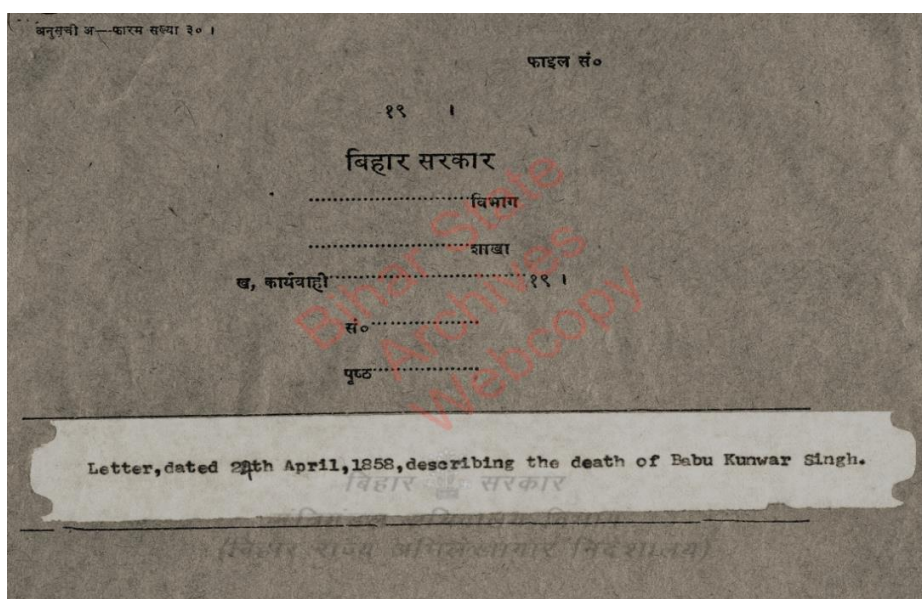


Forum on  
**International Legal History & Philosophy**  
(Offline)  
15 April 2026

**Call for Papers and Engaged Listeners**



**About:**

This Call for ideas (in the form of detailed abstracts) invites scholars working in International Law, Constitutional Law, and Legal Philosophy, whether individually or through interdisciplinary approaches. The contours of the forum are outlined below in two overlapping and porous themes.

**Aims:**

We intend to stimulate discourse on international legal history and theory employing regional and archival lens. We expect a rough sketch of your clearly formulated idea to make such stimulations. We aim to discuss the vitality of your research ideas for them to be transformed into future research (beyond this forum).

**Thematic background:**

**Legal History**

The word 'civilization' has re-entered academic discourse, only this time it is the East which is assertive of it. India is asserting its civilizational heritage by calling itself the 'mother of democracy'. However, the evidence of it (for example, Saṅgha) points more towards democratic values, like public participation, than a political system of democracy. Alongside this civilizational assertion is a renewed emphasis on "decolonizing" India, including in the field of law, though both the efficacy of these efforts and the normative framework of "decolonization" itself remain contested. While these debates have gained traction in International Relations (see the March 2023 issue of *International Affairs* on

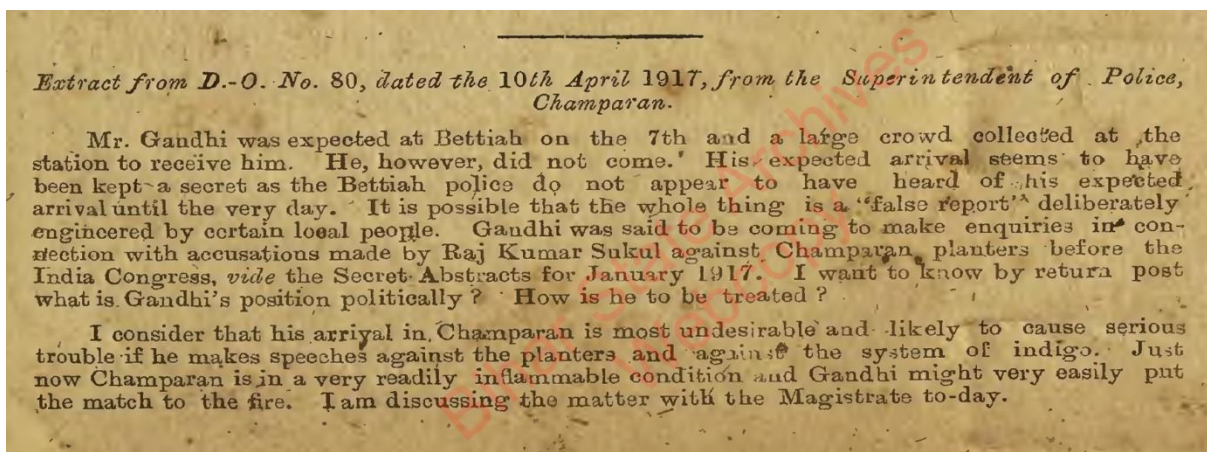
“India as a ‘civilizational state’”), their implications for international law, legal history, and legal philosophy remain underexplored.

