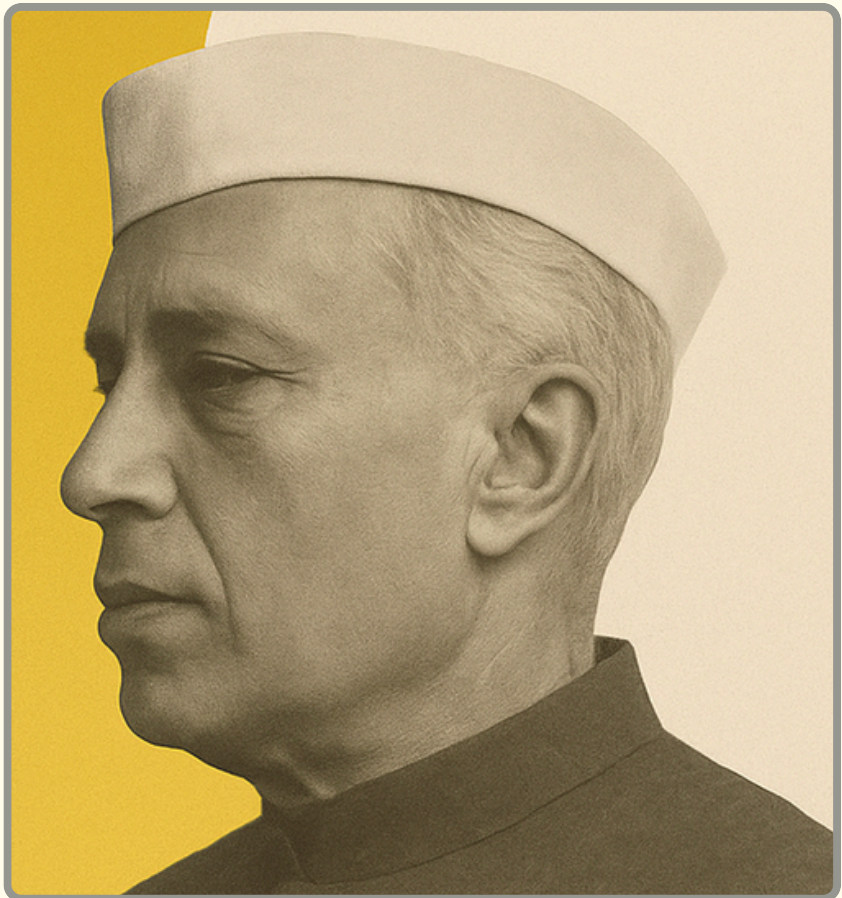


# THE NEHRU CENTRE NEWSLETTER



**Celebrating One Year of  
Ideas, Inspiration and Impact**

## MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

We're excited to share with you the eighth issue of our newsletter! In this issue, we are celebrating one year of The Nehru Centre. It's been an incredible journey, and we're so grateful for all the support and feedback we've received. As we navigate through a rapidly changing world, our pieces bring forward insightful perspectives on pressing issues that shape our society today.

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. Additionally, we are happy to share a glimpse of our journey so far and the events, we successfully hosted, last month. 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,  
Amartya Mishra  
Lead Editor, 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](mailto: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.

