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IN THE SERVICE OF A "PURE IDEAL": GANDHI, INDIAN NATIONAL CONGRESS AND THE DENIAL OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

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Determined to reverse the impending disintegration of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, South Asian Muslims launched the Khilafat movement (1919-1924). Realizing that this issue had galvanized Muslims like no other, Gandhi saw the movement as a rare opportunity to unite Hindus and Muslims and offered unwavering support. This support was premised on the denial of the Armenian genocide. Legitimated in South Asia post-independence (1947) through historiographies, foreign policy and commemorative practices, this historical episode has transitioned into a mnemonic regime. This positive memorialization in South Asia has been extremely useful for Turkey in furthering its narratives of denial leading to a transregional mnemonic landscape that is premised on occlusion and justification of violence against the Armenians. While existing scholarship has briefly remarked on Gandhi's denial, using a range of primary sources, including unpublished letters, this article shows the far more expansive role Gandhi played along with the Indian National Congress in mainstreaming a network of genocidal apologia and denial. Examining the absence of any detailed work on this denialism even after a century, this article also deals with the blind spots of postcolonial studies and the complicity of South Asian academia in perpetuating hegemonic narratives.

Keywords*: Armenian Genocide, Gandhi, Indian National Congress, Khilafat Movement, South Asia, Denial.*

Introduction

In 2020, the Council of Elders of Yerevan in its April session decided to install a statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Yerevan (Armenian initiative, 2020). The decision faced some opposition and the statue was vandalized leading to condemnation from the Armenian foreign ministry (Armenia Foreign Ministry, 2021). The incident

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gained traction in Azerbaijani media which instrumentalized it to ridicule and censure the Armenian community for desecrating the statue of a "true democrat" like Gandhi (Nazimoglu, 2021). The official X handle (previously Twitter) of the Azerbaijan Embassy in India posted on April 26, 2021: "Mahatma Gandhi statue vandalised in Armenia. Armenians destroyed a table with the name of Gandhi from the statue because he was friends with the founder of the Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and opposed the so-called "Armenian genocide" (Azerbaijan in India, 2021). Within Armenia, a think-tank, Civiltas Foundation asked "What has Gandhi done for Armenian rights?" to merit a statue in Yerevan (Azadian, 2020).

Why did the erection of a statue of Gandhi, one of the foremost exponents of non-violence elicit opposition and vandalization? It pertains to a historical episode that led to multiple transregional reverberations in the last century but has barely attracted any scholarly attention. The episode in question is the Khilafat movement, Gandhi's support for it and the deleterious consequences it had for the Armenian community at the Lausanne Conference.

A critical juncture in South Asian history, the Khilafat movement (1919-1924) was spearheaded by Indian Muslims to reverse the impending disintegration of the Ottoman Empire by advocating a return to pre-World War I boundaries. With the loss of power, even if tokenistic, and prestige in the Indian subcontinent after 1857 and the onset of British rule, Indian Muslims, especially the elite looked to the Ottoman Empire as the last vestige of Islam and Islamic identity. As the last remaining Islamic empire, the Ottoman Empire, now, stood for all their hopes, trauma and angst. It is in this context that the late 19th century massacres of Armenians were either denied or justified. As it has been argued, "to implicate the empire of any wrongdoing is to implicate Islam and Islamic identity" (Kumar, 2024). This solidarity with the Ottoman Empire was premised on strong theological foundations which had considerable injunctive power. This religious fraternalism could perhaps be best understood through the concept of *asabiyya* – understood here as unqualified religious solidarity among Muslims. This understanding of asabiyya is essential to any understanding of Muslim identity in this period in South Asia (Robinson, 2000, pp. 193–194). While Robinson sought to explain Muslim separatism, this regnant influence of injunctive religious solidarities is important to understand why denial or justification of violence of Armenians emanated from South Asia. This sentiment is perhaps succinctly captured in the speech delivered by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad at the Bengal Provincial Khilafat Conference in 1920. Azad was the primary theoretician of the Khilafat movement in this period and was later independent India's first education minister. In Azad's rendition, it is only the Turks who had kept the banner of Islam flying for centuries.

