

“FEELING PART OF THE ACTION”: A STUDY OF AFFECT AND MOBILIZATION  
THROUGH TWEETS AND POETRY FROM THE ANTI-CAA MOVEMENT IN INDIA

Anushree Joshi

Department of English

McGill University, Montréal

April 2023

A thesis submitted to McGill University in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
degree of Master of Arts.

© Anushree Joshi, 2023

## Table of Contents

List of Figures.....	2
List of Abbreviations.....	3
Abstract.....	4
Acknowledgments.....	6
Introduction.....	8
Chapter 1: Understanding the CAA and the Rise of a Resistance	
I. Introduction.....	19
II. An Amended Law and a Movement is Born.....	20
III. The Attacks on Jamia Millie Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University.....	23
IV. The Pogrom in Northeast Delhi.....	25
V. Shaheen Bagh and the Care of Community.....	28
VI. Conclusion.....	33
Chapter 2: Anti-CAA Poetry and Its Affective Politics	
I. Introduction.....	35
II. Instagram Poetry.....	35
III. Instagram Poetry and the Dynamism of Williams' "Structure of Feeling".....	37
IV. The Affective Documentary Poetics of the Anti-CAA Movement.....	40
V. Poetics of Collision and Defamiliarization.....	45
VI. Intimacy and Political Depression in Anti-CAA Poetry.....	58
VII. Repetition, Mobilization, and a Cry for Help.....	64
VIII. Conclusion.....	67
Chapter 3: The Immediacy, Intimacy, and Many Sentimentalities of Twitter	
I. Introduction.....	69
II. Structures, Feelings, and a Sense of Being in the Movement.....	71
III. Sentimental Realities.....	73
IV. The Everyday, the Aesthetic, and the Emotional.....	84
V. Words to Inform and to Feel: Topics and Foci.....	88
VI. Trends in the Most Popular Tweets.....	97
VII. Conclusion.....	104
Conclusion.....	108
Appendices.....	113
Works Cited.....	134

## List of Figures

Figure 1. A few of the least retweeted tweets with proverbs and idioms.....	74
Figure 2. Some tweets containing anti-CAA hashtags and keywords.....	74
Figure 3. A bar-plot of sentiment class versus number of tweets in each class for the Twitter corpora.....	76
Figure 4. A random sampling of tweets belonging to the neutral sentiment class (3) shows the presence of idioms, proverbs, and maxims in tweets.....	77
Figure 5. Some tweets deemed neutral by the sentiment intensity analyzer.....	77
Figure 6. A bar graph of sentiment class versus number of poems in each class.....	78
Figure 7. Sentiment class frequency comparison for tweets and poems.....	78
Figure 8. A random sample of the tweets categorized as positive (4) or very positive (5).....	81
Figure 9. A visualization of the comparison between tweets and poetry from the Movement, in terms of the presence of emotions and sentiments in their language.....	85
Table 1. Poems deemed to be positive (class 4) and very positive (class 5) by the sentiment intensity analyzer.....	86
Figure 10. Word cloud for the Twitter corpus.....	88
Figure 11. Word cloud for the poetry corpus. ....	88
Figure 12. Visualization of the topic model for tweets and its top 30 most salient terms.....	90
Figure 13. Visualization of the topic model for poetry and its top 30 most salient terms.....	90
Figure 14. Topic 13 for the Twitter corpus and top 30 most salient terms in Topic 13.....	91
Figure 15. Topic 1 for the tweet corpus.....	92
Figure 16. Topic 11 for the tweet corpus.....	93
Figure 17. Topic 1 for the poetry corpus.....	95
Figure 18. Topic 12 for the poetry corpus. ....	95
Figure 19. A few of the top 20 tweets.....	98
Figure 20. Some of the most popular tweets.....	98
Figures 21 and 22. Shared by @vikrantkumar on Twitter, these pictures show a protester from Jamia Millia Islamia and attempt to cast him as the attacker in the violence on the campus through conspiratorial ideas.....	99

### List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
AAP	Aam Aadmi Party
AMU	Aligarh Muslim University
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
CAA	Citizenship (Amendment) Act
CAB	Citizenship (Amendment) Bill
DH	Digital Humanities
DU	University of Delhi
INC	Indian National Congress
JMI	Jamia Millia Islamia University
JNU	Jawaharlal Nehru University
LDA	Latent Dirichlet Allocation
NLP	Natural Language Processing
NLTK	Natural Language Toolkit
NPR	National Population Register
NRC	National Register of Citizens
QT	Quote Tweet
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
RT	Retweet
UAPA	Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act
VHP	Vishwa Hindu Parishad

## Abstract

Focusing upon the protests that erupted in India when the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) was codified into law on December 11, 2019, this thesis attempts to document and analyze the affective story that shaped the anti-CAA resistance on new media. The law, which has been shown to harbour an unconstitutional and anti-Muslim logic, was critiqued in the civil society spheres such as policy, law, academia, and art. Contextualizing three key events from the Movement, namely the violence on the campus of Jamia Millia Islamia University, the women-led resistance at Shaheen Bagh, and the Hindu nationalist violence on Muslims in Northeast Delhi, this thesis analyzes poetry produced for the Movement alongside tweets that included keywords and hashtags pertaining to the anti-CAA protests. Drawing from seminal work on affect, social change movements, and new media by contemporary scholars like Sara Ahmed, Paolo Gerbaudo, and Zizi Papacharissi, alongside the foundational work of Williams' notion of the structure of feeling, this thesis argues that inculcating emotional experiences and aspects of the felt was integral to the possibility of mobilization and collective action in the Movement and to its popularity online. Harmonizing these aspects of the felt through an artistic mode like poetry and the mode of everyday discourse on Twitter, I assert, is critical to the future of socio-political transformation and resistance instead of undermining the value of affect in progressive politics. Using methods of close reading alongside quantitative and qualitative methods of Natural Language Processing, this project attempts to emphasize the entwined relationship of affect with effective politics, showing the possibilities for how it was utilized in shaping the anti-CAA resistance.

## Abstrait

En se concentrant sur les protestations qui ont éclaté en Inde lorsque la loi sur la citoyenneté (amendement) (CAA) a été codifiée en loi le 11 décembre 2019, cette thèse tente de documenter et d'analyser le récit affectif qui a façonné la résistance anti-CAA sur les nouveaux médias. La loi, qui s'est avérée abriter une logique inconstitutionnelle et antimusulmane, a été critiquée dans les sphères de la société civile telles que la politique, le droit, le monde universitaire et l'art. En mettant en contexte trois événements clés du mouvement, à savoir la violence sur le campus de Jamia Millia Islamia, la résistance menée par les femmes à Shaheen Bagh, et la violence nationaliste hindoue contre les musulmans dans le nord-est de Delhi, cette thèse analyse la poésie produite pour le mouvement ainsi que les tweets qui comprenaient des mots-clés et des hashtags relatifs aux manifestations anti-CAA. S'appuyant sur les travaux fondamentaux sur l'affect, les mouvements de changement social et les nouveaux médias de chercheurs contemporains tels que Sara Ahmed, Paolo Gerbaudo et Zizi Papacharissi, ainsi que sur les travaux de Williams sur la structure du sentiment, cette thèse soutient que l'inculcation d'expériences émotionnelles et d'aspects du ressenti a fait partie intégrante de la possibilité de mobilisation et d'action collective du mouvement et de sa popularité en ligne. L'harmonisation de ces aspects du ressenti à travers un mode artistique comme la poésie et le mode de discours quotidien sur Twitter, j'affirme, est critique pour l'avenir de la transformation et de la résistance sociopolitique au lieu de miner la valeur de l'affect dans la politique progressiste. En utilisant des méthodes de lecture attentive ainsi que des méthodes quantitatives et qualitatives de traitement du langage naturel, ce projet tente de mettre en évidence la relation entre l'affect et la politique efficace, en montrant les possibilités d'utilisation de l'affect dans l'élaboration de la résistance anti-CAA.

## Acknowledgements

The thing about a project like this, which engages with accounts of violence and despair in personal, cultural, and deeply political ways, is that it can consume one and make one wonder if there is any light at the end of the tunnel. I have been fortunate enough to have my own shimmers – people who became my hope at every step.

This thesis would not have been possible without my supervisor, Professor Miranda Hickman. She believed in the possibility and necessity for this project and her encouragement, wondrous attention to detail, and sharp critique gave my ideas their spine to become something substantial. My time at McGill is synonymous with what I learned and executed in her mentorship.

To my parents, thank you for nurturing my curiosity, no matter how bizarre, at every juncture of life. It isn't easy being a few thousand miles away from you, my little menace Rupesh, and the shelter you have built with laughter and love, but your ambition to see me make something of myself in this universe is the hope that keeps me going. None of this would have been possible without my grandmother who sang me my first song and enacted every story I wanted to hear throughout my childhood. I am because you are.

Vishal and Lavina, you are my unwavering pillars of strength. Thank you for listening to my contemplations on affect (even when they made no sense). But most importantly, thank you for being my home and my heart, no matter the distance between us. You are my guidepost to everything. Saman and Vidhatri, you are two of the brightest women I know, and I have nothing but gratitude for having your boundless encouragement and gentle critique guide my work ever since undergrad. Maira, Faiz, and Cassandra – thank you for making Montreal feel like home in the most despondent of times.

I am grateful to Professor Allan Hepburn for introducing and expanding complex questions of human rights and literature to me in my very first seminar at McGill. I am also

immensely thankful to Professor Jonathan Sterne and Professor Carrie Rentschler for giving me the generous opportunity to learn from them. Their kindness and their enthusiasm for interdisciplinary work kept my faith in academia alive even when things seemed the bleakest.

Many thanks to the Department of English, especially Professor Fiona Ritchie, Professor Monica Popescu, and Ms. Maria Vasile, for answering all my administrative, logistical, and procedural queries with a sincere desire to support my growth as a scholar.

To my MA cohort, for challenging me with their academic brilliance, personal kindness, and for being around to let me know I am not alone in this project's journey.

I am also thankful to the Internet Freedom Foundation and my digital literacy team for supporting my academic goals. Everything I learned about approaching the social impact of policies and laws has been shaped by my time as an intern, fellow, and researcher with them.

To my Uncle Anshu and Aunt Esha, who opened their home and life to me and made this land feel like a place where I could belong. And to their lovely newborn, Alaya, the wait for whose arrival during this project filled even dull days of grueling data collection or research with exciting hope.

And finally, this project would not exist without the power of communities who are committed to political action every day by reporting, asking questions, and speaking truth to power in India. To the people in Shaheen Bagh, Jamia, JNU, AMU, Northeast Delhi, and every single site of resistance and survival – this project is a small step in solidarity with their resilience and struggle that is full of love, hope, and transformational rage against nationalism's rhetoric of hate and othering.



## Introduction

I remember being in my hometown for the Christmas break about 300 miles away from New Delhi on the night of December 15, 2019, when violence first broke out on the university campus of Jamia Millia Islamia. As a second-year undergraduate student myself, with my college campus barely three miles from the Jamia campus under attack, I did not feel distant from the fear, anger, and confusion of this violence. At the time, I was a correspondent for a media outlet that covered the University of Delhi as its primary beat. So, when the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill became the Citizenship (Amendment) Act on December 11, 2019, posters, messages, videos, and calls regarding the organization of protests against the Act started flooding my WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, and email accounts. The new law amends the Citizenship Act of 1955 by offering a simple path towards citizenship for persecuted religious minorities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan who belong to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, or Christian religions and had arrived in India before the end of December 2014. Mobilization had been happening for a while, starting in the state of Assam where the law was first piloted, but the concerns of Assam<sup>1</sup> were different from the ones that now pressed the national capital region about the law's explicit erasure of Muslim immigrants and citizens.

Visuals and accounts that reached me on the night of December 15 and the days after that, from friends at Jamia and people I had known only through social media, made this erasure real before our eyes. The images of young women students fighting back by raising their fingers at men who came to attack them, videos of students and activists across Delhi reciting revolutionary poems and singing songs, and the critique of the law as well as the state's aggression in curbing any dissent against it — everything *became real* to me for the very first time, with a screen in between, platformed on Twitter and Instagram. I was not

---

<sup>1</sup> See "Statement by Tribal Intellectuals and Activists of Assam on NRC."

there until January 2020, to sit physically with the women of Shaheen Bagh or read with the children of mobilizing women in Seelampur, Northeast Delhi, where other outbreaks of violence and memorable protests occurred. But I felt a part of the resistance long before that, reading, sharing, retweeting, liking, and commenting, one post at a time.

Situating my position within the Movement is important because my experiences with it were the first reference points on *what to see* and *where to look* in the work of telling the story of the online presence of this socio-political resistance. Having a stance within the resistance, however, has motivated me further in acknowledging and articulating its nuances, focuses, and critiques, instead of hindering that work of scholarly responsibility, as I want to tell a holistic story of the Movement while acknowledging its shortcomings. As researchers involved in the Black Lives Matter movement have aptly put it, I too do not believe that agreeing with the fundamental principles of a socio-political resistance compromises the rigour of such a study and analysis “any more than agreeing with the Civil Rights Movement or feminism compromises research on those topics” (Freelon et al 10).

## **I. The story and how it has been told so far**

It is important to acknowledge at this stage that seminal scholarship and public humanities projects have tried to tell the story of the anti-CAA Movement in different ways. For instance, the work of Emily Edwards and Sarah Ford on the rise and sustenance of transnational digital publics in Shaheen Bagh, where Muslim women led the anti-CAA resistance, has been invaluable for its feminist lens on digital resistance culture. Additionally, historical as well as legal critiques of the Act in texts such as *On Citizenship* by Thapar, Bhatia, and Ram have laid the groundwork for intellectually informing the Movement’s context and way forward. Then, here are texts like Nehal Ahmed’s *Nothing Will Be Forgotten: From Jamia to Shaheen Bagh*, which offers a participatory account of the violence on the campus and the protests in its wake. In another integral category of

scholarship, young researchers (not unlike myself) such as Chetna Khandelwal and Anushka Bhilwar have been contributing to the ongoing project of documenting this resistance from sociological and public policy lenses, respectively. And finally, there has been significant commentary on the role of poetry, from poets gone and living, in the work of the resistance. However, this thesis is the first intervention within the ongoing scholarship on the Movement that attempts to tell the story of its new media presence through a focus on its affective and *feeling* aspects. By contextualizing the Movement's cultural and political stance, this thesis uses quantitative and qualitative approaches, while reading closely for affect, to study how the modes of everyday conversations and aesthetic expressions on Twitter and Instagram, respectively, impacted the moving and mobilizing potential of the resistance. Using Papacharissi's distinction on connective and collective action, wherein the latter includes practices through which people can express interest in issues without committing to complex politics, I argue that harmonizing the affective possibilities offered by anti-CAA poetics and discourse on Twitter is the path forward for building a sustainable, committed politics where "personalized interests" (128) and emotional experiences get them *invested* within the Movement.

With IT cells of political parties instrumentalizing these platforms for propaganda,<sup>2</sup> it is crucial to understand and document the Movement's engagement with social media for resistance since social media is increasingly being used as a site for reproducing and strengthening networks of othering, misinformation, and Islamophobia. Furthermore, new media, the Internet sphere of public organization, and the possibilities of forging solidarities and dissent beyond immediate geographical territories and gathering, have been modes of threat to the regulatory framework of the nation-state. That is why, despite laws guaranteeing

---

<sup>2</sup> The Oxford Internet Institute revealed as much, noting how the run-up to the last General Elections (2019) in India saw an upsurge in the ideological and political functionality of these "cyber troops" as they were used to "suppress the voice and participation of political opponents or vulnerable populations online" (Bradshaw and Campbell-Smith 1).

the Right to Internet Access as well as the protection for freedom of speech online, the ruling administration in India was quick to enact internet blockades in nearly nine states when critiques of the CAA and creative expressions of dissent against it were publicized on social media. Furthermore, the “Freedom on the Net 2021” report by Freedom House also highlights how poets were charged based on complaints filed by actors of the government, and creative modes of dissent were causally related to the incitement of political violence (42-44). In light of this political crackdown on mobilization through social media, the work of this thesis becomes all the more significant as rampant online censorship and demands for content removal from social media platforms mean that these tweets, poems, and expressions of resistance against the CAA are always under the threat of erasure (“Censorship”). It is thus important to document how activists and protesters remembered, critiqued, and felt their way into political injustice and exclusion within the anti-CAA Movement, to say: ‘We were here.’

## II. Theoretical Framework and Methodologies

Telling a story of this socio-political resistance through a focus on affect is important, since, as Jaggar rightly notes, “Critical reflection on emotion is not a self-indulgent substitute for political analysis and political action. It is itself a kind of political theory and political practice, indispensable for an adequate social theory and social transformation” (Jaggar 171). While there are several approaches to affect, as Gregg and Siegworth have compiled,<sup>3</sup> and numerous approaches are invested in distinguishing theoretically between emotion and affect,<sup>4</sup> my characterization of affect in this thesis uses these terms interchangeably and

---

<sup>3</sup> *The Affect Theory Reader* has categorized eight such approaches in affect studies, which have differently intersecting focuses in the realms of biology, cognitive sciences, neurosciences, psychology, cultural studies, science studies, and human/nonhuman interaction, in a variety of ways.

<sup>4</sup> Massumi differentiates between feeling and affect by arguing that the former relates to embodied states of being and the person, while the latter can be seen as a set of configurations framed in social meanings and is a near non-conscious experience of intensity. Siegworth and Gregg relate affect to a *force*: “Affect, at its most anthropomorphic, is the name we give to those forces-visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion-that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as if in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world's apparent intractability” (1).

primarily looks at it as *all that is felt*. My interest is not in theorizing a distinction between emotion and affect, nor in limiting affect to bodily humours and biological or psychosomatic aspects that relate it to the corporeal. But I am intrigued by the role of affect theory through which we can be “rethinking and privileging the felt aspects of everyday life, social change, and durable structures of power” (Rentschler “Affect” 12). Within the realm of the felt, I am turning to Ahmed’s *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* to regard feelings as being formed in ways that remain concealed and become instinctive over time but have histories of encounter and relationality that constitute them. This approach focuses on the political work of emotional attachments as investments in circulation, instead of relegating affect to a state where it precedes consciousness. In spotlighting this characterization and function of affect, I am indebted to the work of scholars like Ahmed, Berlant, Ngai, Cvetkovich, Rentschler, Hemmings, and Butler, who have shown how emotion and affect form an effective lens and methodology for sharing stories of feminism that involve layers of marginalization and unequal socio-cultural power dynamics.

In seeing affect as the capacity to be moved, and valuing the political possibilities of this potential, I intend to show how this potential was used through social media platforms, to explain, document, popularize, and sustain the anti-CAA Movement from 2019 to 2022. The work that forms the theoretical spine of this project has come from scholars like Paolo Gerbaudo and Zizi Papacharissi, who have closely, qualitatively and quantitatively, researched the relationship of new media studies, social change movements, and the lens of the felt. Gerbaudo’s insistence in *Tweets and the Streets* to seek approaches other than actor-network theory for understanding the role of social media networks in protests and his aim “to recuperate a sense of the role of the body and emotions in the process of contemporary mobilisation” (Gerbaudo 77) has been a driving force for my methodology. His argument to cease separating the virtual as a lesser, isolated aspect of social change movements from their

physical, grassroots realm resonates with me because of the nature of the protests against the CAA in the course of a global pandemic that hindered physical mobilization. To that end, I turn to the activist use of social media platforms, which allowed protesters and allies physically dispersed and disconnected in different parts of the country to continue feeling part of the action and, in the process, ascertaining that the action does not end. Gerbaudo's inference on the value of social media guides this understanding well, wherein I assert that social media platforms like Twitter and Instagram helped "by harnessing participants' emotionality and directing it," making sure that "their actions nevertheless do have a deep influence on the display of collective action" (Gerbaudo 150). By looking at the use of hashtags about protest sites and public assembly, I am with Gerbaudo in arguing that "the popularity of Twitter hashtags carrying the name of a specific place associated with the movement" suggests it is becoming "the target of an emotional investment" (Gerbaudo 155).

My goal is to look closely at the kind of narratives people build alongside these hashtags to focus our attention and give us something to associate with our emotional attachment. This is Papacharissi's area of interest as well, who urges that civic engagement online needs to be understood alongside "public formations that are *textually rendered into being through emotive expressions* that spread virally through networked crowds" (Papacharissi 133; my emphasis). These "affective publics," (133) as she terms the formations, are thus emotionally invested and focused on certain things more than others that are shared online because of the possibilities they provide to the readers for being invested and moved. These textual, emotive expressions are not to be seen as separated from the realm of logic or structured reasoning but allow people to better relate with and remember that logic if it has the potential to sentimentally resonate with them and organize their thoughts with feelings. While I am not convinced by Papacharissi's characterization of affect as just intensity, I agree with her main point that "affective attunement is driven, and by driven, I

mean *energized* or *powered* by sentiment-driven modalities” (134). Her work in bringing Raymond Williams’ idea of the structure of feeling to the realm of new media and affect studies, to show an amalgamation of reason and feeling, is also an integral part of her contribution to driving my framework and methodology for this thesis.

To strengthen these methodologies and analyze the sentiment-driven modalities of social media networks, I use digital humanist methods such as sentiment and emotion analysis, as well as topic modelling. Through these natural language processing (NLP) approaches on Twitter data containing anti-CAA hashtags and keywords as well as on the corpus of poetry produced and shared through social media, I aim to first gauge the topics and ideas of interest pertaining to the resistance and then to understand what kind of affects were in circulation around those topics in the Movement. NLP techniques have the potential to reveal patterns of thought and emotion in a vast corpus, and deploying these techniques allows me to understand patterns, structures, and trends in thought as well as their relationships with different feelings and affective attunements. This is thus a method to apply Williams’ concept of “structure of feeling” in practice and to analyze its possibilities. Furthermore, since Ahmed argues that there is value in reading texts closely with a particular focus on metaphors and other such figures of speech, as they are “crucial to the emotionality of texts” (Ahmed 12), I turn to this method particularly for engaging with anti-CAA poetry in depth with a focus on its affective potential. Such a take on traditional close reading offers it a new take, relevant to our socio-political realities, licensed by the work of Heather Milne in her reading for affect of post-9/11 North American poetry. And such close reading goes hand in hand with digital humanist methods since paying attention to the nature and quality of these sentiments by placing them in the relevant context is integral for understanding, and telling, the most authentic affective story of the Movement.

### III. The Role of Poetry in Social Change

To borrow language from Heather Milne on why I am paying attention to poetry in documenting, sharing, and analyzing the story of the anti-CAA resistance: “[P]oetry and art have always accompanied protest and are crucial dimensions of political dissent. [...] Poetry holds the potential to help us develop new forms of agency for engaging contemporary politics, and new literacies for reading our world” (Milne 239). This power of poetry to move people into organization and mobilization, with a strong commitment to socio-political change, has been etched in histories across the world. These histories span from W.B. Yeats penning “Easter, 1916” to mark political instability of Ireland’s colonization to artists sharing poems on social media to express themselves as participants in the 2019 Hong Kong protests.

Historically, poetry has often been the mode for people marginalized by oppressive structures. It has been used to help people feel that they are part of a community and that their experiences, tribulations, as well as stories need not be contained and constrained, but shared—in order to move, touch, and mobilize. In this vein, for such communities in colonial as well as post-Independence India, poetry has played a key part of expressing the desire for socio-cultural change. For instance, when Faiz Ahmad Faiz, a poet from the Progressive Writers’ Association,<sup>5</sup> was arrested for his resistance to the Liaquat administration in Pakistan, he wrote *Zindan Nama* in the prison during the early 1950s. His poems had an optimistic shine to their mood and tone, undercutting the bleakness of his material circumstances, with poems such as “For Your Lanes, My Country” and the following couplet as the apt example of this formidable sense of hope: “This heart is not hopeless, but lacks purpose for the moment / The dusk of sorrow is long, but it’s dusk nonetheless” (Faiz). His poetry enjoyed a rebirth of sorts in the anti-CAA Movement with his anti-establishment

---

<sup>5</sup> The formal establishment of the Progressive Writers’ Association in London took place in 1935. Its members included eminent writers and artists. The objectives and ideologies of the PWA were left-leaning, Marxist, with the literary style incorporating social realism.



poem's refrain, "*Hum dekhenge*" ("We shall see"), becoming a slogan and mobilizing call for people to stand witness to the violence of the law (Dubrow).

Witnessing through poetry has also been used to criticize the fractures in India's socio-cultural fabric. Poet-activists like Namdeho Dhasal, who founded the Dalit Panthers Movement<sup>6</sup> in 1972 to develop an alternative to the caste-based discrimination of mainstream Indian politics, have used their poetry to expose the how the "bad side" of colonial Indian history "still persists" (Milne 199) as most of his poems are "marked by violent language to translate the violence that Dalits routinely faced" (Sharma). And during the Indian Emergency of 1975-1977, when literature was heavily censored, poetry was written in resistance and it was painstakingly archived by John Perry, who noted how the "poems often bespeak a quality of emotional energy that calls for the reader's similar intense commitment, a way of integrated living purposefully directed towards understanding itself fully and contextually but in terms perhaps more readily translatable into social action" (Perry xix-xx).<sup>7</sup>

Now, it is critical to document the poetics of the anti-CAA Movement, in order to understand how it inspired commitment, waded through the political despair of fundamentalism nationalism, and how it learnt from as well as translated into social action.

#### **IV. Chapter Overview**

In Chapter 1, I establish the legal, cultural, and political context of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and categorize three key events and locations from the resistance against it, which formed the core of the action and causes for mobilization on the ground. While Papacharissi emphasizes the value of contextualization in understanding affective publics and their sentiments online, Ahmed argues that emotion itself is context-specific. This chapter

---

<sup>6</sup> A social organization that practices radical politics, Dalit Panthers seeks to combat caste discrimination. It was led by a group of Mahar writers and poets, including Raja Dhale, Namdeo Dhasal, and J. V. Pawar in 1972.

<sup>7</sup> Such documentation is integral and is often suppressed by political parties: "Perry's work is one of the very few and often inaccessible archives of this time of political turmoil in India, and it is ironic that this collection — which includes the works of well-known writers [...], poet-politicians [...], many anonymous writers has not had a reprint since it was first published in 1983."

focuses on the context of the December 2019 attack on university campuses, the formulation of resistance led in the Muslim-majority neighbourhood of Shaheen Bagh that was led by women, and the violence unleashed against Muslims in Northeast Delhi in February 2020. By using testimonies and accounts of protesters, survivors, and witnesses from media, human rights, and minority organization reports, I assert that theoretically turning to these focal points, locations, experiences, and concerns is integral to understanding how these were documented, discussed, felt, and used as mobilizing ideas in the online realm of the Movement. Tuning into the ethics of care seen in the protest at Shaheen Bagh, I show the potential for effective progressive politics that accentuates affect in expressing care, love, and a sense of familiar comfort in building a mobilizing community.

Chapter 2 turns to Instagram poetry that was produced for the anti-CAA resistance and shared online within the context of the events and experiences from Chapter 1. Engaging with these texts as located and produced from the specific context of the three events highlighted in Chapter 1 allows us to highlight “the very public nature of emotions, and the emotive nature of publics” (Ahmed 14). I position the power of emotional attachment in the anti-CAA poetry as a counter to Susan Sontag’s explanation in *Regarding the Pain of Others* on the build-up of political apathy and desensitization that arises in our constant, immediate exposure to the news of suffering, violence, and political confrontations through new media. By articulating the value of Instagram as an aesthetically popular mode and the relationship of poetry with socio-cultural mobilization in India’s history, I study how the work of popular writer-activists used affect to grapple with the political depression brought by the fervour of nationalism through the CAA. Using Williams’ idea of “structure of feeling,” Gerbaudo’s concept of “choreography of assembly,” Kenneth Burke’s theorization of “symbolic action,” and Cvetkovich’s “political depression” as core concepts, I read these poems through an affective lens in the ways Heather Milne does in *Poetry Matters*. I argue that the poetry of the

anti-CAA resistance offers a variety of lenses and possibilities to document the injustice of the state through affective witnessing practices, which use defamiliarization and intimacy as techniques to draw the reader into the experience. The political potential of affective witnessing through social media and using it for mobilization and social transformation, as an alternative to legal notions of justice, has been well-established in Rentschler's scholarship on feminist and affect studies ("Bystander intervention, feminist hashtag activism, and the anti-carceral politics of care"). With this knowledge underpinning my analysis, I further show how this mode of poetic documentation and affective witness urges us to take one step further, sit with our feelings, and understand the critique of the state, nationalism, and the CAA. This is done through the invocation of emotive, culturally resonant symbols as well as memories with which we can become attached and around which we can choreograph our mobilization.

In Chapter 3, I turn to the affective and informative possibilities offered by Twitter and the mode of everyday conversations used on the platform in choreographing assemblies. Informed by the role social media has played in other seminal socio-political movements, which has been linked to its potential for immediacy and intimacy, I analyze 64,000 tweets comprising anti-CAA hashtags and keywords for patterns of information, popularity, and sentiments. The possibilities for sentimental polarization and investment offered by such tweets are then read for affect and qualitatively as well as quantitatively analyzed alongside the anti-CAA poetry corpus, which has been addressed in Chapter 2. Through these varied methods of analysis and the accounts of activists who used Twitter for an alternative narrative-building in the Movement, I thus argue here that engaging and sustaining readers' attention through emotional scene-setting and affective attachments was critical to community-building, collective action, and political mobilization in the resistance.

## Chapter 1: Understanding the CAA and the Rise of a Resistance

### I. Introduction

Paolo Gerbaudo poses a crucial question for the futures of new media activism in *Tweets and the Streets*:

And did all this tweeting and re-tweeting really matter when it came to influencing collective action, mobilising and coordinating people on the ground? Or was all this just an activist delusion: a way of *feeling part of the action* while in fact always standing on the sidelines? (Gerbaudo 2; my emphasis)

Cvetkovich, Rentschler, Siegworth, and Gregg are some of the scholars who discuss the power of mobilization in affect and feeling part of the action. In different terms, they assert that affect “expands to signify disturbance and influence” (Wetherell 2) and “affective labor gives shape to activist communities and networks” (Rentschler 13) with affect arising “in the capacities to act and be acted upon” (Gregg and Siegworth 1). Thus, as the affective turn in the academy tells us, the answer to Gerbaudo’s question can be found in realizing and accepting two key concepts pertaining to affect as a valuable mode of analysis.

The first key concept I use is that to feel a part of the action and witness it from the sidelines has cultural and political value in several ways, which we will encounter throughout this project. The next, related concept involves recognizing that context matters; to witness, revisit, and paraphrase context is a strategy for building and sustaining movements, since “sociocultural context informs the conditions under which people utilize the affordances of technologies to lay claim to agency and potentially to power” (Papacharissi 11). Using affective labour and feeling-based attachment to these contexts has the ability to preserve it and share it to expand communities. In related ways, our affective attachments as well as the affordance of technology can come together to reshape these contexts and reorient the

relationships of other individuals and communities with that sociocultural context. Thus, using these entwined concepts on affect, in this chapter, I provide the context of the protests against the citizenship laws in India, highlighting key affective events that contributed to building the protest movement. In using Chapter 1 to build awareness about the legal, cultural, and associated digital ways of understanding these protests, I aim to highlight how this heightened awareness or established context is “key in interpreting the meaning of affective mechanisms and the potential impact affective publics may generate” (Papacharissi 8).

## **II. An Amended Law and a Movement is Born**

In India, protests erupted when the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) was codified into law on December 11, 2019. The Act offers political refuge exclusively to asylum-seekers who are explicitly non-Muslims, mentioning only the “Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian” communities. The anti-CAA Movement, as the resistance effort came to be called, demanded that the law be rolled back, reading it as unconstitutional. While the Movement against the CAA was built in Assam<sup>8</sup> when the law was piloted there, this thesis focuses on the transition of the Movement into the country’s capital after the Bill was passed, the immediate protest events around which publics in resistance formed, and the subsequent discourse that was globalized through its proliferation on social media.

At the core of this phase of the Movement was the shared understanding that the secular fabric of the Indian Constitution has been torn through both the language and substance of the Act, as articulated by legal experts: “Parliament could not—and was not intended to—ever create conditions for entry into the polity (through citizenship laws) that

---

<sup>8</sup> In Assam, Tripura, and other north-eastern Indian states, the CAA is contended because the natives have been against allowing immigration or refugee status to anyone, regardless of their region, since the 1970s because of concerns about their tribal rights, erosion of agency over their land and culture, and change in the region’s demographic balance in a way that impacts their political rights. See “Statement by Tribal Intellectuals and Activists of Assam on NRC.”

were fundamentally at odds with its secular and civic-nationalist identity” (Bhatia et al 61). This is why the previous versions of the citizenship law have not referenced any religious foundation to granting and maintaining citizenship rights (“The Citizenship Act, 1955” and “The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003”). Furthermore, the suspicion regarding its potential for harm, ““especially to the poor and the marginalised”” (Desai qtd. in Bhatia et al 32), has also shaped the Movement. This suspicion stems from the correlation of the CAA with two notorious digitization exercises for citizenship: the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR).

To understand the motivations of the resistance, it is crucial to turn to the language and narrative used by the nation-state in their policy documentation and public representation of the CAA, NRC, and NPR, as these representations contextualize the language and sentiment of the protests against these interlinked exercises. This knowledge helps to interrogate the underlying logic of the exercises that turn people into statistics, which may be rounded off into obliteration due to the inefficiencies of the bureaucracy or the deliberate exclusion of Muslims based on communalism. In that vein, this excerpt from the Government of Assam website on the NRC defines it as “the register containing details of all Indian citizens” (“What is NRC”) while the Government of India website states, “The National Population Register (NPR) is a Register containing details of persons usually residing in a village or rural area or town or ward or demarcated area within a ward in a town or urban area” (“National Population Register”). The latter goes on to provide a disclaimer that became a crucial theme of the Movement, as seen in Varun Grover’s “The NRC Papers, We Won’t Show” and Akhil Katyal’s “Documentation”: “No document will be collected during this exercise” (“National Population Register”).

