

Talk on Deepening Democracy in India through a Gandhian Perspective

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Prof. Nadkarni, delivered the talk on 'Deepening democracy in India through a Gandhian perspective' followed by an interaction with the participants held at itie Knowledge Solutions, Rajajinagar. This talk was based on his upcoming book, 'Democratic Decentralization – Gandhi's Vision and Indian Reality'. In his talk he outlined the evolution of Panchayati Raj Institutions and

argued for the better integration of PRIs with the state and central administrative and legislative structures. The basis for this argument emerges from the Gandhian idea that empowering the individual does not end with providing voting rights but involving him in the decision making process. The talk highlighted the fact that, only in Swaraj or self-rule that an individual can reach one's full potentiality and feel empowered, which in turn can enable him or her to enforce policies which secure people's welfare. The speaker noted that the shortcomings of the present system of distance democracy are that it has resulted in corruption and self-centredness in politics. On the other hand, for Gandhi, politics was a sacred space, a field for altruism to play a full role. Hence, according to Gandhi, it is PRIs that allow the participation of the individuals at the grass root levels and hence such an institution has to be strengthened. Further, the speaker maintained, that the PRIs have to be well connected with the state and central legislative bodies for effective decision making and informed governance. For this, he proposed to provide the representation for the village panchayats in the upper houses at both state and central levels by making necessary amendments in the structures to accommodate them. Detailed discussion on the pros and cons of such a structural change followed the presentation. About 15 people including lawyers, lecturers and research students participated in the discussion.

