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MAPPING THE DIGITAL SANCTUM: CYBERCRIME AND THE FRAGILE DESIRE OF LAW IN VIRTUAL JURISPRUDENCE

Sneha Hooda*
Dr. Parmod Malik**

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ABSTRACT

This research article analyses the comfortable existence of visual jurisprudence surrounding the loud noise of written law. Such existence raises questions amid evolution of hybrid hearing and trial systems adapted amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The attachment to strict protocols of the courtroom culture was highlighted as judicial systems worldwide saw replication of physical courtroom culture within the virtual domain. However, this research article argues that the law's desire to be perceived as an upright and incorruptible figure is increasingly challenged by the fragility of its digital architecture.

Using scholarly work in the field of visual law, aesthetics and semiotics, this research article demonstrates law's desires through two identifications: mental response of subjects and increased distance from subjects to understand the relationship between law and need to maintain an image. By incorporating contemporary Indian examples on digital divide and the disruptive impact of cyber-invasions on virtual proceedings, the research article critiques the paradox of maintaining overt formalism while judicial infrastructures remain vulnerable to cybercrimes. It concludes that as the Indian judiciary unmasks the Justitia, it must reconsider its traditional desires for symbolic control to achieve a more secure, accessible, and functional adjudication process.

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Keywords: *Cyber-crimes, Blindfold Justitia, Online courts, Digital Sanctum, Visuality, Semiotics.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Videoconferencing entered global vocabulary in 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic forced institutions worldwide to relocate their work online. The Indian judiciary was no exception: it conducted over 43,000 hearings through nearly 2,000 virtual benches during the pandemic period.[1] This massive exercise brought to the fore a problem that had remained concealed for decades. The digital divide present in society stands as an important concern preventing such modes of trial from becoming the norm. It means that attachment, voluntary or involuntary, of subjects to physical hearings and trial within courts acts as a barrier in the way of virtual hearings. Digital divide is the disparity in access to information and communication technology (ICT) and the internet between individuals from various socioeconomic backgrounds. Lack of a strong infrastructure to deliver high-quality internet services, people's capacity to buy ICT access devices, and financial limitations to pay for data are the main causes of the digital divide. It leads to involuntary attachment, out of necessity, to physical hearing and the entire set of old protocols. The issue in digital sanctum i.e. online courts arises out of the court's expectation of the same obedience in virtual space as in physical domain. It perpetuates years of developed habits which people refrain from replicating in the virtual domain which is equated with ease and quick actions.

The move towards online hearings has given thrust to exploration of inherent desire of law as a fundamental concept, to maintain an image in virtual mode. The image that it has constructed, and projected through rituals, courtroom architecture and dress, in a space is sought even when the space itself has changed from stone to screen. The courts in online format expect the same physical governing protocols and decorum which further roots the desire to be obeyed. Multiple instances of judges reprimanding lawyers for not wearing collar bands, or attending hearings while in vehicles were observed during virtual hearings.[2] These are not just actions

1 [1] *Live Law News Network, 'Ensured That Access to Justice Remained Unhindered': Supreme Court Says on Its 71st Anniversary*, LIVE LAW (Jan. 28, 2021), https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/supreme-court-71-anniversary-access-to-justice-169041

2 *Rajesh Kumar Pandey, Allahabad High Court Sets Dress Code for E-Hearings*, TIMES OF INDIA (May 21, 2021), https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/allahabad/allahabad-high-court-sets-dress-code-for-e-hearings/articleshow/84084213.cms; *Sparsh Upadhyaya, Lawyer Not Wearing Neck-Band During Virtual Hearing: Orissa High Court Imposes Rs 500 Fine*, LIVE LAW (June 17, 2021), https://www.livelaw.in/news-updates/lawyer-not-wearing-neck-band-during-virtual-hearing-orissa-

against indiscipline, but a direct showcase of expectations in a space that lacks any resemblance to physical architecture. Hence the desire of law is symbolic.

At the same time, it is crucial to note that the digital sanctum has yet to prove itself safe as against the physical space that it replaced. While the attachment with protocols reflects the law's desire to be seen as an upright and incorruptible figure, this image is increasingly being challenged by digital disruptions and cyber-invasions. In 2023, Karnataka High Court had to suspend live streaming due to attacks by hackers.[3] Similar disruptions happened during National Company Law Tribunal hearings in Mumbai and Kolkata.[4] These instances attacked the law's curated image at the very moment when it moved outside the physical sanctum i.e. it migrated to the online space.

