

STUDENT CONTRIBUTION

What Can International Law Learn from Indian Mythology, Hinduism and History?

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Modern India has been rather silent on its role in international law. This reticence remains unexplained in the comparative literature on international law. India's history with international relations theories date back to ancient times. Various Hindu texts from some eight millennia ago passed over to generations by the method of "shruti" and manuscripted later, contain one of the most complete sets of international laws and relations. "Dharma" remains the central aspect to this discourse. The opinions of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the Nuclear Weapons cases, particularly those delivered by Third World judges, cited these Hindu scriptures as sources of international law. This paper theorizes that modern international law needs a cross fertilisation from Hinduism and Buddhism to become a universal construct. The role of India in the centre-periphery analysis of international law begs a collective answer from the Vedas, the Bhagavad Gītā, the Manu Samhita and the Arthaśāstra. In the post-WWII period, India came quite close to resurrecting the Hindu/Buddhist international law of peaceful co-existence. In an imitative reversal of European discourse in the Panchsheel Agreement with China, India succeeded in establishing new principles of international law. This paper offers an account of the ancient Hindu international laws of India and discusses the possibility of Indian contribution to international law.

Keywords

Indian International Law, Hinduism, Religious Conflicts, Manu, Mythology

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