Certifications of Citizenship: the history, politics and materiality of identity documents in South Asian states and diasporas

Vasudha Chhotray and Fiona McConnell

Abstract

Experiences in the post-partition Indian subcontinent refute the conventional expectation that the 'possession of citizenship enables the acquisition of documents certifying it' (Jayal, 2013, 71). Instead, identity papers of various types play a vital part in certifying and authenticating claims to citizenship. This is particularly important in a context where the history of state formation, continuous migration flows and the rise of right-wing majoritarian politics has created an uncertain situation for individuals deemed to be on the 'margins' of the state. The papers that constitute this special issue bring together a range of disciplinary perspectives in order to investigate the history, politics and materiality of identity documents, and to dismantle citizenship as an absolute and fixed notion, seeking instead to theorise the very mutable 'hierarchies' and 'degrees' of citizenship. Collectively they offer a valuable lens onto how migrants, refugees and socio-economically marginal individuals negotiate their relationship with the state, both within South Asia and in South Asian diaspora communities. This introduction examines the wider context of the complex intersections between state-issued identity documents and the nature of citizenship and draws out cross-cutting themes across the papers in this collection.

Introduction

Identity documents constitute a particular mode of writing a history of the state and its technologies of rule through enumeration and surveillance. Identity documents do not merely allow the state to *see* its citizens for the purposes of explicit control, but also enable a softer governmentality, in facilitating their welfare through the pursuit of governance objectives like efficiency, transparency and accountability. In a world where the movement of people has been the norm, identity documents issued by states have posed a serious challenge to the assumptions of citizenship as a political ideal. As Stevens writes, 'The ideology of citizenship assumes a stability not only of personal identity via documents and laws that assign citizenship but also of borders' (2017, 2). In accordance, dominant political theories of citizenship have either concentrated on distinguishing citizens from aliens or questioned the exclusions following on from the acts of the nation-state (Ibid.). This has focused increasing attention on the granular reality of what citizenship looks like for the poor, and especially for those whose stake to citizenship is not incontestable (e.g. Das and Poole 2004; Lawrance and Stevens 2017; Marston and Mitchell 2014 amongst others).

The fraught relationship between identity documents and citizenship has a distinctive history in the postcolonial Indian subcontinent. The governments of newly independent India and Pakistan had to deal with the question of legal citizenship in the context of the massive exchange of people across the new borders (Chatterji 2007; Jayal 2013). Dual citizenship was ruled out and, over the years, courts were faced with the unenviable task of deciding upon the 'evidentiary' value of passports and, subsequently, other identity documents like electoral and ration cards. As a result, experiences in the post-partition Indian subcontinent refute the conventional expectation that the 'possession of citizenship enables the acquisition of documents certifying it' (Jayal 2013, 71). Rather, identity papers of various types play a vital part in certifying and authenticating claims to citizenship throughout the region. As the question of immigration has become more politicised and controversial, the worth of these documents has also become commensurately less in official quarters, even as they constitute key resources for their holders. Meanwhile, the vast South Asian diaspora (nearly 4 million Indians alone in the British commonwealth in 1947) – given conflicting signals at home – has struggled with issues of 'second class citizenship' and recognition in the various countries where they have lived and worked (Jayal 2013).

As the pressures of continuous migration flows have continued to grow, the rise of right-wing majoritarian politics has created a difficult and uncertain situation for individuals deemed to be on the 'margins' of the state. An investigation into the history, politics and materiality of identity documents thereby offers a valuable lens onto how migrants, refugees and socio-economically marginal individuals seek to negotiate their relationship with the state, both within South Asia and in South Asian diaspora communities. The papers in this collection, which featured in panels organised by the co-editors at the 23rd European Conference of South Asian Studies in July 2014, show how the processes of using identity documents lead to the assertion of very different experiences of citizenship. This special issue brings together historians, political scientists, anthropologists, geographers and development studies scholars to re-examine the idea and practices of citizenship through the perspective of state-issued identity documents.[i].

The cases included in this special issue cover a range of identity documents and contexts, from the 'paperless' *Aadhar* in India (Nair; Chaudhuri and Koenig) to the digitization of citizenship in Pakistan (Siddiqi), from ID-based surveillance of migrant workers in Kerala (Prasad) to the nullification of citizenship documents in Odisha (Chhotray), and from marriage certificates held by Indian 'wives' migrating to early twentieth century South Africa (Hiralal) to the documented life narratives of Tamil asylum seekers in contemporary France (Mantovan). Through these cases, the authors revisit in innovative ways enduring questions around state-citizen relations, the construction of identity narratives and the politics of labelling (cf Moncrieffe and Eyben 2007). In a series of different ways, these papers dismantle citizenship as an absolute and fixed notion, seeking instead to theorise the very mutable 'hierarchies' and 'degrees' of citizenship as observed in various cases.

