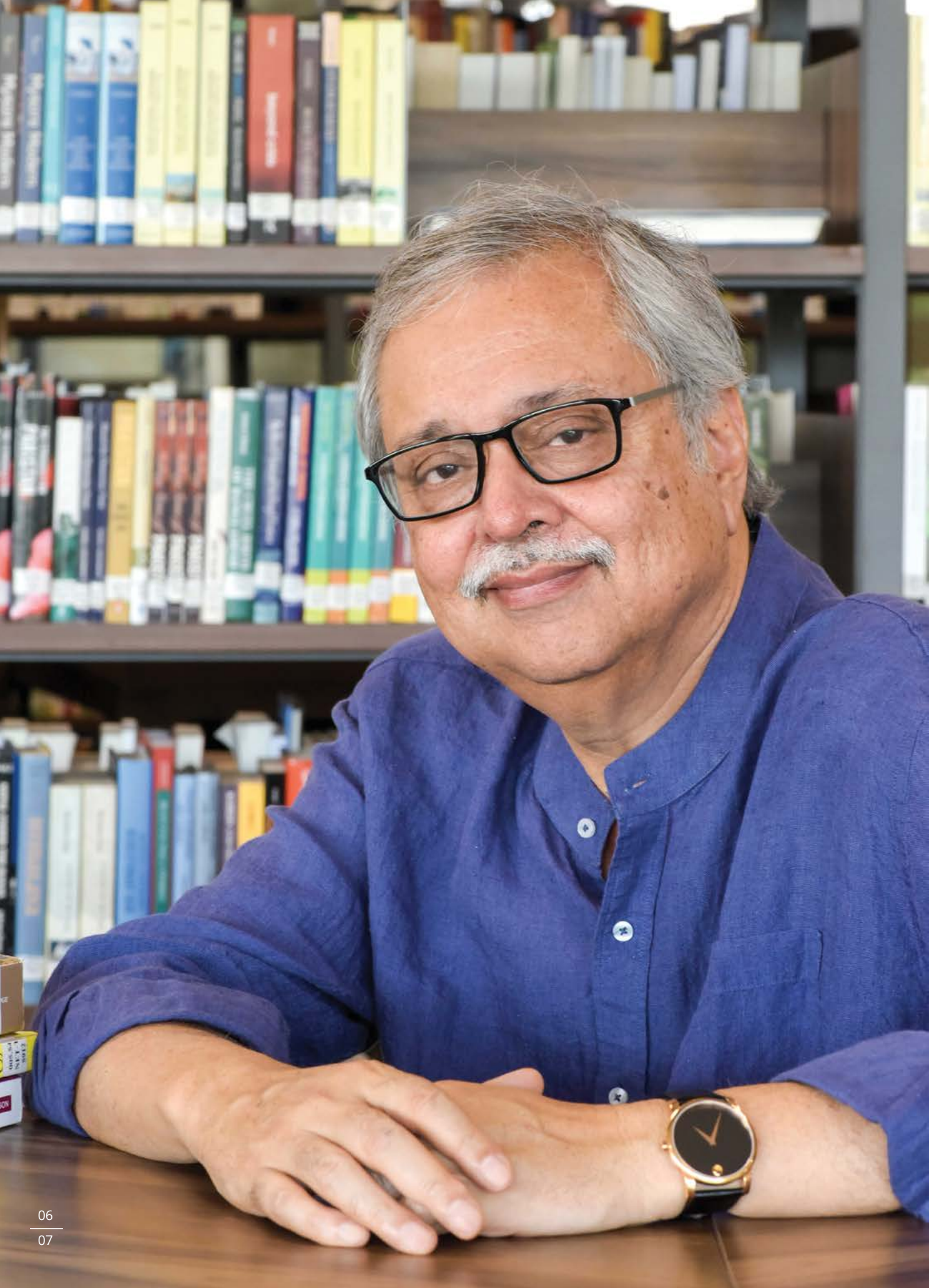# ashoka
UNIVERSITY

ANNUAL REVIEW
2017–18

INDEX

Dear members of the Ashoka family,

I write to introduce to you the Annual Report of Ashoka University for the academic year 2017-18. As all of you know this year saw a number of changes in the University, the most significant one being that Pratap Bhanu Mehta took over as Ashoka's second Vice-Chancellor. These changes, however, did not in any way interrupt the growth and development of the University. On the contrary, these changes hastened and smoothened the continuity that has set Ashoka on the path to become one of the leading institutions of higher education in India. I am pleased and proud to inform all of you that the University you have helped to build is recognised for its excellence in undergraduate teaching. The first group of undergraduates left the portals of Ashoka in May this year to pursue their careers and/or further studies. Most, if not all of them, are now engaged in doing whatever they wanted to do as they intellectually trained themselves at Ashoka University. Their achievements, as the Vice-Chancellor said in his address at the convocation, is the University's best report card.

This success of Ashoka as a top grade undergraduate university presents before us a new and a different kind of challenge. We have now to prove to the global academic community that Ashoka is also a top class postgraduate university whose students and faculty are capable of producing outstanding and original research. This process has just begun and I have no manner of doubt that in the next edition of this report, the Vice-Chancellor will be able to present good tidings about how Ashoka is coping with this challenge.

In my letter to all of you last year, my last as the founding Vice-Chancellor, I noted that Ashoka University will perpetually be a work in progress. The pursuit of excellence in the world of learning does not recognise a finishing line: the quest for knowledge has only a receding horizon. Ashoka University, I promise you, will strive, to seek, to find and to never yield.

