

Ananda Devi

"Languages, writings, and identities"

Friday, March 27 4pm

McCool Hall 100



The Presentation

"Languages, writings, and identities"

You could say that Mauritians live in a translated universe, since from childhood onwards we are called upon to juggle Creole and Bhojpuri, English and French, Hindi and Mandarin, all these ancestral languages heard in everyday life. It is with our minds full of words, sounds, intonations, accents, understood or not, mastered or not, that we move forward in life. Does this better prepare us for a multilingual world? Are we high-wire dancers of language or, on the contrary, jacks-of-all-trades mastering none? What is, in this symphony or cacophony, the foundation of our common culture, of our understanding of one another? These questions are not trivial. They cannot be. The proximity of language and identity is such that their separation can be nothing less than a rupture.

And yet, to solve our unresolved identity issues by using a language inherited from colonization ... can this be the answer ?

The Speaker

Ananda Devi was born in 1957, in Trois-Boutiques (Île Maurice), a village lost among fields of sugar cane. In its splendor and diversity, Île Maurice is at the heart of Ananda Devi's work.

Ananda Devi was a prodigy, at the age of 15 winning a literary prize for a short story in a contest organized by French radio and television. It was the beginning of a 30-year long career during which she has become a prominent figure in French-language literature from the Indian Ocean.

An ethnologist by training as well as a doctor of social anthropology and a translator, Ananda Devi is sensitive to the overlap of identities and languages. She has received several literary prizes for her writing, in particular for her 2006 novel *Eve de ses Décombres*, which won the Award of the Five Continents of La Francophonie as well as the "Radio France Outremer" Prize.

Her incisive, lyrical, and penetrating style gives the French language new cultural and linguistic dimensions tied to her native island.

Books by Ananda Devi have been translated into several languages. Perfectly trilingual in French, English, and Creole, she did her own English translation for her novel *Pagli*. Her most recent novel, *Indian Tango*, takes place in New Delhi.

The OIF

The International Organization for La Francophonie (OIF) is an institution based on important humanist values and French as a shared language. The OIF currently has 55 member states and governments and 13 observers. Present on five continents, the OIF represents nearly a third of the member states in the United Nations. The OIF helps Southern hemisphere and transitioning countries to acquire funds for development and to create their own programs that will allow for sustainable and fair human and social development.

The Award

Created by the OIF in 2001, the Award of the Five Continents of La Francophonie, created by the International Organization for La Francophonie, is aimed at spotlighting literary talents that reflect the cultural and editorial diversity of the French language on the five continents. The award is given to a book whose author has born witness to a specific cultural experience that enriches the expression of the French language.

Sponsorship

Ms. Devi's visit to MSU is sponsored by the Dean of Arts & Sciences, and the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. Ms. Devi's U.S. tour is organized by the Délégation générale de l'Alliance Française aux États-Unis with the support of the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie.