

Prophetic Visions : Negotiating Islam in the Works of Sarojini Naidu

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Sarojini Naidu was born in the city of Hyderabad in Southern India in 1879. She was a brilliant student from her childhood days, and had started writing poetry even when she was in her teens. Under the able guidance of the veteran Congress leader Gopal Krishna Gokhale, she entered politics at the turn of the twentieth century -- a period in which the contentious 'partition of Bengal' issue had thrown the country into a political turmoil and obnoxious issues like Hindu-Muslim animosity were once again raising their ugly heads. Later on, under the tutelage of Gandhi, Sarojini distinguished herself in the field of politics. She toured the country from north to south, and was a popular figure at Congress and other political conferences, lecturing on such diverse issues as the Arms act, women's suffrage and emancipation, indentured labour, freedom of the press, role of the youth and the unity of the religions. She even went abroad -- to the USA, UK and Africa -- to spread the story of British maladministration in India and her countrymen's quest for independence. All these earned her the distinction of being elected the first Indian woman President of the Congress at the Kanpur session in 1925, and only the second woman President after Annie Besant. After the independence of the country in 1947, she was made the governor of the United Provinces (later Uttar Pradesh) and died in office in 1949.

Her fiery speeches, delivered extempore and coming straight from the heart, earned her the cognomen "Nightingale of India" from none other than Gandhi, and it is by this sobriquet that this superlative speaker has remained immortal among her countrymen. Very few people know that apart from delivering rousing speeches, Sarojini was also a gifted poet and has written close to 200 poems. Unfortunately, these have not been subjected to the close scrutiny they deserve; as a result, she has been relegated to the sidelines as a minor poet of India. Whether she deserves such an infirm glory is debatable, but what is certain, in my opinion, is the strong influence of the Islamic world in her poems, speeches and letters. The aim of this paper is to study this influence and the ways in which it manifests in her works, as well as the factors that caused this happy influence.

Perhaps the greatest and the most indubitable cause of Sarojini's tremendous affinity for the Islamic is her birth, and subsequent childhood, in Hyderabad- the premier Muslim city of India at that time. Sarojini's father, Aghorenath Chattopadhyay, hailed from Brahmanagar, a village in (then) East Bengal, but was invited in 1878 to Hyderabad by the Nizam to establish and run an English-medium school. It is in this manner that the Chattopadhyay family came to be associated with Hyderabad, and subsequently settled there. In the process, as servant of the Nizam, Aghorenath went on to render yeoman's service to the state: he founded the Hyderabad College (later rechristened Nizam's College); with the co-operation of his wife and other women, a girls' college was established by him as part of Osmania University; and he was also responsible for the introduction of the Special Marriage Act of British India in Hyderabad.

It was under these circumstances that Sarojini was born in Hyderabad in 1879. Right from the beginning, Sarojini was steeped in the sights, sounds and smells of this pulsating Muslim city of India. For a fact, she could not speak her mother tongue Bengali, spoke Hindi haltingly, but spoke Urdu-- predominantly the language of the Muslims -- as fluently as she spoke English. In the words of V.S. Naravane, Sarojini "lisped in Urdu, not in Bengali" (83). An interesting, humorous incident is quoted by her friend Amar Nath Jha in this regard:

[At the Bihari Students' Conference at Bhagalpur in October 1917], she said, "Gandhiji does not want English to be spoken. I don't know how I am going to speak in Hindustani. I tell you what. When I get up, ask the students to shout 'English, English!'" But actually she spoke in high-flown Persianised Urdu. (7)

One may discern the use of Urdu/Persian words off and on not only in her poems but also in her correspondences, both with Muslims and non-Muslims (and even with Englishmen!) "Salam alikum" remained a favourite greeting in her letters, although the nationalists preferred the more patriotic "bande mataram," and in a letter written to Edmund Gosse in August 1899, she wishes her British literary mentor "salam alikum" (Paranjape 40)! She also uses the words "Id Mubarak," "mashallah," "barakat" and "Inshallah," the last being found even in a letter to her own daughter Leilamani, written on 4 January 1920 (Paranjape 145). In the same letter, she advises Leilamani to practise her Urdu thoroughly. In a lecture titled "Ideals of Islam" delivered at the