Why would this disclaimer be necessary? This critical claim contradicts how the policy was represented to the public by Amit Shah, the 2019 President and current Minister

of Home Affairs for India's current ruling administration, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In a series of election rallies between April and May 2019, he propagated the idea of the 'chronology' that must be understood before understanding the significance of the CAA-NPR-NRC. In a rally in West Bengal, he stated on 22 April 2019:

First we will bring [the] Citizenship Amendment Bill and will give citizenship to the Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain, and Christian refugees, the religious minorities from the neighbouring nations. Then we will implement [the] NRC to flush out the infiltrators from our country. (@AmitShah)

In *On Citizenship*, N. Ram decodes this speech in the context of how BJP has used these terms in the past: he argues that infiltrators refer to "Muslim 'illegal migrant'," and that "'refugee' is code for non-Muslim 'illegal migrant'" (Bhatia et al 33). Taken in context of the well-documented chronology espoused by Shah, the NPR emerges as the foundation and the data source for the implementation of the NRC. The amendment to the citizenship law then becomes the vehicle for excluding present-day Muslim citizens as well as for denying Muslim refugees citizenship status. Ram even cautions that the "power given to the local registrar to enter remarks in the population register if he or she feels that the citizenship of an individual is 'doubtful' will be a Damocles Sword hanging over the heads of millions of people" (Bhatia et al 33). This is precisely the model witnessed in Assam, where the NRC and NPR have been piloted, as 1.9 million inhabitants were entailed to be eliminated in the August 2019 draft of the NRC (Rajan).

Affected by the anxieties of these possibilities regarding increased marginalization and loss of rights, Muslims and non-Muslim allies resisted these exercises in the cultural, political, and legal spheres when the Bill was passed into law on December 11, 2019. While the legal arguments are not within the scope of this project, what matters to this work is how the legal scope was reflected upon, interpreted, and understood for the purpose of socio-

cultural and political mobilization. This resistance connected different media, genres of expression, and modalities of networking, forming different communities that shared the complex affects of anger, fear, confusion, political pessimism, and helplessness about the law and its place in the anti-Muslim nationalist socio-political context of India.

This thesis presents a close overview of three such cultural encounters and sites of resistance: the December 15, 2019, violence inflicted in Muslim-majority university campuses (Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University); the late February, 2020 violence in Northeast Delhi; and the women-led Shaheen Bagh protests in the Muslim-majority neighbourhood of the same name in the capital. These three encounters between the nation-state and the protesters prominently informed and mobilized discourses on ground and on social media spaces, creating affective publics through reliance on distinct modalities and evocations of affect.

### **III. Jamia Millia Islamia and Aligarh Muslim University**

Located in the capital of New Delhi and in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, respectively, JMI and AMU are Muslim-majority, state-funded universities, which have been at the forefront of student politics and mobilization in the country. JMI students marched to the Parliament on December 13, 2019, in resistance to the CAA, becoming “the first to translate the nationwide concern about the government’s reforms against Indian Muslims into collective action” because of the education in political theory and praxis they have gained throughout their history as minority education institutions (Martelli and Garalytè 2). This history and education with theory and praxis put them on the pioneering forefront of this movement in India “because they had been exposed to organized political socialization earlier” (Martelli and Garalytè 3). But the Delhi police used batons (*laathis*) and tear gas for dispersing the protesters and detaining several of them. In this clash, students reportedly picked up stones to defend themselves against state-sanctioned weapons and violence. Following this march and



the subsequent violence, over two thousand JMI students joined the protest on the evening of December 15, 2019, outside the campus; but hundreds of police officers stormed inside the campus to counter the protesting crowd. The storming of the campus took place without the permission from the college authorities to enter the site, and the violence continued through the night with tear gas and batons being used inside various parts of the campus. This was including the library and research areas, where several students who were reading and not partaking in the protest were beaten as well, with two hundred injured and a hundred detained.

Key features of the representations and news reports of this attack became memorable for the course of the event: the police damaging the CCTV cameras to resist being documented, the batons being used to brutalize and vandalize Muslim bodies and spaces of organization and education, and students pleading with these state-sanctioned actors for mercy against the violence.

To protest against this attack as well as the citizenship law, students from Aligarh Muslim University in Uttar Pradesh gathered outside the Maulana Azad library to march towards the Bab-e-Sayyad gate as the threat of being targeted and beaten intensified in the university space. Worried parents and family members urged their children to leave the university and rush home as they were aware and attuned to the communal nature of this violence. Media reports and testimonies revealed that they could sense its affect traveling towards another prominent Muslim-majority university site.

The tension of the threat materialized into reality when the Uttar Pradesh police entered the AMU campus as well, repeating the strategy from JMI, and making students strip while beating them up as Islamophobic abuses were hurled at them. Media reports highlighted the invasive nature of the attack, where police officials barged inside hostels and

residential sites, firing tear gas shells and stun grenades, deeming them ““anti-nationals,”” and threatening to urinate inside their mouths (Kuchay).

The specificity of this context, developed here through media reports and victims’ accounts, is integral to understanding the affective nature of the issue and the resistance, since violent encounters like these aggressively highlight a hated Other or anti-national element. Such accounts show the affective politics that marks the sense of violence by nationalists in the protests against the citizenship law. Even as the law is about exclusion, its defense is marked by physical violence. This is what Ahmed and Borch-Jacobsen highlight when they say that hate needs to build an exchange, a transaction with an Other, in order to survive itself: “Hate wants *to get its hands* on the other; it wants to touch even when it wants to destroy” (Borch-Jacobsen). The same occurred in these campuses as the body became the site of several affective transactions<sup>9</sup> at once. These included the emotions of fear, violence, and attunement to survival, while carrying the religious marker (circumcision) used to identify them and differentiate them from those whose bodies did not carry these markers and thus, this burden of marginalization.

#### **IV. The Pogrom in Northeast Delhi**

Starting on February 23, 2020, the “worst violence in decades” was unleashed in Northeast Delhi, which included Muslim-majority neighbourhoods such as Karawal Nagar, Seelampur, Maujpur, Bhajanpura, Vijay Park, Jaffrabad, Chandbagh, Mustafabad, and Yamuna Vihar (“New Delhi hit by worst violence in decades: What you need to know”). In the Maujpur-Jaffrabad-Seelampur belt, a sit-in was organized by women in solidarity with the Bharat Bandh (pan-India strike) against the CAA. Continuing for five days, the violence in

---

<sup>9</sup> Sara Ahmed argues for the encounter-centric and transactional nature of these affects, highlighting through an analogy: “It is not that the bear *is* fearsome, ‘on its own’, as it were. It is fearsome *to* someone or somebody. So fear is not in the child, let alone in the bear, but is a matter of how child and bear come into contact. This contact is shaped by past histories of contact, unavailable in the present, which allow the bear to be apprehended as fearsome. The story does not, despite this, inevitably lead to the same ending. Another child, another bear, and we might even have another story.” (11)

Northeast Delhi was incited by Delhi BJP leader, Kapil Mishra, issuing an ultimatum to the Delhi police that they evacuate the streets by removing the protesters and affecting violent mobilization by sloganeering, “*Desh ke gaddaaron ko, goli maaro saalon ko*” (“‘Shoot the Traitors’: Discrimination Against Muslims under India’s New Citizenship Policy”).<sup>10</sup>

Mishra’s speech threatened the police force with an ultimatum, urging them to remove the protesters from the streets while he waited for the visiting then-President of the USA, Donald Trump, to return from his Indian tour. He invited fellow CAA supporters to join him in the streets “‘to give an answer to Jaffrabad’” (Mishra qtd. in Dwivedi).

Highlighting “the nexus between the speeches and the violence,” (Yamunan) constitutional law experts and journalists such as Yamunan have argued that the speeches by BJP leader, Mishra, and Union Minister, Anurag Thakur, fit the legal provisions<sup>11</sup> of what constitutes hate speech. Furthermore, this invitation involved great affective mobilization, as we can see through Ahmed, whose characterization of the white supremacist as the ordinary subject is valid for Mishra and other pro-CAA nationalists: “[T]he ordinary or normative subject is reproduced as the injured party; the one that is ‘hurt’ or even damaged by the ‘invasion’ of others” (Ahmed 43). This can be seen in the context of the sentiment Kapil Mishra evoked around the Northeast Delhi protests when he separated the protesters from the ordinary, everyday lives of people, stating, “‘They want to cut off 35 lakh people by blocking the roads. Is this the way to protest against anything?’” (Mishra qtd. in Dwivedi). It is notable that this hate speech is articulated as the desire to protect the everyday, ordinary lives of ‘India-loving patriots,’ reported to be under threat from protesters blocking roads and seen to be betraying the country as traitors for expressing dissent. In doing so, Mishra used a chapter from the playbook of the BJP leadership: Prime Minister Modi claimed something similar.

---

<sup>10</sup> Translation: “Shoot these bastard traitors of the nation.”

<sup>11</sup> “To attract the provisions, three ingredients should be present: the act must be illegal; such illegal act must be malignantly done; and as a result of such illegal action, there must be a situation which may cause, or has caused, a riot” (Yamunan).

We know that “[s]uch narratives work by generating a subject that is endangered by imagined others” (Ahmed 43), as evident in Modi’s claims about the anti-CAA protests after the December 15 attack on university campuses, suggesting that “those who are creating violence can be identified by their clothes,” (Scroll Staff) and strategically deploying stereotypes of Muslim clothing from the popular imagination.

The way this complex encounter of fear, hate, resentment, and othering from ordinariness was expressed included bodily violence and brutalization: over 66% of the people reportedly shot at and 40 of the 53 people who died in the violence were Muslims (“New Delhi hit by worst violence in decades: What you need to know”). One such victim recalled, “The skin on my left temple and eye got scraped off from the friction on the road, as they [the police] dragged us for a few metres. They were treating us as if we were beasts, not human” (Chander).

Akin to the police brutality reported in JMI and AMU, the tacit as well as explicit support lent by the state-sanctioned actors has been well-documented in media reports, conversations on social media platforms, and civil society organizations. In these sources, policemen can be seen demanding that injured Muslim men recite the Indian national anthem as a display of their patriotism and their apparent merit as well as desire to belong in India. They can also be found dismissing the call for ‘*azaadi*’ (freedom) that became a rallying cry in the Movement. And some accounts of the events were documented by the police officers themselves as they stood atop victims lying on the streets, making video clips that then went viral on Twitter (Yadav, @Shaheenbaghoff1).

Incited immediately after the propagation of slogans and speeches by leaders from the ruling party and supported by the police through physical force at times and at other times a blind eye, notably, the Northeast Delhi violence was attributed to activists and students protesting the citizenship laws, along with opposition leaders and residents of the region.

Nearly three years after the violence, police complicity remains uninvestigated, but 16 of the 18 people charged for the violence are Muslims who dissented or lived in the site of the attack. Significantly, one of the foundations upon which the police has based its case include “social media messages about organizing and announcing peaceful protests” (“India: Biased Investigations 2 Years After Delhi Riot”). Let’s take a look at a rare instance from the anti-CAA Movement where uncontrolled violence could not be unleashed by the state, in light of strategic organization and sustained support within the anti-CAA Movement on ground as well as in new media networks.

## **V. Shaheen Bagh and the Care of Community**

Beginning on December 15, 2019, in response to the news of violence and police brutality coming in from JMI, the Shaheen Bagh protests took place in the Muslim-majority neighbourhood of Jamia Nagar near the JMI campus. The protests were cleared on March 24, 2020, due to the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic and public health guidelines. Unlike the police brutality in JMI, AMU, Northeast Delhi, and other protest sites, Shaheen Bagh’s case emerged as a model of peaceful resistance, despite social media and political discourse from the right wing that sought to malign it in several ways.

Why was it different and long-lasting, despite the visibility of hijab and burqa-wearing Muslim women<sup>12</sup> at its forefront? A possible answer lies in the networked nature of these protests, which entwined digital and physical conversations between communities on the precarity catalyzed by issues other than the CAA as well, such as casteism and unemployment. They actively resisted the affective othering that marked the socio-political sphere through speeches of the ruling party’s leaders, by widening the community of the Movement and offering a platform to dialogue against different forms of oppression faced by

---

<sup>12</sup> Nationalists and liberals alike use the hijab as a symbol for antagonizing Muslim men and presenting Muslim women as victims of fundamentalist patriarchy, negating any discourse about their agency.

groups like Kashmiri Pandits and Sikhs. This platforming and dialogue were accompanied by the significant use of symbols, to not only impart logical knowledge but build affective attachments and move people into remembering the *feeling* of participating. For this, Shaheen Bagh built a public reading corner with artwork, poetry, and the Constitution.

Reading the Preamble at Shaheen Bagh *symbolizes* that this is a secular protest— look at the national flags. We have everyone here—people from different religions. They are here *because they know* that the BJP’s anti-Muslim and antiminority policies will hurt everyone and hurt the “nation.” We are not a religious country. We are secular. (Bhatia and Gajjala 6294; my emphasis)

As Jameela, a Shaheen Bagh protester, highlights here, they refused to be pitted against other activists and communities as the bad versus good minorities, which is often the strategy of division used within the postcolonial state, as a legacy of colonization.<sup>13</sup>

We can see that it is the ethics of care and value laid upon moving people, making them feel attached to the community, which differentiate Shaheen Bagh’s model. This model does not rely on merely arguing about the legal flaws or theoretical issues with the CAA – it makes people feel the power of community, so they envision and understand the potential loss that stems from being excluded out of such a community. For instance, one 55-year-old Muslim woman emphasized, “You must be brave—you must *love* people regardless of their religion” (Bhatia and Gajjala 6299; my emphasis). This intersectional and community-first resistance, led by Muslim women, with Muslim men acting as supporters instead of leaders, relied on affective relationships and also iterated the domestic sphere’s affective potential.

Edwards and Ford remarked the same in their interviews with the protesters and observations

---

<sup>13</sup> Edward Said articulated in *Orientalism*: “the ‘good’ Orient was invariably a classical period somewhere in a long-gone India, whereas the ‘bad’ Orient lingered in present-day Asia, parts of North Africa, and Islam everywhere” (Said 99).

from the protest site: “Women of Shaheen Bagh argued for an Indian national community defined by both secularism and multiculturalism, undergirded by creative, caring peaceful protest and an ethics of care”<sup>14</sup> (Edwards and Ford 165). While women in India are often relegated to the space of the kitchen, which can be seen as a closed *outside* to the politics of public spaces, conversations in Shaheen Bagh destabilized this notion by combining the kitchen, or the gentleness of the private, with the persistence in the public. A Twitter observed:

At Shaheen Bagh, almost every conversation begins with Aapne kuch khaya? Nahin? Kya khayenge? Kyun nahin, aap door se aaye ho hamara saath dene, kuch to kaa lijiye... These from folks who have been sitting out there 24/7 in the coldest December in decades. (@prempanicker; “Did you eat something? No? What will you have? Why not, you’ve come from afar to stand in solidarity with, please eat something...”; my trans.)

Tweets like this, as well as poems and art-pieces, have documented this key aspect of the Movement at Shaheen Bagh where they built a politics of care, urging supporters to eat and nourish themselves for the long fight they must struggle to win in the merciless Delhi winter. Sloganeering against the CAA-NPR-NRC was sustained through these encounters with the gentleness of everyday life. This sense of the everyday and its gentleness include elements, experiences, and people who make up our own world and sense of comfort as well as familiarity. It includes experiences we would feel as part of our everyday life, but not pay much attention to, such as someone being concerned about whether we have eaten or if we are cold. It has “got parents with children and children with parents, it’s got teenagers and grandmothers” (Zaidi and Pani) – sights often not envisioned as part of the politics on the

---

<sup>14</sup> See Barnes in *Ethics of Care: Critical advances in international perspective* -- “What care ethics provides is a way of viewing and analyzing care, reclaiming not only the language of care but also the practice, within a philosophical and ideological frame within which care is seen as an act of citizenship that embraces both the personal and the political.”

streets. Bringing these aspects of domesticity to the public space, they showed a model of success where politics on the streets could be sustained by becoming relatable to one's sense of the familiar, the touching, the everyday. As one of the organizers from Shaheen Bagh noted, "These children inherit *a similar spirit* as their mothers do. So it's imperative to *engage with their spirit*, because people might forget the posters and slogans the children raise but not their knowledge" (Thakur 3; my emphasis). These instances highlight how this domestic/public amalgamation at Shaheen Bagh relied on the value of affect and what the spirit remembers, as legitimate and sustainable modes of knowledge.

However, these encounters were also weaponized by those in support of the CAA for the proliferation of disinformation against the motivations behind the protests, claiming that the opposition party had backed them or that the vast supporting crowds could be explained by the distribution of INR 500 (nearly USD 8) and free biryani to every protester (The Quint, Press Trust of India). Underwriting these claims was the gendered and religious stereotype propagated throughout Western and Indian academic, political, and socio-cultural spheres: that Muslim women were objects with a lack of agency in the making of their material and cultural conditions. In such realms, the right wing as well as liberals with a saviour complex imagine Muslim women to be caught between a rock and a hard place. This tough spot is seen as "an abjected stage where caricatured people are victims of their own violent culture" with the saviour complex encouraging a "self-righteous commitment to change those backward or dysfunctional culture" (Abu-Lughod 127).

Deploying these malignant discourses, a fundamentalist organization, Hindu Sena, pejoratively urged the removal of "Shaheen Bagh Jihadis" on January 29, 2020 (Pandey). Affected by such propaganda, a shooter screamed "*Jai Shri Ram*"<sup>15</sup> at Shaheen Bagh on February 1, while asserting that no community apart from Hindus will have a voice in the

---

<sup>15</sup> Translation: "All hail Lord Rama."



functioning of Indian democracy (IANS). The event of the shooting was preceded by another shooting at the Jamia protest site two days before, with the perpetrator threatening to turn “Shaheen Bagh into Jallianwala Bagh,”<sup>16</sup> ironically the site of massacre for Indians demanding independence from the British colonizers in April 1919 (Express News Service). Both these instances, which saw an Indian protest site comprising Muslims who call this nation their home, were motivated by the idea of a hate against and sense of fear for the space of its home being invaded. As Ahmed notes, such expressions construct the “nation as it were a subject, as one who ‘could not cope’ with the presence of others,” and they generate affects, “creating impressions of others as those who have invaded the space of the nation, threatening its existence” (Ahmed 46).

In the face of such micro and macro aggressions, art as well as education through art occupied a significant position in sustaining the protests. Notably, artists performed poetry and songs, a reading area was created with crowdsourced texts, and graffiti and murals denouncing the exclusionary politics of the CAA-NPR-NRC were present all around the protest site (Das, Ameen, and “The Art of Resistance: Delhi’s Shaheen Bagh has turned into an open air art gallery”). The reading area – “Read for Revolution” – alluded to the police invasion of the library and research spaces at JMI in the December 15 violence, as a form of reparative organizing and rebuilding through the mode of education. In creating such kits or tools for resistance, the protesters not only documented the violence to which the anti-CAA communities had been subjected and which still continued to loom over them, but they also used these spaces and tools to reorient the affective relationship with these violent, threatening events. From the memory of aggression and hate, they tried to recast the encounter as a possibility for persevering through education, while continuing to offer an

---

<sup>16</sup> Jallianwala Bagh is a reference to a massacre in Amritsar’s Jallianwala Bagh on April 13, 1919, where around 1500 people were reportedly killed when British General Dyer opened fire on protesters peacefully protesting against the colonial Rowlatt Act and the arrest of pro-Independence activists.

openness to grieve and feel the hurt inflicted in the anti-CAA Movement. The potential for these modes of organization was certainly a threat to the affective othering envisioned by the nation-state. This is evident in the fact that immediately after the removal of protesters from the sites, under the pretext of social distancing, art was made invisible and painted over, and such reading areas were destroyed (“Police Remove Jamia Graffiti, Twitter Reminds Them of ‘Priorities’”). This removal fed into, and was archived within, the digital discourse built around Shaheen Bagh and the citizenship protests even after the physical space and artwork ceased to exist. For instance, sharing videos of the police removing the graffiti, several users immediately posted tweets like these: “The protest graffiti at @jamiamillia\_ being defaced by the labourers brought in by @DelhiPolice. After clearing the protest site at #ShaheenaBagh, the same was done to the graffiti and the caricatures there” (@NandyAsmita).

## VI. Conclusion

Drawing from the contexts of these events, the following chapter will show one such mode of documentation and attempt at affective reorientation through the use of symbolism, figures of speech, and vivid imagery of the anti-CAA poetry circulated online. Affective reorientation involves trusting the potential of emotional and felt experiences in shaping people’s perspective towards and relationship with events that have been documented through majoritarian history by an oppressor. In Chapter 3, this mode will be compared with the work of the Movement on Twitter, “used to document protest events using an insider’s perspective,” based on the notion that “social media grants the spontaneity and immediacy required to engage with ‘premeditated situations where the story is changing so quickly that TV or print media do not have the time to develop a fully sourced story’” (Bhatia and Gajjala 6295). Pertaining to this, one protester explained in detail:

When people see, constantly, that so many protests are happening, the movement does not lose its momentum. People do not get into a lull phase.

We keep posting such encouraging posts about protest sites and activities.

Many times, I post the performances staged by protesters at protest sites. That has a huge impact. Many people who cannot be there share these videos, and they pledge their support for our cause. What is important in these situations is to continue the struggle. (Bhatia and Gajjala 6295)

This desire to involve people and seek their continued support cannot be fulfilled by merely passing on information or using legal or theoretical arguments. It demands the formation of a tug, a tether of sorts, with affective aspects that move them and attach them too.

The next two chapters will be able to offer a stronger response to Gerbaudo's question posed at the beginning, but we can already see an answer developing through the Shaheen Bagh model that values education, affect, domesticity, and digital practices. We can see that tweeting and retweeting were used to share urgent pieces of information about state action and protest organization. But this use of social media in socio-political movements also needs to rely significantly on *feeling* as part of the action, forming affective attachments, and building an ethics of care. Let us see in detail over the next two chapters how these were deployed for sustaining the anti-CAA Movement and almost shielding it from the malignant, hateful narratives and attacks of the state.

## Chapter 2: Anti-CAA Poetry and Its Affective Politics

### I. Introduction

In *Poetry Matters*, Heather Milne claims that “poetry cannot necessarily reshape oppressive structures, but like the Greek riot dog that barked at the police during the anti-austerity protests in Athens, it can accompany you into the street” (6). We have seen in the introductory section how poetry has had a long-standing relationship with social change movements across the globe at different points in time. Thus, this chapter’s focus upon the contemporary poetics associated with the anti-CAA movement stems from this historical understanding of poetry’s intimate relationship to expressing the need for socio-political change and becoming a part of the mobilization for such change.

However, the emergence of and turn to new media for urgent and easily replicable modes of expression on platforms like Twitter, Reddit, Instagram, etc. have brought this historical relationship to a point where its ability to rapidly effect traceable, material change is in question. In simple terms, poetry is generally deemed to not have the urgency required for documenting, witnessing, informing, and mobilizing when there are other modalities constantly available to be “readily translatable into social action” (Perry xix-xx). In this chapter, I analyze the Instagram poetry of writer-activists from the anti-CAA movement that embraced the affordances of new media to inform and engage with a wide audience, in order to argue that poetry is distinctively valuable for touching and *moving* people within social movements in sustainable, memorable ways that turn mobilization into an act of community-building.

### II. Instagram Poetry

As a mode of poetry, Instagram verse navigates the question of urgency surrounding poetry, to some extent. As a medium, Instagram allows for the documentation of the events in real time through pictures and videos in posts and stories and poetry, as a mode, played a key

role in shaping the narrative of the movement in captions of these posts or screenshots from the writer's notes. In fact, much has been said about "how Instagram saved poetry" (Hill and Yuan) and "about whether the phenomenon of Instagram poetry is 'good' or 'bad' for poetry in general," (Yu) even though much of it is severely limited by the Western consumerist's gaze and focuses chiefly on Rupi Kaur as a representative of South Asian Instagram poetics. While such debates are too often polarized between the appreciative or critical end, the crux of the matter is that social media has made the poem, as a form, widely accessible. Instagram poems open the form and expand its scope, evolving the form to popular and viral trends as well as contributing to the creation of such trends. Thus, even as the Instagram poet is recognized in academic and popular discourses, here I intend to intervene and show that poetry on Indian Instagram is more than Rupi Kaur, tidbits of romance, or 'quick and digestible' forms of inspirational mantras.

Furthermore, as "poetry travels more easily than any other art," (Monroe qtd. in Chasar 4), it is valuable to understand social media poetry's role in allowing for the documentation from the protest sites to reach protesters and supporters in different regions, and to see this role as not just limited to the virtual sphere. As Gerbaudo suggests, we must understand new media's role, and I extrapolate from this to comment on social media poetry's role in remaking the cultural work of poetry as a mode, and in "'re-cast[ing] the organisation of the spatial and temporal scenes of social life' (Barnett in Couldry and McCarthy, 2004: 59) rather than as involved in the construction of another 'virtual' space bereft of physical geography" (Gerbaudo 12).

This became critical for the anti-CAA Movement because the pandemic pushed the country into a lockdown, starting in March 2020, barely a month after the Northeast Delhi violence, and it significantly impacted the possibility of organizing and occupying sites like Shaheen Bagh and Seelampur on ground. Several political commentators and activists who

were part of the Movement were arrested during the lockdown, and these actions of the state were documented, discussed, and resisted through expressions on social media.

Drawing from these historical and contemporary realities, I have selected 23 poems by five artists<sup>17</sup> that engage with the Movement and its development. These poems have been curated for discussion here based on three factors: media commentary and their reception, which showed how these poems outlasted the short attention span of the Internet; the different degrees of proximity and association of the writers to the Movement as witnesses and/or affected community members; and finally, my own participation in the Movement, which shaped my observations around how these artists' works were some of the most circulated and discussed in relation to the resistance. It is important to note that including these poems, as is the case for any object of study, means delineating a boundary of exclusion as well. Thus, while these poems may not be entirely representative of the length and breadth of the Movement (no texts can be), I justify my orientation towards them by using the aforementioned parameters to curate these poems for analysis. These poems engage with the events and context we have traced in Chapter 1 in compelling ways to document scenes, reveal patterns, shift affective orientations, and evoke a grammar for mobilization.

### III. Instagram Poetry and the Dynamism of Williams' "Structure of Feeling"

This grammar of mobilization cannot be understood without turning to the affects of these texts. Affects, as Chapter 1 outlines, are linked through their circulation in specific

---

<sup>17</sup> Aamir Aziz (@aamir.aziz.3785) is a writer, actor, and activist from New Delhi. When he went to Jamia as a student, he became involved in student theatre and politics. He writes poetry and composes blues tracks, which are popularly shared on social media and YouTube channels. Sabika Abbas Naqvi (@boltiaurat) is an award-winning translator, poet, feminist activist. She is Senior Editor at *South Asian Avant-Garde*, a global literary magazine for South Asian solidarities and activist approaches to representation. Akhil Katyal (@katyal.akhil) is an Indian poet, translator, academic, and queer activist. He has published three books of poetry and he translated journalist Ravish Kumar's prominent poetry anthology, *A City Happens in Love*. Katyal is a colleague and close friend to activists Natasha Narwal and Umar Khaled, who were imprisoned for protesting the CAA. Puneet Sharma (@puneetvuneet) is an Indian lyricist and poet who has worked with eminent production houses like Yash Raj Films. He rose to popularity with his anti-CAA poem, "Tum Kaun Ho Bey?" ("Who the hell are you?"). Varun Grover (@vidushak) is a writer, comedian, poet, filmmaker, and a National Award-winning lyricist. He uses his artistic platform to satirize political conditions, and co-created *Aisi Taisi Democracy*, a political satire show that combines comedy, acting, and music performances.

contexts and histories. So, what does reading texts, poetry in this context, through an affective lens and framework entail? One answer lies in Raymond Williams' conceptualization of 'structure of feeling'. Asserting the importance of the 'felt' long before affect studies had a vocabulary for it, Williams explains in *Marxism and Literature*:

We are talking about characteristic *elements of impulse, restraint, and tone*; specifically *affective elements* of consciousness and *relationships*: not feeling against thought, but *thought as felt and feeling as thought*: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and interrelating continuity. We are then defining these elements as a 'structure': as a set, with specific internal relations, at once interlocking and in tension. (Williams 132; my emphasis)

Here, Williams associates the patterned and organizational quality of 'structure' with a sense of dynamism and transition, as well as tactility, which one can sense with the concept of 'feeling'. Expressing how this conceptualization is founded upon the harmony between the erstwhile binarized realms of reason (thought) and sentiment (feeling), Williams legitimizes the value of *feeling* our way into organization and planned action.

This concept has significant potential for understanding affect's relationship to politics, mobilization, literature, and new media discourse in the anti-CAA Movement.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, as a cultural hypothesis, Williams' structure of feeling can be relevant when discussing a product of culture's dynamism<sup>19</sup> – for instance, new media poetry, where social content is of an "affective kind," which includes all things "lived and experienced," and these

---

<sup>18</sup> This is particularly because the anti-Muslim sentiment that characterizes the CAA/NRC/NPR can be traced back to the one of the key moments in Indian politics when mobilizing the relational structures of hate and resentment against Muslims became effective, popular politics. This moment is that of the Babri Masjid riots where a majority of the 2000 people who died were Muslims, and it continues to be understood as "a turning point in communal politics" (Pai and Kumar 17). Thus, anti-Muslim sentiment in the cultural sphere has strong ties with the pre-emergence of a new kind of politics, shaped by a structure of feeling which ushered in the era of BJP gaining the central stage in Indian politics.

<sup>19</sup> "The complexity of a culture is to be found not only in its variable processes and their social definitions-traditions, institutions, and formations-but also in the dynamic interrelations, at every point in the process, of historically varied and variable elements" (*Marxism and Literature* 121).

things may lie beyond or not be sufficiently explained by “belief systems, institutions, or explicit general relationships” (Williams 133). This ineffable quality, which cannot be completely articulated through the rhetoric of logic and credibility, turns to pathos; because living and experiencing things involves moments where we *do simply because we feel*. And in moving beyond institutions and systems, as Williams says, poetry gains affective value because it can shape these structures in a way that moves individuals and collectives as “they exert *palpable pressures* and set effective limits on experience and on action” (132; my emphasis). Such pressures help us form attachments, as Berlant says, in a way that “moves you out of yourself and into the world” (Berlant 1).

How these attachments related to the anti-CAA Movement and its various forms of mobilization is to be seen through a closer look at the poetry itself where scenes of attachment and defamiliarization not only move us but help develop what Gerbaudo refers to as a “choreography of assembly”. While Gerbaudo’s conceptualization is associated with new media, its affordances in relation to poetry can be understood through Kenneth Burke’s<sup>20</sup> work in *The Philosophy of Literary Form*, wherein he characterized poetry as “symbolic action” in the 1940s (Burke 8). Gerbaudo’s notion of “the choreography of assembly” requires “a process of symbolic construction of public space, which revolves around an emotional ‘scene-setting’ and ‘scripting’” (Gerbaudo 12). The notion of the symbolic and the purpose of such choreography, to be present and *dance* within multiple shape-shifting forms of such assembly, can be further nuanced through Burke, who claims that “[t]he symbolic act is the *dancing of an attitude*” (Burke 9; emphasis in original). As affect and film scholar Eugenie Brinkema notes, the recent affective turn seems to have led scholars against practices of close reading in a “tradition of arguing *for* affect by arguing *against* reading for form”

---

<sup>20</sup> Burke’s work on symbolic action has influenced Frederic Jameson’s literary critique, Marxist political theory, and his analysis of culture.



(Brinkema xv). I join scholars such as Wehrs and Blake, who turn to Burke's work for seeking an amalgamation of these two modes of reading.

#### IV. The Affective Documentary Poetics of the Anti-CAA Movement

First shared on Instagram in early January, less than a month after the attack on university campuses, Aamir Aziz's "Everything will be remembered"<sup>21</sup> is a critical part of the oeuvre of poetry to emerge from the anti-CAA Movement. It was prominently translated into calls for mobilization and its widespread reach can be seen in how Roger Waters from Pink Floyd recited the poem at a London event, in a completely different context of resistance, demanding the release of the Wikileaks founder Julian Assange ("Pink Floyd's Roger Waters Recites Amir Aziz's 'Sab Yaad Rakha Jayega'"). Such evocations of the poem beyond the Movement as well as its popularity within the same stem from the poem's capacity for shaping a choreography of assembly through emotional scene-setting.

Affective attachments in social movements rely on their ability to build evocative scenes that resonate with people and form encounters of relationality, critical to social transformation. Aziz builds such scenes strategically through his documentary poetics<sup>22</sup> by relaying to the reader a confrontation between the Muslim poet as witness and the nation-state that harbours anti-Muslim sentiment through its policy, law, judiciary, and the executive branches. It highlights facts by referencing real-world events, contextualized in the several curfews and internet blockades that occurred to curb the protests (lines 22-23). Simultaneously, he is pulling the strands of how these facts have affected the intimate ties of kinship and feeling in every sphere of his life: "Devastating the entirety of this small world of mine, / Murdering a piece of my heart in the middle of a crossroads" (lines 25-26). In drawing this connection between facts and feelings as facts, Aziz demonstrates Muriel

---

<sup>21</sup> For a complete translation of "Everything will be remembered," see Appendix A.

