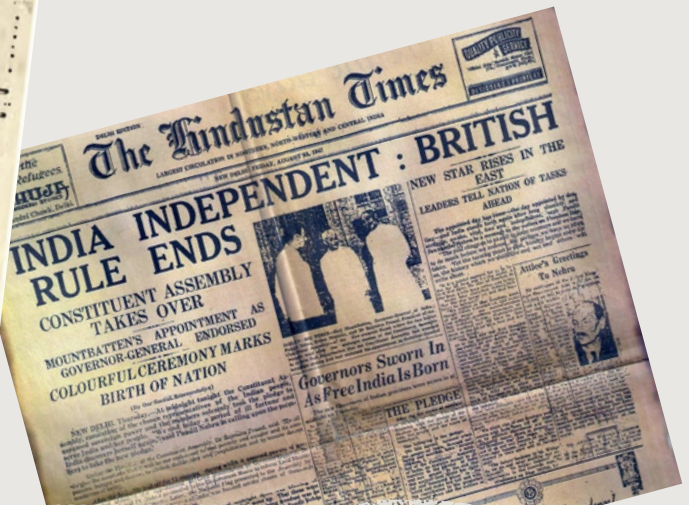
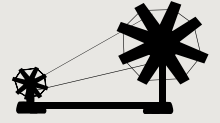
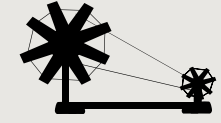


The Nehru Centre

NEWSLETTER



RESEARCHING TRUTH REIMAGINING DEMOCRACY



MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

As we approach Independence Day, we're excited to share with you the seventh issue of our newsletter! This special edition marks the celebration of our nation's freedom and brings together reflections on freedom, fundamental rights, secularism, and nationalism, including a featured article in Hindi.

A special thanks to our guest columnists for their contributions this month and to the TNC team members who have brought everything together to make this issue what it is.

As always, we hope these pieces inspire you to reflect, discuss, and critically engage with the world around you. Your feedback is always appreciated, and we look forward to sharing more with you in the upcoming issues.

We look forward to your continued engagement!

Best,
Editorial Team
The Nehru Centre



Researching Truth, Reimagining Democracy

Disclaimer: While we strive for accuracy and fairness, the views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual contributors and do not necessarily reflect those of The Nehru Centre, its editorial team, or its staff members. The Nehru Centre assumes no responsibility for any inaccuracies, misinterpretations, or any consequences arising from the content published herein. Contributors are solely responsible for ensuring that their work does not infringe on any copyright, defamation, or other legal provisions.

CALL FOR GUEST WRITERS

The Nehru Centre (TNC) is accepting submissions from guest writers on a rolling basis for our upcoming newsletters. Please read our editorial guidelines carefully before sending us your submission. We invite submissions in the following formats in up to 900 words:

1. Opinion pieces – Arguments backed by facts and figures (not rants)
2. Socio-political, Historical, Law & policy Analysis– National or international scope
3. News reports – Curated or original reporting based on primary field research

How to Submit ?

1. Email your submissions (doc) to thenehrucentre.india@gmail.com with a short author bio & your social media handles.
2. Mention the title of your piece in the subject line and specify if it is time-sensitive.
3. For the write-ups, please use English (UK), Times New Roman, 12pt, and line spacing 1.15.
4. If selected, the editor will review your work and request edits, if necessary.
5. You will be informed about the expected publishing date once the newsletter goes live.
6. Your article will be shared on TNC's multiple social media platforms and you will be tagged (depending on social media accounts provided by you).
7. We retain the final say over headlines, publishing dates, and images used.

AI & Plagiarism Policy

We value original thought and authentic writing. While AI tools can assist in proofreading, structuring, or shortening content, all AI usage must be disclosed to the editor. AI-generated content without human oversight will not be accepted.

Terms & Conditions

1. Indicate if your article is exclusive to The Nehru Centre or has been published elsewhere. We prioritize original content and typically do not republish blog posts.
2. Copyright for material that is published exclusively is held jointly by The Nehru Centre, New Delhi and the authors.
3. If others request to republish your article, you must seek TNC's informed consent before granting permission.
4. Once an article is published, it cannot be removed/ taken down except in legal, copyright, or safety-related cases.
5. With the exception of trans writers, we do not allow any writer to change their name or write under a pseudonym for The Nehru Centre to ensure complete transparency and to avoid any legal hassles going forward. However, writers wishing to publish personal narratives can choose to write anonymously for us (editorial records will still require full author details).

HISTORY IN FOCUS

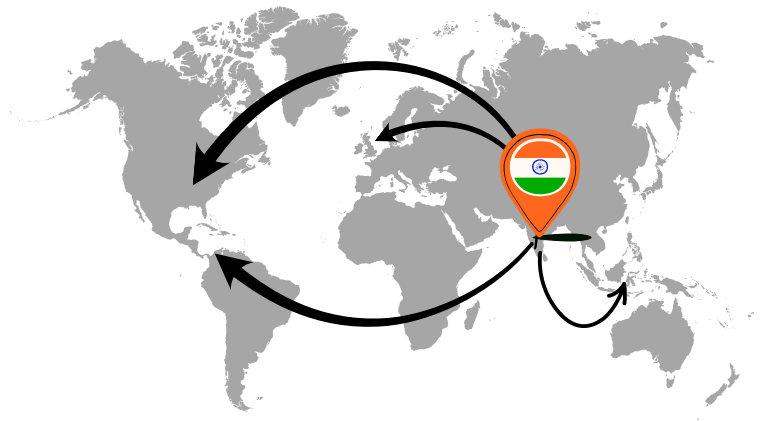
REVOLUTIONARIES IN EXILE: THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSIONS OF INDIA'S FREEDOM STRUGGLE

