



O.P. Jindal Global University
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Classroom 59, T1, Central Block
O.P. Jindal Global University
Sonapat Narela Road, Sonapat-131001, Haryana (NCR of Delhi)



Jindal Global Law School
India's First Global Law School

Center for Law and Humanities

cordially invites you to a

Talk

on

The Violence of those Who Rule: Views from Ancient India

by



Professor Upinder Singh

Professor of History, University of Delhi

Abstract

The intensity of the discussion of violence and nonviolence is a striking feature of ancient Indian political thought. Based on my recent book, *Political Violence in Ancient India*, I argue that the recognition of the pragmatic need for the king to exercise a certain amount of force while discharging his duties and the positive value attached to the principle of nonviolence created an enduring and irresolvable tension. Focusing on the ancient debates on political violence in general and war and punishment in particular, I argue that there is no single 'Indian' theory of kingship or political violence. Rather, we witness an intense conversation across intellectual and religious traditions and a variety of responses to the realities and challenges of political praxis, framed within different perspectives and textual conventions. There was a *dharma* and an *artha* view of kingship, as well as several hybrid models. All of them ultimately upheld the need for the king to use necessary force to maintain and strengthen his position. Nevertheless, a distinction was consistently made between necessary force and the force that was unnecessary, disproportionate, excessive or random. Political violence was justified, aestheticized and almost invisibilized. However, a window of questioning and critique remained.

Short Bio

Upinder Singh is Professor of History, University of Delhi, India. Her writings range over various aspects of ancient Indian history, archaeology, and the modern histories of ancient sites and monuments. She is the author of *Kings, Brāhmaṇas, and Temples in Orissa: An Epigraphic Study* (AD 300–1147) (New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1994); *Ancient Delhi* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1999); *The Discovery of Ancient India: Early Archaeologists and the Beginnings of Archaeology* (New Delhi, Permanent Black, 2004); *A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the Twelfth Century* (Delhi, Pearson, 2008); and *The Idea of Ancient India: Essays on Religion, Politics, and Archaeology* (New Delhi, SAGE, 2016). She has edited *Delhi: Ancient History* (New Delhi, Social Science Press, 2006) and *Rethinking Early Medieval India* (Delhi, New Oxford University Press, 2011). She has co-edited *Ancient India: New Research* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2009) and *Asian Encounters: exploring connected histories* (New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2014). Her most recent book is *Political Violence in Ancient India* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2017). She was awarded the Infosys Prize in Social Sciences -- History in 2009.

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