7   Visual Memory in Grassroots Mobilizations: The Case of the Anti-Corruption Movement of 2011 in India[1]

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Abstract

This chapter investigates the role of images in social movements in activating and nourishing collective memory as a process that has an instant recall value of the past in the present. Using the example of the India Against Corruption movement of 2011–2012, we unpack the role played by visuals as mnemonic devices to trigger and sustain protests and mass mobilizations. Our primary data shows how activists deployed images of Gandhi as well as Gandhi-related visuals to position their campaign within the long tradition of anti-colonial struggles in the country. The chapter contends that images can act as bridges between the present and the past and that they can also contribute to merging different protest waves, hence blurring the lines between past and present.

Keywords: visual memory, protest cycles, grassroots movements, anti-corruption mobilizations, India

Introduction

On a spring evening in March 2021, we sat conversing with some activists who had worked tirelessly behind the scenes about a decade earlier, in 2011, to organize and mobilize people in the framework of an upcoming hunger strike

carried out by Anna Hazare, a then relatively unknown anti-corruption activist on the national stage. The venue was Jantar Mantar, an important site for resistance at the heart of the Indian capital of New Delhi. Our respondents explained that they had done their best to spread the word across the city through digital and non-digital means, but they were not prepared for the hundreds and thousands of people who would eventually turn up at the protest site. As one of the activists recollected: "People had started to come up with slogans of their own. There was a slogan: 'Anna nahi aandhi hai, desh ka dusra Gandhi hai'" (translated from Hindi to "He's not Anna, he's a storm; a second Gandhi of this country"). The India Against Corruption movement, as it was called initially, had captured the national imagination between April 2011 and April 2012 (Chowdhury, 2019). While many important members of Indian civil society, including lawyers, activists, and spiritual leaders, occupied the podium in the rallies, Hazare was the most prominent face of the movement. Indeed, his name would become synonymous with the movement itself. He was considered both by his supporters and journalists to be "a leader of Gandhian proportions" (Sengupta, 2014, p. 407). Photos and videos of Anna, a "self-identified Gandhian" (Sharma, 2014, p. 366), flashed across national and international media, portraying a man clad in white wearing the so-called Gandhi cap, with the image of Gandhi often hanging behind him on stages where he carried out his fasts. The use of images of Gandhi and the deployment of Gandhi-related visuals, often related to his memory, will be the focus of our analysis here.

As literature on social movements argues, images and other types of visual tools are highly relevant for activists in different moments of their contentious collective actions (Doerr et al., 2015), including: activists' self-representation during protests (Rovisco 2017; Tilly, 2008; see also Eyerman, 2006), the development of collective identities (Morrison & Isaac, 2011; Ramsey, 2000; Hardt & Ohrn, 1981) and other actors' representation of social movements through images circulated in various types of media, including the mainstream press (Corrigall-Brown & Wilkes, 2012; Perlmutter & Wagner, 2004; Rohlinger & Klein, 2012). Furthermore, the cultural resonance of activists' injustice frames can be boosted using the right image (Ryan, 1991) and photographs of injustice are sometimes able to trigger mobilizations at the national and transnational level (Olesen, 2018). Images of injustice published in newspapers also have a significant role in the unfolding of frame meanings (Parry, 2011; Gamson & Meyer, 1996; Gamson & Stuart, 1992), visual landscapes (Rohlinger & Klein, 2012), and transnational mediascapes (Appadurai, 1996) on controversial issues that also involve the active attempts of activists to reframe the public debate.

However, activists also use images and other visual tools as mnemonic objects during street protests in order to evoke symbolic connections with battles of the past. The relationship between social movements and collective memory has been at the centre of a rich debate in social movement studies, memory studies, and cognate disciplines. In memory studies, Ann Rigney (2018a) discusses the intertwining of memory and activism as a complex process "of recycling, recollection and political action that can be summed up as 'civic memory'" (p. 372) and introduces the analytical category of *memory–activism nexus*. More recently, social movement scholars Daphi and Zamponi (2019) have systematized the literature on social movements and collective memory by evoking the three levels that feature in the memory–activism nexus originally proposed by Rigney. First, *memory of activism* refers to the way collective memory related to distinct social movements develops and changes over time, offering different types of representation of what a specific social movement has been in the past and formulating public understandings of its significance, heritage, and influences for the social movement of the present. Second, *memory activism* relates to the way collective memory becomes an object of contention for specific social movements that question dominant narratives and memories related to past historical periods or important events. Third, *memory in activism* casts light on how collective memory work within social movements affects activists' activities and, more generally, focuses on the ability of collective memory to act as a facilitating factor for the emergence of protest in societies.

