



GURU GOBIND SINGH
INDRAPRASTHA
UNIVERSITY
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University School of Liberal Arts

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The
USLA
Newsletter

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○ THINK · QUESTION · CREATE · LEAD ○



In its brief yet dynamic journey of three years, the University School of Liberal Arts has carved a distinct imprint on the academic landscape of Delhi-NCR through the organization of international conferences, sustained engagement with contemporary academic debates. It has sought to imbibe the spirit and mandate of the NEP by thoughtfully weaving together theoretical rigor and experiential learning within its curriculum.

We are pleased to present the second issue of our newsletter as a testament to the rigorous, innovative, and multidimensional nature of our teaching pedagogy. It reflects not only the intellectual vibrancy of our classrooms but also the collaborative ethos shared by our faculty and students, aimed at the creation of new leaders ready to meet the challenges and create opportunities for the 21st century.

University School of Liberal Arts

The University School of Liberal Arts (USLA) was established in the year 2022, at the Dwarka campus of Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University and became operation with the 2023-24 academic session. The school envisioned under the New Education Policy (2020) embodies a transformative approach to higher education, aimed at cultivating critical thinking, interdisciplinary knowledge, and holistic personality development.

In accordance with NEP 2020, the USLA has weaved experiential learning in its teaching pedagogy, with the objective of creating problem identifying and solving skills among the students who are going to lead the country in the future.

Visit to Hazrat Nizamuddin Dargah & Associated Monuments

Dr. Altaf Hussain, USLA Faculty (History)

As part of the pedagogical requirements of the paper Devotion and Dissent in Indian Culture (500 CE–1500 CE), 13 students visited the Hazrat Nizamuddin Dargah complex and nearby historical monuments in Delhi. The purpose of this field visit was to gain a first-hand understanding of Sufism, especially the Chishti Silsila, and to observe how medieval devotional traditions persist in present-day society. The field visit was conducted under the academic supervision of Dr. Altaf Hussain (instructors for the History Minor (DSE) paper) and Dr. Deepshika Sangwan. Hazrat Nizamuddin, located about two kilometers south of Purana Qila on Mathura Road, is one of the oldest historic village settlements that still survives within modern Delhi. The student learned that the area is named after Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya (1236–1325), one of the most important Sufi saints of India and a leading figure of the Chishti order. Born in Badaun, he spent most of his life in Delhi, where people from all sections of society came to seek his guidance. The Chishti Silsila emphasized love for humanity, humility, service to the poor, tolerance, and distance from political power. The students were informed that among his disciples were rulers such as Alauddin Khalji and Muhammad bin Tughluq, as well as Amir Khusro, the famous poet and musician.

Students visited the dargah of Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya, which remains one of the most important centers of Sufi devotion in India. Although the original tomb no longer exists, the present structure was built in 1562–63 during the reign of Emperor Akbar. The students observed a continuous flow of devotees from different religious and social backgrounds. The atmosphere of devotion, especially during Thursday evening qawwali, helped us understand how Sufi practices remain alive even today. We also visited the tomb of Amir Khusro, located south of the saint's grave. They learned about his immense contribution to Indian music, poetry, and culture. His close association with Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya highlighted the strong connection between Pir-Murid and cultural creativity.



Further also visited the tomb of Princess Jahanara Begum, daughter of Emperor Shah Jahan. Her grave, covered only with grass, impressed us with its simplicity. The inscription on her tomb reflects Sufi values of humility and detachment from worldly display. Nearby, we saw the tomb of Muhammad Shah Rangila, a later Mughal emperor. We understood that burial near a saint's grave was considered auspicious, which explains why many nobles and rulers chose this area for their tombs. We visited the Jamaat Khana Masjid, the oldest structure in the complex. Built by a son of Alauddin Khalji, the mosque's red sandstone architecture and lotus-bud decorations helped us identify early Indo-Islamic architectural features discussed in class.

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At the northern gate of the dargah complex, we saw the baoli, which is believed to have healing properties. We learned about the popular legend involving Sultan Ghiyasuddin Tughluq, which symbolizes the spiritual authority of Shaikh Nizamuddin and his moral resistance to royal power. Outside the dargah complex, we visited the tomb of Ataga Khan, a noble in Akbar's court. Despite being surrounded by modern buildings, the tomb still reflects Mughal architectural grandeur. We learned about Ataga Khan's assassination and the political rivalries of Akbar's court.

In Nizamuddin West, we visited the tomb of Mirza Ghalib, the renowned nineteenth-century Urdu poet. The nearby Ghalib Academy, with its library and museum, showed us how the area has remained an important cultural and literary center. Lastly, we visited the tomb of Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, located across Mathura Road. Although the tomb is now in a dilapidated condition, we learned that it was once an architectural landmark. Rahim's contributions as a Hindi poet reflected the syncretic cultural traditions of the Mughal period.

Lastly, the field visit to Hazrat Nizamuddin and its surrounding monuments was a meaningful and enriching academic experience for us. The visit helped us connect classroom theories with real historical spaces. It enabled us to understand the spiritual, cultural, and historical significance of the Chishti Sufi tradition in a practical manner. Overall, the visit strengthened our understanding of how devotion and dissent were expressed in medieval Indian culture and how these traditions continue to influence society today.



A Field Trip to Mehrauli Archaeological Park and Sanjay Van

Exploring Delhi's Timeless Tapestry

Ketaki Rohtagi, BA Eng (Hons.), Third Year

On **March 8th 2025** the Liberal Arts Department organized a field trip to two of the city's most significant sites: the Sanjay Van and the Mehrauli Archaeological Park. The journey began with a walk through Sanjay Van, a vast, lush green forest that is a vital part of the ancient Aravalli range. Spanning over several hundred hectares, the forest provides a breath of fresh air, as well as a few adorable dogs to accompany us on trails. Dotted with old, ancient ruins half reclaimed by nature, stone-paved dusty pathways and mesmerizing verdure, yet the place draws one in with its charms. The place serves as a reminder of the deep historical roots of Delhi.

A short walk from the edge of Sanjay Van lies the Mehrauli Archaeological Park, a sprawling landscape scattered with monuments spanning over a thousand years of Delhi's history. This park is a living museum, housing various exquisite architecture from the Tomar, the Delhi Sultanate, the Mughals, and the British. First, we explored the Jamali Kamali Mosque and Tomb, a magnificent structure from the Mughal period made of red sandstones. Built in 1528-29, the mosque is known for its intricate stone carvings and arched facades, while the adjacent tomb of Sufi saint Shaikh Jamali and his disciple Kamali is famous for its exquisitely painted ceilings and stucco work. Another notable ruin was the Tomb of Balban, an important figure from the Delhi Sultanate. This is one of the earliest surviving tombs in Delhi, dating back to 1287 CE.

We also visited the Rajon ki Baoli, a beautiful stepwell believed to have been built by Daulat Khan during the Lodhi dynasty in 1516 CE. It is a three-story structure, with its elaborate arches and stairs leading down to the water. The place houses many such historic architecture which show the grandeur and engineering marvel of that time, along with a plethora of stories which are encased in the walls of the same. It is to be said that the park itself seems to have taken us back to the eras now bygone. The architecture comes alive and shows the deep socio-cultural impact on the history of Delhi. The walk was an exhilarating experience, combined with the ecological and historical cityscapes of Delhi, forcing one to reflect and contemplate about one's roots.



Experiencing India's Democratic Journey: An Educational Visit to the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya

Mr. Prabhat Sharma & Ms. Deepshikha, USLA Faculty, (Political Science)

On 20 February, 2026, first-year students of the University School of Liberal Arts (USLA), Guru Govind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIPU), Dwarka, New Delhi undertook an educational trip to Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya. The visit formed part of the school's commitment to integrating experiential learning within its curriculum.

A total of 41 students, accompanied by 6 faculty members, participated in the excursion. The museum presents a chronological and thematic account of India's Prime Ministers, offering insights into leadership, governance, and nation-building in post-Independence India. Through curated galleries and immersive exhibits, students were introduced to key policy measures undertaken during different tenures, including economic reforms, welfare initiatives, foreign policy decisions, and technological advancements that collectively shaped modern India. The visit held particular academic significance for first-year students who are currently building foundational knowledge in Political Science, History, and Sociology disciplines. It served as an important moment in their academic journey by grounding theoretical ideas such as democracy, development, governance, and statecraft within tangible historical experiences. Pedagogically, the excursion aimed to promote analytical skills essential for social science training while bridging the gap between theoretical understanding and historical reality.

The museum offered multiple layers of engagement, enabling students to move from observation to interpretation and inquiry. As they progressed through galleries, students encountered original documents, personal correspondence, speeches, policy records, gifts, memorabilia, and rare archival entries sourced from national repositories and media archives. These materials allowed them to engage with history in its documentary form rather than as abstract textbook knowledge. Audio-visual records, documentary installations, and synchronized audio guides transformed the museum into a living archive where political decisions could be understood within their historical context. Students engaged with these materials through a critical lens, reflecting on how ideology shapes policy, how leadership responds to national challenges, and how democratic institutions evolve over time.

The excursion encouraged active learning practices grounded in reflection, dialogue, and collaborative interpretation. Interactive kiosks, holographic projections, virtual and augmented reality installations, multimedia screens, and experiential exhibits invited students to participate actively rather than observe passively. Faculty-led discussions prompted them to question representation, compare leadership styles across decades, examine policy impacts, and reflect on how political choices influence democratic outcomes. Many students engaged in spontaneous discussions and debates while moving through the galleries, demonstrating how experiential exposure can stimulate analytical thinking beyond conventional classroom settings.