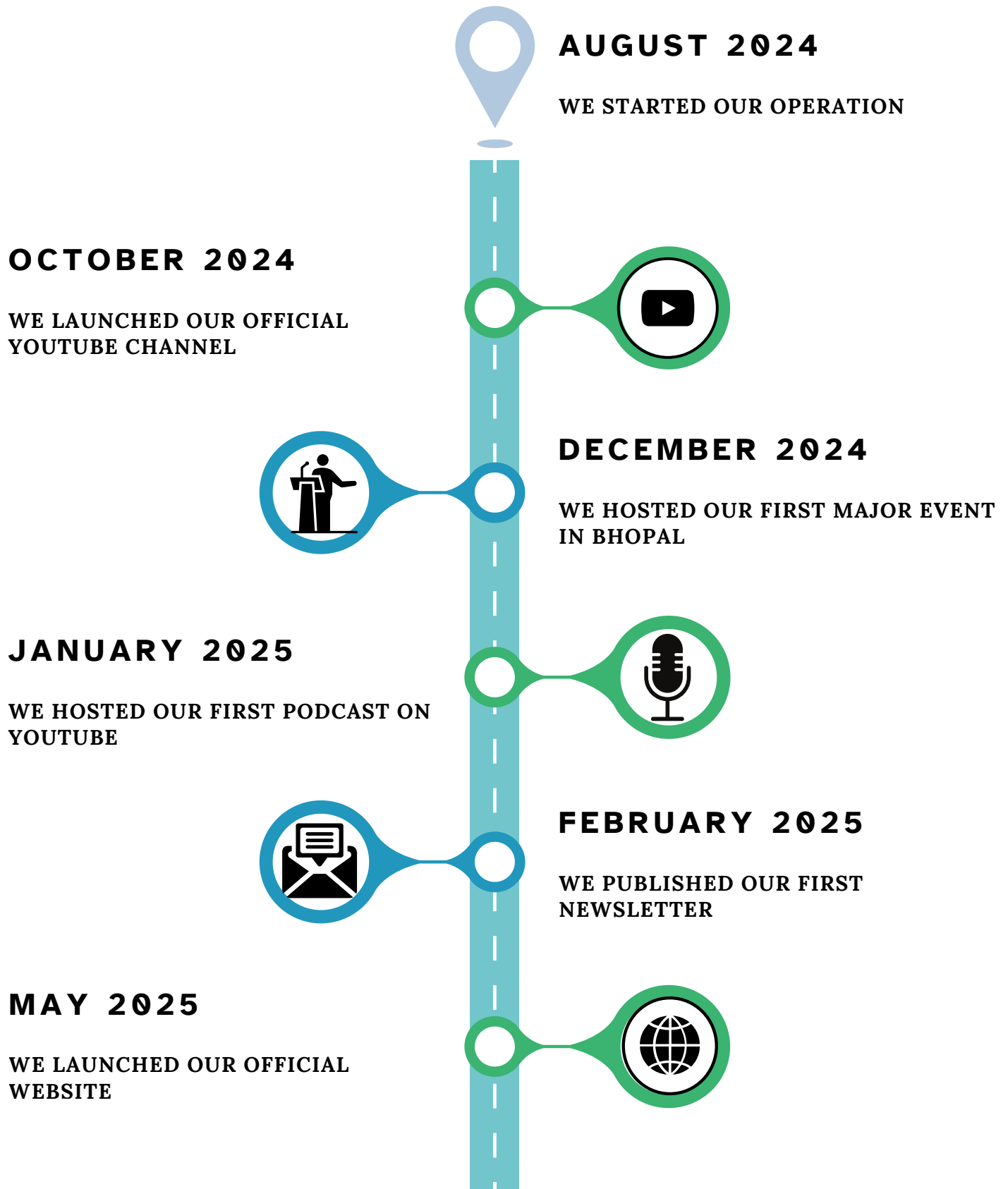
## AI & Plagiarism Policy

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

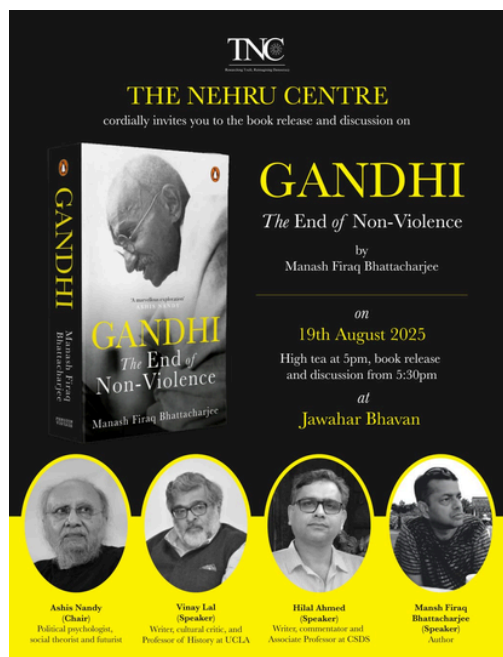
1. Indicate if your article is exclusive to The Nehru Centre or has been published elsewhere. We prioritize original content and typically do not republish blog posts.
2. Copyright for material that is published exclusively is held jointly by The Nehru Centre, New Delhi and the authors.
3. If others 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).