And so, irrespective of the "civil and political fitness, or otherwise of the Turks…", it is religiously incumbent upon Muslims to "help the Turks" (Azad, 1920).

Indian Muslim elite also maintained extensive contacts with Turkish elite and diplomats in this period. To illustrate this briefly, in 1913, Zafar Ali Khan, the editor of *Zamindar* announced a committee, which included Talaat Bey (Pasha), whose objective was setting up of colonies in Anatolia (Zamindar, 1913). Another prominent Khilafatist, Mushir Hosain Kidwai, writing in 1937 remarked that as an acquaintance of Talaat Pasha, he along with Dr. Nihad Rashid, in order to help Turkey which was "absolutely helpless", had fought for the "Turkish cause in France and had also presented the Angora case in London with great ability" (Kidwai, 1937, p. 160). Marmaduke Pickthall, editor of *The Bombay Chronicle*, met with "Turks of the C.U.P party" in 1923 (Appendix, 1924). Halide Edib and her second husband Adnan Adıvar knew and corresponded with South Asian Muslim elite (Hasan, 2010). Materially too, the support rendered by the Indian Muslims for the Turkish cause was extensive (O'Sullivan, 2018). The Khilafat Committee published a detailed statement in March 1923 in *The Bombay Chronicle* showing the amounts collected for the "Angora Fund" and the "Smyrna Fund" (Nailing a lie: Statement on Khilafat funds, 1923). In fact, Mustafa Kemal's "strongest support came from the Indians". A portion of the Indian fund amounting to £125,000 was used by Mustafa Kemal for the construction of the "first Nationalist bank" (Kinross, 1971, p. 298).

Gandhi saw the Khilafat movement as a rare opportunity to unite and mobilize Hindus and Muslims for the freedom movement. He eventually rallied the Hindu community for the Khilafat cause and in the process of offering unstinting support resorted to denial of violence against the Armenians.

Using Gandhi as a figure of soft power has been part of India's foreign policy since the independence in 1947. Concomitantly, Turkey also has utilized the Khilafat movement and Gandhi's support as emblematic of its victimization in the old western imperial order occluding, in the process, any reference to its role in the Armenian Genocide. These entangled histories and transregional mnemonic connections between South Asia and Middle East continue to play out in contemporary domestic political landscapes and geopolitics.

This article is divided into three parts. First, it tackles Gandhi's silences through two unpublished letters and his involvement in a larger network of genocide denialism. Second, it shows at some length the role of the Indian National Congress (INC) in furthering denialism and the occlusions that mar its official histories. Finally, the article highlights the role South Asian academia has played in perpetuating dominant narratives that has led to the absence of any full-fledged

scholarship on the role played by Gandhi, INC and the Muslim elite. It also highlights the role of national and transnational mnemonic regimes and flags the blind spots that continue to dictate postcolonial studies.

The silences and denialism

In September 1920, D. N. Tilak, an Indian Christian and the Marathi editor of the weekly *Dnyanodaya* wrote a letter to Gandhi concerning the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movement. Son of the noted poet Narayan Vaman Tilak, D.N. Tilak was noted for his literary work and was influential in American Marathi Mission. *Dnyanodaya* was the second oldest paper and the oldest religious paper of Western India (Hume, 1921). As an admirer of Gandhi and in consonance with prevailing etiquette, Tilak's letter began with an epistolary prerogative for Gandhi. Gandhi could keep the correspondence private or allow Tilak to publish the reply. Since there is no record of Gandhi's reply, at least in the voluminous *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* which run to 100 volumes, it is highly probable Gandhi ignored Tilak's letter. One could resort to speculation as to why Gandhi ignored it- Gandhi corresponded with other Christian non-cooperators or Christians sympathetic to his ideas (Gandhi, 1966b). But the contents of the letter framed during this crucial period offer a decisive clue. Tilak stated that Christians like him across the country were deeply invested in the freedom struggle and aspirations. They were not 'denationalized' and devoted to 'the motherland'. They however faced a "grave difficulty".

