



AHIMSA CENTER
NONVIOLENCE IN THOUGHT AND ACTION

California State Polytechnic University, Pomona • College of Letters, Arts and Social Sciences

INDIA @ SEVENTY
An International Conference on
BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY
November 3-5, 2017

India will celebrate in August 2017 seventy years as an independent nation. And there is much to celebrate—above all, India’s democracy, the world’s largest, which not only remains solid and secure at the political level in spite of the challenges it has encountered since its inception, but has also ushered in substantial progress on many fronts. For instance, Indian economy which was abysmally underdeveloped on the eve of independence now commands global attention, prosperity is conspicuous all around, significant strides have been made in poverty reduction, and life-expectancy is up considerably. And yet, in what seems like a paradox, there are serious concerns about the health and the future of democracy in India. The goals of this conference are to:

- 1. Examine why in spite of a deep-seated commitment to democracy, there is a growing discontent with its functioning and its fruits. Some specific questions to be discussed in this context are:*
 - Why do political leaders keep paying homage to Gandhi, Ambedkar and other architects of modern India, but rarely act in accord with their ideas and ideals?
 - Why do democratic solutions based on professed commitment to national unity so often have a divisive and exclusionary impact?
 - Why do majority of citizens not only fail to assert their rights, but even accept their own exploitation?
 - In what ways India’s vaunted economic growth may have created an asymmetry of power among different segments of society and widened the socio-economic divides?
 - How are the traditional and social media affecting the functioning of democracy in India?
- 2. Explore the avenues for creative and radical innovations in the delivery of public goods, ranging from education and healthcare to legal system and environmental management, which are the key to strengthening democracy. To this end, we will address questions such as:*
 - What can be some new vehicles for the delivering public goods? In this context, how do the roles of both government and private sector need to change? How can we better leverage philanthropy, CSR, social entrepreneurship and NGO contributions for the provisioning of public goods?
 - What is needed to instill in the delivery of public services greater sense of competence and integrity, as also greater transparency and accountability?
 - How can people become active “designers” of these services rather than being just passive “recipients”?
- 3. Identify strategies for more effectively engaging various stakeholders in the actual workings of democracy to ensure more inclusive outcomes. Relevant to this are questions such as these:*
 - How to promote public reasoning and public action involving a wide range of stakeholders?
 - How to build a common ground for India’s vastly diverse interest groups?
 - How to give voice to those who thus far have been ignored, marginalized or otherwise exploited in the workings of democracy.

An overarching goal of the conference is to deliberate on two fundamentally important and interrelated questions: Given the challenges democracy faces in today's world, what are the lessons **for** India? And given its unique experience as the world's largest and most diverse democracy, what are the lessons **from** India?

The conference features as speakers eminent scholars, thought leaders, social entrepreneurs, philanthropists, business executives, social activists and other expert contributors who will share their expertise and insights on variety of issues and reflect on how to build a more inclusive democracy in India.

Confirmed Speakers

Amit Ahuja. Associate Professor of Political Science at University of California, Santa Barbara.

Rajni Bakshi. Author and journalist, and erstwhile Gandhi Peace Fellow at the Gateway House, Mumbai, India.

Hiram E. Chodosh. President of Claremont McKenna College; Scholar of Comparative Law and Judicial Reform.

Rajmohan Gandhi. Author, historian, biographer and grandson of Mahatma Gandhi. Visiting Professor at IIT – Gandhinagar and Michigan State University, East Lansing.

Akhil Gupta. Professor of Anthropology & Director, Center for India and South Asia (CISA), UCLA.

John Harriss. Professor of International Studies at Simon Fraser University, Canada.

Niraja Gopal Jayal. Professor, Centre for the Study of Law & Governance, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Devesh Kapur. Director of the Center for the Advanced Study of India, and Madan Lal Sobti Professor for the study of contemporary India at the University of Pennsylvania.

Prakash Kashwan. Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Connecticut.

Aishwary Kumar. Assistant Professor of History at Stanford University.

Vinay Lal. Professor of History and Asian American Studies at UCLA.

Vijay Mahajan. Founder of the BASIX Group, India's first "new generation livelihood promotion institution."

Karuna Mantena. Associate Professor of Political Science and Chair, South Asian Studies Council at Yale University.

Eleanor Newbiggin. Senior Lecturer in Modern South Asian History at SOAS, University of London.

Anastasia Piliavsky. Fellow and Director of Studies in Social Anthropology, Girton College, University of Cambridge.

Aruna Roy. A leading Social and Political Activist, and a Co-Founder of the movement leading to the Right to Information Act in India.

Ornit Shani. Senior Lecturer at the Department of Asian Studies at the University of Haifa, Israel.

Perna Singh. Mahatma Gandhi Assistant Professor of Political Science at Brown University.

Mrinalini Sinha. Alice Freeman Palmer Professor of History at University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

Ananya Vajpeyi. Associate Professor at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies New Delhi.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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