In this regard, collective memory about past social movements and their protests develops thanks to the accounts of those who participated in them. However, over time, as work in the field of cultural memory studies has shown, other actors also participate in collective memory processes of mediation whereby the past is represented from changing perspectives in the present with the help of cultural artefacts in a variety of media. Visuality plays an important role in the mediation of memory (see the introduction to this volume). Accordingly, visuals—in the form of flyers, banners, posters, photographs, and other media types, either alone or together with text—provide activists with an important resource for bringing the past into the present. Indeed, once a street protest, specific events within it, and other forms of dissent, have been represented through visuals, they have the potential to remain in the public space for a long time (Merrill, 2020). Activists, accordingly, employ images strategically to link their current protest to past mobilizations so as to increase the resonance of their claims. For instance, the 15M massive mobilization in Madrid produced the iconic images of squares massively occupied by protestors. These images were able

to transcend Spain's national boundaries, circulating worldwide through social media and representing a specific vision of participatory democracy that revolved around a consensual decision-making process (Rovisco, 2017). The images resonated with/echoed other images related to previous protests that included the peaceful occupation of public spaces. They connected the present moments of the 15M with activists' memory of past protests: it is precisely the link between the lived experiences of activists in 2011 occupying the squares of Madrid and Barcelona, among others, and what activists remembered about past occupations of public spaces worldwide that gave these images their worldwide resonance (Rovisco, 2017).

In this chapter, we make a contribution to this line of research by investigating the role of images and other visual tools in social movements in activating and nourishing collective memory as a process that puts the past in the present (Terdiman, 1993). As our opening vignette indicated, we will do so with specific reference to the India against Corruption movement in 2011 and, to a lesser extent, the farmers' mobilizations that happened in the same country in 2020. In the case of the former, we show how activists deployed images of Gandhi as well as Gandhi-related visuals to position their campaign within the long tradition of anti-colonial struggles in the country. In the case of the latter, we illustrate how news media appropriated the images of the India against Corruption movement in 2011 to speak about the farmers' mobilizations that erupted in 2020. In what follows, we cast light on how collective memory developed, dynamically, through two mechanisms, each acquiring a more prominent role in one of the two waves of mobilizations in India: first, the bridging of past and present struggles in the country during the India against Corruption movement in 2011; second, the merging of different times of protest in a subsequent round of farmers' mobilization that happened in India in 2020. Through bridging, visuals create a connection between the present and the past, allowing activists to look at their current mobilizations through the lens of previous protest waves. In this case, the past and the present remain two separate moments that are, however, linked through the use of images. Through collapsing, instead, visuals contribute to the blurring of borders between past and present, hence developing a narrative in which different times of protest live seamlessly side by side. To enrich the discussion of the two mechanisms, we also spend a few words on the agency behind the creation and use of visuals in the framework of the two mobilizations under discussion. Indeed, visuals do not come into existence by themselves: activists and other actors create them, sometimes with clear intentions, at other times without thinking strategically. While this is not the main question of the present chapter,

discussing agency with regard to the role of visuals in collective memory adds a further layer of interpretation to, and yet also problematizes, the role that images and other visual artefacts have in the production of collective memory related to protests.

The paper develops as follows. In the next section, we first explain the choice of case study, the massive street protests and hunger strikes associated with the social movement India Against Corruption that garnered global attention (Lal, 2017). We end this section with a quick discussion of the data gathering methods. The chapter then moves to address its central questions in the three sections that follow. First, we analyse the visual aspects of the protest, reflecting on the bridging mechanism to discuss how the present struggle is linked through visuals to past mobilizations and how this linking impacts the understanding of the present and of the past. We then look at the collapsing mechanism to explain how visuals contribute to the ongoing construction of collective memories once newer mobilizations unfold. Finally, we consider why movement organizers decided to employ visuals as tools of collective memory to reinforce the link between the current protests and those that preceded them. Conclusions summarize the main findings and discuss them further.

