



History of Science in South Asia

A journal for the history of all forms of scientific thought and action, ancient and modern, in all regions of South Asia

Review Essay: Post-Truth and the Post-Colony

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Review Essay: Post-Truth and the Post-Colony

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BOOKS REVIEWED

- Nanda, Meera. *A Field Guide to Post-Truth India*. Three Essays Collective, 2024.
- Nanda, Meera. *Postcolonial Theory and the Making of Hindu Nationalism*. Routledge, 2025.
- Subramaniam, Banu. *Holy Science: The Biopolitics of Hindu Nationalism*. University of Washington Press, 2019.

TOWARDS THE END OF HIS LONG CAREER, the doyen of the history of science George Sarton published a caustic critique of Mohandas Gandhi.¹ The timing was strange. Gandhi had been dead five years, shot down by a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). India was an independent nation with a constitution, although the partition of the subcontinent had left millions of displaced and murdered people in its wake. And Sarton deeply respected the political movement that Gandhi had led. But he had reservations about Gandhi's notion of truth. "I cannot help feeling that he who spoke so much of the truth," Sarton wrote, "did not know what it was." Gandhi's understanding of truth was, in Sarton's account, "always ambiguous and dangerous".² Why did Sarton feel compelled to challenge the man he regarded as "one of the greatest saints in the world's experience"?³ What danger did he see? More pertinent for the audience of this journal, what role should historians of science play as arbiters of truth? There would seem to be a large gap between Gandhi's "experiments with truth" and Michael Faraday's electromagnetic experiments. Nearly a decade now after American politics drove the Oxford English Dictionary to baptize the neologism "post-truth," and when philosophers, sociologists, and historians around the globe have taken up post-truth as a rubric for investigation, we have

1 Sarton 1954, "Experiments with Truth by Faraday, Darwin and Gandhi."

2 *Ibid.*, p. 91.

3 *Ibid.*, p. 88.



much to learn in returning to disputes over the truth in postcolonial India.⁴ If the global body politic is ailing, it is imperative we get the diagnosis correct.

Scientists, of course, are not the only arbiters of truth in our world. Mathematicians, we like to think, produce truth by building proofs. Judges, they like to think, produce truth as they issue rulings in the courtroom. So too do philosophers, although they still have not agreed on what they mean by the word. Even historians, somewhat humbler, aim to produce truth. All of these are rigorous pursuits to describe the world as it is. But only science is synonymous with *the* truth. In our everyday language, to be judicious or to be philosophic entails a concern for details or abstractions. But it does not entail a particular relation to the truth. To be scientific *does*.

This means that science carries with it not only an epistemic position but also an ethical one. When he imagined a new Indian citizen for the post-colonial nation, Jawaharlal Nehru envisioned the cultivation of science as a way of life. Echoing the positivism of Auguste Comte by contrasting science with religion and philosophy, the first Prime Minister of independent India declared that “the scientific temper points out the way along which man should travel.”⁵ Nehru was well-read in the history of science. He had known J. D. Bernal from his college days at Cambridge, and he corresponded with Bertrand Russell, from whom he probably first heard the phrase “scientific temper.”⁶ In issuing his call for a new science-minded citizen, Nehru joined a growing chorus of mid-twentieth-century intellectuals who saw science as a means to redeem humanity.

Today – in India and around the globe – that vision of science is in retreat. In the public sphere, social-media influencers increasingly shape opinions on health, climate, and technology, with little regard for peer-reviewed research. At the same time, the balance of R&D support has shifted, with corporate funding for the pursuit of marketable products rising faster than public financing of independent research. And within universities, faculty face growing political and media scrutiny, which has discouraged critical questioning and put entire fields of inquiry at risk. This is a troubling situation that provides an opportunity to assess the aspirations of science in the twentieth century more broadly. Science was put to many different uses in the decolonizing world of the Cold War, and scientific research both flourished and floundered within authoritarian spaces. Ironically, the call for a new Indian citizen armed with humanism and a scientific temper was written into the Indian constitution only after Nehru’s death, in the midst of the anti-democratic crackdown known as the Emergency. There are many lessons to be drawn from this history.

4 Söderberg 2021. For arguments about looking beyond Euro-American debates, see Hsiung and Okazawa 2025.

5 Nehru 1946: 624.

6 Arnold 2013: 364. Bertrand Russell him-

self would later provide a monologue for the opening of the 1967 Bollywood film *Aman*, preaching a message of nuclear disarmament and universal peace.

