

Call for Abstracts
for
Conference
on

DIGNITY LAW
Promise and Practice

Organised by the NALSAR Centre for Constitutional Law, Public Policy and Good Governance, Access to Justice Program, the Square Circle Clinic, and the Indian Journal of Constitutional Law (IJCL).

JULY 5-6, 2025

NALSAR UNIVERSITY OF LAW, JUSTICE CITY, SHAMIRPET,
HYDERABAD - 500101

The **INDIAN JOURNAL**
OF CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

the square
circle clinic



About the Conference

Human dignity, while a universally resonant ideal, has often suffered from inconsistent application in constitutional jurisprudence. In India, its placement before the unity and integrity of the nation in the Preamble signals its foundational importance. In invoking dignity in a host of cases, Indian courts have shaped a jurisprudential shift that progressively expanded Article 21 to encompass rights such as shelter, privacy, and bodily autonomy. However, this transformative potential remains uneven – courts have selectively applied dignity, often sidestepping it when adjudicating special laws like UAPA or preventive detention. This discretionary invocation has created a fragmented and unstable framework, particularly ineffective in the face of procedural violence and structural exclusion.

This conference seeks to engage with dignity not merely as an aspirational value but as a constitutional tool that shapes legal practice and pedagogy. Bringing together judges, legal scholars, clinical educators, and students, the event aims to unpack the conceptual, doctrinal, and practical dimensions of dignity law. It will explore how dignity can be operationalized in trial courts, reimagined through comparative insights, and embedded in clinical legal education to nurture a more responsive and relational practice of law. By bridging constitutional theory and legal action, the conference will reflect on dignity as both a legal right and a transformative ethic.

Collaborative Partners

The Conference shall be hosted by NALSAR's Centre for Constitutional Law, Public Policy and Good Governance in collaboration with the Access to Justice Program for Undertrial Prisoners, the Square Circle Clinic, and IJCL.

Over its course, the Conference shall witness engagement from a diverse group of participants whose insights and experiences shall enrich the dialogue on dignity law and its future trajectory. These include:

1. **Vasanthi Nimushakavi:** Professor of Law and Registrar at the NALSAR University of Law, where she heads the Centre for Constitutional Law, Public Policy and Good Governance.
2. **Murali Karnam:** Professor of Human Rights at NALSAR University of Law and the Director of Access to Justice Program.
3. **Justice (Retd.) S. Muralidhar:** A designated senior advocate of the Supreme Court of India and a former chief justice of the High Court of Orissa.
4. **Erin Daly:** Professor of Law at Delaware Law School, where she directs the Dignity Rights Clinic, a non-representational clinic for reform and advocacy. She is also the founder of *Dignity Now!*, a NGO dedicated to dignity rights education and advocacy.
5. **Pritam Baruah:** Dean of the School of Law and Director of the Center for Constitutional Values at BML Munjal University.
6. **Anup Surendranath:** Professor of Law at NALSAR University of Law and Executive Director at Square Circle Clinic.

Call for Abstracts

Eligibility

We invite academics, researchers, policy professionals, legal practitioners, and students (of law and other allied disciplines) to engage critically with the dignity framework as both a doctrinal principle and a transformative ethic.

Themes

- The promise and practice of dignity in Indian Courts
- Reflections from the experience in trial court in protecting dignity in cases involving sexual violence, caste atrocity, and institutional negligence.
- Critique of state-centric dignity jurisprudence, with an emphasis on the need for plural legal imaginations and postcolonial justice frameworks.
- Dignity and constitutional personhood.
- Trial-Level dignity and procedural justice.
- Clinical legal education as a vehicle for dignity-centred advocacy.

Submission Guidelines

- **Length:** Abstracts should not exceed 600 words. It should fit within the themes of the conference and clearly indicate its objectives and methodology.
- **Assessment:** Abstracts will be assessed based on: (a) Originality and innovative nature of the work; (b) Relevance to the conference themes and sub-themes. Authors of selected abstracts shall be invited for an oral presentation at the Conference.
- **Authors:** Please include a brief biography of maximum 100 words including affiliation, your email-address and a link to online bio, if available. Such details shall be mailed in a separate document and must not appear anywhere in the manuscript or the abstract. No joint authorship will be allowed.
- **Deadline:** All submissions must reach **dignitylawconf@nalsar.ac.in** on or before **20 June 2025**.

Contact Us

In case of any queries, please feel free to write to dignitylawconf@nalsar.ac.in or reach any of the student organisers:

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