Young Men's Muslim Association, Madras, she claimed, "The first accents I heard were in the tongue of Amir of Kusru" (Grover and Arora 51), and in her poems we find the use of words like "Ya Allah," "Ya Mahbub," "pardahnashin," "henna" and "leili". The title of the poem "Leili" assumes a special significance in this context. It is a poem of great nationalistic fervour, and records the proud and solemn moment when the nationalists take the holy oath of dedicating their lives to the service of the Motherland. In the dead of night, amidst mystic surroundings and with the golden moon as the sole witness, Sarojini and countless others like her "make the gods their incense-offering" (*SF*¹ 31), pledging not to rest till their Motherland is free and the people liberated and happy. Now "leili", is the Persian word for 'night', and keeping in mind the significance of the poem, the use of the Persian term assumes ineffable importance, indicating that fostering Hindu-Muslim brotherhood among countrymen is one of the primary concerns of those that "make the gods their incense-offering."

In many of her poems, she refers to the city where she was born and grew up. She describes the Bazars of Hyderabad, the wares -- both mundane and exotic -- that are sold in a typical market of Hyderabad. The goods range from the cheap commodity such as varieties of fruit and musical instruments, to the expensive such as daggers of jade, scabbards of gold, brocaded tunics, and turbans lined with silver. There are goods for joyous occasions such as marriages, and also mournful occasions like funerals. Merchants, vendors, peddlers, goldsmiths, beautiful maidens selling sandalwood and exotic spices, and even magicians-- all seem to enliven the place with the variety of their professions and products. If this poem presents the mood of economic Hyderabad, then the poem "In a Latticed Balcony" captures its romantic charm, as we find a young lover enticing his beloved with gifts and trying to ensnare her in his web of amatory words and promises:

How shall I deck thee, O Dearest?
 In hues of the peacock and dove.
 How shall I woo thee, O Dearest?
 With the delicate silence of love. (*SF* 105)

Finally, "Nightfall in the City of Hyderabad" celebrates the onset of evening in the city in a series of dazzling romantic images. The star-spangled sky seems to scintillate like an ornament studded with

precious stones, as richly caparisoned elephants move through the city lanes and the faithful are called to prayer:

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. (SF 55)

The extent to which Sarojini identified herself with the city may be gauged from the poem "The Hussain Saagar" in which she hails the Hussain Sagar Lake (a prominent landmark in Hyderabad) as "a living image of my soul" (SF 120). She also liked to invite her friends to Hyderabad, and as one of many examples we can refer to the letter she wrote to Jawaharlal Nehru on 11 May 1925, inviting him to come and share with her in Hyderabad the delights of boating on the Mir Alam Lake, "of lounging and loafing around and meeting the most truly cosmopolitan society in India" (Paranjape 177).

If Hyderabad finds pride of place in Sarojini's poetry, can the ruler of Hyderabad and other members of royalty be far behind? One may recall that it was the Nizam of Hyderabad who had invited Sarojini's father Aghorenath to Hyderabad to aid in the educational fortification of the state, and had bestowed upon the Chattopadhyays great honour and prestige, as a result of which they became one of the most respected families in the state. It was once again this warm-hearted, munificent, Muslim ruler who granted Sarojini a generous scholarship that enabled the young girl to depart in September 1895 for England to pursue higher education. In the poem "Ode to H. H. the Nizam of Hyderabad," she pays lofty tributes to this magnificent and popular ruler. She describes Hyderabad as the land of milk and honey flourishing under the efficient rule of the Nizam, where people from diverse races and creeds lived in peace and harmony. The splendour of the Nizam's court, says Sarojini, reminded one of the opulence of the courts of Baghdad and of the Arabian Nights, and the poets and bards sang of his greatness and valour. The poem ends with a plea to God to give the ruler strength to uphold and honour truth, virtue, and valour:

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. (SF 30)

No wonder then that when the Nizam died in August 1911, Sarojini was so overwhelmed with grief at the death of the father-figure that for a few days she could do nothing and her life came to a standstill. When her publisher William Heinemann pressed her to send him the Preface to her forthcoming anthology of poems *The Bird of Time* (1912), she wrote to him in the letter dated 31 August 1911:

I cannot tell you what it means to us who adored him. . . . He was our heart's idol, the very light of our eyes. . . . We would have given our lives to save him -- forgive me I cannot write more- I only wanted to tell you why I could not send the Preface or answer your letter (Paranjape 63).