## TNC SO FAR



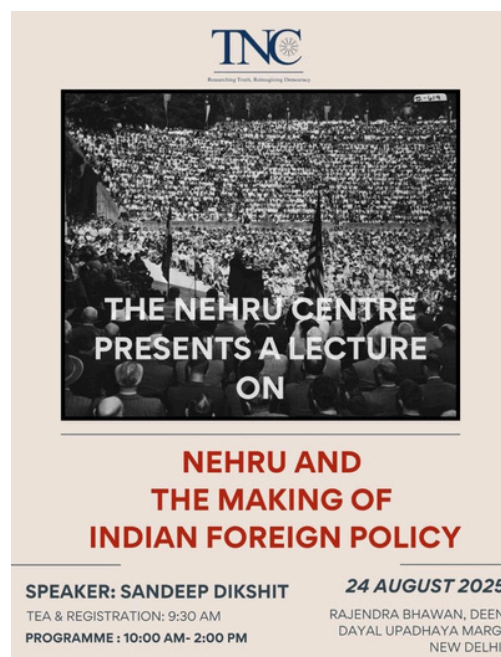


# TNC'S AUGUST GATHERINGS



**1)** We hosted the release and discussion of “Gandhi: The End of Non-Violence” by Manash Firaq Bhattacharjee at Jawahar Bhavan on 19th August 2025. Eminent speakers Ashis Nandy, Vinay Lal, Hilal Ahmed, and the author reflected on Gandhi’s legacy, the challenges to non-violence today, and its relevance to democracy and citizenship. The evening, beginning with high tea and followed by the formal book launch, offered the audience fresh insights, connecting Gandhi’s vision to contemporary debates and struggles.

**2)** TNC hosted a lecture by Prof. Sandeep Dikshit on “Nehru and the Making of Indian Foreign Policy” on 24th August, attended by students, professionals, and ex-defence officers. Prof. Dikshit gave an in-depth overview of Nehru’s foreign policy, touching on China, the 1962 war, Kashmir, and India’s peacemaking roles in international crises. He explained Nehru’s balanced approach during the Cold War and addressed myths about the era. The event concluded with a lively Q&A, offering timely insights amid renewed debates on India’s global position.



**3)** On 29th August, The Nehru Centre, in collaboration with Nehru Dialogues, hosted a student paper presentation conference on “Constituting Independence: Tracing how India’s Constitution has defined Independence since 1947.” Six papers, presented in a hybrid format, explored themes such as franchise, electoral practices, women’s rights, Dalit activism, and constitutional ideals. Professor Salil Mishra and Dr. Chayanika Uniyal served as discussants, with Professor Apoorvanand as observer. The event was marked by engaging discussions and concluded with tea and informal conversations.

## GUEST COLUMN | TRIBUTE

### REMEMBERING DADABHAI NAOROJI: THE GRAND OLD MAN OF FREEDOM MOVEMENT

By Aditya Krishna\*

September 4, 2025, marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Dadabhai Naoroji, a key figure in India's fight for independence and one of the earliest proponents of Indian nationalism. Reflecting on his legacy today, it becomes evident that Naoroji's vision, intellect, and patriotism were crucial in laying the groundwork for the freedom movement that would later gain momentum under figures like Gandhi.

On July 5, 1894, a young 24-year-old barrister living in Durban wrote to Naoroji, saying, "The Indians look up to you as children to the father. Such is really the feeling here." This young man, who would later become known as the Father of the Nation, was none other than Mohandas K. Gandhi. Gandhi, in fact, regarded Naoroji as the true father of Indian nationalism and a guiding spirit for the nation.

Born on September 4, 1825, in Navsari, Gujarat, Dadabhai Naoroji was a man of great intellect and versatility. He was not only a teacher of Gujarati, Mathematics, and Philosophy, but also a businessman. Through sheer perseverance and dedication, he emerged as one of the most influential leaders of the Indian National Congress in the pre-Gandhian era.

Naoroji's life was marked by several pioneering achievements. He was the first Indian to be elected to the British Parliament, the first modern Indian econom-



Source: Britannica

-ic thinker, and the first Congress leader to advocate for self-rule, or swaraj, as the ultimate goal for the nation. Above all, Naoroji identified himself first and foremost as an Indian, advocating for a united national identity that transcended divisions of caste, religion, region, or ethnicity. As he famously declared, "Whether I am a Hindu, a Muhammadan, a Parsi, a Christian, or of any other creed, I am above all an Indian.... Our country is India, our nationality is Indian."