The predicament stated by Tilak was this: "The Non-cooperation movement, initiated by you, has for part of its basis the Khilafat movement and if we support the latter, it means we are winking at the Turkish atrocities whereby several hundred thousands of Armenians were done to death. This indisputable fact makes it quite impossible to join in the Non-cooperation movement. Had Non-cooperation been based on the Punjab atrocities alone we should have felt able to join in your movement- save for one serious difficulty to be mentioned below- for we protest against all forms of injustice whether in Turkey or India (Letter from Mr. D. N. Tilak, 1919).

Tilak in short was questioning the foundational premise of Gandhi's attempt at forging unity between Hindus and Muslims - a project Gandhi was deeply invested in. Gandhi's active disregard for the issues raised in Tilak's letter does not exist in isolation. Another unpublished letter by William Barnard Smith from Boston, Massachusetts to Gandhi raises similar concerns. Smith was sympathetic to Gandhi's views on freedom, animals, call for unity, cow protection and burning of foreign cloth. He disagreed however in one aspect. He wrote: "In one opinion

which you hold, however, I feel sure that you are wrong, so wrong that your words would sound amusing if they were not so full of serious import. You have said (and I have not your article before me that I may quote exactly) that 'whatever atrocities the Turks may have committed, those of the Greeks and Armenians have been infinitely worse" (Letter from William Barnard Smith, 1921).

Throughout this period, when the Khilafat movement was in full bloom (1919-1924), Gandhi denied or relativized the violence against Armenians. But what warranted Gandhi to embark on a denialist project actively dismissing extensive evidence of the massacre of Armenians? Gandhi realized that no other cause animated and mobilized South Asian Muslims as much as the Khilafat issue. And it is in this crisis he saw an unprecedented opportunity to mobilize Hindus and Muslims in tandem. As he noted: "We have both now an opportunity of a lifetime. The Khilafat question will not recur for another hundred years. If the Hindus wish to cultivate eternal friendship with the Mussulmans, they must perish with them in the attempt to vindicate the honour of Islam" (Gandhi, 1966a).

Later, he went further. He accused the Armenians dubbing them as the perpetrators: "I have no desire to defend Turkey against the Armenians or the Greeks. I am not prepared to deny Turkish misrule or misdeeds. But the Greeks and the Armenians have an infinitely worse record. What is more, the defence of the Khilafat is the defence of a pure ideal" (Gandhi, 1924)

In strengthening the case for his support to the Khilafat cause, Gandhi found a willing participant in Marmaduke Pickthall - an English novelist and a Turcophile who had converted to Islam in 1917. Pickthall had already been active in running pro-Turk campaigns through journals and multiple associations in Britain along with South Asian Muslims. With the Khilafat movement gaining traction, Pickthall was invited to India as editor of the prominent newspaper *The Bombay Chronicle* in 1920 (Kumar, 2024). And it is by casting Pickthall as an authoritative interpreter of Turkish affairs that Gandhi bulldozed any opposition he encountered in his stance on Turkey and against the Armenians. Gandhi's public dismissal of Edmund Candler's letter on the plight of Armenians by citing Pickthall is representative of this (Gandhi, 1965, pp. 456-460).

While Gandhi's support for the Khilafat movement gave extraordinary credence and mobilization to the Turkish cause, solidarity for the Turkish empire through denial of violence was not unprecedented amongst Muslims in South Asia. A culture of denial that sought to deny or justify violence was present during the late 19th century massacres of Armenians. This support, again, was premised on "fraternal feelings" – in support of "Muslim brethren". In 1895 and 1896, from a couple of provinces alone (Northwestern and Oudh), newspapers such as *Kashsháf*

(Muzaffarnagar), *Hamdard* (Meerut), *Ázad* (Lucknow), *Áinah* (Lucknow), *Zamánah* (Cawnpore), *Hamid-ul-Akhbár* (Moradabad) *Dabdaba-i-Qaisari* (Bareilly) *Ar Rashid* (Allahabad) either denied the violence, relativized or suggested a series of measures for dealing with the "rebellious" Armenians. These ranged from taxing the Armenians heavily "so that they may live from hand to mouth" to adopting harsher measures against them for being "disobedient, truculent, unreasonable" (IOR L/R/5/73). Denial and rationalization were evident from other provinces as well and continued well into the early 20th century ballooning with the Balkan wars and reaching a crescendo during the Khilafat movement.