Her grief is amply evident in the poem "Memorial Verses I : Ya Mahbub" written on 29 August 1911 in memory of the Nizam after he had died. She lauds the benevolence of this philanthropist and wonders whether the world will ever get to see such altruism again, now that he is dead.

Being a member of the topmost echelons of society of Hyderabad State, Sarojini became familiar with many royal families. The only aristocrat other than the Nizam on whom Sarojini has written a poem is Begum Nazli Raffia of Janjira. Significantly, she has not written on any Hindu aristocrat, though she was close to many, specially the Maharani of Gaekwad. In her poem "The Faery Isle of Janjira," Sarojini describes the kingdom of Janjira as being so beautiful as to bear comparison with the kingdom of fairies; in this enchanted isle of palm woods and wild doves, life glided on at its own unhurried pace. Janjira, like Hyderabad, was an idyllic place, and the poet confesses that she would have gladly dwelt in this land of lotos-eaters had duties to her country not summoned her.

The fact that Sarojini hailed from a Hindu Brahmin family ensured that she had a wide knowledge of Hindu religion, mythology, and gods and goddesses; but more importantly, being born and brought up in the Muslim state of Hyderabad gave her access to the rich corpus of Islamic religion, history and literature. The result is that her poems demonstrate a happy commingling of both Hindu and Muslim cultures, with copious examples from Muslim literature, history and mythology

maintaining a fine balance with Hindu rulers and religious figures. Sarojini was in the habit of regularly extending the frontiers of her knowledge of Islam; she writes to her friend Syed Mahmud on 30 May 1917 "to send me a list of good books on Islamic history which I am now reading with enjoyment" (Paranjape 129). "Humayun to Zobeida," reworked from the Urdu, is an exquisite love lyric, although here Sarojini has got her history slightly wrong, because Humayun's wife (Akbar's mother) was not Zobeida but Hamida (Khan 111). "The Song of Princess Zeb-un-Nissa" is from the Persian. Muslim literature again supplies the anecdote of Queen Gulnaar and King Feroze for the poem "The Queen's Rival." The magnificence of Muslim architecture is praised in both "Imperial Delhi" (the capital of the famous Delhi Sultanate dynasties like the Khaljis and the Tughlaks) and "The Royal Tombs of Golconda" (built by the Qutb Shahi kings) as something that defies the ravages of time and preserves the fame and grandeur of the rulers for posterity.

As far as Islamic literature is concerned, she had the works of famous poets, both medieval and modern, at her fingertips, On Jalal-ud-din Rumi's *Masnavi*, she once ejaculated, "What is there so beautiful in all the wide and manifold realms of literature as that poem by the immortal lyricist of Rumi?" (Naravane 88). At a time when the nation was going ga-ga over the poetry of the internationally acclaimed Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, Sarojini hailed the Urdu poet Mohamud Iqbal as the greatest- "Today the greatest living Indian poet is Iqbal of Lahore with his mad eyes and melodious voice, who sings in a frenzy of inspiration" (Paranjape 166). She also had the habit of quoting lines and couplets from Muslim poets in her speeches and correspondences. In a letter to Jawaharlal Nehru, written on 15 October 1926, she complains against her ill health with a quotation from Iqbal - "Main sar-a-pa dard hun" ("I am pained from head to foot," my translation) (Paranjape 190). On another occasion, speaking at a meeting on indentured labour at Allahabad on 19 January 1917, she said:

Nakhuda dar kashteeay ma gar na bashad gu ma bash

Nakhuda dareem ma ra makhuda darkar nest

(What though there be no pilot to our boat? Go, tell him, we need him not.

God is with us, and we need no pilot).

(Grover and Arora 142)

Sarojini was keenly aware of the poor position of women -- both Hindu and Muslim -- in Indian society in those days, and the indifference of the menfolk towards their female counterparts. Her days in Hyderabad had acquainted her with the problems faced by Muslim women behind the veil, and she had worked hard to bring about a change in their situation, however insignificant.