In 1865 and 1866, Naoroji co-founded the London Indian Society and the East India Association, both of which aimed to bring

together Indians and supportive Britons to work toward a common cause. A staunch advocate for self-rule, he famously stated, "Self-government is the only and chief remedy. In self-government is our hope, strength, and greatness." As a founding member of the Indian National Congress, he served as its president three times—in 1886, 1893, and 1906.

Perhaps Naoroji's most profound contribution came with his concept of the Drain Theory, which he outlined in his landmark work *Poverty and Un-British Rule in India*. In this book, he demonstrated how British colonial policies drained India's wealth, stifled local industries, and enriched Britain at India's expense.

For his significant contributions, Naoroji earned the title of the "Grand Old Man of India." In 1956, Jawaharlal Nehru paid tribute to him by calling him the "Father of the Indian National Congress."

As India commemorates the 200th anniversary of his birth, Naoroji's ideals of unity, justice, and self-governance continue to resonate and inspire the nation.

### Reference Links

- <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/dadabhai-naoroji-swaraj-congress-nationalism-dinyar-patel-6524828/>
- <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-remembering-dadabhai-naoroji-on-his-birthday-5966633/lite/>

- <https://theprint.in/india/governance/remembering-dadabhai-naoroji-the-grand-old-man-of-india-on-his-193rd-birth-anniversary/111639/>
- <https://www.telegraphindia.com/opinion/sagely-leader-dadabhai-naoroji/cid/1820580>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-52829458>
- [https://www.mkgandhi.org/selectedletters/01dadabhai\\_naoroji.html](https://www.mkgandhi.org/selectedletters/01dadabhai_naoroji.html)
- <https://dinyarpatel.com/naoroji/timeline/>

.....

*\*Aditya Krishna holds a Masters in History. He runs the "Nehruvian," a page dedicated to modern Indian history, on social media.*



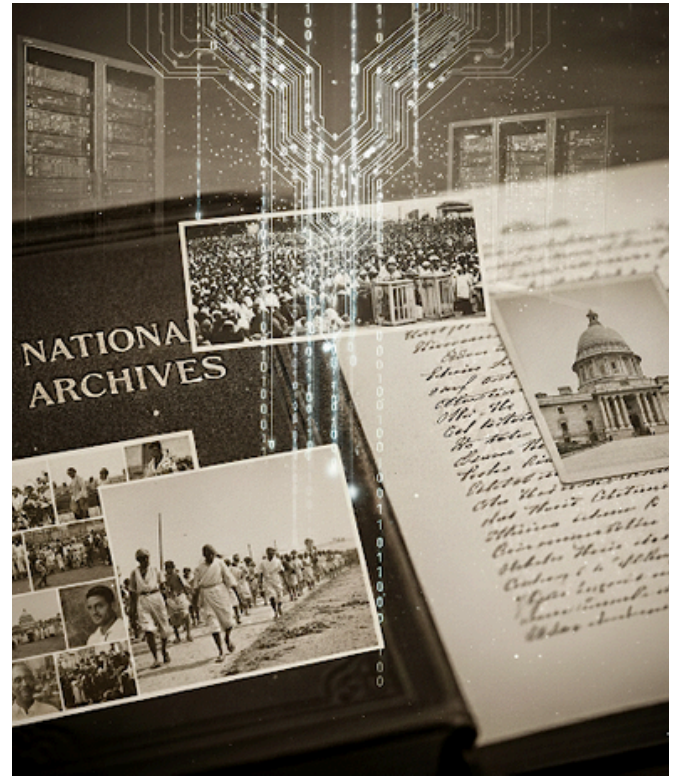
## GUEST COLUMN | OPINION

# THE INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT AS NATIONAL MEMORY IN THE DIGITAL AGE

By K K Pathak\*

What constitutes a “national memory”? Benedict Anderson, in his seminal work *Imagined Communities* (1983), offers a conceptual framework for understanding this idea. He describes nations as communities that are “imagined”, bound together by people who will never meet, yet feel connected through shared languages, cultural artefacts, and a curated remembrance of events, heroes, and narratives. A nation, according to him, is a “horizontal comradeship”. In this sense, “national memory” may revolve around a symbolic recollection by the people—what they choose to remember, celebrate, or mourn. Its creation hinges upon how they assemble past events and icons into a unifying national story.