“Real museums are places where Time is transformed into Space”

~ Orhan Pamuk

An integral component of the excursion was the session at the Nehru Planetarium, where students attended an immersive astronomical show. Through full-dome projections and narrative 3D-storytelling, students explored themes of space exploration, scientific discovery, and the dawn of the space age. The experience complemented the broader educational goals of the visit by reinforcing curiosity, inquiry-based learning, and interdisciplinary thinking. Overall, the visit proved intellectually enriching and deeply engaging. The richness of the museum’s offerings, coupled with the immersive planetarium experience, ensured that students engaged fully in the learning process. This exposure enabled students to situate key concepts such as democracy, governance, development, and leadership within concrete historical experiences, positioning the visit as an important foundation for their continued academic engagement with India’s political systems and institutions.



Field Visit to Kathputli Colony: Identifying Factors for Marginalization of Communities

Simran Makan, BA Eng (Hons.), Third Year

The University School of Liberal Arts, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University organized a field trip to Kathputli Colony, Fareedpuri, near Shadipur Metro Station, on 9th April 2025. A total of 18 students participated in the field visit, led by two faculty members and one senior researcher from the department. The purpose of the visit was to identify factors that cause marginalization of communities. The methods included field observation and interview of key informant, Mr. Puran Bhaat. Puran ji interacted with the students and the teachers. He talked about his origin, his profession, experiences, life journey, and the dire situations that he and many others like him have faced and are still facing.

This report draws heavily on the conversation with Puran ji, a traditional puppeteer whose family traces its origin to Rajasthan. His experiences and insights highlight the struggles and marginalization faced by his community, which includes puppeteers, street artists, and other traditional performers. This report explores the factors contributing to their marginalization, focusing on socio-economic challenges, lack of government support, and the destruction of traditional arts in modern society.

Where is Kathputli Colony? Kathputli Colony is located near the Shadipur Metro Station in Delhi. It is home to a marginalized settlement consisting of traditional puppeteers, street performers, and artisans. To reach it, one has to take the Delhi Metro's Blue Line to Shadipur Metro Station and then a battery rickshaw to reach the colony. The entrance to the colony, where various communities reside, was blocked by a barricade when we visited, and we had to walk thereafter. Despite its central location, Kathputli Colony remains primarily overlooked and socially excluded by barricades at its entrance and exit points.

Objective of the Field Visit: The objective of the visit was to identify the social, economic, and cultural factors that contribute to the marginalization of the Bhaat community. During the field visit, we closely observed the living conditions, social behavior, economic situation, and overall environment of the various marginalized communities. The first thing that stood out for me was the poor housing conditions. Most of the families lived in small one-room houses in small lanes. In comparison to the population, these houses neither seemed to have enough space for the people living there, nor the basic cleanliness or hygiene. These shelters offered little protection against heat, rain, and cold.

There were no proper drainage systems and stagnant water was common, which suggested health concerns. Basic facilities like clean drinking water, electricity, and proper toilets were either missing or poorly maintained. People had to wait for the water tanker or use the ground water pipes which took very long to be efficient for one house's usage of water and many homes had no electricity. Sanitation was a serious issue, especially for women and children. The dire living conditions faced by these communities are not just a result of poverty but also of systemic neglect and broken promises by the authorities.

Insights from interview with Puran Bhaat

Puran ji described how traditional puppeteers and street artists once flourished by traveling from village to village, performing shows in exchange for food and donations. However, modernization and changing societal preferences have drastically reduced the demand for these art forms. Puran ji revealed that they were evicted from their previous place where they had built up to 3-storey houses. They were evicted from their place and promised to be given apartment floors after two years. Approximately 2800 apartments were promised by the officials. It has been almost 9 years, yet there is no revert from the government officials, and neither have they given any fixed dates to when will these people get their apartments. Puran ji mentions that despite promises of housing and welfare schemes, artists like him have been waiting for over a decade for proper housing. They were relocated to temporary transit camps with assurances of permanent homes, but these promises remain unfulfilled. He says, "The government told us we'd get flats in two years, but ten years have passed, and we're still waiting." This lack of accountability worsens their marginalization. As an extension of the housing problem since the DDA builders and the government failed to stand on their promises, Puran ji mentioned that even necessities like ration cards or caste certificates are difficult to obtain due to governmental hurdles. which most community members can't arrange.

Here are some pictures taken during the visit, and they show their realities.



(The field visit & interview)



(The poster of their show)



(Their handmade puppets)



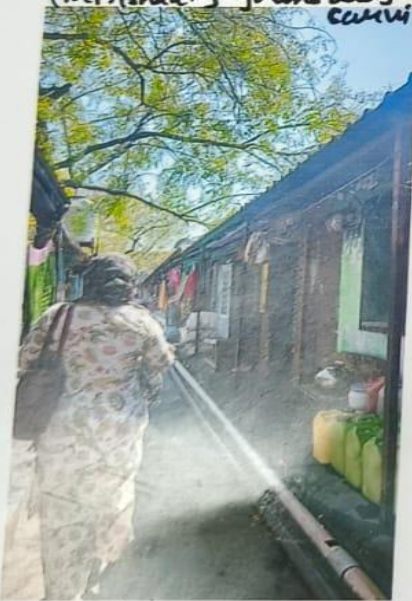
(Mr. Bheet's grand daughter
weaving)



(Another handmade puppet)



(The ancestors)



(Their houses, living
conditions)



(Water situations)

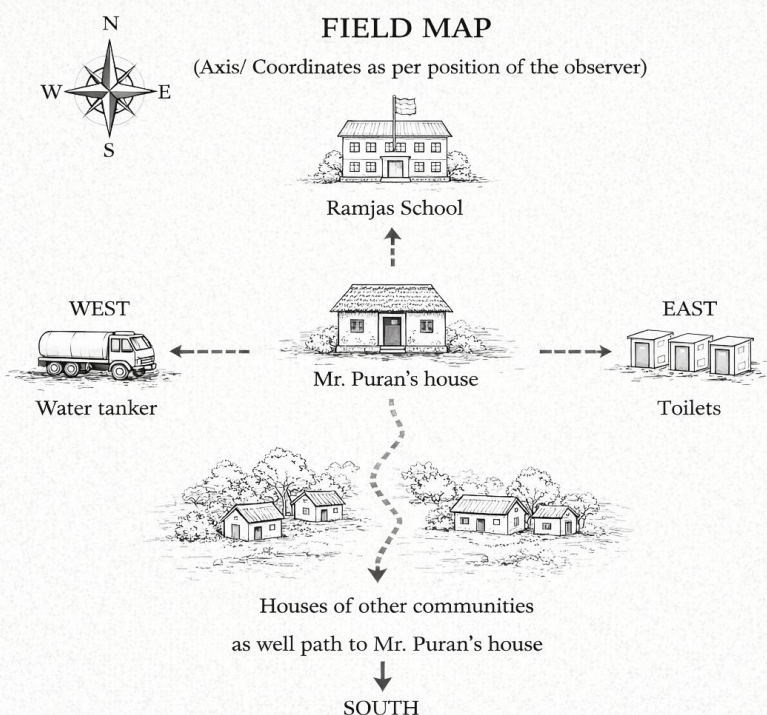


(handmade wood
weaved puppet-face)

Puran ji said, "We have to pay under the table to get things like Aadhaar cards or PAN cards because the system doesn't work for us." This raises a question on their existence as well as their necessities like food, education, right to vote, jobs and many more necessities. Most of the basic facilities' availability depends on Aadhar card or caste certificate, and without these documents, as well as poverty, they cannot afford education or any other schemes that are offered by the government for marginalized communities. Furthermore, the community faces social exclusion due to their semi-nomadic lifestyle and perceived lower status. Puran ji mentioned that while artists were once respected across villages, they are now often dismissed as beggars or relics of the past. He said, "People don't see us as artists anymore; they think we're just asking for money." This stigma makes it harder for them to participate in mainstream society or access opportunities. Younger generations are more attracted to digital entertainment, leaving traditional artists without audiences or sustainable income. He emphasized, "Today's generation only wants to take photos and make videos; they don't value live performances." Another reason for marginalization is that the community lacks collective negotiating power due to internal divisions. Puran ji explained that while many artists face similar struggles, they rarely unite to demand rights. He said, "We don't have leaders who can fight for us. Even if a few speak up, others stay silent out of fear." This disunity makes it easier for authorities to ignore their plight. He mentioned that the current Pradhyaan (head of the community) is not elected by a democratic system but rather based on who is in the good books of the builders. The Pradhyaan does not speak up for the community and signs documents for his personal, monetary benefits.

Conclusion

The field visit to Kathputli Colony provided a blunt insight into the struggles faced by marginalized communities like the Bhaat, a community of puppeteers. The socio-economic challenges, governmental neglect, and cultural erosion that came to the fore during the field visit, speaks of the systemic issues that perpetuate their marginalization. Poor living conditions, lack of basic facilities, and unfulfilled promises of restoration reflect exclusion and indifference on a broader level. The decline of traditional art forms due to modernization and shifting societal preferences further worsens their difficulty, leaving many without sustainable livelihoods. The younger generation's disinterest in these arts and the governmental hurdles in accessing essential services deepen the community's vulnerability and further expose them to marginalization. At last, this report calls for greater awareness and encouragement to bring about meaningful change for Kathputli Colony and other similar communities.



The Future of Indigenous Peoples' Cinema: A Lecture by Dr Ashish Xaxa

Dr. Loveena Sehra, USLA Faculty (Sociology)

The lecture on “The Future of Indigenous Peoples’ Cinema” by Dr Ashish Xaxa, a sociologist and development scholar, offered a thought-provoking exploration of how Indigenous communities have historically been represented in film and how they are now reclaiming their narratives through their own cinematic practices. The session highlighted the importance of representation, authorship, and the need to balance cultural visibility with respect for community privacy. Dr Xaxa began by discussing the long history of misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples in mainstream cinema, particularly in Hollywood. Native Americans were frequently portrayed through harmful stereotypes—as violent antagonists, irrational figures, or submissive characters lacking agency. Even when depicted sympathetically, Indigenous characters were often shown as virtuous only when aligned with white protagonists, reinforcing colonial narratives that denied them full humanity. Importantly, these patterns of misrepresentation continue in contemporary cinema.