She was troubled by the fact that the chaste wife got nothing but apathy and abuse from this male-dominated world in exchange for her sacrifice and love. She felt that this was more applicable to Muslim couples than to Hindus, as is revealed by her verbal chastisement of her friend Syed Mahmud for a similar misdemeanour. Mahmud had, after marriage, shown gross neglect of his newly married young wife by retaining her in her mother's home in Chapra, while he continued to stay far away in Bankipur, thereby inviting Sarojini's wrath. In a letter to Syed Mahmud, written on 6 January 1916, she enjoins upon him to take good care of his newly married bride:

Give to your little bride all the love that is in you to give: remember that while your life is enriched with many things, her life will be filled entirely by you--and let your great sense of tender chivalry guard and save the woman who is yours to cherish or crush from every breath of harm and every touch of pain (Paranjape 109).

Being a woman, Sarojini had a great desire to ameliorate the position of women, specially Muslim women, in Indian society, and she realized that the best way to achieve this would be to make the men more responsible towards the women, and give them the honour and dignity they deserved. Only then would the Muslim women, so cruelly incarcerated behind the practice of the "Purdah," feel sufficiently emboldened to come forward and participate shoulder to shoulder with the men in the freedom struggle to rid the country of her British fetters -- a dream that she cherished from beginning to end. She worked for this all her life, and was also largely successful in storming the conservative Muslim bastions, as indicated by reports specifically mentioning that Muslim women had started attending her speeches on women's emancipation. Padmini Sengupta, for example, mentions the instance when Sarojini presided over the meeting of the Hindu Social Reform Association in early 1908 at the Mahboob College Hall, Secunderabad, in which "special accommodation was provided for *zenana ladies*" (67). She also cites the instance of the Jubilee

celebrations of the *Stree Bodha* in March, 1908 in which Sarojini was a speaker : "many Mahomedan ladies were present 'in a gallery behind the screens'. For the first time in Bombay Mahomedan ladies were to speak" (69). The name of Mrs Akbar Ali is specifically mentioned in this regard.

The poem, "The Pardah Nashin," is the poet's condemnation of the evil Muslim system of "purdah" through an affirmation of the incarcerated life and lack of independence faced by Muslim women. The first two stanzas of the poem speak of the "languid and sequestered ease" (SF 53) and the security of Muslim women behind the veil, prompting many critics like V.S. Naravane to claim that Sarojini was glorifying the 'purdah' system and harem life. Amar Nath Dwivedi considers the poem "an exquisite piece of fancy" (76). What the poet actually attempts is to contrast this life of apparent ease and security to the harsh reality of life behind the veil. With this in mind, the unexpressed agony and anguish seems to become immortalized in these lines :

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? (SF 53)

Izzat Yar Khan believes that these lines highlight Sarojini's supposed contention, in the manner of many Elizabethan sonneteers, that a woman's beauty is defenceless against the onslaught of Time. He feels that the tears shed by the veiled woman are, in essence, tears shed in sorrow at the impending loss of her health and beauty. He goes on to claim that the ending of the poem is paradoxical, because in lifting the veil, Time ensures that the woman is veiled no more: "The veil that man has drawn over the woman's face is lifted by Time. The futility of Pardah is therefore apparent" (126-127). This is nothing but a complete misinterpretation of a very poignant poem. It is amply evident that the lines portray Indian women as victims of a conservative society, with social reformers being able to do little about the matter. This poem, along with its companion poem "Suttee" censuring the evil Hindu system of Sati, seems to hint that in spite of being highly developed, both Hindu and Muslim civilizations were severely apathetic and cynical towards women, a feeling that needed to be corrected immediately if there was to be independence and progress for the country in the true sense.

None since Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the architect of the Bengal Renaissance, did any non-Muslim show such a strong erudition of and a deep sensitivity towards the Islamic religion and theology as Sarojini Naidu. "She was not religious in the accepted sense, for she believed that the Divine was in all things. Islam meant as much to her-its culture and virtues- as did the rituals of her Brahmin heritage which she revered" (Tara Ali Baig, *Vandemataram*). References in her speeches to the religion of the Muslims are too numerous and popular to merit a separate discussion; in fact, they far outnumber her references to Hinduism. Her letters too make copious references to Islam, not only when she is writing to her Muslim friends or fellow politicians, but also when she is corresponding with Hindus. As an instance, one may cite the letter written in April 1921 to her own son Ranadheera Naidu, in which she wishes him *Id Mubarak* and congratulates him on having diligently observed the ritual of fasting (Paranjape 159). What greater example can there be of her catholicity of vision?