As a collection, the papers in this special issue demonstrate how a focus on identity documents can offer a valuable spotlight on three key areas of research: the strategic political, social and emotional issues involved in the making of citizens; the everyday and often arbitrary articulations of state governance arrangements; and the politics of the relationship between states and individuals. Globally, identity documents have been framed in historical discussions of colonial regulations of epidemics, racial surveillance and ethnic conflicts (Zureik 2001; Singha 2009; Sriraman 2013). Within the realms of state formation and discursive citizenship practice, they have figured prominently as technologies of knowing populations in ways that discriminate between citizens and aliens (Harvey 1999; Torpey 2000; Caplan and Torpey 2001). More recently, biometric technologies have also been cast into discussions of identity documents and electronic governance (Lyon 1994, 2001; Gates 2008; Breckenridge 2014). Starting from their immersion in the genealogies of writing practices to record claims, right through to their role within the more systematic regimes of proof that developed in the twentieth century, identity documents warrant treatment as a 'unique' and 'distinctive' subset of documents that can produce significant effects both by their presence and absence (Sriraman 2018).

In focusing on South Asian contexts and communities this special issue builds upon, but also advances, the scope of this extant scholarship on identity documents in three interrelated ways. First, it offers a renewed account of how identity documents are being used to reinforce the power of the state by defining its margins and the deservedness of certain claimants as appropriate members of the political community, while excluding others. Second, it explores hierarchies of citizenship through the experiences of individuals making and remaking themselves as citizens. A key dimension in this regard is the politics of labelling by states (e.g. as 'refugees' or 'migrants'), and the matching state effects experienced by individuals as they lay claim to being 'proper' documents-bearing citizens. And third, this special issue describes a certain dangerous erraticism of citizenship that strikes at the very

foundations of the nation-state. The contributing papers offer a new reading of identity documents as political currency that may be devalued, traded, and also attempted to be cast as void. In what follows we first set the context for the study of identity documents in South Asia before teasing out and discussing a series of themes that cross-cut the seven papers of this special issue.

Citizenship, identity documents and state power in South Asia
There is a specific and still unfolding history of the contested relationship between citizenship, identity documents (IDs) and state power in South Asia. To begin with, given the post partition scenario in the subcontinent, it can be argued that identity documents became central to three core dimensions of citizenship as set out by Jayal (2013): first, as legal status (with documentation proving vital for it to be ascertained); second, as a bundle of rights and entitlements (where documents hold the key to the 'goods of citizenship' whether these are welfare subsidies or a particular social status); and third, as a form of identity.

On this last point, there are a range of opinions. Jayal (2013) has argued that in cases like those of refugees from Pakistan's Sindh and Punjab on India's western border, the claim for citizenship is articulated mostly in terms of the benefits of 'social citizenship' that possession of the 'right' documents can bring. Sadiq's (2009) notion of 'documentary citizenship' aptly captures the value of identity documents for such immigrants seeking membership into the political community. For these claimants, citizenship qua identity documents has an instrumental rather than an affective dimension (Jayal 2013, 98). Equally, there is a fine line between the documents and identity, especially when their holders encounter anxieties, fears and misapprehensions of losing the citizenship claims that come with these IDs (Gordillo 2006; McConnell 2013; Sriraman 2018). Documents certify that the holder is 'who they claim to be' (Hammar this volume), and those without documents cannot 'denounce anything' (Gordillo 2006, 170), even crime. In the South Asian context, like in others too (as noted by Hammar this volume), the undocumented have a difficult existence. The role of IDs in the overall experience of citizenship effectively questions the theoretical distinction between 'thin' (citizenship-as-legal or formal) and 'thick' (substantive) citizenship (see also Holston 2008), where uncertainty in one realm fully permeates the other.

The fact that both the entitlements and deprivations of IDs are highly unequal is testimony to the differentiated social landscape of power and authority. Ong (1999) drew attention to the entitlements granted through identity documentation in her concept of 'flexible citizenship' whereby individuals who hold a range of IDs can access multiple markets and thus accumulate capital gains. The papers in this special issue take Ong's analysis of entitlements elsewhere – away from the transnational elites and citizens of high-income countries and to the global South; to economic migrants, to national minorities and to asylum seekers. At these geographical and social margins, the possession or lack of IDs becomes acutely important (Williams et al 2011). The forms of legal identification that IDs hold can be crucial to an individual's life chances. The granting of an ID or a denial of IDs dictate a person's mobility, ability to work, and right to citizenship. In the cases contained within this collection, we find rich evidence of these encounters and experiences.