Dr Xaxa noted that Indian films often reproduce similar stereotypes, exoticising Indigenous communities and portraying tribal women through reductive tropes. Such portrayals echo colonial images that frame Indigenous peoples as primitive or backward, effectively placing them within stories told by outsiders rather than allowing them to speak for themselves. The lecture then turned to the growing movement to reclaim Indigenous narratives in film. Recent social and political developments—such as the protests at Standing Rock in 2016 and the broader momentum generated by the Black Lives Matter and Indigenous Lives Matter movements in 2020—have drawn attention to the need for more equitable representation in cultural industries. These developments have created greater space for Indigenous writers, directors, and producers to tell their own stories. As Penny Smallacombe of Screen Australia notes, the central aim of Indigenous cinema is simple yet powerful: to “tell our own stories.”

Dr Xaxa concluded by emphasizing the transformative potential of Indigenous Peoples’ cinema. By reclaiming narrative authority, Indigenous filmmakers are creating works that honor ancestral knowledge, engage contemporary realities, and imagine new futures. In doing so, they not only assert cultural sovereignty but also expand the possibilities of global cinema by bringing Indigenous perspectives and storytelling traditions to the forefront.

The USLA organized a field visit for 48 students who had opted for the **Society and Humor** course to the National School of Drama (NSD), New Delhi, to view the play *Double Trouble* by NSD Play. Students were accompanied by Dr. Manisha Jha and Dr. Juanita Kakoti, students experienced exceptional acting, direction, and production quality firsthand.

This outing bridged theoretical learning in sociology of humor with real-world application, demonstrating how theater serves as a mirror to social dynamics, identity conflicts, and cultural narratives. It fostered critical thinking on performance as social commentary—aligning with course goals in philosophy of humor and Indian cultural expressions. Such experiential activities enhance student engagement, retention, and holistic understanding beyond classroom lectures, preparing them for interdisciplinary research and cultural analysis.

Dr. Manisha Jha, USLA Faculty (Sociology)



Narnaul Heritage Circuit Field Visit

Dr. Ayush Jaiwal, USLA Faculty (History)

The University School of Liberal Arts (USLA), Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, organized a one-day historical field visit to the Narnaul Heritage Circuit on 15 November 2025 for first-year students enrolled in the course Historians' Quest (DSC I). The visit formed part of the School's emphasis on experiential and inquiry-based learning, enabling students to study historical processes through direct engagement with monuments and material remains. A total of 50 students along with 5 faculty members joined in this trip. The faculty members who accompanied the students were, Dr. Ayush Jaiwal, Dr. Altaf Hussain, Ms. Aakhya Isha, Ms. Punyapriya and Ms. Deepshika.

The field visit was organized in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology & Museums, Government of Haryana. The collaboration enabled students to access protected and otherwise restricted heritage sites and to interact directly with professional archaeologists and conservation specialists. A specially designed conservation workshop introduced students to the principles and practices of monument preservation and sustainable heritage management. Mr. Vinit Bhanwala, who is a conservation expert and is currently managing the outreach programs for the department joined us for this trip.

The first site visited was *Birbal ka Chatta/Chatta Rai Bal Mukund Dass*, a seventeenth-century palatial structure currently undergoing conservation and restoration by the Haryana Government. Field experts explained the architectural features of the building and demonstrated how structural damage is identified and addressed during restoration. The role of regional architectural features and use of locally available material was highlighted. The site provided students with insight into the complexities of conserving historical structures while maintaining architectural authenticity. This visit was followed by a hands-on conservation workshop conducted by experts from the Department of Archaeology & Museums. Students were introduced to basic conservation techniques, documentation practices, and the challenges involved in preserving built heritage. The session allowed students to observe conservation work in practice rather than as a theoretical concept.

The second major site of the visit was *Chor Gumbad*, a prominent Afghan-period monument associated with the political landscape of late medieval north India. At the site, students examined the structure's architectural features and discussed the importance of trade routes that connected Delhi with Malwa and Gujarat. Narnaul being on these trade routes, rose to prominence during the 13th and 14th centuries. The monument helped students understand the role of regional centers such as Narnaul in the wider political history of north India.

The group then visited *Mirza Ali Jaan ki Baoli*, where students were introduced to the social and environmental functions of stepwells in early modern India. The site illustrated the relationship between architecture, water access, and community life. Through on-site observation, students learned to interpret monuments not only as architectural structures but also as evidence of social organization and environmental adaptation.



The visit concluded at *Jal Mahal*, a monument under the protection of the Archaeological Survey of India. The water from River Dohan (a tributary of Krishnavati River) was used to supply the tank around the structure. Later, adjoining tanks like *Gopal Sarovar*, were constructed to manage the excess water and prevent inundation. The site provided an important example of early modern water management and irrigation strategies. Discussions at the site focused on the technological and environmental knowledge embedded in historical hydraulic systems and their relevance for understanding sustainable resource use in the past. Due to limitations of time, several additional sites including *Pir Turkman*, *Ibrahim Suri Tomb*, and *Shah Quli Khan's Tomb* were briefly visited. These stops provided students with a broader overview of the architectural diversity and historical layers of the Narnaul region, even where extended site discussions were not possible.

Throughout the visit, students were encouraged to maintain field notes, observe architectural details, and reflect on how historians reconstruct the past from physical evidence. The guided sessions enabled them to move from passive observation to analytical interpretation, strengthening their ability to use monuments as historical sources. Students were subsequently given field-based assignments requiring them to analyze selected monuments as historical sources using their observations, photographs, and field notes. The field visit proved academically productive and pedagogically significant. Students gained first-hand exposure to historical monuments, conservation practices, and archaeological interpretation. The collaboration ensured professional-level engagement with heritage sites and provided students with a practical understanding of historical research methods. The visit strengthened the link between classroom learning and field-based historical inquiry, making it an important component of the Liberal Arts curriculum at USLA.

A Visit to The National Archives of India

Ketki Rohtagi, BA Eng (Hons.), Third Year

On **March 26, 2025**, students of B.A. Liberal Arts visited the National Archives of India (NAI), coordinated by Dr. Akanksha Narayan Singh. This educational trip offered students an opportunity to witness firsthand the delicate process of document preservation. Students were introduced to sophisticated techniques involving cellulose acetate foil, tissue paper, and specialized paste that ensure the longevity of records. These preserved records serve as primary source material for researchers and scholars. As part of its ongoing modernization, the NAI is digitizing its vast collection to safeguard it from deterioration and make it more accessible via its website.

Students were also briefed about the history of the National Archives. Originally established as the Imperial Records Department in 1891 in Calcutta, it was tasked with aggregating, apprising, and managing documents of the British administration. In 1911, the department was shifted to Delhi and by 1926, moved into its current building in Lutyens' Delhi. The Museum of the National Archives was inaugurated on July 6, 1998 by the then-President of India K.R. Narayanan, opening its treasures to the public. The oldest record housed in NAI dates back to 1748. Many documents are available in multiple languages such as Arabic, Persian, Hindi, Sanskrit, and Urdu. Their materials include paper, palm leaf, birch bark, and parchment. The records are categorized into Public Records, Oriental Records, Manuscripts, and Private Papers. In recent years the archive has also gained private documents of Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, adding to its existing extensive collection. One of the highlights of the trip were the rare manuscripts kindly presented by senior personnel at the Archive. These included farmans issued in the names of royalty, often written in broken Urdu accessible to the common people. There were documents of land grants to temples in Mathura by the then-Mughal emperor. There was a marriage certificate which included details such as the meher which was given at the time, verses of the Quran, along with the signatures of witnesses. The certificate was decorated with gold and blue borders. Original copies of documents such as the Mahabharat and the Ramayan with captivating artwork were also displayed.

Students explored the NAI's voluminous library where they got to view handwritten reports by British officials, contemporary policy reports, along with handwritten letters and official records by Mahatma Gandhi. The visit concluded in the research area. Its memorable interior encloses the tales of gen of researchers who had once studied, contemplated, and contributed to India's intellectual wealth.



Field Visit to Ayudham Society: Learning Empathy Through Experience

Dr. Manisha Jha, USLA Faculty (Sociology)



Our students from the B.A. Liberal Arts and B.Sc. Chemistry (Hons.) programmes visited Ayudham Society, an old-age home near Najafgarh, on 19 September 2025 as part of the AEC **Introduction to Social Work** course organised by Dr. Manisha Jha. The visit aimed to help students move beyond classroom learning and gain firsthand insight into the realities of ageing and elder care in contemporary India.

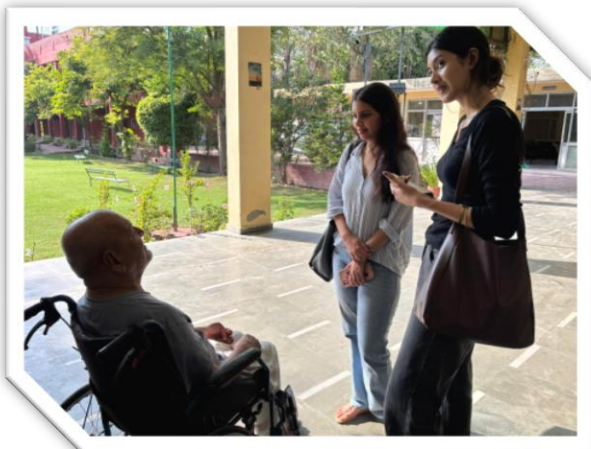
Established in 1993, Ayudham Society is a non-profit organisation that provides shelter, healthcare support, and a nurturing environment for around 30–40 elderly residents who cannot live with their families. The institution offers clean accommodation, regular medical check-ups, physiotherapy, and recreational and spiritual activities that promote both physical and emotional well-being. Beyond elder care, the organisation also contributes to the wider community through initiatives such as a daily langar serving free meals and the Aastha Project, which supports the education of underprivileged girls.