<sup>22</sup> With poets like Muriel Rukeyser and Claudia Rankine as its most prominent practitioners, documentary poetry is created to capture a historical by assembling different media in its creation, including witness accounts, newspapers, legal documents, videos, etc.

Rukeyser's claim that "[p]oetry can extend the document" (Kaufman and Herzog 604). As the poem's refrain reminds us, the rationale and facts of the violence within the Movement need to be documented but the documentation cannot be sustained within archives unless its felt aspects are shared with and transferred to the people.

For Aziz, extending the document also means using his remembrances to evoke the visceral cost of the law and the state's orders: "And with your *laathis* and bullets, / The comrades of mine that you have murdered — / In their memory, we will keep our hearts wrecked" (lines 14-16; my trans.). The scene-setting within the poem uses the vivid imagery of the body and his poetry thus becomes "a space of dissent, a scene of witnessing, and a forum for processing trauma," to borrow language from Milne on why poetry matters (Milne 155). This dissent attempts to turn the experience of the body's and mind's trauma in living through such arrests, into legitimate evidence for countering the usual practice of powerful institutions burying such acts and their reports under the paperwork.

Furthermore, for there to be the possibility of resonance while choreographing an assembly, this visceral connection of an individual's, and a community's, body needs to be felt by the public. This is akin to what Burke suggests about the relationship of the body with the symbolic action intended to rearrange, coordinate with, and shapeshift *the felt*, or our attitudes: "In this attitudinizing of the poem, the whole body may finally become involved" (Burke *The Philosophy of Literary Form* 9). Aziz achieves this by connecting this visceral urge and method of documentation of fact and affect to the world, as he writes: "I will document the proof of these crimes on my bones / Since you demand from me the proof of my existence" (lines 35-36; my trans.). He refers to the NRC's intention to register people's identities by offering documents of their historical relationship to the country. In instances like these, the intimate space of the body — which has become the public property for violence, invasion, and trespassing — is invoked to generate the intense sense of community,

as documentation is not an act which has value in isolation. It involves a witness and somebody to recount the witnessed story and experience to at some point.

This is further seen in how the poem itself is structured to lead to a *scene* of literal and metaphorical assembly:

So that your names could be damned forever,

So that your effigies could be smeared with black paint,

Your names, your effigies will be kept immortal—

Everything will be remembered. (lines 73-76; my trans.)

Here, Aziz is building through the scenes of witness to the climax where the community gathers for a collective performance and action upon what they have seen, felt, remembered, and shared. It is the community's presence as an assembly, gathered for a shared purpose in these lines, which turns the remembrance of what they have *seen* into acts of *witnessing*. To see is to absorb for the self, but witnessing demands more than the self to recount and legitimize what the self has seen. In entwining remembrance as a community with the act of witnessing, Aziz suggests the possibility for the performance of memory by acting on it materially and viscerally, using objects like effigies and the echo of a collective voice in damning the leaders.

Aziz's other poems, like "These are the Girls of Jamia," "I refuse," "#standwithUmarkhalid," and "I'm a Muslim, I've a voice," also work as documentary poetics that connect affect with the form of politics that he witnesses, by which he is impacted, and that he attempts to change. Particularly in "These are the Girls of Jamia," Aziz shifts the gaze onto other witnesses like him, highlighting how the choreography of assembly within this Movement is built on relationalities of seeing and speaking, but also listening and learning. In writing, "Exposing the Shahs of the world, / With their gestures, revolutions unfurl, / These are the girls of Jamia," he ties affect and politics closely as gestures address

the gap between the articulable and inarticulable (lines 1-3; trans. by Saumya). These gestures can be understood in a shared public space as actionable, local *knowledge*.

He is interested in witnessing and learning from this feminist model of resistance, as he can see it is crossing the bridge between the intimate and the collective, the domestic and the public: “And when slogans from the street are picked up by these girls of Jamia, / Sparks of fire tied to gas stoves turn into a flashlight” (lines 33-34; trans. by Saumya). The symbol of the stove’s fire becoming a flashlight, a tool for observantly and closely witnessing and noticing clues to find a path forward, is a reference to the ethics of care at Shaheen Bagh we have noted in Chapter 1. Fostering these ethics of care for poets like Aziz may mean being involved in what they write about, by participating in and experiencing the Movement at Shaheen Bagh and Jamia, instead of commenting upon it from a distance. The felt, domestic knowledge is critical to document and its relationality is key to the future of the Movement, as he writes: “On the pages of history that speak of revolution, / All those who appear are the girls of Jamia” (lines 42-43; trans. by Saumya). These lines suggest how this pattern of witness and mobilization must continue, since he is writing their model of resistance into history in order to spur mobilization.

Documentation and mobilization, emotional scene-setting through symbolic action, and choreography of assembly – all these go hand in hand in these anti-CAA poems. As Milne argues, “The compulsion to witness and document atrocity becomes a form of political action [...] because a poetics of witness holds the *potential to shift the frame* through which an issue is viewed and thus holds the potential to enact a change in perspective” (180). In traditional modes of documenting information in reports about such protests and the attacks on minority communities, emphasis is laid on finding tangible, conclusive evidence that often gets lost, suppressed, or countered by the trauma of the event and the state’s ample resources. In contrast, when such witnessing and documenting happens through poetry, the frame of the

lived experience through the eyes of the survivors is prioritized. A key part of shifting the frame for Aziz and the other poets is tapping into emotional experiences. For instance, he reveals in “I’m a Muslim, I have a voice”: “For their murders, I call out the murderers publicly, openly / My spirit is hardened as a rock, but my heart melts easily, gently” (lines 1-2; my trans.).<sup>23</sup> This short poem’s theme suggests resilience and the need to stand his ground in the face of this violence, or ‘their murders,’ but the gentleness of saying his heart melts easily gives the sense that this politics of *resilience requires affective attachments*. These attachments are tender, built on being invested in something with love and care, orienting your relationality and structuring feelings to fight *for* something, instead of merely *against* atrocity. This emphasis on relationality is important and can be summarized through Felski’s argument about the purpose of attachment in *Hooked: Art and Attachment*, which is “not to shunt from the objective to the subjective but from a language of bifurcation [...] to one of relation. Attachments [...] involve many forms of joining, connecting, meeting. This means zeroing in on differing kinds of ties” (Felski 5).

Furthermore, in “*Khush-aamdeed*,”<sup>24</sup> a short poem about political activists from the Movement under arrest, he writes:

You brought with you to the slaughterhouses

Hope that looked like life

All the stars fireflies butterflies and Delhi’s gullies

They bear witness, they hold testimony. (lines 1-4; my trans.)<sup>25</sup>

The testimony or witness of these scenes is thus preserved and shared not in formal, historical documents but in ordinary places and objects like the stars, fireflies, butterflies, and Delhi streets that take us back to the encounter, the event, and our experience of the encounter,

---

<sup>23</sup> For a complete translation of “I’m a Muslim, I have a voice,” see Appendix E.

<sup>24</sup> It is a Persian term of celebratory, heart-warming welcome.

<sup>25</sup> For a complete translation of “*Khush-aamdeed*,” see Appendix G.

instead of relaying the information-heavy sides of the fact. In *Counter-Statement*, Burke discusses the value of such an “emotional curve” (*Counter-Statement* 35-36), which differentiates the mere provision of information from its incorporation in artforms. In building this emotional curve, poetry makes memorable and valuable the communication of information through the similarities and differences in our experiences of reading it, when we repeat it several.<sup>26</sup> Thus, experiential knowledge or knowledge and memory built on affective attachment and relationality with these objects is significant to the experience of the Movement as well as the strategy to document it.

## V. Poetics of Collision and Defamiliarization

These poems also script and stage what Heather Milne calls “poetic collisions,” (Milne 196-197) wherein the poem becomes the site of two narratives – of the poem’s subject and its institutional oppressors – competing with one another. The latter’s narrative is offered through a turn to documents including political speeches, police reports, websites, and newspaper articles (Milne 196). These work to strengthen the relationship for a model of documenting, witnessing, and mobilizing, as they function by critiquing the national historical, policy, and legal frameworks that allow laws like the CAA and its attendant violence to flourish. Such critique is presented through a reframing by addition of experiences and perspectives of those hitherto marginalized or excluded from the jargonistic language and focus of these frameworks.

For instance, Aamir Aziz’s “I refuse” stages one such collision between the speeches in a Parliamentary session and the narrative of the marginalized subject, excluded by the CAA/NPR: “That the decision of my life be made in a seven-hour Parliamentary session– / That’s not acceptable to me” (lines 17-18; my trans.)<sup>27</sup> In these lines, Aziz highlights the

---

<sup>26</sup> Burke argued that form and information are in conflict in the aesthetic realm of art as he claimed that as art tends to focus more on offering information, for the psychology of its audience instead of its textual subject, then the ability to make the audience connect with the psychology of the text loses its vigour.

<sup>27</sup> For a complete translation of “I refuse,” see Appendix D.

absurdity of people's entire lifetimes, rich with affective attachments, ties of kinship, and lived experiences, being turned into the object of a short Parliamentary debate that can render them invalid. It is a critique driven by the loss of the personal through the political, referencing the Parliamentary session which passed the Citizenship Amendment Bill into law, as well as the barrage of identity documents, like the NRC and NPR, which have a documented history of exclusion.<sup>28</sup>

The critique of these national materials is expanded in "Documentation" by Akhil Katyal as well, which uses subtle imagery of mundanity and of the everyday, to establish the instability of these documents. He writes, "They get lost / And can't be found," and continues, almost as an afterthought that stems from the tone of casualness: "Sometimes bugs destroy them / Sometimes the writing fades on them," (lines 1-2, 3-4; my trans.)<sup>29</sup> as these images of everyday occurrences are easily memorable and easy to relate to for the reader. He uses these images to stage a poetic collision with this documentation: "Sometimes burdened by a pile of files / They suffocate and lose their life / They take away lives" (lines 12-14; my trans.). These lines emphasize the documents' ordinary fragility that has been institutionally imbued with extraordinary power by the CAA/NPR/NRC. The anaphoric use of 'sometimes' in these lines generates a casual tone, and its repetition almost "has a numbing effect and draws attention to the repetition and monotony" (Milne 72) that is involved in the natural, ordinary damaging of these documents. Thus, the momentous impact of the exclusionary nature of the citizenship documents is set in stark contrast to the frail and arbitrary nature of this documentation's creation, preservation, and destruction.

---

<sup>28</sup> "The prolonged nightmare of Assam's NRC, which first saw 4 million people and, in the 'final draft', 1.9 million people left out, casts a dark shadow over the legal status, the fundamental, civic, and political rights, and the future of millions of people who live in the state, including those who were born and raised there" (Bhatia et al 43).

<sup>29</sup> For a complete translation of "Documentation," see Appendix K.

The documentation of these encounters in Instagram and new media poetry is also furthered by the incorporation of populist terminology from ongoing social media conversations. This often works through an inculcation of satire, as best seen in Katyal's "From his Insta, you know," which entertains the readers by relating to them through the habit of sifting through people's digital footprint in order to *know* them: "From his Insta, you know / he has the 'travel bug'" (@katyal.akhil lines 1-2). The use of phrases like "travel bug," motivational wisdom espoused by social media influencers, and the imagery of selfies in Goa, with the popular captions for such posts, intensify this relationship for the reader's imagination: "Next day, he's in a casino in Goa / buddied, selfied, talking / about 'party' and 'paradise'" (lines 6-8). This is also crafted as a critique of our tendency to attribute a disproportionate degree of value and veracity to the *virtual*, even as virtual personae and the portrayal of one's identity on social media is highly curated, as Katyal shows.

His subject "[s]eems like a cool guy" (line 21). But behind this curated persona of affability, intellect, and endearment where he "[s]miles in almost every photograph," "[l]oves his mum," "[b]leeds blue whenever there's a game," (lines 20, 24, 25) there lies a deep hate for the Muslim anti-CAA protestors, as Katyal exposes in the final stanza:

Below the news of  
 a former JNU student's arrest  
 - who has a Muslim name -  
 he comments asking for  
 'a public crucifixion'. (lines 26-30)

Referencing anti-CAA activist and former Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) student Umar Khalid's arrest for his alleged involvement in the Northeast Delhi violence, Katyal expresses the ironic ease with which social media commentary allows people to demand the annihilation of those whom they see as the enemy, the Other. In Katyal's portrait of the



ordinary, Indian man, even his ostensibly harmless traits are strategically revealed to be alarming red flags. If we understand ordinariness as “that which is already under threat by the imagined others whose proximity becomes a crime against person as well as place” (Ahmed 43), then his ‘ordinary’ traits become part of the reason why his deep hate exists for anyone who does not fit within this notion of normativity. Katyal’s poem performs a crucial function in highlighting that this loving, guy-next-door persona is not essentially a contradiction to his hateful expression in demanding a crucifixion, but it is a cohesive condition that makes him dangerous and resentful to Muslims and their political resistance. Ahmed clarifies this tendency by saying that loving the nation, and constructing a hated Other who threatens that loved space and sense of ordinary, are two sides of the same coin. In this vein, the symbolic reference to the affective relationship of Indians with ordinary experiences like cricket through the popular term, ‘Bleed Blue,’<sup>30</sup> highlights the hyper-nationalist tendencies within the sport and its politics in modern India.

This work of satirical critique is sharpened in Sabika Abbas Naqvi’s poetry, which she often performed at anti-CAA protest sites as well. “My country is burning,”<sup>31</sup> like Katyal’s work, uses colloquial language drawn from social media discourse, with each line barely having three words. Each of Naqvi’s four stanzas indicts a community of people who are contributing to the destruction of the country, including people who maintain silence in the face of injustice, those who lie and work to repress the truth actively, people who act as cogs in the machine within the country’s exclusionary institutions, and finally, liberals who wear the façade of progressive politics but don’t practice its values in reality.

She critiques the propaganda of Hindu fundamentalism at the core of the CAA that nurtures the deep hate of the anti-CAA Movement, as she indicts groups of people who

---

<sup>30</sup> Launched as an advertising campaign by Nike in 2010, ‘Bleed Blue’ is now used to express passionate support for the Indian cricket team, which dons a blue-coloured uniform. See Singh on “Modern cricket reflects modern India: Nepotism and toxic nationalism”.

<sup>31</sup> For a complete translation of “My country is burning,” see Appendix H.

participate in this work, from “Newsreader journalist lying people / TV and newspaper liars / IT entrepreneur liars” (lines 15-17; my trans.) to liberals who refuse solidarity for the Movement:

“Don’t get hyper” liberal people

People with intelligent questions, liberal people

“I don’t understand CAB” liberal people

“Plis to explain” liberal people

“We don’t see how it affects you” liberal people (lines 23-27)

Here, Naqvi highlights the deeply ordinary nature of such discourse, performed by liberals who dismiss concerns about the CAA as unintelligent and ill-informed, or those who try to use sentimental attachment as a way to discredit the arguments of the protesters by patronizing them as ‘hyper’. Furthermore, repetition of the phrase “liberal people” through epistrophe emphasizes the satire targeted at this group. It also works to suggest “the despair or a sense of tiredness produced by the ‘inevitability’ of the repetition of that which one is against,” (Ahmed 190) concerning the discomfiting presence of all these groups of people around her. By emphasizing exhaustion through the formal use of repetition, Naqvi then exerts a more intense affective impact when she breaks this discomfiting continuity and reveals: “But to extinguish the fire / That burns this country / Here *they* come on the streets” (lines 59-61; my trans. and emphasis). The introduction of people who resist this continual oppression and injustice becomes more valuable now by incorporating scenes and communities of hope, since, as Ahmed notes, “[h]ope is crucial to the act of protest: hope is what allows us to feel that what angers us is not inevitable, even if *transformation can sometimes feel impossible*” (Ahmed 190; my emphasis).

While repetition functions to make change feel impossible in these stanzas, what is the value in incorporating scenes from new media and national documents in a variety of

poetic collisions, particularly for mobilization? As Milne explains, “These acts of recirculation and reframing disrupt familiar and accustomed narratives in order to open up new interpretive possibilities based on critical engagement and the shock of defamiliarization” (196). Such defamiliarization forces us to reorient ourselves from scenes, encounters, and relationships we take for granted, as literature on witnessing through media shows how intense exposure to discourses of violence, anger, hate, and resentment have the potential to desensitize us and make us desist from working for social transformation.

For instance, Sontag notes in *Regarding the Pain of Others*: “Flooded with images of the sort that once used to shock and arouse indignation, we are losing our capacity to react. Compassion, stretched to its limits, is going numb” (Sontag 108). Amidst economic crisis in India due to COVID-19 and the vast toll of the pandemic’s deaths that overlapped with the anti-CAA Movement, this is the theme that bothered Aamir Aziz, as well as the idea he critiqued, when he wrote, “The world tells me I am an issue / manufactured to distract from the issues” (lines 1-2; my trans.).<sup>32</sup> He evokes pathos here through the metaphor of dogs being chased to eliminate boredom, as a way of discussing how media discourses have a tendency to deprioritize atrocities affecting Muslims, deeming them secondary to the other *more pressing* and *authentic* concerns. Thus, in saying, “The way one lets the dogs out to chase / the poor for some delight on bored days,” (lines 3-4; my trans.) he critiques the structures of apathy in contemporary Indian civil society. He rewrites the scene of this encounter as the one under spotlight in this short poem amidst a barrage of news pieces about reports of communal and CAA violence to which we may become desensitized. In doing so, Aziz seeks to reshape our sense of intimacy and affective attachment with this seemingly distant, unimportant reality, and he thus centers acts of violence against Muslims as the main narrative instead of an afterthought or a distraction.

---

<sup>32</sup> For a complete translation of “The world tells me I am an issue,” see Appendix F.

Through the same strategy of defamiliarization, Naqvi's "But the buses mustn't be burnt"<sup>33</sup> ties affect with scenes from culture and politics. The title, and the refrain of the poem, satirically comment upon the irony of CAA supporters and political centrists arguing that the destruction of public property, such as buses at protest sites, justifies police brutality.<sup>34</sup> As narratives such as this become normalized through the way they are reported as violence among equals, neglecting the power imbalance in the status quo, it becomes easy to draw people into an encounter focused on resentment, anger, and frustration towards the protesters because "as perception becomes habitual, it becomes automatic" (Shklovsky 1). This is the kind of rhetoric Kapil Mishra used in his speech that provoked the Northeast Delhi pogrom (see Chapter 1). Naqvi engages with this narrative used by the CAA supporters and nationalists, using the poem to collide it with it by offering an alternative frame from the protestor's point of view. She writes, "Neighbourhoods become slaughterhouses / Our young are killed and murdered / But the buses mustn't be burnt" (lines 9-11; my trans.). In this poetic encounter, she pulls at the absurdity of valuing inanimate objects more than human life, even as such narratives gradually become ordinary and normative as a critique of the Movement. Naqvi does this by drawing the reader into the scenes of inequality and fear that run through actions of civil disobedience and agitation in movements like this.

The refrain in the poem ("But the buses mustn't be burnt") does two things in this regard: one, it agitates the reader by satirically reminding them of the value attributed to inanimate objects over human lives; two, it emphasizes the ordinariness and realness of such a refrain that *should* be mere satire and accentuates its horrifying absurdity. Accompanied by it, lines like "The SP commands, 'Go to Pakistan!'" and "The police invades our homes to beat us up / The police detains our people" (lines 7, lines 2-3; my trans.) are intended to

---

<sup>33</sup> For a complete translation of "But the buses mustn't be burnt," see Appendix I.

<sup>34</sup> See Kelkar on "For Bollywood stars, anti-Padmaavat protest was terrorism, but burning buses during anti-CAA riots is dissent".

reorient the reader's perception, as these responses by political leaders as well as those who support the CAA and harbour anti-Muslim sentiment have become commonplace in news, video clips, tweets, comments, and posts online. Now, their relationship starts to appear as self-evident and circular: if you are a Muslim protesting against the law, you are an anti-national who should migrate to Pakistan, and if you want to go to Pakistan (as a Muslim), maybe you deserve to be taught a lesson by the Indian police for your deceit. Naqvi's short poem is a succinct attempt to reorient our relationship to these familiar equivalences, the dangers of which writer-activist Arundhati Roy articulates elaborately in *Azadi*:

This plays straight into the binary of the Good Muslim–Bad Muslim, or the Muslim Patriot–Muslim Jihadi, and could [...] trap a whole population into having to redeem itself with a lifetime of regular flag-waving [...]. It also inadvertently shores up the appalling logic of Hindu nationalists: Muslims have so many homelands, but Hindus only have India. The corollary to this, of course, is the well-known taunt thrown at Muslims as well as anyone else who challenges the Hindu nationalist view: 'Go to Pakistan.' (Roy 52)

In "Citizenship," Katyal uses defamiliarization techniques to puncture precisely these notions of national belonging which have been made ordinary and cemented as the normative, by ignoring their fragile arbitrariness:

It lies around in a house's canopy  
 Nobody pays it any special attention  
 If we come across it while passing by  
 Then it's absolutely not necessary  
 To speak of its obviousness and offer some commentary (lines 4-8; my trans.)<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> For a complete translation of "Citizenship," see Appendix L.

He creates scenes of ordinariness with images of things lying around carelessly in a home and people passing it by without noticing those. But in drawing our focus to such scenes, he is interrogating the familiar nature of the ideas we harbour about citizenship, asking: if it's so unnoticeable and ordinary, why are people mobilizing over it and dying for their claim to it? Unlike the shock that Milne talks about, Katyal's defamiliarization functions by evoking the memory of habit and comfort we accord to familiarity in the unnoticed objects of our life. It's not a necessity until one becomes stateless. Then, other priorities like food, water, and jobs, which we notice and acknowledge as significant since "[j]obs are searched for, not citizenship" (line 12; my trans.) – they are made inaccessible due to our lack of access to citizenship. In this sense, we can witness a conversation between his concerns and Aziz's in "The world tells me I am an issue". In both these poems, the apparent distraction of religion from other ostensibly significant issues is the difference between living and dying for those affected by it, which may seem out of focus and unimportant to those with the privilege of not being marginalized by it. Our affective attachments and what we deem ordinary are thus shown as relational and constructed by our histories of encounter (Ahmed). Katyal, Aziz, and Naqvi are reintroducing the readers to these by pulling readers out of their familiar comfort that transforms into apathy because we take that comfort of citizenship for granted. In doing so, they are forcing them to scrutinize the felt, or in this case, the lack of what is felt.

Katyal's "These days," however, completely embraces the affective impact of shock in jolting us out of a lull he develops through the rhythm of his short poem with its longer, three-line stanzas almost coming to a reflective pause with singular lines. The days referenced in the poem refer to the first summer after the pandemic in lockdown where physical protests had been removed or curbed and political activists against the CAA/NRC/NPR were being imprisoned for inciting the Northeast Delhi violence without foundation, as seen in Chapter 1. He establishes the lull of their ordinariness with the imagery

of a routine recurring as “the sun / climbs so slowly” (@katyal.akhil lines 2-3) in a way that one can feel the passage of time lengthening since “even the fallen seeds / throw long shadows” (lines 4-5). But in these ostensibly ordinary, long days, he writes about how “[a] government uses / this convenience to / make some arrests,” (lines 12-14) turning the poem into affective documentation of this event where the looming fatigue of the lockdown or the experience of this news reaching and being acknowledged by us is foregrounded in detail.

The poem stands witness and evidence to this act, accentuating its significance within vivid imagery, countering the risk of these events being drowned in the cacophony of instant, constant news, and commentary online. This act of accentuating by defamiliarizing operates in contrast to the image of exhaustion and droning time in saying that the hours spread, or time passes, “like locusts / like hunger,” and yet stays still “like an illness / refusing to relent” (lines 7-11). Notably, while the imagery of locusts here is an allusion to a time of destruction and the coming of the plague in Biblical references (“Bible Verses About Locusts”), but in Islam, the herd of locust formation is a sign of “Qayamat” or resurrection of the dead on Judgement Day, before which grave wrongs can be corrected (Filiu). The use of these profound, religious symbols in a poem documenting the political reaction to protests about secularism and anti-Muslim sentiment is crucial. In using these, the poem urges the reader to reorient their sense of doomscrolling through the news of such arrests, which though unjust, have become the norm, and to alert their senses to these actions as if each ordinary, routine day is the Day of Judgement, a moment of reckoning.

Here, Sontag’s observation on spectacles of suffering is pertinent: “Photographs of an atrocity may give rise to opposing responses. A call for peace. A cry for revenge. Or simply the bemused awareness, continually restocked by photographic information, that terrible things happen” (Sontag 13). In this vein, doomscrolling during this period on Indian social media, especially on a visual medium like Instagram, exposed the audience continually and

instantly to images and videos of suffering due to the pandemic as well as activists being taken to prisons. But Katyal is playing on the idea of “the image as shock and the image as cliché,” which Sontag sees as “two aspects of the same presence,” (Sontag 23) using these ordinary scenes in a mood of fatigue and tiredness to describe something extraordinary and momentous like political imprisonment with the striking symbolism of Judgement Day. This is a unique quality of the written word, as Sontag claims, “In contrast to a written account—which, depending on *its complexity of thought, reference, and vocabulary*, is pitched at a larger or smaller readership—a photograph has only one language and is destined potentially for all” (Sontag 20; my emphasis). Thus, amidst the plethora of images encountered while doomscrolling on the visual-first medium of Instagram, Katyal’s poem has the potential to strike and make the reader pause to bear witness from a more nuanced point of view.

Katyal also engages with the arrests of political activists, more directly, in “You belong here” and “An evening walk while a friend is in prison” written for Umar Khalid and Natasha Narwal, who were arrested under India’s draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 2019 (UAPA),<sup>36</sup> whereby the Union Government can designate people as terrorists without a formal judicial process (Suresh). Their arrests, along with those of several others, have been deemed a way to stifle dissent through a process that is punishment unto itself (Singh). Both these poems perform the witness and affective documentation of Umar Khalid’s and Natasha Narwal’s absence. Poetically colliding with the fast-normalizing notion that dissent and political critique are akin to antinationalism and terrorism, he again uses scenes from everyday life to transport us in place and time, in order for us to feel their absence as significant. The goal here is to defamiliarize us from the following logic: since political arrests and use of the UAPA is rampant, our orientation towards apathy or cultural numbness is justified.

---

<sup>36</sup> See “The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019.”



The use of the word “belong” in “You belong here” as a refrain in the poem about Khalid expresses the disappointment and political anger, as to be *here*, is a right, a form of possession that has been taken away from him:

You belong here.

Between a *chai-tapri*<sup>37</sup>

and an unfinished thought.

Between a full night's sleep

and a dream. (@katyal.akhil lines 1-5)

Here, the anaphoric use of the word “between” throughout the poem, itself appearing *between* alternating lines, highlights that Khalid deserves to occupy a position amidst his community and the sense of comfort such familiarity, such betweenness with ordinary things brings. This stands in stark contrast to the image the state attempts to build for Khalid and other political prisoners, making them seem like alien, seditious elements who threaten the nation’s community. Furthermore, the terse and contained nature of the poem’s formal structure, with each stanza comprising couplets, reflects the anger and lament bubbling under the surface; as the only way to make sense of his absence despite his right to belong, emerges within the composure of the poem. This mix of anger, lament, and disappointment surfaces as the poem nears its climax when he says that Khalid belongs *here* “[b]etween what we've got / and what we're worth,” (lines 12-13) to emphasize that the people deserve better than to be deemed criminals for dissent. Poetry, as a mode, is fertile ground for such emphasis as seen in this instance as it can both evoke great feeling in its content while maintaining terseness or

---

<sup>37</sup> A tea-stall in Indian cities, especially on university campuses, is a hub for friendly, intellectually stimulating dialogue, where ordinary people weigh in upon political and cultural questions amid peers and even strangers over cups of fresh tea.

restraint in its form, showing a balance or conflict between feeling and expressing. As seen in Katyal, the restrained form of the lyric comprises intense affects that would, in any other mode, overpower the reader's senses with no balance accorded by the form. This balance between form and content exemplifies the harmony envisioned by Williams' structure of feeling and *thought as feeling*, wherein the restraint in the form allows us to think logically while absorbing the intensity felt and experienced by Katyal himself.

Furthermore, defamiliarization through Katyal's strategy is pivotal in the light of how Ahmed theorizes ordinariness in relation to a sense of threat (Ahmed 43). In defiance of the circulation of hate, othering, and apathy as the ordinary, Khalid's humaneness, his oneness with the people, is emphasized through tender scenes of ordinariness when Katyal urges that Khalid belongs *here*:

Between a bad joke  
and a smile helplessly forming.

Between marigolds  
and unexpected rain.

Between a little breeze  
and a window-pane. (lines 6-11)

These scenes are crafted to affect the senses of touch, smell, and sight, intended to reorient our relationship with Umar as one of fondness and wistfulness, similar to the one Katyal experiences as his friend and comrade. Poetry as a mode is especially affective in activating such sensory cues that have the power to move us, as neuroscientist and literary scholar Gabrielle G. Starr notes that "intensely felt imagery (primarily multisensory imagery and imagery of motion) is one of the links that unites both the arts and our most intense

experience of them” (Starr 25). Relying on the sensory and the affective, as experienced in the body, is a turn away from the logic propagated by the state regarding the dangerous, seditious, and alien character of anti-CAA political activists in jail. Using these sensory cues, Katyal uses the mode of the poem to urge the formulation of a logic of the felt.

The refrains in both of Katyal’s poems – “You belong here” (line 1) and “All this ordinariness / belongs to you” (lines 8-9) – highlight the ordinariness that *belongs* to political prisoners like Narwal and Khalid, affectively and sensorily highlights the grave impact of these arrests. This works by showing us the precarity of the subjects affected by these events since they have lost their right to freedom and belonging which, in these poems, is made synonymous with everything that makes life ordinary.

## **VI. Intimacy and Political Depression in Anti-CAA Poetry**

The work done by the Instagram poets then is to make us relate to the conditions of exclusion, violence, and precarity, to attach ourselves with the memory scenes and experiences these poems create, and to mobilize around that precarity instead of deeming it too distant or difficult to even reach, let alone change. The latter is what Cvetkovich characterizes as political depression, which is “the sense that customary forms of political response, including direct action and critical analysis, are no longer working either to change the world or to make us feel better” (Cvetkovich 1).

Agreeing poetically with Cvetkovich that political depression doesn’t have to be something we *succumb to*, poems from the Movement by Puneet Sharma and Sabika Abbas Naqvi draw us into the intimacy of the sinking feeling of political vulnerability and sit with us through that despair. This is pertinent as Cvetkovich cautions, “The obscurity of the connections between our own despair and the collective despair that is present in the places where we live adds to our confusion and (political) depression” (81). For instance, Naqvi’s “Why I can’t be a lover this Valentine’s Day” expresses this divide and obscurity by candidly

sharing the cost of the Movement and her vulnerability to an imagined lover. While romantic intimacy and the affective investment within such Movements does not have to be mutually exclusive, she highlights that resistance, mobilization, and the choreography of assembly take a toll on her mental well-being. To that end, she creates scenes of longing and departure, showing what affective investment in social transformation demands of her, insisting that she can't be a lover *right now* "[a]nd mourn your departure / Because it's not just my heart / That is at risk but my very existence" (@boltiaurat lines 19-21).

Akin to Ahmed's conceptualization of affective economies in circulation, Naqvi's expression suggests a surplus of affective investment in the Movement, leading to a *loss* in the other spheres of her life, crafting experiential reminders of what this loss entails using economic terms: "I cannot / *Afford* to *exchange* it with / The warmth of your embrace" (lines 15-17). But she insists there is no other way as this is the fight for her existence: "The approaching death of my *wajood*" (lines 30-31). However, she also expresses that she has a different kind of love to share within the Movement, where she needs:

To *hold hands* with the women

Of Shaheen Bagh and Ghanta-Ghar

Instead of entangling

My fingers with yours. (lines 8-12)

To navigate through Cvetkovich's caution, Naqvi transposes the intimate notions of care, love, and the corporeal reminder of having company through touch into scenes from the Movement. Through these lines, Naqvi highlights how the context and struggles of political activism do not have to be alienating or depressing to a point of no return, but they carry within them the potential to make companionship, affection, and love evolve into various versions.

Naqvi's strategy in her poems is to establish a sense of anger, indignation, and despair within the first half to establish the urgency of these feelings, and then she uses the second half to show community-building as a way to cope with the urgency of this political despair. For instance, "This is to hooliganism" begins with an explicit expression of her political depression: "This anguished heart of mine keeps sighing in agony / We were punished for dialoging, for debating" (lines 1-2; my trans.)<sup>38</sup>. The aggression during this punishment is expressed through the insults they hurl at women protesters: "*Glory to Mother India!* I'll rip off your clothes / *Glory to Mother India!* I'll give you freedom, no? / *Glory to Mother India!* Muslim slut, how many Muslim men did you bang?" (lines 21-23; my trans.). The refrain of nationalist proclamation is crucial here, as excessive repetition often renders the content meaningless by turning it into a reflex. Naqvi uses this repetition strategically here to show us the consequences and reality associated with such unconditional, habitual, and thoughtless brand of nationalism, as the repeatedly exalted status of the nation to an imagined mother-figure is ironically accompanied by gendered, violent threats doled to actual women.