The cultural critic Meera Nanda has spent the last quarter century warning of the dangers facing science in contemporary India, and she has established herself as the foremost cataloger of Hindu nationalist perceptions of science. There is an urgency to Nanda's writing. The religious nationalist project she first critiqued in *Postmodernism and Religious Fundamentalism* (2000) and *Prophets Facing Backwards* (2003) is more deeply entrenched in Indian civil society than ever before. The electoral victories of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have reshaped India's institutions of education and research. The assassinations of the leading skeptical thinkers Narendra Dabholkar, Govind Pansare, M. M. Kalburgi, and Gauri Lankesh have put a chill on outspoken scholars who write not only in English but also in regional languages. And events in India find echoes the world over with the rise of right-wing political movements across the globe that rebuke claims made by the medical and scientific establishments. Nanda's *Field Guide to Post-Truth India* (2024) is a pithy and public-facing jaunt through some of the more egregious examples of distortions in recent years, rehashing arguments Nanda has made across the scope of her career. At its best, the *Field Guide* should serve as a reminder to the many elegies to truth that center American, British, and European experiences that have emerged over the last decade are not exceptional. While it has not yet reached the shameful level of the American rejection of the harms of anthropogenic climate change, challenges to institutional science in India provide lessons for a range of contexts.⁷

Taking this project on its own terms, Nanda has set out to show how "modern science ended up as a handmaiden to the Hindu nationalist project" (*FG*, p. 132). Right-wing politicians and activists in India do not reject science outright, Nanda argues, quite the contrary. Modern science is recruited into a Vedic framework and is used to support Hindu nationalism but never to critique it. This has led to distorted views of the history of science in India, often expressed as claims to priority – whether it be genetics or general relativity – along with the elevation of dubious medical practices and policies. There is a long historical background to all this, which Nanda variously traces back to late-twentieth-century post-colonial thought, nineteenth-century neo-Vedantic movements, and – sometimes – to classical Sanskrit texts. At risk is not only India's democracy but also science's universality.

The *Field Guide* substantiates its arguments through dedicated case studies designed to showcase the larger histories of recent events. The 2020 National Education Policy (NEP) laid the groundwork for stripping sections on Darwinian evolution from high-school curricula. Nanda argues that hostility to

⁷ Oreskes and Conway 2010. Recent denials of the connection between disease and air pollution have brought the central government into conflict with government fun-

ded research bodies, bringing India closer in line with American-levels of deceit (Balakrishnan et al. 2019).

these ideas has grown in recent years, and points to statements by former Minister of State for Human Resource Development, Satyapal Singh, which echo opposition to Darwinism in the thought of Dayananda Saraswati, the nineteenth-century founder of the Arya Samaj. In response to the covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Ayush released guidance for the distribution of herbal drugs “to prevent covid, treat mild symptoms, and for post-covid self-care” (FG, p. 50). Nanda uses this as an opportunity to investigate the various lawsuits to which the physician Cyriac Abby Philips has been subject due to his research into renal failure and the toxicity of drugs containing *ashwagandha* and *guduchi*, two staples of the modern ayurveda pharmacopeia. Scientific research is selectively invoked by Ayush but willed away through gag-orders when it is overly critical.

Running through the examples that Nanda gathers is the institutional rise of a movement dubbed Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS), a keyword that connects diverse projects to reshape education in contemporary India. As a part of the implementation of the NEP, in October 2020 the Ministry of Education established a Bhāratīya Jñāna Paramparā Vibhāga – or Indian Knowledge Systems Division – within the All India Council for Technical Education. By November 2022, the University Grants Commission mandated that IKS-related topics be introduced to training modules for all faculty at Indian colleges and universities. Today, IKS research centers exist at more than two dozen Indian universities, including prestigious IITs.

