



Centre for Legal Theory
Faculty of Law

Centre for Legal Theory Seminar

“Constitutional Imagi-Nations: Images, History, Law”

By Dr. Sabarish Suresh

Post-Doctoral Fellow, NUS Law

Moderator: Asst Professor Benjamin Goh

Discussant: Professor Kevin YL Tan

TUESDAY, 14 NOVEMBER 2023

2.30PM TO 4.00PM

LEE SHERIDAN CONFERENCE ROOM, LEVEL 1, EU TONG SEN BUILDING
(FACULTY OF LAW, NUS, BUKIT TIMAH CAMPUS)

ABSTRACT

Even after 73 years since it came into force, examinations of the Indian Constitution remain partial and incomplete. An important facet of the constitution has not been afforded any serious consideration in scholarship. The Indian Constitution has been predominantly viewed as a text alone, but it is not just a text. It is not widely known that the original ratified copy of the Constitution also makes a visual argument through the opening pages of every part. These elaborately crafted artworks — of totemic animals, sages, gods, religious teachers, sovereign rulers, national leaders, emblems, epic myths, mountains, sculptures, and seas — are structured in the form of a teleological and linear narrative, encompassing a claim of an unbroken link to an immemorial civilisation. These visual harbingers have been entirely negated in the scholarship on the constitution, albeit it is in these images that the play and dynamics of collective anxieties and national affect are clearly discernible. Based on archival research and a hermeneutic that combines image studies, literary theory, and constitutional jurisprudence, this paper will demonstrate that these constitutive images adopt the function of representing, and legitimising, a symbolic construction of national identity and historical subjectivity, inducing fantasy and affective attachments to a mythically projected nation. This paper will also show how this undermined function is closely related to a foundational ambivalence that endures in constitutional law.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Dr Sabarish Suresh is a Post-Doctoral Fellow at NUS Law. He completed his JSD from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, New York, where he wrote a thesis that examined how the partition of India affected the making of the Indian Constitution. At NUS Law, he is working on colonial cartography and its relationship to the development and expansion of British Sovereignty and English Common Law in the Indian subcontinent.

Participation is by invitation only.

Please visit <https://tinyurl.com/clt231114>
or scan the QR Code to register your interest.

For enquiries, please write to clt@nus.edu.sg.