Yours sincerely,
RUDRANGSHU MUKHERJEE
Chancellor

Dear friends of Ashoka,

I am delighted to be able to present you this Annual Report, a record of Ashoka's activities during the year. But I hope you will see in this chronicle, not just a record of Ashoka's activities but something more precious: the attempt by an institution to redeem the faith you have put in us. I hope you will find some of your expectations have been fulfilled. It has been exactly a year since I joined as Vice-Chancellor. My enthusiasm for Ashoka, and my confidence about what it can achieve, has only grown during this year. This is in large part due to your generous and unflinching support. But it is also due to the daily experience of Ashoka's campus: the energy and striving of its students, the excellence of its faculty, and the commitment of its staff. This combination has enabled Ashoka to establish itself as one of the most exciting projects in Indian Higher Education.

We are deeply mindful of several important challenges that stem from the scale and ambition of what Ashoka is trying to achieve. Much of the precious year was devoted to ensuring that we were in a position to meet them. The reputation of Ashoka's undergraduate programme and the YIF is well established. The quality of the student body is getting better on a number of parameters including academic excellence. Ashoka is also a more socially diverse campus. But there is much more work to be done in this area so that we can truly become the nation's University. But we need to ensure that the promise of pedagogical excellence we made to our students can be redeemed as the number of students grows larger. To this end we have been doing a thorough review of our curriculum and teaching practices, so that we maintain a reputation for excellence and innovation.

I am pleased to be able to report that Ashoka is also on the pathway to becoming a significant research University. Almost all the pillars required for the construction of a great university are being put in place. Ashoka now has over hundred regular faculty, in addition to scores of visitors. Our faculty are already doing exciting and top quality research in a number of areas. We are striving to ensure that the culture of Ashoka brings the best out of its faculty. But the cornerstone of our ambitions as a research university will be producing the leading scholars and scientists of tomorrow. We are beginning to launch a graduate programme. But we are mindful of the enormity of the challenge. This programme will require extra resources, an imaginative approach to creating a top class research culture, and the creating of new interdisciplinary centres that can push the frontiers of knowledge.

Ashoka's campus is not just a piece of infrastructure. It is a vibrant community of students, scholars and staff. The current campus is close to being built out to capacity. But we have, fortunately, acquired another 25 acres of land to ensure that Ashoka's campus remains an unrivalled experience.

Ashoka is a private university, but it is also a public trust. It's most important achievement has been to demonstrate that it is possible to create an institution that has high standards of governance, unrivalled excellence in teaching, and ambitious goals in research. We are immensely grateful to you for making this possible. I hope in coming years you will see an institution of which you are truly proud.

Yours sincerely,
PRATAP BHANU MEHTA
Vice-Chancellor

Yo**ung**

The
India
Fellowship

The Young India Fellowship (YIF), Ashoka's flagship programme, is a one-year multidisciplinary postgraduate diploma programme in Liberal Studies. It brings together young individuals who show exceptional intellectual ability and leadership potential from across the country, and prepares them to become socially committed agents of change. YIF exposes them to a diverse set of subjects and perspectives, delivered by some of the finest teachers from India and around the world. Students come from diverse academic backgrounds such as engineering, the humanities and social sciences, law, medicine, commerce, and science. The programme commenced in 2011 with 57 Fellows and the seventh cohort admitted 279 Fellows in July 2017. In July 2018, the programme admitted its eighth cohort comprising of 289 students.

HIGHLIGHTS

During the 2017-18 session, the YIF witnessed significant growth. The batch size increased to 279 Fellows. This entailed an increase in the number of faculty, courses, and Experiential Learning Module (ELM) projects [more on page 17], making for an increasingly diverse and exciting year. This academic year, students from 25 states and 71 cities in India were taught by 44 professors from all over the world.

FACULTY

YIF continues to follow a strategy of inviting both resident faculty members and distinguished visiting faculty from India and abroad. This includes academics from the University's global partner institutions.

During the 2017-18 session, 11 resident faculty members and 33 visiting faculty members taught at the Fellowship. There were a total of 15 foreign faculty members in this group of visiting faculty. In addition to the abovementioned faculty, ten writing preceptors helped run the YIF's Critical Writing Programme.

Professor Geetanjali Chanda delivering a lecture on gender, culture and popular cinema.

Some professors who taught this year include Dwight Jaggard, Devesh Kapur and Kenwyn Smith (professors at UPenn), Urvashi Butalia (recognised feminist and publisher), AK Shiva Kumar (faculty member at Harvard and ISB), Manoj Mohanan (asst. prof., Duke University), and Shobita Punja (art historian).
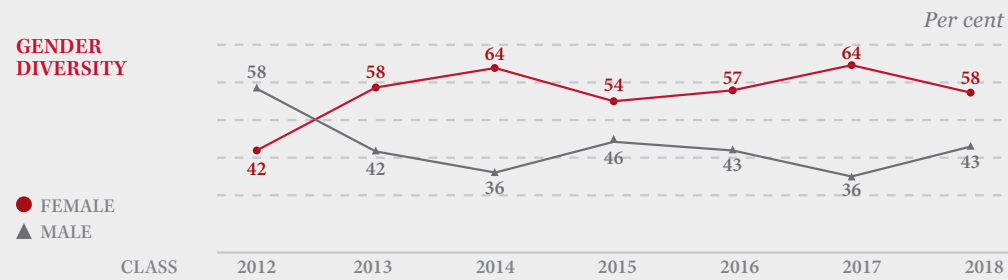
Gender diversity in YIF cohorts across the years.

