

Neeti Nair

Corcoran Department of History
University of Virginia
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Academic Employment

University of Virginia, Corcoran Department of History, Associate Professor, fall 2012 - present
University of Virginia, Corcoran Department of History, Assistant Professor, 2006 - 2012
University of Virginia, South Asia Center, Core Faculty, 2006 - present
Tulane University, Department of History, Assistant Professor, spring 2006
Brown University, Department of History, Visiting Instructor, spring 2005, spring 2004

Education

Tufts University, Ph.D. in History, 2005; M.A. in History, 2000
St. Stephen's College, University of Delhi, B.A. in History (Honours). First Class. 1998
Rishi Valley School, Krishnamurti Foundation India. Indian School Certificate. 1995

Publications

Books

[Changing Homelands: Hindu Politics and the Partition of India](#), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2011, 356 pages including notes, bibliography

- Co-published by Permanent Black in India, 2011; Paperback, 2016
- Short-listed for the AHA's inaugural John F. Richards Prize for South Asian History, 2011
- [A Washington Post WorldViews Recommended Book, 2013](#)
- Invited essays on related themes: [Page 99 Test](#), [India Today](#), [Seminar](#)

Reviews: *The American Historical Review*, *Contemporary South Asia*, *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, *Journal of Asian Studies*, *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, *Social History*, *Asian Affairs*, *Journal of Genocide Research*, *India International Centre Quarterly*, *The Book Review*, *South Asian Review*, *Oral History Review*, *Indian Historical Review*, *H-Net Reviews*, *Journal of*

World History, Canadian Journal of History, Asian Journal of Social Science. Extracts of reviews are available [here](#)

Media Coverage: *The Hindu, Washington Post, Frontline, The Daily Star, Refugee Watch Online, Permanent Black Blog*

Ghosts from the Past? Assessing Recent Developments in Religious Freedom in South Asia, co-edited with Michael Kugelman, Taylor & Francis, forthcoming, 2021. Reprint of a special issue of [Asian Affairs](#), 49:2, 2018

Peer Reviewed Articles

‘Introduction’ to *Ghosts from the Past? Assessing Recent Developments in Religious Freedom in South Asia*, a special issue of *Asian Affairs*, 49:2, 2018, 199-204

‘Towards mass education or “an aristocracy of talent”: non-alignment and the making of a strong India’, in Gyan Prakash, Michael Laffan, and Nikhil Menon eds., *The Postcolonial Moment in South and Southeast Asia*, Bloomsbury, 2018, 183-200

‘Beyond the “communal” 1920s: the problem of intention, legislative pragmatism, and the making of Section 295A of the Indian Penal Code’, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, July 2013, Vol. 50, No. 3, 317-340

- Republished in *The Law Weekly* 2016-3-LW, Vol. 199, 1 JS - 20 JS and *The Law Weekly (Criminal)* 2016-1-LW (CrI) 48 JS - 68 JS
- Media Coverage: [The Telegraph](#), [OPEN Magazine](#), [Live Mint](#), [The Diplomat](#), [Economic and Political Weekly](#), [The Print](#), and the [Chapati Mystery Blog](#)

‘Indo-Pak Relations: a Window of Opportunity that has Almost Closed’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 20, 2014, Vol. 49, No. 51

Articles on ‘Hindu Mahasabha’, ‘Pt Madan Mohan Malaviya’, ‘Rangila Rasul’, ‘Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh’, ‘Sanatan Dharm’, ‘Shuddhi’, ‘Swami Shraddhanand’, in Ayesha Jalal ed., *The Oxford Companion to Pakistani History*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2012

‘Partition and Minority Rights in Punjabi Hindu Debates, 1920-1947’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, December 24, 2011, Vol. 46, No. 52, 61-69

‘Bhagat Singh as “satyagrahi”’: The Limits to Non-violence in Late Colonial India’, *Modern Asian Studies*, May 2009, Vol. 43, No. 3, 649-681