The Indian national movement was arguably the most consequential event in the history of India, and, in a great measure, for the whole of South Asia. While as a political movement, the freedom struggle succeeded in achieving its objective of overthrowing the British colonial rule, its eventful legacy has left an indelible mark on the social landscape of India. For generations to come, it metamorphosed into a public memory, through which India understands its constitutional identity—as a sovereign, democratic, pluralist nation. This memory-making has been shaped and sustained not only by state-sponsored commemorations, textbook histories, public monuments, and national holidays, but also by civic rituals like public participation in the form of *nukkad nataks*, cinema and music culture, patriotic



story-telling in households etc. Eventually, the national movement evolved into a shared repertoire of remembrance that continues to anchor both the legitimacy of the Indian nation-state and the moral imagination of its citizens.

While the pre-independence India galvanised its energies to win independence from the *British Raj*, the post-independence India saw its priorities shift dramatically. Inaugural leaders like the first PM Jawaharlal Nehru and the first HM Vallabhbhai Patel prioritised nation-building and governance. Thereafter, the nation witnessed great legislative strides in the domains of economy, polity and social justice. But despite these evolving priorities, the memory of the Indian national movement



endured as a unifying sentiment, across generations and governments. As the nation stepped into the 21st century, backed by the economic boost of 1991 liberalisation reforms and the IT revolution wave, it transformed into one of the premier tech-focused countries of the world. With the advent of the internet and digital technologies, the national priorities began to alter yet again. Political leaders today leverage digital technologies in almost every aspect of governance. Also, in this age of digital economy, mass digitisation has unlocked the ambitions and actions of people in numerous ways. The internet in particular, has revolutionised the way knowledge is accessed by people. In this context, people are prompted to explore the nation's history, including the Indian national movement with even more accessibility. Unlike earlier, when engagement with the Indian national movement was largely mediated by state-sponsored commemorations or confined to civic rituals on national holidays, today, the free flow of short-form digital content, ranging from Instagram reels to YouTube podcasts has significantly broadened public curiosity around the freedom struggle, its events and its icons. This in turn, seems to have impacted our understanding of the Indian national movement as a site of national memory.

In this digital age, political ideologies aside, the Indian national movement has increasingly been recast into forms that suit the virality of content, driven by the attention economy. Its once solemn and moral imagery, along with its unifying legacy are now shown through commercially-driven platforms that favour brevity, sentimentality, and visual appeal. Public memory of national icons, slogans, and events are often merchandised on e-commerce platforms during national ho-

-lidays, and social media tributes designed for reach rather than reflection. While such representations may foster a surface-level engagement with the past, they also risk reducing the movement's legacy to a consumable spectacle—flattening its historical nuance. This shift in how we remember our freedom struggle reflects a change in how national memory itself is re-constructed and consumed in the digital age. Today it is marketed, aestheticised, and, at times, instrumentalised for increasingly commercial purposes.



Source: Wikipedia

More concerning is the growing challenge of misinformation in shaping public understanding of the freedom struggle. In a digital ecosystem where narratives circulate faster than they can be verified, selective interpretations and factual distortions often tend to push content consumers away from the original motivations and imperatives of the Indian national movement. Social media channels and viral podcasts have become fertile grounds for alternative histories—some motivated by political agendas, others by a lack of historical literacy. In doing so, emerges a repackaged and fragmented image of the Indian national movement rather than a collective national memory. As a result, national icons have become contenders of political ideologies and the freedom struggle itself has become a site of rewriting history. These distortions in many

ways erode the long held shared memory that sustained our nation's lifeblood, i.e. unity in diversity. The digital public sphere, for all its participatory potential, has thus emerged as a commercialised battleground for the nation's historical imagination.