But in the second half, Naqvi invites the mob into the affective life of their resistance: "Come, take a look at the energetic crowd / Of our sit-ins and slogans, loud and proud" (lines 34-35; my trans.). She shows how they navigate the sense of loss and indignation by building attachments to aesthetic forms and share its affective experience through slogans, dances, art, and songs. In Naqvi's oeuvre, the expression of the desire to be free requires sustained commitment in the anti-CAA Movement, and she notes in "This is to hooliganism" how organizing and mobilizing rely on the intimacy we associate with privacy and domesticity: "We will live our romances and politics on all streets, close and far / And out and about in the public, we will organize seminars" (lines 40-41; my trans.). Countering the notion of distinguishing sentimental expression from political discourse, Naqvi expresses that when her

---

<sup>38</sup> For a complete translation of "This is to hooliganism," see Appendix J.

identity as a Muslim is under attack, then it is her prerogative to become wholly invested in the politics of the Movement unlike a detached, distant commentator.

On the other hand, Puneet Sharma navigates this sense of political depression by laying emphasis solely on the intimate and the domestic ties, characterizing the nation as a beloved and an affectively charged space at once. “Who the hell are you” begins as follows: “I have, with India, a direct relationship,” (line 1; trans. by Chitre) presenting the country as a living subject with attachments and relationalities. He ties scenes from his own life and the memories to the country he is *protesting for*: “This is my country / I love it tacitly / From the ignorance of my kin I save it daily” (lines 8-10; trans. by Chitre). To him, loving the country *is* romantic, and his desire to dismiss the exclusions of the CAA is a desire to save this love, this pre-existent community. He writes: “I won't tell you what this soil means to me, never mind / The cities, the people that made me, never mind / The farms I wandered about, the food that fed me, never mind” (lines 20-24; trans. by Chitre). Thus, unlike Naqvi, he reminds us that the scenes of intimacy and joy that built our lives are not separate from the Movement, but they are the signposts towards which the Movement is striving.

In this sense, if Naqvi's strategy is to build those intimate connections within the Movement and commit to mobilization by turning *outward*, Sharma urges us to pay attention to how this relationship is pre-existent and exists *inward*, making us who we are. Therefore, for him, the way to resist succumbing to the political depression is through a form of homecoming with affective tugs at memory and nostalgia from the past. This form of homecoming in Sharma's anti-CAA Movement poems is consistent with Cvetkovich's reading of “*radical self-possession* [...] as a terminology for establishing the felt relation to body and home that (political) depression interrupts” (Cvetkovich 121). Crafting nostalgia by linking us to the memories from his childhood and home life allows Sharma to embrace and to share the sensory experience of being within the familiarity of a community without hate.

Feeling these ties almost as moving images before our eyes, we are expected to remember in our gut the motivations for the Movement, instead of learning them anew as something built of formal documents and jargon.

This is perhaps why he insists on a direct relationship with India, resisting external interventions, asking as a refrain, “Who the hell are you? Why should I explain how deep it is?” (line 50; trans. by Chitre). His felt relationship to home functions on relationalities with experiences, intimate ties, and people in the domestic sphere that make home, India, an affectively charged space. The refrain of his poem demands that people mind their own business when it comes to his relationship with his beloved land. This is key as repetition plays an integral role in establishing norms and social forms like the nation (Butler qtd. in Ahmed 12). Thus, to an ordinary nationalist, proclaiming his nationalism repeatedly and loudly is important even though “such norms [like nationalism] appear as forms of life only through the concealment of the work of this repetition” (Ahmed 12). Through his own refrain, Sharma unveils the manufactured and absurd nature of this jingoistic nationalism and its expectations. In his repeated refusal and refrain that insists upon intimacy within this expression of love for India, Sharma counters the logic of hate that drives fundamentalist nationalism: “*Because we love, we hate, and this hate is what brings us together*” (Ahmed 43). This logic separates the Self from a manufactured Other, as per Ahmed, but Sharma’s love offers an alternative possibility to this form of nationalist community-building.

Instead, he sifts through his memories to place us in scenes from different junctures of his life, using vivid imagery to urge us to experience those affective bonds without hate for a manufactured Other: “Why tell you the slangs my grandmother used to scold me / And, while I fell in love, the greenery that would hold me” (lines 27-32; trans. by Chitre). These ostensibly insignificant details are not generally shared with others but have the power to ground us. He thus chooses to participate in the Movement by excavating and revisiting the

dynamic affective bonds that present an antithesis to this loud, screeching turn away from love and belonging.

The nation for him is built on the *circulation* of these affective ties and attachments, scenes of intimacy, and memories of domesticity that can be shared, instead of being founded upon the fragile documents which attempt to *fix his identity* and function through the creation of binaries of the self and the Other, wherein “these talks of love” are difficult “to digest” (line 48; trans. by Chitre). This attachment of affect with politics continues in “You are not the government”<sup>39</sup> as well, wherein he collides with the idea of apathy and apolitical culture<sup>40</sup> prevalent on social media networks. The refrain and title are both ironic, satirizing the notion that just because the people are not a part of the government and its institutions, they have no stake and responsibility in its decision-making or critique. However, the poem’s satirical tone is punctured deliberately when he indulges in an almost-direct conversation with those espousing the apolitical attitude:

Don’t shrink your identity to a number for the majority

Or to a suicidal slogan for another political party

Until you have it in you, carry on

*To feel your soul within your body*

*When you felt it last, do you have that memory?* (lines 60-64; my emphasis)

By rhythmically urging the reader to not shrink their identity to that of a political oppressor, Sharma highlights the potential of poetry’s lyrical feeling and affect to make more robust a sense of self that has much more to offer, in terms of its rich experiences, memories, and soul. Evoked through sensory language, this memory is seen as a tool for resisting the influence of narratives of othering and the manipulation of negative affects like resentment

---

<sup>39</sup> For a complete translation of “You are not the government,” see Appendix M.

<sup>40</sup> Singh notes in “Modern cricket reflects modern India: Nepotism and toxic nationalism” that the modern male cricketer uses his vast socio-cultural capital to express apolitical, neutral stances in the face of violent political events and injustices, but their neutrality is in support of the nationalist state.



and anger at a perceived Other. In so doing, it is also interesting that the poem itself is trying to become an aesthetic memory of feeling this soul within the body, such that we not only think of these encounters and the attachments we felt, but we are also inclined to think of the moment of encounter with this poem as a layer of lived and felt experience with that memory. This has the potential of working on establishing an affective disposition built on structures of feeling that sustain far beyond this moment and the Movement.

## **VII. Repetition, Mobilization, and a Cry for Help**

But how far can this poetic commitment go when it comes to sustaining mobilization? For instance, Varun Grover's popular poem, "The NRC Papers, We Won't Show" gained instant virality online, as we will see in Chapter 3, and it became an anthem in the protests (Trends Desk). The poem is resisting the demand for documentation throughout its simple, memorable refrain: "The NRC papers we won't show" (line 2). By doing so, Grover is able to develop what Milne refers to as a "poetics of affective connection through repetitions" (Milne 163) as this meditative repetition has the tendency to undercut the sense of inevitability and normativity that the CAA attempts to attach with the act of producing documentation. It draws this idea of showing one's documents into focus, playing with "the resonance and dissonance of the familiar and the strange" (Milne 48).

We find Grover's appeal within the Movement in his ability to deploy the relationship of affect with politics to counter the violence and resentment through care, love, and resilience in the following lines: "You poison our waters / That we will sweeten with love / And we'll drink it all in a go" (lines 4-6). However, while the use of affect as a political strategy to build sustainable communities that resist the bitter flavour of these laws is a crucial part of the anti-CAA poetry oeuvre and its popularity in binding together the Movement, Grover seems to simplify the nuances of political and cultural precarity, claiming: "How will you divide the motherland / That has the blood and sacrifice of every Indian"

(lines 8-11). These lines attempt to resist the anti-Muslim sentiment and divisive force of the CAA/NRC/NPR by highlighting a united front in the very making of present-day India and its independence struggle. But in exalting the nation, the poem assumes a certain sense of unity, making it appear as though the CAA is the only event that has caused communal divide. For instance, by referring to the crucial role played by several Muslims in the Indian Independence Struggle in his reference to Ram Prasad Bismil<sup>41</sup> (line 9), Grover evokes a sense of significance for the anti-CAA struggle equivalent to that of the anti-colonial struggle, which is matter of pride amongst Indians across political spectrum.

Such an invocation is, thus, strategic in its affective impact but it upholds the nation as an object of unconditional love, making it seem as if history justifies this attachment and it is only under the current administration that this the nation's soul has been threatened. It fails to consider several histories of violence and exclusion, as experienced by Muslims continually after India's independence, neglecting to recognize that anti-Muslim sentiment is a feature, not a bug, of Indian politics and culture (Chishti). Grover further writes, "We will save the Constitution before we go / [...] We will sing the national anthem for sure" (lines 18, 20). Contrary to poems by Aziz, Naqvi, and Katyal that poetically collide with national documents and expose the bad side of India's history, Grover recognizes the Constitution as an egalitarian document and imbues performances of patriotism, like the national anthem, with an assured faith to imply that the BJP-led central government and the introduction of the CAA are the only things responsible for this precarity.

There is a certain degree of affective value in simplification working as memorability, as seen in Akhil Katyal's short poem, "I was born," which also attempts to highlight the united front of India, like Grover, through personal and a shared sense of history:

---

<sup>41</sup> Ram Prasad Bismil is an Indian poet, revolutionary, and a freedom fighter against in India's independence struggle against British colonialism. Born a Hindu, he adopted the Muslim term 'Bismil' as his penname and began writing Urdu and Hindi patriotic poetry. Here, he has been referenced as a symbol of India's history and spirit of communal unity.

I was born  
 to Hindu parents  
  
 in a Bareilly hospital  
 set up by a Christian missionary  
  
 on land gifted to her  
 by a Muslim prince. (@katyal.akhil lines 1-6)

These lines evoke a sense of shared intimacy between communities, making the reader witness scenes of intimacy that they have been denied of in the citizenship law and the media narratives around it. Present here is a felt sense of the way that different religious communities have been imbricated in one another, with people from diverse religious communities being involved in one another's lives, ordinariness, and times of need. In vein of this, Katyal concludes the poem, highlighting how Hindus, Christians, and Muslims – a metonym for all religious groups – have lived in communal harmony, with a powerful line, “We are made of each other” (line 7). This is an attempt to bridge the affective distance between communities and to reorient our relationship with the perceived Other, based on the tender circulation of these encounters leading to the moment of a person’s creation.

However, in both Grover and Katyal, highlighting generalized connections between communities runs the risk of glossing over difficult histories and shared encounters of resentment, anger, othering, and violence that have persisted culturally long before the CAA. But one of the reasons for using this method of propagation can be traced to how Grover perceives poetry’s role in the anti-CAA resistance, refusing to label it as protest but seeing it as “a cry for help by people who have no other power” (Grover qtd. in “We Will Save The Constitution, chants Varun Grover” 1:08-1:14). This perspective requires poets like Grover

and Katyal to appeal to as vast an audience as possible and tap on the simplest kinds of relation and affective attachment to the nation. A cry *needs* to be heard as a form, no matter the degree of nuance or complexity in its content, as journalists note, “The desire to send messages beyond borders has been a common refrain since the Arab Spring highlighted the role of social media in making protests visible” (Merelli).

### VIII. Conclusion

This chapter began with Milne’s assertion that poetry can accompany us in the street while resisting oppressive structures. Through the oeuvre of the anti-CAA Movement’s poetry, we can see how poetry as a mode can do more than this by becoming the *very* force that takes us to the streets and helps us *keep returning* there through its affective journeys that tug at memories of powerful transformation and stir us away from the despair of political stagnation or failure. As Gabrielle G. Starr remarks that art can change “how we think and feel in the now, and in engaging systems for emotion [...] as well as for imagery and even memory in the core network, it can change how we think and feel in the future” (Starr 147).

As seen in this chapter, the potential of the poetic mode in changing aspects of the felt in the present and in the future stem from the fact that its vivid, sensory imagery and memorable repetition gain new or intense meaning in each reading. This is a distinct quality of an aesthetic form like the poem, as Burke argues too, because ordinary information loses its affective value, in terms of suspense, irony, or surprise, the more it is repeatedly engaged with. In poems by Katyal and Sharma, this quality is accentuated because of their turn to familiar scenes and experiences from our own life that we can instantly feel related to and yet experience in a different affective mix, at different points in our life. We also noted the value of this imagery and symbolic action in the emotional scene-setting work, which Gerbaudo argues must be done to build communities for mobilization in sustaining the Movement.

However, for poets like Grover, these scenes are valuable only as long as they can draw people into the core of the issue and make visible these concerns on a large scale that grabs attention. The next chapter will thus zoom into the other mode and medium of protest, economically framed 280-character tweets on Twitter, to draw a qualitative and quantitative comparison between these two modes in making protests visible and engaging. This chapter laid the theoretical foundation for understanding the role of repetition, imagery, and symbolism in documenting the anti-CAA Movement. These elements emerged as crucial to the balance between the evocation of affect and expression of critique in this documentation and witness. While we saw how an affective politics was expressed in the anti-CAA poetics, the next chapter attempts to understand how the presence or absence of these concepts impacted the popularity of the Movement online.

### Chapter 3: The Immediacy, Intimacy, and Many Sentimentalities of Twitter

#### I. Introduction

When engaging with a movement in the twenty-first century like the anti-CAA resistance, the threads that bind different communities and networks together will inevitably lead us to Twitter. This has been the case for several notable socio-political movements, from Arab Spring to Black Lives Matter, from Hong Kong to Occupy Wall Street, and from #MeToo across the globe to #StandWithFarmers in India. Key analyses and accounts from across these movements have engaged with *why* Twitter has remained a reliable medium with which to demand social change. For instance, as Naghibi explains in the context of the 2009 electoral protests in Iran: “Much of the celebratory language around social media has to do with its *speed*, its conflation of *immediacy* and *intimacy*, its ability to make us *connect emotionally* with one another” (Naghibi 57; my emphasis). And in 2014 and 2015, the seminal, comprehensive report on the use of online media and hashtag activism in Black Lives Matter noted how “activists used digital tools to generate alternative narratives about police violence to counter the so-called neutrality of the mainstream press” (Freelon et al 78). Both these comments highlight Twitter’s value in terms of the urgency suggested by the medium, its potential in offering a sense of community to seek change, and its democratic value in its ability to amplify marginalized voices. In the anti-CAA resistance as well, connective and urgent proximity to the information and networks on the ground was critical in highlighting Twitter’s value for the protesters. As one person stated:

When students at JNU [Jawaharlal Nehru University] were attacked, we wanted to *mobilize immediately*. [...] We could not have waited for the news media to help us. We had to use social media—the events were so immediate, and we wanted to circulate this “appeal to gather” through authentic channels (6295 Bhatia and Gajjala)

Furthermore, all these factors, particularly the desire to spread information quickly, became significant in giving rise to a sense of virtual proximity to the anti-CAA Movement. The sense of proximity was especially poignant and welcome because the conditions of the pandemic had necessitated physical distance amidst the participants. Gerbaudo's assertion on the role of this virtual proximity aligns with the protesters' account from Bhatia and Gajjala seen earlier, as Gerbaudo relates the value of virtual proximity to what he calls "choreography of assembly":

This practice [choreography of assembly] is made visible in the use of social media in directing people towards specific protest events, in providing participants with suggestions and instructions about how to act, and *in the construction of an emotional narration to sustain their coming together in public space.* (Gerbaudo 12; my emphasis)

In the context of the Movement, such virtual proximity facilitated the choreography of assembly in metaphorical and literal senses through online discourses, art propagation, and information dissemination. In the previous chapter, we have seen how a visual-first platform like Instagram with long captions and commentaries provides aesthetic possibilities for creative plays on documenting and nurturing movements through emotional narratives. Drawing from the lessons of other global resistances, this chapter analyzes the role played through Twitter by affect, emotional narration, and sentimental scene-setting in popularizing the anti-CAA Movement and shaping mobilization around it. This analysis takes into account that Twitter as a platform has afforded relatively stable opportunities for expression to users – as opposed to other social media platforms like Instagram – since it continues to be used in diverse ways as “a broadcast medium, marketing channel, diary, social platform, and news source” (boyd and Marwick 122). While Twitter's primary mode of expression remains

tweets (recently shifted from 140 to 280 characters), in the last three years since the resistance began, Instagram has shape-shifted to prioritize byte-sized video content in the form of reels over static posts with images and captions. And although long threads on Twitter are used for detailed commentary and insights, its modality primarily encourages economic and concise communication as well as content-sharing. Despite this linguistically economic modality, I contend that Twitter had more to offer to the structures of anti-CAA mobilization in the nuances of its affective tweets than merely efficient information dissemination. And coming together in tandem with the affective narrative of a mode like poetry, for instance the anti-CAA Movement on Instagram, Twitter can further strengthen such structures for mobilization and offer a way for sustainable political practices that don't succumb to the political despair brought forth by a constant exposure to negative news. This hope for the Movement aligns with Gerbaudo's argument that the cultural narrative of contemporary movements "chiefly requires the construction of common collective identifications among participants, without which such practical information would fall on deaf ears" (Gerbaudo 40-41).

## **II. Structures, Feelings, and a Sense of Being in the Movement**

Aiding this analysis, I continue to draw from the theoretical stage set in Chapter 2 by Williams' idea of 'structure of feeling'. Contextualizing its relationship with new media studies and affect theory, Zizi Papacharissi writes that the organized nature of hashtags on Twitter is akin to the structure that Williams envisioned, "comprising an organically developed pattern of impulses, restraints, and tonality" (Papacharissi 3). While Chapter 2 drew on this concept from Williams in the context of the aesthetic realm of anti-CAA poetry, this chapter relies on Papacharissi's use of Williams to understand how the formal features afforded through tweets in the structure of Twitter can offer different possibilities of connecting and feeling to political organizers. Twitter features such as commenting and



quote-tweeting allow for an open interpretation and moderation of these patterns or structures, showing the effective nature of the deliberate contradiction<sup>42</sup> between ‘structure’ and ‘feeling,’ where the former suggests that which organizes, and the latter suggests free flow and openness. In turning to these formal features, we will see how these structures became more valuable for organization and mobilization in the Movement when accompanied by explicit expressions of feeling and a sense of affective investment, akin to what tends to be foregrounded by the mode of poetry.

This sense of the “felt” within Twitter’s organizing structures is crucial to the possibility of participation needed for assembly and mobilization. As boyd et al suggest that feelings involve us and make us interactive participants:

Interactivity refers to the properties of technologies that are designed to enable users to make meaningful choices [...] or choices that may personalize the experience [...]. Participation, on the other hand, refers to properties of the culture, where groups collectively and individually make decisions that have an impact on their shared experiences. We participate *in* something; we interact *with* something. (boyd, Ito, Jenkins 12; emphasis in original)

Twitter’s formal features offer several methods of interactivity, involving people and engaging them as participants is crucial to its role in social change movements. Here, I relate Twitter’s participatory potential in the anti-CAA Movement to the affective value with which activists and allies imbued discussions of their shared experiences of oppression and mobilization, turning those into more than pieces of news to like and forget. This shared affective relationship is what makes Twitter, as a medium, meaningful for future possibilities of mobilization. Ahmed notes that zooming in on our investments and relationships with

---

<sup>42</sup> Such deliberate contradiction dissolves binaries regarding reason and rational thought as organized, structured realms in opposition to feeling and emotionality, and instead brings them together in harmony.

structures is “precisely to attend to how they become meaningful - or indeed, are felt as natural - through the emotional work of labour, work that takes time, and that takes place in time” (Ahmed 56).

### III. Sentimental Realities

To conduct this analysis on Twitter’s value for information dissemination and emotional narration to mobilize people in the anti-CAA Movement, I have read these tweets<sup>43</sup> closely and also analyzed them through Natural Language Processing (NLP) methods (Joshi). The NLP methods include sentiment and emotion-word association analysis, as well as topic modelling, on the corpora of tweets and poems studied in Chapter 2. Through the corpus of nearly 64,000 tweets, I searched for the most and least popular tweets. Here, I use retweet count as a proxy for popularity and reach, in order to quantify the kind of affective impact made online for the Movement by the repeated use of these hashtags. This is integral because the quantifiable nature of Twitter metadata allows us to move one step further beyond the analysis in Chapter 2 and understand scale—*how much* impact has been created and spread—alongside the potential for the *depth* of the impact that we emphasized in our engagement with protest poetry online. Papacharissi and boyd explain the relationship of retweeting practices with high spreadability, virality, information-sharing purposes, and the desire for social action. With this understanding in mind, we can address some of the tweets containing the hashtags and keywords considered:

---

<sup>43</sup> To compile a corpus of English-language tweets for this study, I have conducted a Twitter scrape based on the hashtags and keywords linked to the anti-CAA Movement over a two-year period, beginning from December 11, 2019, when the CAA was codified into law. After cleaning and pre-processing the retrieved data, 64,412 tweets remained that comprised different variations of hashtags and keywords pertaining to the movement, including: #StandWithJamia, #JamiaProtests, #JamiaViolence, #StandWithAMU, #AMUViolence, #NorthEastDelhiRiots, #DelhiPogrom, #ShaheenBaghProtests, #StandWithShaheenBagh, #BoycottCAA, #BoycottNRC, #CAA\_NRC\_NPR, #CAA\_NRC, #NoCAA, #NoNRC, #IndiaAgainstCAA, #IndiaAgainstNRC, #CAAProtests. I used the Twitter Academic API on Jupyter Notebook on Python 3.0 to conduct this scrape and analysis. See the source code and analysis by Joshi on GitHub.

	retweet_count	tweet
19703	0	One today is worth two tomorrow , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw
19374	0	Scornful dogs will eat dirty puddings , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia
19373	0	Easier said than done , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw
19372	0	A blind man would be glad to see , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw
19371	0	It is the first step that costs , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw
19370	0	Better be born lucky than rich , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw
19369	0	It is easy to swim if another holds up your chin (head) , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia
19368	0	If there were no clouds , we should not enjoy the sun #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia
19367	0	Fasting comes after feasting , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw

*Figure 1. A few of the least retweeted tweets with anti-CAA hashtags and keywords.*

19365	0	The darkest hour is that before the dawn , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia
19364	0	As the tree falls , so shall it lie #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw
19375	0	Set a thief to catch a thief , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw
19363	0	A fly in the ointment , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw
19361	0	Between the cup and the lip a morsel may slip , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia
19360	0	A soft answer turns away wrath , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw
19359	0	Happy is he that is happy in his children , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia
19358	0	A good marksman may miss , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw
19357	0	Blood is thicker than water , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw
19356	0	Scratch my back and I'll scratch yours , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia

*Figure 2. Some tweets containing proverbs and idioms.*

Interestingly, the list of 20 least popular tweets comprises commonplace and often irrelevant idioms and proverbs, saturated with the following hashtags:

“#WorldAgainstCAA\_NRC\_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA\_NRC\_NPR

#SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia

#WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw”. As the pervasive presence of these tweets was

unexpected and surprising given the context of the Movement and their unrelated content

apart from the hashtags, I dug further into their sources. I found that all these idiom-centric

tweets were shared by only two users: @sazamza and @dpascool1. While the former is a

legitimate human account that has history of tweeting before, during, and after the Movement

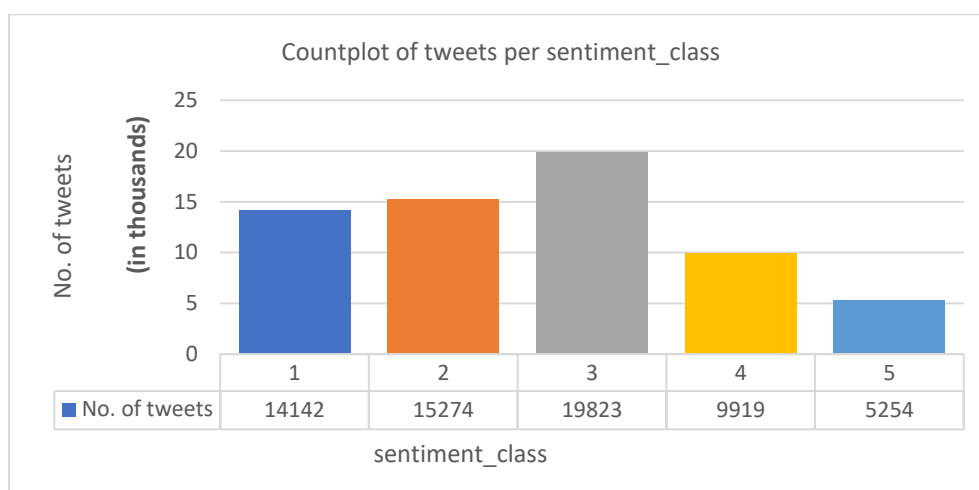
with content beyond these proverbs, the latter was created only in January 2020 and is likely a bot account. It has been tweeting tweets these hashtags regularly ever since its inception, even continuing to tweet them in the present day (February 2023), with no follower engagement or content engagement beyond these idiom-centric tweets.

One way to understand this kind of tweeting technique is the desire to keep the Movement in the public eye and make loud its cry for help, which poet-activists like Grover wish to do too. In this sense, these tweets appear like an exercise in pressing desperation, in tandem with the notion of “complex contagion” as applied to Twitter hashtags, “which posits that repeated exposures to an idea are particularly crucial when the idea is in some way controversial or contentious” (Romero et al). However, we can see how these tweets fail to infuse Twitter with an affective depth, which would involve offering the reader an opportunity to develop a sense of attachment with the experience, expression of the felt, or commentary shared in documenting the events of the Movement.

While maxims are effective for passing ancient wisdom through an economical form of expression, their isolated and contextless repetition here, without an innovative layer to document, experience, or discuss the Movement (as was seen with repetition in Instagram poetry), relegates to them a sense of mindless repetition. The goal of this form of unthinking repetition may be to storm Twitter and make the Movement appear as though it is trending, but repetition of these patterns has no bearing on its affective impact since it lacks a contextual connection crucial to evoking emotion. Papacharissi argues that “[r]efrains reinforce affect” (318), but we can see that repetition without an attempt at striking an honest, affective depth yields no quantifiable impact as well since these tweets have garnered no identifiable engagement online. This reinforces the value of Williams’ contradiction in ‘structure of feeling’. The extensive proliferation of these hashtags alongside such maxims should work in theory to make them trend, but the lack of potential here for affective

investment or for participating in *the felt* ultimately leaves these structures without the ability to facilitate mobilization.

Therefore, it's important to amalgamate the quantified sense of the assembly around these tweets with the quality of affect and the felt. To analyze this, I have conducted a sentiment analysis<sup>44</sup> and supported it with a more detailed emotion-word association<sup>45</sup> analysis. The former analysis assigned sentiment classes between 1 and 5 to the tweets and revealed how many tweets populated each class.



**Figure 3.** A bar-plot of sentiment class versus number of tweets in each class for the Twitter corpora.

Notably, the corpus is heavily populated by tweets that belong to the ‘neutral’ sentiment class (3), comprising several anti-CAA hashtags but offering no distinct commentary based on the issue and the Movement, which would involve fleshing out an aspect of the felt or shared experience that can be further discussed and participated in with a sense of the personal.

<sup>44</sup> I used the SentimentIntensityAnalyzer from the NLTK Vader-Lexicon Library, which assigns positive, neutral, and negative scores between the range of 1.0 and -1.0 to documents in a corpus, based on the context of words used in a tweet in relation to the CAA and to its protesters. These scores are then categorized into different sentiment classes by specifying ranges of these scores:

- A. Very positive ‘5’ — [0.55, 1.00]
- B. Positive ‘4’ — [0.10, 0.55]
- C. Neutral ‘3’ — (-0.10, 0.10)
- D. Negative ‘2’ — (-0.55, -0.10]
- E. Very negative ‘1’ — [-1.00, -0.55]

<sup>45</sup> I use LeXmo here. Created by Saif M. Mohammad and Peter D. Turney, the National Research Council (NRC) Word-Emotion Association Lexicon (NRC Emotion Lexicon or EmoLex) is a pioneering Python package for emotion classification in a text corpus. It lists associations of words with eight emotions (anger, fear, anticipation, trust, surprise, sadness, joy, and disgust) and two sentiments (negative and positive).

10010	He gives twice who gives in a trice , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw	3
8314	To draw water in a sieve , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw	3
11533	The work shows the workman , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw	3
7363	To take counsel of one's pillow , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw	3

**Figure 4.** A random sample of tweets from the neutral sentiment class shows idioms and proverbs.

In fact, taking a close look at some of the tweets in sentiment class 3, we find an overlap between the least popular type of tweets comprising maxims, and those deemed by the sentiment intensity analyzer to be neutral towards the CAA and the Movement. While we know from the hashtags and a reading of the user account (@sazamza) in context that these tweets are in solidarity with the Movement, the neutrality registered by the model is based on the relative lack of feeling noted in these tweets, in comparison with other Movement discourses that combined the use of these hashtags with relevant, genuine expressions of passion, anger, sadness, and hope. In this sense, it follows that the neutral category also comprises informative, news-oriented tweets, which either don't use polarizing words towards the CAA or its protesters, or obliquely reference them instead of engaging directly.

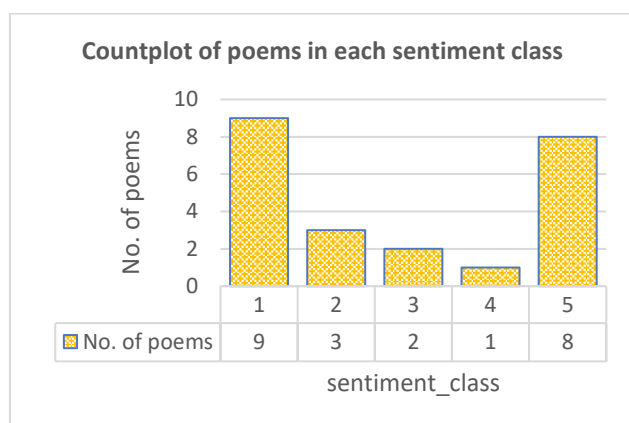
24087	RT @NoCAA_Finland: At the International Working #WomensDay march in #Helsinki yesterday. \n\n#naistenpäivät2020 #InternationalWomensDay2020 #Fäç	3
20373	Idleness rusts the mind , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw	3
32282	RT @mkvenu1: Earlier opposition was misleading people against CAA/NRC combine. Now PM says opposition is misleading farmers over the new faâç	3
15477	Old birds are not caught with chaff , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw	3
16108	All is fish that comes to his net , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw	3
63835	RT @jyerasaishwarya: No, he will not be able to walk out. \n\nHe continues to be booked in a few cases in Delhi, including the Jamia violenceâç	3
37563	RT @trajeshtvpm: Addressing a Mammoth Crowd in Moradabad earlier today, @priyankagandhi pointing out the absence of @yadavakhilesh duringâç	3

**Figure 5.** Some tweets deemed neutral by the sentiment intensity analyzer.

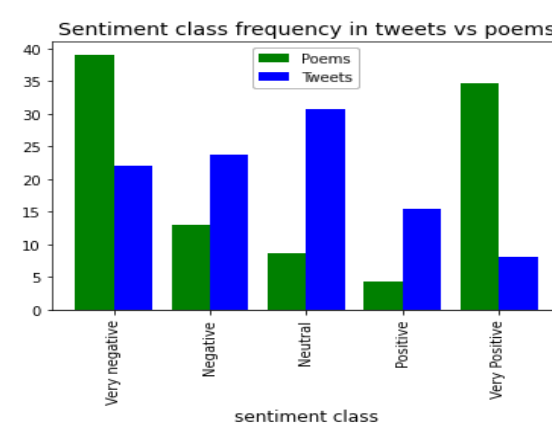
For instance, the tweet indexed 24087 references a handle which opposes CAA in its name (@NoCAA\_Finland) but goes on to focus on a women's day event update in the substance of the tweet. Similarly, in the tweet indexed 63835, the main subject is the political prisoner Sharjeel Imam, and the Jamia violence as well as the Delhi pogrom are included in

the tweet as indirect references, since they only offer additional information on the news about the charges filed against Imam. The primary information still concerns his arrest. Furthermore, the tweet numbered 37563 uses CAA/NRC as a mere bullet point amidst a variety of issues: “Addressing a Mammoth Crowd in Moradabad earlier today, @priyankagandhi pointing out the absence of @yadavakhilesh during CAA/NRC, Covid time & in the struggle against Yogi Govt & taking potshots at him for his drawing room politics... #UPAssemblyElections2022” (@trrajeshtvpm). These tweets, which form a huge chunk of the discourse on the Movement on Twitter, have a relative lack of affective intensity in polarizing the sentiments and perceptions around the Movement, as compared to other expressions in the tweet corpus.

In contrast, in the previous chapter, we have analyzed closely the potential for affective polarization within the poems. We can see this affective intensity quantified here in comparison to the tweets, suggesting how the evocation of different moods is facilitated by different modes and platforms.



**Figure 6.** A bar graph of sentiment class versus number of poems in each class.



**Figure 7.** Sentiment class frequency comparison for tweets and poems.

As the evidence suggests here, poetry generates intense and polarizing sentiments on both the negative and positive extremes, with very little that can be deemed neutral. The chart comparing the frequency of sentiment classes in the poetry and Twitter data corpus illustrates this contrast more clearly. But what does this mean for their respective roles in building and

sustaining connections and mobilization in the anti-CAA Movement? To understand, let's take a closer look at the tweets and poems populating the negative and positive categories.