Case Study and Methods

The chapter rests on data gathered in the framework of a cross-country comparative research project on how anti-corruption activists employ digital media to fight corruption from the grassroots and outside political institutions. As a case study, it takes one emblematic collective action against corruption that developed in India: the massive anti-corruption movement, popularly known as the India Against Corruption movement (hereafter IAC), the Jan Lokpal movement or the Anna movement, which started in 2010 and reached its peak in the street protests of 2011. The backdrop to the movement was the large-scale political corruption by the then ruling Congress party, which manifested itself in the form of a plethora of scams, most notably the Commonwealth Games of 2010 in New Delhi, which directly implicated the then Chief Minister of Delhi, Sheila Dixit, from the ruling party. Arvind Kejriwal, an ex-officer of the Income Tax Department of the Government of India and noted Right to Information (RTI) activist, who had given up his lucrative position to fight systemic corruption, was a central figure of the movement (Chowdhury, 2019; Sharma, 2014). In November 2010, Kejriwal officially announced the launch of the movement and demanded

the passage of the Lokpal Bill in the Indian parliament, which would create an independent anti-corruption ombudsperson and bring all perpetrators of corruption, including those holding ministerial positions, to book.

While it began in 2010, the movement truly gained momentum in April 2011, when Anna Hazare, a septuagenarian social activist from the state of Maharashtra, carried out the first of several hunger strikes at Jantar Mantar, an important protest site at the heart of the capital, New Delhi. His fast-unto-death received enthusiastic support from major civil society actors and activists and was a publicly performed act attended by thousands of ordinary citizens ("Anna Hazare on Indefinite Fast over Stronger Lokpal Bill," 2011). Over the following months, there would be multiple such events at the capital, with Hazare and key IAC members taking the lead in negotiating with the Union government to pass the Jan Lokpal Bill and failing every time. By August 2012, Hazare and his team of activists ended yet another hunger strike that began towards the end of July that year, announcing the formation of a new political party, which would become Aam Aadmi Party (Common People's Party) ("Team Anna Ends Fast at Jantar Mantar," 2012). In just over a year, in December 2013, the party would win the Delhi elections, with Arvind Kejriwal becoming the Chief Minister of Delhi for the first time.

This chapter aims to unpack the iconography associated with the movement and its connection with collective memory, especially concerning the constant parallels drawn between Hazare and India's best-known figure of non-violent struggle, Mahatma Gandhi.[2] We look at images as cultural objects with a mnemonic potential to understand how the memory of past mobilizations informs/impacts contemporary activism. More specifically, we consider anti-corruption activists' deployment of images of Gandhi and

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2   In recent years, the narrative about Gandhi as the "Mahatma" (or "the great soul") has become a topic of contention, especially in the context of race and caste relations (see, for example, Omvedt, 2006 and Vahed, 2017) where he is seen as a figure who staunchly supported the status quo and did not seek emancipation outside the religious fold of Hinduism. These attributes make him, in the discursive constructions of present anti-caste activists, an unlikely candidate to be considered as a radical social reformer. However, in the specific discursive context in which the anti-corruption movement is located, the use of the Gandhi portrait was strategic, as he is the reference point in Indian history and cultural memory for non-violent struggles and for being the tallest figure of the Indian freedom struggle. His notion of non-violence is also inextricably linked with ideas about and the pursuit of truth (Pradhan, 2006). We would also like to note here that his portrait, seen in the IAC movement's posters, has an instant recall value for Indian citizens because of its ubiquity in Indian social life, most notably, in its presence on Indian banknotes (of all denominations). It would thus not be far-fetched to argue that Gandhi is not just an icon of civil disobedience but also of transparency, even if this line of enquiry has not been explored yet in academic writings.

other related visual tools: most prominently, the Gandhi cap. To this end, we analysed three photos of the movement received from the activists, first considering their denotative level and then taking into account the relationship the images established with the broader context in which they were created. In these photos, we see a clear framing of Hazare as the new Gandhi, something that was deemed contentious, as we will discuss later, by India's progressive circles (Sengupta, 2012). Additionally, we also interviewed four protest organizers with in-depth knowledge of the mobilization in order to enhance our understanding of the agency behind the visuals. They were ambivalent about their role in creating and propagating the Gandhi–Hazare parallels. The activists were contacted through networks established as part of a larger research project on anti-corruption and digital media. We obtained their consent to record their recollections of the movement and anonymized their responses. Their testimonies serve as the crucial missing link between the images and the stories behind them since these were not always recorded by the national and international media, which otherwise did a thorough job in documenting the protests. In their act of reminiscing, the activists provided valuable stories about how the movement organizers employed various audio, visual, and performative media—banners, flyers, posters, street plays, missed calls,[3] and SMS campaigns—to encourage and persuade people to partake in the protests. As mentioned previously, one of the heavily used images was that of Gandhi, to whom the star campaigner of the movement, Hazare, was constantly compared. Our chapter documents this specific aspect of the movement.