What are Indian Knowledge Systems? “The underlying sentiment,” Nanda argues, namely “that Indian students should learn the history of Indian sciences and other aspects of Indian intellectual history as they get introduced to different academic disciplines – appears eminently reasonable” (FG, p. 43). Indeed, this call would seem to mirror the goals of this journal, which aims to publish high-quality academic research in the history of science, with a focus on South Asia.⁸ But Nanda is more dubious. The knowledge systems of IKS are static and unchanging, “ancient and eternal” in the language of the NEP. History is often evacuated from knowledge in talks of such knowledge systems. Recent work by historians of science Dhruv Raina, Anna Winterbottom, and Projit Mukharji has shown the twentieth-century genealogies of the related concepts indigenous and traditional knowledge in South Asia – ideas that sit at the heart of IKS – and should serve as a warning for the careless extension of these powerful frameworks.⁹

There is a conundrum at the heart of the *Field Guide*. Indian politicians of all stripes aspire to see the nation as a global leader in technological and scientific fields. The Indian government ostensibly takes pride in subsidizing basic

8 <https://hssa-journal.org/index.php/hssa/about>.

9 Raina 2016, Winterbottom 2021 and

Mukharji 2020. Looking beyond South Asia, see Tilley 2021.

research. Funding for science has increased in real terms over the course of the BJP incumbency, although as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product funding has stagnated, trending somewhat downwards since 2014.¹⁰ While India continues to lag behind other BRICS nations in terms of investment in research and development, sciences continues apace in India, with institutes and laboratories largely shielded from changes in national politics. True, the budget of Ayush has expanded significantly over the last decade, but it still pales in comparison with the annual budget for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. “The Hindu nationalist government’s enthusiasm for traditional medicine,” Nanda permits, “should not be taken as evidence that it has eclipsed modern medicine in India” (*FG*, p. 48). This means that institutional science is, in some ways, insulated from political shifts in a way that other truth-producing enterprises in India are not. Societies can – and often do – value technoscientific investigation while undermining other sorts of truth-seeking exploration, from investigative journalism to nuanced historical analysis and an independent judiciary. To paraphrase the historian of science Steven Shapin, our present problems are not fully explained by scientific ignorance.¹¹

But it is not merely the natural and physical sciences that Nanda seeks to defend. Rather, science for her comes to stand in for a larger set of vocations that adjudicate truth tied together by liberal democracy. Recall that science is one of many truth-producing activities in our society, which only functions when different sorts of people – lawyers, scientists, journalists, and historians – work together. But for Nanda, science comes to stand in for all reasonable and rational inquiry. At times, this vision of modern science resembles the Vedic science of her opponents; it consists of a set of ideals that exist outside of history. Shorn of discomforts or sins, the faults of science can be attributed to its practitioners not being scientific enough. Capitalism, colonialism, and nationalism are stained – and they have at moments hijacked science – but science itself cannot be.

Talk of post-truth implies that things have changed, that state and society were once characterized by truthfulness, or at least more truth than there is today. For Nanda, there was “a brief interregnum” between regimes of untruth when “rationalism did have an upper hand; the methods and the worldview of modern science were, for once, not invoked for revival and self-assertion, but for reform and self-critique” (*FG*, p. 149). This was a moment epitomized by figures such as M. N. Roy, B. R. Ambedkar, and Jawaharlal Nehru, but it came shattering down with the Emergency imposed by Indira Gandhi and, more than that, with a new crop of “neo-Gandhian” postcolonial intellectuals who sought to undermine the foundations of science in its wake. Nanda – returning to a refrain that has marked much of her career – asserts that there is an ideological convergence

¹⁰ Mallapaty 2024.

¹¹ Shapin 2019.

between those on the right who advocate for government support of Hindu science and postcolonial thinkers on the left who question the historical relation between science and universal reason.

This is a point that Nanda pursues in a second book, which was published earlier this year: *Postcolonial Theory and the Making of Hindu Nationalism* (2025). Taking her earlier argument against left-wing postcolonial thinkers as its *raison d'être*, this second book provides a more detailed accounting of the tangled genealogies of postcolonial critique, using it as a warning for contemporary scholars. Nanda characterizes herself in this book as “an old-fashioned Enlightenment secular humanist who proudly locates herself on the side of universal norms of reason and human flourishing” (*PT*, p. 6), and she has little patience for those who might find discomfort in the myriad ways – often violent and exploitative – that science has been used the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Like Sarton, Nanda sees Mohandas Gandhi as the root of a dangerous mode of alternative theorization of truth. She argues that in the opening decades of the postcolonial project, the Nehruvian government paid lip service to Gandhian ideals, while pursuing policies at odds with the late Mahatma’s vision. Rather than committing to systematic land reforms or large outlays of capital for the marginalized majority, the early Indian government pursued technocratic mega-infrastructure projects in an attempt to jump-start the lagging economy. This created a situation, Nanda narrates, “where large public industrial enterprises, modern scientific research and technological institutions, and an emerging layer of upwardly mobile capitalist farmers coexisted with vast numbers of small farmers, landless laborers, and tribal people living in absolute poverty” (*PT*, p. 53). Science became tied to a technocratic state that was increasingly resented.

