

Loktantrashala: School for Democracy

Academic Year Report : 2017-18

- In August , 2017 public lecture by Dr. Usha Ramanathan was held on 'Aadhar and the Right to Privacy '
- On September 5, 2017 a lecture-demonstration was held by the Manganiar group from Western Rajasthan on Sufi folk music.
- In September , 2017 introducing the Gandhi Lecture Series , P.V Rajagopal gave a lecture on 'Mahatma Gandhi and his philosophy of Non-Violence' .
- In October , 2017 under Gandhi Lecture Series, IP College alumna Rajni Bakshi gave a lecture on ' Gandhi in Contemporary World '
- In April , 2018 book release and panel discussion with the alumna author Aruna Roy on her book , 'The RTI Story: Power to the People'

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Aadhar and the Right to Privacy

The first lecture with School for Democracy was organized on August 8, 2017. A Public Lecture by Dr.Usha Ramanathan was held on “Aadhar and the Right to Privacy”

The UID Project in 2004 arose and it interested a lot of researchers because it was hoped that Aadhaar would provide an identity to the poor, would allow them to assert themselves and would empower them. To give a logo and brand name to the UID Project, the Bangalore National Task Force, which is a partnership between the citizens, corporates and the administrative agencies, was asked to put up the Aadhar Trust. Hence we see that the UID Project no longer remains a solely government task but becomes a Public Private Partnership.

It is therefore important to understand that this project is not creating a unique 'identity' for the people but a unique 'identification' for the state and is in this way stepping on our civil rights which has serious sociological implications. It has been compulsory for the people to have the Aadhar in three phases. The first phase was about no subsidy without UID, the second about no services without UID and the third phase talks about taking away what one has if they don't get UID. Dr. Ramanathan also talked about the 3 U's, namely, Unique, Ubiquitous and Universal, as a part of the UID project. The Aadhar is unique to every individual by providing an unmatched number, it provides an omnipresent database to the State and is possessed by everyone.



Lecture-demonstration by the Manganiar Group

A lecture-demonstration was held by the Manganiar group from Western Rajasthan of Sufi folk music, by School for Democracy, on 5th September 2017. The musicians were Anwar Khan Manganiar who was the lead singer, along with vocalist, Roshan Khan, Rafik Khan with the Kamaicha, Latif Khan with the Dholak and Jaisa Khan with the Khartal. The first song was performed in collaboration with members of Alaap- the Indian Music Society of Indraprastha College

Along with the demonstration, the event also highlighted the work of Bulleh Shah, a Punjabi Muslim philosopher of Mughal era who, through his music, criticized the misuse of Islam and its ideologies by the Muslim clergy of that time. The programme talked about the socio economic problems faced by the Manganiar and the Langa community, and the threat of commercialization of musical heritage which has affected the artists and their traditions leading to a deep economic crisis. The instruments themselves are a part of their identity and intrinsic to their performances. These communities of folk musicians which consist of Muslims have been performing for Rajput patrons for decades but have nevertheless been recipients of the injustices of the prevailing caste system. The event thus sought to bring about a greater awareness which could contribute to the efforts of preserving this form of music.



Performance of Manganar Singers at I. P. College

Mahatma Gandhi and his Philosophy of Non-Violence

In September introducing the Gandhi Lecture Series , P.V Rajagopal gave a lecture on how it is important to train in the use of non-violent methods. This lecture was organised in collaboration with Gandhi Studies Circle of IP College for Women. Rajagopal , the son of a Gandhian worker, studied agriculture at Seva Gram in Wardha. In the early 70s he worked in the violence-ridden area of Chambal (Madhya Pradesh) helping to rehabilitate dacoits. In the years that followed, Rajagopal travelled to several tribal areas and developed an understanding of plight and needs of India`s tribal people. Their cause became part of his lifetime mission. After setting up a number of training organizations across Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa, the subsequent mobilization led to the consolidation of a people`s organization, namely, Ekta Parishad in 1991. This organization is focused on people`s control over livelihood resources in an environment where land is being grabbed, and where forest

rights are not being implemented. This is making the Gandhian vision of the advancement of self-reliant communities and local governance, more challenging.



P.V Rajagopal Lecture



P.V Rajagopal Lecture

Gandhi in Contemporary World

Indraprastha College for Women in collaboration with School for Democracy organised a lecture on 'Gandhi in Contemporary World' by Rajni Bakshi on the 13th of October, 2017 as part of Loktantrashala's Gandhi Lecture Series. This lecture was also organised in collaboration with Gandhi Studies Circle. The lecture took place in the Translation Centre, where the speaker talked about the meaning and implications of many of the ideals that Gandhi used. By doing so, she further explained the relevance of these concepts and ideals in contemporary times, especially that of non-violence. At the same time, we learnt the idea of embracing the enemy which is the way to solving the problem by its root. The lecture also focused upon all contexts where the method of ahimsa seems to be applicable and indeed, can be applied. Hence, the lecture ended highlighting the importance of changing our methods of dealing with violent and problematic situations in a similar manner, to working towards a solution with greater patience, tolerance and non-violence.



Rajni Bakshi Lecture

Right to Information: Power to the People - Alumna Book Launch

Roli Books and School for Democracy in collaboration with Indraprastha College for Women organised a panel discussion on ‘The People’s Right to Information: Challenges and Opportunities’ to celebrate the book, “The RTI Story: Power to the People” by Aruna Roy and the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan collective. The event took place in the Conference Hall on the 10th of April, 2018 and the panelists included G. Sampath (Social Affairs Editor, The Hindu), Dr. Meena Bhargava (Associate Professor, Department of History, IP College for Women) and Professor Nivedita Menon (CCPPT, School of International Studies, JNU) who were in conversation with Aruna Roy.

The discussion began with G. Sampath talking about how elections do not always equate to democracy in a country. At the same time, elections keep democracy alive as they allow ordinary citizens to hold the government accountable. This accountability, he stated, has further been expanded by the RTI Act where the public has a means to ask or talk back to the government. However, G. Sampath pointed out an offensive that has been launched by the State in in “information war” which is the Aadhar Act. Moving further with the same context, Prof. Menon talked about how there is a need to protect our right to information in a situation wherein various RTI activists have been murdered and/or faced intimidation in the last decade. Aruna Roy gave an account of some of the stories that led to the enactment of Right to Information and how it was a contribution of the people for the people of the country. The discussion, which highlighted the importance of the RTI Act which in itself challenges the notion of power and hierarchies, was chaired by Dr. Bhargava and also attended by Kamla Bhasin who, along with few team members, reiterated slogans on the RTI.



Alumna Book Release



In conversation with the author : Panel discussion chaired by alumna Dr. Meena Bhargava