ADMISSIONS AND OUTREACH

In 2017-18, the YIF Outreach team organized events geared towards making Ashoka a more diverse and inclusive community. These efforts included conducting seminars, mailing marketing materials, and participating in career fairs nationally and internationally. The team also incentivised current Fellows and alumni to reach out to their networks and recommend applicants to the Fellowship. Historically, word of mouth continues to be the strongest outreach and marketing tool. For the 2017-18 batch, the Fellowship admitted a class of 279 Fellows, of which 160 were women.

At the end of the 2017-18 session, YIF had received 3,134 completed applications and accepted 289 Fellows as a part of the incoming batch.

ACADEMICS

The YIF offered 8 core courses taken by all Fellows, as well as 35 elective courses with approximately 100 students to a section. As before, the focus was on the breadth of disciplines offered. Some of the new courses on offer this year include disciplines such as Sociology, Design Thinking, Diaspora Studies and Public Health Systems, and Kabir as a Poet of Vernacular Modernity. At the end of their term, Fellows not only need to have sound academic knowledge but also be effective communicators.

The Critical Writing Programme trains Fellows to possess three core skills – critical thinking, reading, and writing. This was the first year the programme came under the umbrella of the YIF, and Fellows' feedback at the end of the year ranked this as the second-most meaningful aspect of their YIF experience. Ten preceptors taught the whole class in small groups over an eight-month period. The academic year also saw the launch of *Final Draft*, the journal of YIF Critical Writing.

FINANCIAL AID

All Young India Fellows receive a minimum threshold of scholarship. Ashoka operates on a principle of admission wherein students are offered financial aid depending on the economic need and profile of their family.

YEAR	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14*	2014–15	2015–16	2016–17	2017–18
SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED	4.5	4.8	3.3	4.9	5.5	6.4	8.2

Rs crore

*In 2013, the structure of the YIF scholarships was revised

"Through the Experiential Learning Module (ELM), I worked with SEWA, an NGO that works with women in the non-formal economic sector. I was working with the children of these women in six communities. That experience completely changed my understanding of educational opportunities in urban areas and how we can tackle this issue."

SWETA KUMARI (YIF 2016)

Division of ELM Projects Across Sectors (2017-18)

- 14.8%
- 14.8%
- 12.5%
- 12.5%
- 18.2%
- 2.3%
- 6.8%
- 8.0%
- 5.7%
- 4.4%
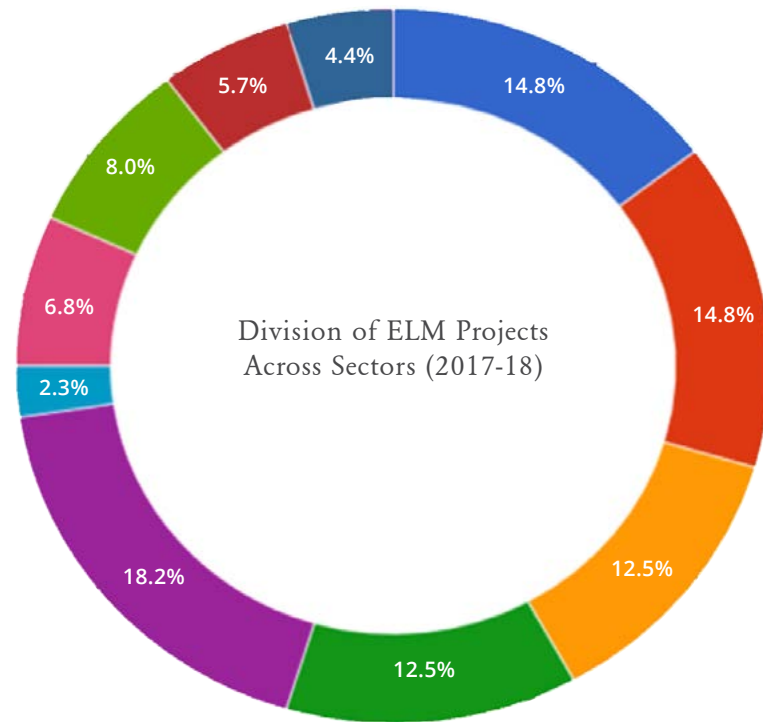
PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

YIF requires Fellows to undertake an eight-month-long internship known as the Experiential Learning Module (ELM). This is a core aspect of the YIF curriculum. The ELM projects serve as effective platforms for Fellows to learn problem-solving, teamwork, client engagement, communication skills, project management, planning, and execution. An analysis of their performance as reflected in their composite grades in three stages has shown a steady overall growth. In the 2017-18 cohort, Fellows were organised in teams of three and were engaged with 93 projects across diverse sectors. [refer to chart on the left]

At the end of the academic year 2017-18, all Fellows who opted to avail placement services were placed successfully. Sixty-four per cent were placed in the corporate sector and 36 per cent took positions in the social sector. Companies that recruited from the fellowship include McKinsey & Company, Bain & Company, Boston consulting Group, Goldman Sachs, Tata Trusts, and Viacom18.

Students and staff receiving hands-on experience on dealing with the challenge of climate change through a Dutch-based board game called Perspectivity.

CONVOCATION 2018

The University hosted the convocation ceremony for the YIF Class of 2018 on 23 June. The Fellows received their certificates from the guest of honour, Dr Lant Pritchett (Professor of the Practice of International Development at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University). Founders, faculty, friends, and families of the graduating students were present along with other members of the Ashoka family.

