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Revolutionary Indian Women: Re-reading Colonial Police Records in 2020

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Amidst the pain and loss that 2020 brought worldwide, the year also brought into much sharper focus how citizens around the world understand democracy. The coronavirus pandemic has required society after society to balance survival against values. As a result, participatory democracy has been tested in many of the countries that have been democracy's main proponents, and not just in the United States.

In India, the start of 2020 saw the stirrings of a broad-based national mobilisation in support of India's democratic institutions, which have come under increasing pressure from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu majoritarian government. In city after city, young people came out with placards and slogans; when they were blocked by increasingly violent police, older citizens joined them. Time Magazine captured India's year as a standoff between an increasingly authoritarian Modi and an 82-year old woman an arresting image contrasting chauvinist majoritarianism with a frail, softly wrinkled grandmother.

2021 has begun in much the same way. A farmer protest that began in November of 2020 is deepening and widening, and Modi's government appears committed to its unyielding stance to legislation it has passed with little consultation or transparency.¹

The Prime Minister and the Granny

2020 marked the third time Narendra Modi was chosen to Time Magazine's list of '100 most influential people'. Unlike the previous years, Time chose to highlight the ways in which Prime Minister Modi, along with other strongmen such as Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro, has used the pandemic to "bring into doubt" Indian democracy as an example of harmony and stability.²

In a further indictment of Modi Time named, in its icon category, Bilkis, an 82-year old Muslim woman whose consistent presence in the Shaheen Bagh neighbourhood of New Delhi helped make it a protest site.³ Bilkis Dadi or Grandmother Bilkis left her home to sit amidst revolutionary placards with the Indian flag in one hand, and prayer beads in the other hand after the Modi government introduced its Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in December 2019, a law deemed discriminatory for fast-tracking citizenship for people – except Muslims – from neighbouring countries.⁴

New Delhi does not lack protest sites, but as the upswell of large protests against the CAA built throughout December 2019, the increasingly strong-armed response by Indian authorities meant that sites such as Jantar Mantar became less accessible; when students tried to march on Parliament, they were blocked by police batons and tear gas even as members of the press were 'manhandled'.⁵ India's draconian measures of 2019 included blocking internet access in the eastern state of Assam for 10 days as CAA protests expanded in the eastern state, echoing measures in August 2019 banning internet connectivity to Kashmir, which has been contested since Independence/Partition in 1947.⁶

In December 2019, amidst a storm of counter-narratives in India's polarized media ecosystem, video recordings emerged of police as they stormed Jamia Millia University in Delhi and Aligarh Muslim University in the state of Uttar Pradesh – both of which are highly-ranked establishments of higher learning that have roots in anti-colonial movements of Indian Muslims.⁷



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The police violence against the students sparked demonstrations across the country – even within institutions that have traditionally had a more conservative student population, such as the Indian Institutes of Management.⁸ Early in January 2020, there was further violence inside the campus of another leading Indian institution, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), which has produced a Nobel laureate, and whose alumni have included ministers and high-ranking officials in India as well as in Afghanistan, Nepal and Libya. There are indications that the protracted inaction of police and of JNU's administration has and had a chilling impact on scholarship of an institution that, with a long-standing reputation for being left-leaning, has long earned the ire of the Prime Minister Modi's right wing, Hindu nationalist party.⁹

By March 2020, the worldwide pandemic put an end to the demonstrations in the Shaheen Bagh area of New Delhi that had propelled Bilkis to Time's '100 most influential people' of 2020. It is no coincidence that Bilkis Dadi is a Muslim in a country that claims to be secular but whose Prime Minister, a staunch Hindu nationalist, has, according to Time, "governed as though no one else mattered."¹⁰

Most striking about the women of Shaheen Bagh were the explicitly Muslim signifiers – from posters and poetry in Urdu to prayer beads and the veil – even as they claimed their identity as Indian citizens, proud of their constitution. In this celebration of national identity, the leaderless protest was joined by women from other parts of the capital, making Shaheen Bagh reflect the broad-based and variegated discontent within India.¹¹