The Indian national movement is more than just a chapter of history. It is a source of moral force that continues to shape the collective conscience of the nation. As a unifying narrative, it has long offered citizens a shared lens through which to understand our past and our very own identity as a nation-state. In this digital age, where the lines between truth and interpretation are increasingly blurred, the preservation of this national memory demands public vigilance. It is imperative that institutions—educational, cultural, and technological—collaborate to promote digital literacy, encourage responsible content creation, and uphold historical integrity. For a nation as diverse as India, the memory of the Indian national movement serves as a connective tissue across regions, religions, languages, castes, and generations. Regardless of the medium through which it is accessed—textbook, stage, or screen—it must remain a space of thoughtful engagement and remembrance. To forget this is to risk weakening perhaps the most enduring moral and political legacy that still binds our republic together.

*\* K. K. Pathak holds a Master's in Spanish and Latin American Literature from Jawaharlal Nehru University. He has worked in the fields of digital ads and E-commerce. He is passionate about exploring intersectional themes in sociology, history, linguistics, digitisation and artificial intelligence.*



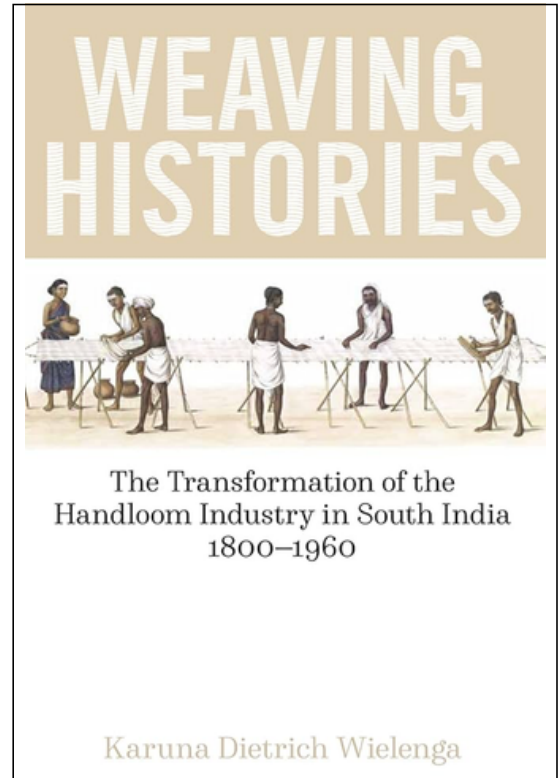
## BOOK REVIEW

### WEAVING HISTORIES: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE HANDLOOM INDUSTRY IN SOUTH INDIA 1800–1960

By Soumya Singh

*WEAVING HISTORIES: The Transformation of the Handloom Industry in South India, 1800–1960* by Karuna Dietrich Wielenga is a detailed and engaging account of the multiple facets of and people in the cotton production economy of eighteenth to twentieth century colonial Madras. Wielenga sets clear tasks for herself, which also differentiate her account from other books on the theme of textile histories that have generated a substantial amount of scholarship. First, she connects her history of economic processes to the emergence of the informal sector, which she insists on being studied as a specific stage in the development of global industrial capitalism and not a remnant or continuation of some pre-colonial past. Second, by centering the question of caste and social hierarchies, she disrupts unilinear narratives of growth or decline, and traces how communities experienced varying economic trajectories depending on their caste and class status. Third, by bringing attention to themes of gendered division of labor and the role played by women's work in various stages of cotton production, Wielenga raises questions afresh about the romanticisation of household small scale production supposedly unmarked by exploitation or inequality.

Wielenga acknowledges the possibility of a history of small-scale artisanal production and its resilience in revealing alternative visions of development and offering regional perspectives that destabilize teleological assumptions about the inevitability of industrial capitalism, but without rolling over into an essentialised account of the virtues of the



handloom sector. This is achieved by detailed descriptive accounts of the various elements of the industry, its stages of production, the communities and castes involved in diverse roles, an emphasis on the 'politics at the point of production'. Wielenga first differentiates between the export oriented fine goods industry concentrated in the coastal areas and the domestic consumption oriented coarse goods industry concentrated in the inland zones. She discusses how this difference overlapped with others such as caste status as well as the relative independence of the weaver. She argues that accounts which emphasise the freedom of the pre-colonial weaver fail to differentiate between the found goods specialist weaver who participated in a competitive market and had the ability to

negotiate between various buyers and the small scale domestic oriented weavers who had lesser ability to negotiate. Nevertheless, as she shows, the consolidation of colonial rule does witness an overall decline in the weaver's power, onset of centralisation and mechanisation, development of mill monopolies and power of intermediaries and the increase in the number of weavers for hire as small scale lacked the capital to continue weaving independently. For example, once millmade yarns take over the market, the weaver's ability to choose raw materials or make decisions about yarn or cloth quality is minimised, as yarn prices and availability come to be determined by millowners. Often millmade yarn is incompatible with local technology or priced too highly for the small scale weaver to afford.

