

**Competing Legal and Religious Norms:
The Context of Structural Exclusion of Dalits in India**

by Dr Vinod Kumar, National Law University, Delhi

Chaired by Assistant Professor Jaclyn Neo, Faculty of Law, NUS

5 April 2018, Thursday, 1.30pm – 2.45pm

Lee Sheridan Conference Room, Level 1, Eu Tong Sen Building
NUS (Bukit Timah Campus)

ABSTRACT

India is a country with codified legal and constitutional norms of liberty, equality, justice and human dignity, while Hinduism, the majority religion, has a codified framework of norms contained in the 'holy' religious scriptures. This codified system of religious norms is diametrically opposite and inherently conflicting to the constitutional values and norms. The religious values and norms, quite often are cruel, inhuman and barbaric which no civilised democratic society can endorse in 21st century. These religious norms are entrenched deep into collective social and cultural life of people for centuries. Perpetrators and victims alike, over a period of time have accepted and psychologically internalised these religious norms and values as a part of day-to-day life. 'Caste' is the foundational norm of the Hindu religion and the most fundamental contradiction of Indian society. The practice of Caste is rampant in almost the entire Indian sub-continent. Caste has made an indelible mark on the civilisation on the Indian sub-continent. The System of Caste has brought about irreparable social consequences on the lives of millions and millions of Dalits. The expression 'Dalit' has been derived from Marathi languages, a derivative of Sanskrit. The expression is generally defined as 'ground' or 'broken to pieces'. The expression Dalit describes the appalling and degrading conditions of the Shudras who have been considered untouchables for thousands of years under the 'sacred' norms of Hindu religion. Dalits have been the historical victims of the Caste System for five thousand years as they have been excluded structurally, under the command of the religion, from enjoying a majority of their human rights, such as the right to education, the right to property, the right to equality, the right to liberty, the right to justice and the right to human dignity. Furthermore, the structural exclusion treats Dalits as 'untouchables', even worse than animals, as their physical touch, even mere touch of their shadow, would pollute the Caste Hindus. This Seminar would provide an opportunity to have diverse reflections in terms of holistic understanding of the subject matter.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Dr. Vinod Kumar is ASLI Visiting Fellow to NUS. He is Associate Professor of Law and Director, *Centre for Human Rights and Subaltern Studies* at National Law University Delhi (NLUD) India. He is a member of United Nations Expert Group on *Global Manual on Counter-Terrorism*. He is Visiting Professor of human rights to *University of Sao Paulo (Brazil)*, Visiting Professor to *South Eastern University (Sri Lanka)*. He did his Ph.D. in 2011 from JMI and LL.M. and LL.B. from Delhi University. He did PGD in Victimology from WVS and Tokiwa International Institute of Victimology (Japan). He is also PGD in Human Rights, Humanitarian and Refugee Law from Indian Academy of International Law (New Delhi). Dr. Vinod Kumar currently teaches *Human Rights* to post-graduate students of Law, and *Law, Poverty and Development* to undergraduate students of law in NLUD. He has attended dozens of national and international conferences, seminars and workshops and presented his research papers. He has many published papers to his credit on themes of diverse academic interests.

REGISTRATION

Register early, as seats are limited. There are no registration fees to attend the seminar. Light refreshment will be provided upon registration.

Closing Date: **2 April 2018, Monday**

For enquiries, please contact Chris Chan at asli@nus.edu.sg

To register, go to <https://goo.gl/NtXgqM>

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