During the visit, students interacted closely with residents and heard deeply personal stories of loss, resilience, and adaptation. These conversations revealed that while institutions like Ayudham provide security and dignity, the elderly often long most for companionship, attention, and emotional connection. Students also observed certain challenges faced by the society, including limited space, reliance on donations, and the need for stronger medical infrastructure. The visit proved to be a meaningful learning experience, encouraging students to reflect on changing family structures, the growing need for organised elder care, and the importance of empathy and social responsibility. More than an academic exercise, the experience reminded students of the collective duty of society, and especially the younger generation, to respect and safeguard the dignity of the elderly.

Student Reflections

Students shared heartfelt reflections after interacting with the residents of Ayudham Society. **Sakshi (USBAS)** spoke about a moving conversation with an elderly woman who had chosen the home after the loss of her husband, highlighting how the space offered emotional healing. **Vihan Sharma (USLA)** reflected on the organisational challenges faced by the institution, noting the need for expanded facilities and stronger medical support. **Jayanti Ranjan (USBAS)** described how her initial nervousness transformed into comfort and connection after the warm welcome from the residents. **Raghi Verma (USLA)** recalled a touching moment when she bonded with a resident over their shared regional background, which instantly created a sense of familiarity. **Aryan Sukanth Aggarwal (USBAS)** observed the subtle social dynamics among residents, while **Muskan (USLA)** reflected on how changing family structures in modern India have increased the need for institutions like Ayudham. **Chakshika Seth (USBAS)** was struck by the rich life histories and experiences of the residents, and **Renee Nayak (USLA)** reflected on the importance of listening to elders' stories as valuable repositories of memory and knowledge.

These reflections underscored the emotional depth of the visit and reminded students of the importance of empathy, respect, and meaningful engagement with the elderly.



Why Astrology?

Annanya Kaul, Second Year, BA Liberal Arts (History)

If you type “Why are millennials” into Google, one of the results completes the question with ‘obsessed with astrology’. Never mind the answer; the question alone is likely to incite exasperation among scientists, most of whom would condemn astrology as pseudoscience in its most fatuous and infuriating form. Astrology may have long been debunked – there is no reason to suppose that our fate is written in the stars – but it still endures, endorsed by countless magazines and newspapers feeding off our own, self-absorbed vanity. But the truth, however annoying, is that astrology played an important role in the history of science. Many of today’s scientists might be embarrassed to acknowledge, for example, that the 17th-century German mathematician Johannes Kepler, who discovered the laws of planetary motion, also cast horoscopes for his boss, the Holy Roman Emperor Rudolf II. The extraordinary detail and accuracy of the astronomical observations of scholars such as the Greek mathematician Hipparchus, in the second century BC, were due at least in part to a conviction that only with excellent data could astrologically forecasts and diagnoses be reliable.

Astrology proved amazingly resilient as science evolved. You might imagine it would have been dealt a sucker punch when Copernicus rearranged the heavens in the early 16th century by replacing the Earth with the sun at the center of the cosmos, relegating our home to the center of the Solar System. That idea remained much disputed until the early 17th century, but the observations and arguments put forward by the likes of Kepler and Galileo, helped to make the Copernican model generally accepted by the end of the century. And what did astrology do? It didn’t miss a beat – it just adapted to the new cosmology. Perhaps many such instances are the reason cynics might say this just goes on to show just how unscientific astrology is: it can be adapted to fit anything. But many might see it instead as a reflection of how tenaciously our minds cling to ideas deemed useful. In its penetration into our shared lexicon, astrology is a little like psychoanalysis once was. In the last century, you might have heard talk of id, ego, or superego at a party; now it’s common to hear someone explain themselves by way of sun, moon, and rising signs.

The popularity of astrology is often explained as the result of the decline of organized religion and the rise of economic precariousness, and as one aspect of a larger turn to ‘New Age’. Then, there’s the matter of political panic. In times of crisis, it is often said, people search for something to believe in where they wouldn’t really be responsible for the outcome. And yet, the current appeal of astrology’s abstract messaging feels somewhat paradoxical. At a time where we’re increasingly being told to ‘follow the science’ and ignore fake news, why are we so eager to embrace something that, at the end of the day, is almost entirely arbitrary? Contrary to that, some influencers and scientists suggest that “with enough structure to be considered a system of knowledge, but enough malleable abstraction to allow people to imagine and apply



its ideas in their own reality,” astrology’s appeal may not be as irrational as it appears. Yet, probably the ultimate reason people cling to astrology is one that is not going to go away: it offered hope of making sense of a bewilderingly complicated cosmos, and reassured us that we are a part of its grand design. And though some people remain noncommittal on whether there is a smidgen of truth in astrology, it’s not because they think there really is some way of reading your fate in the stars, but because the fundamental intuition of astrology is unambiguously true: “Astrology embodies a sense that life on Earth is affected by events in the wider universe” – as shown, for example, by discoveries in the 20th century about the cycle of the sun’s activity, the flux of cosmic rays, and the influence of meteorite impacts on evolution. It’s just that today we call all that astrology. As Malik says, “It teaches us that we are all made up of the same elements, and can relate to each other through this, while at the same time being incomprehensibly unique.”

The Misery

How poor it is to see,

The misery.

No one is happy,

No one is smiling,

None of them has a joyous nature. Every person is sad
And are covering their faces under their hats, why is it so?

Nobody has known, nobody knows –

And nobody will ever know!

It’s a secret that what happened

People assume that it is a tradition.

But little did they know that it is a transition

Transition of their emotions,

Transition of their own self,

Transition of their LIFE into misery

THE MISERY!!

Suvya Malik, BA Liberal Arts First Year

Cannabis In India: From Rituals to Recreation

Navya Kukreja, BA Liberal Arts First Year

Forget what you think you know about drug culture. In India, it isn't defined by back-alley deals or illicit rave parties. Instead, it's a centuries-old story told through wisps of charas smoke, the milky sweetness of bhang, and the quiet rituals of millions. While the world debates legalization, India navigates a unique reality where the line between the sacred and the criminal is blurred. The rise of psychotropic drug culture in India sparks a vital question: are we witnessing cultural continuity, or a social challenge spiraling out of control?

What is Cannabis?

Cannabis is a psychotropic drug. It refers to the dried leaves, flowers, stems, and seeds of the cannabis Sativa plant. The plant has many different chemical compounds, including tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which has intoxicating and has effects how the brain works and causes changes in mood, awareness, thoughts, feelings, or behavior

Cannabis: Ancient Traditions

Bhang has long been of cultural significance in India. In Hinduism, bhang takes on special meaning as the plant preferred by Shiva, the god of destruction, who was believed to have used bhang to focus inward and to harness his divine powers for the good of the world. In the Atharva Veda cannabis is named one of the five most sacred plants on Earth. The text also refers to it as a 'source of happiness' and a 'liberator'. Although the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act of 1985 prohibit the production, sale and consumption of certain parts of the cannabis plant, the leaves are an exception. There are even government-approved bhang shops in towns like Jaisalmer and Pushkar, and more. This intoxicating ingredient has always been popular with India's Brahmin community, who were traditionally forbidden from imbibing inebriants. In some religious parts of the country, including Varanasi, it is common to see babas and sadhus consuming bhang directly or smoking it from a clay pipe known as a chillum.

Bhang and integral part of Festival Celebration

Bhang also plays an important role in Hindu celebrations like Shivrati and Holi. During these times, the addition of bhang to a traditional thandai heightens the general sense of merriment on the streets. Although thandai is the most common base, bhang is also blended into lassi, savory snacks like pakora or into the chutneys and pickles that accompany other snacks like samosa and kachori. Many of the government-authorized shops also sell sweetened bhang in the form of laddoos.

The British Commission

When the British established rule over India in the mid-1800s, they were initially astounded at such widespread use of bhang in the country; in the late 19th Century, they commissioned a study of the drug's effects and cultural significance. The study revealed that bhang, a cannabis preparation, was deeply embedded in Indian culture, used in religious rituals, festivals, and as a traditional medicine. Despite its widespread use, the British attempted to regulate its consumption, reflecting their broader efforts to impose Western norms on Indian society.

Cannabis: Ancient lore and modern medicine

In Ayurveda, cannabis is referred to as Vijayahas, long been regarded as a medicinal herb with therapeutic and spiritual value. According to ancient texts, it is used to treat pain, digestive disorders, anxiety, and sleep disorders, especially when administered in purified and controlled doses. It is said to balance the body's doshas, calming Vata, and appears in traditional formulations like churans, oils, and medicinal pastes. Importantly, Ayurveda emphasizes moderation, detoxification, and ritual contexts, treating cannabis not as an intoxicant but as a healing aid. In the modern era, cannabis is being re-examined globally for its medicinal potential. Research highlights its role in managing chronic pain, epilepsy and chemotherapy-related side effects, with cannabinoids like THC and CBD receiving special attention. While recreational use remains restricted under the NDPS Act, there is growing interest in exploring cannabis for medical and industrial purposes, with Ayurvedic traditions offering a culturally rooted framework for its therapeutic use.