The transition from physical to virtual sanctums has exposed the law's vulnerability. When judicial infrastructure is targeted by cybercriminals, the majesty of the law is confronted by a decentralized and invisible threat. This research article argues that the law's traditional obsession with symbolic rigidities, like dress codes, is paradoxical when juxtaposed against the fragile security of its digital architecture, necessitating a reimagining of judicial authority in the age of cybercrime. The research article argues that the two phenomena, one being persistent maintenance of decorum in the virtual domain and the other being the insecurity posed by the hosting platform are both connected expressions of law's hidden desire to be seen as an incorruptible, authoritative and upright institution. Using scholarly work in the field of visual culture vis-à-vis law and aesthetics, this research article examines the law's desire through two identifications: the mental response and the increased distance from the subjects, to understand the relationship between law and the need to maintain an image. It then traces how these indicators have carried over into the digital sanctum, and how their persistence sits uneasily against that sanctum's fragility.

high-court-imposes-rs-500-fine-to-restore-dignity-of-the-profession-170152.

3 *IANS, Karnataka High Court Suspends Live Streaming After Hackers Play Obscene Videos*, Econ. Times (Mar. 1, 2026), https://legal.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/litigation/karnataka-high-court-suspends-live-streaming-after-hackers-play-obscene-videos/105763601.

4 *Dwaipayan Ghosh, Breach in Cyber Security Disrupts NCLT Hearing*, Times of India (Mar. 1, 2026), https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolkata/breach-in-cyber-security-disrupts-nclt-hearing/articleshow/123081457.cms.; *V. Dalvi, NCLT Mumbai Bench Video Conference Network Hacked to Play Obscene Videos in Courtrooms*, Hindustan Times (Dec. 20, 2024), https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/mumbai-news/nclt-attack-video-conference-network-hacked-to-play-obscene-videos-in-court-rooms-101734722556892.html.

The research article proceeds in three parts. Part One develops the theoretical framework, locating the desire of law within the broader sociology of legal symbols and identifying its two indicators through the history of Justitia's blindfold, the architecture of Indian and comparative courts, and the jurisprudence of contempt. Part Two turns to the digital sanctum, examining how courts have replicated symbolic formalism online even as cyber-invasions have exposed the vulnerability of that space, and develops the research article's central analytical claim that cybercrime against judicial infrastructure operates as a form of digital iconoclasm, striking directly at the law's visual self-image. Part Three analyses the removal of Justitia's blindfold by India by looking at it as a considerable redirection of law's desire towards functional justice than being a controller of symbols. The research article concludes by drawing these threads together to argue that an unmasked Justitia is an invitation to recalibrate the need of law, and should not be looked at as an aesthetic choice.

II. Part One: The Architecture Of Legal Desire

Visuality, Symbol, and the Working Aspect of Law

The development of law as a system of rules and enforcement mechanisms is well documented as a hallmark of social organisation, evolving from informal dispute-resolution practices into codified systems shaped by historical tradition and contemporary need.[5] As black-letter law gained prominence, older modes of legal ordering such as Chthonic traditions rooted in custom and nature receded from view.[6] Alongside them, a second casualty of codification was visuality: the symbolic, architectural, and ritual dimensions of law that operate independently of written text.

Alexa Sand describes visuality as "the element of visual experience that is contingent on culture and therefore far more unstable and resistant to description than even the most complex of biological functions."[7] Its marginalisation in legal scholarship does not reflect its absence from legal practice. Rather, it reflects what might be called its comfort. Visuality is so deeply embedded in the everyday experience of law that it escapes scrutiny. The blindfolded image of Justitia, the layout of a courtroom,

5 Roscoe Pound, Social Control Through Law 1-25 (Yale Univ. Press, 1942).

6 Patrick Glenn, Legal Traditions of the World: Sustainable Diversity in Law ch. 2 (Oxford Univ. 5th ed. 2014).

7 *Alexa Sand, Visuality*, 33 Stud. Iconography 89, 90 (2012).

the sightlines between bench and bar, and now the framing of a video call, all communicate something about law that the text of a statute cannot.