By Mihika Singh

A significant number of actors played an important role in the struggle for India's independence. While some adopted moderate approaches and constitutional means to achieve their aims, others pursued more radical or militant tactics. The independence movement was not confined solely within the territorial borders of India; many chose to continue their resistance from abroad, adding an international dimension to the freedom struggle. These 'revolutionaries in exile' significantly broadened the scope of the anti-colonial movement.

The geopolitical rivalry, known as the 'Great Game', between the British and Russian Empires created unique strategic opportunities for Indian revolutionaries. Following the assumption that "England's enemies are India's friends," the exiled leaders sought to leverage international rivalries to India's advantage. They established connections with powers such as Germany, Turkey, Afghanistan, and eventually Soviet Russia, aiming to secure diplomatic and material support for the cause of Indian independence. Subsequently, the regions situated between British India and the Russian sphere of influence consisting of Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Soviet Turkestan emerged as important centres of revolutionary activity. These areas provided not only a sanctuary for exiled leaders, but also functioned as strategic bases for their activities.

The Revolt of 1857 significantly underscored



the strategic importance of Central Asia as an alternative stronghold for anti-British resistance, with many participants of the revolt immigrating to the region. The feudal princely rulers of northern and central India attempted to establish contacts with the Russian colonial authorities in Turkestan and subsequently dispatched several missions to Central Asia. G.L. Dmitriev characterises this initial phase of Indian royal emissaries in the region as "feudal nationalism," which, despite its traditional framework, was imbued with a form of "enlightened internationalism". This orientation reflected a belief in the transformative social forces emanating from Russia, perceived as instrumental in facilitating the much-needed political transformation of the Indian subcontinent.

World War I provided an opportunity for Indian revolutionaries to seek support from countries that were at war with the British. Berlin, in particular, became an important centre for these activists. Central to these efforts was the formation of the Berlin Indian Committee, later known as the Indian Independence Committee, which sought to coordinate the revolutionary

activities of figures such as Raja Mahendra Pratap, Lala Hardy, Virendra Nath Chattopadhyaya, Bhupendra Datta, and Maulana Barkatullah, among others. However, by the end of 1916, Germany's material and strategic support had diminished. In response to these setbacks, leaders like Mahendra Pratap and Barkatullah began to focus on Turkey and Afghanistan as potential bases for their operations.

In 1915, the Indian revolutionaries established the *Provisional Government of India* in Kabul, declaring the beginning of an organised government-in-exile, marking a significant shift to radicalisation and unification of diverse revolutionary forces fighting British colonial rule. The cabinet included Mahendra Pratap as President, Maulana Barkatullah as Premier, Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi as Home Minister, C.Pillai as Minister of External Affairs and Mohammed Bashir and Mohammed Walli, Defence and Finance Ministers respectively. This government-in-exile brought together members from various backgrounds including the Ghadar Party, the Berlin Committee, Muslim movements, and extreme left-wing elements of the Indian National Congress, demonstrating a broad coalition aimed at overthrowing the British. However, by 1922 the Provisional Government's influence had waned significantly due to internal contradictions, lack of widespread support in India, British counter-intelligence, and shifting geopolitical realities. Many revolutionaries were captured, some switched loyalties, and the government became defunct.

This period also coincided with heightened British military actions against the Ottoman Empire, which in turn fuelled pan-Islamic sen-

-timents among Muslim youth and served as a precursor for the rise of the Khilafat Movement. Among the key revolutionary figures, Ubaidullah Sindhi's contributions are especially noteworthy. He adopted a more expansive approach by forging connections with a broad spectrum of revolutionary groups operating in exile and established a branch of the Indian National Congress in Kabul, emphasising on the imperative of Hindu-Muslim unity in the struggle for independence.

Following the Russian Revolution in 1917, the Communist Party of Turkestan sought to advance its revolutionary agenda by establishing the "Union of Liberation of the East," aimed at promoting militant literary propaganda, cultural education, and the dissemination of information as instruments of anti-colonial struggle. To support these efforts, the Council for International Propaganda (known as *Sovinterprop* in Russian) in the East was founded on December 23, 1919, with key leaders such as Abdul Fazl, Mohammad Ali, and Mohammad Shafiq heading the Indian communist faction known as the 'Revolutionary Committee of Indian Democrats under *Sovinterprop*'. They produced a publication in Urdu called *Zamindar* to promote consciousness and party work. In 1920, this group actively pursued financial and military aid from Soviet authorities to sustain their campaign. Although the Soviet viewed these activities as immature rather than fully developed revolutionary initiatives, they provided support due to their shared opposition to British imperialism.

During the same period, the Indian Revolutionary Association (IRA) formed in

Kabul with about 150 members from various backgrounds with leaders like Abdur Rab and M.P.T. Acharya. However, following a reversal of policy by Amir Abdullah that favoured the British, the revolutionaries were compelled to relocate to Tashkent. In exile, they reflected more deeply on the national liberation movement's goals and social implications, considering the relevance of Soviet experience for a post-independence India. Their Indo-centric worldview linked India's freedom to global emancipation.

