



Militant Publics in India

Arafaat A. Valiani

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This creative study explores how Mohandas Gandhi's celebrated concept of *satyagraha* (non-violence) was eclipsed by the xenophobic Hindu nationalist movement that has organized ferocious episodes of ethnic cleansing against minority communities in contemporary India. By means of a close reading of Gandhi's writing on popular mobilization and resistance, and a detailed historical investigation of hitherto understudied episodes of *satyagraha* that took place in the first half of the twentieth century, Valiani illuminates debates on politics in South Asian history, anthropology, and sociology. Among other insights, this inquiry underscores the continuities and discontinuities between physical culture and various contending modes of popular political protest and activism in Gandhi's *satyagraha* movement and the militant Hindu nationalist movement in the western Indian state of Gujarat in the colonial and postcolonial periods. Interpreting his own direct observation of Hindu nationalist pogroms in contemporary Gujarat, in addition to testimonies and ethnographic observations of the inner workings of the movement that were revealed to the author when he was a "trainee" within it, this brilliant account offers readers a rare insider perspective on the social and religious world that historically and culturally produces militants.

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