Deepak Dennison, Vedhika Krishnakumar, and Kartikay Khetarpal were awarded the Torchbearer Awards for embodying the spirit and ideals of the programme and displaying academic and co-curricular excellence. Arunita Mitash and Ishan Mehandru received the YIF Scholar Awards for leading the batch in academic excellence. The Spirit of YIF Awards were awarded to four Fellows from the cohort: Mayuri Annamalai, Anindya Pandey, Ambika Malik, and Geo Ciril Podipara.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The University will hold the Fellowship size to a cohort of 300 for the foreseeable future. Currently, the key objective is to enhance the quality of the Fellowship experience. This will be done by streamlining the curriculum and administrative structure. Additionally, significant investments have been made towards experiential and peer learning at the Fellowship.

LIBERAL ARTS AND THE MAKING OF A DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONAL

PRAVEEN KHANGHTA

Praveen Khanghta manages research and grants with a special focus on accountability and school governance at Central Square Foundation (CSF). Prior to joining CSF, Praveen served as a Teach For India Fellow. He has conducted research on international relations, Indian politics, and the marginalisation of minorities in urban settings. He graduated from the Young India Fellowship in 2014.
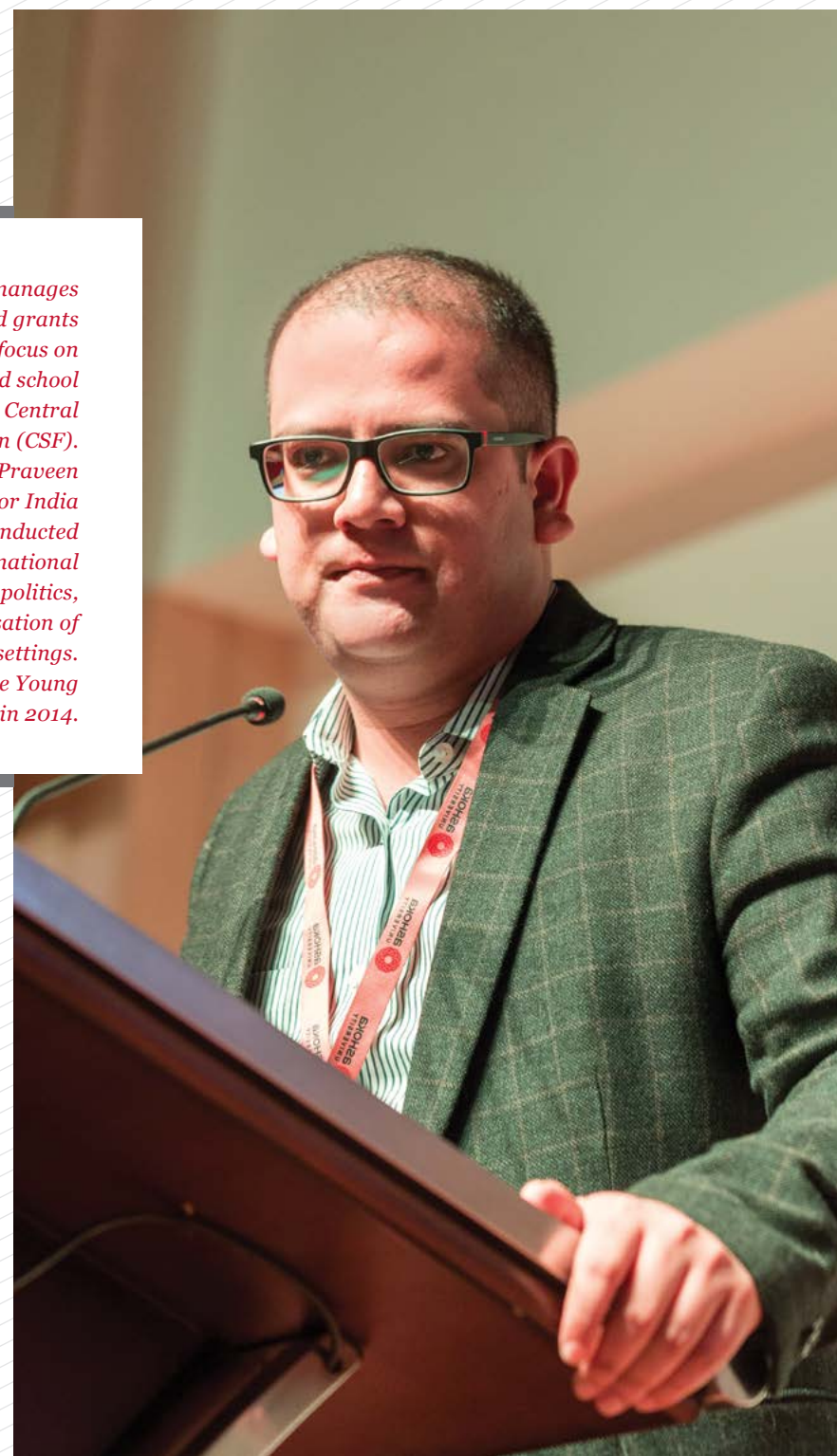
Professor AK Sivakumar who teaches Economics and Public Policy at the Fellowship tends to open his lecture with a quote from Nobel prize-winning economist Robert Lucas. Lucas says, and Sivakumar echoes, that once you begin to think about problems of development and consequence for human welfare, 'it is hard to think about anything else'. Working in the development sector is intoxicating, if deeply complex. More so if, rather than opening one clinic or running one school, you want to make 'population-level' changes and improvement. For example, what is it that the government of Uttar Pradesh could do to improve its social outcomes and bring them closer to those of Kerala or Himachal Pradesh? If this is not possible, what are some binding constraints? Once you make your life's purpose asking (and practically answering) these questions, it is tough to work on anything else.