The Image of Gandhi and the Bridging of Different Times

Memories of past mobilizations can be a source of inspiration for movement organizers, who look to past struggles to develop a broader, consistent narrative about who they are in the present. In this way, activists legitimize themselves in the eyes of the participants in the protests they organize, but also in the eyes of their allies and even their opponents. Building a tangible link to the past by keeping alive the memory related to mobilizations that occurred

3   A missed call is a call terminated by the caller before the receiver can answer it, without any credit reduction. Back in 2011, when mobile phones were not as diffused in India as they are today and instant messaging apps and free calling facilities were not available, missed calls were a cost-effective way for individuals to show interest in a campaign without incurring costs. At the same time, the number of the interested callers would be registered in the campaign organizers' database.

years, sometimes even decades earlier is one way in which activists construct unitary, coherent, and ongoing narratives related to the social movements in which they participate (for a review cfr. Daphi and Zamponi, 2019). Such a process is in line with the social movements' need to become visible in the public space as relevant political phenomena whose legitimacy cannot be easily contested. Through the activists' production of images depicting protesting crowds, through banners and slogans, and bringing together different political/interest groups, movement organizations display the high numbers of protesters, their commitment to mobilizations, and the morally justified cause that unites different movement organizations and protesters in the same social movement (Tilly, 2004). However, such images also have a mnemonic potential because, in some cases, they can also bear witness to present struggles and develop a symbolic connection with the past. In other words, as already pointed out in the introduction, images become relevant in connecting present-day protests to previous struggles at home and abroad.

Visuals' capacity to link up protests that happened in different times is not that different from some of the framing activities that movement organizations and activists perform when they mobilize. More specifically, Snow et al. (1986) speak about the activity of frame bridging, thanks to which activists construct a connection, or better a bridge, between two otherwise disconnected frames. When frame bridging occurs at the level of movement organizations, the bridged collective action frames remain separate and easily distinguishable one from the other. Similarly, visuals work as mnemonic devices that can connect two or more otherwise disconnected protest events that occurred at different times although for different purposes. Accordingly, the metaphor of time bridging seems appropriate to describe a mechanism whereby visuals can connect two protest events, or social movements, that share neither the same temporality nor, as often happens, the same collective action frame. While each of the two protest events or social movements remains distinct, the connection between the two is performative in that it gives a specific meaning to events in the present where the time bridging mechanism operates.

The case study presented in this chapter offers a striking example of these processes: the massive mobilization against corruption in India between 2010 and 2012 with the Gandhian figure Hazare at the helm drawing large crowds to fasting and protest sites in the Indian capital of Delhi. At these rallies, the striking visual element characteristic of the movement was the use of the image of Gandhi on posters and placards linking the present struggle of Anna Hazare with the past struggles for India's independence from British rule. As we see in the following images, both from 2012, Anna Hazare and the other prominent civil society activists who were heading the movement are

Figure 7.1: Hunger strike of Anna Hazare and prominent IAC activists. A portrait of Gandhi is visible on the banner in the background. New Delhi, India, July 2012. Photo: Sanjay Raghav.

Figure 7.2: Hazare and Gandhi on banner. New Delhi, India, 27 December 2011. Photo: Sanjay Raghav.

seated in front of large banners where Gandhi's face features prominently. The metaphor of war is used liberally in the text of the banners, but the war is expected to be fought according to Gandhian principles, that is, through civil disobedience and hunger strikes, even if those in power use coercive tactics to tackle or silence activists. As Chowdhury (2019) noted while writing about the movement, the IAC activists were weaving a conscious narrative by juxtaposing the present struggle against the government with the past struggle against colonial rule. Protestors at these sites often raised the slogan "Inquilab Zindabad" ("Long Live Revolution" in Urdu), which is historically rooted in the pre-independence struggle for freedom (Jeelani, 2011).