Throughout this period, the Indian revolutionaries were influenced by several ideological currents. Up until 1919, these leaders were largely characterised by an elitist perspective that prioritised the overthrow of British colonial rule without necessarily envisioning extensive popular mobilisation or pursuing deeper socio-economic transformation. Their interpretation of communist doctrines was shaped by a form of religious progressivism rather than by the principles of mass-based revolutionary praxis.

The transition of the Indian revolutionary movement toward a class-based ideological orientation became most evident during the Second Congress of the Communist International, where the Indian communist agenda was articulated with increased clarity. During this time the Communist Party of India (CPI) was founded in October 1920 in Tashkent with Soviet backing. M.N. Roy arrived in Tashkent in 1920 and, alongside M.T. Acharya and Mohammad Shafiq, worked to devise a political program grounded in the principles of class struggle. Roy's advocacy for a mass movement organised along class lines was regarded by some contemporaries as excessi-

-vely radical or "ultra-leftist," reflecting internal debates about the appropriate strategy for anti-colonial mobilisation. By this time, Tashkent had emerged as a crucial centre for the Indian revolutionaries, offering extensive military and political training facilitated by Soviet support. Over time, however, shifts in popular Indian sentiment and the evolving dynamics of Anglo-Soviet relations led to a decline in extraterritorial revolutionary activities, and the 1921 Anglo-Soviet Treaty explicitly curtailed any anti-British operations.

The Indian revolutionaries in exile played a pioneering and indispensable role in internationalising India's freedom struggle, transforming it from a localised nationalist movement into a global anti-imperialist cause. By engaging with diverse political ideologies ranging from Marxism-Leninism to pan-Islamism and forging transnational alliances, these exiles experimented with novel political imaginaries that went beyond the dominant frameworks within India. Although their efforts were constrained by significant practical obstacles such as geopolitical realities, internal divisions, and limited mass base, they nonetheless planted crucial seeds for future collaborations and ideological currents, including internationalism, federalism, and radicalism. Their legacy occupies an important place in the broader history of anti-colonial movements, prefiguring later developments in Indian politics and offering alternative visions for the nation's sociopolitical trajectory.

.....

OPINION | RIGHTS AND FREEDOM

CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS AND THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM IN INDIA

By Mansi Singh

More than seventy-five years after independence, the foundational promise of freedom in India stands at a critical juncture. Indian freedom was never meant to be limited to the symbolic act of lowering one flag and raising another. Rather, it represented a profound societal transformation, a shift towards justice, dignity, and equality for every citizen. The Indian Constitution, especially Part III, which guarantees fundamental rights, was crafted not merely as a legal framework but as a moral and democratic response to centuries of colonial exploitation, caste-based oppression, and entrenched social hierarchies.

The vision of constitutional rights in India did not emerge in a vacuum. It was born from a protracted freedom movement, shaped by diverse political ideologies and social struggles. As early as the 1920s, the discourse around civil liberties had already gained significant traction. The Nehru Report (1928) and the Karachi Resolution (1931) were landmark declarations that anticipated and embedded the idea of fundamental rights within India's political imagination. These early documents advocated not only for liberty and equality, but also for social justice, education, labor rights, and protection from economic exploitation laying the foundation for what would later be enshrined in the Constitution.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Constitution, offered a transformative



understanding of rights. For him, rights were not neutral legal instruments but powerful tools for social emancipation. His interpretation of fundamental rights was aimed at addressing India's deep-seated moral failures like caste discrimination, patriarchy, and exclusion. Similarly, Mahatma Gandhi's conception of swaraj extended beyond mere political independence. It envisioned an ethical society grounded in truth, self-rule, dignity of labor, and mutual respect, values meant to guide both personal conduct and political life.

The framers of the Constitution were deeply inspired by the universal idea of human rights. They drew from international charters such as the U.S. Bill of Rights, the British Magna Carta, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was being drafted almost simultaneously by the United Nations. These influences not only shaped the structure and language of fundamental rights in India, but also infused them with a spirit of justice, dignity, and freedom for all.

The Constitution guaranteed key rights: equality before the law (Articles 14–18), freedom of

speech and expression (Article 19), protection from exploitation (Articles 23–24), religious liberty (Articles 25–28), and the right to constitutional remedies (Article 32), among others. These were meant to ensure that no citizen would suffer from arbitrary power or institutional discrimination in a democratic republic.

Over the decades, the Indian judiciary has played a pivotal role in expanding the scope of fundamental rights, particularly under Article 21, which guarantees the right to life and personal liberty. Landmark judgments from *Kesavananda Bharati* (1973), which upheld the basic structure doctrine, to *Puttaswamy* (2017), which recognised the right to privacy have demonstrated the Constitution's ability to evolve with changing times. Rights to clean air, legal aid, and even a dignified death have been interpreted within the ambit of Article 21, reinforcing the Constitution's progressive spirit.