I have had an opportunity to work on these questions for the past seven years in the education sector. Initiated into this sector with Teach for India, I first taught in a school situated in a slum in Seelampur, Delhi. I had not defined a higher purpose for myself at that time. However, being in my early 20s, I thought the best way to learn from a first job was to throw oneself at the most challenging problems one could find. Working at the grassroots is exhilarating! You could leave the larger superstructure of state and society behind, and by doing your job properly every day, make a meaningful (albeit small) impact. Unfortunately, what you see not working at the grassroots is a symptom of larger national-level problems. It took a year of YIF for me to develop the intellectual muscle to look at both the small and the big, the here-and-now and the abstract. This was followed by a stint at a strategic philanthropic

foundation working as a researcher, grant manager, policy analyst, and an advisor to the government. I have spent the last one-and-a-half years working with the Government of India and multiple state governments on designing and implementing large-scale programs. I think this journey from Seelampur to Shastri Bhawan (the sprawling complex where the Ministry of HRD is based), with a slight detour to the classrooms of YIF, has reinforced in me the importance of a liberal arts education.

Firstly, solving real problems requires a holistic mindset. Sustainable solutions require a buy-in at political, administrative, and social levels. They are usually delivered by people who can effortlessly understand these levels and make themselves be understood. Secondly, it requires a world view seasoned by working at multiple levels: from the grassroots to the systems. I have been amazed to notice the (mostly artificial) mental barriers people create between thought and action. What has been even more troubling is the pride people take in creating those barriers. A grassroot social worker who knows nothing about policy and takes pride in that fact is already limited by his/her experience. Lastly, improving human conditions is a process, so should be the continuous learning which is required to work in this area. A liberal arts education enables all of this while creating the capacity to empathise with those less privileged.

Reducing inequalities and improving human capabilities is one of the greatest pursuits of our times. An education system which prepares young students for the complexities of the process, and equips them with the passion for learning is one of our best bets to achieve this.

The Undergraduate Programme

Chancellor Rudrangshu Mukherjee and Dean of Academic Affairs Mahesh Rangarajan attend a town hall meeting with UG professors and students.

Ashoka is India's first university offering a multidisciplinary, integrated liberal arts and sciences programme. The undergraduate (UG) course was introduced in August 2014. Ashoka's Sciences programme – with physics and biology – was launched in 2017. A distinctive feature of the University's UG programme is its Foundation Courses that precede the selection of majors and minors. These include courses such as Literature and the World, Principles of Science, Social and Political Formations, Indian Civilisations, and Introduction to Mathematical Thinking.

HIGHLIGHTS

The undergraduate programme currently offers 11 pure majors and 8 interdisciplinary majors such as Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE), and Computer Science and Entrepreneurship. It additionally offers minors and co-curricular courses.

In 2017-18, faculty recruitment in all disciplines ensured that core faculty strength was achieved with careful attention to standards of excellence. From a total strength of 83 at the end of academic year 2016-17, the University now has 69 permanent and 36 visiting faculty.

In May 2018, Ashoka hosted the convocation for its second undergraduate batch and the founding cohort of the Ashoka Scholars Programme (ASP) [more on page 58]. The graduating ASP Scholars joined the University at its inception in 2014. The students were a part of the University's founding UG batch before opting to continue their academic journey as Ashoka Scholars. Across four years, 1,039 students have studied in the undergraduate programme.

FACULTY

The focus in faculty recruitment for the academic year 2017-18 has been on building the sciences while investing in expanding the existing disciplines at Ashoka.

The natural sciences department launched with four faculty members, two each in biology and physics. The two professors in the Department of Biology were Kaveri Rajaraman Indira (PhD, Harvard University), and Imroze Khan (PhD, Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Mohali). Over 2017-18, three biologists were further recruited as assistant professors – Shubhasis Haldar (PhD, Indian Institute of Chemical Biology), Sougata Roy (PhD, University of Montreal), and Anup Padmanabhan (PhD, National University of Singapore). The department is led by Distinguished Visiting Professor LS Shashidhara (PhD, University of Cambridge).

Right: Former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright at an Ashoka Crossover Series lecture. She is a graduate of Wellesley College, one of Ashoka's international partners.

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya (PhD, Northwestern University), former director of Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, led the formation of the physics department at Ashoka. Prior to that, Professor Bhattacharya was a member of the Ashoka University Science Advisory Group (AUSAG). The group was instrumental in the setting up of the natural sciences at Ashoka. At the start of the 2017-18 session, he was joined by Bikram Phookun (PhD, University of Maryland).

In mathematics, senior mathematician Rajendra Bhatia (PhD, Indian Statistical Institute) moved to Ashoka from ISI Delhi. Kumarjit Saha (PhD, Indian Statistical Institute) joined as assistant professor during the session. The Department of Computer Sciences had a total strength of six permanent faculty at the end of the 2017-18 session. This includes Ravi Kothari from IBM (PhD, West Virginia University).

Simultaneously, significant developments took place in the humanities and social sciences. Multilingual scholar and translator Rita Kothari (PhD, Gujarat University) joined the Department of English. The department also welcomed a number of younger faculty, including digital humanist Johannes Burgers (PhD, The City University of New York). At the end of the academic year, the economics department had a total strength of 13 permanent faculty.

The total strength of faculty at the end of the academic year 2017-18 was 105.

ADMISSIONS AND OUTREACH

Ashoka's outreach efforts continued throughout the year to create a diverse and inclusive cohort of undergraduates. The efforts entailed engagement with over 350 schools across the country and over 10 countries abroad. This engagement was conducted by means of school presentations, international and national seminars, faculty workshops, and career fairs. Resources were dedicated to international outreach with an emphasis on the SAARC region, Asia Pacific, Middle East, and Africa. As a result, students joined Ashoka from over 250 schools across 86 cities and 21 states in India. The University also welcomed students from 11 countries including Afghanistan and Tibet.