While the immediate reason in December 2019 for Indians pouring out onto the streets was the introduction of a polarizing change to India's law on citizenship, the Modi government's authoritarian tendencies have fragilized Indian institutions in recent years. The erosion of the media, was all too apparent in the reification of a linkage between Muslims and the spread of coronavirus.¹² And then came the draconian coronavirus lockdown that went into effect in hours, with no real measures envisioned for the working poor and internal migrant workers in India's gigantic cities. Prime Minister Modi's response to the pandemic left masses of Indians with no option but to simply leave locked-down cities stalked by starvation.¹³

The columns of people walking by the sides of roads or hitching rides to far-flung villages in 2020 were a gruesome reminder of the black and white photos of kafilas or human caravans that traversed the sub-continent in 1947, when India and Pakistan were born amidst the paroxysmal violence of the Partition of British India that forever transformed the sub-continent.¹⁴ The massive shifts in population surrounding Partition/Independence re-fashioned cities such as Delhi and Lahore along religious lines, dismembered an economy that helped the Allies win World War II and established a stubborn basis for wars, real as well as the ongoing ideological battle for the very interpretation of the sub-continent's history.¹⁵

The numbers are perhaps even more sobering: an estimated 40 million internal migrant workers were 'severely impacted' by Modi's lockdown, according to Chatham House's Dr Champa Patel.¹⁶ By contrast, one estimate for the number of sub-continentals on the move during Partition at nearly 18 million, with more than 3 million 'missing.'¹⁷ As researchers scramble to analyse the impact that the horrors of Modi's lockdown subjected on India's army of cheap labourers, it is instructive to remember that Partition's scars are still visible today, not least in the political tensions between the post-colonial states.

This oversight of the Modi government to care for the poor contrasts mightily with the measures taken to help repatriate its overseas workers. It begins to approximate cruelty in light of the massive economic shock that Modi dealt the Indian economy in November 2016, when he announced that rupee 500 and rupee 1,000 notes would no longer be valid currency, with effect four hours after the announcement. In an economy that is heavily cash dependent and where most workers find employment in the informal economy, banning 86 percent of the currency was even more of a jolt to the poorest. It is again instructive to look to history, for the demonetisation policy undertaken by British Indian government in the 1940s entailed the removal of rupee and half-rupee coins of silver over the course of two years between April 1941 and May 1943.¹⁸



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Although Shaheen Bagh's protestors were disbanded in March, and even though the pandemic continues to rage, there appears to be no end to India's discontent. Unemployment had already reached a 45-year high in 2017.¹⁹ A slew of sweeping laws pushed through by the Modi government in September 2020 claiming to 'liberate farmers' has mobilised tens of thousands of farmers to march on the national capital.²⁰ Once again, Indian police responded in a heavy-handed manner, giving farmers little incentive to accept the government's proposal to have an expert committee examine the controversial laws.²¹ Indeed, there are reports that the protesting farmers have marched on Delhi bringing with them provisions that can last them for months.²² Negotiations have been fraught, with assurances from government officials dismissed as equivocations.²³

Re-Reading British Colonial Police Records in 2020

At the start of 2020, the women of Shaheen Bagh had also dug their heels in, maintaining their protest in spite of threats from right-wing organizations, including three instances of violence, and in the face of a petition in the Supreme Court to re-open the site to traffic.²⁴ Finally, two days after the capital was locked down on grounds of the coronavirus pandemic, police cleared the site. And yet, arrests of the protestors even during the lockdown, prompting the United Nations to call in June for their release amid serious allegations of human rights violations and ill-treatment.²⁵

If Time's editorial choice left her nonplussed, Bilkis Dadi was saddened by the conditions in which she had to abandon her protest – a conviction that reminded me of other sub-continental women I had encountered in the British Library. Wondering what the colonial police might have had to say about the terrorists who became the freedom fighters and political leaders of independent India, I examined a secret British colonial police reference book of "persons prominent within the [United] Provinces for political or politico-criminal activities."²⁶

In the 1930s, the United Provinces, now renamed Uttar Pradesh, was a hotbed of nationalist activity and the police report of 1936 contains the usual suspects. The colonial police had detailed reports on Jawahar Lal Nehru ("Caste: Kashmiri Brahman; a prominent all-India Congress leader"), who would become the first Prime Minister of India, and Lal Bahadur Shastri, who would be India's second Prime Minister, ("Caste: Kayasth; a rabid Congress-Socialist"), as well as Khaliq-uz-Zaman (Caste: Sheikh; a Congress propagandist), now better known as Chaudhry Khaliquzzaman and associated with the Muslim League and Pakistan.

