

*Conversations on society since 1960*

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**  
Delhi School of Economics, University of Delhi  
<http://sociology.du.ac.in/sociological-research-colloquium/>

**FRIDAY, 19<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2021 AT 3:00 PM**

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**SANJAY  
PALSHIKAR**



**DEMONS AND DEMONISATION:  
OTHERING IN THE BHAGAVAD GITA**

**Abstract:**

This paper explores the “distinction between the divine (*daivi*) and the demonic (*asuri*)”, the theme of the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Gita*, in order to understand the evolving modes of othering visible in classical texts. When and how did rhetorical techniques of describing opponents acquire an intensified form that created fundamental and irrevocable divisions? How did the identification of desire and sensual gratification with the demonic on the one hand, and of detachment, devotion, and knowledge with the divine on the other emerge? How – despite this dichotomy – was the exercise of power and the pursuit of this-worldly goals legitimised? What did modern commentators seek to do with this inherited representational apparatus, and with what contemporary consequences?

**The Speaker:**

Sanjay Palshikar is Professor of Political Science at the University of Hyderabad, and the author of *Evil and the Philosophy of Retribution: Modern Commentaries on the Bhagavad Gita* (Routledge 2014). He has co-edited *Sectarian Violence in India: Hindu-Muslim Conflict 1966–2015* (2019); *Indian Political Thought* (v.3 of the ICSSR Research Survey in Political Science, 2013), and *Critical Studies in Politics* (2013). He has held visiting appointments at the University of Liverpool and the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla. His research interests include intellectual history and conceptual change in modern India.