

DHYĀNA: SOCIETY FOR CONSCIOUSNESS AND AWARENESS

Annual Report 2016-17

DHYANA, the Society for Consciousness and Awareness, is dedicated to revising the concept of education, focusing the mind into thought, and thought into awareness. It is from awareness and through inhabiting one's internal reality that one can imagine immensities for transforming the world. Dhyana's central theme for the year 2016-17 was "*TAT TVAM ASI*", a Sanskrit phrase, translated as "Thou art that." *Tat* here refers to the 'Brahman', *Asi* means 'are' and *Tvam* is the self. The words when said together convey that 'You are the only reality that exists.'

Dhyana began the year with an interactive session titled "Painted Faces: - The Initiation" on the 12th of August, 2016. This was an activity where students were paired individuals who were unknown to them- faces they may have seen in college, might have exchanged smiles with, but never spoken with. This was cathartic session where students largely unfamiliar with each other till this point of time could now get acquainted, speak from their hearts, confide, heal, and re-energize within a safe space.

On the 4th of October, 2017, Dhyana organised the screening of the award winning film 'I am Kalam' directed by Nila Madhab Panda. Keeping in mind Dhyana's emphasis on self-exploration, the movie was chosen for its storyline about a boy who pursues his inner calling of becoming like the then President Mr. Kalam. The screening was attended by a large number of students and was followed by a discussion.

Dr. Renu Bahl, Associate Professor in the Political Science Department of LSR, delivered a lecture on 'The Upanishadic Concept of the Self' on the 6th of October, 2016. Dr. Bahl spoke of the various aspects and perspectives within the Upanishads and the influences that shape selfhood. The talk was followed by an interaction with the audience.

Dhyana organized an interactive session with Ms. Ameeta Mehra, an alumna of LSR and Head of the Gnostic Centre on 27th of October 2016. She spoke on the "The Power of Meditation and Concentration – A Practicum to Deal with Day-to-Day Problems". Ms. Mehra explained how meditation could help control anger, moderate aspects of our behavior that we wish to change, develop inner poise in daily life and deal with difficult situations calmly. The lecture came to a close with two brief guided meditation sessions.

On the 2nd of March, 2017, Ms. Ananya Vajpeyi was invited to speak on "Selfhood and Solidarity". Ms. Vajpeyi who was also the founder Dhyana society, is currently a fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies. The lecture was focused on the ways of embracing 'otherness', and patiently dealing with a plural environment by making space for differences and dissent. She emphasized on the importance of fighting against caging thinking minds by coming together in our own selfhood and as a collective to express solidarity.

Mr. Gurcharan Das, a journalist and international best-selling author visited LSR on the 9th of March and delivered a lecture on "The Difficulty of Being Good". He discussed the 'Mahabharata' and its central notion of 'Dharma'. He narrated various events from the 'Mahabharata' and drew parallels with the contemporary world. The floor was then opened

for questions, and many students interacted with Mr. Das. The session ended with students getting copies of Mr. Das's books signed by him.

On 23rd of March 2017, Dhyanaorganised a talk on 'The Buddhist Conception of the Self' by Mr. Kabir Saxena, a Buddhist monk and the Director of Maitreya Buddha Project in Kushinagar. Mr. Kabir said that in today's competitive world, the significance of Mother Nature and the human-nature relationship have declined. He further stated that aggression could not be the answer to aggression. Rather this needs to be a time of engaging in peaceful deliberations and decision-making. He concluded his lecture by stating his Holiness the Dalai Lama's take on the status of Tibet and the need for peace and harmony. The session ended with a question and answer round.

Dr. Pankaj Jha, Associate Professor of the History Department of LSR gave an illuminating talk on 'Love and Other Emotions of Power in Medieval Sufism' on 13th April, 2017. Dr. Jha discussed the various stages of love in context of Sufism. He demystified various notions about power and the myths that revolve around Sufism. He also spoke about the politics that Sufism has been subject to till date. The session ended with an enthusiastic question and answer round.