I was initially struck by the primacy of caste and the overlapping memberships of Muslim League and Indian National Congress, rather than the religious differences that were the basis of the partition of British India in 1947. But it was the peevishness reserved for the women transgressors for their revolutionary activities that I remembered as I watched the Shaheen Bagh demonstrators. A special ire was reserved for Parbati Devi, from Agra, ("dresses in khaddar sari; extremist Congress propagandist"), whose age did not, apparently slow her down: "Her tart tongue has not mellowed with age." Blue-eyed and feisty Savitri Devi alias Mrs Jaffar Ali alias Alyce Nisbet Wright alias Mushtari ("Caste: Originally a Christian, then a Muhammadan and now a Hindu; A Congress worker and an associate of revolutionaries") appeared to transgress category after category with surprising ease. Not only had she given up the religion she was born and raised in, she had then "quarrelled" with her Muhammadan husband before moving on to fraternize with revolutionaries of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA), a revolutionary organization formed by Chandrashekar Azad and Bhagat Singh in 1928 to undermine the British and work towards the establishment of socialism in India. The commitment of Musammat Savitri Devi ("an Irish woman who was arrested at her house at Allahabad after an exchange of shots and arms and ammunition were recovered") reminded me of the calm resolve of Bilkis Dadi: "On release resumed clandestine relations with her old associates."

Re-reading my notes on the police archives reminded me of the question that had accompanied my examination of the police files at the British Library: Could the British colonial police have known what the next decade would bring to the sub-continent? Although Shaheen Bagh has been emptied of its women and their children, is their revolution, far more peaceful than the HSRA revolutionaries, really over?



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Categories of Citizenship

It wasn't just Muslims taking to the streets to protest the CAA, police violence and the subsequent arrests of CAA protestors.²⁷ But the images of Shaheen Bagh, where Bilkis Dadi and her sisters continued to protest peacefully till March of 2020, came to be a defining moment in Indian democracy. In a powerful television broadcast from Shaheen Bagh in January 2020, journalist Ravish Kumar showed ordinary women, mostly with their heads covered and many wearing burqas.²⁸ This alone would not be revolutionary – even though it goes against the stereotype of the downtrodden Muslim woman whose form is hidden. It may be that the symbols of national pride – India's tricolor flag on hands, on headbands, on toddlers' cheeks – deployed by these women will pose a fundamental challenge to the categories that were created, enacted, and perpetuated by partition and the post-colonial nation-states: the liminal "Indian-Muslim" exists in large numbers and is deeply vested in India's democracy.

Rather than an aberration in modern South Asia, historians have argued that the violence surrounding Partition/Independence was a moment of 'nationalisation', a moment that was central to the creation of the modern nation-state of India (and Pakistan), a moment that allowed both nation-states to subordinate 'all previous, traditional and often multi-layered loyalties' into unchanging and essentialised categories.²⁹ The creation of the two states at independence in 1947 also meant that the question of citizenship, long debated, could no longer be shelved.³⁰ From this perspective, Prime Minister Modi may merely be fine tuning of India's idealized category of citizens with the definition of citizenship introduced in 2019 by the CAA and equally divisive National Register of Citizens in the eastern state of Assam. Making citizenship easier for non-Muslims from neighbouring countries is matched internally by an internal clamp-down on Muslims within the country in general, and specifically in Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority province: Kashmiris reeling from a punitive internet ban imposed in August 2019 following the revocation by Delhi of Kashmir's autonomy.³¹ were subjected to sweeping changes to the protections on land rights in October 2020, when the Home Ministry repealed 12 state laws and amended 14 other laws.³² Within months, there were indications that authorities were 'reclaiming' land from Kashmiri businesses.³³