Focusing on the holders of IDs offers important insights into the construction of identity and experience of (non)citizenship, but only tells part of the story. IDs also offer an important spotlight into state power. States govern with paper, and that a profound reliance on documents of all kinds is what makes bureaucracy has been widely noted, following the work of Weber (2006). A fecund literature has grown around the range of documentary practices that give form to the actions of the state (e.g. Feldman 2008; Hull 2012; Navaro-Yashin 2012; Gupta 2012; Sriraman 2018). The Indian state has a 'marked obsession

with paper' writes Mathur (2016) whose ethnographic research on how laws are sustained within the state has lead her to study the lives assumed by documents as they circulated within the multiple rungs of bureaucracy. Scholars describing the workings of the everyday state in India have also observed how a chronic need by officials to maintain 'upward representations' to satisfy the textual protocol laid down by those of a higher status marks the bureaucratic state (Mosse 2004; Chhotray 2005).

Identity documents can thus acquire a central role in facilitating, even extending, the bureaucratic state (see Torpey 2000). On the one hand IDs are firmly situated within a now well documented genealogy of verification and surveillance (Zureik 2001; Lyon 2001). On the other hand, IDs have also strengthened the notion of the state as the ultimate provider of popular welfare, as in India (Sriraman 2018). The Indian state's many policies and orchestrations for welfare are all contingent upon the claim that the holders of appropriate categories of documents can effectively make (ration cards being a prime example, see Sriraman 2011). The elaborate documentary requirements lend an aura of transparency, while perversely obfuscating the actual goings on that Gupta (2012) and Sriraman (2018), amongst others,have commented upon. The distinction between 'official life' and 'actual life' of any policy or scheme, as drawn out by Mathur (2016), makes this extremely clear. With the launch of biometric innovations in governance, ground may be created for even newer opacities (Sriraman 2018). This is borne out by the barrage of critical evidence that has flooded the public domain about the detrimental impact of 'Aadhar', India's flagship biometric identification scheme in existence since 2009, upon access to welfare.[ii]

In her bold account of the making of IDs in India, Sriraman (2018) argues that IDs must not be viewed only as 'artefacts' of the state, but also as the hybrid and conjectural products of popular engagement with and use of these documents. Welfare entitlements are not readily available things that are waiting to be acquired. Instead, they are the messy and highly conjectural outcomes that arise precisely when citizens use IDs in creative and assertive ways, negotiating a range of unpredictable authorities. Sriraman (2018) refers to this process as 'deep immersion' without which the Indian state would be unable to govern marginal spaces. Terms like 'squatters', or 'unauthorised colonies' (Das 2012 cited in Sriraman 2018), and objects like the substitute ration cards that people who live in these marginal spaces use, actually allow for the consolidation of various transitional or liminal approaches to governance. All of the cases discussed in in this collection, ranging from flood victims in Pakistan (Siddiqi) to Bengali refugees in Odisha in India (Chhotray) to migrant workers from the north and north east in Kerala (Prasad) to Sri Lankan Tamil asylum seekers in France (Mantovan) and Indian female migrants at the turn of the 20th century in South Africa (Hiralal) powerfully illustrate the creative uses that IDs are put to. The papers each show the unmistakable liminality between the certainty of recognition and the uncertainty of existence that this recognition seeks to counter (Hammar this volume).

A new twist to the power of the state as exercised through identity documents in this region is provided by the unprecedented scale of Aadhar, the largest national biometric identification programme anywhere in the world. As Nair (this volume) explains, within a long history of individual identification, ID card systems gained currency in the twentieth century, and now biometrics orchestrated by the state is what is driving the entire process (see also Breckenridge 2014). The Aadhar Scheme is a government initiative launched by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) in 2009 that seeks to give every Indian resident a unique identity number that is linked to their biometric details (see Chaudhari and Koenig; Nair, this volume, for more details). The scheme was initially justified as a 'welfare enhancing project'[iii] to accord valid identification to the rural and urban poor to enable them to access state welfare subsidies, and to eliminate fraudulent middlemen by expediting transfers to bonafide recipients. It was expected that Aadhar would neither guarantee rights or benefits (merely hold the key

to access), nor would it be an authentication of Indian citizenship (the UIDAI decided to issue Aadhar to *all* residents irrespective of citizenship, thereby in effect tying Aadhar to other state issued documents like ration and Below Poverty Line cards; see Nair this volume).