“‘We Left our Keys with our Neighbors”’: Memory and the Search for Meaning in Post-Partitioned India’, Rosemarie Rogers Working Paper # 29, The Inter-University Committee on International Migration, MIT, November 2004

In Progress

Hurt Sentiments and State Ideology in South Asia (in progress; under contract with Harvard University Press)

India’s Partition: Politics, Culture, Memory (under contract with Cambridge University Press)

Editor, Special Issue, ‘Citizenship, Belonging, and the Partition of India’, *Asian Affairs*, 2021-22

Academic Honors and Grants

Mellon Humanities Fellow, Institute of the Humanities and Global Cultures, University of Virginia, 2020 - 2021

Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation Research Grant, fall 2020

Public Voices Fellowship, The Op-Ed Project, fall 2019

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., Global Fellow, 2018 - 2020

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Public Policy Fellow, June - August 2018

Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Fellow, 2017 - 2018

American Council of Learned Societies, Frederick Burkhardt Residential Fellowship, John W. Kluge Center, Library of Congress, Washington D.C., 2016 - 2017

National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend, 2016

University of Virginia Sesquicentennial Fellowship, spring 2016, 2009 - 2010

Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton University, 2016 - 2017 Fellowship, alternate

American Institute of Indian Studies Senior Short-term Fellowship, 2014 - 2015

University of Virginia Faculty Stipend for Summer Research, 2020, 2012, 2011, 2009, 2008, 2007

University of Virginia Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences, 2020-21, 2019, 2015, 2010, 2008

University of Virginia Center for International Studies Travel Grant, 2011, 2010

Mellon-MIT Inter-University Program on International Migrations, 2002 - 2003

Columbia University, Taraknath Das Foundation, Southern Asian Institute, 2002

Harvard University Certificate of Distinction in Teaching, Derek Bok Center, 2002

Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Summer Language Training Fellowship, 2001

Tufts University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Student Award for Outstanding Academic Performance, 2001

Reviews and Commentaries

Interview with Matthew Berkman, [“Hurt Sentiments” and Forbidden Speech in India](#), The Andrea Mitchell Center for the Study of Democracy, University of Pennsylvania, January 21, 2021

- Podcast at <https://mitchellcenter.libsyn.com/210-hurt-sentiments-and-forbidden-speech-in-india-neeti-nair>

Starr Forum, [‘Democracies on the Rocks?’](#) MIT Center for International Studies, October 23, 2020

Interview with G. S. Mudur: [‘CAA-NRC a road to Hindu Rashtra’](#), *The Telegraph*, December 18, 2019

Interview with G. S. Mudur: [‘Ayodhya case verdict: Secularism not easy to crush’](#), *The Telegraph*, November 10, 2019

[‘An Emergency Today’](#), Review of *Emergency Chronicles: Indira Gandhi and Democracy’s Turning Point* by Gyan Prakash, *The New Rambler: An Online Review of Books*, September 2019

[‘Old Laws for New Reasons: The Limits to Free Speech in India’](#), Berkley Forum, Berkley Center for Religion, Peace & World Affairs, Georgetown University, August 23, 2018

- Republished in [The Print](#), August 26, 2018

[‘Secularism and India’s Electoral Democracy’](#), *Asia Dispatches*, Wilson Center Blog, June 2018

[‘Rising Religious Intolerance in South Asia’](#), *Current History*, South Asia, April 2018

[‘Looking Back: Filling in the gaps of Partition’](#), Review of *Looking Back: The 1947 Partition of India 70 Years On* edited by Rakhshanda Jalil, Tarun K. Saint and Debjani Sengupta, *The Print*, October 1, 2017

Review of *Army and Nation: The Military and Indian Democracy since Independence* by Steven I. Wilkinson, *The American Historical Review*, 121, 1, 2016, 218-19

[‘Freedom and Faith in India’](#), Review of *Pluralism and Democracy in India: Debating the Hindu Right* eds. Wendy Doniger and Martha Nussbaum, *Current History*, South Asia, April 2015

[‘On a Personal Note’](#), Review of *Strictly Personal: Manmohan & Gursharan* by Daman Singh, *The Sunday Tribune - Spectrum*, 21 September 2014

