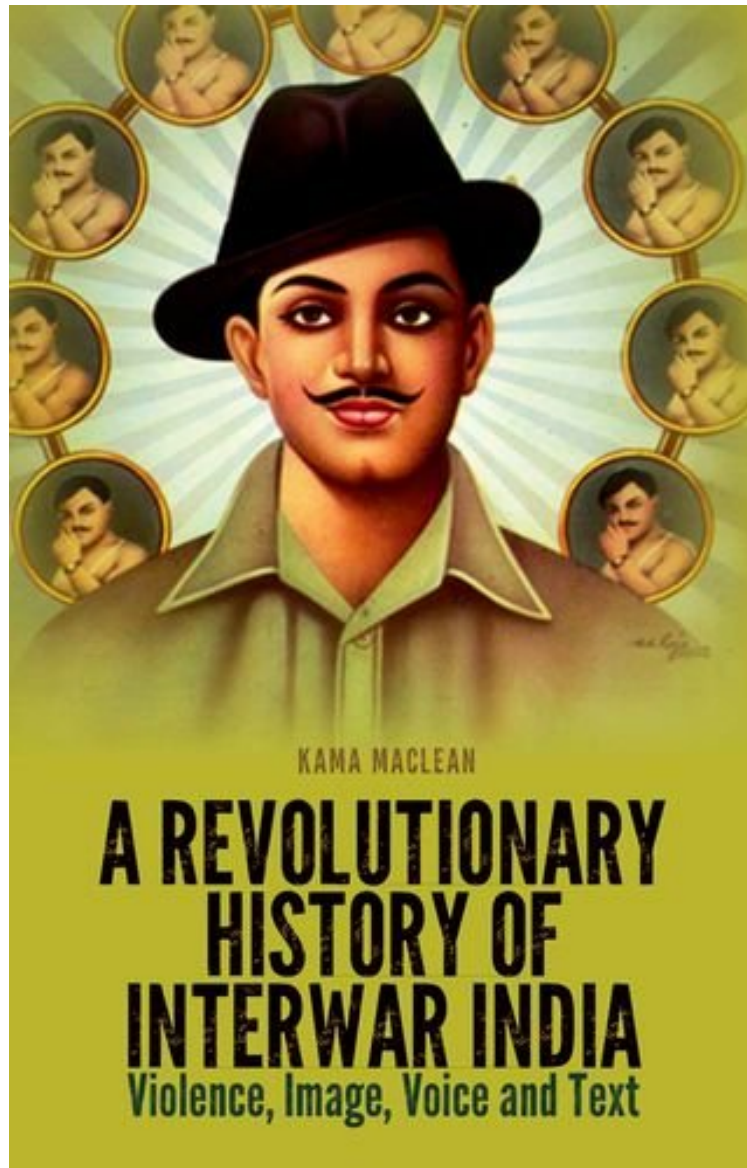


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# A Revolutionary History of Interwar India: Violence, Image, Voice and Text

*Kama Maclean*

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## India: Violence, Image, Voice and Text:

Focusing on the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army (HSRA), *A Revolutionary History* delivers a fresh perspective on the ambitions, ideologies and practices of this influential organization, formed by Chandrashekhar Azad and Bhagat Singh and inspired by transnational anti-imperial dissent. It is a new interpretation of the activities and political impact of the north Indian revolutionaries who advocated the use of political violence against the British. Kama Maclean contends that the actions of these revolutionaries had a direct impact on Congress politics and tested its policy of non-violence. In doing so she draws on visual culture studies, demonstrating the efficacy of imagery in constructing-- as opposed to merely illustrating-- historical narratives. Maclean analyses visual evidence alongside recently declassified government files, memoirs and interviews to elaborate on the complex relationships between the Congress and the HSRA, which were far less antagonistic than is frequently imagined.

"An extraordinarily well-written and well-researched book that will transform our understanding of the relationship between violence and nonviolence in interwar India. The book reframes the place of revolutionary ideologies and programs as they both competed and collaborated with the campaigns of Gandhi and Congress in northern India. A model of creative research and good writing." -- Durba Ghosh, Associate Professor, Department of History, Cornell University

"A courageous alternative account of the Indian freedom struggle, so far predominantly framed within the mega-narrative of Gandhi's ideology of non-violence as the principal instrument of triumph of India's independence, overshadowing the role of the revolutionaries during interwar India. Never before has the history of this crucial phase in modern India been reconstructed using the living archives of oral histories, folklore, popular visual culture, interviews, cinema and satires as powerful additional sources, resulting in the fascinating story of peoples's movements, lesser known martyrs and unsung freedom fighters intricately analysed within the dynamics of anticolonial violence." -- Jyotindra Jain

"In pursuing the story of the revolutionary-nationalist Bhagat Singh and his comrades, Maclean makes a clean break with the official teleology of Indian nationalism: the victory of non-violence over imperial forces. However, she also encounters a figure whose historical life extends far beyond official archives into the regions of oral testimony, popular cinema and bazaar representations. The resulting text raises fundamental questions about the place of violence in Indian nationalism. It also presents some very thoughtful reflections on historians' use of unconventional sources. A remarkable and enduring achievement." -- Dipesh Chakrabarty, Lawrence A. Kimpton Distinguished Service Professor of History, South Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago

"No other work on the revolutionaries of this important phase has ever tried to approach them like Kama Maclean has done here. The book successfully locates them as key players in the freedom struggle, albeit for a short while, with close linkages with the Congress Party. Despite ideological differences, they hung together for the common goal of attaining freedom. A refreshing addition to the corpus of scholarship on the subject." -- Asian Studies

About the Author Kama Maclean is Associate Professor of South Asian and World History at UNSW in Sydney, and Editor of *South Asia*. Her book, *Pilgrimage and Power*, was awarded an honorable mention in the Ananda Coomaraswamy Prize (2009).