At the end of the 2017-18 session, the UG programme had received 3,343 completed applications and accepted 459 students in the incoming batch.

GENDER DIVERSITY

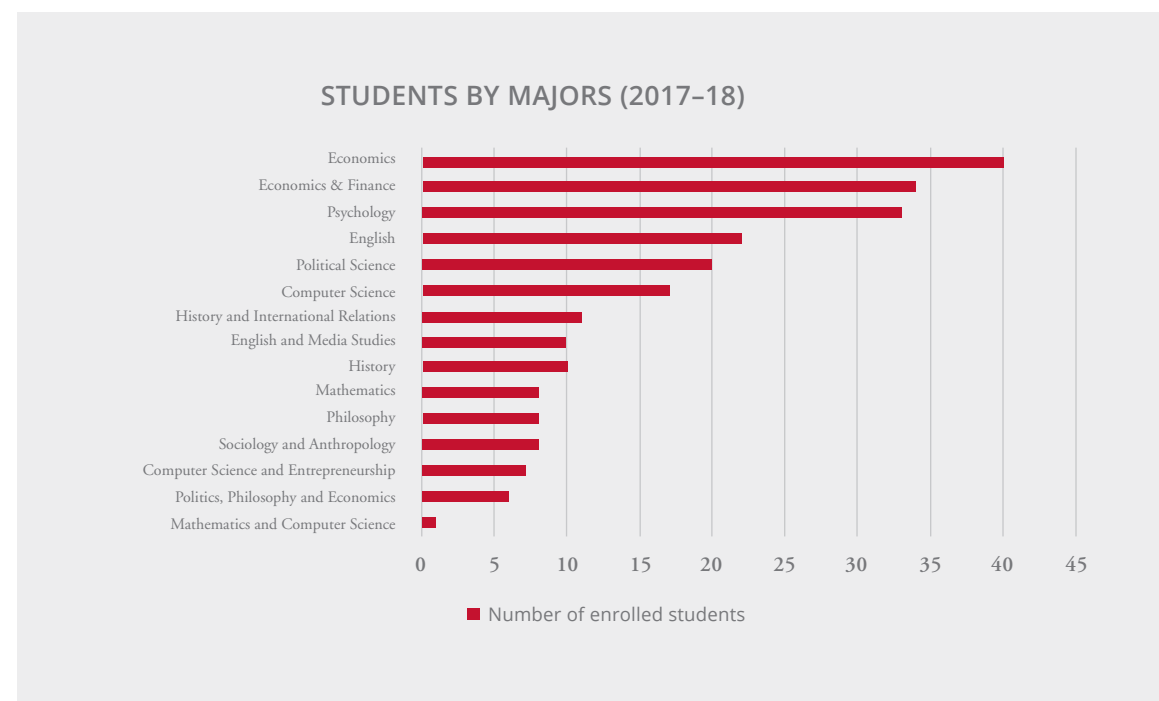| CLASS OF	WOMEN (%)
2017	51
2018	58
2019	57
2020	54

"A vibrant liberal arts programme – constructed out of the bricks and mortar of Foundation Courses, the pillars and girders of majors and minors, and the *jaali* lattices of co-curricular – is always a work in progress."

JONATHAN GIL HARRIS
(Professor of English)

STUDENTS BY MAJORS (2017–18)

Major	Number of enrolled students
Economics	40
Economics & Finance	34
Psychology	33
English	22
Political Science	20
Computer Science	17
History and International Relations	10
English and Media Studies	10
History	10
Mathematics	8
Philosophy	8
Sociology and Anthropology	8
Computer Science and Entrepreneurship	7
Politics, Philosophy and Economics	6
Mathematics and Computer Science	1

■ Number of enrolled students

ANKITA PODDAR (UG 2019)

"From world-class academics to leading faculty, my experience at Ashoka has helped me explore diverse ideas, opportunities, and ideologies. The blend of academic rigour with real-world experience is what constantly challenges and pushes me to do better."

ACADEMICS

To graduate with a bachelor's degree, students must pass courses that are broadly divided into three categories – Foundation, Major (including interdisciplinary majors) and Co-curricular Courses.

Ashoka restructured the Foundation Courses (FC), an integral part of the University curriculum, during the academic year 2017-18. The FCs were reduced by one course to allow students more flexibility in selecting their majors. A few formerly optional FCs were made compulsory as they were considered essential for a strong academic foundation. These courses are Quantitative Reasoning, Environmental Studies, and Mathematical Thinking.

Academic performance for undergraduate students continued to rise for the fourth consecutive year. Student performance has been consistent and women continue to be better represented in the top performance band.

Right: Professor Sanjiva Prasad, visiting faculty for computer science, in class with UG students.

FINANCIAL AID

Ashoka offers need-based financial aid and all incoming students are eligible to apply for full and partial scholarships. Nearly 50 per cent of all students enrolled in the undergraduate programme receive varying degrees of financial aid.

Out of the 386 students admitted in 2017-18, 177 students received some degree of aid. This ranged from exceptional financial aid (tuition, meals, and residence cost) to aid that covered tuition. An amount of Rs 21 crore was given by way of financial aid to undergraduate students during the academic year.