Through these pictures, we can see content remediation (Bolter & Grusin, 1999) at work according to which activists insert one medium, the picture of Gandhi, into a different, more recent context from which another picture is produced. The resulting image becomes a trigger in connecting two struggles that, despite their many differences, are now linked through the juxtaposition of two charismatic figures. This case exemplifies the general model of remediation (Bolter & Grusin, 1999), in the sense that one medium, the photograph of the present mobilization, absorbs another, older medium, the icon of the past mobilization, combining them so that the differences between the two struggles cannot be immediately seen. While they remain distinct, activists connect them to cast light on the continuity between them, to root the present struggle in a longer tradition of people's movements against the corrupt and powerful and to give a visual reference to contemporary anti-corruption struggles that they would otherwise lack.

Activists used the image of Gandhi as a powerful signifier to frame the anti-corruption protest as part of a broader discourse of empowerment, liberation, and the Indian people's self-determination. This, of course, gave the struggle an immediate resonance not only in India but more broadly worldwide. While Hazare was not very well known outside India when he began the hunger strike, Gandhi was already a significant iconic image of non-violent protests in many countries across the world, including in the West (Scalmer, 2011). The connection between the present and the past through the juxtaposition of the images of these two protest leaders, then produced a strong continuity between the two movements, making them part of the same narrative: the visual memory that activists mobilized through the iconic image of Gandhi was instrumental for the construction of a shared history of non-violent fights against the powerful. The selection of the hunger strike as the main form of protest against corruption worked together with the image of Gandhi to allow the emergence of a specific anti-corruption

frame which contrasts the social justice activists to the systemic injustice they were fighting and to the main target of the mobilization.

As Tilly (2002) also noted, the repertoire of contention has a robust communicative dimension, in that the selection of one form of protest rather than another allows activists to speak to their opponents according to a particular shared understanding of who the protestors are and which values support their demands. Nevertheless, it is also relevant to note that the use of a commonly shared repertoire of images, if the meaning of those images is contested, can also produce cleavages among the potential protest supporters. In her analysis of Hazare and the anti-corruption movement that emerged in 2011, Mitu Sengupta (2012) shows that their use of the Gandhi image was considered in progressive activists' circles to be exaggerated if not openly misleading. Sengupta was referring to Hazare's own apparent authoritarian tendencies, such as calling for the death penalty for the corrupt or his praise for the then Gujarat Chief Minister (now Prime Minister) Narendra Modi, who was and continues to be a polarizing figure in Indian politics. These attributes, as Sengupta argued, made Hazare a far less nuanced figure than the Mahatma. While much derided in progressive circles, support for Hazare on the ground swelled and the activists capitalized on this Hazare–Gandhi juxtaposition. Indeed, the visual memory of past struggles arrives in the present with specific meanings attached to it, and, for this reason, bringing past mobilizations into present struggles can renew controversies around collective memory within the social movements.

The anti-corruption protest did not stop with Hazare's multiple hunger strikes: it grew into a massive mobilization bringing hundreds of thousands of people to the streets all over India and in cities around the world with a sizeable Indian population. The small white cap that Hazare wore during these rallies became yet another visual reference to the IAC protests: printed with the name of Hazare, his supporters used it to signal their belonging to the IAC movement. Pictures of Hazare, wearing the little white cap with the image of Gandhi behind him, quickly became, in itself, an evocative icon of the anti-corruption movement and its most crucial front man. These pictures were circulated and remediated by print and TV media extensively when referring to the IAC protests.

The Image of Gandhi and the Merging of Different Time Periods

So far, we have talked about the hunger strikes and rallies in 2011–2012 and the iconic image of Mahatma Gandhi that worked as a powerful

mnemonic tool in the hands of activists. We have also discussed how
activists and protestors strategically engaged in mnemonic work to connect
anti-corruption movements to past independence struggles in the country.
However, collective memory about past events is not static. Rather, and
especially in the case of fast-evolving street mobilizations, we are dealing
with a dynamic process in which the reading of what happened in the
past changes in light of events happening in the present. In other words,
it seems that mnemonic projects about the struggles that occurred in the
past decades always remain unfinished. From this perspectives, collec-
tive memory is an ongoing interaction with the past, one that is able to
continuously generate different understandings of what happened before
and how this can be embedded in the present through remembrance.
That is to say, it is a practice of meaning-making about the past in the
present (Rigney, 2018b; Olick & Robbins, 1998; Irwin-Zarecka, 1994). The
emergence of new political actors, configurations of political power, and
political events together lead contemporary activists to engage in a work
of resignification so that the past acquires specific functions in the present
(Schwartz et al., 1986) where visuals are once again crucial to the narratives
of emergent mobilizations. However, non-movement actors, such as media
organizations and journalists, can also engage in meaning-making by
bringing the past into the present so as to construct other narratives about
emerging mobilizations.