Gandhi's unflinching support for the Khilafat movement was critiqued by some of his close lieutenants such as Indulal Yagnik and Vallabhbhai Patel. Differing with Gandhi over the Khilafat and non-cooperation issues, Yagnik resigned as the sub-editor of *Navajivan* in June 1920, a paper he had started five years earlier (Yagnik, 1943, p. 135). Yagnik, who saw himself as a religious sceptic, was averse to Gandhi's uncritical embrace of religious claims endemic to the Khilafat issue. He believed Gandhi's support was premised on "slender reasoning" and ignorance of Turkish history of its "oppression and barbarous misrule". Particularly galling for him was the dissonance engendered from resisting British rule in India while providing wholesale support for the Turkish empire. This also led to "unholy jokes" on the Khilafat issue with Vallabhbhai Patel wryly remarking "Imagine our fighting for the independence of the Arabs of Arabia and Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia, when we ourselves are held as slaves under the British bayonets in our own land. Isn't it funny beyond words!" (Yagnik, 1943, p. 131).

But largely, Hindu elite joined Gandhi and the Muslim elite in championing the Khilafat movement. Critical media infrastructure aligned with the Muslims and Congress participated in a strongly constituted network of denialism disseminated through major "nationalist" newspapers within India and publications run by various figures outside India. A few examples include newspapers such as *The Bombay Chronicle*, *The Independent* within India and Indian National Congress overseas organs such as *India*.

Indian National Congress, media and the making of a polite fiction

Bolstered by the support of the Indian National Congress and Muslim elite, mobilization for the Khilafat movement came at the expense of denying and rationalizing the genocidal violence perpetrated upon Armenians. A look at INC support for the movement through resolutions and the extensive denialist campaign

through newspapers such as *The Bombay Chronicle* and *The Independent* is necessary to grasp the intricacies of its involvement. Edited by Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Bombay Chronicle* was a prominent "nationalist" newspaper. Pickthall was a close associate of Gandhi during this period and was a member of a core "Subjects Committee" of the Indian National Congress in 1920 along with Gandhi (Report, 1920, p. 5). But more importantly for this article, he held strong animosity towards Armenians prior to his editorship at *The Chronicle*. In a letter to *The New Age* in 1919, Pickthall dubbed Armenians as a "race of traitors, spies, blacklegs, perjurers, lickspittles, liars, utterly devoid of shame or honor" (Pickthall, 1919). And in an article for *Young India* in 1920, the weekly edited by Gandhi, he eulogized the trio- Enver Pasha, Talat Pasha and Djemal Pasha (Pickthall, 1920) – figures widely deemed to be responsible for the Armenian genocide.

In 1922, as part of its extensive campaign to deny the massacres, *The Chronicle* accused the Armenians of trying to "stage manage massacres of themselves" ("Notes of the Day," 1922). Another prominent newspaper, *The Independent*, started by Motilal Nehru and run with the assistance of figures such as Syud Hossain and Jawaharlal Nehru, asked in July 1920, in response to atrocities perpetrated on Armenians: "It may be asked whether the record of other nations has been free from any "atrocities" of the kind attributed to Turkey" (Allied Reply to Turkish Note, 1920a). Outside India as well, an extensive network of journals manned largely by South Asian Muslims ran a denialist narrative designed to question the violence against Armenians and to portray Turkey as a victim. Congress overseas organ, *India*, with its offices at Temple Avenue, London routinely held meetings to further denialism (India, 1920).