Cannabis in Bollywood

Cannabis has frequently been portrayed in Indian movies. It was shown unfavorably in Hindi cinema, with the drug being connected with upper-class hippy culture or as an intoxicating stimulant used by criminals. On the other hand, the use of bhang was often praised in well-known film songs like "Jai Jai Shiv Shankar" and "Khaike Paan Banaraswala". Beginning in the 2000s, negative representations of cannabis began to change. *Shaitan* (2011), *Kapoor & Sons* (2016), and *The Blueberry Hunt* (2016) all show urban middle-class heroes who use cannabis to relax. Many believe that there is a culture of smoking up among today's youth, and it is becoming increasingly relevant in our movies. Films such as *Gully Boy* (2019), deal with the illegal cannabis trade in Mumbai.

Conclusion

Despite its deeply rooted history, cannabis has faced challenges for spiritual and medicinal purposes in India over the centuries. The advent of British colonial rule in the 18th century subjected cannabis to increasing scrutiny due to cultural misunderstandings and conflicting legal perspectives. In 1838, the British Indian Hemp Drugs Commission published a comprehensive report that acknowledged the long-standing use of cannabis in India and recognized its relatively benign effects compared to other intoxicants. However, in subsequent years, cannabis started to face demonization, and efforts to curb its use gained momentum. In 1985, India introduced the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, aiming to regulate and control the use and distribution of various substances, including cannabis. Under this act, cannabis received classification as a Schedule I substance, imposing strict restrictions on its cultivation, possession, and consumption. Ancient India's spiritual journey with cannabis stands as a testament to the profound and complex relationship between humanity and the plant world. Cannabis, deeply intertwined with the spiritual practices of the time, played a central role in connecting devotees with the divine and fostering a sense of interconnectedness with the universe. Today, while the legal status of cannabis in India remains restrictive, the legacy of its ancient use continues to inspire curiosity and intrigue. As India navigates its way through modern challenges, the echoes of its sacred connection with cannabis linger, reminding us of the enduring power of the plant to shape culture, spirituality, and the human experience.

DEPRESSION: A SILENT KILLER

Ridhima Bajaj, BA Liberal Arts First Year



Depression is one of the most common yet least acknowledged public health challenges of the modern era. Often associated with feelings of sadness or lethargy, depression is in reality a complex mental disorder that affects millions worldwide, quietly undermining mental, emotional, and even physical health. The question of whether depression can be considered a “silent killer” compels us to examine its scale, consequences, and the reasons it so often goes unnoticed and untreated.

The Pervasiveness of Depression

Globally, depression affects more than 280 million people, according to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates. Some studies suggest this number may be as high as 320 million, with depression being the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide. In India alone, around 2.7% of the population is estimated to suffer from depressive disorders. Depression does not discriminate; it afflicts people of all ages, genders, and backgrounds. Symptoms extend far beyond sadness, including persistent emptiness, hopelessness, fatigue, sleep and appetite disturbances, impaired concentration, and, in severe cases, suicidal thoughts. Untreated major depressive disorder can persist for years, robbing individuals of joy, productivity, and even basic functioning.

Why is Depression “Silent”?

One of the most insidious aspects of depression is its ability to remain hidden. Unlike physical illnesses, which often display visible symptoms, depression’s effects are internal, recognized mainly by the sufferer. Stigma surrounding mental health prevents many from admitting they need help, while societal expectations to “be strong” or “move on” discourage openness. This silence is especially deadly among men. Traditional gender roles often equate emotional distress with weakness, making men less likely to seek help. As a result, men are several times more likely than women to die by suicide, frequently turning to alcohol or drugs as unhealthy coping mechanisms.

The Deadly Consequences

The term “Silent Killer” is not just metaphorical. Depression is a major risk factor for suicide, responsible for more than 700,000 deaths per year worldwide. Suicide is now the fourth leading cause of death among people aged 15–29, showing how depression can claim lives without warning, particularly among youth. Beyond suicide, depression is linked to physical illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, weakened immunity, and chronic pain disorders. It also often coexists with alcohol and tobacco abuse, further compounding health risks. The consequences extend beyond the individual, affecting families, communities, and entire economies by sapping productivity and straining relationships.



Barriers to Treatment

Despite the existence of effective treatments, such as medication, therapy, and lifestyle interventions, over 75% of people in low and middle-income countries receive no treatment for depression. The reasons include: Lack of awareness, limited trained professionals, insufficient healthcare investment, and persistent stigma. Without treatment, sufferers endure cycles of pain, isolation, and increased risk, while the condition worsens over time.

Real-Life Impact

Behind the statistics are countless untold stories of individuals who lived with depression in silence, fearing judgment or rejection. Many were diagnosed late—or not at all. For teenagers and working adults, depression is intensified by academic stress, workplace pressure, and social isolation, making it even more destructive and silent in its spread. The key lesson from these stories is the urgent need for compassion, awareness, and proactive intervention - not just from healthcare professionals, but from families, friends, and society at large.

Breaking the Silence

Solutions and Hope Despite its severity, depression is both treatable and preventable. Early diagnosis and intervention can transform lives. Public education campaigns and mental health literacy initiatives can help destigmatize depression and encourage people to seek help. Governments and organizations must invest in stronger mental health infrastructure to ensure affordable, accessible care. Support from loved ones, empathetic listening, and healthy social environments are equally vital. Recognizing warning signs and validating the experiences of those suffering can make the difference between despair and recovery. Research shows that timely treatment significantly reduces mortality

- Patients whose depression improved after a heart attack had nearly 50% lower risk of death compared to those with untreated depression.
- In primary care, patients receiving enhanced depression treatment were 24% less likely to die during follow-up.
- Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) reduces suicidality by about 34% and lowers overall mortality by around 30%.

On the other hand, untreated or treatment-resistant depression greatly increases mortality risk, both from suicide and related health complications.

Conclusion

Depression can justifiably be called a ‘Silent Killer’. Its quiet progression, widespread prevalence, and devastating impact on both mental and physical health make it one of the most lethal and misunderstood health challenges of our time. The silence surrounding depression—not just in individuals, but in our communities and policies—amplifies its danger. To break this deadly silence, society must prioritize open dialogue, early intervention, and universal access to treatment. Destigmatizing mental illness and building supportive environments will save lives and restore hope. By listening, understanding, and acting, we can give those suffering from depression a chance not just to survive, but to truly live.

IInd Annual Debate of the University School of Liberal Arts

Raghi Verma, BA Liberal Arts, Third Year (Sociology)

The Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIPIU) stands as a beacon of learning and innovation, committed to academic excellence and the fostering of critical thinking among its student body. Within this esteemed institution, the University School of Liberal Arts (USLA) operates with a distinct mission i.e. to transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries, encourage dialogues across disciplines and sharpen argumentative skills. It attempts to achieve this by encouraging students to engage with complex contemporary issues and creating platforms for engagements of students from different disciplines. As part of this approach, the USLA organized its second annual debate competition on 14th November 2025, in Dwarka campus.



The debate competition was organized on the theme: **“India and the World: Contemporary Development and Global Challenge.”**. A total of 15 teams from different Schools of the University participated in the competition who deliberated over issues like India’s internal and external policies, development strategies, and cultural identity under global pressure,

The event commenced with a warm welcome and formal felicitation for Prof. Queeny Pradhan, in charge of the University School of Liberal Arts. The Judges for the event included Dr Akanksha Narayan Singh, a specialist in Modern Indian History, Dr. Loveena Sehra, an Anthropologist from the USLA, and Dr Shrabana Barua who specializes in South and Southeast Asian studies, as external expert. The judges’ collective expertise in content, organization, delivery, and rebuttal ensured a high standard of evaluation for all teams.

The format was designed to be rigorous, requiring that for every proposition, one speaker would argue in favour while another presented the case against, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of each motion. The speakers were given a total of ten minutes to present their argument. A highly challenging element was the inclusion of a **dedicated three-minute interjection window**, which permitted spontaneous engagement but was strategically capped at **two interjections per speaker**, demanding remarkable composure, quick thinking, and strategic verbal dexterity under



pressure. Arguments were thoroughly evaluated by the jury based on four precisely weighted criteria, in total 100 points: **Content/Matter (30 points)** assessed the substance and logical coherence; **Organization/Structure (20 points)** judged the clarity and flow of the presentation; **Delivery/Manner (30 points)** focused on persuasive communication and stage presence; and **Rebuttal/Counter-arguments (20 points)** measured the ability to directly and effectively address the opposition's claims. The jury was particularly impressed, unanimously noting the exceptional quality of the rebuttal and engagement, which served as powerful evidence of the students’ rigorous preparation, deep-seated research, and sophisticated critical capacity to engage with the complex, contemporary global theme at the heart of the competition.





The debate competition recognized excellence in three categories: **Best Team, Best Speaker, and Best Interjector.**

- **Best Team (Winner)**
Tanushree Sharma and Gazal Bhardwaj
- **Best Team (Runner-up)**
Somya and Simaran
- **Best Speaker:**
Pranav Roy, Mehak, and Navya Kukreja
- **Best Interjector**
Aasees Oberoi, Aakash and Ananya Kaul



“It is better to debate a question without settling it than to settle a question without debating it.”

— Joseph Joubert

Preference or Pressure? Social Coding of Color

Aasees Oberoi, Second Year, BA Liberal Arts (Sociology)

Have you ever walked through the clothing sections of a store and noticed the color schemes? Light, dainty “feminine” colors for females and dark “masculine” colors for males. Have you ever been told “not to wear that color as it is girly or boyish? These associations do not come with colors; we make them. We decide what the colors mean, but should they be classified into masculine and feminine at all? What once were neutral colors are now markers of identity, expectations, and limitations. From clothes to toys to cards, the world silently preaches and tells us what color belongs to whom. But should something like color be restrictive to specific groups just because society tells us? Most people remain unaware that the colors that they now associate with genders were originally not classified that way. In an article by the University of Missouri-Kansas City, the whole assigning of colors started way back in the 19th century when pastel shades were used for kids clothing, which was further narrowed down to pink and blue as it complemented the hair and eyes, and eventually blue was assigned to girls as it was seen as a more feminine and poised color, while pink was assigned to boys as it was seen as a stronger color. Gradually, pink was reassigned to women as it was seen as closer to red, which was considered a romantic color, reinforcing the idea that women were more emotional; however, this notion changed again in the 1960s around the time of the women’s liberation movement, which challenged the preassigned colors that came with the gender of the baby.