			Rs crore
2.7	**6.3**	**12.5**	**21**

2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Academic Year			*Includes 4th year*
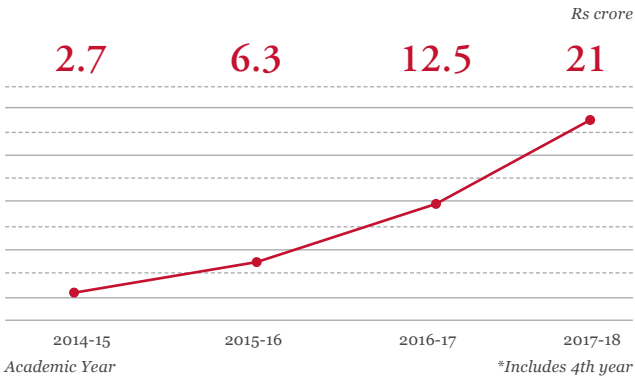
UG scholarships across the years.

PLACEMENTS

The Career Development Office [more on page 40] conducted over 63 workshops/sessions in 2017-18. Over 30 sectoral workshops were organised to give students an overview of opportunities in various sectors. Students also benefitted from access to quality one-on-one career counselling, CV reviews, mock interviews and case interviews.

More than 165 organizations conducted outreach and placement efforts on Ashoka's campus and the graduating batch of Ashoka Scholars (fourth-year) have been offered employment by leading organisations across the country. All students who chose to opt for placements were successfully hired and the salaries offered are amongst the highest of any UG programme in India. The companies include McKinsey & Company, Deloitte, Star TV, Genpact, Zomato, RBL Bank, India Infoline, MuSigma, and Central Square Foundation.

The Office of Global Education and Strategic Partnerships (GESP) [more on page 38] creates a number of internship opportunities for undergraduate students. A total of 172 internships were offered for UG first and second-year students in the summer of 2018. These spanned the social sector, corporate sector, and start-ups. Another 18 interns worked with various departments and centres within the University.

GRADUATE STUDIES

The GESP held several graduate information sessions for the senior classes. The office helped them navigate the admissions offices of several schools including University of Michigan, University of Warwick, and London School of Economics. As a result, over 35 Ashoka graduates are headed for master's and PhD degrees at prestigious universities across the world. These include universities such as King's College London, Sciences Po, The Graduate Institute, London School of Economics, Univeristy of Sussex, Indian School of Business, and University of Edinburgh.

UG CONVOCATION

On 18 May, Ashoka hosted the undergraduate convocation for the Class of 2018. The event celebrated the achievements of students who completed the three-year bachelor's programme. In the same ceremony, 89 students from the founding batch of the ASP were awarded the postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Studies and Research (DipASR).

Sheldon Pollock (Arvind Raghunathan Professor of South Asian Studies, University of Columbia) delivered the keynote address. Nirupama Rao (Foreign Secretary and Ambassador) was the chief guest.

Awards were granted to students who maintained a high CGPA (out of a total of 4.0). Fifteen students graduated Summa Cum Laude (CGPA 3.9 and above) and 29 students graduated Magna Cum Laude (CGPA 3.75 and above). The third honour, Cum Laude (CGPA 3.6 and above), was bestowed upon 43 students.

THE ROAD AHEAD

In 2017-18, the University consolidated its foundation of an intensive academic framework supported by strong pedagogical practices. In the upcoming academic year, Ashoka aims at improving the systems and processes surrounding this core mission.
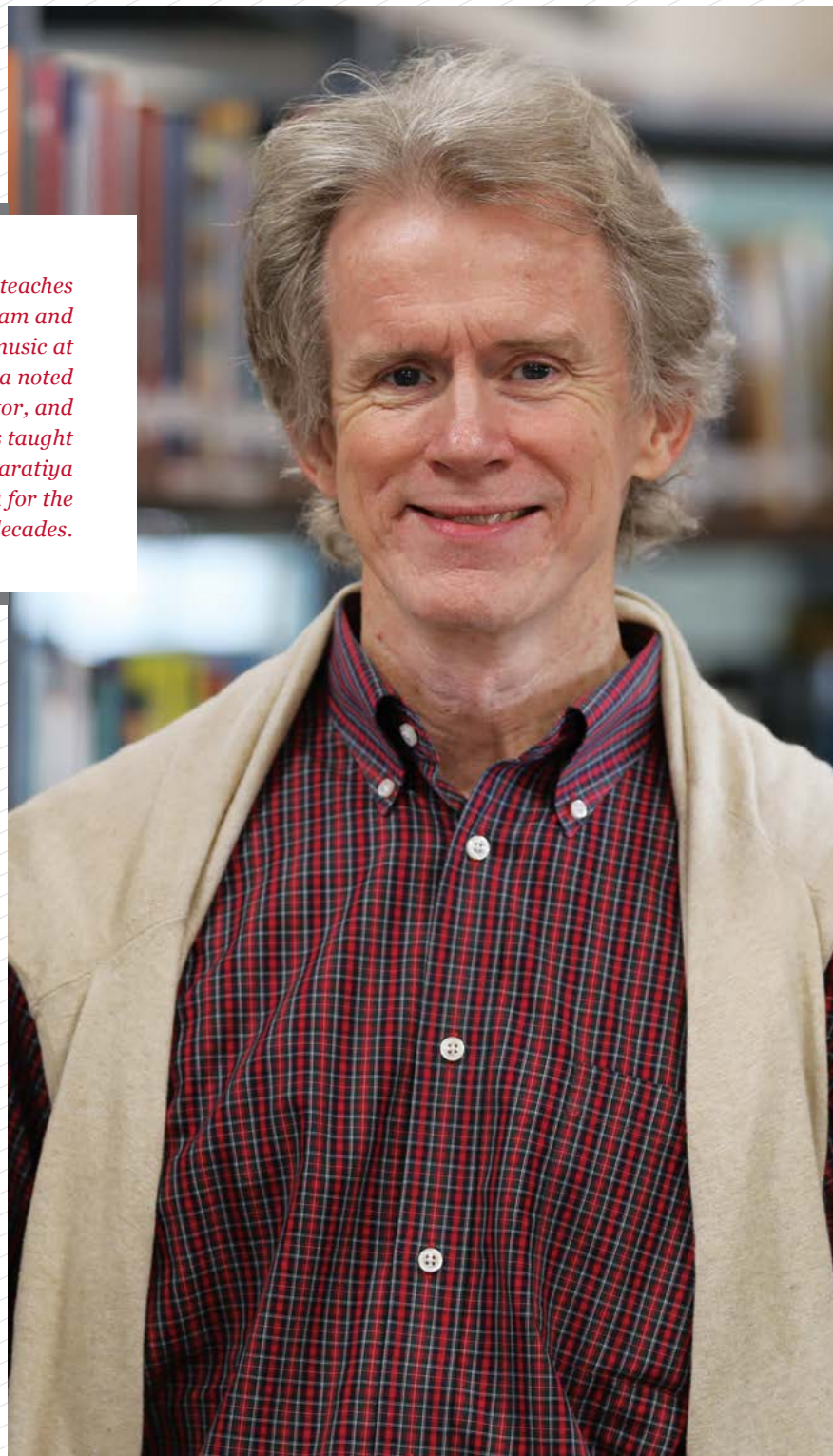
Performance Arts and Experiential Learning