The tweets in sentiment classes 1 and 2 (very negative and negative, respectively) are linked significantly to the violence unleashed at Jamia and Northeast Delhi, primarily antagonizing the CAA protesters. Even in cases where tweets do not antagonize the protesters, they focus primarily on the Delhi pogrom and subsequently discuss aspects of people's victimhood more than other facets of their political identity. For instance, one user notes, "They released all the criminals behind demolition of Babri Masjid and you think they will arrest the culprits during Delhi Pogrom who demolishes several mosques few months back. How cute!" (@RecklessSinner\_). Another tweet by a media outlet informs: "UAPA accused #IshratJahan, out on interim bail, got married on 12 June. 'My past has been very painful, I've been falsely implicated. Now instead of thinking about the future, I don't want to ruin this moment,' she tells @iyersaishwarya" (@TheQuint). Another retweet cites a media report regarding the complicity of Meta in the Delhi violence: "Inflammatory content against Muslims on Facebook (@Meta) spiked 300 percent in months before the Delhi Pogrom, which led to killing of 53 people, mostly Muslims. Facebook is complicit in Delhi's anti-Muslim Pogrom #FacebookEnablesMuslimGenocide" (@HumanismProject). Insights like those in the first example, or informative retweets like in the other two instances here, reflect on the failure or the loss of the public's power in protesting and containing the anti-Muslim agenda and praxis of the CAA. Their pessimistic mood, despite their information or fact-centric content, resides in the views that they propagate about a temporal relationship to the protest. Ahmed articulates the relationship between a sense of temporality and hope, which seems to be wavering in such tweets because of historical expressions of hate and othering:

It would be tempting to say that it is in the failure of the past to repeat itself  
that the conditions for political hope might exist. But such an argument would



empty politics of work and it would allow us to sit back and do nothing. I would argue instead that hope involves a relationship to the present, and to the present as affected by its imperfect translation of the past. (Ahmed 190)

These tweets engage with an idea of ‘what could have been’ in envisioning a sense of the future or lamenting the present, in a mood of pain and pessimism. However, a sense of negativity in relating to the wounds or failures of the past should not be a point of stagnation, contrary to users like @RecklessSinner\_ suggest. Instead, the failures of the past, as these tweets suggest, and a sense of pessimism that arises out of remembering the experience of those failures, need to be channelled into the work of complex movements like the anti-CAA resistance instead of being read as counter to its sustainability.

Like the tweets, the poems in sentiment classes 1 and 2 also contain direct mentions of anti-Muslim violence and police brutality, particularly in university spaces like Jamia. Several of these poems engage with the political hopelessness that stems from the failures of the past pervading the present. Notably, 75% of Aziz’s poetry is a part of these two classes. His documentary poetics reflect on anti-Muslim violence and state brutality by setting the scene for us through visceral descriptions and grappling with the violence, building on his own identity as a Muslim activist-poet. As seen in Chapter 2, his poems, like “The world tells me I am an issue” and “I refuse” do not focus on the secularism of the protests, which may be more palatable to liberal sensibilities and the work of symbolic action in furthering a sense of collectiveness in the Movement. Gerbaudo explains this tendency, wherein “social media have acted as a means of collective aggregation, facilitating the convergence of disparate individuals around common symbols and places, signifying their unity despite diversity” (Gerbaudo 14). Instead, Aziz’s poems confront the historical and socio-cultural tendencies of the nation, which form the backbone of laws like the CAA, treating Muslims as second-class, marginalized citizens. While their sentimental valence is deemed negative, commentary like

Aziz's is valuable in its nuance as it recognizes and critiques "the downside of this construction of unity against a corrupt and brutal system," which is its "tendency to elide the differences among participants," (Gerbaudo 14). These differences, Aziz asserts, existed long before the CAA and haunt aspects of the Movement as well.

Let's see how this nuance carries to formulation of a positive sentimental valence in the Twitter and poetry corpora. Here are some tweets categorized as positive:

7383	It's no use pumping a dry well , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw	4
11778	RT @owais_speaks: I am so proud of this little warriors. \nHum ladke lengey. Azadi\nHum leke rahengey. Azadi\nAre sunle modi. Azadi\n\n#CAAProtea	4
14968	Fine feathers make fine birds , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw	4
20187	Put not your hand between the bark and the tree , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia	4
26245	RT @NoCAA_Finland: The Delhi Police reports straight to the Home Minister and is under his full control. Mr. Amit Shah is responsible for m	4
5925	To be wise behind the hand , #WorldAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #IndiaAgainstCAA_NRC_NPR #SaveConstitutionSaveIndia #WeThePeopleOfIndia #WorldAgainstNewIndianCitizenshipLaw	5

**Figure 8.** A random sampling of the tweets categorized as positive (4) or very positive (5).

For instance, the tweet corpus shows an interesting trend, as the positive tweets comprise optimistic yet abstract idioms with several hashtags supporting the anti-CAA movement, along with some direct references to the Movement. Furthermore, as the Northeast Delhi pogrom was a focus in the negative sentiment class for tweets, the positive sentiment appears to be linked to several references to Shaheen Bagh, as seen here: "They Tried to Bury Us, They Didn't Know We Were Seeds. Bilkis Bano Saheba our 'Daadi' of Shaheen Bagh protest made it into the TIME's list of the 100 most influential people of 2020. May she live long" (@azharbaig1995). Another user tweeted the hashtag – "#ShaheenBaghZindaHai" (@RashidYuva), meaning that the Movement in Shaheen Bagh is still alive. Both these tweets are not just optimistic about the power of the Movement but also express a celebratory sentiment, using Shaheen Bagh as a symbol of sustained resistance.

Emotional narration here evokes a sense of the community-building and hopeful power of the Movement, despite the obstacles brought by the pandemic and the state authorities, as seen in tweets such as this: "I am so proud of this little warriors. *Hum ladke*

*lengey. Azadi Hum leke rahengey. Azadi Are sunle modi. Azadi #CAAProtest #IndiaAgainstCAA #Azadi*” (“I am so proud of this little warrior. We will fight for freedom, we will strive for freedom. Modi, listen up, we’ll win our freedom”; @owais\_speaks; my emphasis and translation). The emphasized part references musical protest slogans, demanding liberation, which was accompanied in the tweet by the video of smiling young children protesting the CAA/NRC in Jamia Nagar (one of the localities of Northeast Delhi violence). Such writing on social media strengthens ties in publics formed online through an attunement to affect. As Papacharissi explains, “These affectively charged micro-narratives typically produce disruptions or interruptions of dominant political narratives, inviting others to tune and feel their way into their own place in politics” (Papacharissi 130). In this case, we can see this idea in practice as tweets like these provide a sense of emotional connection that can linger and attach us, providing ways of building and sustaining community for the present and future of the resistance.

Another tweet highlights the attachment to the Indian Constitution’s values as a driving force for the protest movement: “some of us still need to respect the Constitution and understand our role as an indian it isn’t to bow or kiss the ring of the Prime minister. Sentimental attachment towards any government is destruction of your own rights” (@Shakeeb\_frq). By making a case for respecting the Constitution, tweets like these invest such documents with affective value.

This form of affective investment takes shape by recognizing and utilizing the rhetorical value of pathos in identifying with the sentiment of the audience, especially towards national documents like the Constitution: “*pathos* is an appeal based on *passion* or *emotion* [...] that impels an audience to act” (Plett 574; emphasis in original). This relationship between feeling and turning to feeling for impelling people to act has been a critical part of the recent discourse in affect and rhetorical theory, as Marnie Ritchie argues:

Uses of affect theory in rhetoric have challenged the boundaries that hierarchize reason and feeling, that ignore the influences of affect, feeling, and emotion, that confine affect, feeling, and emotion to private and individualized experience, that limit rhetoric to human activity, that harden rhetoric against the supposed softness of stylized writing, and that preserve affective investments in oppressive and destructive practices and systems. (Ritchie 19)

In this vein, we can see that these tweets then use this affective value, created through pathos,<sup>46</sup> as a motivating force for overcoming the structural hurdles in the Movement, which have been set by the logic of nationalism, antagonizing dissent as an unlawful, seditious practice. Commenting on the soft storytelling structures afforded through the medium of Twitter for offering immediate remarks on developing events, Papacharissi argues in relation to this affective value: “Stories engage through their potential for affective attunement by persuading ‘through their appeal to emotion rather than reason, through an affective identification that supersedes logic and evidence’” (Papacharissi 130). In tandem with this, instead of arguing merely through the logic that democratic dissent is not legally criminal, these tweets instead show dissent in a humane light by associating it with images of innocence and comfort in the form of senior citizens as well as young children, tying something rebellious like dissent to the sentiment of reverence for the Constitution. This strategy has much in common with the sense of optimism and comfort that may be found in community, as emphasized within anti-CAA poems, which we will see in the next section.

However, in other instances, several tweets categorized as positive focus on building upon such affective attachment, in order to comment upon the actual involvement of alternative political parties in opposition to the BJP’s anti-Muslim, anti-dissent rhetoric, as

---

<sup>46</sup> In classical rhetoric according to Aristotle, *logos* (logic), *pathos* (emotion), and *ethos* (credibility) come together as the three modes of persuasion or identification with the interlocutor in a manner that they are compelled to believe your argument more than another’s.

well as its insistence upon the CAA. One user criticizes: “Just some days back, AAP<sup>47</sup> had no power to file FIRs during Delhi Pogrom, nor during Jamia and JNU attacks. Well played, *libbus ki favorite party*”<sup>48</sup> (@MehekF) while another applauds, “After doing splendid work to support protesters at Shaheen Bagh and then saving the victims of East Delhi pogrom, Kejriwal now offers full assistance to farmers. Consistency makes a leader” (@Sydusm). The desire for actionable political change and reliable leadership, evident in tweets like these, shows a possibility for positive attachment and hope within the Movement if its mobilization is vocally supported by public leaders. While such critiques of leadership and the way forward for the Movement complicate the possibility for the tweets to be deemed wholly optimistic, the positive valence on the sentiment intensity analyzer stems from their desire to look for realistic alternatives in the time of political pessimism. Their critical commentary on the involvement of political leaders against the BJP’s strategy poses a crucial question for the continuity of the resistance: ‘Where do we go from here?’

#### IV. The Everyday, the Aesthetic, and the Emotional

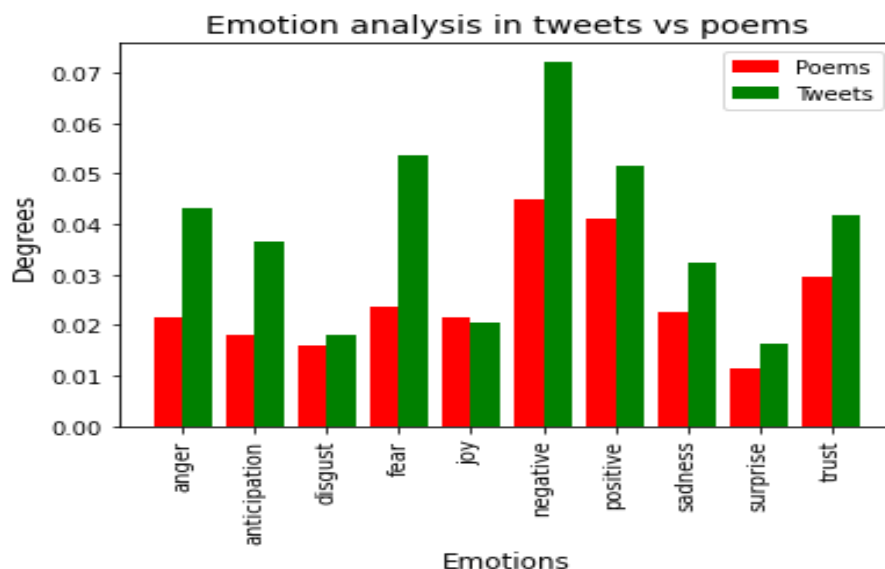
At this stage, it’s necessary to nuance the positive and negative sentiment categorization a bit further by analyzing how these sentiments may be categorized through the emotion-word associations in the tweet and poetry corpora. Comprising eight emotions and two sentiments, also addressed through the sentiment analysis earlier, the EmoLex package revealed notable results.

Despite accounting for the vast difference in the dataset sizes for tweets and poetry, which can lead to the tweet corpus bars being marginally high for certain emotions (like disgust, positivity, and surprise), the comparison here confirms the sentiment analysis results.

---

<sup>47</sup> AAP refers to the Aam Aadmi Party, which forms a majority in the National Capital Region of Delhi, with the Chief Minister being Arvind Kejriwal.

<sup>48</sup> Translation: “Well played, the favourite party of liberals.”



**Figure 9.** A visualization of the comparison between tweets and poetry from the Movement, in terms of the presence of different emotions and sentiments in their language.

Negativity, as a sentiment, and emotions like anger, fear, and sadness are significantly higher in the tweet corpus. This spike can be attributed to the plethora of information, news reports, and live-tweeted commentary about the threat of the CAA as an exclusionary law as well as the fear and sadness founded upon the violence in university campuses, protest sites, and upon the arrest of political activists. However, as we saw earlier in the tweets, these emotions can be in support of the law or against it, and there is no way of knowing which inclination is in play without close reading, highlighting the limitations of such a quantitative model.

Another notable result is the heightened anticipation level in the tweet corpus, which might be attributed to the urgent and news-like quality of the language in the tweets, which were posted immediately as the Movement developed. In contrast, despite its documentary quality, poetry for the Movement wasn't written instantaneously as the events occurred. Thus, its language or content do not have to perform an informative function as such, and activists and allies did not have an expectation of urgent, complete information from such documentary poetics. However, there were several tweets seeking information and clarity on the law and the Movement's motives, anticipating commentary and fact-checked news: "Can Someone sensible from @TheQuint @thewire\_in @scroll\_in @ndtvfeed @the\_hindu

@IndianExpress @timesofindia @IndiaToday @ndtvfeed @ThePrintIndia

@AmarUjalaNews @DBhaskarHindi @NationalHerald please comment on this or better run a story and it's relevance for #CAA\_NRC\_NPR @NewsX" (@BadheRakesh). Demanding a response from media outlets with different political leanings, this tweet exemplifies the desire to be informed about the events through the platform of Twitter. This has been seen as a popular form of expressing support in other socio-political resistances as well, wherein the tweet shares "breaking news about an incident of police violence or protest combined with a clear movement-supporting tilt. These 'activist headlines' signal that the author is a friend of the movement whose information can therefore be trusted" (Freelon et al 26). By seeking such activist headlines from independent new media outlets, tweets like these suggest a desire to support the Movement by seeking alternative knowledge sources and defying the acceptance of state-backed narrative as a form of propaganda against the protests.

Amidst the overwhelming propaganda of the state and an overwhelming amount of information about violence and interests, positive sentiments and emotions are difficult to sustain in the way the Movement is discussed, expressed, and furthered online. That's why one of the most interesting aspects of this analysis is the small spike in joy found in anti-CAA poetry, despite the vastly smaller size of its corpus. Joy appears to prevail here beyond reasonable predictions and expectations due to the quantitative difference in the corpus sizes. Let's take a closer look at examples of joy and positive sentiment found by these two models:

Poem	Poet	Sentiment Class
Today's death	Aamir Aziz	5
The NRC Papers, We Won't Show	Varun Grover	5
My country is burning	Sabika Abbas Naqvi	5
From his Insta, you know	Akhil Katyal	5
You belong here	Akhil Katyal	5
An evening walk while a friend is in prison	Akhil Katyal	4
<i>Khush-aamdeed</i>	Aamir Aziz	5
Why I can't be a lover this Valentine's Day	Sabika Abbas Naqvi	5
This is to hooliganism	Sabika Abbas Naqvi	5

**Table 1.** Poems deemed to be positive (class 4) and very positive (class 5) by the sentiment intensity analyzer.

As seen in earlier chapters, joy and hope have been poignant in acts of community-building nurtured on an ethics of care and familiarity, seen in play at Shaheen Bagh, as well as its poetic expression. Most of the poems in these classes reflect upon hope brought forth by the power of a protesting community or the perseverance of political prisoners, like Umar Khaled and Natasha Narwal, who have contributed to the Movement.

I strongly agree with Ahmed who argues for the value of joy in politics, which stems from making “different kinds of connections with others and realising that the world was alive and could take new shapes and forms” (Ahmed 177). She goes on to note that such joy is not a standalone force in politics that seeks transformation, but it must be through critical engagement with an interpretation of our sense of joy, hope, optimism, and other comparable emotions that politics can thrive. This is reflected in the affective, critical nuances of all the poems categorized here as positive in their sentiment analysis. Barring Katyal’s “From his Insta, you know,” which undercuts the veneer of carefree optimism and joy by satirizing it and showing the social media figure’s violent and bitter hate for a Muslim protester, every other poem uses affects of intimacy and community to reorient the gloom of the CAA and of the violence upon protesters into a positive attachment. As highlighted in Chapter 2, poems like “My country is burning,” “*Khush-aamdeed*,” “Why I can’t be a lover this Valentine’s Day,” “An evening walk while a friend is in prison,” and “The NRC Papers We Won’t Show,” don’t merely sit with and stew about the a sense of political and cultural failure that have led to the exclusionary CAA, its subsequent anti-Muslim discrimination, and the criminalization of dissent. They instead use it to move the reader by defamiliarizing the scene of imprisonment, loss, and political violence, and showing how meaningful assemblies of hope and collective action can be nurtured.



## V. Words to Inform and to Feel: Topics and Foci

Delving one level further into understanding the focal points in these the nature of these assemblies, I sought the visualization of their areas of interest through word-clouds for the Twitter and poetry corpora.



**Figure 10.** Word cloud for the Twitter corpus.



**Figure 11.** Word cloud for the poetry corpus.

Topical, direct, yet negatively charged terms pertaining to the attack in the Delhi pogrom and Jamia campus, such as “riot,” “violence,” “case,” “jamia,” “delhi,” “pogrom,” proliferate in the Twitter data. However, the results for the poetry corpus, as expected for a creative genre, are more varied yet less direct in their reference to the Movement as well as its key events. Terms like “write,” “us,” and “people,” which populate the poems, relate the act of writing to a sense of collectivism and community.

A glance at the most popularly used terms on Twitter reveals an informational tilt in its language, as most of these terms relate to the facts of violence and attacks in the course of the resistance. At this point, it's valuable to turn to Gerbaudo, who notes that “new forms of connection facilitated by the use of social media and the increasing availability of information they offer does not automatically translate into additional participation, unless organisers are capable of creating a powerful emotional connection” (Gerbaudo 127). This amalgamation of information with a potential for emotional connection is relatively more highlighted for the poetry corpus, as terms like “remembered” and “keep” emphasize the documentary nature of these poetics, accompanied by terms like “love,” “refuse,” “Jamia,” “government,” and “liberal,” suggesting the range of discourses and moods tackled in these

poems. The sense of anger and resilience in ideas of refusal as well as the possibilities of love and attachment provide something to cling to for the reader, even as the topics are related to news-pieces and commentary on state action and university campuses, as we saw in a nuanced reading of these poems in Chapter 2.

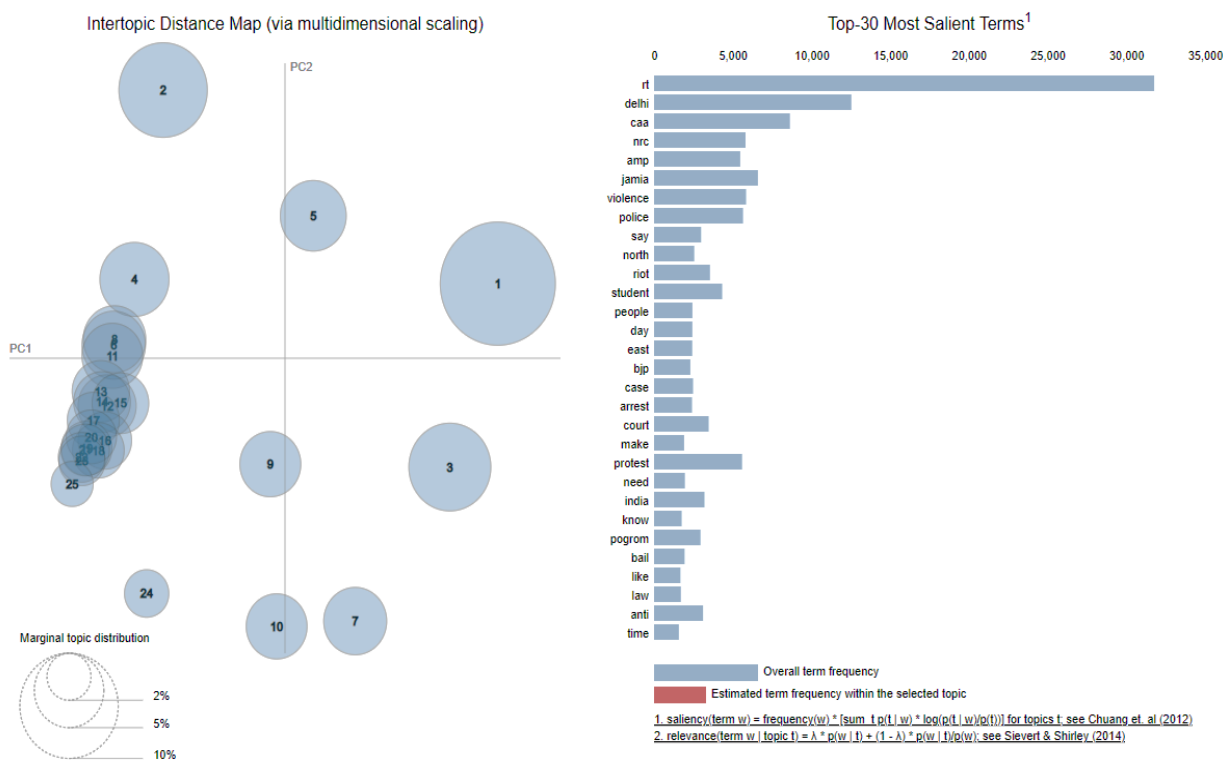
Now that we have a preliminary sense of the foci in the terms and ideas used in both the poetic and the everyday discourse realms for the Movement on social media, let's try to better understand the moods<sup>49</sup> associated with these terms and their relationship with one another. As a Natural Language Processing technique, topic modelling builds bins of related words as they appear in similar contexts within a corpus of texts and documents (tweets and poems in this case). For this analysis, I have extracted 25 and 15 topics<sup>50</sup> from the tweet and poetry corpus each, and visualized each topic through pyLDAvis,<sup>51</sup> which is an interactive Python package that helps to interpret the topics and its relevance to the entire corpus.

---

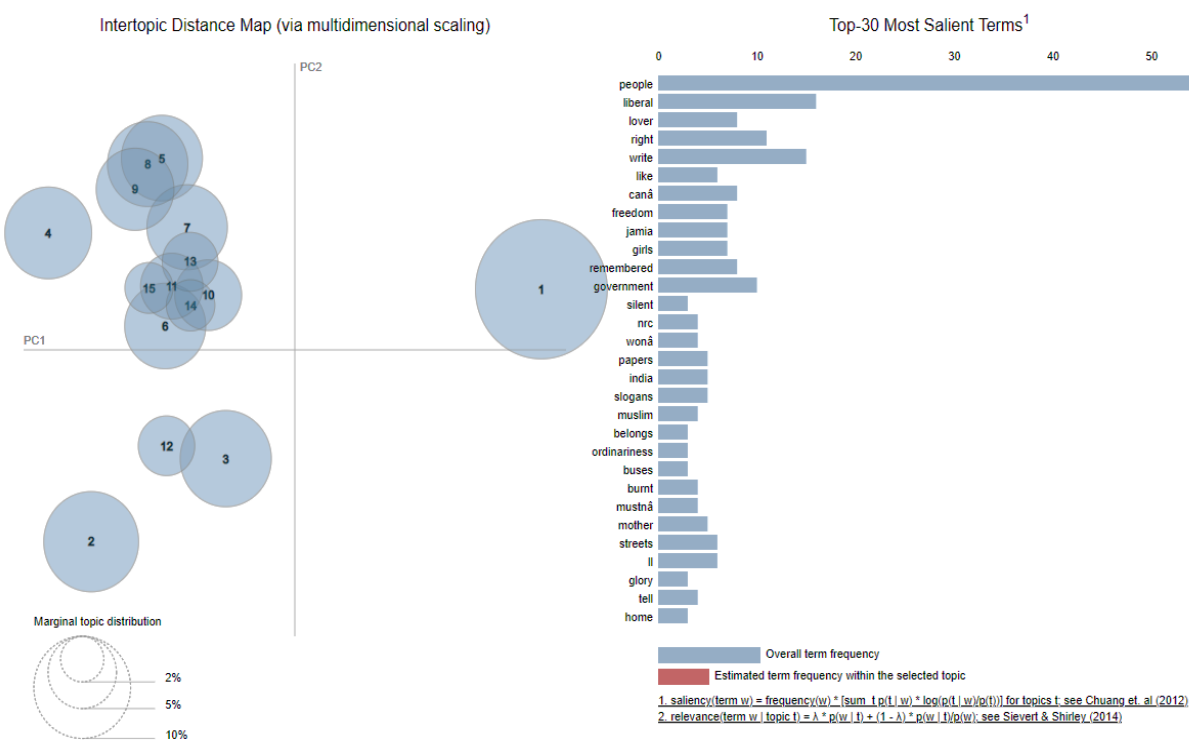
<sup>49</sup> See "Reading for Mood" by Flatley.

<sup>50</sup> These topics numbers are determined based on the size of the corpus and then evaluated for different metrics like perplexity and coherence scores. Due to the differently sized datasets, the bigger dataset showed more clarity and specificity, or less perplexity and high coherence scores with 25 topics and 30 salient terms, while a similar result was gauged for the poetry corpus with 15 topics and 30 salient terms.

<sup>51</sup> pyLDAvis is an interactive Python library, which was designed to help users interpret and visualize the topics in a topic model that has been fit to a corpus of text data. It extracts information from a fitted Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) topic model to inform an interactive web-based visualization.

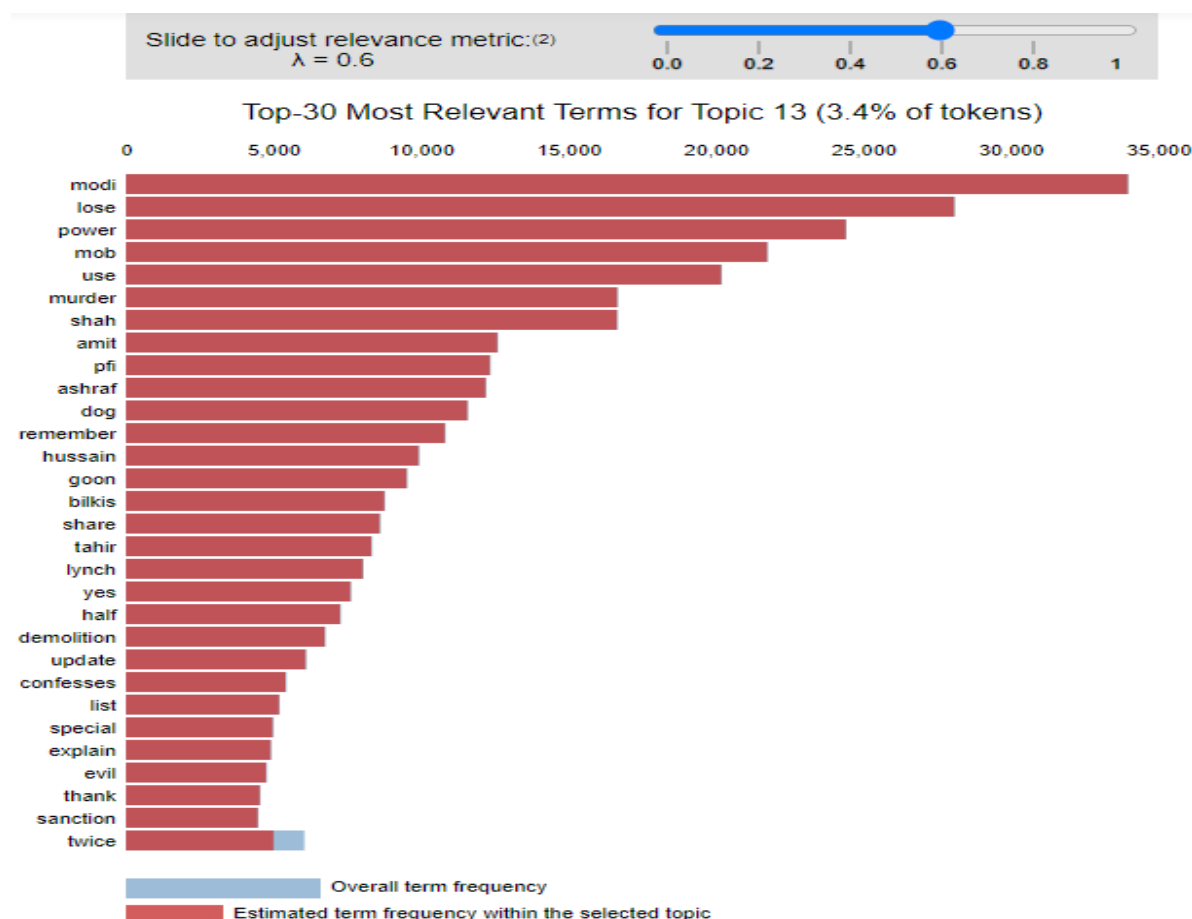


**Figure 12.** Visualization of the topic model for Twitter corpus and its top 30 most salient terms.



**Figure 13.** Visualization of the topic model for poetry corpus and its top 30 most salient terms.

As seen here, the topic model visual<sup>52</sup> of the overall data from both the corpora confirms the results of the word-cloud and the proliferation of terms seen in it. Notably, retweets form a significant part of the tweet corpus, as evident in the appearance of the term “rt” throughout the dataset. Now, let’s delve deeper into some notable trends in the topics.



**Figure 14.** Visualization of Topic 13 for the Twitter corpus and top 30 most salient terms in Topic 13.

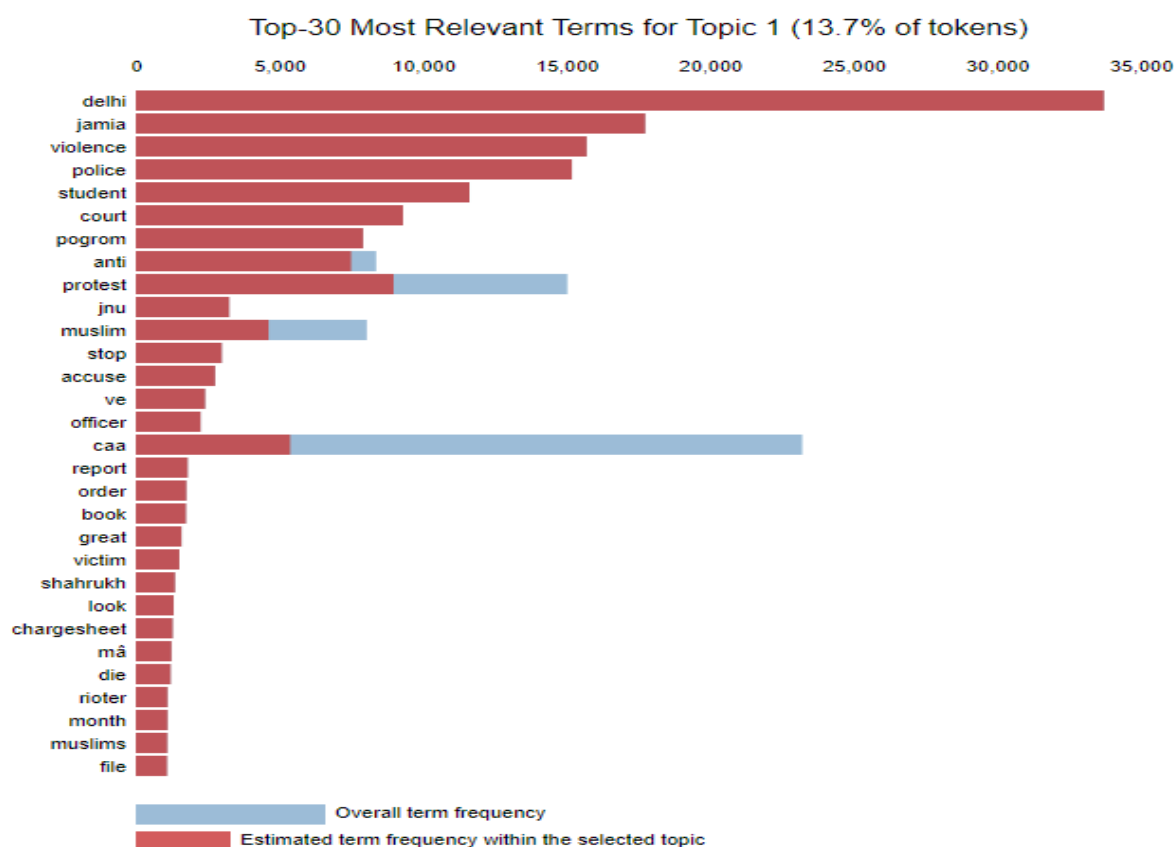
As seen in Figure 14, for the Twitter corpus, Topic 13 is proliferated by terms referring to BJP leaders like PM Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, and the AAP politician Tahir Hussain (accused in the Northeast Delhi violence).<sup>53</sup> These topics of discussion are

<sup>52</sup> Each circle represents a topic and the larger the area occupied by the circle, the more populous that topic is in the corpus. The distance between the topics is visualized through the quadrants. For instance, topic 1 is much more prevalent in the Twitter data corpus and it has much less in common with topic 24 than it does with topic 5, as seen in the inter-topic distance map. On the right, the blue bars represent the degree of proliferation for the given term in the entire corpus. Topic 0 is a visualization of the entire corpus, showing top 30 salient terms from it. As we select different topics after 0, the visuals will correspond to that topic and its key terms.

