

Roads to freedom: prisoners in colonial India

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Abstrak

In its most brutal form, the prison in British India was an instrument of the colonial state for instilling fear and dealing with resistance. Exploring the lived experience of select political prisoners, this volume presents their struggles and situates them against the backdrop of the freedom movement. From Mohamed Ali, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the Nehru family, and Gandhi, to communists like M.N. Roy, we get a vivid glimpse of their lives within the confines of the prison in a narrative that is at times deeply personal and yet political. The struggles of some remarkable women of the time are also brought to the fore, be it the feisty doctor Rashid Jahan, Aruna Ali, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, or Sarojini Naidu. Extensively researched, the volume draws upon the records at the National Archives of India, private papers, creative writings of the prisoners, newspapers, memoirs, biographies, and autobiographies. The volume also brings to light the differences between Indian and European prisons during the colonial period and the conception of criminal classes in the colony. Capturing the sharp pangs of loneliness, the poetry born out of solitude, and the burning desire for independence, Roads to Freedom breathes new life into accounts and tales long forgotten.