Review of *Women, War, and the Making of Bangladesh: Remembering 1971* by Yasmin Saikia, *The American Historical Review*, 118, 1, 2013, 169-70

[‘Delhi University’s Undergraduate Programme: Notes from the Archives’](#), *Economic and Political Weekly*, Special Series on ‘Debating DU’, May 25, 2013, Vol. 48, No. 21

[‘riyaaz, saadhana, taiyyari: life practices’](#), *Seminar* No. 632, Special Issue ‘A Country of Our Own: A Symposium on re-imagining South Asia’, April 2012, 27-30

Review of *Pedagogy for Religion: Missionary Education and the Fashioning of Hindus and Muslims in Bengal* by Parna Sengupta, *Social History*, 37, 3, 2012, 341-43

Review of *The Partition of India* by Ian Talbot and Gurharpal Singh, *Journal of Islamic Studies*, 21, 3, 2010, 464-67

Review of *Witnessing Partition: Memory, History, Fiction* by Tarun K. Saint, *Seminar* No. 610, June 2010, 57-61

‘Restraint vs. Denial: The Struggle between India and Pakistan’, *Harvard International Review*, Web Perspectives, February 6, 2009

Review of *Shameful Flight: the last years of the British Empire in India* by Stanley Wolpert, *Journal of British Studies*, 47, 2, 2008, 475-76

Review of *Precolonial and Colonial Punjab: Society, Economy, Politics and Culture* edited by Reeta Grewal and Sheena Pall, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 66, 2, 2007, 568-71

Review of *India: A National Culture?* ed. by Geeti Sen, *Contemporary South Asia*, 14, 1, 2005, 113-15

Review of *The Aftermath of Partition in South Asia* by Tai Yong Tan and Gyanesh Kudaisya, *Seminar* No. 534, February 2004, 74-76

Popular Press

[‘For Congress, A History Lesson’](#), *The Indian Express*, August 29, 2020

[‘Haksar’s advice to Indira Gandhi can help Sonia steer Congress in the right direction’](#), *The Print*, March 13, 2020

- Published in Hindi in [The Print](#), March 13, 2020

[‘Missing Rahul in Delhi’](#), *The Indian Express*, March 3, 2020

[‘For the first time, India is seeing secularism go from a top-down decree to a street slogan’](#), *The Print*, January 3, 2020

- Published in Hindi in *The Print*, January 3, 2020
- Published in Bengali in *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, January 4, 2020

[‘Modi’s Kashmir move is biggest test for Indian democracy’](#), *The Print*, August 5, 2019

- Published in Hindi in *The Print*, August 6, 2019

[‘In 1964, calling Godse patriot led to uproar in Parliament. Now Pragya Thakur gets approval’](#), *The Print*, May 19, 2019

- Published in Bengali in *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, May 19, 2019

[‘In many significant ways, Nehru’s vision for India seems passé’](#), *The Print*, November 14, 2017

[‘What did Gandhi Stand For, And How is His Legacy Faring In Today’s India?’](#), *Huffington Post India*, October 10, 2017

[‘What does Nawaz Sharif’s disqualification mean for democracy in Pakistan and its politics’](#), *The Print*, July 28, 2017

[‘Heroes of Hindu Nationalism’](#), *India Today Magazine*, January 12, 2015

[‘The uniformity project’](#), *The Indian Express*, June 26, 2014

- Published in Bengali as [‘English has now become an Indian language’](#), *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, August 7, 2014

[‘The Truth of Geography’](#), *Outlook India*, December 4, 2008

Invited Talks and Conference Papers

‘India’s Partition: Literature, Culture, Politics’, Mellon Fellow Symposium Series, Institute of the Humanities & Global Culture, University of Virginia, March 2021

‘Three Moments in the History of Indian Secularism’, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, December 2019

‘*We are Ayodhya: The Life and Times of a Festival for Secularism*’, Liu Institute for Asian Studies and the South Asia Group, University of Notre Dame, September 2019

