



Centre for Language, Translation and Cultural Studies

School of Humanities

NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

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Online Partition Lecture 19.08.2025

Topic: Partitioning People: The 1947 Partition from the perspective of Sindh (and Sindhis)

Speaker: Professor Sarah Frances Deborah Ansari

The 28th Partition Lecture began at 7.00 pm on 19th August 2025, with a formal introduction to the BPR Project by Professor Manan Kumar Mandal, the Co-coordinator of the Bengal Partition Repository Project. This was followed by a welcome speech by Dr Srideep Mukherjee, the Officer-In-Charge, School of humanities. Next Professor Barnana Guha Thakurata, the Director School of Social Sciences spoke on partition from the perspectives of the Indian citizens in recent times.

Dr Sumana Bandyopadhyay, Assistant Professor, English Language Teaching, introduced the speaker of the day, Sarah Frances Deborah Ansari, Professor of History on South Asia's recent past at Royal Holloway University of London. She introduced Professor Ansari's collaborative research projects; her engagements with community groups, inter-faith clergy, theatre companies, art organizations youth charities, schools and race equality think tanks in raising public understandings on mass migration, refugee displacement and huge loss of life. She also introduced Professor Ansari's first publication, *Sufi Saints and State Power: the Pirs of Sindh, 1843-1947* (Cambridge 1992). The publication is an elaboration of her University of London PhD thesis. Professor Ansari began her talk at 7.30 pm.

Sarah Frances Deborah Ansari, in her lecture focused on South Asia's recent past, specifically on the history of (1) the province of Sindh and the city of Karachi, and (2) the lives of women in South Asia. Much of her talk explored issues of religion, migration, identity, citizenship and gender. Her talk elaborated on the formative decades of post-Partition Sindh and Karachi. She mentioned two of her publications in her talk. Her description started with the 1990s, when ethnic politics had come to dominate Sindh, with calls for Karachi to become a fifth province in the nation. *Life After Partition: Migration, Community and Strife in Sindh 1947-1962* published in 2005, examines the historical background of post partitioned development. She focused on events in the province in the years immediately following partition, when migrants from India and local people in Sindh found themselves living alongside each other on the newly created state of Pakistan. How far they retained distinctive notions of community and identity, and what its impact was on processes of accommodation and integration forms the main focus of this study of life in Sindh between 1947 and 1962.

Asari's expertise extends from 1947 Partition, History of South Asia, Sindh and Muslim women. She explored citizenship and rights in early independent India and Pakistan with documentary evidences. While mentioning her other publication, *Boundaries, of Belonging: Localities, Citizenship and Rights in India and Pakistan*, 2019, she described how citizenship evolved at a time of political transition and what this meant for ordinary people.

Her interpretation was based on rich archival research and fieldwork, bringing out similarities, differences, and the mutual co-construction of the 'citizen'. The talk also revealed the way in which developments across the border, such as displacement, refugee issues and the complex relationship between the government and the citizens at the time had direct impact on minority rights. The lecture series ended at 8.30pm after a brief question and answer session.