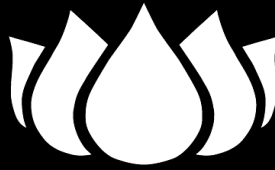


**Faculty of
Religious Studies
McGill University**



**South Asian
Religions Distinguished
Lectureship**

**AN HISTORIAN AMONG THE GODDESSES
OF MODERN INDIA**

BY

SUMATHI RAMASWAMY
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY
DUKE UNIVERSITY

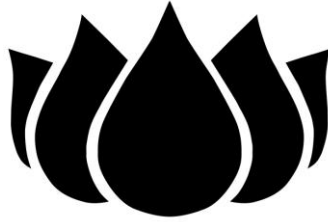
**FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 2011
5:30PM
BIRKS HERITAGE CHAPEL
3520 UNIVERSITY STREET, 2ND FLOOR**

An Historian among the Goddesses of Modern India

In October 2006, the globally recognizable Statue of Liberty traveled—virtually—from New York city’s harbor to an unusual new location: the map of India as it appeared on an artist’s computer screen in New Delhi, India. With some critical transformations that speak to her novel identity as “English the Dalit Goddess,” the Statue of Liberty has digitally morphed into a new icon for the Dalits of India in their centuries-long struggles against caste, class and linguistic oppression. Following Michael Taussig’s injunction to allow the image “to billow into the driving concept,” this talk explores the political and ethical impulses that motivate this new Dalit project of fighting back by considering some critical image-journeys leading from and to the novel Dalit "Angrezi Devi." I will reflect on what it means for me as an historian of India to write about goddesses such as these in our times, and why I have found visual history profoundly revelatory in doing so.

Sumathi Ramaswamy is Professor of History at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina and Executive Director of the North Carolina Center for South Asian Studies. Prior to this appointment, she was Professor of History at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, and Assistant Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. She pursued her M.A. and M. Phil. in ancient Indian history at the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. She also has a Master's in Anthropology from the University of Pennsylvania, and graduated with a Ph. D. in History from the University of California, Berkeley.

Prof. Ramaswamy is the author of *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India* (Duke University Press, 2010), *The Lost Land of Lemuria: Fabulous Geographies, Catastrophic Histories* (University of California Press, 2004), and *Passions of the Tongue: Language Devotion in Tamil India, 1891-1970* (University of California Press, 1997). Her edited volumes include *Barefoot Across the Nation: Maqbool Fida Husain and the Idea of India* (Routledge, 2010), and *Beyond Appearances? Visual Practices and Ideologies in Modern India* (Sage, 2003). She is currently working on a project entitled "Global Itineraries: The Indian Travels of a Worldly Object." She is co-founder of a trans-national digital network for popular South Asian visual culture called Tasveer Ghar (House of Pictures) (www.tasveerghar.net)



The South Asian Religions Distinguished Lectureship in the Faculty of Religious Studies, McGill University, was established to complement the Faculty's strong undergraduate and graduate programs on South Asia, and to encourage public understanding of South Asian religions.

It has been made possible by the generosity of Professor Robert Stevenson, Professor of Comparative Religion at McGill from 1966 to 1991.