<sup>53</sup> Hussain is a former councillor of the Aam Aadmi Party, the political party in power in Delhi during the Northeast Delhi riots. He was charged for criminal conspiracy and rioting in the events of February 2020 by the Delhi High Court.

accompanied by terms suggesting targeted violence like “mob,” “murder,” and “lynch”. A correlation between the names of political leaders from national parties and terms of targeted violence indicate a sense of political pessimism with reference to party politics and the “power” of elected leaders. Alongside this pessimism, terms like “remember,” “explain,” “update,” “confesses,” and “list” suggest a process of ongoing documentation and desire for truthful information in these moments of political failure that have spurred the Movement.

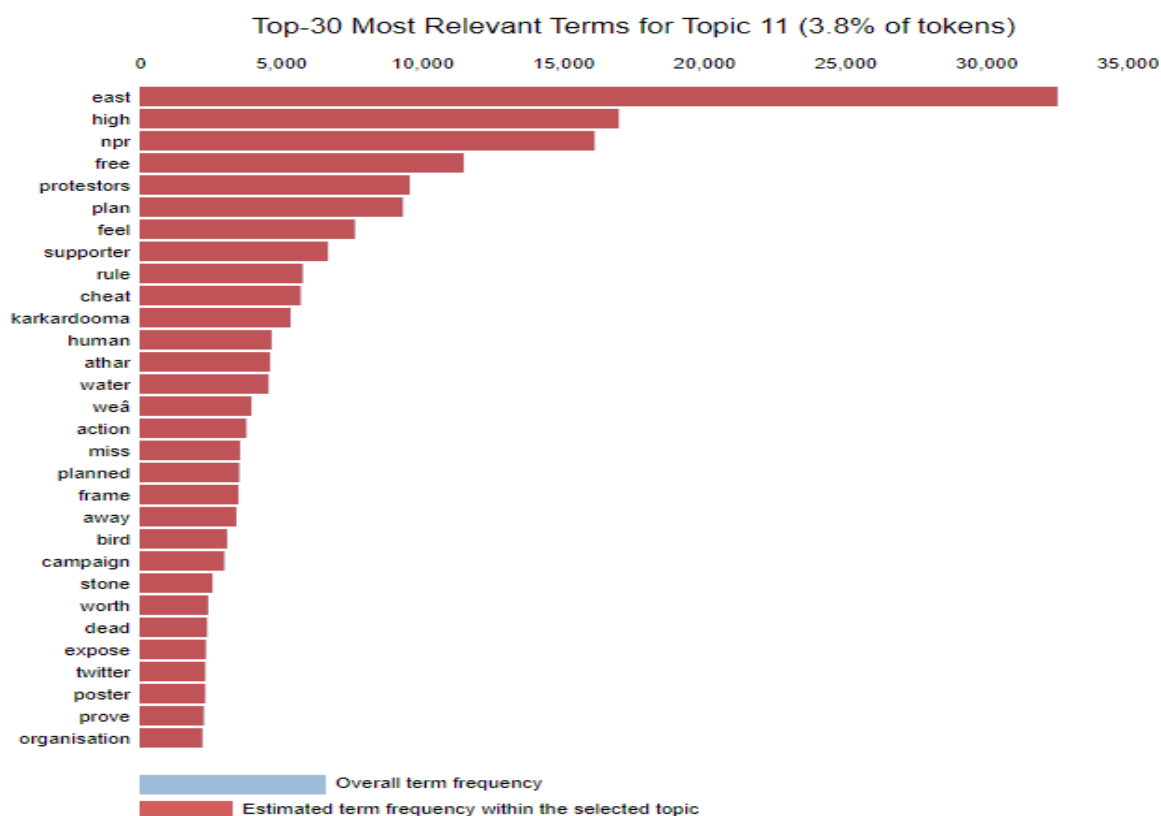
Interestingly, as seen in Figures 15 and 16, despite the inter-topic distance (see footnote 52) between Topics 1 and 11, there is a fair degree of similarity in the negativity of their sentiments.



*Figure 15. Topic 1 for the tweet corpus.*

For instance, Topic 1 appears to focus on terms in the context of the violence on campuses in Delhi, with words like “delhi,” “student,” “jamia,” “violence,” “pogrom,” and “jnu” populating the data. This topic also suggests a sense of protester-administration confrontation

using judicial terms like “chargesheet,” “file,” and “court,” as well as action verbs like “report” and “protest”.



*Figure 16. Topic 11 for the tweet corpus.*

This follows from the fact that several news-oriented tweets and headlines shared on the platform deployed these terms and highlighted this ensuing legal confrontation, used by the state as a strategy to silence activists: “Jamia Violence: hearing on petitions seeking independent inquiry begins before the Delhi HC @DelhiPolice #JamiaViolence” (@LiveLawIndia). We can see some commentary on this strategy in tweets such as these: “Anti CAA / NRC protesters created WhatsApp groups, planned Chakka Jams that resulted in North East Delhi riots [...] Delhi Police have said in their 17,500 pages chargesheet. UAPA invoked ! ‘Chakka jams, not a democratic way of protest’” (@arvindgunasekar).

However, there is ambiguity about the mood of the corpus and the tweets with respect to this confrontational relationship in the Delhi violence. To that end, Topic 11 is a bit more

forthcoming about the mood of the corpus. In reading for mood, or “emotional energy” (Gerbaudo 41), we are recognizing its affordance as a critical concept “that helps us to read for the historicity and potentially political effects” (Flatley 137). Such a reading requires that we look for terms and clues, which “encourage some affects to attach to some objects, while foreclosing others” (Flatley 145) and add a layer of historical as well as political contextualization. In this vein, Topic 11 is integral for it reveals the usage of terms like “free” and “feel,” even as it too indicates the aforementioned sense of confrontation and political manipulation with terms like “frame,” “planned,” “cheat,” “campaign,” and “rule”. Terms pertaining to freedom and feeling orient this confrontation in an affective, political realm. Furthermore, with the proliferation of the term “twitter” along with “protesters,” “supporter,” “prove,” “expose,” and “organisation,” this topic makes evident the informative nature of the platform in sharing news and updates, documenting the events. With terms commenting on questions of feeling, freedom, and humaneness, this topic suggests a correlation of the informative aspect of these tweets in encouraging our affects and in mobilizing confrontational communities on either side of the CAA law.

Taking such an amalgamation further through the aesthetic realm, the topic model for poetry shows a wider variety in its prominent focal points and related moods.

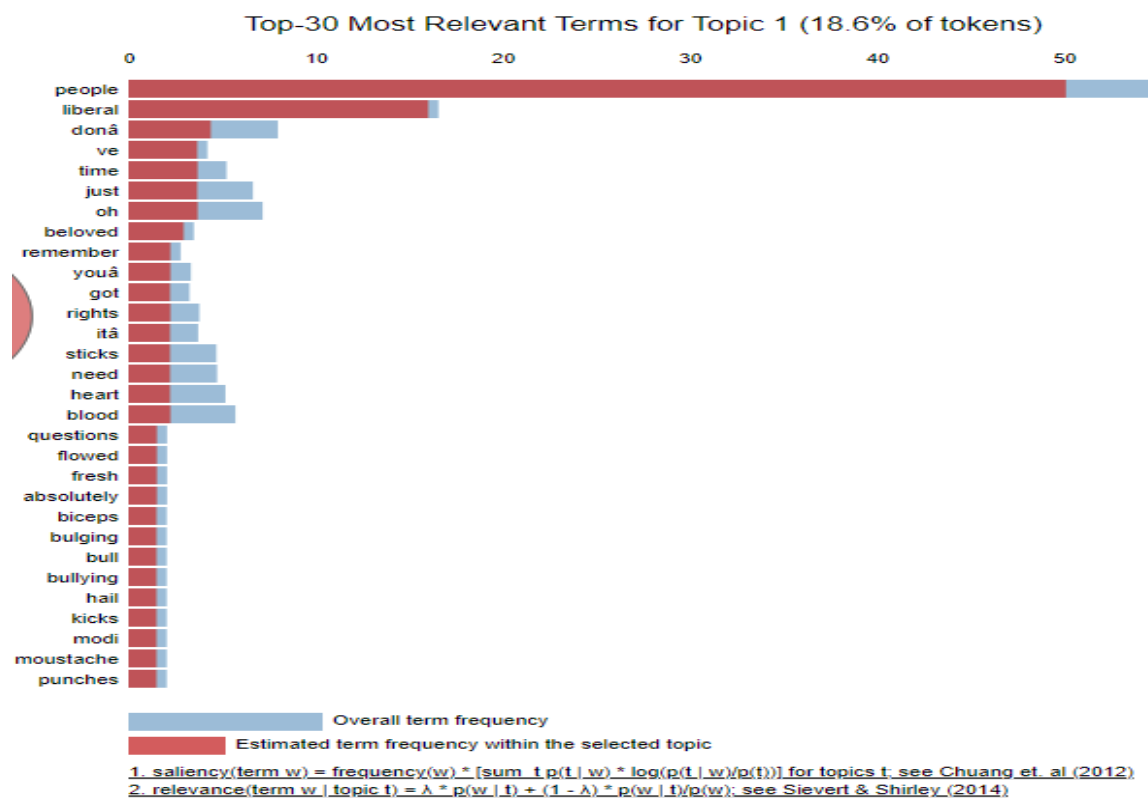


Figure 17. Topic 1 for the poetry corpus.

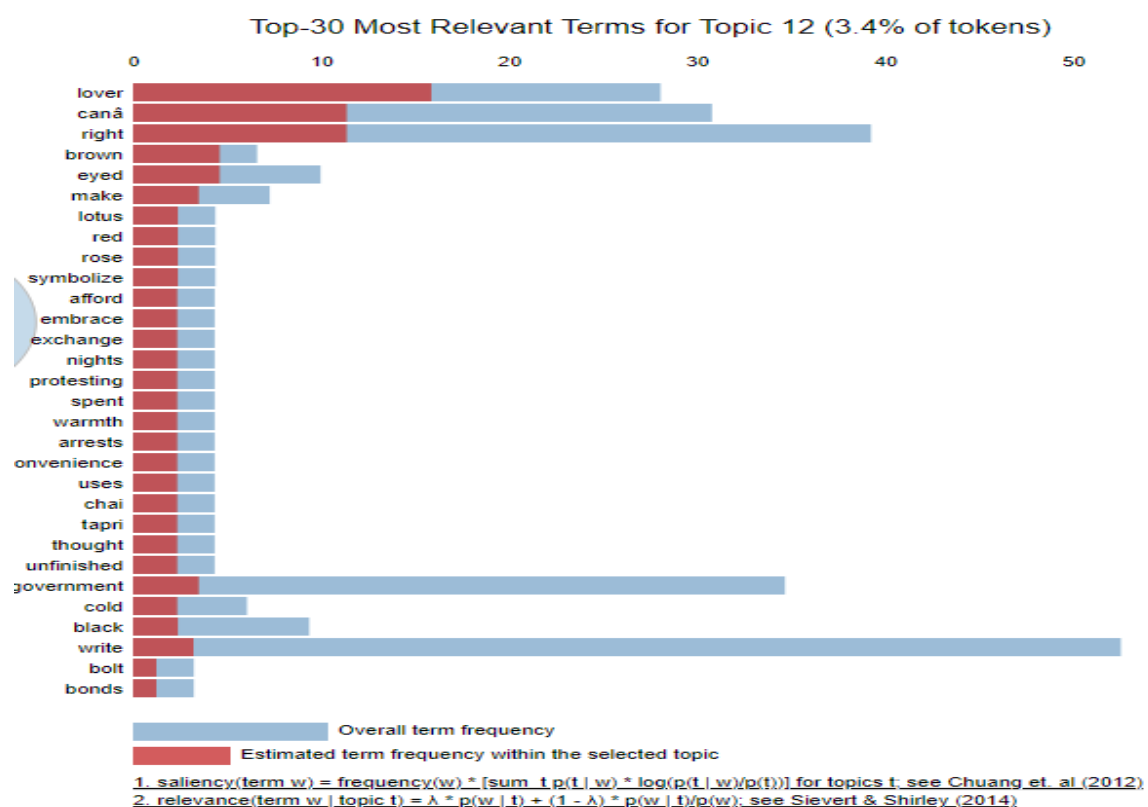


Figure 18. Topic 12 for the poetry corpus.



Topic 1 comprises terms that suggest an oppressive and violent form of masculine politics, referring to Prime Minister Modi, using descriptive words like “bulging,” “biceps,” and “moustache,” which have been used in the poems to describe both Modi and Hindu fundamentalists as seen in Chapter 2. Other such terms include verbs signifying oppression and unequal power dynamics, like “bullying,” “hail,” “kicks,” and “punches”. Furthermore, the model also shows a strong proliferation by the corpus-favourite term “people” with “liberal”. These are accompanied by terms like “sticks,” “fresh,” “blood,” and “flowed” that have been used in the poems to describe the visceral nature of the violence committed upon “beloved” communities of people fighting for their “rights,” and asking dissenting “questions”. In this sense, this topic focuses upon the physically traumatizing and violent aspects of the resistance, which come as a cost in the fight for dissent and justice. While these are significant realities of the resistance, if these were the only aspects discussed about the Movement on social media, then the possibilities for public participation in it would have been doomed, as Gerbaudo argues: “The choreography of assembly of contemporary movements has its own cultural narrative, and it chiefly requires the construction of common collective identifications among participants, without which such practical information would fall on deaf ears” (Gerbaudo 40-41).

This collective identification through affective imagery is indeed deftly accompanied by commentary on practical information from the Movement. And other possibilities for understanding the Movement and orienting our affective attachment to it are highlighted in several other topics through the poetic corpus. For instance, Topic 12 is significantly populated by terms like “exchange,” “warmth,” “bonds,” “embrace,” “rose,” and “lover,” in the face of physical and political tribulations, indicated by the use of terms like “arrests,” “protesting,” “cold,” and “nights”. And as expected due to the distance between Topics 12

and 1, the former includes terms with positive and communitarian sentiments associated with the Movement, unlike the latter that foci on its violent aspects strongly, as seen earlier.

Zooming into these corpora's topic models suggests markedly negative, pessimistic, and violent discourses and moods proliferating the Movement's presence on Twitter in contrast to the varied, positively charged, gentle, and even celebratory moods of the poetry created for the resistance. And it is only through a strategic amalgamation of these two currents that resistances can function. As Ahmed cautions, "Moving and being moved as a form of labour or work [...] opens up different kinds of attachments to others, in part through the recognition of this work *as work*" (Ahmed 201; emphasis in original). So, poetry may make us experience hope and feel our way into politics, but mobilization and organization require a form of more robust critical engagement with the negative sentiments and realities that mark the work of that politics. This is where the works of poet-activists like Aziz and Naqvi offer nuance, using their poetics of hope and memory to simultaneously offer sharp critiques of India's nationalism problem and deep-seated anti-Muslim sentiment which precedes the CAA and the BJP. Let us now look at the most popular tweets to see how such a mix of information with feeling emerged as a way of trying to keep the Movement alive in the face of effective, affect-laden nationalist narratives and conspiratorial expressions.

## **VI. Trends in the Most Popular Tweets**

We have already seen that mindless repetition and resharing of the hashtags yielded nothing for the propagation and popularity of the information about the Movement itself as neutral tweets, comprising idioms, proverbs, and maxims were the least popular of the corpus despite a high degree of anti-CAA expression.

Firstly, a majority of the dataset for the most popular tweets is actually infiltrated by tweets against the protests and in favour of the citizenship law, despite these tweets having been compiled using a majority of the keywords and hashtags in support of the Movement

and against the law. These tendencies of right-wing anti-protest rhetoric were found quite late in other recent movements like #BlackLivesMatter, consisting of “oppositional tactics [...] including impugning the credibility of supportive witnesses, changing the subject, news about attacks on police, complaints about the “liberal” media, and partisan sniping” (Freelon et al 66). In the one-year-span of this study, these tactics were seen to be gaining momentum in the latter periods of the resistance (Period 7), but these can be found to be a key part of the popular tactics against the anti-CAA resistance since its inception.

retweet_count		tweet
29864	14903	RT @hasanminhaj: #CAA + #NRC + more this Sunday on @patriotact <a href="https://t.co/AloAub8Fwu">https://t.co/AloAub8Fwu</a>
28712	9006	RT @ndtv: Woman protester breaks down while speaking to NDTV's Ravish Kumar at Delhi's #ShaheenBagh\n\n#CAA #NRC <a href="https://t.co/4TizzqCYNN">https://t.co/4TizzqCYNN</a>
28882	8464	RT @kpnewschannel: My House was burnt \nMy documents were burnt \nMy Family was killed \nMy Childhood was ruined \nMy Identity was lost \nI am aâ
30936	8357	RT @ShashiTharoor: I donâ know who this brilliant poet is, but â hum kagaz nahin dikhayengeâ is destined to be one of the most powerful anti
32084	7320	RT @asadowaisi: Speechless to hear the news of @rahatindori's passing away. This is a personal loss. May Allah grant him maghfirah & illumi
58466	6876	RT @vemula_radhika: My son Rohith was martyred in struggle for inclusive education. He was vilified & hounded. Today I am enraged to see si
36663	6339	RT @knowthenation: This young NRI student started out with a deep dive into morals and the need to fight for the thought of India.\n\nWhen asâ
39195	6275	RT @vivekagnihotri: I am surprised that not even one journalist has asked from where #ShaheenBaghProtests are getting wireless sets, metal
62553	6185	RT @karthiksubbaraj: Citizenship Amendment Act - Sounds seriously wrong & against Secularism.\n\nLet's keep India Secular \nSay NO to CAA\nSa

Figure 19. A few of the top 20 tweets.

55586	6150	RT @akshaylakra17: His name is Bharat Sharma. Law student of du. State executive committee member of ABVP. Volunteer of Rss\nClearly seen iâ
56791	5603	RT @vikrantkumar: These two Guys look same no?\n#JamiaViolence #JamiaMilia <a href="https://t.co/wdaKVIFDKY">https://t.co/wdaKVIFDKY</a>
32224	5397	RT @moonstar4u: The abuses hurled at me in my comment sections and DMs by these radical and intolerant losers after my opinion on #CAA_NR
57148	5109	RT @free_thinker: Mainstream media outlets including India Today, Times Now, Republic and News Nation claimed that a Jamia student was seen
30275	5106	RT @ANI: #WATCH The full clip of the incident where a woman named Amulya at an anti-CAA-NRC rally in Bengaluru raised slogan of 'Pakistan zâ
3044	4837	RT @thepeeinghuman: Option 1 : Ram Prasad Bismil, Ashfaqulla Khan, Roshan Singh ka Bharat\nOR\nOption 2 : Godse, Savarkar, Golwalkar ka Hindu
57370	4766	RT @jamiamilia_: Watch this and realise what kind of trauma and brutality #JamiaMilliaIslamia students faced on the hands of @DelhiPolice.â
29237	4535	RT @ReallySwara: The best thing you will see on the Internet today!!! @spill_the_sass #DollySingh âs HILARIOUS take down of CAA-NRC-NPR âââ
2797	4463	RT @UmarKhalidJNU: Delhi Police unleashes brutalities on Jamia students once again. Your lathis will not be able to break our resolve to fâ
29031	4425	RT @samiir: Drone view of crowd at August Kranti Maidan in support of CAA + NRC\n\nWithout much publicity. Spontaneous participation. Quite uâ
59501	4244	RT @srivatsayb: No FIR + No Arrest\nââAnurag Thakur\nââKapil Mishra\nââParvesh Verma\nââKomal Sharma\n\nUAPA + Arrested\nââSafoora Zargar\nââMeeranHaideâ

Figure 20. Some of the most popular tweets.

For instance, conspiratorial tweets regarding the motivation and foundation of these protests were popular: “I am surprised that not even one journalist has asked from where #ShaheenBaghProtests are getting wireless sets, metal detectors, Wi-fi centres? Who is providing transport, air-tickets, logistics for the guest speakers? Who is paying professional security & event managers?” (@vivekagnihotri). Another user tweeted, “These two Guys look same no? #JamiaViolence #JamiaMilia” (@vikrantkumar).



**Figures 21 and 22.** Shared by @vikrantkumar on Twitter, these pictures show a protester from Jamia Millia Islamia and attempt to cast him as the attacker in the violence on the campus through conspiratorial ideas.

By sharing these pictures, the user aims to insinuate that one of the people found committing violence upon students in the Jamia campus is the same person who protested against the CAA. In doing so, he attempts to counter new media reportage and information about the rioters based on eyewitness accounts we saw in Chapter 1. He implies that the Jamia violence was not caused by Hindu nationalists in support of the CAA, but it was orchestrated by Muslim student leaders to malign the law and gain popularity for the Movement.

Another conspiratorial tweet plays on the virtues of gotcha journalism: “This young NRI student started out with a deep dive into morals and the need to fight for the thought of India. When asked how #CAA\_NRC was discriminatory, look at the expression on her face” (@knowthenation). Aiming to show that the youth resisting the CAA are uninformed and opposing it solely for new media fame, the video is clipped immediately after they ask the question, and we don't even know if the person had a chance to respond (Chaudhuri).

Some other tweets feature explicit affective nationalist support for the law, antagonizing independent media and protesters as anti-nationalist and seditious, relying not on facts or the news but on the sentiments of pride and trust in the nation. While we have seen in earlier sections how this reliance on pathos has been used strategically by protesters, tweets from nationalists supporting the CAA emphasize how pathos without scope for scrutiny can be counterproductive<sup>54</sup> to the progressive political work and potential of affect. For instance, one user tweeted, “Drone view of crowd at August Kranti Maidan in support of CAA + NRC [...] Without much publicity. Spontaneous participation. Quite unbelievable [...] Media is not reporting. Can we spread it aggressively to make media redundant” (@WellSaidGuru). It suggests that the outpour of support for the law and affective mobilization in its favour have been conspicuously buried by media outlets.

These tweets attempt to create a sense of victimization within the CAA supporters, presenting them as an excluded minority. This is furthered by other tweets, such as this one by @kpnewschannel:

My House was burnt

My documents were burnt

My Family was killed

My Childhood was ruined

My Identity was lost

I am a refugee in my own country

I lost everything, yet I can prove my documents that I am INDIAN . Yet I

stand for CAA & NRC

---

<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, when political leaders and other influential people support such narratives, then they add weight to the compelling potential of such narratives through their ethos. See Bhattacharya, who notes the dangers of combining powerful cultural symbols and the pathos they evoke with narrative authority: “This is the real reason why it was so easy to arrange a pogrom against Muslims just by evoking imaginary nationalism and its inherent enemies who could be, as our prime minister said, “recognised by their clothes’.”

### WHATS YOUR EXCUSE (@kpnewschannel)

Using the effective rhetorical strategy of anaphora as well as epistrophe-like writing, this tweet comprises aspects of the moving, the poetic. Through this strategy, the handle, Kashmir Pandit News Channel, references the exodus<sup>55</sup> of Kashmiri Pandit (Hindus) from the Muslim-majority region of Kashmir in the 1990s due to widespread communal violence. Using the affects of loss and sadness, this tweet emphasizes that loyalty towards the CAA and NRC is akin to one's loyalty to an Indian identity.

Popularity and formulation of a connected public around the Movement online, thus, seem to be fallible due to the ability of such affective appeals and conspiracy theories by the right-wing supporters of the CAA to infiltrate these spaces and publics. The repetition of negative sentiments, delivery of violence-centric information, as well as easily replicable hashtags collectively do not seem to be leading the charge of popular engagement with the resistance. This highlights the concern Papacharissi has regarding the connective<sup>56</sup> potential of affective publics online, which does not necessarily translate to collective action. As I note in the conclusion for this project, such conspiratorial nationalist narratives have attempted to infiltrate other socio-political movements as well through new media, but the powerful harmony between cultural symbols that sustain affect (as seen in anti-CAA poetry and some tweets) and informational nuance has transformed their connective potential into collective action and success for their goals.

---

<sup>55</sup> In the early 1990, Kashmiri Hindus had to migrate and flee from the Muslim-majority Kashmir valley in Indian-administered Kashmir due to rising violence in an insurgency. Nearly 90,000–100,000 of the 140,000 Kashmiri Hindus fled or felt compelled to leave, and about 30 were killed. Reports suggest that the insurgency was being led by a group calling for a secular and independent Kashmir, but there were also growing radical Islamist factions demanding an Islamic state. The Pandits, who believed that Kashmir's culture was tied to India's, felt threatened and panicked due to targeted killings of some high-profile officials and public calls for independence among the insurgents.

<sup>56</sup> "Affective publics support connective yet not necessarily collective action. [...] connective action practices permit people to express interest in or allegiance to issues without having to enter into complex negotiation of personal versus collective politics. Online and convergent platforms like Twitter serve as conduits that link together personalized interests, thus enabling people to connect around commonalities without having to compromise their own belief systems" (Papacharissi 128).

This concern leads us into analyzing the second trend in these popular tweets, as the value of creativity, affective attachments, and aesthetic form is suggested within many of the anti-CAA tweets in the corpus. For instance, one of the most popular tweets, by an opposition political party leader, reads: “I don’t know who this brilliant poet is, but ‘hum kagaz nahin dikhayenge’ is destined to be one of the most powerful anthems of the #CAA\_NRC\_Protests!” (@ShashiTharoor). It references Varun Grover’s poem, “The NRC Papers We Won’t Show” and praises it as a prominent, popular voice against CAA. The popularity of tweets like these indicates the need for an amalgamation of affective attunement with informative documentation, already present in the tweets. Another tweet in this vein is as follows:

Speechless to hear the news of @rahatindori's passing away. This is a personal loss. May Allah grant him maghfirah [forgiveness] & illuminate his grave [.]  
This clip is from January 25-26 this year when #RahatIndori sahab had visited us in Hyderabad for an Ehtejaji Mushaira [protest poetry recitation] against CAA NRC & NPR (@asadowaisi)

Mourning the death of poet Rahat Indori,<sup>57</sup> whose poems were also used as anthems in the Movement, the tweet gained popularity with reference to the protests as it was accompanied by a clip from his recitation at a protest site. It comprises feelings of sadness and uses art as a vehicle of hope. Another example of such an anti-CAA tweet, which emphasized affective attachments within the movement, gained prominence: “Woman protester breaks down while speaking to NDTV's Ravish Kumar at Delhi's #ShaheenBagh #CAA #NRC” (@ndtv).

Papacharissi’s argument provides one of the reasons for the popularity of such tweets, drawing from cultural elements that build affective attachments, since “political interest is activated through avenues that are of a cultural nature, and these involve offering access to

---

<sup>57</sup> Indori was a popular lyricist in the Hindi film industry, a Hindustani language poet and performer, as well as a professor of Urdu language. One of his poems, “*Kisike baap ka Hindustan thodi hai*” (“Hindustan doesn’t belong to your forefathers”) is a key anthem to resist the nationalist sentiment that Hindus have a special right on India, wherein Muslims and other religious minorities are *permitted* temporary residence and living.

more information, providing ways to remix and play with information, and supporting spaces where people may discuss this information further” (Papacharissi 9). Thus, instead of relying merely on the protester’s stance or on the facts from the Movement and its politics, such resistance taps into the human quality and value of its impact to draw in people. Not all of it must be based on feelings of sadness, loss, and pessimism, as humour too gained prominence: “The best thing you will see on the Internet today!!! @spill\_the\_sass #DollySingh ‘s HILARIOUS take down of CAA-NRC-NPR [...] Sheer genius!” (@ReallySwara).

The third and perhaps most expected trend based on the analysis of these tweets highlights the value of Twitter discourse in building and acquiring popularity for the Movement due to the technical possibilities it offers for real-time documentation and economic commentary on events. This is the discussion with which we began this chapter, turning to Naghibi’s faith in Twitter’s speed and immediacy as well as comments from anti-CAA protesters who began using social media for these very features, as the Movement’s events unfolded rapidly.

In this sense, the mode of the tweet seems to be crucial for urgent, affective documentation, as we expect affect to be imbued in the Movement’s aesthetic expression, but it is valuable for keeping readers interested when they are continuously shown live updates and developing informative news. For instance, one page tweeted emotively and immediately as the Jamia violence unfolded: “Watch this and realise what kind of trauma and brutality #JamiaMilliaIslamia students faced on the hands of @DelhiPolice. Students studying in library are being attacked and brutalised for no fault of theirs. #15DecJamiaAttack” (@jamiamilliaislamia\_). Activist and currently imprisoned Umar Khalid also documented the brutality urgently, “Delhi Police unleashes brutalities on Jamia students once again. Your lathis will not be able to break our resolve to fight against CAA/NRC/NPR. #IndiaAgainstCAA\_NPR\_NRC” (@UmarKhalidJNU). The popularity of these tweets is



valuable, as researchers have asserted on the poignancy of #BlackLivesMatter online: “You have a group of people whose voices are not typically heard, but with social media their voices are not only amplified, but really driving how we're framing discussions about this issue” (McIlwain qtd. in Reynolds 3). In tandem with this and with Grover’s focus on the cry for help, these tweets show how political activists, victims, and witnesses who suffered in the violence unleashed at the protests in Jamia, were quickly able to share their plight and document it in their own voice, reaching millions of people.

## **VII. Conclusion**

We started with an understanding of Twitter’s value as a swift information-sharing platform in the context of socio-political resistance, where users could offer concise commentary on the shared information immediately. However, in the course of qualitative and quantitative analyses of the most prominent and popular terms and tweets deployed on Twitter, we can see how information-sharing was neither the sole nor the most critical reason for relying on Twitter in the anti-CAA resistance. As the trends analyzed in the most popular tweets reveal, we can see a similarity with other new media resistances wherein “movement action tweets were not among the most shared” (Freelon et al 84). While independent journalists and activists played a major part in offering urgent commentary about the Movement’s developments online through their Twitter presence, emotions ran high and were crucial to engagement-formation online. This showed the possibilities for an amalgamation between progressive politics and affective attachments, as right-wing nationalist and pro-CAA commentary was able to infiltrate the online assembly of the Movement through its strategic deployment of emotionally charged narratives and ideas ripe with feeling. And this seemed to be lacking in the Movement’s Twitter realm despite the fact that emotionally charged tweets were among the most popular, since tweets with a relatively neutral sentimental valence formed a majority of the corpus. In fact, as seen in the trends of the least

popular tweets, repeated exposure to anti-CAA hashtags and keywords was not enough as a strategy when it was accompanied by irrelevant and unrelated maxims and idiom-centric language. Despite a desperate desire reflected in such repeated posting and use of such hashtags to popularize the anti-CAA Movement's demands, such expression failed to create meaningful assemblies as it could not draw people in through cultural symbols or intense feelings that they could relate with and thus amplify.

However, engaging closely with sentiment and emotion-word association analysis, as well as visualizing prominent topics for the Movement on Twitter showed other forms of how this affective commentary was shaped for mobilizing people online. A markedly negative sentiment as well as emotions of anger and fear, as well as discussions of violence and aggression, proliferated through the mood of the anti-CAA assembly on Twitter. It gave people a sense of the grim realities of the Movement but also offered them a way to consider the felt anger, fear, and negativity critically alongside immediate information. Comparing these sentiments and emotional moods with the anti-CAA poetry corpus also showed the polarizing tendencies of the documentary poetics, wherein poets like Aziz articulated their sense of the negative and pessimistic into a critique of the Movement's secularism-centric sensibilities that sidelines secular India's anti-Muslim cultural histories. This comparison, however, also revealed surprising results about the presence of joyous emotions in the poetry. Accompanied by a close reading of the poetry in Chapter 2, this result is valuable for showing how the critique of nationalism, Islamophobia, political criminalization of dissent, and the violence of the CAA, can be meaningfully shared in a way that centers community, care, and love as a way of navigating political despair. The nuance offered by symbolism, defamiliarization, and the play between form and content in a mode like poetry, in contrast to the economic language of Twitter (which also makes it valuable in urgency), is highlighted through such a result. This, in turn, shows the contrast in how the mode of everyday

conversations on Twitter zoomed in on the Movement's realities through a different affective orientation than the aesthetic mode of the poem. In this way, the anti-CAA Movement was able to harness these possibilities of combining information and affect to a certain degree by using new media strategically and offering affective documentation to feel our way into and build the critical development of the political path forward.

Such a combination between the different affective possibilities offered by the aesthetic and the everyday mode of expression is significant. Informed through feeling commentaries on Twitter in an urgent, immediate manner about political developments, assemblies can form with popularization of these tweets as affect draws people in. This information and commentary are then further nuanced in modes of expression like the poem, offering a possibility for feeling, caring, and loving as crucial to community-building and turning "connective action"<sup>58</sup> (Papacharissi 128) to a *sense of the collective*. Taking this sense of the collective to Twitter, everyday discourses on Movement updates, organizational planning, and critical expressions of politics will benefit in sustaining the popularity of the Movement because people will be *invested*. As new media and affect scholars like Papacharissi argue that there is value to the symbolic impact made by these assemblies who feel their way into narratives on social media, as the symbolic "can help sustain movements that may yield political impact of a specific form" (Papacharissi 132) when it is combined with other coordinated activities, such as assembly on the ground. This was visible in the fact that anti-CAA tweets continued to be published and shared widely even after the pandemic eliminated possibilities for physical mobilization. This work of the symbolic was especially important in the documentary poetics of the Movement, as the vivid imagery and symbolic action in these poems helped build affective memory to sustain choreographies of assembly in these times of physical lull within the Movement due to COVID-19.

---

<sup>58</sup> See footnote 56.