This Call invites scholars of international law, legal history, and legal philosophy to intervene in this debate through a focused regional and archival lens. While earlier works, such as C. H. Alexandrowicz’s discussion of the Mandala system situating Kautilya within the Law of Nations (1965), have addressed cognate themes, this project concentrates specifically on Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, including their pre-modern formations. Thus, Pataliputra, Azimabad, and Patna, while essentially the same site, retain their individuality and continuity across time and space. Contributions on neglected princely states and provinces such as Arah, Awadh, Benaras, Baksar, Betiyah, Champaran, Darbhanga, Sasaram, Sagauli, among others, are especially welcome.

Many of these entities were classified as “Zemindari estates” rather than “Princely states.” Colonial Bihar thus reveals how international law sustained empire not by outright denial of sovereignty, but by withholding international legal personality from polities that governed in every meaningful sense. The contemporary relevance of these discriminatory practices persists, as illustrated by the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 26<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Indian Constitution, land reform Act of Bihar and U.P. 1950, *State of Bihar v Radha Krishna Singh & Ors* (1983) and The Vesting of Bettiah Raj Properties Act, 2024.

The Call also encourages works on figures such as Veer Kunwar Singh and Begum Hazrat Mahal, particularly research drawing on archives from the National Archives of India, Uttar Pradesh State Archives, and the Khuda Baksh Oriental Library (Patna). Finally, it seeks renewed readings of colonial constitutional instruments, such as the Pitt’s India Act (1784) and the Government of India Act (1833), and the constitution-like document drafted during the early days of the 1857 revolt.

The Call, therefore, asks: How does colonial legal invisibility structure postcolonial international law? What legal techniques differentiated *Zemindari estates* and *Princely states*? How do colonial legal categories shape postcolonial constitutional disputes? What do colonial legislations tell us about the constitutional origins of international law? How did British colonial rule transform indigenous sovereignty into quasi-sovereign authority without formal annexation (of places like Betiyah-Raj and Darbhanga-Raj)?



## Indian Legal Philosophy

A related interest of this call is Indian (legal) philosophy. While no Indian philosophical school explicitly identifies itself as “legal”, the Nyāya tradition, through its sustained engagement with Pramāṇa, Prameya, Tarka, Nirṇaya, Śabda, Artha etc., offers a systematic framework grounded in logic and epistemology.

This project is interested in works exploring the connections between the Nyāya school and decolonization and retains the regional focus. Gotama (or Akṣapāda Gautama) who composed Nyāya Sūtras, Pāṇini (composer of Aṣṭādhyāyī), Gaṅgeśa (pioneer of Navya-Nyāya branch), Udayanācārya (defended Nyāya school against Buddhist critiques), Vāchaspati Misra (Critique of Nyāya school), Kautilya (whose thoughts on Ānvīkṣikī was used by Gotama for Nyāya school) were all either based in the Bihar region or wrote their works here.

We, therefore, encourage scholars to explore the fields of Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Navya- Nyāya (through works of Gaṅgeśa), and of Pāṇini's Aṣṭādhyāyī. While Pāṇini tells us *how* reasoning works Nyāya explains *why* reasoning works. Scholars working exclusively in the field of philosophy, and those working on legal philosophy are welcome to respond to this call.

### Participation details

If your research aligns with either of these themes or questions, we invite you to participate in this Forum, as:

#### 1. Presenters

If you would like to present your research, you are requested to submit a 500-word abstract, clearly setting out-

- the central theme(s) of your research,
- your core research question(s),
- three to five literatures you are engaging with,
- your name, position and affiliation.

We will select abstracts based upon the novelty, strength and coherence. The selected participants will then be required to submit a preliminary draft of not more than 1500 words one week before the Forum, i.e. on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2026 for thorough academic engagement with your research. Participants will have ten minutes to present their work at the forum.

There will be no sections or panels at the forum. Each participant will be expected to attend all the presentations. This is aimed at breaking departmental barriers and fostering interdisciplinary engagements from which both lawyers, historians and philosophers can gain.

#### 2. Engaged Listeners

Scholars from the field of law, history and philosophy (including teachers, PhD Scholars) and students (including graduate and post graduate students) who are interested in understanding and potentially developing future work on these themes with us are invited to join the forum as Engaged Listeners. Engaged listeners will have access to all presentations at the forum and will have chance to interact with the presenters within and outside the forum, providing an opportunity to refine their research interests and to contribute to the project in the future.

For participating as engaged listeners, individuals are requested to submit a 200-word statement outlining their reasons and motivations for participating, and their primary areas of interest (identifying two to three such areas), and their name, position and affiliation.

Presenters and Engaged Listeners should send their abstracts to [ilhilpf@gmail.com](mailto:ilhilpf@gmail.com).

**Date & Venue:** 10 AM to 5 PM, 15 April 2026 at Chanakya National Law University, Patna, Bihar, India.

**Key dates:**

Submission of abstracts (by presenters) & interests (by engaged listeners)	15 March 2026
Communication of selection (for presenters & listeners)	25 March 2026
Registration	5 April 2026
Research outline submission (by presenters)	8 April 2026

**Registration details:**

For presenters:

- For undergraduate, postgraduate students and PhD scholars: Rs. 500/-
- For teachers and practitioners: Rs. 1000/-

There is no participation fee for the engaged listeners.

*The Project is being led by Aman Kumar, PhD Candidate at the Australian National University, Canberra. The Forum is convened by Dr Swati Singh Parmar (DNLU, Jabalpur) and Dr Aditya Roy (CNLU, Patna).*