This dynamic recycling of images also happened with the IAC movement.
Nine years after that wave of mobilizations, the images of Hazare produced
during those protests circulated again in the news during the large-scale
farmers' protests that began in the last trimester of 2020 and were supported
by several key figures of the IAC movement (while other key figures refrained
from showing support).[4] Hazare, then 83 years old, was in the news between
December 2020 and January 2021, as he planned to undertake what he called
his "last protest" in support of the farmers and their demands ("Anna Hazare
Threatens to Launch His 'Last Protest' for Farmers," 2020). The images of
Hazare in these reports were mostly file photos of him clad in his Gandhi cap
and white outfit, sometimes with the national flag in the background ("Farm

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4   Here it is also important to note that both IAC and the ongoing farmers' protests are move-
ments against the government of the day. However, while IAC brought together people from
various sides of the political spectrum, the farmers' movement has primarily garnered support
from the socialists and communists. Hazare, who supported the farmers and their demands,
withdrew his indefinite hunger strike later on in January 2021 as he claimed that he had faith
that the Union government would ensure fair prices for crops to the farmers (see also "Anna
Hazare on Indefinite Fast over Stronger Lokpal Bill," 2011).

Law Stir," 2021). The act of placing these images alongside news articles and reports instantly rekindled memories of the IAC. One video report produced by the right-wing Republic TV, which discussed Anna Hazare's participation in the farmers' movement, showed him garlanding a bust of Gandhi while wearing the trademark Gandhi cap (the video had no time stamp thereby making it difficult to ascertain when it was filmed) ("Anna Hazare Sits on Hunger Strike to Support Farmers", 2020). Be that as it may, these images and videos constructed a connection between the past and the present, positioning the current agricultural workers' protests as part of the long heritage of people's struggles against the ruling government. The use of such images to speak about more recent protests around farmers' rights in India signals the fact that the image of the social activist, all dressed in white and with his tiny white cap, became yet another relevant image in itself, able to evoke a more recent past of anti-corruption struggles, and of large scale grassroots mobilizations.

Furthermore, in this new wave of mobilization, collective memory is related, simultaneously, to two periods in the past: the distant liberation struggle that occurred in India in the early decades of the 20th century, with Gandhi's mass campaigns of civil disobedience, and the much more recent anti-corruption struggles of Hazare that are the subject of this chapter. Both of these are collapsed into one image in newspaper reports on the current protests in support of the Indian farmers. The image of Gandhi embedded in the image of the anti-corruption protests connects these two past times and merges the collective memories of two different periods of mobilization. Unlike what happens with the time bridging mechanism, in this case the collective memory related to the three different waves of contention—in the distant, in the much nearer past, and in the present—do not remain distinct and distinguishable. In other words, they are not simply bridged one with the other: the condensation of different images through the mediation of news organizations blurs the boundaries between ongoing events and the two earlier periods. The liberation struggle, the anti-corruption mobilizations and the farmers protests come together around the image of Gandhi, the differences between them suspended in favour of a shared narrative of resistance against the power holders that, paradoxically, seems to be timeless.

In this way, one specific visual can merge and condense different contexts belonging to the distant past, the most recent past, and the present (Merrill, 2020). Similar to what happens with time collapse in social media (Brandtzaeg & Lüders, 2018), various temporal layers can be connected even within the same image, thus giving rise to a configuration of meaning that casts light on present protest through the lens of past ones. This type of

Figure 7.3: Hazare in the foreground with Gandhi at his shoulder. New Delhi, India, 25 March 2012. Photo: Sanjay Raghav.

convergence is also recognized as a key feature of memory sites as defined by Nora (1997) and others (e.g. Rigney, 2005). In the case of mainstream media, the process of time collapse happens due to a double remediation of contents: first, activists remediated the image of Gandhi, bringing it to the physical stage of the anti-corruption protests of 2011–2012 in the form of a giant banner, and taking pictures of Hazare with the image of Gandhi in the background (and, as we will see in the next section, even placing photos of Hazare and Gandhi side by side); subsequently, mainstream media remediated those pictures and visuals of Hazare from the anti-corruption protests to speak about ongoing (2020) farmer protests. By being displayed in new contexts and circulated in news media, the cultural life of the Hazare visuals was extended. In this sense, they can be compared to private digital photographs that have a second life on the internet, allowing them to be included in other, sometimes unexpected, contexts (Van Dijck, 2008). While the three waves of protests did not share the same contentious issues and did not mobilize the same constituencies, the time collapse produced by visuals contributes to developing a common thread between them emphasizing non-violent civil disobedience to achieve a political aim. In the case of the independence movement, this was freedom from colonial rule; in 2011, it was the passing of the Jan Lokpal Bill to fight political corruption; in the farmers' protests of 2020–2021, it was the repealing of certain laws that farmers perceived as detrimental to their interests.

