

ROSHAN AMAR UJALA

PhD Candidate in Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

Witch-hunting and gendered violence · political and legal anthropology · performance, ritual and the political · necropolitics and the everyday state · Adivasi (Santal) worlds and indigeneity · gender and feminist theory · sensory and multi-sited ethnography · South Asia and eastern India.

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi Expected 2028
Thesis: "Power, Performance, and the Political: A Study of Witch-Hunting in West Bengal."

M.A., Political Science, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi 2022

B.A. (Honours), Political Science, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi 2020

DOCTORAL RESEARCH

Theorises witch-hunting in Purulia, West Bengal as *necro-performance*: the publicly staged, ritually structured production of social death enacted on Adivasi (Santal) women. It situates the *dain* (witch) accusation at the intersection of colonial legacies, a fragmented anti-witch-hunting legal architecture, and a political economy of dispossession (welfare withdrawal, contested land, and an *ojha*-mediated healthcare vacuum). The project is among the first political-science treatments of witch-hunting in South Asia as a question of sovereignty and performance.

Methods: multi-sited and sensory ethnography, socio-legal analysis, colonial-archival research, Right to Information (RTI) data, and digital ethnography.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

PhD Candidate, Centre for Political Studies, JNU 2022 – present

- Doctoral research on power, ritual authority, gendered violence and the everyday state; preliminary ethnographic fieldwork, RTI-based data collection, and colonial-archival work in West Bengal.

Geopolitical Research Analyst (South & Southeast Asia), StratNews Global, New Delhi 2024 – present

- Regional political analysis and concise research briefs for editorial publication.

WORKING PAPER

- "Federalism's Uneven Shield: Witch-Hunting, Territorial Autonomy, and the Multi-Level Governance of Gendered Harm in India" (under submission, 2026). Reframes India's divergent, state-by-state anti-witch-hunting laws as a problem of multi-level governance and the protection of "minorities within minorities."

PUBLIC SCHOLARSHIP & ESSAYS

- "The Denied Grief of the Families of Dalit and Adivasi Women Accused of Witchcraft in West Bengal," *Feminism in India* (2026).
- "When Women Stage Their Own Deaths to Be Heard: Bodily Protest and the Politics of Being Seen," *Feminism in India* (2026).
- "The Logic Behind India's Labour Systems Punishing Menstruating Women Resembles That of Witch-Hunting," *Feminism in India* (2026).
- "Period Paath: The Societal Taboo Called Menstruation," *Youth Ki Awaaz* (2020).

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Guest Faculty, Political Science, Jesus & Mary College (NCWEB), University of Delhi 2024 – 2025

- Comparative Government & Politics; International Political Economy; Political Leadership & Communication.

Academic Counsellor & Resource Person, Political Science, School of Open Learning (Univ. of Delhi) & IGNOU 2025 – present

Teaching Fellow, Teach For India, Pune 2020

SELECTED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- "Socio-Cultural Exploration of Gender and Performance in Regional Indian Theatre: Transgender Representations in Shumang Leela and Bhavai," International Conference on India & Southeast Asia, JNU (2023).
- "Exploring Ethical Dilemmas on Stage: Ethics and Theatre in Contemporary Performance," National Conference on Ethics in Human Sciences Research, JNU (2023).
- "Deconstructing Gender Binaries in Experimental Theatre: Non-Binary Representation of Language and Identity," International Conference on Gender Narratives, RGNIYD & JNU (2023).

- “Political Ideology and Attribution: COVID-19 Perceptions among University Students in India,” 31st Convention, National Academy of Psychology, IIT Bombay (2022).

FELLOWSHIPS, SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

- UGC-NET Junior Research Fellowship (JRF) and Assistant Professor eligibility, Political Science (2022).
- Selected Participant, Jean Monnet Intensive Summer School (EU Institutions), University of Rome Unitelma Sapienza (2026).
- National Youth Icon Award (Excellence in Theatre & Performance), Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports, Govt. of India (2025).
- Merit-Cum-Means Scholarship, Centre for Political Studies, JNU (2020–2022).

THEATRE & PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

- Convenor, JNU Drama Club (2023–present); Secretary, Rangshala Dramatics Society, BHU (2018–2020).
- Direction (selected): Mahasweta Devi’s *Bayen* (a woman branded a witch), Saadat Hasan Manto’s *Khol Do*, Girish Karnad’s *Tughlaq*, Vijay Tendulkar’s *Sakharam Binder*, Piyush Mishra’s *Gagan Damama Bajyo*.
- Street theatre (*nukkad natak*) as public pedagogy on gender, indigenous rights and the environment, with Indian ministries (Environment & Forests; Jal Shakti), the NHRC, WWF India and the National School of Drama.
- Screen: *Summer of 77* (SonyLIV, dir. Sudhir Mishra, forthcoming); *Barah X Barah* (2024).

LANGUAGES, SKILLS & SERVICE

Languages: English (fluent) · Hindi (native) · Bengali (fluent; primary fieldwork language) · Maithili · Bhojpuri · Mandarin Chinese (elementary).

Research & technical: in-depth interviews and focus groups; qualitative coding; comparative and policy analysis.

Academic service: examination scripts evaluator, Political Science, University of Delhi (2025–26); jury member, inter-collegiate theatre and street-play festivals (2023–26).

REFERENCES

- Available on request.