

For Immediate Release

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Symposium to Explore Modernity/Anti-Modernity of Gandhi's Politics

During his own lifetime, it was clear that Mahatma Gandhi, despite or perhaps because of his popularity, did not fit into the received narratives of Indian nationalism, anti-colonial struggle, or even pacifism and civil disobedience. The complexity of Gandhi's politics and its relevance in contemporary India will be the topic of an international symposium at Yale University on 5 April 2004.

"Gandhi: The Politics of Modernity" is convened by Faisal Devji, the Doctor Malathy Singh Visiting Lecturer in South Asian Studies in the Department of History and sponsored by the Rustgi Family Fund, with support from the South Asian Studies Council and the Yale Center for International and Area Studies. The conference that will take place at the Whitney Humanities Center is open to the public and the Yale community. Registration is free, but required by contacting the South Asian Studies Council at south.asia@yale.edu or 203.432.9343. A complete schedule of the conference activities is available at www.yale.edu/ycias/southasia/events/gandhi.htm.

Speakers at the symposium will include Akeel Bilgrami (Columbia University), Ritu Birla (University of Toronto), Carol Breckenridge (New School University), Faisal Devji (Yale University), Uday Mehta (Amherst College), Vyjayanthi Rao (New School University), and Ajay Skaria (University of Minnesota). The symposium will conclude with comments and discussion by Dipesh Chakrabarty, the Lawrence A. Kimpton Distinguished Service Professor of History and South Asian Languages and Civilizations at the University of Chicago.

"After his assassination," Devji points out, "Gandhi was for a time transformed into a good, if somewhat eccentric, nationalist, anti-colonialist, pacifist, etc. leader." More recently, in the light of the waning of Nehruvian secularism in India, a different Gandhi—as an anti-modernist—has come to light. The symposium, Devji expects, will "explore Gandhi's politics not only in the light of its new, anti-modern relevance in contemporary India, but also as a political thinking that managed to address and re-conceive important narratives of the modern and pre-modern more generally."

In conjunction with the symposium, there will be an exhibition of Gandhi's correspondence that is held by the Yale Library in its Pancholi Collection of Gandhi Letters. The donation by Manubhai R. and Vijayaben M. Pancholi in 1988 included letters written by the Indian leader between 1935 and 1948 to Vijayaben M. Pancholi, who was his former pupil and ashram inmate for three years. At the time of this gift, Vijayaben M. Pancholi requested that Yale organize programs to inform students and others about Gandhi's life and legacy.

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