Resolutions passed by the Indian National Congress at various sessions also showcase the extent of its support for the Khilafat cause. At the INC 34th session 1919, resolution XV dwelt at length on Khilafat issue. It appealed for the settlement of the Turkish question in accordance with the "just and legitimate sentiments of Indian Mussalmans". Bipin Chandra Pal, a prominent nationalist, in proposing the resolution on the Khilafat issue against the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire made the following case: "My Mahomedan friends oppose it on religious grounds. I oppose it on political grounds. I oppose it in the interest of world peace and world freedom. It has been said that the Turk is a tyrant. Mr. Gladstone and the rest of them made or tried to make out a very strong case for the expulsion of the Ottoman from Europe on the ground of the Armenian massacres, on the ground of the oppression of the Christian subjects of Turkey by the Musulman subjects and Turkish officials. When I am reminded of it, I am reminded of another episode that happened two thousand years ago in Gallili when

a woman was caught in the act of adultery. She was brought to Jesus and he was asked, "Lord, what shall we do with her"? The law says that when a woman is caught in the act of adultery she should be stoned to death, and do you remember what Jesus replied? Jesus said, "he who is sinless amongst you should cast the first stone." When I hear of the references to Turkish tyranny my reply is the same. He who is sinless amongst you, England, France, Italy, and Belgium the last though not the least of it, he who is sinless among you let him cast the first stone" (Report, 1922, p. 158).

At the 37th Congress session, resolution IV tabled by Sarojini Naidu, another prominent activist, offered congratulations to "Ghazi Kamal Pasha and the Turkish nation" stating "the determination of the people of India to carry on the struggle till the British government has done all in its power and removed all its own obstacles to the restoration of the Turkish nation to free and independent status and the conditions necessary for unhampered national life and effective guardianship of Island and the Jazirat-ul-Arab freed from all non-Muslim control" (Report, 1923).

"Ghazi Pasha", Naidu stated, has "broken once for all the bondage of the Asiatic peoples". Naidu reasoned that Muslims ought to have "unbroken and unchallenged control" because they earned it. She went further in her support for Turkey – "Your independence is our independence…we, the Moslems and Hindus of India, would wage war against Britain in your behalf as it is in our behalf."

How did a movement premised on unstinting adherence to Gandhian non-violence partake in congratulating Kemal Pasha for battlefield victories? Harisarvathama Rao, the Andhra Congress delegate had a workaround for this. Though Gandhi had preached non-violence as the "best method" in realizing libertarian objectives, there are other equally valid and legitimate methods. Thus, the question of non-violence does not arise and there was no compunction in congratulating Kemal Pasha (Report, 1923). These extracts and the line adopted by prominent newspapers are emblematic of the discourse that stemmed from South Asia- a mishmash of denial, rationalization and apologia. It is a testament to the disparate registers of denial and justification, all functioning through a polite fiction. While Gandhi sought to actively deny and downplay the extent of the violence against the Armenians, Pal resorted to relativization. Sarojini Naidu on the other hand marshalled Islamic history.

In its subsequent official histories, Congress maintained a strategic silence over its role in denying and rationalizing the violence against Armenians. In making the case for non-violence espoused by Gandhi, Pattabhi Sitaramayya in the epilogue of his *History of the Congress*, remarks upon a world beset by violence from Ireland to Germany. He touches upon Armenians briefly twice in volume two

(combined the two volumes number1834 pages) – the persecution of the Christian Armenians by the Turkish Empire that world opinion becomes incensed" (Sitaramayya, 1947, p. 14) and "the notorious Armenian massacres of old" (Sitaramayya, 1947, p. 807). While the second reference is clearly about the Armenian massacres of the late 19th century, the first remark and its temporal bracket are ambiguous.

In making the Khilafat movement explicable, these histories were informed by a strong nationalist lens. Congress and its vociferous support for Turkey and its impact on the Armenians at Lausanne remain unmentioned. This is true for another official centenary history of Congress written over five volumes and released in 1985. The first volume noted that with the Tripoli and Balkan wars "an astonishing wave of sympathy for Turkey swept through Indian Muslims". While all Indians had a degree of anxiety and sympathy, for Muslims "this was keener and something almost personal." This snowballed over the years and by the end of the First world war, "their pent-up feelings were to break-out in the Khilafat movement". Among the Muslims, Abul Kalam had a "more rationalist outlook". He could discern the growth of nationalism in Turkey and other Islamic countries and "applied that knowledge to India" (Pande, 1985, pp. 320-321).