Yet, while these judicial interventions are commendable, they increasingly appear exceptional rather than routine. A disturbing pattern of judicial hesitancy is emerging, especially in politically sensitive matters. Delays in hearing habeas corpus petitions and the opaque use of sealed cover procedures reveal a weakening of judicial accountability. Dr. Ambedkar called Article 32 the

66

the very soul of the Constitution
and the very heart of it

99

and when courts fail to uphold it robustly, the entire architecture of constitutional democracy is undermined.

In recent years, India's commitment to upholding civil liberties has come under increasing scrutiny. Reports from the Academic Freedom Index and press freedom watchdogs indicate a sharp decline in the democratic health of public institutions. University spaces have witnessed increasing ideological policing, where professors resign under political duress and students face criminal charges for peaceful protests. Similarly, the media, once celebrated as a vibrant pillar of democracy, now faces systemic censorship, surveillance, and intimidation. Journalists are arrested for investigating caste atrocities, corruption, and state failures further evidencing the shrinking space for critical discourse.

This authoritarian drift is not unique to India, but the discrepancy between its democratic self-image and the ground reality is particularly stark. India's democratic decline is part of a broader global trend, yet its scale and implications remain especially troubling for a nation that claims to be the world's largest democracy.

Despite constitutional guarantees of equality through Articles 14–18, the lived experience of this right remains deeply fragmented. Structural violence continues to affect Dalits, who face lynching, exclusion, and lack of access to justice. Muslims confront routine discrimination, targeted violence, and legal harassment under the guise of cow protection laws and anti-conversion legislations. Women, too, navigate a state and judicial system that often appears apathetic to gender-based violence. While welfare schemes and affirmative action do exist, they coexist uneasily with political rhetoric that valorises hierarchy and exclusion.

This contradiction points to a deeper structural crisis. The principle of equality is being gradually inverted through majoritarian narratives that normalise discrimination. The Constitution's vision of justice is being replaced by selective application and social polarisation, thereby eroding the foundational ideal of universal citizenship.

Among the most alarming trends is the state's increasing intolerance of dissent. Article 19(1) (a) guarantees the right to free speech and expression, a right central to democratic life. Yet, peaceful protesters from students to farmers, face sedition charges and are booked under draconian laws like the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). Critics are routinely branded as "anti-national," blurring the line between dissent and disloyalty.

Movements like the anti-CAA protests and the farmer's agitation highlight the shrinking space for civil resistance and civil dialogue. Despite Supreme Court rulings clarifying that criticism of the government is not sedition, arrests and harassment persist. This chilling effect fosters widespread self-censorship and hollows out democratic discourse. A democracy that cannot tolerate critique is in danger of becoming a managed state, one where rights exist on paper but not in practice.

The Constitution's survival depends not just on legal instruments, but on the political will of institutions and the moral courage of its citizens. While structural protections like Article 32 remain vital, the active participation of civil society is indispensable. Democracy is not merely the act of casting a vote, it is the continual practice of raising a voice. When this voice is silenced or punished, freedom is

reduced to a symbolic rather than a substantive reality. India remains a free country, but with freedom which is unevenly distributed. The liberties guaranteed tend to serve the influential and the majority more readily than those marginalised and in minority. It often prioritises conformity over critical voices. In such a context, rights should not be viewed merely as legal entitlements but as essential to the health of democracy. Upholding them is not a challenge to the nation but reaffirmation of its core principles. Engaging with power through questions, seeking transparency, and standing against injustice are thus expressions of a deeper commitment to the democratic ideal.

.....

GUEST COLUMN | EXPLAINER

THE RELIGIOUS NATIONALISM AND POLITICAL OTHER IN THE INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

By Abeer Singh*

The language and ideas of nationalism are seen in terms of an 'Imagined Community' (Anderson, 1983). This is because even the smallest nation will never get to know most of its members, yet its citizens are led to imagine a connection with one another. The imagination of this nation is in terms of language, print capitalism, memory, and official nationalism, imposed through identity from the top in a structured creole identity, and most importantly, the religious aspect of nationalism (Anderson, 1983). Modern religious nationalism is not a historical element but rather a contemporary adaptation that uses modern nationalist tools through mass politics. Religious nationalism, within the Indian subcontinent, can be seen as an amalgamation of religious extremism and nationalism that often leads to the creation of a political 'other' within the society. Religious nationalism, often seen as concomitant with communalism, has the possibility for violence because of an attempt to impose superiority of one's culture over others in contrast to 'openness' and 'rootedness' (Parekh, 1997).

As early as during the period of the Indian freedom struggle, we witnessed two forms of religious nationalism—Hindu and Muslim—working simultaneously and later aggressively. The central argument of this essay is to highlight how the two major religious communities of the subcontinent mutually constructed each other as "political other" in the process of identity formation.

Hindu Nationalism

Hindu nationalism as an ideology was popularised between the 1870s and the 1920s, rooted in the traditional worldview of the upper castes. This cultural reconstruction emerged as a fundamental response to perceived threats from Christian missionaries and Islamic influence (Jaffrelot, 1996). Because of this, several upper-caste leaders such as Dayananda Saraswati came forward to form organisations like the Arya Samaj which reinterpreted the Hindu identity. They introduced practices such as the Shuddhi Movement, a purification act primarily involving high-caste individuals who felt polluted by interactions deemed impure (Jaffrelot, 1996). This movement contributed to a growing sense of 'the other' in society, ultimately giving superiority to one of the cultures. By the early 20th century, prominent leaders like Bal Gangadhar Tilak and Lala Lajpat Rai further promoted the Hindu vision of Indian nationalism. Tilak viewed Hindus as the natural leaders of the nation and opposed cow slaughter by highlighting cultural differences (Tilak, 1893). In 1909, Lala Lajpat Rai established the Hindu Mahasabha, which framed a strong political identity that reflected a form of proto-Hindu nationalism, inspiring some individuals to embrace the German concept of ethnic nationalism. This ideology portrayed other communities as the 'political other' in society (Jaffrelot, 1996).