However, in the ensuing years, the much-lauded technocratic experiment that is Aadhar has exploded into a dystopian situation of gargantuan proportions. The move by the central government to create a superstructure of biometric governance has seen 139 notifications linking Aadhar to various walks of life and seeded it with the National Population Register, even impacting upon commercial transactions like opening a bank account.[iv] The gradual but steady linking of Aadhar to many welfare scheme and service, from the public distribution scheme to pensions and the issuing of death certificates is reported to be producing significant exclusions in practice.[v].In a country where satisfaction with bureaucratic protocol has a rich lineage, field functionaries often think nothing before deleting the names of those who do not submit Aadhar numbers from the ration list. The encompassing tyranny of Aadhar has become fully evident when pregnant women seeking an abortion have been turned away from government health facilities into the hands of unsafe quacks, because they did not have an Aadhar number.[vi] The popular press in India has been awash with headlines like 'Pension is a right, not a subsidy, how can you link it to Aadhar',[vii] 'Aadhar controversy- Jharkhand hunger death',[viii] and 'Aadhar- an idea gone very wrong'.[ix]

The biggest challenge to Aadhar in recent years has has been the infringement into an individual's privacy. The collection and storage of an individual's unique biometric data in a centralised and interlinked database and its indiscriminate, widespread and unknown uses have provoked outrage and mobilisation. In August 2017, the Supreme Court declared that the right to privacy is a fundamental right of all Indian citizens and is a part of Article 21 of the Indian Constitution that guarantees the right to life. While this challenged the central government's argument that the right to privacy was an ordinary right, the implications of this judgement for Aadhar specifically are not clear, beyond indicating that the protection of data is paramount.[x] The articulation of arguments about biometric governance leading to a highly efficient data economy has dominated Aadhar, which is no longer simply about giving rations to the undocumented poor. Reetika Khera, amongst the most vocal critics, describes this transmogrification best:

> 'The packaging of the Aadhaar project as a welfare-enhancing project was the sugar-coating on what is essentially turning into a surveillance and data-mining tool. A centralised database creates entrepreneurial data analytics possibilities which clash in a fundamental way with civil liberties. Centralised and inter-linked databases lead to profiling and self-censorship, which endangers our freedom. This clash lies at the heart of the Aadhaar debate'.[xi]

To this vital debate over the evolving relationship between the state, IDs and individuals' rights, two papers in this collection offer a uniquely critical perspective. Chaudhari and Koenig theorise Aadhar as the 'cornerstone of a new citizenship regime in India' (this volume). In a reflective paper, they situate the Aadhar experiment within the broader shift to neoliberal governance whereby state operations assume a market logic, and private bodies acquire a larger role in performing state operations through various technologies. Invoking the Foucauldian notion of governmentality, the authors theorise Aadhar under the framework of biopolitics as a form of governmental technology. They then address the question of how this new apparatus of biopolitics is linked specifically to an evolving citizenship regime which theorises the relationship between states and citizens in four dimensions: responsibility mix, rights and duties, governance arrangements and the definition of membership (see also Jenson 2007). They thereby reveal how the Indian government's Aadhar experiment is silently changing the

boundaries of how citizenship is understood within India, using a suspiciously apolitical idiom. Understanding the profound transformations unleashed by Aadhar in each of the dimensions of the citizenship regime is a timely contribution. It provides the appropriate conceptual resources and language to theorise the ongoing critical interventions previously discussed.

Taking a different approach to debates surrounding Aadhar, Nair (this volume) offers an innovative reading centred on ethnographic research at an Aadhar enrolment centre in New Delhi. She argues that Aadhar provokes two questions: what kind of person would be its recipient, and what does an ID like Aadhar afford or limit, or in other words, what larger (political) community does Aadhar provide membership into? These are important questions that have not thus far been raised in popular discussion regarding Aadhar. Her fascinating account shows how one of the most important motivations for Aadhar – to clean up the system of corruption – ends up 'fuelling imaginaries' about the 'common, culpable man', and reinforcing the need for policing. She also discusses the controversy about how Aadhar illegitimately facilitates the channelling of national resources to 'illegal' immigrants. In both senses, Aadhar has 'reprised tensions' relating to individual identity, citizenship and immigration in postcolonial India.

It is precisely such potency of IDs and the bureaucracies that underpin them that all the papers in this special issue seek to expose and analyse. Whilst the papers focus on a diverse range of contexts – geographical, historical and social – a number of common themes cross cut them. In the remainder of this introduction we highlight these themes and draw out the wider contributions that the papers make to debates around identity, citizenship, marginality and the state.

Cross cutting themes

IDs as a mechanism of state power

Identity documents have long served as a crucial instrument of state power (Torpey 2000; Caplan and Torpey 2001). Even as digital biometric identification frequently outsourced to private companies becomes increasingly prevalent, the role of the state remains central. The modern phenomenon of digital biometric identification flows from nineteenth century eugenics, colonial anthropometry and European policing systems (Maguire 2009 cited in Nair this volume), all of which have perpetuated state power. In fact, it could even be argued that IDs make the state, due to their centrality to bureaucratic processes of government. And while this is perhaps less true of the South Asian context where the foundation of the respective states is not in question, in cases of newly formed states, like South Sudan, IDs even serve as a marker of statehood. Marko's fascinating paper reports on how the contention surrounding South Sudan being a 'failed' state has provoked a public political response along the lines of how can it be so when 'we make the best passports' (2016, 117)!