While it may seem that it is not a big deal and that these are just colors and it is up to the child and the parents, it is not that simple to break away from this. Assigning colors to the specific genders not only puts restrictions but also confines a child’s creativity and expression. The child is expected to work and stay within the lines of the designated colors, also enforcing that there are only two genders that you can take up. If you are a girl and you like pink, you are normal, but if not, you are a tomboy; similarly, if you are a boy and like blue, that is normal, but if you like pink, you are girly and not enough of a man. While the newer generations of parents try to raise their kids without gendered expectations, mainstream media and marketing often reinforce them in subtle yet powerful ways. Advertisements, cartoons, store layouts, and other kids’ essentials also reinforce these ideas, pushing the rigid color codes. Walk into any toy store, and the division of the aisles with the section for girls being all pink and full of dolls, cooking sets, and makeup toys while the section for boys, blue, and full of gaming sets, blocks, action figures, and cars will be very visible. This is not just about preference; it is about limiting choice and allotting traits to the consumers. This teaches kids what’s “meant” for them and what they cannot do. Luckily, growing up, I did not have to face this and had access to all things, but upon asking around from people, this was not the scenario for all; many people recalled being taunted and criticized for disliking pink and wanting to play with toys, while even the males faced criticism for wanting to play with Barbie dolls and cooking sets. These experiences do not fade but linger and shape the perception of the child growing up.

The role of media and brands in marketing colors the way they are largely because colors help and improve brand recognition by up to 80%, according to VMG Studios, a marketing company, in one of their articles, “Color is a bit of a

double-edged sword because it has the power to make or break your brand.” The goal of such marketing is simple: to reach and mould the ideas of their target audiences, which they successfully do. Hence, assigning pink to girls and blue to boys or any color to any group is not just about reflecting preferences but also a larger scheme by brands to establish a market that they can influence and sell their products to; however, often these approaches come at the expense of perpetuating inflexible stereotypes, especially among young, impressionable consumers. This binary of blue for boys and pink for girls is a concept that is Western and is not followed across the globe but is recognized by many in India.

Pink is not considered just feminine but has a deeper meaning attached to it; bright colors like red and pink are linked to auspiciousness and prosperity. Similarly, the color white symbolizes grief and peace but also purity, showing the versatility of colors. In China, red is seen as a lucky and prosperous colour and is used widely by both genders. The cultural difference does not just stop here. In communities of Nigeria, particularly the Yoruba community, according to



a study by the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at the University of Western Ontario, they use colours and link them not by gender associations but by their spiritual significance and community roles. When we recognize these global ideas, we start to question and slowly dismantle the illusion of the “normal” around us that is created by society. In a book by Jo B. Paoletti titled *Pink and Blue: Telling the Boys from the Girls in America*, we see how the whole idea of the gendering of these colors started. The author tells us how it was a western concept that is being accepted now on a global level without questioning. what we must ask is why we are linking something like gender to a specific color and why it affects the child while growing up. As written earlier, the early and foundational years of a child’s life are spent with the parents or other adults around them; this enables them to enhance their cognitive ability. the child learns gender roles by imitating an adult model to whom he or she is attached emotionally; this phenomenon is called Identification (influenced by Freudian psychology).

Cognitive development by Piaget states how the child is the agent of his own identity through a process of learning and enacting gender rules. Social learning ensures that the child learns gender rules socially, through a process of reward and punishment. As absurd as they might sound, these are the stepping stones of childhood that help the child develop an identity. When the people around the child during these times tell them repeatedly what they should do, automatically the brain feeds the information as “normal” and suitable for the child, shaping their whole personality and identity around them, which is why, while growing up, when most people realize that they do not fit into the norms set by society, they start to question the system and slowly find their true self, creating the “other” genders. Jo B. Paoletti talks about how

before the 1900s, white was used for the kids, and that too not for the gender or sex of the child but for the age; as the child grew, colorful hues were added to the clothes according to the complexion, season, hair, etc. it was in the 20th century that these colour specifications became more gender-specific. Her research and this book highlight how what we see as “natural,” “traditional,” and “normal” things today are constructed and a relatively new phenomenon. Colors have always had power, the power to express, the power to belong, and the power to connect and even heal. It is not something that should be misused and put labels on just for the sake of “normality” because even one label has the power to influence. When this is misused, it restricts and confines not just the people but also their senses, ultimately affecting their choices later in life also. When prolonged, this becomes a tool of social conditioning rather than creativity. What we see as a “normal” association of gender with colors is just a deep-rooted concept fueled by markets and brands, cultural shifts, and even history to some extent that we have passively accepted. What is crucial is the understanding of these origins, as they are the first step in deconstructing the norms. The differences across cultures show us that these norms are not set in stone but rather can be influenced and are thus changeable. We need to stop seeing these as limits and boundaries into which people should be curbed and rather look at them as possibilities for endless potential. When we stop thinking about the “log Kya kahenge?” and start doing what we as individuals feel suits us more, we open doors to a present and future where roles and identities are not distributed and given out based on packaging or what someone said works for us best. Something like color should be an indicator and factor in the celebration of individuality and not a code for conformity and rules and regulations. All we need is a collective shift in mindset because we are the society we blame for everything

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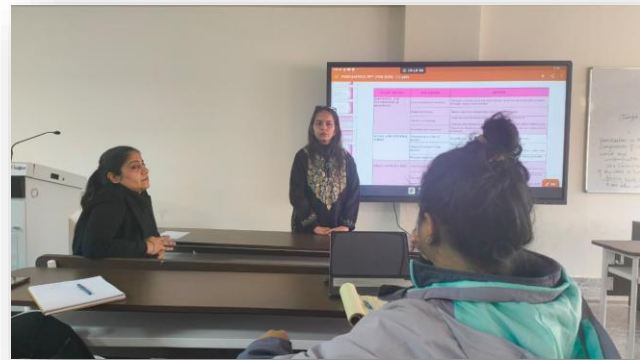
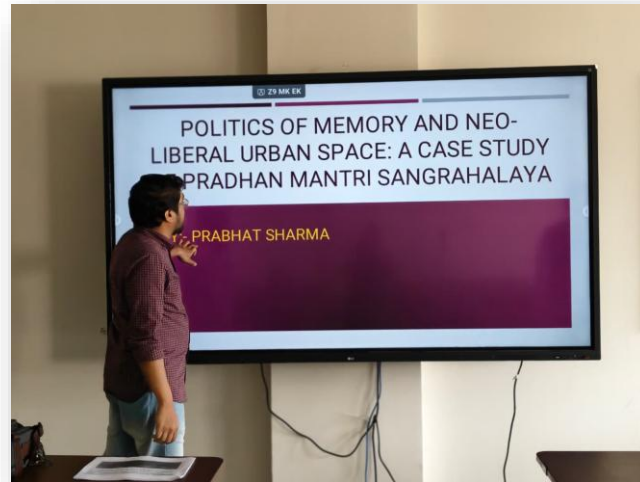
USLA initiative: USLA Colloquium Series

Dr. Ayush Jaiwal, USLA Faculty (History)

The University School of Liberal Arts (USLA), initiated the USLA Colloquium Series to create a regular forum for academic discussion and presentation of ongoing research. It was conceived as an internal platform for scholarly exchange. It allows faculty members, research scholars and students to engage with research across disciplines and participate in critical conversations about methods, sources, and arguments. The idea behind the series emerged from the recognition that many faculty members at USLA are early-career scholars actively developing their research trajectories. The colloquium therefore provides an institutional space where research can be presented in progress, discussed openly, and refined through feedback. Each session typically includes a research presentation followed by an extended discussion involving faculty members, research scholars, and students. The colloquium was launched in the previous semester and has already hosted several presentations from different disciplines within the school.

The presenters so far include Dr. Harshvardhan Tripathy (Sociology), Dr. Pavel Tomar (History), Mr. Anurag Kumar (Sociology), Ms. Punyapriya Gahlot (Psychology), and Mr. Prabhat Sharma (Political Science). These presentations have covered diverse themes and have reflected the interdisciplinary character of the University School of Liberal Arts. An important feature of the initiative is the documentation of these sessions. All colloquium talks are being recorded with separate audio and video inputs. The recordings are being archived with the intention of gradually making them publicly accessible, allowing a wider academic audience to engage with the research being conducted at USLA.

In the coming years, the USLA Colloquium aims to expand its scope by inviting external scholars and researchers from other institutions. There are also plans to develop the colloquium into a larger academic initiative, including the possibility of launching a journal that could publish selected research emerging from these discussions. The USLA Colloquium thus represents an important step toward strengthening the culture of research dialogue, interdisciplinary engagement, and academic collaboration within the University School of Liberal Arts.



Raja Ram Mohan Roy: A Voice of Reform in Early Modern India

Siddhant Pandey, Third Year, BA Liberal Arts (Political Science)

Raja Ram Mohan Roy is often remembered as the Father of Modern India, and for good reason. At a time when Indian society was bound by rigid traditions and unquestioned customs, Roy emerged as one of the first thinkers to challenge practices that denied dignity and justice to many sections of society. Born in 1772 in Bengal into a Bengali Brahmin family, he grew up in a deeply traditional environment but was also exposed to different intellectual traditions, including Persian, Arabic and English learning. This wide exposure shaped his ability to think critically about society while still valuing India's cultural and spiritual heritage. As political theorist Bhikhu Parekh observes, Raja Ram Mohan Roy was among the first modern Indian thinkers who attempted to reconcile Indian traditions with the new ideas of Western modernity, creating a bridge between two intellectual worlds.

