

1. Record Nr.	UNINA9910452393603321
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Titolo	Gandhi's body [[electronic resource]] : sex, diet, and the politics of nationalism // Joseph S. Alter
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Philadelphia, : University of Pennsylvania Press, c2000
ISBN	1-283-89101-8 0-8122-0474-3
Descrizione fisica	1 online resource (226 p.)
Collana	Critical histories
Disciplina	954.03/5/092
Soggetti	Diet - India Medicine, Ayurvedic Nationalism - India Sexual ethics - India Electronic books. India Politics and government 20th century
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	Bibliographic Level Mode of Issuance: Monograph
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and index.
Nota di contenuto	Frontmatter -- Contents -- Preface: History, Body, Culture -- Part I. Rethinking the Mahatma -- Chapter 1. Gandhi's Body, Gandhi's Truth -- Chapter 2. The Ethereal Politics of the Mahatmas Fasts -- Part II. Nationalism, Transnationalism, and the Embodied Self -- Chapter 3. Nature Cure and Yoga -- Chapter 4. Surya Namaskar-Salute to Village Democracy -- Chapter 5. Somatic Nationalism -- Conclusion: Post-Gandhian Somatics -- Glossary -- Notes -- References -- Index -- Acknowledgments
Sommario/riassunto	No single person is more directly associated with India and India's struggle for independence than Mahatma Gandhi. His name has equally become synonymous with the highest principles of global equality, human dignity, and freedom. Joseph Alter argues, however, that Gandhi has not been completely understood by biographers and political scholars, and in Gandhi's Body he undertakes a reevaluation of the Mahatma's life and thought. In his revisionist and iconoclastic approach, Alter moves away from the usual focus on nonviolence, peace, and social reform and takes seriously what most scholars who

have studied Gandhi tend to ignore: Gandhi's preoccupation with sex, his obsession with diet reform, and his vehement advocacy for naturopathy. Alter concludes that a distinction cannot be made between Gandhi's concern with health, faith in nonviolence, and his sociopolitical agenda. In this original and provocative study, Joseph Alter demonstrates that these seemingly idiosyncratic aspects of Gandhi's personal life are of central importance to understanding his politics-and not only Gandhi's politics but Indian nationalism in general. Using the Mahatma's own writings, Alter places Gandhi's bodily practices in the context of his philosophy; for example, he explores the relationship between Gandhi's fasting and his ideas about the metaphysics of emptiness and that between his celibacy and his beliefs about nonviolence. Alter also places Gandhi's ideas and practices in their national and transnational contexts. He discusses how and why nature cure became extremely popular in India during the early part of the twentieth century, tracing the influence of two German naturopaths on Gandhi's thinking and on the practice of yoga in India. More important, he argues that the reconstruction of yoga in terms of European naturopathy was brought about deliberately by a number of activists in India-of whom Gandhi was only the most visible-interested in creating a "scientific" health regimen, distinct from Western precedents, that would make the Indian people fit for self-rule. Gandhi's Body counters established arguments that Indian nationalism was either a completely indigenous Hindu-based movement or simply a derivative of Western ideals.