In each of the papers in this issue, the use of IDs as a mechanism of state power is richly substantiated. As we have noted above, the papers by Nair and by Chaudhari and Koenig provide original insights into how Aadhar has transformed modalities of state power in India in direct and more subtle ways. The other papers contain evidence of the use of IDs as explicit means of state-led control, even coercion. IDs can control many aspects of life and movement, with the right to work being at the forefront of these. Prasad in her paper 'Cards and carriers: migration, identification and surveillance in Kerala, South India' sheds light on the relatively neglected area of the use of IDs as an instrument of surveillance of internal migration within a nation-state. Her paper, drawing upon fieldwork in construction sites and factory premises in Ernakulam district in Kerala, documents how identity cards

and surveillance practices are integral to the overall experience of being a migrant. ID based surveillance unfolds within a differentiated field of power and schisms amongst the various classes of labour, where migrant workers resist not necessarily class power, but the state and its practices of surveillance.

IDs make individuals, and poor and marginalised subjects in particular, visible to the state. Prasad's paper is especially rich here, with its account of how surveillance practices help to mark out the 'undesirable' migrant. This has resonances with Chhotray's paper 'Nullification of citizenship: negotiating authority without identity documents in coastal Odisha, India' in which she focuses on the power of the state to use IDs to identify, and then attempt to isolate and expel people. Through the case of a unique citizenship controversy concerning a community of Bengali immigrant settlers in this east Indian state, this paper richly illustrates the sheer arbitrariness of how states can 'de-recognise' persons by nullifying their documents. The context to this act was a 2003 amendment to the Citizenship Act of 1955 that modified the provision of citizenship by birth to exclude from it persons born in India who have one parent who is an illegal immigrant at the time of their birth. The cut-off date of 1971 itself was imposed *retrospectively* in 1985 for immigrants from East Pakistan, then Bangladesh, to qualify as bonafide refugees. Chhotray illustrates how the might of the state was expressed through a state government order that led to the production of a list of 1551 'infiltrators'. Although no deportation took place, those who found themselves on this list were driven into a state of extended suspension, having to conduct their lives with documents that were void and negotiate authority without the certainty of recognised citizenship.

Hiralal's historical paper 'What is the meaning of the word "wife"? The impact of the immigration laws on the wives of resident Indians in South Africa 1897-1930' raises similar issues of rights curtailment for women seeking to join their spouses, through restrictive procedures of documentation and verification. At the heart of this was the questioning of Indian customary marriage by various actors of the South African state: immigration officials, appeal boards and courts. The paper also contributes to the critical literature on gender and citizenship in historical migrations by exploring how the meaning of 'wife' within official parlance became contentious at the turn of the twentieth century. In a manner resonant with the treatment of immigrant workers in Kerala and the Bengali immigrants in Odisha, Indian wives in this case found themselves in an invented category of 'prohibited immigrants' who were to be monitored and controlled. These papers thus powerfully demonstrate how IDs are the very instrument of these acts of negative labelling.

The spectre of control through identity documents raises images of physical border crossings and check points. However, as the papers in this special issue demonstrate, often sites are mundane spaces far away from the external boundaries of the state, like market places, factories and offices. Moreover, they attest to the plurality of actors and officials who may request IDs, produce them, issue them, retain them, or otherwise dispose of them or declare them void. ID checks thus combine with the prior amalgamation of entitlements to invest identity documents with a considerable degree of power, often producing a great deal of humiliation and anxiety at documentary scrutiny. This thereby illustrates the extent to which the state is not a monolithic entity but rather a series of individuals, practices and objects.

Being seen by the state: IDs and state-citizen relations

Much as IDs render invisible particular groups by denying them documentation, they also allow citizens to be seen by the state, facilitating the flow of assorted benefits that come with recognition. In this sense,

IDs form a critical interface between the state and the individual, enabling legal rights, access to resources and movement (Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Anderson 1991; Scott 1998 and Torpey 2000). The process of ID verification creates an encounter between the official and the veritable holder of the document which, however unpleasant or degrading at times, is also desired by the latter. The literature on identity documents has emphasised their *inherent duality* whereby they can lead to both entitlement and deprivation, security and insecurity, empowerment and control, emancipation and repression (Caplan and Torpey 2001). The papers in this special issue build upon this body of work by providing grounded examples of how this duality plays out and is contested within South Asia and the South Asian diaspora.

The need to be seen by the state through the use of IDs has, as the papers here demonstrate, a rich lineage in the post-partition subcontinent. For example, in wanting IDs that could offer them a measure of protection and safety, immigrant workers in Kerala sought to be seen by the state (Prasad this volume). In willingly going to local state officials to negotiate their position on a ration list, despite their cancelled ration card, we find a similar desire to continue being seen by the state by Bengalis in Odisha (Chhotray this volume). In sitting across the computer from an operator at an Aadhar enrolment centre, the enrolee (Aadhar aspirant) was able to see how the state saw her: 'As the operator fed the software demographic information, the enrolee could read the state reading her, the might of the state temporarily being made available to her' (Nair this volume). Nair describes this as a moment of equivalence, according a certain agency to the resident to 'insist that the state see her as she wanted to be seen' (ibid.). This equivalence is only fleeting though, replaced quickly by the much weightier asymmetry of power that typically characterises relations between ID issuer and ID applicant or holder.