The third volume noted that "beginning from 1908", Indian Muslims felt much "disturbed" by the British policy towards Muslim countries. Though Congress "did not take any direct interest in this matter, its leaders did consider it their duty to express their sympathy with Turkey largely as a gesture of goodwill towards their Muslim brethren in India" (Pande, 2011, pp. 808-809). In foreign policy, as Ram Manohar Lohia, the Foreign Secretary of the Indian National Congress wrote in a special article in 1937, the Khilafat movement, which saw "most intimate contacts with the neighbouring countries and the Islamic world", laid the groundwork for the foreign policy of the Congress party (Lohia, 1937). In short, the histories of the Khilafat movement and the Congress party are indivisible.

Historiographies, mnemonic regimes and the blind spots of postcolonial studies

That Gandhi had denied the violence against the Armenians is not revelatory. Within the lifetime of the Khilafat movement, Gandhi's denialism was contested but did not acquire any traction. In response to Gandhi's denial, the influential 'liberal' newspaper *The Leader*, in May 1920, published extracts from "Secrets of the Bosphorus" by Henry Morgenthau - the American ambassador in Constantinople who had published evidence of the massacres. It also noted that

Turkish delegates, in 1919, had admitted their role in massacres (Armenia's Agony, 1920b). An anonymous work published in 1921 also faulted Gandhi's support for the Khilafat-non-cooperation movement. Turkey, the writer stated, initiated the war and its massacre of Armenians was well documented (Argus, 1921). Within academia, works briefly mentioning Gandhi's denial or indifference are almost two decades old (Adams, 2010; Panter-Brick, 2007; Tidrick, 2006). Notably, all the three authors here are not of South Asian origin. One recent exception to this is P.R. Kumaraswamy of South Asian origin but specializing in Middle Eastern politics. Kumaraswamy diagnoses this denial by Gandhi as a strategy to shore up support for the Khilafat movement. An adversarial position on the Khilafat issue would have unraveled the unity Gandhi was trying to assiduously forge (Kumaraswamy, 2021, pp. 97-100).

Literature on denialism has shown that blaming the victim is a frequently deployed tool (Cohen, 2001, p. 110; Fein, 2000; Melvin, 2018, p. 6). And with reference to the Armenian genocide, this was a template often deployed in the last decades of the Ottoman Empire (Gaunt, 2022). Reading Talat Pasha's memoir as an exemplar of the CUP denial of violence, Göçek (2015, p. 251) has shown how "the CUP always appeared as the victimized innocent, and Armenians as the perpetrators". Gandhi's remarks, mentioned earlier, about Armenians having an "an infinitely worse record" show that outside Turkey, it was in South Asia during the Khilafat movement that this project of framing Turkey as a victim of Armenian machinations and violence acquired critical momentum.

One is hard pressed to explain why South Asian historians are yet to tackle the Armenian genocide even after a century with all the honesty it merits. Such an examination will warrant paying serious attention to religious worldviews and mnemonic practices. Within India, any such potential studies are hobbled by the dominance of certain methodologies and the presuppositions that underlie them. This is best exemplified by the Indian History Congress which explicitly states its preference for a "secular" framework. The IHC website states that it is the "largest association of professional historians in South Asia" with 35,000 members and 2000 delegates attending its annual sessions. The "primary objective of the IHC is to advance the cause of secular and scientific historiography" (About Indian History Congress, 2025). Popular within South Asian academia and postcolonial histories, this objective, in consonance with the Marxist framework, sees religion as purely epiphenomenal, derivative and not worthy of scholarly attention (Keune, 2021, p. 28; Pennington, 2005, p. 161). Such presuppositions dictating the discipline of history have aided in entrenching existing knowledge regimes and party historiographies.