A segment of these leaders adopted a more radical and exclusionary vision of Hindu identi-

-ty in shaping the concept of the Indian nation. Vinayak Savarkar drew inspiration from Western proponents of ethnic nationalism and presented a framework for identity building. He constructed the notion of 'threatening others' in his theory of nationalism, which emphasised the subcontinent's geographical territory as inseparable from Hindus and Hindu culture, asserting that Muslims and Christians were not integral members of the nation due to cultural differences (Savarkar, 1923).

Muslim Nationalism

Muslim nationalism in the Indian subcontinent emerged as a response to the growing power of British colonial rule, which further marginalised the Indo-Muslim elites. This created a crisis of identity and authority among them. This division hardened when Hindu members of the Aligarh Scientific Society demanded that the proceedings should be conducted in Nagri script, rather than in Urdu. In response, Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, a leading figure in the organisation, decided to dedicate his educational and political efforts to uplift Indian Muslims. Simultaneously, British historians like Elphinstone and Dow contributed to the construction of a political 'other', reinforcing religious nationalism by dividing history into distinct Hindu, Muslim, and British periods (Robinson, 1974). This fostered an imaginary fear of Hindu domination, prompting Indian Muslims to isolate themselves from mainstream Indian politics. Reacting to this growing sense of exclusion, the Indian Muslim League was formed in 1906, solidifying a political identity for Muslims. Subsequently, the Morley-Minto Reforms of 1909 granted separate electorates for Muslims, which entrenched the Hindu-Muslim divide (Robinson, 1974).

With this growing political consciousness, leaders such as Iqbal, Nazeer Ahmed, and Rahmat Ali played crucial roles in shaping Muslim identity through their contributions to literature, philosophy, and education. In 1930, Iqbal, being the president of the League, crafted the map of Pakistan in the northwestern provinces, while it was Rahmat Ali who proposed the name "Pakistan." Although Jinnah saw himself as the sole representative of Muslims in India, it was only in 1940 that the Lahore Resolution was passed, calling for independent states for Muslims. This moment marks the foundation for the Two-Nation Theory, asserting that Hindus and Muslims should have two distinct nations (Chakravarty, 2003).

Conclusion

The Historical construction of Hindu and Muslim nationalism was deeply structured and imagined based on religious identities. These imaginings were not isolated, but in reaction to one another. This process of political otherisation led to the unfortunate genocide between the communities that had been coexisting for centuries, which resulted in the institutionalisation of communal boundaries that continue to shape the political spectrum of South Asia.

.....

**AUTHOR BIO: Abeer Singh is currently pursuing Masters in Political science from Delhi, and interested in the areas of nationalism, Political Identity and communalism.*

GUEST COLUMN | HINDI

स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में महात्मा गांधी और बौद्धिक स्वतंत्रता

लेखक अविश पटेल*

परिचय

ब्रिटिश उपनिवेशवाद के विरुद्ध भारत के स्वतंत्रता संग्राम का इतिहास लोकतांत्रिक शासन, संस्थागत विकास, जन-आंदोलन और जनता के बौद्धिक जागरण सहित कई आधारभूत विचारों के उद्भव और विकास का आधार रहा है। 20वीं सदी के शुरुआती दशकों से, विशेषकर 1915 में महात्मा गांधी के भारत लौटने के बाद, गांधीवादी विचारधारा ने राष्ट्रवादी आंदोलन के राजनीतिक विमर्श में एक केंद्रीय स्थान प्राप्त कर लिया। अहिंसक प्रतिरोध (सत्याग्रह), सविनय अवज्ञा और नैतिक आत्मानुशासन में निहित उनके दर्शन ने धीरे-धीरे पहले के उदारवादी और उग्रवादी दृष्टिकोणों का स्थान ले लिया और अंततः भारतीय राष्ट्रीय कांग्रेस और व्यापक राष्ट्रीय आंदोलन का प्रमुख वैचारिक ढाँचा बन गया।



बौद्धिक स्वतंत्रता किसी भी माध्यम से, सीमाओं की परवाह किए बिना, राय रखने, जानकारी और विचारों को प्राप्त करने और प्रदान करने की स्वतंत्रता है। (राष्ट्र, संयुक्त 1948)

इसमें अपने विचार बनाने, विविध दृष्टिकोणों तक पहुँचने और बिना किसी सेंसरशिप या प्रतिबंध के खुली चर्चा में शामिल होने का अधिकार शामिल है। मूलतः, यह बिना किसी अनावश्यक बाधा के सोचने, सीखने और अपनी बात कहने की आज़ादी है।