‘Godse’s legacy for Gandhian secularism’ for a panel titled *Rethinking the Murder of the Mahatma: Political Assassinations and the Burdens of History*, Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, October 2018

‘The Objectives Resolution of Pakistan: Islam, Minorities, and the Making of a Democracy’, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, February 2018

‘The Objectives Resolution and the Enduring Question of Minority Rights in Pakistan’, for a panel titled *Constitutions and Minority Rights: Case Studies from South Asia*, American Historical Association Annual Meeting, Washington DC, January 2018

‘The Challenge and the Promise of the Objectives Resolution of Pakistan’, South Asian University, New Delhi, August 2017

‘Case laws, testimonies, and the everyday life of blasphemy laws in India and Pakistan’, Annual Conference of the Law and Society Association, Mexico City, June 2017

‘The Historian as Judge: Free Speech Case Laws in Postcolonial India and Pakistan’, Washington and Lee University, November 2016

‘Section 295A: The Unexpected Afterlives of a Colonial Piece of Legislation’, for a panel titled *Afterlives: Postcolonial Laws and their Colonial Antecedents in South Asia*, Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, Seattle, April 2016

‘Towards mass education or a “natural aristocracy of talents”? Manpower needs and the virtues of “non-alignment”’, Conference on *The Postcolonial Moment in South and Southeast Asia*, Princeton University, November 2015

‘Ideas of Justice and Unity in Indian Higher Education’, Southeast Conference of the Association for Asian Studies (SEC-AAS), University of Virginia, January 2015

Discussant, panel on “Women in Modern India”, Southeast Conference of the Association for Asian Studies (SEC-AAS), University of Virginia, January 2015

‘Debates over intention, the intention behind debates: legislative pragmatism and the making of Section 295-A of the Indian Penal Code’, *Conference on Religion, Patronage and Reform in Modern South Asia*, Department of South Asia Studies, University of Pennsylvania, April 2012

“Partition” and “minority rights” in Punjabi Hindu Debates, c. 1920 - 1947’, American Historical Association Annual Meeting, Chicago, January 2012

Discussant, ‘The Coast of Tantara: 1948 and after’ by Alon Confino, paper for *1948 in Palestine: An Interdisciplinary Symposium*, University of Virginia, 2011

‘Surprise, Disbelief, and the Telos of Partition’, Indian Council of Historical Research Delhi, 2011

‘The Problem of Return for Partition’s Punjabi Hindu Refugees’, Center for South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison; Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, 2011

‘*Om shantih, ameen*: between communalism and anti-colonial nationalism’, Workshop on *Radical Politics in 20th century Punjab*, European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, University of Bonn, 2010

“*Kehte hain naasur hai*”: memory and the search for meaning in post-Partition Delhi’, Ambedkar University Delhi, 2010

Discussant, Roundtable discussion of *Specters of Mother India: the global restructuring of an Empire* by Mrinalini Sinha at Mid-Atlantic Conference on British Studies, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, 2009

‘Gandhian *satyagraha* as terrorism: the limits to non-violence in late colonial India’, Conference on *Terrorism and Modernity: Global Perspectives on Nineteenth Century Political Violence*, German Historical Institutes and the Department of History, Tulane University, 2008

‘*Om shantih, ameen*: religiously informed anti-colonial protest’, Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2008

“Unity cannot be purchased at the cost of Hindu rights”: the Nation debated as Hindu’, Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, Atlanta, 2008

‘Bhagat Singh as *satyagrahi*: a “Clash of Principles” and a “Question of Humanity”’, Association for Asian Studies Annual Meeting, San Francisco; Nehru Memorial Museum and Library; University of Delhi, 2006

‘Religion, Democracy, and their Discontents’, Summer Program on Understanding Globalization - Focus on South Asia, Programs in International Educational Resources, Yale University, 2005

“Things happen to upset plans”: the problem of responsibility and Partition violence’, Annual Conference on South Asia, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2004

“‘We left our keys with our neighbors in 1947’”: private memories, public histories and the making of a new India’, Center for International Studies, MIT, 2004