The dynamics of such a relationship is examined in a very different context in Mantovan's paper 'A "tactical" use of collective history: the construction and certification of truth in life accounts for Sri Lankan Tamil asylum application in France' which focuses on the narrativisation of identity in order to secure an identity document to obtain access to a political community. In a fascinating account, Mantovan discusses how Sri Lankan Tamils construct their life histories for asylum applications in France. The bureaucratic procedure follows the logic of 'singularisation', where collective history is tactically used by a public writer to write up individual life stories to enhance the chances of success for the asylum applicant. Mantovan strikingly refers to this as a 'citizen-making' process where the state's attempts to 'control its margins' is at the heart of the state-building project.

Those whose claims to IDs are not certain often find themselves in this position, compressing their inchoate, plural and sometimes forgotten life histories into a coherent narrative that will be acceptable to the authorities. Indeed in a strange case, the Bengali immigrants in Odisha (Chhotray this volume) had to continue with this process of narrativisation much *after* they acquired the IDs, in fact when these were nullified, by way of trying to justify the legitimacy of their presence. Chhotray's paper contains intricate details of how the Bengali community was left divided after the production of the state list of 'infiltrators', with some even categorising themselves according to this language and the official timeline of permitted arrival.

A number of papers interrogate how the process of using IDs to 'see citizens' alters the mutual relations between various state actors. This point is made particularly clearly in Siddiqi's paper '"Disaster Citizenship": an emerging framework for understanding the depth of digital citizenship in Pakistan'. Here the author charts out the advances made by the state in Pakistan, usually criticised for possessing a weak social presence, in 'formalising and universalising citizenship through the digitisation of citizenship numbers' (Siddiqi, this volume). The construction of a digital ID base (contained within the

National Database and Registration Authority) during the decade of military rule, was mobilised to allow the state to reach out to citizens in the aftermath of large scale flooding in 2010 and 2011 Through an innovative administrative scheme, the state used these citizenship numbers to disburse cash transfers to disaster affected households through ATM cards. The state also sought to eliminate intermediaries and make disaster relief available to citizens in a direct and unprecedented manner. Officials had to respond to this new modality of state functioning which also reshaped citizenship behaviours (more on this later). Indeed, the doing away of intermediaries in governance is a key thematic of new biometric identification technologies, even as they remain critical to the claims that refugees and asylum seekers can make (like Kumar, the public writer in the Sri Lankan Tamil asylum seekers' case, Mantovan this volume).

Emerging clearly from all the papers in this issue is the insistence that the state is not simply a functional bureaucratic apparatus, but rather, a powerful site of symbolic and cultural production (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). Das and Poole's observation that documents 'bear the double sign of the state's distance and its penetration into the life of the everyday' (2004, 15) holds in all these cases. However, the papers also go further than this, in many ways echoing Sriraman's (2018) contention that citizens do not simply 'see' the state but instead invest their creative agency in the IDs they claim and use, which contributes to the state's ability to govern various marginal spaces,. And yet, often times it is this very need for state officials to satisfy paper protocol that leads to the acceptance of counterfeit documents, crippling genuine administration.

Unevenness of citizenship and paradigms of inclusion and exclusion

There are many different, countless even, ways of practising citizenship, notes Jayal (2013). Scholars writing about citizenship have emphasised the contiguity between its legal statutory dimensions associated with universal and formal rights and obligations, and the realised, contextually situated substantive dimension (Holston 2008, Hammar this volume). Hammar (this volume) notes that at the very 'heart of formal and informal citizenship is *distinction*: between citizens and non-citizens, between (and among) "insiders" and "outsiders"; between those recognised as entitled or not to claim certain rights, resources….pasts, futures; a distinction that defines and attempts to control ways of moving, belonging, and living in the world'. Agamben (1998) describes the classification of some people as undeserving of the most basic reach of dignity and humanity and their exclusion from the political community while remaining 'internal to society and the economy' (like women, slaves, outcasts in Roman times) as the most elementary operation of sovereign power (as cited in Hansen and Stepputat 2005, 16). Many of the papers in this special issue show that the production or reproduction of this distinction largely occurs in the realm of certification, through identity documents.