Many of her poems address Islam directly or indirectly. "The Old Woman", for instance, gives us a picture of a true devotee of Islam who does not forsake her faith although life had been utterly cruel and unjust to her. In her youth she had been beautiful and had a family; but all is now lost due to the vagaries of fortune. Now she is blind and bent, poor and hungry, and forsaken by the world. Yet she goes on praising God:

'La ilaha illa-I-Allah

La ilaha illa-I-Allah

Muhammad-ar-Rasul-Allah' (SF 126)

"The Night of Martyrdom" talks of "Th' enduring loveliness of Allah's name" (FD² 6), and the greatness of martyrs like Ali, Hassan and Hussain who uphold it. The beggars in the poem "Wandering Beggars", moving about with the name of Allah on their lips, reminds one of the itinerant faqirs, derveshes and Sufi mystics. Who can ignore Sarojini's acclaimed poem "The Call to Evening Prayer" -- her supreme tribute to national and religious integration -- which posits the different religions of India congregating for prayer in an atmosphere of religious brotherhood and tolerance. Significantly, it is the Muslims with their cries of "Allah ho Akbar! Allah ho Akbar!" (SF 136) who lead the procession, with the Hindus bringing up the rear. In many of the poems, we find Sarojini beautifully adapting the tenets of Islam to her

viewpoint to pointedly address issues of patriotism. "The Imam Bara," for instance, with its reference to the tragic and edifying martyrdom of Ali, Hassan and Hussain, is ably used as a referent by the poet to remind the people of the sacrifices that the country demanded of them in her hour of need. "A Song from Shiraz" is Sarojini's gift of love and hope to her suffering countrymen. A happy commingling of religion and nationalism is found in the poem "The Prayer of Islam," where 10 of 99 Arabic names of God as used by Muslims are listed; the 'prayer' ultimately becomes a resonant plea to Allah to grant people the strength and the resilience to

transmute from hour to hour
Our mortal weakness into power,
Our bondage into liberty (SF 168)

P. V. Rajyalakshmi analyzes the poet's treatment of love in the poems of the section titled "The Temple" in *The Broken Wing* as having a definite Islamic influence:

Love progresses from 'khudi' (selfhood) to 'khudai' (Godhood), from 'Haqiqi' (Earthly love) to 'Mazazi' (Divine Love), and from 'Daad' (Agony) to 'Mast' (Ecstasy), in the manner of Omar Khayyam, the Sufi mystics, and Ghalib, Hali, Hafiz and Iqbal. (90)

It did not take Sarojini's astute mind much time to see through the divide-and-rule scheme of the British, and realize that the need of the hour was Hindu-Muslim unity. The more aggressive the British became to annihilate this bonding, the greater should be the resolve of the Indians, felt she, to preserve it. Given the situation, the task of holding our olive branches to each other was not easy. The anti-Hindu indoctrination of the Muslims by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan of Aligarh had bred in the Muslim mind a sense of mistrust and hostility towards the Hindu. The British too had wasted no time in hobnobbing with the Muslim aristocrats and political leaders-- Curzon visited East Bengal in February 1904 fomenting animosity among the Muslims against the Hindus, and even granted Nawab Salimullah of Dhaka a loan of 14 lakh rupees at a very low rate of interest in exchange for open support of the partition. All these events culminated in the formation of the Muslim League in Dhaka in December 1906, which was destined to have such an irrevocable impact on the course of Indian nationalism.

Under these circumstances, with both Hindu and Muslim political

leaders trying their utmost to save the day, Sarojini found herself in a curious position that worked to her and also to her country's advantage at large. She posited herself as a person *Hindu in flesh but Muslim in spirit*, thereby appealing in the same tone to both her Hindu and Muslim brethren. On the one hand, as a Hindu by birth (and a Brahmin at that) coming from a highly respected family, she spoke on Hindu culture and the traditional Hindu benevolence, quoting examples and incidents from Hindu history and mythology. On the other hand, she projected herself as being a Muslim in spirit, coming as she did from a Muslim state and growing up under the refreshing influence of an Islamic heritage:

... I come from the premier Mussalman city in India. The premier Mussalman power rules over the city from which I come, and there the tradition of Islam has truly been carried out for two hundred years, that tradition of democracy that knows how out of its legislation to give equal rights and privileges to all the communities whose destinies it controls. (Grover and Arora, 51)

In her speeches all over the country, she sought to dispel in the minds of the Hindus their misconceptions about Islam and to present it as a religion of love and brotherhood :