And a movement like the anti-CAA resistance, which comprises deep-seated anti-Muslim othering at its core, requires a continued amalgamation of these structures of feeling and information-sharing to be able to appeal to both — reason and sentiment, so that the skilled affective engagement of the pro-CAA nationalist is tackled head on. Merely connecting people through information isn't enough for a movement like the anti-CAA resistance; rather, it needs to bring people into a collective as Shaheen Bagh did on the ground. It needs to have them share information, feelings, and deep stories alike in the virtual sphere too, and make them stay longer and remember better than the short attention spans of fast-evolving trending hashtags on Twitter allow them. Leaning into the possibilities of an affective politics by a stronger conversation between these two modes and media, as well as the Movement's on-ground presence, is integral to the progressive of the Movement – to roll back the CAA and its cultural symptoms that exclude, other, and annihilate Muslim citizens of India.

## Conclusion

The personal has always been political; it has always been cultural. The stories of contemporary social change movements, such as India's anti-CAA resistance, are a reminder that the political can and must turn to the power of the personal, the intimate, and the affective to bring people together and turn that togetherness into mobilization.

We started with a detailed understanding of this idea at play in Chapter 1, wherein the memorable and disruptive protests at Shaheen Bagh showed us how ethics of care and affective community-building were key to the visibility and leadership of Muslim women in protesting the anti-Muslim sentiment across India that has led to the CAA. In the virtual realm of the Movement, this affective politics could be seen in the documentary poetics by writer-activists as well as narratives on Twitter.

As seen in Chapter 2, in times of despair, violence, anger, and indignation, poetry by writer-activists not only provided alternative modes of love and hope in its expression of community and friendship, but it also became a mode of confronting and critiquing fundamentalist nationalism and liberal politics in India's history and present that have led us to this crisis and moment of political depression. Finally, in Chapter 3, we saw how this quality of affective narrative-building, symbolic action, and emotional scene-setting worked in the other key realm of the Movement – its presence on Twitter. We started with a sense of Twitter's use for its immediacy and information dissemination. And while popular ideas for the use of social media platforms as primarily informational channels in contemporary movements have been “reducing their communications to pure questions of efficiency” (Gerbaudo 161), analysis in Chapter 3 showed that even the informative, critical, and tactical communication on Twitter carry positive and negative sentimental valences as well as an emotional dimension.

Thus, affect has played a key role in the cultural and political popularity of the Movement as well as the nationalist narrative against it, evident in the most retweeted and discussed tweets. This echoes Gerbaudo's claim that "the emotional quality of the communications of contemporary movements needs to be understood in conjunction with the 'popular' character of these movements" (Gerbaudo 161).

### **I. The Effectiveness of Affective Politics**

Almost three years later, the ruling administration has not changed its position on the implementation of the law as the Home Minister had announced in August 2022 that "the CAA would be implemented once the 'COVID wave is gone'" (Shah qtd. in *The Wire* Staff). While the major goal of getting the CAA/NRC/NPR rolled back has yet to be accomplished, the resistance succeeded in bringing the critique to public attention on a vast scale. It also highlighted the anti-Muslim nature of the law, which had led political leaders to "a view that the government is treading cautiously on the matter after the Act drew protests in different parts of the country" ("CAA rules will be framed after COVID precaution dose exercise, Amit Shah tells Bengal BJP leader"). It has also succeeded in the form of a 'cry for help,' as Grover terms it, in drawing global attention and critique towards the undemocratic nature of the law, imprisonment of political activists from the Movement, the violence unleashed primarily at Muslims in protest sites, and the rise of hate speech in India with the codification of the CAA (Dieng).

However, the lack of success in achieving the Movement's primary demand does not undermine the role of emotional scene-setting in contemporary new media movements. In fact, this setback further highlights the entwined nature of affect and effective politics to turn the connective potential of affective publics online into collective action and success. For instance, the recent farmers' protest of 2020-2021 also critiqued the exclusionary and autocratic methods of the ruling administration, but they succeeded in getting the contentious

farm laws repealed in November 2021.<sup>59</sup> In both these cases, the government attempted to use nationalist propaganda on social media for maligning the movement by labelling the protesters as seditious, with the farmers being labelled ‘Khalistani’<sup>60</sup> (Arora) and Muslim protesters being told to ‘go to Pakistan’. As journalist Hussain Haidry, who reported on both movements closely, notes:

The plan of action against any protesters, be it the farmers’ protest or anti-CAA-NRC protests is to label the protesters by calling them ‘terrorists’ or ‘misguided’, then showcase that the protesters really don’t understand what the intention of the government is and why they have put forth these ‘controversial’ laws, and thereafter, appeal to their voter base by demonising the protesters fully. (Haidry qtd. in Prakash)

But this form of demonization and malignancy was not effective against farmers because nationalist symbols of emotional attachment, such as the armed forces, patriotic cinema and music, and even the ordinary sense of a hearty Indian meal, are strongly tied to them. As Indian sociologist Surinder Jodhka explains, “Nationalism invokes and sacralises territory, the *land*. ‘Mother India’ is not only the ‘sacred’ map of India but is also made of its soil, toiled upon by its hardworking and cultivating farmers” (Jodhka).

On the contrary, the anti-CAA Movement is battling against the deep-seated communal divide and antagonism towards Indian Muslims. And even as attempts towards inculcating a secular grammar of the Movement were made in Shaheen Bagh, anti-CAA poetry, and Twitter discourse, several assemblies in the Movement choreographed around the undemocratic attack on the identity and existence of Muslims as a community. Several poet-

---

<sup>59</sup> Refer to Goldman et al for a detailed timeline of the protest, the understanding of the laws, and the final repeal of the three acts.

<sup>60</sup> The Khalistan Movement is a Sikh separatist movement demanding sovereignty for the Sikh community (to which the majority of farmers in the protest belonged) from the Indian state and it had been one of the most significant sources of civil unrest and riots against the Sikh community in 1984. For a detailed understanding of Khalistan, refer to “Khalistan: Sikh political ideology”.

activists like Aziz and Naqvi, as well as tweets critiquing the hope for secularism in the Movement, suggested that their Muslimness is not an appendix to the issue but the reason for the issue itself. And thus, in several expressions and affective documentation online, nationalism was thoroughly critiqued for its history of othering against Muslims. Thus, their affective politics was linked to their communal identity intricately, echoing Arendt: “If one is attacked as a Jew, one must defend oneself as a Jew” (Arendt 12).

## **II. Feeling into the Future of the Movement**

The distinctive affective politics and strategic narratives built around Muslims, however, subject them to a form of othering and exclusion from national imagination that simply does not exist for farmers or any other dissenting group in India. This is explained through Ahmed’s notion of ‘stickiness,’ involving a “transference of affect” through repeated histories of contact that lead to an “accumulation of affective value” for signs, expressions, and objects (Ahmed 91-92). What makes this stickiness crucial to questions of cultural hate and violence is its concealed nature and difficulty to trace the chain of events that made it sticky through various exchanges and circulations between bodies (of people, communities, and nations). Ahmed argues that even as these expressions and signs continue to be repeated, over time and encounters, their association with other unspoken words and expressions remains concealed and accumulates more value for them. This stickiness makes the work of a movement such as the one against the CAA, primarily about communal issues, even more crucial yet difficult because of the evocative, memorable affective associations that have been tied to Muslims in the nationalist imagination. The vivid imagery and symbols of hope, community, and intimacy in the aesthetic mode of anti-CAA poetry as well as Twitter discourse are thus a step in the right direction, but they have their work cut out for them in countering the affective investment and emotional narration that precedes it, wherein:



The visual imagery of nationalism thus carries with it – along with several other components – a farmer with plough and sickle standing on his land, a cow grazing the field, and a Sikh soldier in army uniform saluting the national flag. Meanwhile, an ‘anti-national’ is always a Muslim man with a beard and skull cap, either planning to overthrow the state with the support of Pakistan, or betraying friends in everyday life. (Bhattacharya)

In the presence of such established, effective imagery and symbolism, *feeling* as part of the action becomes even more integral in the future of reviving the anti-CAA Movement. And social media allows exquisite possibilities for mobilizing assemblies around this feeling, as Gerbaudo concludes that contemporary movements “cannot do without (or what they do better with) is the capacity of such [social] media to become the instruments of an emotional narration capable of motivating individuals to take to the streets” (Gerbaudo 162). In tandem with this, the “long haul of history” (Papacharissi 135) needs a sustained engagement with affect and documentation of affective stories of resistances like the anti-CAA Movement, to see symbolic action counter effective nationalist propaganda and political othering. While the Movement certainly imbued affect into its politics to critique and counter such scenes of othering by trying to build alternative scenes of attachment on social media, more academic, journalistic, and political work of rigour needs to be done in highlighting the legitimacy and crucial value of affective politics. This thesis has been one attempt in that direction.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

A translation of “*Sab yaad rakha jaayega*” by Aamir Aziz:

You write the night; we will write the moon.  
 You put us in jail, we will jump over the walls and still write.  
 You file an FIR against us, we will write that we are ready to fight.  
 You murder us, we will manifest as ghosts and still write.  
 We will write the evidence of the murders you committed.

And you enjoy writing jokes in courts,  
 We will write justice on the roads and the walls.  
 We will speak loud enough so even the deaf will listen  
 We will write clearly enough so even the blind may read.

You symbolize the black lotus; we will write the red rose.  
 You write tyranny on the earth  
 We will write revolution in the sky.

Everything will be remembered, each and every thing will be remembered.  
 And with your *laathis* and bullets,  
 The comrades of mine that you have murdered —  
 In their memory, we will keep our hearts wrecked.  
 Everything will be remembered, each and every thing will be remembered.

And you will write lies with ink  
 We know that well—  
 Be it so with our blood, the truth will absolutely be written.

Everything will be remembered, each and every thing will be remembered.  
 And the blockades on mobile, telephone, internet in broad daylight,  
 And confining the entire city in the cold, dark night,  
 And abruptly invading my home with hammers,

Devastating the entirety of this small world of mine,  
Murdering a piece of my heart in the middle of a crossroads,  
And then smiling with no disguise, standing amidst the crowd—  
Everything will be remembered, each and every thing will be remembered.

And you sweet talk in front of the world during the day,  
Telling them everything is fine with a stuttering tongue,  
Come night-time, you hit with sticks  
The people who demand their rights.  
Shooting us, attacking us, and then calling us the attackers—  
Everything will be remembered, each and every thing will be remembered.

And I will document the proof of these crimes on my bones  
I will document the proof of these crimes on my bones  
Since you demand from me the proof of my existence.  
The proof of my being will certainly be given to you  
This war will be fought till your very last breath—  
Everything will be remembered, each and every thing will be remembered.

They will also be remembered—  
The countless ways you conspired to break the nation  
They will also be remembered—  
The endless endeavours we made to dream of uniting the nation.  
And whenever the world speaks of the era of cowardice,  
Your deeds will be remembered.

And whenever the world speaks of the commemoration of life,  
Our names will be remembered—  
That there were some people whose will could not be broken with iron hammers,  
That there were some people whose conscience could not be sold  
At the price of pennies to the highest bidders, unlike yours has been sold,  
That there were some people who stood strong,  
Even after the passing of the storm.  
That there were some people who stayed alive,

Even after receiving the news of their death.  
The eyes may forget to blink,  
The earth may forget to revolve at its axis—  
The flight of our clipped wings,  
The voice of our sore throats will be remembered.

You write the night; we will write the moon.  
You put us in jail, we will jump over the walls and still write.  
You file an FIR against us, we will write that we are ready to fight.  
You murder us, we will manifest as ghosts and still write.  
We will write the evidence of the murders you committed.

And you enjoy writing jokes in courts,  
We will write justice on the roads and the walls.  
We will speak loud enough so even the deaf will listen  
We will write clearly enough so even the blind may read.

You symbolize the black lotus; we will write the red rose.  
You write tyranny on the earth  
We will write revolution in the sky.

Everything will be remembered, each and every thing will be remembered.

So that your names could be damned forever,  
So that your effigies could be smeared with black paint,  
Your names, your effigies will be kept immortal—  
Everything will be remembered.

## **Appendix B**

A translation of an untitled poem by Aamir Aziz:

I can be beaten and attacked anywhere  
Abandoned, thrown, slashed, and sheared anywhere

Anywhere, anytime, for some matter or the other  
I can be arrested.  
Let alone some matter, even if there's no rhyme or reason to it  
I can be arrested.

My crime?

In their fabricated fables,  
I am the fabricated villain.

## **Appendix C**

A translation of an untitled poem by Aamir Aziz:

Today again fresh blood flowed through the streets  
For you, this fresh blood flowed through the streets

You drink it up!  
Drink it up till you feel full!

Perhaps the blood frozen in your veins will flow again  
Perhaps your conscience that has become mum  
Speaks up again

## Appendix D

A translation of “*Mai inkaar karta hoon*” by Aamir Aziz:

You can shoot us with your bullets certainly  
 Whether Haman dies of the bullets – that’s not necessary  
 It’s certain that Haman is afraid of death  
 Whether Haman is terrified into oblivion – that’s not necessary

I am the child of Hawā and Adam  
 My motherland is Hindustan  
 Muhammed, my Prophet; Allah, my Almighty  
 Ambedkar, my Teacher  
 Budh, my beginning; Nana, my Guide  
 Peace, my Religion; Passion, my Faith  
 So, to be terrified into oblivion  
 To die without my death—  
 I refuse.

I refuse tyranny  
 For to refuse tyranny is the first step towards revolution  
 I refuse to step back now.  
 That the decision of my life be made in a seven-hour Parliamentary session—  
 That’s not acceptable to me  
 That my identity be decided based on an identity card’s information—  
 That’s not acceptable to me.  
 Such a Parliamentary session  
 And the identity card’s information—  
 I refuse.

Should I be given charity instead of rights in my own country—  
 That’s not acceptable to me  
 Should I be turned into another name in a register—  
 That’s not acceptable to me.  
 To be handed alms instead of my rights

To be documented as a mere name in a register—  
I refuse.

Should I call my wounds flowers?  
Should I call my tyrant the Messenger of Law?  
Should I call the curfew some side entertainment?  
Should I call hatred a principle?  
That which calls the lie a truth—  
Each such shenanigan of the tongue—  
I refuse.



## **Appendix E**

A translation of an untitled poem by Aamir Aziz:

For their murders, I call out the murderers publicly, openly  
My spirit is hardened as a rock, but my heart melts easily, gently

I am deserving of punishment, so punish me with no uncertainty  
I am a Muslim with a tongue that refuses to speak silently.

## **Appendix F**

A translation of an untitled poem by Aamir Aziz:

The world tells me that I am an issue  
manufactured to distract from the issues  
The way one lets the dogs out to chase  
the poor for some delight on bored days

It makes me chuckle how the world  
never tires of making a hue and cry about 'humanity'  
I am a toy in the hands of a toddler  
who just wants to play and dilly-dally!

## Appendix G

A translation of “*Khush-amdeed*” by Aamir Aziz:

You brought with you to the slaughterhouses  
Hope that looked like life  
All the stars fireflies butterflies and Delhi’s gullies  
They bear witness, they hold testimony  
For how long can these false lawsuits, these false cases  
Keep truth jailed within the walls of the prison  
I say, hello, my friend! I say, welcome, welcome!

## Appendix H

A translation of “*Mera desh jal raha hai*” by Sabika Abbas Naqvi:

My country is burning  
 Yes, our country is burning  
 Go on, announce it on every street and crossroads  
 That our burnt country’s funeral procession is about to begin  
 And the coffin is being carried by  
 The silent people from one end  
 Well-educated silent people  
 Privileged upper-caste silent people  
 The rich, the wealthy silent people  
 Actor director silent people  
 CEO bureaucrats silent people  
 Ratify every bill silent people.

The liars shoulder the coffin from the other end—  
 VC Registrar lying people  
 Newsreader journalist lying people  
 TV and newspaper liars  
 IT entrepreneur liars  
 The liars of this crony government  
 Naive innocent helpless liars  
 Ready with the sticks liars.

The liberals shoulder the coffin from the third end  
 Balanced centrist liberal people  
 “Don’t get hyper” liberal people  
 People with intelligent questions, liberal people  
 “I don’t understand CAB” liberal people  
 “Plis to explain” liberal people  
 “We don’t see how it affects you” liberal people  
 Our friends, our pals, those liberal people  
 Extended relatives of the Sangh Dynasty liberal people

Descendants of Savarkar liberal people  
 "The government cannot do this, my pal" liberal people  
 The leaders of jargon, liberal people  
 My thoughts sway with but-ifs, liberal people  
 Treacherous, deceiving liberal people  
 "But even the police was attacked" liberal people  
 "Genocide is very far" liberal people  
 "These students don't study, my pal" liberal people  
 "Protests are fully futile" liberal people  
 "Whataboutery is my weapon" liberal people  
 "We prefer civility" liberal people  
 "Explain the nitty gritty" liberal people  
 Mildly communal liberal people  
 Mostly millennial liberal people.

For the fourth leg, the country's system  
 The officials of these courts people  
 Politicians, ministers, businesspeople  
 Obedient in their uniforms people  
 Facebook and Twitter expert people  
 Their bribed unemployed people  
 Throne and crown carrying courtier people  
 Abusing cultured people  
 Parliament's prominent people  
 Contractors of the Constitution people  
 Rotten vegetable people  
 Worshippers of fake news people  
 Participants of their people  
 Stick-carrying anticipating people  
 Those who are all set to unleash people.

But to extinguish the fire  
 That burns this country  
 Here they come on the streets

Raised fingers  
Shouting slogans  
Sparking hope  
Singing songs  
Women.  
Heads covered, or hair undone  
Carrying flags  
Making noise, breaking barricades  
Playfully teasing the patriarchal rulers  
Beware of us women!  
Hear us roar, don't you dare!  
A new dawn will break for sure  
The tyrannous ritual will turn for sure  
See, here they are on the streets—  
Thunderstorm people  
Sunshine people  
Fearless people  
Priceless people  
Oh, these universities' relentless people  
Everyone's pride people  
Virtuous people  
Cascading with hope people  
Oh, these good-hearted, darling people  
Safekeepers of rights people  
Audacious, bravely leading people  
Devoted to rights people  
Oh, these passion people, oh, these love people  
Not just once, but time and time again people  
Not just over and over, but every single time people  
Oh, all these street gully market people  
Not one, not two, a thousand people  
My beloved people, my beloved people  
Dear to my heart, my love people.

**Appendix I**

A translation of “*Lekin bus nahi jalni chahiye*” by Sabika Abbas Naqvi:

But the buses mustn't be burnt  
The police invades our homes to beat us up  
The police detains our people  
You bear the brunt of beating sticks  
Go to jail and get arrested  
But the buses mustn't be burnt.  
The SP commands, “Go to Pakistan!”  
But the buses mustn't be burnt.  
Neighbourhoods become slaughterhouses  
Our young are killed and murdered  
But the buses mustn't be burnt.  
They kill our children, they kill our women  
They shower us with sticks and abuses  
You just keep turning the other cheek  
But the buses mustn't be burnt.  
Every day the empty promises of deceit  
Fed to us as the pile of crap I eat, and you eat.  
But the buses mustn't be burnt.

## Appendix J

A translation of “*Yeh gundaiti ke naam*” by Sabika Abbas Naqvi:

This anguished heart of mine keeps sighing in agony  
 We were punished for dialoging, for debating  
 What was our crime that we were beaten  
 Oh yes, we were beaten by the state, the society  
 And the fake nationalist goons of the ABVP.  
 They pelted stones at us, thrashed us with bottles  
 Indifferent to our traditions of education and its legacy  
 With closed minds, they stabbed at us openly.  
 Anyway, our crime was colossal  
 We had organized a seminar for all  
 Those who were like us, the anti-nationalists  
 Yes, all of them we had invited.  
 Yes, those traitors who spoke loudly  
 Exposed the rising atrocities in the country  
 Then how could it be for these sons of the soil  
 That their veins had remained frozen, their blood not boiled?  
 In a frenzy they came with their weapons  
 When they heard the freedom cries and slogans  
 These self-proclaimed sons of the motherland  
 Screamed loud and proud in full fervour, without an end—  
*Glory to Mother India!* I’ll rip off your clothes  
*Glory to Mother India!* I’ll give you freedom, no?  
*Glory to Mother India!* Muslim slut, how many Muslim men did you bang?  
*Glory to Mother India!* I’ll humiliate you with some sexist slurs, abuses, and slang.  
 Listen to me, you beloved goons of the country  
 These bullying ways and your bulging biceps, you can keep  
 The Modi you hail and the bullets you shoot, you can keep  
 You can keep your laathis and sticks, your punches and kicks  
 All of this you can keep, we don’t need  
 Your long, bull-tailed moustache  
 You can keep it all to yourself.



With ears wide open, listen to the echoes  
Of our steps marching to you and your doors  
Come, take a look at the energetic crowd  
Of our sit-ins and slogans, loud and proud.  
These barricades are bound to fall soon  
As we sing songs for peace night and noon  
And we'll explain to you how every lock you shut tightly  
Shall be opened with the power of our voices inevitably.  
We will live our romances and politics on all streets, close and far  
And out and about in the public, we will organize seminars.  
We will reclaim the markets, the roads, and the universities  
To tyranny and the abuse of force, we will bid adieu boldly  
We will birth new and novel slogans for the lanes  
You keep on singing of violence, hate, and pain  
We will discover the freedom that love can gain  
The freedom to be joyous, the freedom to be in love  
The freedom to read, write, and study the world  
If you don't let us be free, we'll write liberty in our destiny  
We will sing, dance, and create art to claim our liberty.  
By now, you must have understood clearly  
That we'll build the nation, world, and university of our dreams  
So, go and hide the chest you claim to be of 56 inches  
Oh, and stop being so creepy, oh so masculiney  
So lousy, troubling, rioting, and rowdy.

## Appendix K

A translation of “*Kaagazaat*” by Akhil Katyal:

They get lost  
And can't be found  
Sometimes bugs destroy them  
Sometimes the writing fades on them  
Sometimes in mysterious circumstances  
They are burnt in government offices  
If they don't exist, then a bribe brings them to life  
Sometimes they get names wrong, sometimes age  
Sometimes sex, and sometimes village  
Again and again, they are demanded  
Just like that— validated and unvalidated  
Sometimes burdened by a pile of files  
They suffocate and lose their life  
They take away lives  
  
And then they say these documents—  
They create identity.

**Appendix L**

A translation of “*Naagriktā*” by Akhil Katyal:

It's not anybody's kind favour  
Nor can it be donated as charity  
And it can't be begged for on the streets.  
It lies around in a house's canopy  
Nobody pays it any special attention  
If we come across it while passing by  
Then it's absolutely not necessary  
To speak of its obviousness and offer some commentary  
It always lags behind hunger  
The need for water is a much bigger priority  
Within offices and newspapers  
Jobs are searched for, not citizenship.

It is fundamental,  
It is a right.

And they give it away like it's a pittance.

## Appendix M

A translation of “*Aap sarkaar nahi hain*” by Puneet Sharma:

You are not the government  
Say this thing – to yourself  
To each and everyone out there  
Repeat  
Keep repeating it again and again  
And again–  
You are not the government

You might have with you sticks to beat with  
Bricks within a home, or to build a home with  
Your eyes might spew the venom of division  
But you shouldn’t latch on to violence–  
You are not the government.

You may have the right to citizenship  
Lawful weapons or ones that are illegit  
But you are not the government  
And you can’t escape the prison  
If you attack some agent of the government  
And by cracking your skull open  
The constable earns himself a medal  
For to thrash and attack is the duty of the government–  
You are not the government.

Don’t you flaunt your false testimony  
Don’t you entrap people in the lies within your story  
You may be a doctor or a student  
An actor or a tailor–  
You are not the government.

You can either be a robber

Or you can turn out a hoarder  
Or you may burst with pride  
But you mustn't be a robber, a hoarder  
And loud and proud altogether—  
You are not the government.

You shouldn't spread rumours about  
Make some promises and then bolt out  
Don't break homes and bonds, my friend—  
You are not the government.

You may have friends and enemies as well  
You may be a comrade or a rebel  
But to be a turncoat for your benefit  
Being asked a question and throwing a fit  
To be stiff always, to always be rigid  
And to pretend to fall  
Only to be exposed of your deceit  
And then fake standing tall—  
None of this is right  
Why, you might ask and fight till the end  
Why, because you are not the government.

You are supposed to fulfill your duty  
Waking up and somehow letting time drain into dusk  
But to destroy an innocent's life is not your task  
Your duty is not to raise questions  
If you've money, spend it  
If you've got food, devour it  
If you feel like crying, then let it go (on your own)  
If you want to laugh, then go on (at the weaker ones)  
If you can buy it, then put a bid on your share of comfort  
Or maybe you can share it, just a bit  
Remember – remember to breathe

Remember – you’ve a conscience to keep  
Don’t shrink your identity to a number for the majority  
Or to a suicidal slogan for another political party  
Until you have it in you, carry on  
To feel your soul within your body  
When you felt it last, do you have that memory?  
You’re your administration’s subject and its slave  
You can’t be dismissed away  
Only the government can be dismissed  
You are not the government.

You are not the government  
Say this thing – to yourself  
To each and everyone out there  
Repeat  
Keep repeating it again and again  
And again–  
You are not the government  
Your responsibility ends with you  
For the dying crops of our country  
For those not born and their progeny  
Or for the murder of those oppressed by tyranny  
You have no accountability.

You  
Are not  
The government.

## Works Cited

- @aamir.aziz. Photo containing the poem 'I am a Muslim, I have a voice'. *Instagram*, 8 July, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CCZGUOMHKHj/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . Photo containing the poem 'Khush-aamdeed.' *Instagram*, 17 June, 2021, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CQO6skzH4o5/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . Photo containing the poem 'Log kehte hain ek mudda hai tu jisse bhatkaye jaate hain mudde.' *Instagram*, 12 February, 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZ3kdNpvnEf/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . "#standwithUmarkhalid." *Instagram*, 14 September, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CFHePcOHH-k/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . "sab yaad Rakha jayega." *Instagram*, 11 January, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B7LgTR6nvO5/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . "Sab Yaad Rakha Jayega The horror of 15th December shall never be forgotten!!!" *Instagram*, 15 December, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CIz4c6JHhc7/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . "Today's death!!!" *Instagram*, 19 December, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B6Q0vIIH3bb/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . "'Jamia ki ladkiyan'." *Instagram*, 3 January, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B6225Gznkni/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . "'Main inkar karta hun'." *Instagram*, 4 January, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B66HTkQnybo/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- @AmitShah. "First, we will bring Citizenship Amendment Bill and will give citizenship to the Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain and Christian refugees, the religious minorities from the neighbouring nations. Then, we will implement NRC to flush out the infiltrators from our country." *Twitter*, 22 April 2019, <https://twitter.com/AmitShah/status/1120275890871521280?s=20>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- @arvindgunasekar. "Anti CAA / NRC protestors created WhatsApp groups, planned Chakka Jams that resulted in North East Delhi riots. This is what Delhi Police have said in their 17,500 pages chargesheet. UAPA invoked ! 'Chakka jams, not a democratic way of protest', Delhi Police." *Twitter*, 16 Sep. 2020, [twitter.com/arvindgunasekar/status/1306232033681776641](https://twitter.com/arvindgunasekar/status/1306232033681776641). Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- @asadowaisi. "Speechless to hear the news of @rahatindori's passing away. This is a

- personal loss. May Allah grant him maghfirah & illuminate his grave This clip is from January 25-26 this year when #RahatIndori sahab had visited us in Hyderabad for an Ehtejaji Mushaira against CAA NRC & NPR.” *Twitter*, 11 August 2020, <https://twitter.com/asadowaisi/status/1293170518477029378>. Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- @azharbaig1995. “O M A Salam, Chairman PFI (@oma\_salam) Tweeted: They Tried to Bury Us, They Didn’t Know We Were Seeds. Bilkis Bano Saheba our "Daadi" of Shaheen Bagh protest made it into the TIME's list of the 100 most influential people of 2020. May she live long.” *Twitter*, 24 Sep. 2020, [twitter.com/azharbaig1995/status/1309104867005419520](https://twitter.com/azharbaig1995/status/1309104867005419520). Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- @BadheRakesh. “Can Someone sensible from @TheQuint @thewire\_in @scroll\_in @ndtvfeed @the\_hindu @IndianExpress @timesofindia @IndiaToday @ndtvfeed @ThePrintIndia @AmarUjalaNews @DBhaskarHindi @NationalHerald please comment on this or better run a story and it’s relevance for #CAA\_NRC\_NPR @NewsX.” *Twitter*, 17 Aug. 2020, [twitter.com/BadheRakesh/status/1295346694343634944](https://twitter.com/BadheRakesh/status/1295346694343634944). Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- @boltiaurat (Sabika Abbas Naqvi). Video of Naqvi reciting ‘*Bus nahi jalni chahiye.*’ *Instagram*, 30 December, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B6sBhbzHjhc/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . Video of Naqvi reciting ‘*Yeh gundaiti ke naam.*’ *Instagram*, 17 January, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B7arpZYnI0V/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . “Mera Desh Jal Raha Hai.” *Instagram*, 20 December, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B6SbmETn3tP/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . “Why I can’t be a lover this Valentines Day.” *Instagram*, 14 Feb. 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B8iSyLGJRyJ/>. Accessed 9 Feb. 2023.
- @dpasscool1. *Twitter*, <https://twitter.com/dpasscool1>. Accessed 12 February 2023.
- @HumanismProject. “Inflammatory content against Muslims on Facebook (@Meta) spiked 300 percent in months before the Delhi Pogrom, which led to killing of 53 people, mostly Muslims. Facebook is complicit in Delhi’s anti-Muslim Pogrom. #FacebookEnablesMuslimGenocide.” *Twitter*, 13 Nov. 2021, [twitter.com/HumanismProject/status/1459599020142125057](https://twitter.com/HumanismProject/status/1459599020142125057). Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- @jamiamillia\_. “Watch this and realise what kind of trauma and brutality #JamiaMilliaIslamia students faced on the hands of @DelhiPolice. Students studying in library are being attacked and brutalised for no fault of theirs. #15DecJamiaAttack.” *Twitter*, 15 Dec. 2020,



- [twitter.com/jamiamillia\\_/status/1338840252841140224](https://twitter.com/jamiamillia_/status/1338840252841140224). Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- @katyal.akhil. Photo containing the poem 'Kaagazaat'. *Instagram*, 21 December, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B6VNSympDCP/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . Photo containing the poem 'Naagrikta'. *Instagram*, 30 December, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B6tZo37J1rm/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . "An evening walk while a friend is in prison." *Instagram*, 17 June, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CBindspJHEI/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . "Falcon." *Instagram*, 19 January, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B7fjSazpSiC/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . "From his Insta, you know." *Instagram*, 14 September, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CFIS28Qp-PZ/>. Accessed 8 February 2023.
- . "I was born." *Instagram*, 24 April, 2020, [https://www.instagram.com/p/B\\_XBqoJp8MB/](https://www.instagram.com/p/B_XBqoJp8MB/). Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . "These days." *Instagram*, 25 May, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CAnzW5RJ1EI/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- . "#umarkhalid500daysofarrest #releaseumarkhalid." Photo containing the poem 'You belong here,' *Instagram*, 27 January, 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZPDiwxvCyC/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- @knowthenation. "This young NRI student started out with a deep dive into morals and the need to fight for the thought of India. When asked how #CAA\_NRC was discriminatory, look at the expression on her face. Watch till the end! Clip from August Kranti Maidan #CAA\_NRC\_Protests #ISupportCAA\_NRC." *Twitter*, 20 December 2019, <https://twitter.com/knowthenation/status/1208040613079158790>. Accessed 12 February 2023.
- @kpnewschannel. "My House was burnt My documents were burnt My Family was killed My Childhood was ruined My Identity was lost I am a refugee in my own country I lost everything, yet I can prove my documents that I am INDIAN . Yet I stand for CAA & NRC WHATS YOUR EXCUSE." *Twitter*, 9 Jan. 2020, [twitter.com/kpnewschannel/status/1215345548380778496](https://twitter.com/kpnewschannel/status/1215345548380778496). Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- @LiveLawIndia. "Jamia Violence: hearing on petitions seeking independent inquiry begins before the Delhi HC @DelhiPolice #JamiaViolence." *Twitter*, 18 Sep. 2020, [twitter.com/LiveLawIndia/status/1306877764100919298](https://twitter.com/LiveLawIndia/status/1306877764100919298). Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- @MehekF. "Just some days back, AAP had no power to file FIRs during Delhi Pogrom, nor during Jamia and JNU attacks. Well played, libbus ki favorite party." *Twitter*, 11

April 2020, [twitter.com/MehekF/status/1248960165019336705](https://twitter.com/MehekF/status/1248960165019336705). Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.

@NandyAsmita. "The protest graffiti at @jamiamillia\_ being defaced by the labourers brought in by @DelhiPolice. After clearing the protest site at #ShaheenaBagh, the same was done to the graffiti and the caricatures there. @TheQuint." *Twitter*, 24 March 2020, <https://twitter.com/NandyAsmita/status/1242340202019868672>. Accessed 10 February 2023.

@ndtv. "Woman protester breaks down while speaking to NDTV's Ravish Kumar at Delhi's #ShaheenBagh #CAA #NRC." *Twitter*, 9 January 2020, <https://twitter.com/ndtv/status/1215339817254281216>. Accessed 12 February 2023.

@owais\_speaks. "I am so proud of this little warriors. Hum ladke lengey. Azadi Hum leke rahengey. Azadi Are sunle modi. Azadi #CAAProtest #IndiaAgainstCAA #Azadi." *Twitter*, 19 Dec. 2019, [twitter.com/owais\\_speaks/status/1207724490345463809](https://twitter.com/owais_speaks/status/1207724490345463809). Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.

