

**The India Habitat Centre, Max Mueller Bhavan and Zubaan
are pleased to invite you to the eighth lecture in the series
Partition: The Long Shadow
at Gulmohar, India Habitat Centre, Vardhaman Marg, New Delhi 110003 at 7.00 pm
on 21 April 2008**

**Digesting the `Other': Hindu Nationalism, Partition and
the Muslims in India**

Jyotirmaya Sharma

Hindu nationalism in the nineteenth-century sought to portray itself as a set of arguments deriving inspiration from an interpretation of Hinduism as an allembracing and tolerant faith. A highly dubious interpretation of Advaita, informed largely by the writings of the Orientalists, was the foundation upon which the Hindu ability to absorb and assimilate rested. Words such as `empathy', `fellow-feeling', `tolerance' were part of the self-image of Hindu nationalists. They did not see a contradiction in simultaneously using terms such as demonic and alien when discussing Muslims and Islam. This early view increasingly gave way to a highly fraught vocabulary where the Muslims were likened to mythical rakshasas, asuras and daityas. For instance, in the early years of the twentieth century, Savarkar uses these disparaging terms when he speaks of the Muslims. The RSS incorporated this highly charged rhetoric and saw Muslims as incomplete, uncultured and demonic. After independence and the partition of India, ideologues such as Golwalkar argued that Muslims in India were not nationalists. They were the enemy within. The challenge for the Hindus, he argued, was to find ways to `digest' the Muslims.

Dr Jyotirmaya Sharma is Professor in Political Science at the University of Hyderabad. He has previously taught at St Stephen's College, Delhi and at the Universities of Heidelberg, Hull, Oxford and Baroda. He has also been a journalist, having worked most recently with The Hindu as Deputy Editor and previous to that, as Senior Assistant Editor with the Times of India. He has many publications to his credit. These include newspaper articles, academic essays and books. Among these latter are: Hindutva: Exploring the Idea of Hindu Nationalism, Hinduism, Hindus and The `Other': Coomaraswamy, Tagore and Gandhi on Identity and Politics, and, most recently, Terrifying Vision: M.S. Golwalkar, the RSS and India (all Viking/Penguin India).