Wielanga's work mostly focuses on the inland domestic oriented industry, and throughout the chapters she provides a comprehensive account of the types of fabrics and clothes used in the area, the communities engaged in manifold types of textile production, the various stages of cultivation, cleaning, spinning, weaving and trade that constitute the economy as well as the transformations entailed by the growing power of the East Indian Company state in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a result of EICs twin role as state and merchant that furthered its ability to use a range of legal and coercive measures to bend the producers and markets to its will. Wielanga traces how events such as the change in company priorities from trade in fabric to trade in raw cotton, the inflow of mill-made fabric and yarn, setting up of local mills and the development of technology that mechanized several stages of production had a negative impact on the primary producers, who increasingly lost control over the production

process and in negotiating wages or prices. She further clarifies the uneven nature of this impact, by stressing how lower caste communities that were predominantly involved in coarse cloth production were worse off than communities that dealt in fine goods, and affluent communities which could afford to invest in newer technologies that improved productivity. She discusses how the emergence of weaving masters and specialist weavers that signed a continuity or resurgence of the industry were mostly from upwardly mobile communities like the Saurashtra caste, whereas so called untouchable communities like Pariars who formed a significant part of small scale independent coarse good producing weavers had almost stopped weaving by the turn of the 20th century.

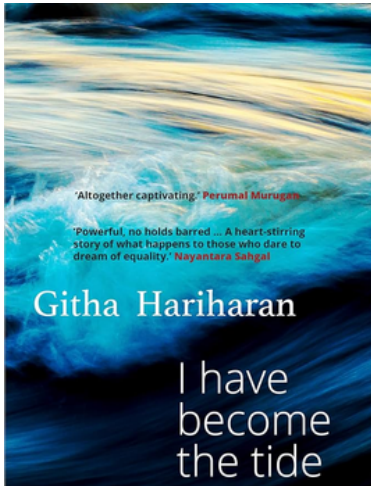
By focusing on the uneven impacts that were produced at historical conjectures for heterogeneous communities, and providing extensive descriptions of disparate types of work and levels of remuneration on basis of caste or gender, she argues against celebratory narratives of commercialisation or innovation, showing how the latter often accounted to self-exploitation. Wielanga's work is significant because it is history writing of a manner that possesses the ability to reflect on several pressing contemporary problems - the instability and exploited status of the informal work and its caste dimensions, the question of women's unpaid labour in the domestic setup and the continuing vulnerability of the informal economy to 'external forces', such as unpredictable and unstable effects produced by failures of diplomatic policy to secure favourable trade agreements impacting millions of workers.

.....



## TNC READING LIST: MUST READS

By Mansi Singh



### *I Have Become the Tide*

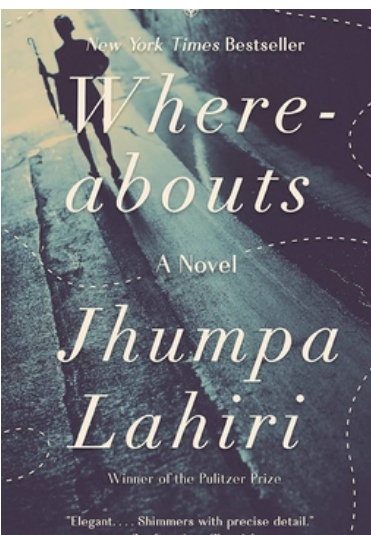
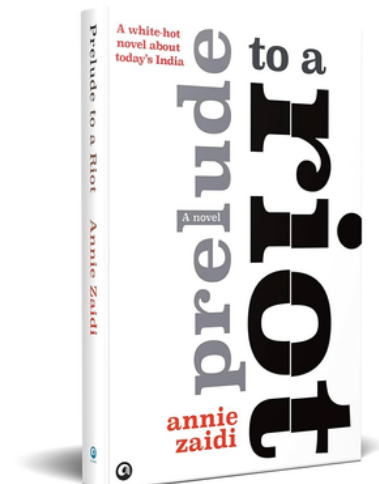
**Author:** Githa Hariharan

