



O.P. JINDAL GLOBAL
INSTITUTION OF EMINENCE DEEMED TO BE
UNIVERSITY
A Private University Promoting Public Service



In Memoriam

PROFESSOR MARC GALANTER
(February 18, 1931 – April 14, 2026)

A towering global scholar, a devoted teacher, and one of the most profound interpreters of Indian law and society.



A Global Scholar, Rooted in Justice

Professor Marc Galanter, a distinguished legal scholar and professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin Law School, passed away on April 14, 2026, at the age of 95.

He was not merely an academic; he was an institution unto himself. Across continents, his name became synonymous with the Law and Society movement, in which law is understood not as abstract doctrine, but as a living force shaped by power, inequality, and human aspiration.

For India, however, he was something more personal:

A friend, an interpreter, and a lifelong companion in its legal journey.

The Teacher Who Created Generations

At Wisconsin and across the world, Professor Galanter mentored countless scholars, supervised doctoral researchers, and shaped entire intellectual traditions.

His influence is carried forward by generations of leading academics, including figures such as Jayant Krishnan and Arpita Gupta, among many others, who continue to expand the frontiers of socio-legal research.

He believed scholarship was not solitary; it was a lineage. His students were not merely taught; they were cultivated, challenged, and entrusted with the responsibility of advancing justice.

India as Intellectual Home, Not Field Site

Few scholars from the United States engaged with India with such depth, humility, and continuity.

Galanter did not “study” India from afar; he immersed himself in its institutions, courts, and intellectual life. He engaged deeply with the judges of the Supreme Court of India, Indian legal scholars and universities, and lawyers navigating the realities of justice on the ground. His scholarship gave the world a framework for understanding India’s complexities, especially caste, affirmative action, and access to justice, not as anomalies, but as central questions of democracy.

Scholarship That Reshaped Legal Thought

The Theory That Changed Everything

His seminal work, “Why the ‘Haves’ Come Out Ahead”, transformed legal scholarship by demonstrating how repeat players dominate legal systems. This insight continues to shape debates on inequality across jurisdictions.

His article “Scholars in Self-Estrangement: Some Reflections on the Crisis in Law and Development Studies in the United States”, co-authored with David Trubek, led to a complete re-examination of international development efforts in the developing world and became the most cited work in the field of law and development.

● **India-Centric Intellectual Contributions**

He played a central role as an expert witness for the Government of India in the Bhopal Gas Tragedy case. His academic work in the area of civil justice has been seminal. Most notably, he established the Bhopal Digital Archive at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, ensuring that this great tragedy and its lessons remain in public memory.

His monumental book, "Competing Equalities: Law and the Backward Classes in India", remains one of the most authoritative analyses of caste and affirmative action ever written. It bridged constitutional ideals with lived realities.

● **Expanding the Boundaries of Legal Culture**

In works like “Lowering the Bar: Lawyer Jokes and Legal Culture,” he explored how even humour reflects deep anxieties about law and legal systems, revealing the cultural life of law beyond courtrooms.

In “World Without Trials,” he questioned the centrality of trials in modern legal systems, challenging widely held assumptions about justice and dispute resolution. Over the decades, his writings combined empirical rigour, theoretical originality, and deep moral concern for fairness.

A Lifelong Engagement with Indian Legal Institutions

Professor Galanter’s relationship with India was lived through constant dialogue.

He interacted with members of the Indian judiciary, contributed to legal debates, and influenced how Indian courts and scholars understood litigation patterns, access to justice, and structural inequality within legal systems.

His work became a bridge, connecting Indian legal realities with global academic discourse.

A Foundational Presence at Jindal Global Law School

Professor Galanter shared a close and meaningful association with O.P. Jindal Global University and its pioneering Jindal Global Law School.

He was present during its formative years, an intellectual architect in spirit, helping shape its vision of global, interdisciplinary legal education rooted in Indian realities.

At JGU, he was not just a visiting scholar, but also someone who engaged deeply with faculty and students, contributing to building a culture of rigorous socio-legal inquiry and inspiring a generation of Indian legal academics to think globally while remaining grounded in India.

His association strengthened one of India’s most ambitious legal education projects, leaving a lasting institutional legacy.

Bridging India and the United States

Standing between India and the United States, Galanter became a rare intellectual bridge.

He helped the world understand India, and helped India understand itself in comparative perspective. His scholarship ensured that Indian law was not peripheral, but central to global legal thought.

A Legacy Beyond Scholarship

Marc Galanter changed how we think about justice and inequality; courts and litigation; and law as a social institution.

But beyond ideas, he leaves behind something even more enduring:

A community of scholars, judges, and institutions shaped by his generosity, rigour, and vision.

Professor Marc Galanter’s life was not merely a career; it was a conversation across continents, generations, and legal traditions.

He showed the world that to understand law, one must understand society.

He showed India that its legal struggles were globally significant.

And he showed his students that scholarship, at its best, is an act of justice.

In his passing, the world of law loses a true intellectual titan.

But in his work, his students, and his deep connection with India, he remains profoundly alive.

May his legacy continue to guide the pursuit of justice in India and across the world.