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POLICING IN LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES

**LEGAL VIOLENCE AND SCIENTIFIC
INTERROGATIONS IN INDIA**

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MONDAY | 29 AUGUST 2022 | 7.30 PM (IST)

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ABSTRACT

On Aug 8, 2021, the Chief Justice of India stated: “The threat to human rights and bodily integrity are the highest in Police Stations. Custodial torture and other police atrocities are problems that still prevail in our society,” thereby reiterating the need to focus on Policing in Liberal Democracies. This talk will broadly be based on the speaker’s recent book *The Truth Machines: Policing, Violence, and Scientific Interrogations in India* (2020). The book explores the workings of law, science, and policing in the everyday context to generate a theory of state power and legal violence, challenging the monolithic frameworks about this relationship. Based on cases and interviews with lawyers, police, and forensic psychologists in five Indian cities, Professor Lokaneeta provides insights into a police institution that is founded and refounded in its everyday interactions between state and non-state actors. The postcolonial Indian police have often been accused of using torture in both routine and exceptional criminal cases, but they, and forensic psychologists, have claimed that lie detectors, brain scans, and narcoanalysis (the use of “truth serum,” Sodium Pentothal) represent a paradigm shift away from physical torture; most state high courts in India have upheld this rationale. Attention to truth machines reveals the texture of violence experienced by certain sections of the population, even under the rule of law, especially in terror related cases. Professor Lokaneeta argues that the attempt to replace physical torture with truth machines in India fails because it relies on a confessional paradigm that is contiguous with torture. Theorizing a concept of Contingent State, the lecture will demonstrate the disaggregated, and decentered nature of state power and legal violence, creating possible sites of critique and intervention.

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Professor Jinee Lokaneeta is working in Political Science and International Relations at Drew University, New Jersey. She is the former President of the Consortium of Undergraduate Law and Justice Programs. Her areas of interest include Law and Violence, Critical Political and Legal Theory, Human Rights, and Interdisciplinary Legal Studies. Her recent book *The Truth Machines: Policing, Violence, and Scientific Interrogations in India* (University of Michigan Press, Orient Blackswan, 2020) theorizes the relationship between state power and legal violence by focusing on the intersection of law, science and policing through an ethnographic study of forensic techniques-narco analysis, brain scans and lie detectors. Professor Lokaneeta is the author of *Transnational Torture: Law, Violence, and State Power in the United States and India* (New York University Press, 2011, Orient Blackswan 2012) and the co-editor of *Feminist Politics: Struggles and Issues* (2001). She has published articles in *Economic and Political Weekly*, *Theory and Event*, *Law, Culture and Humanities*, and *Studies in Law, Politics and Society*.

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