**Overview:** This novel interweaves three storylines across time. A Dalit boy aspiring to become a poet, a medieval saint who challenged caste hierarchies through song, and contemporary students questioning inherited discrimination. Hariharan explores the politics of caste, education, and voice, highlighting how resistance takes root in both history and the present.

### *Prelude to a Riot*

**Author:** Annie Zaidi

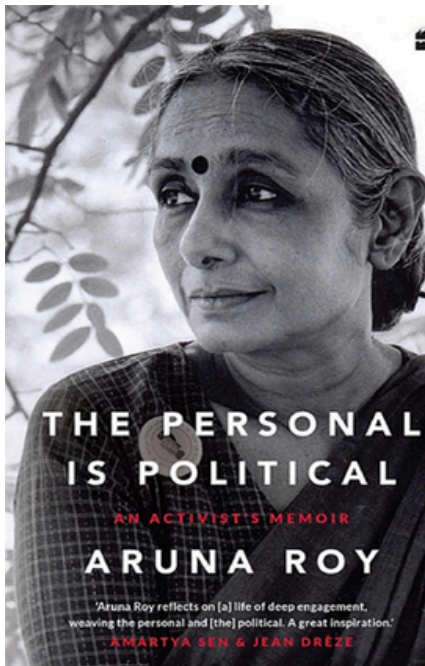
**Overview:** Set in a small southern town on the brink of communal breakdown, the novel unfolds through monologues of ordinary people landowners, workers, and children each revealing layers of prejudice and fear. Zaidi's spare yet piercing prose captures how everyday interactions can harden into hostility, and how tensions simmer beneath apparent normalcy until they erupt.



### *Whereabouts*

**Author:** Jhumpa Lahiri

**Overview:** Written originally in Italian and later translated by Lahiri herself, this novel follows an unnamed woman navigating solitude and fleeting encounters in an unnamed city. Though set in Italy, its reflections on alienation, belonging, and identity resonate globally especially with Indian urban experiences of displacement, migration, and the search for connection.



## *Of the People: The Personal Is Political – An Activist’s Memoir*

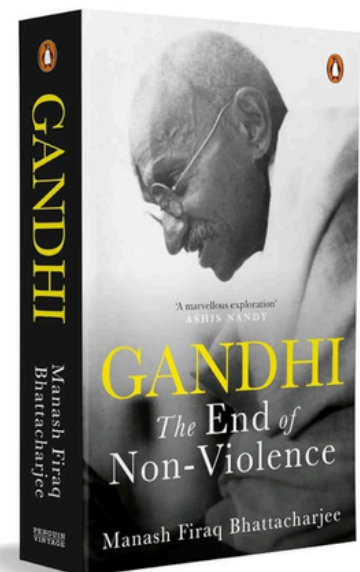
**Author:** Aruna Roy

**Overview:** In this memoir, Aruna Roy traces her transformation from a civil servant to a grassroots activist and co-founder of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS). She reflects on struggles for transparency and accountability, including the historic Right to Information movement. Blending personal narrative with political critique, Roy demonstrates how democracy deepens when ordinary people claim their rights.

## *Gandhi: The End of Non-Violence*

**Author:** Manash Firaq Bhattacharjee

**Overview:** A deeply researched and empathetic exploration of Gandhi’s philosophy, this work examines the resilience and limits of nonviolence in moments of historical crisis particularly Partition and communal violence. Drawing on witness accounts and Gandhi’s own writings, Bhattacharjee interrogates whether nonviolence could withstand the weight of hatred and mass tragedy, while illuminating Gandhi’s enduring moral influence.



## GET IN TOUCH



the\_nehru\_centre



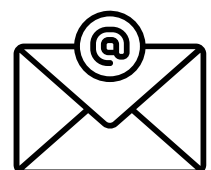
The Nehru Centre India



thenehrucentre



thenehru\_centre



thenehrucentre.india@gmail.com