Distributed Agency in Memory Work

So, how did the idea of equating Hazare with Gandhi come about? Did the activists actively engage in drawing such a parallel and communicating it to the public or was it the media, or even the protestors, who made the connection first? The few scholarly articles available on the movement agree that the activists who managed the protests had intentionally woven such a narrative to create an immediate connection with their intended audience (Chowdhury, 2019; Sharma, 2014). In a recollection published by one of the movement organizers, Lal (2017) writes that, in one of the earlier protests in 2011, at the Ramlila Maidan, the image of Bharat Mata ("Mother India" in Hindi; an iconic image of a saffron-clad woman on the backdrop of the geographical contours of India, often carrying the national flag and sometimes accompanied by a lion) was used as the stage backdrop. This caused consternation as the image has long been associated with right-wing Hindu nationalism. There was, however, no specific mention of the use of the image of Gandhi in this context.

Our respondents, who were insiders themselves, interestingly, had divergent viewpoints regarding how the activists used Gandhi as a mnemonic device for the movement. One of them, who joined the movement as a protestor before becoming an active member of the IAC team, explained that the comparison between Hazare and Gandhi was not planned by the activists but came from outside:

> It wasn't an idea initiated by us. It was an idea adopted by us. One has to anticipate how people perceive things. Especially when you are at the helm of a movement like this. You have to be receptive to what others are feeling and gauge what is working and what is not. So, for the longest time we used to refer to the Lokpal Bill as Jan Lokpal. People used to refer to it as Anna ka Lokpal. Media used to refer to it as "Anna ka Lokpal." Eventually we had to start referring to it as Anna ka Lokpal. Because that is what actually the people resonated with.

According to this respondent, Anna had become such a popular figure during this period that his name became synonymous with the movement itself, not unlike the Mahatma, who was the symbol of the independence movement. The purpose of the protests, as discussed earlier, was to create pressure on the Union government to pass the Jan Lokpal Bill (the people's ombudsman bill). However, over time, the bill came to be known as Anna ka Lokpal (Anna's Lokpal bill). Much like the ubiquity of Gandhi in any

discussion on India's struggle for independence against the British, Hazare had become a ubiquitous figure: the one-stop reference point for the movement. According to our respondent, it was not the case that the organizers had set out to forge the connection between Anna and Gandhi, but that they had to pay heed to the emotional connect that Hazare had made with the people, thanks to strong parallels between his life and that of Gandhi.

Gandhi's image had acquired mobilizing potential through its iterated use across history. As was clear both from the images of the anti-corruption mobilizations and the interviews we had with activists, Gandhi's image was the most salient reference point in activists' cultural repertoire: for activists, it was a natural choice to use such an image and somehow obvious to the point that they do not recall any strategic choice made in this regard. Two other respondents suggested that the comparison between Gandhi and Hazare happened organically, without divulging further details as to whether the activists themselves were instrumental in disseminating those images. According to one participant, it was Anna's piety and his simple lifestyle that created a strong connection with Gandhi:

> [T]he media was highlighting what was visible to them … that look there is a man sitting here who is like Gandhi. He is 73 years old. He has nothing of his own. He is sacrificing everything. He has adopted villages, he is now staying at a temple … And with Anna obviously the movement became much more pious. Because people felt that, yes, this man at the age of 73 is willing to risk his life in order to help … When you see a 73-year-old man can give up his life for the country. Where are you? What are you doing?

In this context, it is worthwhile recalling that Mohandas Gandhi is remembered the world over as the "Mahatma," which is an honorific title signifying "the great soul." From the testimonies of our respondents, it was clear that they saw Anna in the same light, as a larger-than-life figure and as a beacon of hope. However, drawing conclusions about who was responsible for the Anna–Gandhi juxtaposition—the media, the protest organizers, or the protestors themselves—is tricky, even though it is evident that the activists managing the movement mobilized the collective memory inspired by Hazare's life story and utilized his Gandhian appeal to spread the protests far and wide. In other words, with the passing of time Gandhi's image became a cultural artefact with a mobilizing power in itself.