@premanicker. "At Shaheen Bagh, almost every conversation begins with Aapne kuch khaya? Nahin? Kya khayenge? Kyun nahin, aap door se aaye ho hamara saath dene, kuch to kaa lijiye... These from folks who have been sitting out there 24/7 in the coldest December in decades." *Twitter*, 29 Dec. 2019, [twitter.com/premanicker/status/1211280588625178624](https://twitter.com/premanicker/status/1211280588625178624). Accessed 10 Feb. 2023.

@puneetvuneet (Puneet Sharma). Post caption containing the poem 'Tum kaun ho bey,' *Instagram*, 10 January, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B7I89MqJzw6/>. Accessed 9 February 2023.

---. "Aap Sarkaar Nahin Hain." *Instagram*, 15 January, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B7VUaafpb9q/>. Accessed 10 February 2023.

---. "English translation by Mihir Chitre." Post containing translation of "Who the hell are you" by Mihir Chitre, *Twitter*, 14 Jan. 2020, [twitter.com/PuneetVuneet/status/1216998727782739968](https://twitter.com/PuneetVuneet/status/1216998727782739968). Accessed 9 Feb. 2023.

@RashidYuva. "Free Safoora, Free Shifa-ur Rehman, Free Meeran. Stand with Jamia. #ShaheenBaghZindaHai." *Twitter*, 11 May 2020, [twitter.com/RashidYuva/status/1259777920958111744](https://twitter.com/RashidYuva/status/1259777920958111744). Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.

@ReallySwara. "The best thing you will see on the Internet today!!! @spill\_the\_sass #DollySingh 's HILARIOUS take down of CAA-NRC-NPR Sheer genius!" *Twitter*, 9 January 2020, <https://twitter.com/ReallySwara/status/1215321898646564864>.

Accessed 12 February 2023.

@RecklessSinner\_. “They released all the criminals behind demolition of Babri Masjid and you think they will arrest the culprits during Delhi Pogrom who demolishes several mosques few months back. How cute!” *Twitter*, 30 Sep.2020,

[twitter.com/RecklessSinner\\_/status/1311208843540488193](https://twitter.com/RecklessSinner_/status/1311208843540488193). Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.

@sazamza. *Twitter*, <https://twitter.com/sazamza>. Accessed 12 February 2023.

@Shaheenbaghoff1. “When the protector turns perpetrator, where do we go?! Shame on @DelhiPolice for disrespecting the value of human life. Is this how the Delhi Police fulfills its Constitutional duty to show respect to our National Anthem? (Maujpur, 24 Feb) #ShameOnDelhiPolice #DelhiBurning.” *Twitter*, 24 Feb. 2020,

[twitter.com/Shaaheenbaghoff1/status/1232130822171435009](https://twitter.com/Shaaheenbaghoff1/status/1232130822171435009). Accessed 9 Feb. 2023.

@Shakeeb\_frq. “some of us still need to respect the Constitution and understand our role as an indian it isn’t to bow or kiss the ring of the Prime minister. Sentimental attachment towards any government is destruction of your own rights. #CAAProtests

#JNUViolence.” *Twitter*, 10 Jan. 2020,

[twitter.com/Shakeeb\\_frq/status/1215506427495583744](https://twitter.com/Shakeeb_frq/status/1215506427495583744). Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.

@ShashiTharoor. “I don’t know who this brilliant poet is, but ‘hum kagaz nahin dikhayenge’ is destined to be one of the most powerful anthems of the #CAA\_NRC\_Protests !” *Twitter*, 21 December 2019,

[twitter.com/ShashiTharoor/status/1208455054543347712](https://twitter.com/ShashiTharoor/status/1208455054543347712). Accessed 12 February 2023.

@Sydusm. “After doing splendid work to support protestors at Shaheen Bagh and then saving the victims of East Delhi pogrom, Kejriwal now offers full assistance to farmers. Consistency makes a leader.” *Twitter*, 7 Dec. 2020,

<https://twitter.com/Sydusm/status/1335889362249154561>. Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.

@TheQuint. “UAPA accused #IshratJahan, out on interim bail, got married on 12 June. ‘My past has been very painful, I’ve been falsely implicated. Now instead of thinking about the future, I don’t want to ruin this moment,’ she tells @iyersaishwarya. Catch more here: <https://bit.ly/3d2Oyxh>.” *Twitter*, 14 June 2020,

<https://twitter.com/TheQuint/status/1272345373835620357>. Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.

@trajeshtvpm. “Addressing a Mammoth Crowd in Moradabad earlier today,

@priyankagandhi pointing out the absence of @yadavakhilesh during CAA/NRC, Covid time & in the struggle against Yogi Govt & taking potshots at him for his drawing room politics... #UPAssemblyElections2022.” *Twitter*, 2 Dec. 2021,

- [twitter.com/trrajeshtvpm/status/1466398830543327232](https://twitter.com/trrajeshtvpm/status/1466398830543327232). Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- @UmarKhalidJNU. "Delhi Police unleashes brutalities on Jamia students once again. Your lathis will not be able to break our resolve to fight against CAA/NRC/NPR. #IndiaAgainstCAA\_NPR\_NRC." *Twitter*, 10 Feb. 2020, [twitter.com/UmarKhalidJNU/status/1226821150535106563](https://twitter.com/UmarKhalidJNU/status/1226821150535106563). Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- @vidushak (Varun Grover). Video of Grover reciting "The NRC Papers, We Won't Show." *Instagram*, 21 December, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/p/B6WDPJKJ4h4/>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- @vikrantkumar. "These two Guys look same no? #JamiaViolence #JamiaMilia." *Twitter*, 16 February 2020, <https://twitter.com/vikrantkumar/status/1229028686273208320>. Accessed 12 February 2023.
- @vivekagnihotri. "I am surprised that not even one journalist has asked from where #ShaheenBaghProtests are getting wireless sets, metal detectors, Wi-fi centres? Who is providing transport, air-tickets, logistics for the guest speakers? Who is paying professional security & event managers?" *Twitter*, 31 Jan. 2020, [twitter.com/vivekagnihotri/status/1223124959293140992](https://twitter.com/vivekagnihotri/status/1223124959293140992). Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- @WellSaidGuru. "Drone view of crowd at August Kranti Maidan in support of CAA + NRC Without much publicity. Spontaneous participation. Quite unbelievable Need anything more be said Media is not reporting. Can we spread it aggressively to make media redundant." *Twitter*, 27 December 2019, <https://twitter.com/WellSaidGuru/status/1210581681867935745>. Accessed 12 February 2023.
- Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Ackerman, R.D. "Wallace Stevens: Myth, Belief, and Presence." *Criticism*, vol. 14, no. 3, 1972, pp. 266–76. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23099022>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- Ahmed, Sara. *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*. NED-New edition, 2, Edinburgh University Press, 2014. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.3366/j.ctt1g09x4q>. Accessed 14 Oct. 2022.
- Ameen, Furquan. "The Library at Shaheen Bagh." *The Telegraph online*, 20 January 2020, <https://www.telegraphindia.com/delhi/the-fatima-sheikh-savitribai-phule-library-has-been-set-up-at-shaheen-bagh-on-17-january-2020-the-fourth-death-anniversary-of-rohith-vemula/cid/1737477>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- Arendt, Hannah. *Essays in Understanding 1930-1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*.

- Edited by Jeroke Kohn, Schoken Books, New York, 1994.
- Arora, Kusum. "Farmers' Protest: Despite Rightwing Propaganda, 'Khalistani' Angle Finds Little Traction." *The Wire*, 2 December 2020, <https://thewire.in/agriculture/farmers-protest-despite-rightwing-propaganda-khalistani-angle-finds-little-traction>. Accessed 6 April 2022.
- Aziz, Aamir. "These Are the Girls of Jamia." *Centre for Translation*, translated by Yukti Saumya, Ashoka University, <https://translation.ashoka.edu.in/these-are-the-girls-of-jamia/>. Accessed 9 Feb. 2023.
- Barnes, Marian and others (eds). *Ethics of Care: Critical advances in international perspective*. Online edition, Policy Press Scholarship Online, Bristol, 19 May 2016, <https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1332/policypress/9781447316510.001.0001>. Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- Berlant, Lauren. "Introduction." *Cruel Optimism*, Duke University Press, 2011, pp. 1-23.
- Bhatia, Gautam, N. Ram, and Romila Thapar. *On Citizenship*. Aleph Book Company, 2021.
- Bhatia, Kiran & Gajjala, Radhika. "Examining Anti-CAA Protests at Shaheen Bagh: Muslim Women and Politics of the Hindu India." *International Journal of Communication*, vol. 14, 2020, pp. 6286-6303, <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/16015>.
- Bhattacharya, Abhik. "Debate: The Real Reason Why Farmers' and Anti-CAA Protests Have Been Perceived Differently." *The Wire*, 27 January 2021, <https://thewire.in/rights/farmers-anti-caa-protests-muslim-sikh-identity-hindu-nationalism>. Accessed 13 February 2023.
- Bhilwar, Anushka. "Social Media and Protest: A Case Study on Anti CAA Protest in India." *3rd International Conference on Advanced Research in Social Sciences*, 11-14 March 2021, pp. 11-25, <https://www.dpublication.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/16-225.pdf>.
- Borch-Jacobsen, Mikkel. *The Emotional Tie : Psychoanalysis, Mimesis, and Affect*. Stanford University Press, 1993.
- boyd, danah, and Alice E Marwick. "I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience." *New Media & Society*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2011, pp. 114–133, [doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313](https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313). Accessed 9 Feb. 2023.
- boyd, danah, Mizuko Ito, and Henry Jenkins. *Participatory Culture in a Networked Era: A Conversation on Youth, Learning, Commerce, and Politics*. Polity Press, 2016.
- boyd, danah, Scott Golder, and Gilad Lotan. "Tweet, Tweet, Retweet: Conversational

- Aspects of Retweeting on Twitter.” *Proceedings of the Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, 2010, <https://doi.org/10.1109/HICSS.2010.412>.
- Bradshaw, Samantha, and Ualan Campbell-Smith. “Global Cyber Troops Country Profile: India.” *Oxford Internet Institute*, University of Oxford, <https://demtech.oii.ox.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/93/2019/05/India-Profile.pdf>. Accessed 7 October 2021.
- Brinkema, Eugenie. *The Forms of the Affect*. Duke University Press, 2014.
- Burke, Kenneth. *Counter-Statement*. Second edition, Hermes Publications, 1953.
- . *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*. Third ed., University of California Press, 1973.
- Burke, Michelle Y. “Writing from the Senses.” *Poetry Foundation*, 29 Aug. 2013, [poetryfoundation.org/articles/70049/writing-from-the-senses](https://poetryfoundation.org/articles/70049/writing-from-the-senses). Accessed 10 Feb. 2023.
- Butler, Judith. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*. Routledge, 1st ed., 2021, <https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.4324/9781003146759>.
- Chander, Mani. “11 Ways The Delhi Police Have Muddled The Delhi-Riots Investigation.” *Article 14*, 13 September 2021, <https://www.article-14.com/post/11-ways-the-delhi-police-have-muddled-the-delhi-riots-investigation-613ebb8c99769>. Accessed 14 October 2022.
- Chasar, Mike. *Poetry Unbound : Poems and New Media from the Magic Lantern to Instagram*. Columbia University Press, 2020. Accessed 12 February 2023.
- Chaudhuri, Pooja. “Investigating Twitter handle ‘Know The Nation’ that shared Rahul Gandhi’s clipped video.” *Alt News*, 8 January 2019, <https://www.altnews.in/investigating-twitter-handle-know-the-nation-that-shared-rahul-gandhis-clipped-video/>. Accessed 12 February 2023.
- Chishti, Seema. “The Rubble.” *The Caravan*, 1 Nov. 2022, <https://caravanmagazine.in/politics/thirty-years-babri-masjid-ram-janmabhoomi-ayodhya>. Accessed 13 Dec. 2022.
- Cvetkovich, Ann. *Depression: A Public Feeling*. Duke University Press, 2012.
- Das, Aritry. “Shubha Mudgal To Rapper Sumit Roy: When A Common Cause Makes Them Perform At Shaheen Bagh.” *Outlook*, 7 February 2020, <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/india-news-subha-mudgal-to-rapper-sumit-roy-when-a-common-cause-make-them-perform-at-shaheen-bagh/346916>.
- Dieng, Adama. “Note to Media on India.” *United Nations*, 18 May 2020, [https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/18052020\\_SA%20note%20to](https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/documents/18052020_SA%20note%20to)

- [%20media%20on%20India\\_final.pdf](#). Accessed 13 Feb. 2023.
- Dubrow, Jennifer. "Singing the Revolution: India's Anti-CAA Protests and Faiz's 'Hum Dekhenge.'" *positions*, April 2020, [https://positionspolitics.org/eikon\\_2dubrow/](https://positionspolitics.org/eikon_2dubrow/).
- Dwivedi, Sukirti. "'We'll Be Peaceful Till Trump Leaves,' BJP Leader Kapil Mishra Warns Delhi Police." *NDTV*, 24 February 2020, <https://www.ndtv.com/delhi-news/bjp-leader-kapil-mishras-3-day-ultimatum-to-delhi-police-to-clear-anti-cao-protest-jaffrabad-2184627>. Accessed 14 October 2022.
- Edwards, Emily, and Sarah Ford. "Women of Shaheen Bagh in Transnational Digital Publics." *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2021, pp. 163–166.
- Edwards, Emily, et al. "Shaheen Bagh: Making Sense of (Re)Emerging 'Subaltern' Feminist Political Subjectivities in Hashtag Publics through Critical, Feminist Interventions." *New Media & Society*, 2021, doi:10.1177/14614448211059121.
- English, James F., and Ted Underwood. "Shifting Scales: Between Literature and Social Science." *Modern Language Quarterly*, 77 (3), 2016, pp. 277–295, DOI: 10.1215/00267929-3570612. Accessed 14 Oct. 2022.
- Express News Service. "Jamia firing: Would turn Shaheen Bagh to Jallianwala Bagh, said shooter on Facebook." *The Indian Express*, 31 January 2020, <https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/delhi/2020/jan/31/jamia-firing-would-turn-shaheen-bagh-to-jallianwala-bagh-said-shooter-on-facebook-2096841.html>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- Faiz, Faiz Ahmed. 2020. "दिल ना-उमीद तो नहीं नाकाम ही तो है." *Rekhta*, <https://www.rekhta.org/couplets/dil-naa-umiid-to-nahiin-naakaam-hii-to-hai-faiz-ahmad-faiz-couplets?lang=hi>. Accessed 24 February 2021.
- Felski, Rita. *Hooked: Art and Attachment*, University of Chicago Press, 2020.
- Filiu, Jean-Pierre. *Apocalypse in Islam*. Translated by M. B. Berkeley DeBevoise, University of California Press, 2011.
- Flatley, Jonathan. "Reading for Mood." *Representations*, vol. 140, no. 140, 2017, pp. 137–158.
- Freelon, D., McIlwain, C., and Clark, M. *Beyond the hashtags: #Ferguson, #Blacklivesmatter, and the online struggle for offline justice*. Center for Media & Social Impact, 2016, <http://cmsimpact.org/blmreport>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- Gerbaudo, Paolo. *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism*. Pluto Press, 2012.

- Goldman, Russell, Emily Schmall, and Mujib Mashal. "What Prompted the Farm Protests in India?" *The New York Times*, 27 Jan. 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/27/world/asia/india-farmer-protest.html>. Accessed 8 April 2022.
- Gregg, Melissa, and Gregory J Seigworth. *The Affect Theory Reader*. Duke University Press, 2010.
- Hemmings, Clare. "Affect and Feminist Methodology, Or What Does It Mean to be Moved?" *Structures of Feeling: Affectivity and the Study of Culture*, edited by Devika Sharma and Frederik Tygstrup, 2015, pp. 147-158, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110365481.147>.
- Hill, Faith, and Karen Yuan. "How Instagram Saved Poetry." *The Atlantic*, 15 October, 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2018/10/rupi-kaur-instagram-poet-entrepreneur/572746/>. Accessed 11 February 2023.
- IANS. "Shaheen Bagh shooter Kapil Gujjar released on bail." *Livemint*, 7 March 2020, <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/shaheen-bagh-shooter-kapil-gujjar-released-on-bail-11583597201231.html>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- Jaggar, Alison M. "Love and knowledge: Emotion in feminist epistemology." *Inquiry*, 32:2, 1989, DOI: 10.1080/00201748908602185, pp. 151-176. Accessed 14 Oct. 2022.
- Jodhka, Surinder S. "No matter how hard the propagandists try, protesting farmers won't be seen as anti-national." *Scroll.in*, 19 December 2020, <https://scroll.in/article/981677/no-matter-how-hard-the-propagandists-try-protesting-farmers-wont-be-seen-as-anti-national>. Accessed 10 Feb. 2023.
- Joshi, Anushree. "Digital-Resistance-in-Anti-CAA-Protests-in-India." *GitHub*, 20 Feb. 2023, <https://github.com/AnushreeJoshi31/Digital-Resistance-in-Anti-CAA-Protests-in-India>. Accessed 20 Feb. 2023.
- Kaufman, Janet, and Anne Herzog, editors. *Collected Poems of Muriel Rukeyser*. University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mcgill/detail.action?docID=2041565>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- Kelkar, Amit. "For Bollywood stars, anti-Padmaavat protest was terrorism, but burning buses during anti-CAA riots is dissent." *OpIndia*, 19 December 2019, <https://www.opindia.com/2019/12/bollywood-hypocrisy-padmaavat-anti-kaa-riot/>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- Khandelwal, Chetna. "Networked social movements: a critical interrogation of pro and anti-



- immigration Twitter discourse in India and the USA.” *Library and Cultural Resources*, University of Calgary, <http://dx.doi.org/10.11575/PRISM/39722>.
- Kuchay, Bilal. “Student’s hand amputated as violence grips citizenship protests.” *Al Jazeera*, 25 December 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/12/25/students-hand-amputated-as-violence-grips-citizenship-protests>. Accessed 13 Feb. 2023.
- Lal, Amrith. “Chronicle of the Emergency: When poetry spoke against the betrayal of democracy.” *The Indian Express*, 25 June 2018, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/when-poetry-spoke-against-the-betrayal-of-democracy-2/>. Accessed 13 February 2023.
- Martelli, Jean-Thomas, and Kristina Garalytė. “How Campuses Mediate a Nationwide Upsurge against India’s Communalization. an Account from Jamia Millia Islamia and Shaheen Bagh in New Delhi.” *South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal*, 20200612, 2020, pp. 1-9, <https://doi.org/10.4000/samaj.6516>. Accessed 13 Feb. 2023.
- Merelli, Annalisa. “‘It’s almost like a cry for help’: An Indian poet gets at the heart of protests around the world.” *Quartz*, 30 December, 2019, <https://qz.com/1776221/varun-grover-says-poetry-and-protests-are-a-cry-for-help>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- Milne, Heather. *Poetry Matters: Neoliberalism, Affect, and the Posthuman in Twenty-First-Century North American Feminist Poetics*, University of Iowa Press, 2018.
- Mohammad, Saif. “Accessing the NRC Emotion and Sentiment Lexicons.” *Saif M. Mohammad*, <https://www.saifmohammad.com/WebPages/AccessResource.htm>. Accessed 12 February 2023.
- . “NRC Word-Emotion Association Lexicon (aka EmoLex).” *Saif M. Mohammad*, <http://saifmohammad.com/WebPages/NRC-Emotion-Lexicon.htm>. Accessed 12 February 2023.
- Naghibi, Nima. “Diasporic Disclosures: Social Networking, Neda, and the 2009 Iranian Presidential Elections.” *Biography*, vol. 34, no. 1, 2011, pp. 56-69. *ProQuest*, <https://proxy.library.mcgill.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/diasporic-disclosures-social-networking-neda-2009/docview/878152345/se-2>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- Ngai, Sianne. “Bad Timing (a Sequel). Paranoia, Feminism, and Poetry.” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2001, pp. 1–46.
- Pai, Sudha, and Sajjan Kumar. *Everyday Communalism: Riots in Contemporary Uttar Pradesh*. Oxford Academic, Delhi, 2018; online edn, 17 April 2019,

- <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199466290.003.0001>. Accessed 14 October 2022.
- Pandey, Tanushree. "Shaheen Bagh 'Jihadis' inciting division of India, will remove them on Feb 2: Hindu Sena." *India Today*, 29 January 2020, <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/shaheen-bagh-anti-caa-protest-hindu-sena-chief-1641418-2020-01-29>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- Papacharissi, Zizi. "Affective Publics." *Affective Publics: Sentiment, Technology, and Politics*, online edition, Oxford Studies in Digital Politics, 20 November, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199999736.003.0006>. Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- Perry, John Oliver. *Voices of Emergency: An All India Anthology of Protest Poetry of the 1975-77 Emergency*. Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1983.
- Plett, Heinrich F. *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*. Edited by Thomas O. Sloane, Oxford University Press, 2006, <http://www.oxford-rhetoric.com/entry?entry=t223.e177>. Accessed 12 February 2023.
- Prakash, Meghna. "Anti-CAA & Farm Laws: How the 2 Protests Are Different Yet Similar." *The Quint*, 17 December 2020, <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/anti-caa-and-farm-laws-how-the-2-protests-are-different-yet-similar#read-more>. Accessed 13 February 2023.
- Press Trust of India. "Shaheen Bagh Protesters Get Biryani Through 'Foreign Funds': BJP's Dilip Ghosh." *NDTV*, 15 February 2020, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/shaheen-bagh-protesters-get-biryani-through-foreign-funds-bengal-bjps-dilip-ghosh-2180797>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- PTI. "CAA rules will be framed after COVID precaution dose exercise, Amit Shah tells Bengal BJP leader." *The Hindu*, 2 Aug. 2022, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/caa-rollout-after-covid-precaution-dose-exercise-amit-shah-tells-bengal-bjp-leader/article65716530.ece>. Accessed 13 Feb. 2023.
- Rajan, S.I. (Ed.). *The Routledge Handbook of Refugees in India*. 1st ed., Routledge India, 2022, <https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.4324/9781003246800>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- Rentschler, Carrie. "Affect." *Keywords for Media Studies*, edited by Jonathan Gray and Laurie Ouellette, NYU Press, 2017, pp. 12-14. *Project MUSE*, [muse.jhu.edu/book/59004](https://muse.jhu.edu/book/59004). Accessed 12 February 2023.
- . "Bystander intervention, feminist hashtag activism, and the anti-carceral politics of care." *Feminist Media Studies*, 17:4, 2017, pp. 565-584, DOI:

10.1080/14680777.2017.1326556. Accessed 10 February 2023.

- Reynolds, Eileen. "Hashtags in the 'Real' World: How #BlackLivesMatter Changed Activism." *NYU*, April 2016, <https://www.nyu.edu/about/news-publications/news/2016/april/charlton-mcilwain-on-black-lives-matter.html>. Accessed 12 February 2023.
- Ritchie, Marnie. "Rhetoric and Critical Affect Theory." *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*. Oxford University Press, 22 December 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228613.013.1301>. Accessed 12 Feb. 2023.
- Romero, Daniel, Jon Kleinberg, and Brendan Meeder. "Differences in the Mechanics of Information Diffusion Across Topics: Idioms, Political Hashtags, and Complex Contagion on Twitter." *Proceedings of the 20th International Conference on World Wide Web*, WWW, 2011, pp. 695-704, doi: 10.1145/1963405.1963503.
- Roy, Arundhati. *Azadi*. Haymarket Books, Chicago, 2020.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books edition, Vintage Books, 1994.
- Scroll Staff. "Citizenship Act: Protestors 'creating violence can be identified by their clothes', claims Modi." *Scroll.in*, 15 Dec. 2019, <https://scroll.in/latest/946901/citizenship-act-protestors-creating-violence-can-be-identified-by-their-clothes-claims-modi>. Accessed 13 Dec. 2022.
- Shamshad, M.R. "Report of the DMC Fact-finding Committee on North-East Delhi Riots of February 2020." *Delhi Minorities Commission*, Government of NCT of Delhi, July 2020, <https://ia801906.us.archive.org/11/items/dmc-delhi-riot-fact-report-2020/-Delhi-riots-Fact-Finding-2020.pdf>. Accessed 13 Dec. 2022.
- Sharma, Unnati. "Poet & Dalit Panther Namdeo Dhasal's poetry embraced those discarded by society." *The Print*, 15 January, 2021, <https://theprint.in/features/poet-dalit-panther-namdeo-dhasals-poetry-embraced-those-discarded-by-society/585363/>. Accessed 11 February 2023.
- Shklovsky, Viktor. *Theory of Prose*. 1st American ed., translated by Benjamin Sher, Dalkey Archive Press, 1990.
- Shroff, Kaushal. "Delhi violence: Cops shouted 'Jai Shri Ram' with armed Hindu mob, charged at Muslims." *The Caravan*, 25 Feb. 2020, <https://caravanmagazine.in/conflict/delhi-violence-cops-shouted-jai-shri-ram-with-armed-hindu-mob-charged-at-muslims>. Accessed 13 Dec. 2022.
- Singh, Anushka. "Criminalizing Dissent: Consequences of UAPA." *Economic and Political Weekly*, Sep. 2012. *ProQuest*,

- [proxy.library.mcgill.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/magazines/criminalizing-dissent-consequences-uapa/docview/2153739011/se-2](https://proxy.library.mcgill.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/magazines/criminalizing-dissent-consequences-uapa/docview/2153739011/se-2). Accessed 10 Feb. 2023.
- Singh, Sushant. "Modern cricket reflects modern India: Nepotism and toxic nationalism." *The Caravan*, 14 Sep. 2022, <https://caravanmagazine.in/sports/cricket-bcci-nationalism-corruption-islamophobia>.
- Sontag, Susan. *Regarding the Pain of Others*. Picador, 2003.
- Starr, Gabrielle G. *Feeling Beauty: The Neuroscience of Aesthetic Experience*. The MIT Press, 2013.
- Suresh, Mayur. "The Slow Erosion of Fundamental Rights: How Romila Thapar V. Union of India Highlights What Is Wrong with the UAPA." *Indian Law Review*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2019, pp. 212–223., <https://doi.org/10.1080/24730580.2019.1640593>.
- Thakur, Jyoti. "Shaheen Bagh Kids and Jamia Students Make Space for Art, Reading and Revolution." *The Citizen*, 11 January 2020, <https://www.thecitizen.in/index.php/en/NewsDetail/index/7/18148/Shahen-Bagh-Kids-and-Jamia-Students-Make-Space-for-Art-Reading-and-Re%E2%80%A6>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- The Quint. "Old Video Shared With Claim of Rs 500 Distributed at Shaheen Bagh." *The Quint*, 24 January 2020, <https://www.thequint.com/news/webqoof/old-video-shared-with-claim-of-rs-500-distributed-at-shaheen-bagh-cao-protest-fact-check#read-more>. Accessed 10 Feb. 2023.
- The Wire Staff. "CAA Will Be Implemented After COVID Vaccine Drive is Over, Says Amit Shah." *The Wire*, 2 Aug. 2022, [thewire.in/politics/amit-shah-cao-after-covid-vaccine-drive](https://thewire.in/politics/amit-shah-cao-after-covid-vaccine-drive). Accessed 13 Feb. 2023.
- Trends Desk. "'Hum Kaagaz Nahi Dikhayenge': Varun Grover's anti-NRC poem wins support online." *The Indian Express*, 23 December 2019, <https://indianexpress.com/article/trending/trending-in-india/hum-kaagaz-nahi-dikhayenge-varun-grovers-anti-nrc-poem-6179815/>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- Wehrs, Donald R, and Thomas Blake, editors. *The Palgrave Handbook of Affect Studies and Textual Criticism*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
- Wetherell, Margaret. *Affect and Emotion: A New Social Science Understanding*. SAGE, 2013.
- Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford University Press, 1977.
- . *The Long Revolution*. Pelican Books, 1965.
- Yadav, Anumeha. "Ground Report: Delhi Police Actions Caused Death Of Man In Infamous

- National Anthem Video.” *HuffPost*, 1 March 2020, [https://www.huffpost.com/archive/in/entry/delhi-riots-police-national-anthem-video-faizan\\_in\\_5e5bb8e1c5b6010221126276](https://www.huffpost.com/archive/in/entry/delhi-riots-police-national-anthem-video-faizan_in_5e5bb8e1c5b6010221126276). Accessed 9 February 2023.
- Yamunan, Sruthisagar. “‘Goli maaron’ slogans meet hate speech test – here’s how the Supreme Court can stop them.” *Scroll.in*, 3 March 2020, <https://scroll.in/article/954926/goli-maaron-slogans-meet-hate-speech-test-heres-what-the-supreme-court-can-do-to-stop-them>. Accessed 14 October 2022.
- Yu, Timothy. “Instagram Poetry and Our Poetry Worlds.” *Poetry Foundation*, 24 April, 2019, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet-books/2019/04/instagram-poetry-and-our-poetry-worlds>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- Zaidi, S., and S. Pani. “Revisiting a ground report from Delhi’s Shaheen Bagh: what it means to live in a city of dissent and under siege.” *Firstpost*, 18 July 2020, [firstpost.com/india/revisiting-a-ground-report-from-delhis-shaheen-bagh-what-it-means-to-live-in-a-city-of-dissent-and-under-siege-8595151.html](https://firstpost.com/india/revisiting-a-ground-report-from-delhis-shaheen-bagh-what-it-means-to-live-in-a-city-of-dissent-and-under-siege-8595151.html). Accessed 10 Feb. 2023.
- “Bible Verses About Locusts.” *King James Bible Online*, [kingjamesbibleonline.org/Bible-Verses-About-Locusts](http://kingjamesbibleonline.org/Bible-Verses-About-Locusts). Accessed 10 Feb. 2023.
- “Censorship.” *Internet Freedom Foundation*, 2023, <https://internetfreedom.in/tag/censorship/>. Accessed 13 February 2023.
- “Citizenship (Amendment) Act.” *The Gazette of India*, Ministry of Law and Justice, New Delhi, part II, section 1, no. 71, December 2019, <https://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2019/214646.pdf>. Accessed 7 October 2021.
- “Freedom on the Net 2020: India.” *Freedom House*, January 2021, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/india/freedom-net/2020>. Accessed 7 October 2021.
- “India: Biased Investigations 2 Years After Delhi Riot.” *Human Rights Watch*, 21 Feb. 2022, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/02/21/india-biased-investigations-2-years-after-delhi-riot>. Accessed 9 February 2023.
- “Khalistan: Sikh political ideology.” *Britannica*, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Khalistan>. Accessed 8 April 2022.
- “National Population Register.” *Census India*, Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs, India, 2021, <https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/node/343>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- “New Delhi hit by worst violence in decades: What you need to know.” *Al Jazeera*, 27 February 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/27/new-delhi-hit-by-worst->

- violence-in-decades-what-you-need-to-know. Accessed 13 Feb. 2023.
- “Pink Floyd’s Roger Waters Recites Amir Aziz’s ‘Sab Yaad Rakha Jayega’.” *The Print*, 27 February, 2020. *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Awly6GiL7ZU>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- “Police Remove Jamia Graffiti, Twitter Reminds Them of ‘Priorities’.” *The Quint*, 24 March 2020, <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/jamia-graffiti-art-shaheen-bagh-anti-caa-protest-removed-reactions#read-more>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- “Shaheen Bagh anti-CAA sit-in removed amid coronavirus lockdown.” *Al Jazeera*, 24 March, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/3/24/shaheen-bagh-anti-caa-sit-in-removed-amid-coronavirus-lockdown>. Accessed 11 February 2023.
- “Statement by Tribal Intellectuals and Activists of Assam on NRC.” *Raiot: Challenging the Consensus*, 9 August 2018, [raiort.in/do-the-tribals-of-assam-have-an-opinion-on-nrc/](http://raiort.in/do-the-tribals-of-assam-have-an-opinion-on-nrc/). Accessed 13 Feb. 2023.
- “The Art of Resistance: Delhi’s Shaheen Bagh has turned into an open air art gallery.” *Scroll.in*, 23 January 2020, <https://scroll.in/article/950720/the-art-of-resistance-delhis-shaheen-bagh-has-turned-into-an-open-air-art-gallery>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- “The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003.” *India Kanoon*, Parliament of India, NO. 6 OF 2004, 7th January, 2004, [indiankanoon.org/doc/949775/](http://indiankanoon.org/doc/949775/). Accessed 13 Feb. 2023.
- “The Citizenship Act, 1955.” *The Gazette of India*, Act No. 57 of 1955, 30 December 1955. *TISS*, [www.tiss.edu/uploads/files/Citizenship\\_Act\\_1955.pdf](http://www.tiss.edu/uploads/files/Citizenship_Act_1955.pdf). Accessed 13 Feb. 2023.
- “The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act, 2019.” *The Gazette of India*, Ministry of Law and Justice, Part II, Section 1, no. 28 of 2019, <https://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2019/210355.pdf>. Accessed 10 February 2023.
- “We Will Save The Constitution, chants Varun Grover.” *Karwan e Mohabbat*, 30 Dec. 2019. *YouTube*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zrnRs2i0Qs>. Accessed 9 Feb. 2023.
- “What is NRC.” *Government of Assam: Office of the State Coordinator of National Registration (NRC), Assam*, 2014, [https://www.nrcassam.nic.in/wha\\_nrc.html](https://www.nrcassam.nic.in/wha_nrc.html). Accessed 10 February 2023.
- “‘Shoot the Traitors’: Discrimination Against Muslims under India’s New Citizenship Policy.” *Human Rights Watch*, 9 April 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/04/09/shoot-traitors/discrimination-against-muslims-under-indias-new-citizenship-policy>. Accessed 14 October 2022.