Social life was governed by customs such as Sati, child marriage, rigid caste divisions and polygamy, which were widely accepted. At the same time, new ideas about liberty, education and rights were entering India through Western contact. Roy believed that Indian society needed reform, but he also felt that modernization should not mean blindly copying the West. Instead, he argued for combining



modern rational ideas with India's ethical and spiritual traditions. One of Roy's most significant contributions was his strong opposition to the practice of Sati, in which widows were expected to burn themselves on their husband's funeral pyre. Deeply disturbed by the suffering of women subjected to this practice, Roy began campaigning against it through essays, petitions and public debates. Importantly, he used Hindu scriptures themselves to argue that Sati was not a religious duty. His persistent efforts eventually influenced Governor-General Lord William Bentinck, who passed the Bengal Sati Regulation Act in 1829, making the practice illegal. Roy also spoke against child marriage and polygamy, supported widow remarriage, and argued strongly for women's education, believing that no society could progress if half of its population remained deprived of opportunity.

Roy's concern for social reform also extended to the caste system, which he considered deeply divisive. He believed that a person's value should depend on merit and character rather than birth, and he even supported inter-caste and inter-racial marriages, a remarkably progressive view for his time. His advocacy for women's rights was equally striking. In his writings, including the 1822 pamphlet "Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females," he argued that Hindu scriptures allowed women to inherit property and therefore demanded legal recognition of women's inheritance rights. Religion was another area where Roy sought reform. Having studied Islamic theology, Sufi literature and Hindu scriptures, he came to believe that religion should be based on reason, morality and belief in one universal God rather than rituals and idol worship. In 1828, he founded the Brahmo Samaj, a reformist movement that encouraged monotheism, ethical living and social reform. He also translated texts such as the Upanishads and Vedas into Bengali and English, making them accessible to ordinary people rather than leaving their interpretation solely to priests.

Roy was also deeply committed to modern education. He believed that learning should include subjects such as science, mathematics and philosophy, which could help Indians engage with the modern world. He supported the establishment of Hindu College in 1817, one of the earliest institutions of modern higher education in India. At the same time, he used journalism as a platform for reform by publishing newspapers like Sambad Kaumudi and Mirat-ul-Akbar, through which he discussed social issues and even criticized certain colonial policies. In political thought, Roy supported ideas such as freedom of the press, civil liberties and greater Indian participation in governance. In a letter written in 1823, he argued that restrictions on the press would prevent rulers from understanding the grievances of the people. He admired certain aspects of British constitutionalism, particularly the emphasis on rights and accountability, but he also criticized colonial economic exploitation and demanded reforms in administration.

Roy's intellectual contributions were also reflected in his writings. His early work "Tuhfat-ul-Muwahhidin" questioned religious orthodoxy and emphasized rational faith. Another important text, "A Conference between the Advocate and an Opponent of the Practice of Burning Widows Alive" (1818), used a dialogue format to challenge the justifications given for Sati. By presenting both orthodox arguments and reformist responses, Roy demonstrated that the practice lacked true scriptural support and violated moral principles. Despite the importance of his work, Roy faced considerable opposition from orthodox sections of society, who accused him of misinterpreting religious texts and being overly influenced by Western ideas. Yet over time, his arguments found support among reform-minded Indians and progressive officials, helping to create momentum for broader social change.

Raja Ram Mohan Roy believed that true modernity meant progress guided by reason, justice and ethical values, not simply the adoption of foreign ideas. By challenging oppressive customs, promoting education and advocating equality, he helped lay the intellectual foundations of modern Indian society. His efforts continue to be remembered as an early and powerful step towards a more humane and progressive India.

Mental Health Fair: Together for Well-being

Ms. Simran Kohli, USLA Faculty (Psychology)

The University School of Liberal Arts (USLA), organized a vibrant Mental Health Fair on 15th October 2025 to mark World Mental Health Day. The event aimed to promote emotional well-being, encourage self-awareness, and highlight the importance of caring for mental health. Students and faculty came together in a lively and supportive environment dedicated to spreading awareness, empathy, and positivity. The event began with a ribbon-cutting ceremony by the Dean, marking the official opening of the fair. Volunteers enthusiastically guided participants through various stalls, each thoughtfully designed to encourage mindfulness, creativity, and reflection. Their efforts created a welcoming space where students felt comfortable exploring different aspects of mental well-being.

Several interactive activities were the highlights of the fair. The Gratitude Tree invited students and teachers to write down things they were thankful for, gradually transforming the tree into a vibrant symbol of shared appreciation. The Compliment Exchange Box, based on the simple rule “Take One, Leave One,” spread unexpected kindness among participants. Meanwhile, the Coloring for Calm corner allowed students to unwind through mindful coloring. Creative expression was also encouraged through activities such as “Letter It Up” and “Doodle It Out,” where participants expressed their thoughts and emotions through art and writing. The Mental Health Photobooth became a popular attraction where students captured cheerful moments using fun props, adding a sense of joy and celebration to the day.



Towards the end of the event, an engaging talk on “Understanding Psychological Trauma” was delivered by Dr. Itisha Nagar. In her address, she emphasized the meaning of psychological trauma in simple terms and engaged the audience in a thoughtful discussion about stress and emotional well-being. Dr. Nagar addressed several important questions such as “What is considered traumatic?” and “Is all stress trauma?” Her interactive session helped the audience gain a deeper understanding of the difference between everyday stress and serious emotional distress.

The Mental Health Fair successfully fulfilled its aim of reminding everyone about the importance of mental well-being. It highlighted how simple gestures of kindness and gratitude can play a significant role in helping people lead happier and more balanced lives.





International Conference

On

“Art, Culture, and Values in India and Europe: Exchanges, Influences, and Evolving Dynamics”

Organised by

Jean Monnet Project
Art and Culture in Everyday Life: An Interface of
European and Indian Values (ACE), JNU

University School of Liberal Arts
Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University,
New Delhi



1st – 2nd May, 2025

GGSIU, Dwarka, New Delhi



Report on the International Conference

Pranav Roy, Third Year, BA Liberal Arts (Political Science)

The two-day international conference brought together scholars, researchers, and students to deliberate on the evolving relationship between India and Europe through the lens of art, culture, and values. While the brochure framed the theoretical base, the core richness of the event came through in the academic papers and discussions, which engaged with themes of security, migration, aesthetics, philosophy, and cultural identity. The event began with a formal welcome by the organizing committee, where the importance of Indo-European engagement was highlighted. Speakers emphasized that the partnership was not merely diplomatic but also deeply cultural, extending into literature, cinema, and everyday practices.

The first day largely revolved around the political, security, and cultural dynamics between India and Europe. Distinctions were drawn between hard security (power, regulations, refugee crisis) and soft security (cinema, dance, music, cultural identity). The refugee question emerged as a significant theme, showing Europe's contemporary challenges and India's perspectives on migration and borders. Papers also analyzed how films, literature, and visual art act as mediums of soft power and cultural diplomacy. Discussions also highlighted Europe's role as both an influencer and recipient of cultural exchange with India. The day ended with a recognition that political values and cultural expressions cannot be separated, as both shape Indo-European understanding in today's globalized context. and cultural exchange, the conference proved that Indo-European ties are as much about imagination and creativity as they are about diplomacy and governance.



The second day shifted focus towards aesthetics, philosophy of art, and cultural identity. The day began with key note address by Prof. Molly Kaushal (Former Professor and Head, Janapada Sampada Division at IGNCA). She addressed the longstanding debate between High Art and Low Art, raising the critical question of whether art is confined to elite circles or whether the common person can also be considered an artist. She further emphasized that aesthetics should be understood as a form of discourse rather than merely an appreciation of beauty, shaped by broader engagements with truth, philosophy, and society. The academic presentation discusses a wide range of themes like diverse aesthetic traditions ranging from Sanskrit *Natak* to European philosophical thought, while critically examining colonial and postcolonial frameworks such as Hegelian philosophy and transcendental idealism in their interpretations of Indian art. The sessions also highlighted how artistic expression is deeply embedded in questions of identity, linking art to social class, cultural memory, and the representation of reality. The day ended with a consensus that art is not only about expression but also about shaping values, identity, and political discourse.

The International Conference successfully foregrounded that Indo-European relations must be studied through the integration of politics, security, art, and philosophy. The handwritten records of sessions reveal that participants consistently circled back to one central idea: culture is not a backdrop but an active force in shaping values and identities across nations. By engaging with themes of security, migration, aesthetics, and cultural exchange, the conference proved that Indo-European ties are as much about imagination and creativity as they are about diplomacy and governance.