The moment was ripe for the critique of techno-scientific systems, which came to a head in 1975 with the state of emergency declared by Nehru’s daughter Indira Gandhi. Nanda focuses on the populist leader Jayaprakash Narayan, who “injected fresh energy into [a] moribund Gandhism that no one believed in, but that everyone claimed as a brand name” (*PT*, p. 54). Narayan, Nanda argues, crafted a form of Gandhian socialism that would be appropriated by figures on both the left and the right. On the one hand, left-wing intellectuals at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies such as Rajni Kothari and Ashis Nandy found in the return to Gandhi a uniquely Indian way of pursuing social theory. This movement would develop and spread internationally with the rise of the Subaltern Studies Collective and its transformation into Postcolonial Studies. At the same time, Narayan provided a footing for Hindu nationalist thinkers associated with the RSS to put forward a new vision of anti-Western nationalism that can be traced to the spiritual thinkers Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, and Sri Aurobindo. At the center of both intellectual movements sits science and the critique of European categories. Nanda argues that these

two movements have come together today, with postcolonial arguments providing backing for Hindu nationalist assertions. “Are postcolonial theory’s chickens coming home to roost?” Nanda gleefully asks (*PT*, p. 96).

Parts of this story are well known. Postcolonial theory has been roundly critiqued from the start; perhaps most vociferously by people who associated themselves with the movement.¹² Nanda’s book makes its main contribution when wading through the writings of more recent Hindu nationalist intellectuals, a new group that has recently turned to postcolonial theorization. She shows “how the arguments and jargon of postcolonial and decolonization theory have found their place among the self-styled ‘intellectual Kshatriyas’ of the Hindu Right” (*PT*, p. 195). Through close readings of the work of Koenraad Elst, S. N. Balagangadhara, Rajiv Malhotra, and J. Sai Deepak, Nanda explores what she calls “an explosion of intellectual energy” among Hindu nationalists (*PT*, p. 197). Nanda takes her intellectual opponents on the right seriously. She explores the proliferation of arguments about “epistemic violence” and “decolonizing thought” made by these authors, who summarily invoke the writings of influential left-wing scholars such as Ashis Nandy, Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, Edward Said, Walter Dignolo, and Nicholas Dirks. Appeals to such authors suffuse the new Hindu nationalist repertoire of arguments, where majoritarianism is smuggled in through the postcolonial language of difference and indigeneity.

Nanda joins the ranks of scholars who argue that the language of decolonization has been hijacked by authoritarian revanchist movements. But she does so with a particular vehemence in attacking a group she dubs “the postcolonial left.” How exactly this group is related to right-wing populism can be somewhat unclear. For instance, in critiquing S. N. Balagangadhara, Nanda asserts that the Belgian intellectual has taken “postcolonial anti-realism to its logical conclusion” (*PT*, p. 209) before going on to say that his project “is a complete perversion of the aims and methods of postcolonial theory” (*PT*, p. 211). In the first instance, it would seem that Hindu nationalist authors are the rightful heirs of early postcolonial theorization. In the latter, the use of postcolonial language would appear little more than a cynical appropriation of fashionable academic discourse. This means that “postcolonial theory” comes to stand in for a wide range of critiques, often with little to do with each other and entirely divested of politics. It also washes over the past two decades of debate amongst scholars more sympathetic to postcolonial critique, who have time-and-again confronted right-wing invocations of decolonial and postcolonial theory.¹³ Postcolonial theorization has not been a doctrine set in stone, but rather a conversation at the

¹² See the critiques collected in Ludden 2002.

¹³ Bhan and Govindrajana 2023; Shah 2024; Sen 2024.

heart of which are challenges, questions, and revisions. One need not adhere to Enlightenment-style claims to universal reason to challenge authoritarian calls for decolonization.

