



## The Mahatma Misunderstood

The Politics and Forms of Literary Nationalism in India  
Snehal Shingavi

**Pub Date:** March 2013

**Binding:** Hardback

**Price:** £60 / \$99

**ISBN:** 9780857285119

**Extent:** 275 pages

**Size:** 229 x 152mm / 9 x 6

**Category:** LITERARY CRITICISM /  
Asian / Indic

**BISAC code:** LIT008020

**BIC code:** DSK

**Rights Held:** World

### Description

**A study of the fiction about Gandhi produced in his lifetime that explains why novelists both vehemently critiqued and lovingly collaborated with the Mahatma simultaneously.**

*The Mahatma Misunderstood* studies the relationship between the production of novels in late-colonial India and nationalist agitation promoted by the Indian National Congress. The volume examines the process by which novelists who were critically engaged with Gandhian nationalism, and who saw both the potentials and the pitfalls of Gandhian political strategies, came to be seen as the Mahatma's standard-bearers rather than his loyal opposition.

In doing so, the volume challenges the orthodoxy in postcolonial and subaltern studies which contends that nationalists and nationalisms use independence to bring to power a bourgeois elite, who produce a story about the nation that erases the unevenness of minority experiences and demands in favour of simplified, majoritarian citizenship. Instead *The Mahatma Misunderstood* demonstrates that nationalist fiction (and by extension the nationalist political movement) was marked from the beginning by a deep ambivalence about the relevance of nationalist agitation and mainstream nationalist politics for minorities in colonial India, and sought to recast anticolonial politics through novelistic debates with the spokesman for Indian nationalism, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

The volume thus articulates a recuperative theory of nationalism in the Indian case, in order to move thinking about nationalism beyond the current impasse produced by postcolonial theory in an era of transnational capitalism that too frequently forgets, underestimates or represses the national in the transnational.

**Readership:** Students and scholars of Indian literary studies and postcolonial theory, as well as those engaged in comparative literature and history.

### Contents

Introduction; Chapter 1. The Mahatma as Proof: The Nationalist Origins of the Historiography of Indian Writing in English; Chapter 2. "The Mahatma didn't say so, but ...": Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and the Sympathies of Middle-class Nationalists; Chapter 3. "The Mahatma may be all wrong about politics, but ...": Raja Rao's 'Kanthapura' and the Religious Imagination of the Indian, Secular, Nationalist Middle Class; Chapter 4. The Missing Mahatma: Ahmed Ali and the Aesthetics of Muslim Anticolonialism; Chapter 5. The Grammar of the Gandhians: Jayaprakash Narayan and the Figure of Gandhi; Chapter 6. The Mahatma Misunderstood: The Arrested Development of the Nationalist Dialectic

### About the Author

Snehal Shingavi is Assistant Professor in the Department of English at the University of Texas, Austin, where he specializes in the teaching of English, Hindi and Urdu literature from India and Pakistan.

#### Ordering in the UK/Rest of the World

Marston Book Services  
P.O. Box 269  
Abingdon, Oxfordshire  
OX14 4YN, United Kingdom  
Tel: +44 (0)1235 465577  
Fax: +44 (0)1235 465556  
direct.orders@marston.co.uk  
trade.orders@marston.co.uk

#### Ordering in North America

Books International  
P.O. Box 605  
Herndon, VA 20172-0605  
United States  
Tel: +1 703 661 1570  
Fax: +1 703 661 1501  
bimail@presswarehouse.com