



Lecture-

on Friday, 29 May 2015

5:15 pm at National Museum Auditorium

All are invited

The Museum is National



Dr. Kavita Singh

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Kavita Singh is a Professor at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, where she teaches courses on the history of Indian painting and the history and politics of museums in South Asia. She has published on museums, heritage and related areas, and was co-curator (with Preeti Bahadur Ramaswami) of the exhibition *Nauras: The Many Arts of the Deccan* that was recently shown at the National Museum. This talk develops on an essay published in a volume (co-edited with Saloni Mathur) *No Touching, No Spitting, No Praying: The Museum in South Asia* (-edited with Saloni Mathur), Routledge, 2015.

About the Lecture

What is a National Museum? And when, why and how are such museums made? Today, almost every country we visit has a museum and a gallery that it calls 'National.' Within these institutions we are able to trace a history of the nation through art. National museums are so widely present that it might come as a surprise to learn how recently they took this form.

Against the backdrop of the global history of national museums, this lecture will discuss the formation of the National Museum in Delhi (founded 1948), and put it in dialogue with two other National Museums of South Asia: the National Museum of Pakistan in Karachi founded in 1948, and the National Museum of Bangladesh, formed in 1973. The dates of the foundation of these museums, so close to each nation's attainment of independence or liberation, immediately suggest a close relationship between political sovereignty and national self-representation in the cultural sphere. What the museums show, and how they show it, reflects the production of collective memories for the newly founded nations. But, as this talk will suggest, equally vital to this process is the production of a collective amnesia.