

Heinz Werner Wessler

Guest Professor, Department of Linguistics
and Philology, Uppsala University
holds a public lecture about:

The Liberating Force of Hindi and 'Goddess English'

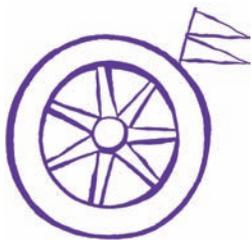
Language Policies and Identity Politics in India

Monday 6 December 2010, 14–16

**Venue: Lilla konferensrummet, 2nd floor,
Department of Political Science (Eden),
Paradisgatan 5 H, Lund**



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Dr. Heinz Werner Wessler is guest professor at Uppsala University (Institute of Linguistics and Philology) and in charge of its advanced Hindi courses. He has been, since 2002, affiliated to the Division of Indology at the University of Bonn, Germany, where he was in charge of both Hindi and Urdu, as well as modern Indian literature, history of Indian religions, and modern Indian history.

Dr. Wessler defended his doctoral thesis in 1993 at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. It was entitled "Zeit und Geschichte im Vishnupurana" (Time and History in the Vishnu Purana). His post-doctoral thesis (habilitation) is on contemporary Hindi Dalit literature.

In July 2010, he was the main coordinator behind the organisation of the 21st European Conference on Modern South Asian Studies, held in Bonn.

Besides his academic qualifications, Dr. Wessler has also been working as a free-lance journalist and as general editor of the quarterly German language magazine SÜDASIEN, published by Südasiensbüro e.V.



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The Liberating Force of Hindi and 'Goddess English'. Language Policies and Identity Politics in India

Abstract:

In his early anti-colonial classical "Hind Swaraj", published a hundred years ago (1910), **Mahatma Gandhi** stresses the importance of a shift away from English to the Hindi/Hindustani language as a basic tool of cultural decolonization. English, so Gandhi argues, is part of the enslaving mechanism of colonial rule. The anti-colonial movement and in its aftermath independent India until today never openly questioned this position, even under challenge, and the promotion of a Sanskritized code of modern standard Hindi has continued to be a pillar of national language policies having led to the reconciling "three languages formula" in Indian education.

In social reality, however, social upward mobility in Indian society continues to be associated with English education, and Indian parents invest fortunes to secure Anglophone schooling to their offspring. A partisan thinker like **Chandra Bhan Prasad** even argues that "Indian languages are more about prejudices, discrimination and hatred and less about expressions and communications". Chandra Bhan Prasad, in his lust to break an anti-colonial taboo, refers back to the fabulous **Lord Macauley**, whose "minute on education" (1835) with its extremely polemical rhetoric against anything related to oriental learning, forming the original ideological basis to Anglophone education for the colonial Indian elite. In his lecture, Dr. **Heinz Werner Wessler** also shows, how modern authors, beyond the bias of national language policies, stick to "their" Hindi in the age of globalization beyond the complicated intricacies of language policies.