This collection of papers offers original insights into how the contrasting attributes of personhood find their way into the official language of classification as articulated through identity documents. They also confirm that there is an unstated notion of deservedness of the 'legitimate citizen', as contrasted from the undeserved claims exercised by immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees. These are, of course, unleashed very subtly, through the veiled techno-determinism of state surveillance contained within certification (like the Aadhar, or indeed other forms of regulation like the workers IDs discussed in Prasad's paper). This confirms Clavell's (2011) diagnosis that rather than viewing surveillance as a technology with social consequences, it is imperative to approach it as a social and political process with technological consequences (Prasad, this volume).

Nair (this volume) has shown how in the case of the world's largest biometric drive, Aadhar, the question 'Who is this person' transposed into 'What kind of person is this' (Caplan and Torpey 2001, 3). In a fascinating analysis, her paper shows how the postulation of the UIDAI created infrastructure that would preclude the possibility of fraud actually became the conceptual building block in the entire imaginary of Aadhar. The strong association with biometrics and criminality has underpinned this imaginary, which has been seen as a means of 'catching' a criminal (theft, diversion of public funds, other petty criminal activity), as well as a means of technology that itself potentially allowed for criminal activity (illegal migration).

The problem of credibility of the accounts presented by migrants from the global south, fleeing wars and persecution, to countries in the global north, is at the heart of Mantovan's paper. His account focuses on how the production and evaluation of asylum applicants' life histories constitutes a key moment in the relationship between the (foreign) individual and the French state. The concern by official agencies about 'Is this a *real* refugee' leads to a messy but concerted attempt by the asylum application system to produce the 'truth' concerning the life histories of asylum seekers. This interface between narrator and evaluator is the basis of the citizen-making process, allowing the state to determine who asylum seekers are, and whether they will be integrated into the state or not. Mantovan is emphatic that the production of truth is not a simple adaption to the state's laws and regulations, but rather the outcome of multiple interactions amongst distinctive actors.

Such messiness in the construction and appropriation of labels is also a key theme in Chhotray's paper wherein she traces the development of an inherent hierarchy of identity labels, even amongst those who are deemed to be at the devalued end of the citizenship spectrum. Generally, refugees defy the orderings laid down by the international system of the modern natio- state and denote all that is exclusionary about statehood and citizenship (McConnell 2011). However, in this case, the term 'refugee' oddly became a safe haven, even a badge of honour, for those who could claim it, while those who could not were assigned to a relatively inferior political denominator – the *anuprabeshkari* or infiltrator. Overall, therefore, in different ways, these papers powerfully demonstrate the precariousness and ambiguity of citizenship as a realised status for those whose claims are contestable.

Citizenship behaviours

Even as IDs have served as modes of control by the state as well as instruments of exclusion, it is also true that 'identification cannot be seen as separate from the quotidian empowerments' that it produces (Prasad, this volume). The possession of IDs is, at times, a means of dignity and self-esteem, granting a peek at, even if not full-fledged access to, the legitimacy represented by official institutions. The recognition that identity documents provide a segue into issues of critical agency exercised by their holders has grown within the wider scholarship. There are increasing calls to 'ground' the social practices of citizenship by focusing on its contingent and ever dynamic nature, the affective element of belonging and the lived experiences and agency of citizens (Marston and Mitchell 2004; Leitner and Erhkamp 2006; Ho 2008). As such, there is now a rich repertoire of ethnographic work that examines the relationships between individuals and the identity documents they hold (e.g. Poole 2004; Bakewell 2007).

The possession of IDs has been observed to produce 'citizenship behaviours' (like in Gordillo's 2006 work with marginalised indigenous groups in Argentina). In this collection, Siddiqi's paper on the initiation of a post-disaster digital citizenship contains rich evidence of the creation of a transformative political space in the aftermath of a major disaster. The state's use of digitised identity numbers for all

households in disaster affected areas in order to provide a one-off cash transfer proved to be the catalyst for altered state-citizen relationships. In this case, IDs played a crucial part not only in enabling state officials and citizens to interact in new ways, but by encouraging citizens to *demand more* from their 'social contract'. The case also illustrates that substantive experiences of citizenship are contingent upon IDs, which mediate the continuum between the so-called thin (legal/formal) and thick (substantive, situated) forms of citizenship. This case is thus suggestive of more positive outcomes associated with the state's use of biometric identification than, as previously discussed, has been the case with Aadhar in India.

