

M. K. NAMBYAR MEMORIAL LECTURE SERIES

Prof. Dinesha Samararatne

CONSTITUTIONAL
GOVERNANCE IN
SOUTH ASIA:
PERSPECTIVES
FROM SRI LANKA



22nd, 23th and 24th March, 2026



Online



Session 1: 5:00- 7:00 PM, 22nd March

Session 2: 5:00 - 7:00 PM, 23rd March

Session 3: 5:00 - 7:00 PM, 24th March



M. K. Nambyar SAARC Law Centre
NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad

M.K. NAMBYAR SAARC LAW CENTER

The M.K. Nambyar SAARC Law Centre for Advanced Legal Studies was established in 2003 at NALSAR under the patronage of Mr. K.K. Venugopal, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of India. Recently revitalized with the appointment of Justice S. Ravindra Bhat (Former Judge, Supreme Court of India) as Chair of Comparative Constitutional Law Studies, the Centre focuses on academic research, writing, and deliberation on Indian constitutional law, comparative constitutional law, and legal issues affecting South Asian nations. The Centre has been in the process of launching a series of academic activities, which we intend to carry forward year on year, and which are aimed at benefiting students, faculty and the wider pedagogic space.

INTRODUCTION TO LECTURE SERIES

The MK Nambyar Memorial Lecture Series, inaugurated last year, is the Centre's foremost activity. The lectures are intended to be a long-form series, delving deep into a constitutional issue over several sessions. The lecture series is designed to foster meaningful dialogue and deepen public understanding of critical Constitutional Law issues in South Asia.

Prof. Mohan Gopal delivered last year's lecture on 'The Roles of the Constitution and the Supreme Court in India's Struggle for Democracy' in September 2024.

This year's lecture shall be delivered by Prof. (Dr.) Dinesha Samararatne on the topic "Constitutional Governance in South Asia: Perspectives from Sri Lanka" from March 22nd to 24th, 2026.

PROFESSOR DINESHA SAMARARATNE

Prof. Dinesha Samararatne is a Professor at the Department of Public & International Law at the Faculty of Law of the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, where she has been working as an academic since 2005. Her research interests include judicial review, public participation in constitution-making, constitutional resilience, women and constitutional law, guarantor institutions, and the relevance of the global south in comparative constitutional law.

Prof. Samararatne is also a Senior Fellow at Melbourne Law School, Australia, and the Editor of the University of Colombo Review. In 2023, she was appointed an independent expert to the Constitutional Council of Sri Lanka.

She graduated with a second class in the upper division from the University of Colombo and read for her master's degree at Harvard Law School as a Junior Fulbright Scholar. She is enrolled as an Attorney-at-Law of the Supreme Court of Sri Lanka.

She was a postdoctoral fellow at the Melbourne Law School, University of Melbourne, Australia. She has been a Kathleen Fitzpatrick Visiting Fellow at the Melbourne Law School and an honorary visiting fellow at Pantheon-Sorbonne, Paris 1 University, France. She won the Vice Chancellor's Research Award for Law in 2021 and the CVCD Excellence Award for the Most Outstanding Young Researcher in 2020 in the fields of Management and Law.

CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH ASIA: PERSPECTIVES FROM SRI LANKA

I. What are Guarantor Institutions and Why Do They Matter?

The first lecture will draw on Sri Lanka's experience with the design of and the operationalization of Guarantor Institutions such as the Human Rights Commission. The lecture aims to explain the idea of Guarantor Institutions in terms of constitutional principles and institutional design, with a special focus on the doctrine of the separation of powers as developed in Sri Lanka. It will also discuss and explore the significance of these constitutional institutions in the Sri Lankan context. The lecture will then identify and develop insights from this experience in Sri Lanka and ask a more general question – what distinct aspects can we identify in constitutionalism, when we consider this experience 'from and within' the Global South?

II. Guarantor Personnel: Who, why and for what?

The second lecture will consider the idea of Guarantor Personnel, the kind of persons who are required to serve on Guarantor Institutions (as discussed in lecture 01). Drawing from the experience with Guarantor Personnel in Sri Lanka, an attempt will be made to identify the attributes that are ideal to Guarantor Personnel. The lecture will consider several ethical concepts such as public trust, independence and integrity along with the ideas of expertise and representation, as relevant to Guarantor Institutions and Guarantor Personnel.

CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE IN SOUTH ASIA: PERSPECTIVES FROM SRI LANKA

III. Doing Legal Scholarship from and within the Global South.

The third lecture will draw from the first two lectures and will comprise two parts. Using published scholarship relevant to the subject matter of the first two lectures, this lecture focuses on how legal scholarship may be developed ‘from and within’ the Global South. The first part will focus on methods of legal scholarship, with a special focus on methods more relevant to public law. These include the identification, interpretation and analysis of legal doctrine and the examination of legal institutions. It will also include a discussion on the use of socio-legal methods. The second part will focus on the unique opportunities as well as disadvantages of doing legal scholarship, using these methods, in Global South contexts.