



Jain University holds panel discussion on 'Indian Democracy: Looking Back, Looking Forward'

Jain University in association with Lokniti of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi, organized a panel discussion on 'Indian Democracy: Looking forward, looking back' on 10th July at JGI Knowledge Campus.

Panelists included dignitaries like author and historian Ramachandra Guha, political scientist Ashutosh Varshney and social scientist and academic Dr Suhas Palshikar, who not only provided a deep insight into the past history of Indian democratic society but also highlighted the dominant characteristics of modern day democracy.

All panelists alike hailed the initiative taken by Jain University to organize such a session that will not only bring about thought-provoking discussion on Indian democracy but also engage students to understand the status quo.

He talked at length about the challenges and anomalies facing the present Indian society and how the concept of democracy has undergone massive changes in the last two decades. He said, "The idea that a large and complex country like India could go straight into elections seemed an amazing idea to policymakers and the public. Yet the first elections were successful, and continue to be free and fair today."

His argumentative statements sparked deep-thinking among audiences as he stated how India has become an election-only democracy. He said that although the engagement of citizen and voter turnout have increased remarkably over the years due to the success of electronic ballot system, however the political party's electoral commitments and strategies have declined sharply as have the quality of election debates and discussions.

Ashutosh Varshney, another panelist, said effective utilization of social media can help all kinds of causes, not just populism. Talking about India's increasing GDP growth rate he said, "The opportunities that high growth provide can create billionaires overnight just through deals struck between politicians and bureaucrats among others." He also argued whether India had a democracy between elections.

Dr Suhas Palshikar on the other hand drew attention to the present moment and how does one perceives the modern day democracy and the way forward. He said, "We are currently living in a twilight zone, where the earlier hegemony has probably completely broken down by now and the new hegemony is still haltingly emerging and we are trying to find out what this new emergence will be like." He said that changing idea of nation and search for global power are

two new components of the emerging understanding of Indian democracy and tried to look at the question of where democracy went from the present situation.

The event saw participation of around 200 students and staff members of Jain University and students of the summer school.