‘Crafting a Nation: The Political Identities of Lala Lajpat Rai, 1882 - 1928’, Graduate Students Interdisciplinary Studies Symposium, Tufts University, 2001

Guest Lectures and Public Outreach

Guest Speaker, 1947 Partition and the Making of Modern of India, Area Studies Division, Foreign Service Institute, U.S. Department of State, 2020 -

Chair, Symposium on *Citizenship, Belonging, and the Partition of India*, Institute of the Humanities & Global Culture, University of Virginia, 2021

Citizenship Amendment Act - National Register of Citizens: A Teach-In, Charlottesville Alliance for Refugees and Tamil Students Union, University of Virginia, 2020

A Conversation on Human Rights in India, Inaugural Human Rights Week, University of Virginia School of Law, 2019

Ideas of India: What’s at Stake in India’s Elections, Washington Literary Society and Debating Union, University of Virginia, 2019

Chair and Discussant, panel on Constitutional Considerations, Conference on *Ghosts from the Past? Assessing Recent Developments in Religious Freedom in South Asia*, Asia Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., 2018

Free Speech in India, Inaugural session of *Chit Chaat: A Night of Indian Cultural Literacy*, Indian Students Association, University of Virginia, 2015

Partition and its Implications, Indian Student Association and Pakistan Student League Conference, University of Virginia, 2011

Thinking through Mumbai: A Panel Discussion and Teach-In, University of Virginia, 2008

Collective Memories and Political Identities, Conversazione Series Dinner, International Residence College, University of Virginia, 2008

Service in the name of Gandhi, Gandhi Day, Indian Students Association, UVa, 2010, 2006

Guest lectures on ‘Five Moments in the History of Human Rights in India’, Camilo Sanchez’s International Human Rights Clinic, UVa School of Law, 2019; on ‘Religious Nationalism and Its Legal Dimensions’, Timothy Lubin’s *Law & Religion*, Department of Religious Studies, Washington & Lee University, 2016; on Oral History for Mark Thomas’ *Approaches to Historical Study*, Department of History, UVa, 2014; on ‘Moral Relativism and the Partition of India’, Ravindra Khare’s *Hierarchy, Rationality, Relativism and Cultural Reasoning*, Department of Anthropology, UVa, 2011; on the Partition of India for Alon Confino’s *Forced Migration in the Modern World*, UVa, 2008; on ‘Jinnah, the Red Shirts, and the Partition of India’ for Mehr Farooqi’s *Remembering India’s Partition*, UVa 2007.

Service to History and South Asian Studies

Organizer, Symposium on *Citizenship, Belonging, and the Partition of India*, Institute of the Humanities and Global Cultures, University of Virginia, 2021

Organizer, Conference on *Ghosts from the Past? Assessing Recent Developments in Religious Freedom in South Asia*, Asia Program, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., 2018

Reviewer, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Fellowship Program, 2018-19

Reviewer, National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend Program, 2014-15

Reviewer for tenure cases for the University of Massachusetts-Amherst; Amherst College; Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS), Pakistan

Reviewer for mid-tenure case at Ashoka University, India

Commentator, Book Workshop, University of Notre Dame

Compiled a book of essays by Meeto (Kamaljit Bhasin-Malik), *In the Making: Identity Formation in South Asia*, Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2007

Member, Editorial Board, *Asian Affairs*, 2017 -

Manuscript Review

Agricultural History, Asian Affairs, Asian Politics and Policies, Contemporary South Asia, History of the Present, Indian Economic and Social History Review, Journal of Asian Studies, Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History, Journal for the Study of Radicalism, Modern Asian Studies, Modern Intellectual History, New Literary History, Radical History Review, South Asian History and Culture, Studies in History, , Oxford Bibliographies, Oxford University Press, Routledge, Stanford University Press

Languages

Hindi: fluent; Urdu: conversational, basic reading; Sanskrit: reading; Tamil: conversational

Professional Memberships

American Historical Association, Association for Asian Studies, Society for Advancing the History of South Asia