

## MODERNISM AND THE IDEA OF INDIA

In his 1909 manifesto *Hind Swaraj*, Gandhi made an impassioned call for passive resistance that he soon retracted. “Passive resistance” didn’t, in the end, serve his overarching aims, but was troubled on multiple grounds from its use of the English phrase to the weakness implied by passivity.

*Modernism and the Idea of India: The Art of Passive Resistance* claims that the difficulty embedded in the phrase “passive resistance,” from its seeming internal contradiction to the troubling category of passivity itself, transforms in artistic expression, where its dynamism, ambivalence, and receptivity enable art’s capacity to create new forms of meaning. India provides the ground and the fantasy for writers and artists including Rabindranath Tagore, R. K. Narayan, Ahmed Ali, Amrita Sher-Gil, G. V. Desani, Virginia Woolf, and Le Corbusier. These artists and writers explore the capacities of passive resistance inspired by Gandhi’s treatise, but move beyond its call for activism into new languages of art.

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# MODERNISM AND THE IDEA OF INDIA

*The Art of Passive Resistance*

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*In memory of Aidan*

*No mystery beyond the present; no striving for the impossible;  
no shadow behind the charm; no groping in the depth of the  
dark. This love between you and me is simple as a song.*  
Rabindranath Tagore, *The Gardener* XVI

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