And then, even those academics seeking to transcend methodological nationalism have been instrumental in perpetuating the Turkish narrative through replication or evasive silences. Specialist scholarship on the Khilafat movement has either occluded any references to the genocide or denied it. Niemeijer makes a passing reference while the other works listed here do not mention it. Qureshi replicates the Turkish denialist thesis. Özcan refers to the late 19th century massacres as "vigorous propaganda" while entirely eliding over the 1915 genocide (Hasan, 1979, 1985; Landau, 1990; Minault, 1982; Niemeijer, 1972; Özcan, 1997; Qureshi, 1999; Shakir, 1970)

Area Studies scholars from India specializing on Turkey have also replicated the Turkish denialist thesis. Two authors, both trained in Turkey, who have replicated this template only to be cited back again in Turkish academia and media are Mohammed Sadiq and R.K.Sinha. For Sadiq (1983, pp. 67-69), the khilafat movement was an "anti-colonial movement" and Turkey as an "Eastern nation" was a "victim of imperialism". Sinha's work, on the other hand employs the trope of inverted victimhood wherein Armenians and Greeks are the perpetrators – "Armenians and Greeks began to exterminate the Turks in order to reduce the country to a colony" and "most of the educated Turks disappeared mysteriously" (1994, pp. 168–169).

Scholarship that tackles the Khilafat movement in considerable detail as part of larger themes is also marked by such silences. Ironically, new historiographical trends that utilize frameworks like shared histories, transnational history, mobilities, cosmopolitanism, anti-colonial solidarities etc. have aided such occlusions. Khilafat movement is positively affirmed in these studies casting it as emblematic of resistance and importantly a moment of anti-colonial/imperial contestation. Examples include works by historians like Ayesha Jalal, Sugata Bose (2020) and Seema Alavi (2015).

More significantly, INC history was closely welded into the South Asian state institutions leading to uncritical perpetuation. This includes history writing, textbooks, commemoration, remembrance practices, memory making, foreign policy and popular culture. A particularly notable aspect is how participants in the Khilafat movement in 1920s and those partial to it held sway over the state institutions in both India and Pakistan after independence in 1947. Though partition was premised on seemingly disparate understandings of history and commemorative stories, the Khilafat movement was retained as a foundational moment by both India and Pakistan leading to the constitution of mnemonic regimes.

Zerubavel (1999, pp. 87-89) notes of how nation building projects utilize mnemonic socialization in crafting a particular vision imbued with script like "plot structures". Legitimized and accorded state sanction in both India and Pakistan, the Khilafat movement became a foundational moment after 1947. Ultimately, the Khilafat movement, Gandhi and INC's support for it became part of an elaborate mnemonic infrastructure within India and Pakistan. In turn, this mnemonic infrastructure has aided Turkish and Azerbaijani state narratives in marshalling Gandhi, Khilafat movement for genocide denialism.

Turkish academics and diplomats routinely lecture at Indian universities and produce scholarship on Gandhi's support for the Khilafat and the aid sent by Indian Muslims during the Balkan wars and the Khilafat movement. These outreaches are specifically designed to further Turkish state narratives and perpetuate genocide denialism. For Turkey, India's own involvement in the denial through the Khilafat movement during 1920s and its commemoration has proven to be a favorable arrangement. It is no accident that it is in South Asia that Turkey finds its self-fashioning narratives greatly affirmed with no contestation. An example of this denial through occlusion is a web talk titled 'Turkey, India and Mahatma Gandhi' delivered by H. Hilal Sahin, Giresun University in August 2020 for Aligarh Muslim University (Turkey, India and Mahatma Gandhi, 2020). Another work by Burak Akçapar, an academic and Turkish ambassador to India (2011-2017) examined M. A. Ansari's medical mission to the Ottoman Empire prior to the First World War. Akçapar justified the deportation of Armenians in the course of the book (2014). Short articles and pamphlets pertaining to Gandhi and India's support for Turkey are promoted by the Turkish state on its websites. Kologlu's article (2015) is representative of this template which makes extensive use of glittering generalities like "Justice", "Peace", "Liberation", etc.

Similarly, as part of state sponsored histories and narratives, the Khilafat movement, its affirmation and remembrance are part of Indian foreign policy apparatus. The note prepared by the External Affairs Ministry on its website pertaining to India-Turkey relations, dated March 2015 mentions Ansari's mission and that "Mahatma Gandhi himself took a stand against the injustices inflicted on Turkey" (India-Turkey Relations, 2015). It needs no mention that histories with such a template tend to occlude any references to the violence against the Armenians.

