



OCSI DIALOGUES 2018 INDIA PERSPECTIVES

C.D. Deshmukh Auditorium India International Centre, New Delhi

Wednesday 4th April 2018 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Taking stock of the context of highest world's growth and projections that the "21st century belongs to India", as a well as "imagining it as a civilisational construct", the purpose of the **OCSI Dialogue** is multifold. It aims at gathering scholars, policy makers, members of the government, industrialists, entrepreneurs, and representatives of think tanks and offering them a platform for high level debates to reflect on a series of key issues that shape India and its impact on the world. The Conference is meant to be holistic and encourage cross-fertilisation of ideas amongst various disciplines. Four broad themes have been identified embodying this intent, they should neither be seen as exhaustive categories nor as segregated or mutually exclusive.

Law and Governance

The relationship between states and centre is becoming frayed, provoking us to think of what should be the vision of cooperative federalism. Inability of the state to provide public services like education, health, law and order, call into question its very legitimacy. The 'first past the post system' of our electoral system creates disjunction between vote share and seat share, requiring re-imagination of more nuanced electoral arrangements. Two strands that are influencing our media are corporate ownership and self censorship. How serious are these as a threat to our democracy? The supremacy of the rule of law is under challenge and in this context, is the threat to Judicial independence from within or without. These are, among several others, issues of law and governance that require our attention.

Energy, Ecology and Built Environment

Indians are increasingly demanding power for all, housing for all, water and sanitation for all - and a cleaner environment. India will experience the fastest rate of urbanisation in the coming three decades. Its energy demand will grow faster than any other major economy. It has to stimulate economic growth and job creation within fast-shrinking environmental boundaries. The quality of land, water and air is directly impacting economic productivity and public health.

As India shifts several hundred million people into using modern energy sources, handles rapid urbanisation with changing patterns of resource use, and integrates deeply into global energy and resource markets, the future presents tradeoffs and opportunities. How is India attempting to balance energy, resources, ecology and the built environment? How will housing, mobility, commerce and innovation in cities reconcile with the needs of a resource efficient economy? Which combinations of policy, technology and finance are driving change, for better or for worse? Are there solutions to resolve competing political economy stresses?



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Education, Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Employment

With the window for reaping demographic dividend closing, will the idea be reduced to a mere political slogan? Indeed, is the Indian reality more consistent with an unfolding demographic disaster, given rising aspirations of its youth bulge and diminishing prospects of high-quality jobs? Does the muscular growth rate performance on the back of a highly unequal income distribution fuel discontent and merely accelerate the process of disaffection? Is the Indian State cognizant of these challenges or is it blissfully complacent? What, in any case, can the State do to reverse these trends? And even if it wants to, is the State really capable of doing what it needs to do?

Such questions, rooted in India's projected growth rates and burgeoning young population are at the centre of interconnected issues of education, innovation, entrepreneurship and employment and need to be discussed.

Crisis of Identity: Civilisation, Culture & Hindutva

The 'idea of India' has become a site of contestation in the past five years as never before. At the core this contestation is the role to be accorded to the Hindu religious and cultural traditions in the formation of Indian national and civilisational identity. This contestation turns on which strand of the Hindu tradition is going to play a decisive role - the liberal strand associated with name of Mahatma Gandhi, or the nationalistic strand associated with the name of Veer Savarkar. This is further complicated by the irony or the fact that Gandhi was the public believer and Savarkar was the atheist. Such contestation has now acquired the dimension of a crisis which must be addressed.

Organised by The Oxford and Cambridge Society of India, OCSI, in collaboration with the India International Centre, IIC, New Delhi.

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