

The India Habitat Centre, Max Mueller Bhavan and Zubaan are pleased to invite you to the eleventh (and final) lecture in their series *Partition: The Long Shadow*

**Partition as a Metaphor of New Politics:
The 1940s Realignment of the Dalit Movement in North India
Dr Ramnarayan S. Rawat**

Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre
Wednesday 13 August 2008, 6.30 pm

Dr. Rawat's presentation will point to the new emphasis on identity politics in the decade leading up to Partition. Although not directly concerned with the demand of Partition, Partition's reflection of a new emphasis on political identity enabled Dalits of North India to frame their own agendas by defining a separate identity. Conventional wisdom has taught us that Partition politics fixed identities even for marginal communities, forcing everyone to choose between Hindu and Muslim. In this talk, Dr. Rawat argues that this is an inaccurate reading, instead arguing that Partition and the politics that led up to it made new opportunities for the types of self-definition available to marginal groups. Dalits of Uttar Pradesh, for example, appropriated the new situation by using it to their advantage in order to articulate and define a new Dalit politics. Drawing from his ongoing research on the history of Chamars in UP, Dr. Rawat argues that members of the Chamar community played a significant role in constituting a newly inclusive Dalit politics prior to the 1940s, concluding that the core of Dalit politics as it developed in the 1940s has remained largely unchanged today. Indeed, by the 1960s a commitment to the liberation of Dalits, a desire for social and economic progress, a sense of pride and identity, and a firm resolve to resist the domination perpetuated by Hindu society had all become securely ingrained in the minds and actions of Dalit activists and ideologues—commitments that are still evident today. The earlier concern with refashioning a pure, 'untouched' identity continued, but what became most significant during the 1940s was the emergence of a Dalit identity as a foundational category for the social and political reorganization of ways of thinking and acting. In exploring the impact of the ideas of Partition of the 1940s on other domains of politics, Dr. Rawat rethinks nationalist narratives of Dalit struggles and helps us recognize dimensions of history that go beyond a Hindu-Muslim binary.

Dr Ramnarayan S. Rawat is a postdoctoral teaching fellow in modern South Asian history in the Department of South Asia Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He has taught in the History Department at the University of Notre Dame and has been a recipient of Rockefeller and Guggenheim fellowships. As a SEPHIS (IISG, Amsterdam) doctoral fellow, he completed his Ph.D. on the social and cultural history of the Chamars of Uttar Pradesh in the Department of History at the

University of Delhi, supervised by Shahid Amin. Last fall he finished a book manuscript titled “Untouchable Boundaries of Colonialism and Nationalism: Rethinking Histories of Untouchability in North India,” which was awarded the 2008 Joseph W. Elder book prize by the American Institute of Indian Studies. He has received an AIIS senior fellowship to begin a new project on the Dalit public sphere in 2008-2009. Dr. Rawat is organizing the first ever Dalit studies conference at an academic institution in the United States, which will be held in December 2008 at the University of Pennsylvania.

Envisaged as a series of dialogues, lectures and readings from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the year long *Partition: the Long Shadow* programme marks the 60th anniversary of the Partition of 1947, a seminal event in the history of the subcontinent. This series of talks and discussions explores the multiple and somewhat unaddressed dimensions of the Partition of the Indian sub-continent.