In contrast to the voice of the Indian state, as embodied in the Prime Minister, what the women of Shaheen Bagh showed was their humanity. Many were Muslim, others not; many from the area, others not; many preferring Urdu, others not; many older women such as Bilkis Dadi, others clearly young students. In their diversity, they challenged the essentialized Hindu, Muslim, Sikh or Christian that have been described in short-hand by their clothing.³⁴

At 82, Bilkis Dadi is, of course, older than the nation-state she claims. She was born before Partition, and before the post-colonial states. It may be that she remembers the tumultuous transition from British India to India; she may, like many North Indian Muslims, have family scattered on the other side of the border. Nonetheless, in a persistently patriarchal society, her willingness, as a woman, to claim India, to perform a defence of the Indian Constitution, made for powerful testimony on Ravish Kumar's programme.³⁵ Woman after woman told Ravish Kumar that she had never been on a demonstration before. Upon questioning, the women revealed they had changed the ways in which their household cooking and childcare duties were organized in order to sit swaddled in shawls against the bitter Delhi winter, to take their young children with them into a space where violence had been threatened. The programme spoke to transformative power of these peaceful women, as Kumar describes a friend of his who gained a new respect for his illiterate mother after she participated in the Shaheen Bagh protests – 'How can I refer to her as illiterate if she is willing to fight for the Constitution?'

Just as in 1936, when the colonial police went to great lengths to explain women revolutionaries, Delhi is struggling to understand what it means when women -- young women, middle-aged mothers and older dadis -- come out onto the streets. And just as in 1936, the resolve of the women appears to unshakeable: in an interview published in September, Bilkis Dadi said: "I would have been much happier had our demand been fulfilled, had the government listened to us and given us what we wanted (withdrawal of the Citizenship Amendment Act)," Bilkis said in a trembling voice. "It is sad we had to call it (protest) off because of the disease (COVID-19)."³⁶



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Here again, it may be instructive for contemporary observers to remember that journalists in the 1930s explained women's turn to revolutionary roles as an indication of how oppressive the government had become. 'Who could imagine', wrote the journalist-agitator Chaman Lal, 'that those quiet and humble goddesses of piety and sweetness would turn out to be real warriors in the cause of their country'?³⁷

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¹ 'Why India's Farmers Won't Stop Protesting', Foreign Policy, December 18, 2020, available at <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/12/18/india-farmers-wont-stop-protesting/>

² 'The 100 most influential people of 2020: Narendra Modi', Time, September 22, 2020, available at <https://time.com/collection/100-most-influential-people-2020/5888327/narendra-modi-india/>

³ 'The 100 Most Influential People of 2020: Bilkis', Time, September 22, 2020 available at <https://time.com/collection/100-most-influential-people-2020/5888255/bilkis/>

⁴ New Delhi has dismissed concerns by top UN officials who expressed their fears the law entailed the "risk of statelessness", as well as the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) unprecedented step of filing an application in the Indian Supreme Court in March of 2020. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/un-rights-body-to-move-supreme-court-on-citizenship-amendment-act/article30970693.ece>

⁵ 'Jantar Mantar turns into ground zero of anti-CAA protests in Delhi', Hindustan Times, December 19, 2019, available at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/jantar-mantar-turns-into-ground-zero-of-anti-kaa-protests-in-delhi/story-q5cN15LCNP2jFD9uY5zeLP.html> ; '50Jamia students detained after clash with Delhi cops during Citizenship Act protest,' The New Indian Express, December 14, 2019, available at <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/delhi/2019/dec/13/50-jamia-students-detained-after-clash-with-delhi-cops-during-citizenship-act-protest-2075676.html>

⁶ 'Mobile internet ban lifted in Assam,' The Economic Times, December 20, 2019, available at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/mobile-internet-ban-lifted-in-assam/articleshow/72896522.cms>

⁷ The "Muslim question" has been long debated in India, with an early contribution provocatively posing the issue as question of the construction of a 'natural' citizen: Pandey, Gyanendra. "Can a Muslim Be an Indian?" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41, no. 4 (1999): 608–29. doi:10.1017/S0010417599003072.