On a different note, while the possession of IDs is enabling, they also reproduce what Mitchell (1999) has referred to as 'state effects'. In Chhotray's paper a single act of the state issuing a list of 'infiltrators' translated into multiple social practices, which greatly accentuated the effect of that act in the first place. The paper documents how the tussles that those labelled 'infiltrators' face are not only with government officials, but also with other social power holders more generally. In Mantovan's paper on Sri Lankan Tamil asylum seekers in France, such was the need to satisfy the state's expectations of a true narrative that it galvanised applicants into trying to show that their personal story was indeed true. Yet, despite their enabling dimension, many of the papers in this collection show that for those on the margins, the experience of using identity documents is an unstable one, with highly contingent outcomes. For example, Chhotray's account conveys the tenuousness of the moral claims that 'infiltrators' are able to exercise upon those with authority, once their documents were nullified. It also shows how some documents have been easier to effectively withdraw than others. Nair's paper draws out the fragility of individual confidence as the 'deserving' Aadhar enrolee, which then quickly unravels upon further interrogation by the official across the all-knowing monitor. Prasad's paper details the unexpected alliances forged by migrant workers in order to resist against the surveillance rendered possible by identity documents. As Kelly eloquently notes regarding the case of persons and states in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,

> 'the implications of holding identity documents are always partial and unstable, as the laws and regulations that give them meaning are often incoherent…The result is that even as people try to gain a measure of security through holding the right documents, these same documents also mean that their lives are shot through with fear and uncertainty. Identity documents are inherently unstable, both as a technique of governance and as objects to be manipulated' (2006: 90, 91).

Conclusion: the materiality of IDs

As we have sought to document in this introductory article, identity documents in their various forms offer an important and revealing insight into the history and politics of the relationship between individuals and the state. Moreover, by attending to the production, use and denial of IDs in South Asia and the South Asian diaspora, the papers in this special issue reveal the complexity and contradictions of state power, individual agency and the fraught politics of labelling in this context. In different ways each paper traces how the inherent duality of IDs offers a fruitful lens onto the ambivalent character of both citizenship and statehood. The issuing, validation and holding of IDs can be benign and empowering, or it can be coercive and restrictive. This duality is particularly stark in the margins of the state, amongst communities of migrants, refugees and the socio-economically disadvantaged. It is within such marginalised communities that the vagaries of state bureaucracies are felt with full force and the hierarchies of citizenship and its denial generate everyday hardships. Yet, as the papers in this issue illustrate, IDs can be used to grant rights as well as deny them, and can be a source of pride and creative resistance.

The duality of IDs also facilitates a productive conceptualising of the relationship between individuals and the state. Key to this is the materiality of identity documents. IDs are points at which the state passes into material form: as the condensation of state relations IDs are where the state-individual relationship becomes most visible and tangible. This is not to devalue the role of social relations vis-à-vis the articulation of citizenship and statehood. Far from it, as the papers in this volume richly illustrate how as material objects identity papers *are* social relations. As Gordillo argues, IDs 'are worthless without the social relations that produce them and give meaning to them as symbols of something else. The power that people invest in those documents lies there, in those relations and conventions, rather than in their physical materiality' (2006, 173). Even in the case of biometric technology and the emergence of different values associated with digital technology in the context of Aadhar and the digitisation of citizenship in Pakistan, the drive to delink material documents from personal identification has simply seen a shift of power relations to the systems and objects that manage biometric IDs. Moreover, the materiality of IDs and the bureaucratic systems that underpin them both necessitates a focus on the micro-scale in terms of everyday state practices, and links this to the macro scale of the structures of state power. The materiality of paperwork and the quotidian performances of paperworkers reveal much about how states identify, categorise and govern individuals, and the dynamics of resistance and agency.

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[i] We thank anthropologist Amanda Hammar for accepting our invitation to write an afterward to this volume, where she has offered an African viewpoint on these South Asian debates.

[ii] http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/why-abba-must-go/article20353913.ece
https://thewire.in/government/aadhaar-mid-day-meals for example (accessed on the 6th of April, 2018). There are scores of articles in the popular press on this subject.

[iii] https://thewire.in/government/privacy-aadhaar-supreme-court (accessed on the 6th of April, 2018)

[iv] https://thewire.in/government/aadhaar-privacy-government-supreme-court (accessed on the 7th of April, 2018).

[v] http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/fifth-column-aadhaar-an-idea-gone-very-wrong-5023463/ (accessed on the 6th of April, 2018). Many other articles have been published along similar lines.

[vi] http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-aadhaar-a-problem-for-women-seeking-abortions-2554206 (accessed on the 7th of April, 2018).

[vii] https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/pension-is-a-right-not-subsidy-how-can-you-link-aadhaar-to-it-asks-sc/articleshow/63405273.cms?from=mdr (accessed on the 6th of April, 2018).

[viii] https://scroll.in/article/862338/jharkhand-hunger-death-girl-died-crying-for-food-her-family-is-now-accused-of-shaming-the-nation (accessed on the 6th of April, 2018).

[ix] http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/fifth-column-aadhaar-an-idea-gone-very-wrong-5023463/ (accessed on the 6th of April, 2018).

[x] https://scroll.in/article/848389/privacy-is-now-a-fundamental-right-can-aadhaar-pass-its-test (accessed on the 7th of April, 2018).

[xi] https://thewire.in/government/privacy-aadhaar-supreme-court (accessed on the 7th of April, 2018).