

15TH HUMBOLDT INDIA PROJECT LECTURE

21st November, 10:00-12:00

Department of South Asia Studies

Institute of Asian and African Studies

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

Invalidenstr. 118, Room: 217



Sucheta Mahajan

Whose Heroes and Whose Villains?

Rewriting the History of the Assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

Beginning with 1948 and the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the talk unravels the post-history of this calamitous event. The then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru compared the assassination to the partition of the country, the second grievous blow to hit the newborn state. Situating the assassination in the politics of extreme communalism rampant at that time, Prof Mahajan discusses the conspiracy behind the action of the assassin and the successful cover-up for two decades. Even after the conspiracy was unveiled by 1970, the Hindu communal parties and leaders denied any involvement. It was only when the Hindu communal parties came into their own and assumed political power that the assassination itself was stood on its head and presented as a necessary act to save the country. The assassin was accordingly glorified as a martyr, and the martyr vilified. Apart from political discourse, this revisionist history finds its way into school textbooks, poisoning young minds. The manner in which this has been done will be of interest to students of history in Germany, with its conflicted past and concomitant contestations in the writing and rewriting of history.

Sucheta Mahajan was Professor at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi until February 2023.

Her publications include *Independence and Partition: The Erosion of Colonial Power in India* (2000); *India's Struggle for Independence* (1988; with Bipan Chandra et al); *RSS, School Texts and the Murder of Mahatma Gandhi The Hindu Communal Project* (2008; with Aditya and Mridula Mukherjee).

Contact johannes.heyman@hu-berlin.de