This remains true also in the case of the farmers' mobilizations that occurred in 2020. As we have argued above, the remediation of images of Hazare's donning the small white cap and clad in white clothes rekindled

memories of one powerful event and cast its long shadow on the present one. In this case, it is worthwhile speculating whether any of the initial protest organizers were responsible for disseminating the decade-old images of Hazare. Reading some of the newspaper articles that carried the news of Hazare's most recent fast in favour of the 2020 protests, several visuals used in them were old file/archival photos of the movement. This shows that it is indeed difficult to identify a single actor with control over the dispersion of the visuals and agency over the narrative that projected Hazare as the second Gandhi. At least in the case of the IAC movement, we experience what can be termed as distributed agency, where it is close to impossible to say who decided to release certain visuals and what they should signify. As far as the Hazare–Gandhi parallel is concerned, it would be futile to trace a single source or originator of this idea as it diffused widely immediately after the movement broke out and occupied a firm place in the collective memories of protest organizers and participants. Even more importantly, such distributed agency also rests on the performative potential of cultural artefacts, like Gandhi's images, which themselves accumulated a mobilizing potential over the course of the years. In another decade, some of these images would re-appear in an instance of what we have called time collapse, where the visuals are able to condense contexts at a temporal distance.

Conclusions

In this chapter, using the India Against Corruption movement of 2011–2012 as our case study, we have attempted to unpack the role played by visuals as mnemonic devices to trigger and sustain protests and mass mobilizations. We have contended that images can act as bridges between the present and the past and they can also contribute to the merging of different protest waves, hence blurring the lines between past and present. Through the processes of bridging and merging, visuals bring forth the recall value of iconography from past movements, which, in turn, allows activists to strengthen their narrative in the present. As was the case with our example, the image of the movement's primary face, Anna Hazare, was placed in conjunction with that of Mahatma Gandhi. Hazare also appeared in almost every single image accessed so far (both from media and personal sources) in white clothes and the iconic white Gandhi cap, to create an instant and unmistakable connection with the most prominent leader of the Indian independence struggle. Many protestors who arrived at the street rallies and the hunger strikes to support the movement, wore replica Gandhi caps

with the words "Main Anna Hoon" [I am Anna], thereby showing a strong identification with and admiration for the movement's leading face.

The colour white, symbolizing purity and piety, the two qualities that are antagonistic to corruption, was constantly associated with Hazare, by the activists who coordinated the movement as well as his followers, who diligently turned up at the marches or were glued to the television sets where Hazare was covered at almost feverish pitch. Our final contention is that these visuals, which activists select and employ to trigger collective memory, have a dynamic life span of their own and can appear from time to time, thereby bridging and collapsing the past, present, and future with an instant recall value that immediately transports the onlooker to past protests. We saw Anna's images resurface after almost a decade in a different context for the farmers' protests, which had completely separate political goals. In this case, the use of the images from the previous protest was exogenous to the original movement. Yet, it managed to create an instant recollection of the iconic scenes from 2011 when common people came out in large numbers to oppose the government of the time, much like the ongoing farmers' protests. In so doing, we also show that the mnemonic capacity of visuals in social movements that engage with massive street protests vary according to the stage in which the mobilization finds itself: visuals are hence dynamic tools in the construction, transformation, and spread of collective memories associated with social movements, with other actors than activists interacting with visuals in different ways across time. We also cast light on the various actors that contribute to the creation and diffusion of visuals related to protest: instead of singling out a specific social actor who is responsible for the visual strategies in mobilization, we showed that the agency is spread across different actors, including protest organizers, protest participants, interested bystanders, and, of course, mainstream media. The choice of the Gandhi portrait was strategic in order to harness its mobilizing power, which was rooted in cultural memory and the accumulated history of all its reproductions. All these social actors produce, circulate, and look at visuals from different perspectives. However, interestingly, in our discussion we illustrated how, independently from the social actor at stake, the mnemonic potential of visuals is not only always present, but also explicitly or implicitly employed to either bridge or merge past struggles with present mobilizations.

This chapter is intended to be the starting point of a larger conversation in which we aim to build on visuals and their role in both activating and nourishing collective memory in collective action against corruption. From the example of India, the analysis can be expanded to other countries to

develop a more fine-grained understanding of how collective memory, as a dynamic process, changes retrospectively in the light of how activists use key images in collective actions against corruption in later movements.

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