गांधी का स्वराज और बौद्धिक स्वतंत्रता

गांधीजी की स्वराज की अवधारणा राजनीतिक स्वतंत्रता से आगे बढ़कर बौद्धिक स्वतंत्रता और आत्म-नियंत्रण तक फैली हुई थी। उनका मानना था कि सच्चे स्वराज के लिए न केवल बाहरी नियंत्रण से मुक्ति आवश्यक है, बल्कि व्यक्तिगत मन को अज्ञानता, अंधविश्वास और परंपराओं के प्रति अंध-आज्ञाकारिता से भी मुक्ति आवश्यक है।

स्वराज से उनका तात्पर्य स्वतंत्रता और स्वशासन से था जिसका अभ्यास तीन स्तरों पर किया जाना चाहिए,

1. व्यक्तिगत स्वराज के मामले में, यह आत्म-नियंत्रण या स्वयं का स्वराज है।
2. देश के मामले में, यह ब्रिटिश चंगुल से भारत की आज़ादी है, और
3. सामुदायिक स्तर पर इसे ग्राम स्वराज या गांव की स्वतंत्रता कहा जाता है। (रूट 2015)

ब्रिटेन में बैरिस्टर के रूप में प्रशिक्षित, महात्मा गांधी ने स्वतंत्रता की केंद्रीयता के लिए गहन प्रशंसा विकसित की, विशेष रूप से बौद्धिक स्वतंत्रता, एक लोकतांत्रिक समाज की आधारशिला के रूप में। उनकी आलोचना औपनिवेशिक शासन से आगे बढ़कर भारतीय समाज में व्याप्त सामाजिक-आर्थिक पदानुक्रमों को भी शामिल करती थी, जिसमें कुछ उच्च-वर्गीय कांग्रेसी नेताओं का अभिजात्यवाद भी शामिल था, जो उनके विचार में, अक्सर गरीबों की वास्तविकताओं की उपेक्षा करते थे। गांधी ने लगातार बौद्धिक स्वायत्तता के महत्व को बरकरार रखा, व्यक्ति के सोचने, तर्क करने और असहमति के अधिकार की वकालत की। हिंद स्वराज और सत्य के साथ मेरे प्रयोगों की कहानी जैसी मौलिक रचनाओं में, उन्होंने इस बात पर जोर दिया कि सच्चे स्वराज में न केवल राजनीतिक मुक्ति शामिल है,

बल्कि अज्ञानता, हठधर्मिता और दासता से मन की मुक्ति भी शामिल है। इस प्रकार उनकी विचारधारा मूल रूप से बौद्धिक स्वतंत्रता के सिद्धांतों के अनुरूप थी, जिसे वे व्यक्तिगत विकास और राष्ट्रीय पुनरुत्थान दोनों के लिए अपरिहार्य मानते थे।

गांधी और बौद्धिक स्वतंत्रता का विकास

अहिंसा और स्वराज के दृढ़ प्रतिपादक महात्मा गांधी ने केंद्रीकृत राज्य सत्ता, विशेषकर बौद्धिक स्वतंत्रता को दबाने की उसकी क्षमता की तीखी आलोचना की। उनके विचार में, ज़बरदस्ती और पदानुक्रम पर आधारित कोई भी राज्य अंतर्निहित मानवीय गरिमा को कमज़ोर करता है और विचारों के स्वतंत्र विकास को रोकता है। उन्होंने घोषणा की कि सच्चा स्वराज बल द्वारा संचालित केंद्रीकृत तंत्र के अंतर्गत फल-फूल नहीं सकता, और कहा कि "पर्याप्त बल के बिना केंद्रीकरण को न तो कायम रखा जा सकता है और न ही उसकी रक्षा की जा सकती है।" (डॉ. एस इंदिरा)।

उनके राजनीतिक दर्शन में बौद्धिक मुक्ति के साधन के रूप में शिक्षा पर गहरा ज़ोर था। गांधीजी ने औपनिवेशिक और केंद्रीकृत शिक्षा प्रणालियों की आलोचना की, क्योंकि वे ग्रामीण आबादी को अलग-थलग कर रही थीं, विदेशी भाषाओं को विशेषाधिकार दे रही थीं, और भारतीयों को नौकरशाही के लिए सिर्फ़ क्लर्क के रूप में तैयार कर रही थीं। इसके बजाय, उन्होंने नई तालीम की परिकल्पना की, जो व्यावसायिक प्रशिक्षण, नैतिक विकास और सांस्कृतिक जड़ों पर आधारित एक शैक्षिक मॉडल था, खासकर स्थानीय मातृभाषाओं में शिक्षा और ग्रामीण जीवन के अनुरूप शिक्षा के माध्यम से। (कल्याणरामन 2024)

गांधी और बौद्धिक स्वतंत्रता का राज्य दमन

हालाँकि गांधीजी ने राज्य की ऐतिहासिक आवश्यकता को स्वीकार किया, लेकिन उन्होंने इस बात पर ज़ोर दिया कि उसकी दमनकारी शक्ति को न्यूनतम किया जाना चाहिए। उनके अनुसार, जो राज्य अपनी जनता पर क्रूर शक्ति का प्रयोग करता है, वह स्वाभाविक रूप से अहिंसा या वास्तविक नैतिक स्वायत्तता के सिद्धांतों के साथ असंगत है।