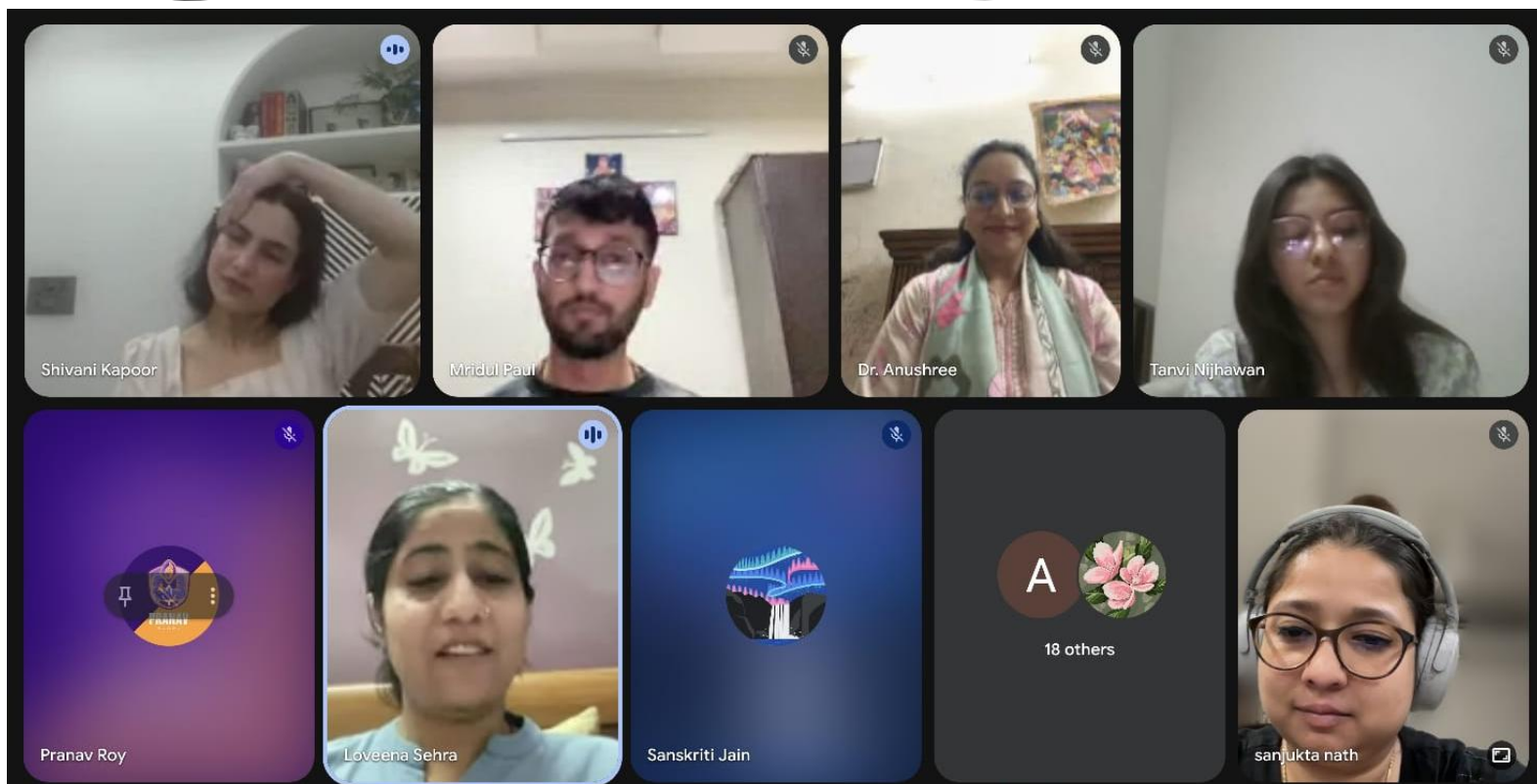
Report on the Session: Electoral and Political Reforms and the Role of ADR

Dr. Anushree, USLA Faculty (Political Science) & Tanvi Nijhawan (BA Liberal Arts II Year)

An online lecture was organized by the University School of Liberal Arts on “Political and Electoral Reforms in India”. The lecture was delivered by Ms. Shivani Kapoor, Program Lead and Manager (Legal), Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), on 27th February 2025. The session was attended by the In-charge of USLA Prof Queeny Pradhan, faculty members and students of GGSIPU, with approximately 30 students participating in the lecture. The discussion formed part of the academic lecture series aimed at strengthening students’ understanding of contemporary legal and constitutional issues.

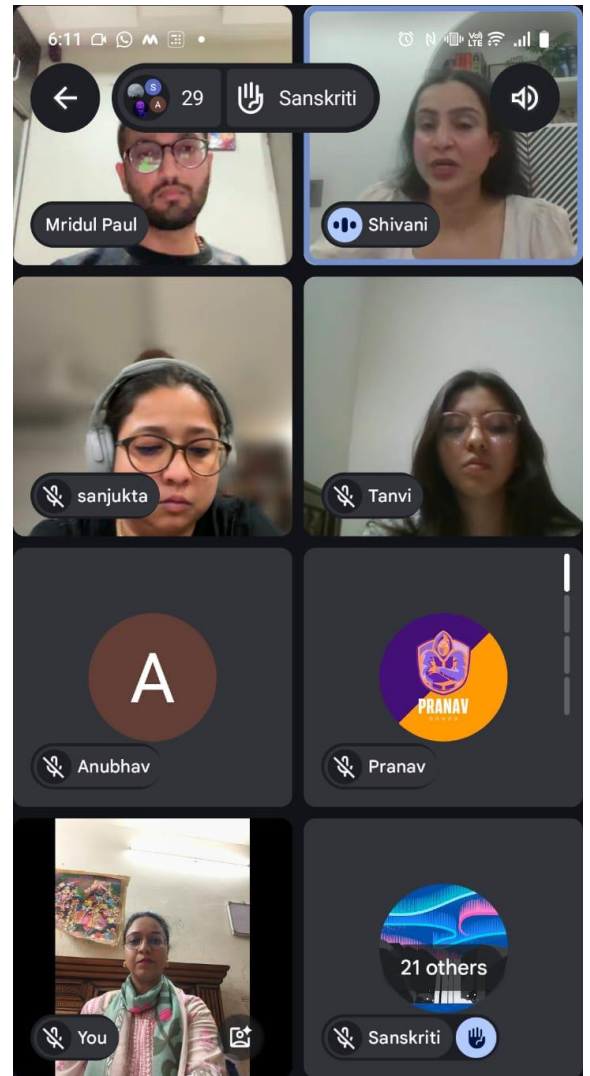
The session focused on electoral and political reforms in India, with particular emphasis on the work of the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR). The speaker traced the origins of ADR to the early 2000s, when a group of academics raised a fundamental question: how can voters make informed choices when they have no access to basic background information about candidates? This concern led to a series of landmark judgments between 2002 and 2003, which made it mandatory for candidates to disclose details of their criminal cases, assets, liabilities, educational qualifications, and sources of income through Form 26 affidavits.

The speaker explained ADR’s key areas of work, analyzing candidate affidavits (Election Watch), examining political party finances (Political Party Watch), engaging in public advocacy, and pursuing strategic litigation. A recurring theme throughout the session was transparency as the backbone of democracy. Voters, it was argued, cannot exercise meaningful choice without access to accurate and complete information.



Several important judgments were discussed. These included the striking down of Section 8(4) of the Representation of the People Act, which earlier protected sitting legislators from immediate disqualification upon conviction. The introduction of NOTA (None of the Above) was presented as an extension of the right to reject undesirable candidates. The speaker also addressed cases relating to electoral bonds, foreign funding of political parties, paid news, and the expansion of disclosure requirements to include sources of income and potential conflicts of interest.

Concerns were raised regarding criminalization of politics, delays in judicial processes, the dominance of money power, lack of transparency in political funding, and the independence of constitutional bodies such as the Election Commission. The interactive discussion that followed reflected differing perspectives, particularly on presumption of innocence versus higher ethical standards for public office. The exchange underscored the complexity of balancing democratic principles with institutional accountability.



Current issues with our Electoral and Political Affairs

- Lack of comprehensive law dealing with working and functioning of political parties.
- Lack of inner party democracy within parties.
- No criteria for tickets distribution to candidates.
- Strong nexus between muscle and money power.
- Disproportionate asset increase of candidates.
- No limit on political parties' election expenditure.
- Unknown sources of income of parties
- Parties incorrect, incomplete and delayed financial statements.

Students' Achievements



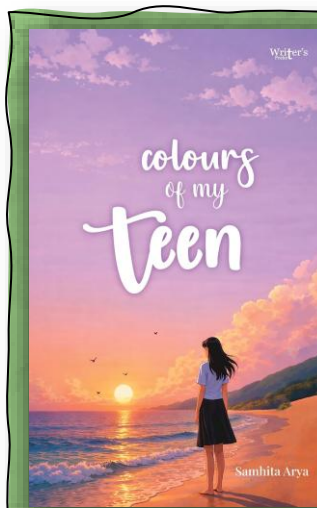
In alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP), internships form an integral component of the curricula across all programmes offered by the USLA. Internships serve a particularly vital role, bridging the gap between theoretical inquiry and real-world application. In an increasingly competitive landscape, hands-on experience not only enhances employability but also helps students discover their vocational strengths and chart purposeful career pathways across diverse fields, from media and the arts to public policy, education, and beyond. This year, our students successfully secured and completed internships with several distinguished organizations, reflecting the department's commitment to fostering industry-ready professionals. These include:

- Tech Mahindra Foundation
- Udayan Care
- IAWRT (International Association of Women in Radio & Television)
- PSBT (Public Service Broadcasting Trust)
- Kiran Nadar Museum of Art
- Indian Culinary Agenda
- Ayudham Society
- Jamghat- A Group of Street Children

To ensure academic rigor, students are evaluated on their internship performance through the submission and presentation of a report before a designated committee.



- **Jhanvi Shamra** (Semester IV), won a Gold Medal in Tennis at the Inter-IP Tournament and secured a Bronze Medal in Football.
- **Arpit Dwivedi** (Semester IV), including 2nd position in 2024 and 3rd position in 2025 in Kabaddi. Additionally, he was also selected to represent the university at the AIU North Zone Kabaddi Tournament 2025.
- **Sneha Raj** (Semester VI), secured 2nd rank in Mixed Doubles at the State-level competition held in Hyderabad and had qualified for the National Mixed Doubles event.
- **Samarth Dargan** (Semester IV), was selected twice for the AIU Football Tournament and reached the finals twice in the Inter-IP Sports Tournament.
- **Prarthana Nair** (Semester IV), secured 3rd position in Football at the Inter-IP Tournament.



USLA 2nd Year Student
Sambhita Arya Published her first collection of Poetry titled 'colors of my teen'.