Brotherhood is the fundamental doctrine that Islam taught: brotherhood of civic life, of intellectual life, of spiritual life in the sense of leaving other religions and creeds free to offer their worship. This is what we call modern toleration, the larger outlook, this is what we call civilisation. (Grover and Arora, 52)

Quite aptly, she gave the example of the great Muslim king Akbar as the epitome of benevolence. She spoke of the kinship of Hinduism and Islam, how both were parts of the same universal principle, and how the tenets of one complements the other's:

Young Muslim is to put his contribution -- not the sword made of steel but the sword of the Islamic spirit which has been re-tempered in the older fires of Vedic cult- the sword of Muslim love dedicated to the service of Vedic India. (Grover and Arora, 54)

Citing the example of the famous Muslim poet Md. Iqbal whose poems had come as a clarion call to bind the two communities together, she expressed the desire to be his Hindu counterpart aspiring after the same objective. The seriousness of her mission and the earnestness of

her voice can be gauged from her advice to G. Natesan, editor of the *Indian Review*:

You have realised that the Mussalmans have definitely held out their hand to the Hindus. Be gracious, be wise, be brave when the Hindus hold out their hand to the Mussalmans at the next Congress. Do not analyse motives too closely, but take the proffered hand and hold it fast and so represent truly the Indian world as far as your influence reaches. . . . (qtd in Sengupta 133).

Although Sarojini was fond of projecting herself as a neo-Muslim, never did she sound artificial, nor did it appear as if she was doing it for political mileage. Whether this particular idea of Sarojini to foster Hindu-Muslim ties proved efficacious in the long run may be debated (given the volatile political situation in the country), but it certainly made both the Hindus and the Muslims sit up and take notice, if attendance at her speeches is any indication. In any case, her convictions earned her the love and respect of contemporary Muslim politicians-- Abul Kalam Azad, Saifuddin Kitchlew, the Ali Brothers who launched the Khilafat Agitation, Dr Ahmad Ansari, and countless others belonging to both the Congress and the Muslim League. She started getting invitations to the Muslim League sessions (such as the historic session in Lucknow on March 2, 1911 that sought to adopt a new Constitution seeking loyal co-operation with Hindus in national and social matters), and at a conference in Geneva in 1920, she proudly claimed, "the first political speech I made was at the meeting of the Muslim League" (unknown author, *womenexcel*). Prominent League leaders started seeking her advice before deliberations with the Congress. Most importantly, Md. Ali Jinnah, who would play such a sterling role in Indian politics later on, became her life-long friend and they shared a tremendous love and respect for each other.

This paper has tried to trace the impact of Muslims and Islam on the life, outlook and activities of Sarojini Naidu. It may be acknowledged that had it not been for her father Aghorenath who came to Hyderabad when he could have settled in any state (including his native Bengal), her life and political activities, even the themes of her poems, may have taken a radically different tinge indeed. But she was destined to be born and to grow up in this quintessentially Muslim city with its liberal people and tolerant ruler, and this left an indelible mark on her mind and her spirit. It gave her a broad-mindedness that put to shame the trivial bickering of other political leaders over such unimportant issues

as cow-slaughter and use of loudspeakers at mosques. It prepared her for her extensive journeys over the length and breadth of the country later on in life when she would get the opportunity to observe her fellow men from close quarters and be a part of the ups and downs in their lives. In a speech delivered in Madras in 1903, she had thundered, "I was born in Bengal. I belong to the Madras Presidency. In a Mahomedan city I was brought up and married and there I lived; still I am neither a Bengalee, nor Hyderabaddee but I am an Indian, not a Hindu, not a Brahmin, but an Indian to whom my Mahomedan brother is as dear and as precious as my Hindu brother" (Grover and Arora 179). The confluence of the great Hindu culture which she was born with, and the great Islamic culture which she inherited and breathed, thus enabled her to send her unique message of unity and hope to the teeming millions of her country, giving them the strength and the resilience to progress on the road to freedom.

Notes

1. *The Sceptred Flute*, an anthology published by Kitabistan of Allahabad in 1948, which is a collected edition of her first three anthologies viz, *The Golden Threshold* (1905), *The Bird of Time* (1912) and *The Broken Wing* (1917). It will henceforth be abbreviated as 'SF'.
2. *The Feather of the Dawn*, henceforth abbreviated as *FD*.

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