This distinction maps onto a useful separation between the functional and working aspects of law. The functional aspect is what most legal scholarship addresses as the social engineering project, in Roscoe Pound's sense, through which law balances competing interests and is tested against constitutional values such as free speech.[8] The working aspect, by contrast, concerns how law is experienced using the lens of the signs, symbols, and spatial arrangements through which courts communicate authority quite apart from the substance of what is decided. It is at the level of the working aspect that the desire of law becomes visible.

Desire, in its ordinary sense, denotes "a strong wish to have or to do something."[9] Applied to law, this research article uses the term to describe the institutional wish that is expressed through symbol and ritual rather than through statute, to be perceived as an upright, neutral, and authoritative body, and thereby to command the respect and obedience of those subject to it.[10] This desire is not incidental to law's authority; it is, on a Kelsenian reading of legal systems as resting on generalised norms of obedience, part of what allows authority to be sustained over time without constant recourse to force.[11] The remainder of this Part identifies two indicators through which this desire operates: the cultivation of a particular mental response in legal subjects, and the maintenance of distance between the law and the people it governs.

First Indicator: Mental Allegiance and the History of Justitia's Blindfold

The image of Justitia offers a concentrated history of how law has sought to secure allegiance through visual symbolism. Martin Jay traces a satirical sixteenth-century woodcut depicting a fool covering the eyes of the Goddess of Justice. It was originally a critique of her incapacity to judge, since clear sight was then associated with knowledge and insight.[12] Albrecht Dürer's *Sol Justitiae*, by contrast, depicted a

8 POUND, *supra* note 5, at 64-81.

9 Merriam-Webster, Desire, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/desire (last visited Mar. 2, 2026).

10 COSTAS DOUZINAS & LINDA NEAD, LAW AND THE IMAGE: THE AUTHORITY OF LAW AND THE AESTHETIC OF LAW 1-15 (Univ. of Chi. Press 1999).

11 See generally Hans Kelsen, *General Theory of Law and State* 30-48 (Anders Wedberg trans., Harvard Univ. Press 1945) (describing the basic norm as the foundation of a legal system's claim to obedience).

12 Martin Jay, *Must Justice Be Blind? The Challenge of Images to Law,* in LAW AND THE IMAGE: THE AUTHORITY

clear-eyed, haloed Christ-Justice, reinforcing sight as a guarantor of justice.[13] Over time, however, the blindfold was reinterpreted and was altered to be considered no longer a mark of incapacity, but a guarantee of impartiality, signalling that Justitia could not be swayed by the identity of the parties before her.[14] Costas Douzinas and Linda Nead read this ambivalence as central to the symbol: the blindfold may free Justitia from prejudice, or it may blind her to the human realities she must address.[15]

What this history demonstrates is that the image of Justitia has never been a neutral aesthetic choice. It has been continuously adjusted to secure what Merriam-Webster defines as "allegiance". "The fidelity owed by a subject or citizen to a sovereign or government."[16] A blindfolded, impartial Justitia secures allegiance by appearing incorruptible. An unveiled, clear-sighted Justitia, as adopted recently in India, secures it (or attempts to) by appearing engaged and responsive. In either case, the image is doing the same institutional work: inviting the subject's trust.

India's jurisprudence on contempt of court provides a contemporary, non-architectural illustration of how this desire for allegiance operates. In 2020, the Supreme Court initiated contempt proceedings against a senior advocate for tweets it considered disrespectful, ultimately imposing a token fine of one rupee, and similar proceedings were brought against two artists over social-media criticism of judicial orders.[17] The contempt proceedings in court, as an exception to the protection of free speech, allows wide discretionary powers to the judges to hold the accused accountable for blemishing the system. It reinforces the idea that deference is commanded also by law's image, and not just its rulings.[18] These proceedings illustrate that the cultivation of allegiance is not confined to architecture or ritual but it extends to how the institution is permitted to be spoken about.

OF ART AND THE AESTHETICS OF LAW 19, 21-22 (Costas Douzinas & Lynda Nead eds., Univ. of Chi. Press 1999).

13 JUDITH RESNIK & DENNIS CURTIS, REPRESENTING JUSTICE: INVENTION, CONTROVERSY, AND RIGHTS IN CITY-STATES AND DEMOCRATIC COURTROOMS 22-25 (Yale Univ. Press 2011).

14 JAY, *supra* note 12, at 25-27.

15 DOUZINAS & NEAD, *supra* note 10, at 19-22.

16 Merriam-Webster, *Allegiance*, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/allegiance (last visited Mar. 2, 2026).