The scholar who most emphatically takes up the flag of “postcolonial STS” in the contemporary South Asian context is Banu Subramaniam. In *Holy Science: The Biopolitics of Hindu Nationalism* (2019), Subramaniam investigates the same phenomenon as Nanda, namely the place of science in contemporary Hindu nationalism. Both Nanda and Subramaniam identify as former scientists. And neither would call themselves a supporter of the promotion of Vedic sciences. But their positions on how to approach the contemporary predicament of science in India could not differ more starkly. While Nanda wants to rid India of mythology, Banu Subramaniam seeks to weave new myths for the tangled present moment. “India presents an interesting case study,” Subramaniam writes, “because in its quest for modernity, the past and the present, science and religion, and modernity and orthodoxy cohere within the political landscape—and we are faced with competing historiographies brimming with mythological, epistemological, and methodological tensions” (*HS*, p. 146). Subramaniam – in an attempt to understand and analyze – invites her readers to dwell in these tensions.

This does not mean that Subramaniam lets down her critical scruples. She rarely does. But rather than refute claim-after-claim made on behalf of Vedic science, Subramaniam seeks to get under the hood – so to speak – to understand how discourses of Hindu science have taken root within everyday society. Just why are invocations of a Hindu science so pervasive? To investigate this, Subramaniam relies on the language of biopolitics and biopower to show how science has proven central to new identities in twenty-first century India. She turns to intimate spaces such as the home and to intimate acts such as sex to investigate the braiding of the political, social, and personal in everyday life through the language of science. If we are to understand what is happening on a national level, Subramaniam argues, we must first understand the domestic. And it is science that weaves these different domains together. But, Subramaniam argues time and again, we should reject Comtean categories that would place science and religion in opposition to each other and instead attend to the messiness of how things play out on the ground. This is the best way to understand what she dubs contemporary bionationalism.

While *Holy Science* is framed as describing Hindu nationalism, this can at times be a vague term with unclear referents. For instance, people who rely on *vāstuśāstra* to organize their domestic space – a topic that forms the focus of the first chapter – need not, and often do not, align themselves with the RSS. But this, precisely, is the point. Hindu nationalism is not easily delimited from a wide variety of everyday practices and structures of feeling. The political movement that Subramaniam traces does not solely exist in party politics or parliamentary

sessions; it is a pervasive politics that seeks to recast the scope of religion, society, and science. Throughout the book, Subramaniam focuses on how science is invoked in the building of consensus around a particular vision of Hindu India as natural.

This also means that Hindu nationalism is not without precedent. For Subramaniam, it incorporates elements from other forms of nationalism alongside which it emerged. Subramaniam devotes an entire chapter to discussing the notion of “unnatural offenses” embedded in Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalized consensual homosexual sex between adults. The chapter traces the colonial history of this provision through to the 2018 Supreme Court ruling that declared the application of the law to consenting homosexual couples unconstitutional. The vast majority of this history is, of course, one of British imperialism and secular Indian nationalism, not Hindu nationalism; and it was under the BJP’s watch – without a full party blessing – that Section 377 was diluted. Contemporary Hindu nationalism, for Subramaniam, draws freely from these other programs and their ways of managing populations. “Colonial legacies translate into the management of postcolonial bodies,” she writes, while warning that, “those legacies do not fully map onto Indian conceptions of the sexual” (*HS*, p. 107). Section 377 is thus an opportunity for Subramaniam to reflect on the diverse models of sexuality promoted by Hindu nationalist leaders in the midst of colonial and secular nationalist biopolitical projects. She examines how founding RSS figures articulated eugenic-inspired fears of a diminishing Hindu race while simultaneously promoting the ideal of a masculine, yet celibate, warrior.

Instead of separating the world into two opposing camps, Subramaniam searches out alliances that would appear unexpected if one assumed a binary relationship between science and religion. Exploring the territory of the post-liberal democracy means encountering surprising coalitions. Take, for instance, the various engagements of Hindu nationalism with environmental causes. The past twenty years have seen a long dispute over the proposed Sethusamudram Shipping Canal Project, which would see the limestone shoals between the Gulf of Mannar and Palk Bay dredged in an effort to streamline global supply chains. This was an infrastructure project initiated by a Hindu-nationalist coalition government in 2004 and then approved in 2005 by a Congress-led secular coalition. It was, in turn, opposed both by environmental groups concerned with habitat loss and Hindu religious groups, which saw in the shoals evidence of a bridge described in the Sanskrit epic the *Rāmāyaṇam*. While there is much money in the god business, capital and Hinduism do sometimes come into conflict.