Additionally, critical lacuna in scholarship over these denialist entanglements lays threadbare the blind spots of postcolonial studies and its disciplinary construction. One of the important reference texts of postcolonialism by Robert Young (2001) categorizes the Khilafat movement under "anti-colonial resistance"

and "anti-colonial internationalism". The text also refers to the German genocide of Hereros and the 1908 Turkish revolution in its discussion of First and Second Internationals and its advocacy for people suffering from "oppression". That a foundational text includes Turkish developments of 1908 but occludes the Armenian genocide point to two broad developments over the decades in academia- The "oppressed" is found and designated in opposition to the West in socialist advocacy zeitgeist. A second interrelated aspect, either by design or indifference, is the omission of Armenian issues within postcolonial studies. This is largely a consequence of influential postcolonial theorists like Edward Said who cast the Ottoman Empire as a "mere victim of Western imperialism or colonialism." (Albrecht, 2020). Such elisions behoove researchers working within the postcolonial paradigm to question the inadequacies of the existing conceptual vocabulary in addressing denials and silences of the kind South Asia throws up.

Conclusion

While existing scholarship has briefly hinted at Gandhi's role in denial of the Armenian genocide, this article has shown that his role was far more substantial. He actively aided and abetted denial of the violence against the Armenians championed by the Muslim elite. Complicit in this project were the media and the Indian National Congress. Rife with denial and justification of the Armenian genocide, the Khilafat movement as a mnemonic episode has been embedded onto the state in South Asia. Concomitantly, it pervades a range of institutions – from history writing to commemoration and foreign policy. This mnemonic regime in South Asia has provided a fertile atmosphere for Tukey in perpetuating its denialist narratives with minimal contestation and maximum approbation. Recent historiographical trends have bolstered these narratives utilizing a transnational mnemonic landscape furthered by domestic memory regimes. Finally, the absence of any scholarly work dedicated to the examination of this denial in South Asia shows the complicity of South Asian academia in replicating hegemonic narratives wedded to nationalist and party historiography.

Conflict of Interests
The author declares no ethical issues or conflict of interests in this research.

Ethical standards
The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

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ՇԱՌԱՅԵԼՈՎ «ԱՐԴԱՐ ԻԴԵԱԼԻ». ԳԱՆԴԻՆ, ՀՆԴԿԱՍՏԱՆԻ ԱԶԳԱՅԻՆ ԿՈՆԳՐԵՍԸ ԵՎ ՀԱՅՈՑ ՑԵՂԱՍՊԱՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ ՄԵՐԺՈՒՄԸ

Նագոտու Նըրեյշ Կումար

Առաջին համաշխարհային պատերազմից հետո Հարավային Ասիայի մահմեդականները նախաձեռնում են Խիլաֆաթի շարժումը (1919–1924 թթ.)՝ փորձելով պաշտպանել Օսմանյան կայսրությունը։ Գանդին, տեսնելով շարժման միավորող ներուժը, լիակատար աջակցություն է հայտնում՝ հույս ունենալով խթանել հինդու-մահմեդական համերաշխությունը։ Սակայն այդ աջակցությունը հիմնված էր Հայոց ցեղասպանության մերժման վրա։ Այն հետագայում լեգիտիմացվեց Հարավային Ասիայում՝ պատմագրության, արտաքին քաղաքականության և հիշողության քաղաքականության միջոցով՝ ձևավորելով տարածաշրջանային հիշողության դաշտ, որը նպաստեց Թուրքիայի մերժողական նարատիվների տարածմանը։ Հիմնվելով մի շարք սկզբնաղբյուրների վրա, այդ թվում՝ չհրապարակված նամակների՝ հոդվածը բացահայտում է Գանդիի և Հնդկաստանի Ազգային Կոնգրեսի խորքային ներգրավվածությունը ցեղասպանության մերժման և արդարացման գործընթացում։ Անդրադարձ է կատարվում նաև հետգաղութային գիտության լռությանը և Հարավային Ասիայի ակադեմիական շրջանակների պատասխանատվությանը։

Բանալի բառեր՝ *Հայոց ցեղասպանություն, Գանդի, Հնդկաստանի Ազգային Կոնգրես, Խիլաֆաթ, Հարավային Ասիա, մերժում։*