All-India Muslim League. One of the key figures in creating a separate secular Muslim state upon Independence, he would serve as the newly created Pakistan's first Governor-General.
16. See Sarkar, 89. The INC, which included delegates from various regions throughout the subcontinent, met at the end of every year.
17. Calls for self-government began in the nineteenth century and were first implemented, in very modest ways, under Viceroy Ripon. The Government of India Act of 1909 presented the possibility of representative government in a more systematic though still limited manner; it also introduced a separate electorate for Muslims and Hindus.
18. Jackson's call for a rereading of American poetic history through a rereading of poetry as direct address illustrates the way in which poets such as Bryant also blurred distinctions between rhetoric and poetry.
19. Naidu follows the nineteenth- and twentieth-century convention of representing the Indian nation through the figure of the mother-goddess, which both reflects and constructs the rhetoric of sacrifice and sacredness that surrounds that conflation.
20. See Thapar, 319–20, 322. Thapar notes that, for British Orientalists, such stasis was the result of the simplicity of Indian village life and the passivity of Indian villagers as well as governance by capricious native despots who did little to ensure the progress of their peoples.
21. This poem itself does not use the *rubai* structure of the *ghazal*. The two poems in which Naidu does use the *rubai* structure, "The Song of Princess Zeb-un-Nissa in Praise of Her Own Beauty (From the Persian)" and "A Song from Shiraz," are both love songs that follow the other basic formal conventions typically characterizing the *ghazal*.
22. The Persian poet Firdusi's (c. 940–1020 AD) *Book of Kings (Shah-nameh)* is an epic account of Persian "national" history presented to his patron, the sultan Mahmud.
23. Naidu wrote poetry throughout her life. The posthumously issued *The Feather of the Dawn* (1962) includes previously unpublished poems written in 1927.
24. Naidu, like her predecessor Toru Dutt, was read by her reviewers and audience as an Indian poetess, whose life would be "scrutinized for conformity to perceived womanly and poetic standards, however conflicting those might be" (Brown 184). The generic role of the poetess, into which Naidu positioned herself and was positioned by her critics, allowed her to be published in England and India. Yet the very performance of gender that allowed her to circulate in the first place, prompted twentieth-century nationalist critics to feminize and thereby dismiss her work. See Mukherjee for an early feminist reconsideration of Naidu through the terms of gender and colonialism.
25. See the Indian-English poet Toru Dutt's 1882 poem "Savitri" for a good example of one such construction.

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