Like Nanda, Subramaniam challenges postcolonial critics of modern science from the 1980s and 90s who appealed to an indigenous and sustainable Indian past. She views such accounts as reflecting a romantic nativism that neglects

the violence of caste and patriarchy. And she does not see an environmentalist Hindu nationalism as a productive way forward, arguing that “the rhetoric of ‘green’ in modern Hinduism is centrally about Hinduism rather than environmentalism. The ‘indigenous’ India is rendered a fetishized object, a benign pre-modern site of nostalgic return” (*HS*, p. 135). But Subramaniam wants to learn from these moments to chart a way forward. And she does not view post-modern critique as the source of our current predicament. “There is a deep resonance between the green and saffron,” Subramaniam writes, before going on to ask rhetorically: “But are they the same?” (*HS*, p. 134). They are not.¹⁴ And it is postcolonial STS that provides the tools, in Subramaniam’s account, to navigate this brave new world.

Most importantly, science is not going to save us. Subramaniam brings her argument to a culmination by investigating the rise of cheap genomic testing and its use in crafting origin stories for the nation. Following debates within India and across the Indian diaspora, she shows the power that DNA has come to exert over national identity and belonging. “Genetic genealogical projects have unleashed, Subramaniam argues, “a plethora of nostalgic ruminations” (*HS*, p. 175). This is not entirely a new state of affairs. Projit Mukharji has recently shown how race science sat at the heart of the Nehruvian scientific project, which should give us pause in hastily associating science with tolerance and social justice.¹⁵ The contemporary genomic science that Subramaniam explores has provided a second life to moribund debates over Aryanism. Through the Indian Genome Variation Initiative, it has played a role in the larger push to transform healthcare into a product. And it has recently been integrated into paradigms of indigenous medical systems as ayurgenomics. In all of this, Subramaniam demonstrates, “new genomics appears to reinvigorate old categories of difference” (*HS*, p. 176). The exclusionary politics of race and caste are reinscribed onto genomic practices backed up by science.

In his critique of Mohandas Gandhi, George Sarton separated the truth of science from other pursuits of truth. “To be right against one’s opponents in a forensic or administrative debate like a lawyer or a politician is one thing,” he asserted, “to be right in conformity of nature is quite another”.¹⁶ Science may never reach the absolute truth, but it maintains a monopoly on its pursuit. Sarton held Gandhi’s “subtle and evasive” notion of truth – one that is at times religious and at times legalistic but never scientific – responsible for “the partition of India and all the horrors which followed it”.¹⁷ For him, it was only science that can serve as “the keystone of international peace”.¹⁸ Echoes of this vision still find resonance today. But they ring hollow. We are

¹⁴ For a full accounting, see Sharma 2025.

¹⁵ Mukharji 2023.

¹⁶ Sarton 1954: 106.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

now quite a bit better at science, but not when it comes to peace. If science is separated from all other activities, and if all other ways of approaching the world are downgraded, there is little scope for science to have an effect in the world. This does not mean that anything goes. But it does mean we should be a little more modest in our hopes for science to redeem us.

History too will not redeem us. But it can help us to see the present more clearly. In one way or another, the post-colony looks back to the pre-colonial, and there are few alternative visions of science in premodern South Asia that have found a foothold. The accounts of science in contemporary India by Meera Nanda and Banu Subramaniam – despite their differences – both suggest that there is much work to be done by historians of science in precolonial South Asia, the primary audience of this journal. Those of us who engage with precolonial archives have been reticent to communicate across temporal divides. But there is reason to think we should. Here, we can learn from the historian of early modernity Kapil Raj, who has called for a conversation beyond postcolonial and postpositivist treatments of science in a manner that draws resources from each as the circumstance requires, while asking novel questions outside of the framework of western modernity.¹⁹ We can see books like those of Nanda and Subramaniam as invitations. We have been late to come to the party. But the door remains open for our arrival, and our presence is anticipated.



Figure 1: *Gandhi, Man of Peace* by Maqbool Fida Husain. Oil on canvas, 1969. © M. F. Husain, reproduced in non-commercial, low resolution form under Fair Use terms from [WikiArt](#).

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¹⁹ Raj 2013.

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