17 *The Wire, Supreme Court Fines Prashant Bhushan Re 1 in Contempt of Court Case*, THE WIRE (Aug. 31, 2020); *Live Mint, SC Issues Notice to Comic Kunal Kamra, Cartoonist Rachita Taneja in Contempt Cases*, LIVE MINT (Dec. 22, 2020), https://thewire.in/law/prashant-bhushan-supreme-court-contempt-re-1-fine.

18 Rahul Donde, *Uses and Abuses of the Potent Power of Contempt*, 42 ECON. & POL. WKLY. 3919, 3920-21 (2007).

The shift to videoconferencing during the pandemic carried these expectations into a new medium without adapting them. Lawyers appearing online were expected to observe the same protocols of dress and demeanour as in physical courtrooms. The Allahabad High Court directed lawyers to "smarten up their act" in virtual hearings, treating cyberspace as a mere extension of the physical court, while the Orissa High Court imposed a fine on a lawyer for failing to wear a neckband during a virtual hearing, and courts elsewhere reprimanded lawyers for appearing from moving vehicles.[19] These episodes show that allegiance, as an indicator of law's desire, survived the transition online essentially unchanged. Even though the architectural cues that originally secured it (the dais, the robes, the physical courtroom) were largely absent from the screen.

Second Indicator: Distance and the Architecture of the Sanctum

The second indicator: distance, can be traced through the external and internal architecture of court buildings, and through the digital spaces that have come to replicate them. Jeremy Bentham's ideal of "open courts" framed publicity as a check on judicial power, and early courts were often situated within shared civic buildings that the public could readily enter.[20] As caseloads grew, however, courts relocated to dedicated buildings. It was a shift that, whatever its administrative justification, widened the physical and symbolic gap between the law and the people it served.[21]

Judith Resnik, Dennis Curtis, and Allison Anna Tait describe this shift as part of a broader "new monumentality" in court design, in which modern buildings retain the separating function of older ones, through dedicated entrances, passageways, and parking for judges, even while presenting glass facades as symbols of transparency.[22] Linda Mulcahy similarly warns that "aspirations to democracy become overwhelmed by design practices in courts which alienate rather than empower."[23] India's own court architecture bears this out. The Punjab and Haryana High Court, designed by Le Corbusier, was explicitly intended in the words of the High Court's own description to manifest "the majesty of the Law to all who enter",

19 PANDEY, *supra* note 2; UPADHYAYA, *supra* note 2.

20 Judith Resnik, Dennis Curtis & Allison Anna Tait, *Constructing Courts: Architecture, the Ideology of Judging, and the Public Sphere*, in LAW, CULTURE AND VISUAL STUDIES 515, 519-21 (Anne Wagner & Richard K. Sherwin eds., Springer 2014).

21 *Id.* at 522-24.

22 *Id.* at 530-35.

23 Linda Mulcahy, *Architects of Justice: The Politics of Courtroom Design*, 27 SOC. & LEGAL STUD. 383, 385 (2007).

through a portico resting on three giant pylons.[24] The Supreme Court of India's 26.7 metre dome performs a comparable function, its scale producing what Shailesh Kumar describes as a panoptic presence overseeing all who enter the building.[25]

Piyel Haldar's study of the Supreme Court of Israel extends this analysis to the interior, arguing that the spatial organisation of a courthouse such as its passageways, sightlines, and the raised judicial dais, are all designed to isolate participants and to mark a transition from the disorder of the outside world to the controlled order of the courtroom.[26] Mulcahy traces the raised dais specifically to Victorian design conventions intended to physically elevate the judiciary above what was then characterised as the "dirty" common litigant, reinforcing a panoptic relationship between bench and bar that persists across jurisdictions.[27]

The COVID-19 shift to videoconferencing might have been expected to dissolve this architecture of distance, since a video call has no dais, no passageway, and no dome. Emma Rowden's research suggests the opposite: remote hearings do not simply replicate the symbolic functions of the courthouse, but produce their own forms of distance, often increasing rather than reducing the gap between litigants and the institution.[28] In India, this was compounded by the practical reality of the digital divide. A 2016 study found that fewer than ten percent of Indians were digitally literate, and a majority of prisons lacked videoconferencing facilities altogether, meaning that for many litigants the move online represented not closer access to justice but a new and more absolute form of exclusion.[29] Reports from lawyers during the pandemic similarly documented widespread difficulty in even learning of hearing dates, let alone participating in them.[30] The principle that justice must not only be done but be seen to be done is difficult to sustain when the "seeing" is

24 Punjab and Haryana High Court, Building and Architecture, https://highcourtchd.gov.in (last visited Mar. 2, 2026).

25 Shailesh Kumar, *Interpreting the Scales of Justice: Architecture, Symbolism and Semiotics of the Supreme Court of India*, 30 Int'l J. Semiotics L. 637, 645-48 (2017).