Many of the Shaheen Bagh demonstrators would mention their distress about having to teach their children about the role that Muslims, such as their own fathers and grandfathers, had played in the struggle for the national liberation of India. A more recent study by Ali Khan Mahmudabad supports these claims to a range of the Indian Muslim experience is evidenced. Using as his historical archive the poetry of the Indian sub-continent between 1850 to 1950, Mahmudabad demonstrates the varied Muslim and non-Muslim responses and formulations of the concepts of nation and citizen. Mahmudabad, Ali Khan, *Poetry of Belonging: Muslim Imaginings of India 1850-1950*, Oxford University Press, 2020.

⁸ 'Gujarat: Cops tried to disrupt event at IIM-A, had to shift venue, say participants,' The Indian Express, January 6, 2020, available at: <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/ahmedabad/gujarat-cops-tried-to-disrupt-event-at-iim-a-kaa-protest-new-citizenship-law-6201290/>

⁹ 'Internal investigation shelved: Year on, little headway in JNU violence probe', The Indian Express, January 5, 2021, available at: <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/internal-investigation-shelved-year-on-little-headway-in-jnu-violence-probe-7132948/>

'JNU violence: Four months on, police yet to take action, students still fearful and Right, Left continue blame game,' First Post, May 7, 2020, available at <https://www.firstpost.com/india/jnu-violence-four-months-on-police-yet-to-take-action-students-still-fearful-and-right-left-continue-blame-game-8341251.html>

¹⁰ 'The 100 Most Influential People of 2020: Narendra Modi', Time, September 22, 2020 available at <https://time.com/collection/100-most-influential-people-2020/5888327/narendra-modi-india/>

¹¹ 'Shah dilemma in Shaheen Bagh as Modi govt gets ready to hear anti-CAA protestors,' India Today, February 18, 2020, available at: <https://www.indiatoday.in/news-analysis/story/shah-dilemma-in-shaheen-bagh-as-modi-govt-gets-ready-to-hear-anti-kaa-protesters-1647323-2020-02-17>

¹² 'How the coronavirus outbreak in India was blamed on Muslims,' Al Jazeera, 18 April 2020, available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/4/18/how-the-coronavirus-outbreak-in-india-was-blamed-on-muslims/>

¹³ 'COVID-19: The hidden majority in India's migration crisis', Dr. Champa Patel, 13 July 2020, available at <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/07/covid-19-hidden-majority-indias-migration-crisis>

¹⁴ Some of the most powerful images of the terrible Partition migrations were taken by the American photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White. 'A new way of seeing Indian independence and the brutal 'Great Migration'', Time, August 14, 2016, available at <https://time.com/4421746/>

¹⁵ In the decade between the census of 1941 and that of 1951, Delhi witnessed the departure of 3.3 lakh (330,000) Muslims, and almost twice that number of Hindu and Sikh refugees had arrived from Punjab. The Muslim exodus from Delhi, where the 1941 census indicated a Muslim minority of 33.22 percent, is reflected in an exodus of Hindus from Karachi, where the Hindu minority, estimated at 47.6 percent of the population in 1941, had played a crucial role in the economy of the Punjab. Zamindar, Vazira



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Fazila-Yacoobali, *The Long Partition and the Making of Modern South Asia: Refugees, Boundaries, Histories* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007): 5. The importance of India's role to the Allies during World War II has been analysed by Srinath Raghavan in *India's War: World War II and the Making of Modern South Asia*, Basic Books, 2016. In his review of Partition historiography, David Gilmartin has argued that 'wars over the interpretation (and control) of history – and partition – will almost certainly continue in coming years' in "The Historiography of India's Partition: Between Civilization and Modernity," *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 74, no. 1 (February) 2015, 23-24.