उन्होंने आगाह किया कि एक शक्तिशाली, केंद्रीकृत नौकरशाही अनिवार्य रूप से अभिव्यक्ति, प्रेस और शिक्षा की स्वतंत्रता को बाधित करती है और सच्ची नैतिक शक्ति विकसित करने में विफल रहती है। इसके विपरीत, अहिंसा और स्थानीय आत्मनिर्भरता पर आधारित विकेन्द्रीकृत राजनीति में, बौद्धिक स्वतंत्रता स्वाभाविक रूप से फलती-फूलती रहेगी।

यह आलोचना आज भी गहरी प्रासंगिकता रखती है। समकालीन राज्य, यहाँ तक कि लोकतांत्रिक राज्य भी, अक्सर पाठ्यक्रमों को विनियमित करते हैं, अभिजात्य भाषाओं को प्राथमिकता देते हैं, और विश्वविद्यालयों पर नियंत्रण केंद्रीकृत करते हैं, जिससे असहमति कम होती है, स्थानीय शिक्षा कमज़ोर होती है, और ग्रामीण आवाज़ें हाशिए पर चली जाती हैं। गांधी का ढाँचा एक विकल्प प्रस्तुत करता है: मातृभाषाओं में शिक्षा को सशक्त बनाना, स्थानीय समुदायों में संस्थानों की नींव रखना, और नैतिक तथा बौद्धिक विकास को बढ़ावा देने के लिए अधिकारों का हस्तांतरण करना।

ऐसी दृष्टि में, बौद्धिक स्वतंत्रता एक प्रतीकात्मक घोषणा नहीं, बल्कि एक सामाजिक व्यवहार है, जिसे सामुदायिक शिक्षा, आत्मनिर्भर संस्थाओं और विकेन्द्रीकृत शासन के माध्यम से पोषित किया जाता है। इन आदर्शों का समर्थन करते हुए, गांधीजी ने न केवल राज्य दमन का प्रतिरोध करने, बल्कि सच्ची मानवीय स्वायत्तता और नैतिक स्वशासन को बढ़ावा देने के लिए एक सशक्त खाका प्रस्तुत किया।

**AUTHOR BIO: Avish Patel is a postgraduate history student from BBAU, Lucknow. He focuses on modern and social history of India.*

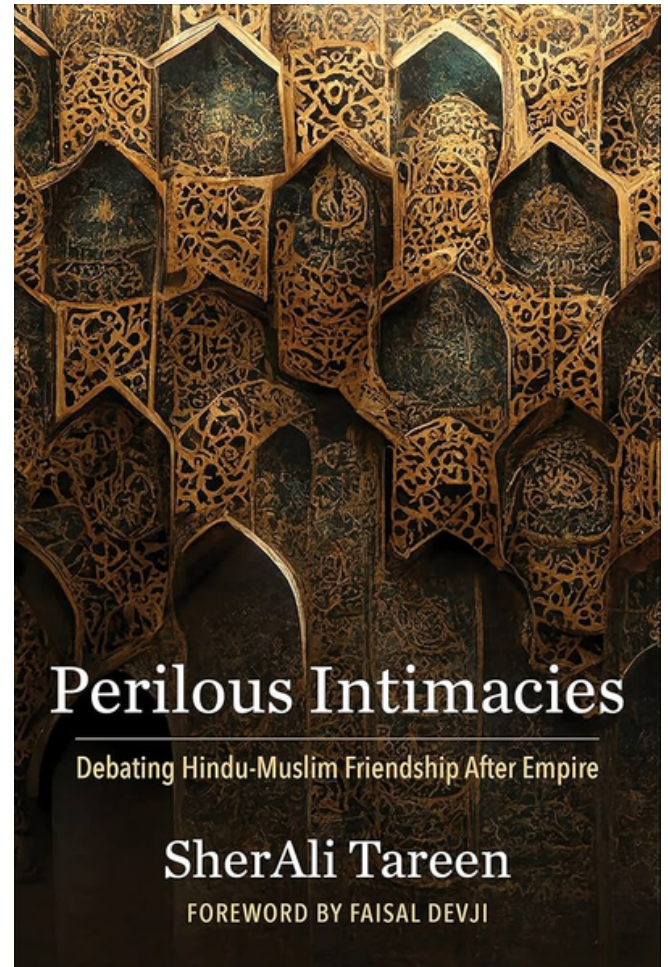
BOOK REVIEW

PERILOUS INTIMACIES: DEBATING HINDU-MUSLIM FRIENDSHIP AFTER EMPIRE

By Soumya Singh

In *Perilous Intimacies: Hindu-Muslim Friendship After Empire*, SherAli Tareen offers an account of Muslim political theology, identity formation, and interreligious relations in colonial South Asia. Moving beyond conventional paradigms of colonial disruption or religious reform, Tareen centers his analysis on the rich, complex debates among the South Asian ulema—seminary-trained Muslim scholars—who grappled with the enduring implications of Muslim loss of sovereignty under British rule and interactions between indigenous religious traditions. Rather than portraying colonialism as a mere rupture, Tareen explores how Muslim scholars, particularly traditionalists, negotiated the shifting terrain of power through everyday ritual life and the preservation of religious distinction.