26 Piyel Haldar, *In and Out of Court: On Topographies of Law and the Architecture of Court Buildings*, 7 Int'l J. Semiotics L. 185, 190-95 (1994).

27 Mulcahy, *supra* note 23, at 388-90.

28 *Emma Rowden, Distributed Courts and Legitimacy: What Do We Lose When We Lose the Courthouse?*, 14 Law, Culture & Human. 263, 270-75 (2018).

29 Deloitte, Digital India: Unlocking the Trillion-Dollar Opportunity 12-15 (2016), https://www2.deloitte.com/in/en/pages/technology-media-and-telecommunications/articles/digital-india-unlock-trillion-dollar-opportunity.html.

30 Daksh, Lawyers' Experiences During the COVID-19 Pandemic 8-14 (2021), https://dakshindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Laywer-Survey_06.pdf.

mediated by a platform that large parts of the population cannot access.[31]

III. Part Two: The Digital Sanctum - Continuity and Rupture

The Persistence of Protocol in Virtual Hearings

Mental allegiance and distance, as two identified indicators in Part One, seem to have been transposed into the novel mode of justice. The dress-code and decorum cases discussed above are not isolated incidents but evidence of a more general pattern of courts treating the video frame as if it were a continuation of the physical courtroom. In essence the courts subjected the video frame to the same expectations of formality, even though the underlying technology bears no resemblance to the architecture that originally generated those expectations.[32] This is the working aspect of law operating without its traditional working materials. The symbols of authority persist, but the structures that once made those symbols legible (a dais, a robe visible to a packed courtroom, an usher calling for silence) are largely absent from a screen shared between a judge's home office and a lawyer's living room.

Cybercrime as Digital Iconoclasm

If the persistence of protocol shows continuity between the physical and digital sanctums, the judiciary's experience of cybercrime shows rupture. In late 2023, the Karnataka High Court suspended its live-streamed proceedings after its videoconferencing link was repeatedly compromised, with hackers broadcasting obscene content during live hearings.[33] The National Company Law Tribunal benches in Kolkata and Mumbai experienced comparable breaches, each requiring a temporary retreat to physical hearings to restore the integrity of proceedings.[34]

These incidents are best understood as a form of digital iconoclasm. Historically, iconoclasm, the deliberate destruction or defacement of an image, has been directed at the visual symbols through which an institution projects authority such as statues, seals, portraits. When a courtroom's live broadcast is hijacked to display obscene material, the target is not the judge, the litigants, or the substance of the dispute, but the visual decorum through which the proceeding asserts its legitimacy. Such

31 *R v Sussex Justices, ex parte McCarthy* [1924] 1 KB 256, 259; *Krishnadas Rajagopal, Live-Streaming Court Proceedings Crucial for Dissemination of Information: CJI*, The Hindu (Apr. 21, 2018).

32 See sources cited *supra* note 2.

33 Ians, *supra* note 3.

34 Ghosh, *supra* note 4; Dalvi, *supra* note 4.

breach inverts the carefully curated image that law has generated of the courtrooms through centuries. This crafted image of dignified and controlled spaces is breached by the chaotic spectacle that the rituals and architecture sought to exclude.