¹⁶ 'It was as if the entire country was walking' People's Archive of Rural India, January 5, 2021, available at:

<https://ruralindiaonline.org/articles/it-was-as-if-the-entire-country-was-walking/>

¹⁷ 'COVID-19: The hidden majority in India's migration crisis', Dr. Champa Patel, 13 July 2020, available at

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2020/07/covid-19-hidden-majority-indias-migration-crisis>

Dr. Patel's estimate is of 40 million internal migrants within India. I am using estimates for Partition from Bharadwaj, Prashant, Asim Khwaja and Atif Mian, "The Big March: Migratory Flows after the Partition of India." *Economic & Political Weekly*, 43, no. 35 (30 Aug. 2008): 31.

¹⁸ 'Withdrawal of all remaining standard rupees from circulation,' *Commerce, A weekly review of Indian financial, commercial and industrial progress*, 10 October 1942, Vol. LXV, No. 1665, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), New Delhi.

¹⁹ 'India's leader accused of hiding unemployment data before vote,' New York Times, January 31, 2019, available at:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/31/world/asia/india-unemployment-rate.html>

'Unemployment rate at 45-year high, confirms Labour Ministry,' The Hindu, May 31, 2019, available at:

<https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/unemployment-rate-at-45-year-high-confirms-labour-ministry-data/article27379174.ece>

²⁰ 'India's farmers come out in force against Modi,' Foreign Affairs, November 28, 2020, available at:

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/11/28/india-farmer-modi-agriculture-law-protest/>

'Tens of thousands of farmers swarm to India's capital to protest deregulation rules,' December 1, 2020,

<https://edition.cnn.com/2020/12/01/asia/delhi-farmers-india-protests-intl-hnk/index.html>

²¹ 'Farmer protest 'hero' who turned off water cannon charged with attempt to murder', NDTV, November 28, 2020, available at:

<https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/farmer-protest-hero-who-shut-water-cannon-charged-with-attempt-to-murder-2331248>

'Dilli chalo: No breakthrough at farmers' talks with govt; protests to continue,' The Hindu, December 1, 2020, available at:

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/farmers-protests-talks-between-unions-and-govt-remain-inconclusive-to-meet-again-on-december-3/article33223088.ece>

²² 'Have enough ration to last us a year, claim protesting farmers at Singhu Border,' India Today, December 2, 2020, available at:

<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/delhi-protest-farmers-langar-food-ration-enough-for-a-year-singhu-border-1746180-2020-12-02>

²³ 'How Talks Froze: Centre says we yielded, farmers insist repeal was always key demand,' The Indian Express, December 15,

2020, available at: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/how-talks-froze-government-says-we-yielded-farmers-insist-repeal-always-key-demand-7098697/>

'Farmers Protest Highlights: Stalemate continues,' Financial Express, January 4, 2021, available at:

<https://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/farmers-protest-live-news-deadlock-over-repeal-farm-laws-msp-farmers-unions-centre-talks/2163571/>

²⁴ 'Threat to protests "real": Shaheen Bagh groups ask authorities to act,' ANI, February 3, 2020, available at:

<https://www.ndtv.com/delhi-news/shaheen-bagh-citizenship-amendment-act-protesters-ask-authorities-to-act-threat-to-protests-real-2173814>

²⁵ 'Anti-CAA protest: Eight parties condemn arrests of activists, students in letter to President,' The Hindu, May 11, 2020, available

at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/anti-kaa-protest-eight-parties-condemn-arrests-of-activists-students-in-letter-to-president/article31556282.ece>

'UN experts urge India to release protest leaders,' June 26, 2020, available at:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=26002&LangID=E>

²⁶ Extracts from the second edition of the United Provinces Political "Who's Who", DIG of Police, CID (Special Branch UP), dated Allahabad 30th September 1936, No. 8, British Library, L/P&J/12/672. The descriptions of the persons of interest in this and the following paragraph are from the police report.

