



# The Modernity of Sanskrit

*Simona Sawhney*

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## **The Modernity of Sanskrit** Simona Sawhney

Sanskrit texts have usually been discussed either within the frames of anthropology and religious studies or with a veneration that has substituted for analysis. Going beyond such approaches, Simona Sawhney argues that only a literary approach that resists the closure of interpretation can reveal the fragility, ambivalence, and tension that mark the canonical texts.

Today we witness, Sawhney contends, the near-total appropriation of Sanskrit literature by Hindu nationalism. *The Modernity of Sanskrit* challenges this appropriation by exploring the complex work of Rabindranath Tagore, M. K. Gandhi, and Mohan Rakesh. Sawhney proposes that Indian nationalist writings about classic Sanskrit became a charged site for postcolonial reflections on politics and art in India.

Sawhney claims that although new readings of Sanskrit literature played a decisive role in the intellectual conception of modernity in India, the space for such readings has steadily shrunk in contemporary times, leading to a stark diminishment of both the political and the literary lives of the texts.

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