Linking the Theoretical Framework to the Central Claim

When read against the theoretical framework developed in Part One, the significance of this rupture becomes clearer. The two-pronged indicator approach of that framework highlights that mental allegiance was controlled through symbols and distance was controlled through architecture separating higher order from the ordinary. These two indicators are struck asymmetrically when cybercriminals attack judicial infrastructure. The cyber offences such as hacking of the judicial hearings do not impact the substantive output produced by law. Because the remedial measure of hearing adjournment without impacting the underlying dispute remains an available option for the court officers. But it devastates the working aspect of law almost completely. The stakeholders who end up watching the courtroom's official feed broadcasting pornographic content or any objectionable content suddenly faces a distorted sense of decorum and distance which is completely opposite to the image cultivated by centuries of architecture curation. It cannot be restored by adjournments and re-hearings. This asymmetry exposes a structural weakness in how the desire of law has been pursued in the digital era. The symbolic control was relocated online in the form of decorum rules, official backgrounds, and visible institutional branding on video calls without a corresponding relocation of the security measures that, in the physical world, made such control durable. The Punjab and Haryana High Court's pylons cannot be hacked but a Zoom link can. Understood this way, the persistence of dress-code enforcement alongside unresolved cybersecurity gaps is not merely inconsistent administration, but it also reflects a judiciary that has carried its desire for symbolic control into a new medium while leaving behind the infrastructural conditions that once made that control credible.

IV. Part Three: Unveiling Justitia- Toward A Reoriented Desire

The Symbolism of the Unveiled Justitia

India's recent removal of Justitia's blindfold should be read against this background. As discussed in Part One, the blindfold has carried different meanings at different times. From incapacity to impartiality, and now, potentially, a deliberate signal of

engagement.[35] An unveiled Justitia raises an immediate question: does removing the blindfold represent a genuine shift toward an engaged, responsive judiciary, or does it risk exposing the law's symbolic apparatus to the same charge of partiality that the blindfold was designed to forestall, particularly in a society marked by significant disparities of power, wealth, and access?[36]

The answer, this research article suggests, depends less on the image itself than on what accompanies it. A blindfold removed without corresponding institutional change risks being merely cosmetic. A new image serving the same old desire for allegiance through appearance rather than substance. But the unveiling can also be read as an opportunity, and an acknowledgment that the law's traditional symbolic apparatus was built for a world of physical courtrooms, controlled audiences, and stable architecture which is no longer adequate to the conditions in which the law now operates, and that something must replace it.

From Symbolic Control to Functional Security

What should replace it is not a new set of symbols but a reordering of priorities. The analysis in Part Two suggests that the judiciary's current allocation of attention on vigilant enforcement of dress codes and decorum in virtual hearings, alongside unresolved vulnerabilities in the platforms hosting those hearings has the priorities reversed. A judiciary genuinely committed to the values that its symbols claim to represent (impartiality, dignity, accessibility) would direct at least as much institutional energy toward securing its digital infrastructure as toward policing the attire of those who appear before it.

This reorientation has practical implications. Accessibility requires attention to the digital divide identified in Part One by ensuring that videoconferencing platforms are usable on low-bandwidth connections, that real-time translation and accessibility accommodations are built into virtual hearings, and that litigants are reliably informed of hearing dates and procedures.[37] Security requires treating judicial videoconferencing infrastructure with the same seriousness as any other critical institutional system, rather than as an improvised substitute for the courtroom adopted under pandemic conditions and never subsequently hardened. Neither of these priorities depends on Justitia's blindfold one way or the other, but both

35 See *supra* Part II.B (discussing the evolving meanings of the blindfold).

36 I. Bennett Capers, *On Justitia, Race, Gender, and Blindness*, 12 MICH. J. RACE & L. 203, 210-15 (2006).

37 ROWDEN, *supra* note 28, at 277-79.

are more likely to receive institutional attention if the judiciary understands its own legitimacy as resting on functional reliability and access, rather than on the maintenance of a particular visual image.

V. CONCLUSION

This research article has argued that the desire of law as the institutional wish to be perceived as upright, impartial, and authoritative operates through two indicators identifiable across both physical and digital sanctums: the cultivation of mental allegiance, and the maintenance of distance between the law and its subjects. These indicators, developed over centuries through architecture, ritual, and the iconography of Justitia, were carried into the virtual courtroom largely unchanged, even as the underlying medium changed entirely.

The fragility of the digital sanctum which is demonstrated by the cyber-invasions discussed in Part Two exposes a mismatch between where the judiciary has placed its symbolic energy and where its actual vulnerabilities lie. India's removal of Justitia's blindfold offers a moment to address this mismatch directly. An unmasked Justitia, on its own, changes only the law's image. Combined with a genuine reordering of institutional priorities such as toward digital security, toward accessibility for those on the wrong side of the digital divide, and toward the substantive goals of adjudication rather than its visual performance, it could represent something more: a law that commands respect not because of the image it projects, but because of the service it reliably provides.



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