²⁷ 'India Citizenship protests spread to Muslim area of capital,' The Wall Street Journal, December 17, 2019, available at

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/india-protests-against-new-law-spread-to-muslim-area-of-capital-11576596978>



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²⁸ 'Ravish's Ground Report On The Unshakeable Women Of Delhi's Shaheen Bagh,' Prime Time NDTV, January 9, 2020, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TQm7nBa49WQ>

²⁹ Gyan Pandey, *Remembering Partition*:17. Historian Mark Levene goes even further, arguing that the very function to of the nation-state to subordinate 'all previous, traditional and often multi-layered loyalties' in order to 'aggregat[e] human beings within single, fixed, unchanging and irreducibly essentialised categories'. Mark Levene, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation-State: Volume 1*, 15. Read alongside Vazira Zamindar's detailed work on the technologies that were deployed, including permits and passports, by both India and Pakistan, Levene's thesis of the centrality of the nation-state in modern violence makes Partition perhaps more intelligible.

³⁰ Joya Chatterji has discussed the debates over citizenship on jus soli as opposed to racial or ethnic bases that leaders such as B. N. Rau and Sardar Vallabhai Patel engaged in before Partition. Those discussions were inconclusive, as the thorny issue of what to do with Sindhis if that region of British India were to become a part of Pakistan complicated any definition of citizenship along 'tidy territorial' lines. Joya Chatterji, "South Asian Histories of Citizenship, 1946-1970," *The Historical Journal*, 55, no. 4, 2012: 1053-1054.

³¹ 'Kashmir in lockdown after autonomy scrapped,' BBC, August 6, 2020, available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-49246434>

³² 'Explainer: What exactly are the changes to land laws in Jammu and Kashmir: Kashmiris see this as a double assault: on history as well as the future,' Scroll.in, October 29, 2020, available at: <https://scroll.in/article/977057/explainer-what-exactly-are-the-changes-to-land-laws-in-jammu-and-kashmir>

³³ 'After tribals, apple farmers, J&K Govt begins evicting hotels in quest for land,' article-14, January 5, 2021, available at: <https://www.article-14.com/post/after-tribals-apple-farmers-j-k-govt-begins-evicting-hotels-in-quest-for-land>

³⁴ I build here on an argument made by Faisal Devji: "Indian anguish, then, seems primarily to be a national rather than a human emotion, one concerning the country's loss and not the particular losses of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs - which are lessened in the process". Faisal Devji, "Hindu/Muslim/Indian," *Public Culture* 5, no. 1 (Fall 1992): 17. Prime Minister Modi has made a number of inflammatory speeches and in December 2019, he mentioned the clothing of protestors: 'Look at their clothes: Modi plays communal card on CAA, targets Muslim protestors,' *The Wire*, December 16, 2019, available at <https://thewire.in/communalism/narendra-modi-citizenship-amendment-act-protests-clothes>

³⁵ India has been named the world's most 'unsafe' country for women, with lower caste women bearing the brunt of gendered violence. 'Dalits bear brunt of India's 'endemic' sexual violence crisis', *The Guardian*, September 16, 2020, available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/sep/16/dalits-bear-brunt-of-indias-endemic-sexual-violence-crisis>

A spate of rapes and murders in Uttar Pradesh culminated in a case of a brutal attack on a 19-year old in Hathras, a grim reminder of the 23-year old student who died in 2012 after being gang-raped in Delhi, but also an indication that sexual violence is being used as a tool of oppression and revenge against lower caste women. Instead of addressing growing concerns, Uttar Pradesh police forcibly cremated the remains of the victim in the middle of the night. 'Hathras gang-rape and murder case: a timeline', *The Wire*, October 28, 2020, available at: <https://thewire.in/women/hathras-gang-rape-and-murder-case-a-timeline>

³⁶ 'Would have been happier if demand was met: Shaheen Bagh's 'dadi' Bilkis on featuring on Time magazine', *The New Indian Express*, September 24, 2020, available at <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/delhi/2020/sep/24/would-have-been-happier-if-demand-was-met-shaheen-baghsdadibilkis-on-featuring-ontime-magazin-2201401.html>

³⁷ Chaman Lal, as quoted in Kama Maclean What Durga Bhabhi did next: or, was there a gendered agenda in revolutionary circles?, *South Asian History and Culture*, 4:2 2013: 187, DOI:10.1080/19472498.2013.768843)