



Colloquium Series: Postcolonial Relations: Gandhi, Nehru and the Ethical Imperatives of the National-Popular

Speaker:

Rajeswari Sunder Rajan, New York University

Date / Time:

March 1, 2012 - 3:15pm

Venue:

Room 307, Third Floor, Pixel B, APU

Abstract:

In India the morality of politics is identified with the names of the two most prominent nationalist leaders of the time, Mohandas K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. The ethico-political mode of identification that I am interested in exploring in the case of Gandhi will be directed chiefly at the idioms and practices of *giving*, in so far as it constitutes the basic structural and performative component of his adoption of voluntary poverty as a way of life-- in the public eye as much as within the intimate confines of family life. Gandhi's political morality and way of life is tautologically described--since it appears so entirely *sui generis*—as Gandhianism. In the case of Nehru my interest is in the ways he both exemplified and urged upon other Indians a relationship of intimacy and responsibility between nation and people, and among the people, for which the word 'patriotism' will serve as shorthand. I shall invoke Gandhi at the origin of the concept of a specific technology of self that I name *dissemination*; and Nehru as the exemplification of a postcolonial national political leadership that resembles *noblesse oblige*.

A Note on the Speaker:

Rajeswari Sunder Rajan is Global Distinguished Professor in the English department at New York University. She was educated in Bombay and Washington DC. She taught for many years in India, and then in the U.K. where she was Professorial Fellow at Wolfson College and Reader in the English faculty at the University of Oxford. She has also been a Senior Fellow at the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

Her publications include *Real and Imagined Women* (1993) and *Scandal of the State* (2003), the edited volumes *The Lie of the Land* (1992), *Signposts* (1997), *Postcolonial Jane Austen* (2000, with You-me Park) and *Crisis of Secularism in India* (2006, with Anuradha Needham). Major journal articles include the co-authored 'Shahbano' (in *Signs*), and 'The Subject of Sati' (in the

Yale Journal of Criticism). She is currently completing a book on the Indian novel in English after *Midnight's Children*, and compiling a collection of her own work on secularism. Sunder Rajan was a founding editor of *Interventions*, an international journal of postcolonial studies. Her chief research interests are in feminist theory, South Asian gender issues, postcolonial studies, the Anglophone Indian novel and the British nineteenth- and twentieth-century novel.