The defining theme of the book is the question of how the loss of Muslim political sovereignty with the end of Mughal rule catalyzed intensified intra-Muslim debates on identity, difference, and the boundaries of friendship with religious others—especially with Hindus. Tareen's answer is layered, historically argued and repetitively stated. He shows that, with the disappearance of an imperial Muslim polity, the locus of sovereign power shifted from the domain of territorial governance to that of embodied ritual practice. This "everyday choreography" of Muslim life, infused with theological anxiety, became a crucial site for maintaining spiritual and communal integrity. Friendship, particularly with "undesirable" religious others, was not merely a personal or



social matter—it threatened the sovereignty of the self and community, unleashing both political and spiritual peril.

As Tareen shows, many scholars responded to this new condition by doubling down on the markers of Muslim distinction—ritual purity, separation from non-Muslim festivals, and preservation of Islamic norms in public life. However, Tareen also highlights diversity within Muslim responses leading to significant debates within the theology. His book adopts a methodology in which his arguments are sustained by in-depth analysis of works of key scholars at crucial historical junctures, such as the Festival of Deciding

the True God and the Khilafat movement as well as debates questions about everyday aspects such as friendship with or imitation of religious others through six detailed chapters.

Tareen also challenges simplistic binaries between “traditionalist” and “modernist” ulema, revealing instead a spectrum of interpretive agility. While all upheld the sanctity of the legal canon, their disagreements lay in the interpretive approaches to preserving Islamic tradition under new political conditions. However, as he clarifies, interpretive elasticity never translated into a willingness to reorder the foundational logics of Islamic law. Within these, as Tareen highlights, debates were based on alternative imaginaries of political sovereignty. He also contextualises the political valency of these debates by charting their impact on historical developments related to the colonial state or the nationalist(s) movements.

In one of the chapters, Tareen dissects debates during the Khilafat movement, when the idea of Hindu Muslim friendship had become central, Muslim scholars argued whether cow sacrifice was obligatory or permissive, and whether its performance was more or less important than protecting the institution of the Caliphate, that is, whether it was acceptable to give up performance of cow sacrifice to forge an alliance with the Hindus and rally in support of the Caliphate, a central symbol of pan-Islamic sovereignty, or did the mark of distinctiveness and everyday sovereignty borne through the cow sacrifice reign superior over a more distant context? Tareen grounds these differences in varied interpretations of the ritual necessity of the sacrifice in the specific context of the time and dissimilar opinions on the significance of the Caliphate and related them to the mobilis-

-ational imperatives of emergent mass movements.

In another chapter, he studies two competing visions of Islamic reform in colonial South Asia, represented by Sayyid Ahmad Khan (Aligarh) and Qari Muhammad Tayyib (Deoband). Tareen discusses how although often framed as a clash between modernity and tradition, the debate was more nuanced, centering on what counts as legitimate religious knowledge after the loss of Muslim political power. Khan sought to reconcile Islam with Western science and reason, emphasising individual access to religious truth and downplaying traditional authority, including the ulema. On the other hand, Deobandi thinkers like Tayyib saw the preservation of Islamic identity as dependent on strict adherence to traditional norms and separation from non-Muslim customs, especially in everyday practices in a time of colonial subjugation. The defining question of the debate was how to sustain Islam’s relevance and authority in a modern colonial world and the absence of political power, but offered opposing solutions based on competing ideas of power, identity, and knowledge.

Tareen explores similar debates on connected issues in a way to accentuate the significance of sovereignty in everyday religious thought, that was fractured yet persistent during colonial rule and produced varied interactions with emerging political formations including but not limited to the nationalist movement.

.....

FREEDOM TRIVIA

By Midhat Samra

Which revolutionary was tried in the famous Lahore Conspiracy Case along with Sukhdev and Rajguru?

- a) Chandra Shekhar Azad
- b) Ashfaqulla Khan
- c) Bhagat Singh
- d) Ram Prasad Bismil

Which Indian leader presided over the Constituent Assembly when the national flag was adopted on 22 July 1947?

- a) B.R. Ambedkar
- b) Dr. Rajendra Prasad
- c) Jawaharlal Nehru
- d) Sardar Patel

What was the main reason for the rejection of the Cripps Mission in 1942?

- a) It proposed immediate partition
- b) It offered only dominion status
- c) It excluded Indian representation
- d) It lacked British parliamentary approval

Which language did Nehru deliver the famous Tryst with Destiny speech in?

- a) English
- b) Hindi
- c) Urdu
- d) Sanskrit

What unique role did the Indian National Army (INA) play in influencing British decisions post-WWII?

- a) It forced the British to militarize India
- b) INA trials sparked mass civilian unrest

- c) It caused the RIN Mutiny
- d) It triggered Gandhi's arrest

Which British Prime Minister announced the decision to grant India independence by June 1948?

- a) Winston Churchill
- b) Clement Attlee
- c) Ramsay MacDonald
- d) Harold Macmillan

Which princely state declared independence and sought to remain sovereign even after August 15, 1947?

- a) Kashmir
- b) Junagadh
- c) Hyderabad
- d) Travancore

Who composed the music for India's national anthem in its first recorded version?

- a) Pandit Ravi Shankar
- b) Rabindranath Tagore
- c) Herbert Murrill
- d) Captain Ram Singh Thakuri

True or False: The Indian flag's original design included a spinning wheel (charkha) instead of the Ashoka Chakra.

ANSWER

(left to right) : c.), b.), b.), a.), b.), b.), c.), d.), True



GET IN TOUCH



the_nehru_centre

The Nehru Centre India

thenehrucentre

thenehru_centre

thenehrucentre.india@gmail.com