JUSTIN MᶜCARTHY

Justin McCarthy teaches Bharatanatyam and Western classical music at Ashoka. Justin is a noted dancer, instructor, and choreographer. He has taught at the Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra for the last three decades.

Dravidian chieftains danced. Buddhist kings danced. Jain princes danced. Hindu princesses danced. Mughal nawabs danced. In the north, the east, the south and the west, temple dancers danced, courtesans danced. Royal ensembles danced, traveling troupes danced. Acrobats, jesters, gypsies, jugglers, all danced. Until not so long ago, all of India danced!

You might wonder what dance could possibly have to do with higher education. Students at Ashoka are learning that performing arts can be invaluable experiential tools for exploring varied but inter-related fields of knowledge.

A theatre student performed his own piece at one of the campus construction sites. It was a referential enactment of the disrobing of Draupadi as described in the Mahabharata. One viewer described the performance as emotionally charged, but also as a way of cultural questioning amidst the debris of actual physical construction.

A dance student connected Bharatanatyam and Shakespeare in a dance depiction of the shadowy figure of Sycorax from *The Tempest*. Her piece used dance and literature to create a dynamic critique of colonial history, addressing patriarchal dominance in a truly novel way.

A music student, while pursuing a summer course in Istanbul, heard a street musician playing and recognised the melody. He wrote to me, saying, 'The joy of being able to recognise a tune in the middle of a crowded street in a foreign land was akin to the anticipation of homecoming.'

Everyone talks about cultural values today. What about a value-based education which involves a cultural exploration of the many modes of thinking and living that have criss-crossed the subcontinent for centuries, interweaving and enmeshing themselves? The cultural memories that live in the dancer's body, in the actor's gestures, and in the musician's voice are pulsating evidence of complex histories.

Whether a student is pursuing philosophy, economics, mathematics, geography, or history, their studies are stimulated by tangential and experiential studies in performing arts. Because of the ephemeral nature of performing arts, their histories tend to seep into other disciplines, allowing for a plurality of possible meanings. Through the study of proximities, crossovers, and fusions, we arrive at the questions which form the core ethos of performing arts at Ashoka. What is tradition, both past and present? What is heritage, both past and present? What is respect? What is tolerance? How can we learn to revel in multiplicity?

To me, the ideal university is implied in the name itself. Schools, like schools of fish, imply smaller, protective entities perfectly suitable for nurturing an individual's mind. The enriching, broadening aspect of education is proper to a 'university', the word implying access to a vast but interconnected universe of knowledge systems. And, in my own naïve way, I would like to believe that the university prepares young adults to be good universal citizens, i.e., primarily citizens of the world, imbued with a spirit of curiosity and generosity in trying to know, understand, and accept others.

Student
Services -
Offices and
Centres

OFFICE OF GLOBAL EDUCATION AND STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS (GESP)

The GESP leads all international partnerships. Over the last four years, over 200 Ashoka students have participated in summer abroad programmes. In addition, Ashoka students have had the opportunity to study abroad for a full semester. In 2017-18, as a part of a university collaboration, Ashoka hosted two UG students from Sciences Po and two students from HEC Paris.

The GESP offered ten summer courses during the summer of 2018. This included two joint courses with US partner universities. The first, 'Mega Cities: Many Lives of Delhi', was co-taught by Thomas Blom Hansen (Stanford University) and Durba Chattaraj (Ashoka University). The second, 'Indian Democracy in Motion', offered to students at Princeton University, was taught by Ashoka's Vice-Chancellor, Pratap Bhanu Mehta.

Above: A UG student in conversation with a Koç University representative at the Study Abroad Fair.
Above (Left): Ameeta Mehra, Founder and Trustee of Gnostic center, New Delhi with students.

OFFICE OF LEARNING SUPPORT (OLS)

The OLS promotes an inclusive environment for students with learning difficulties and sensory impairments. This is done through individual support plans to help students with specific needs achieve their academic goals. The OLS aims to create equal opportunity for students irrespective of their special needs. They also serve as a central resource on specific-needs-related information and services.

In 2017-18, three students with specific learning disabilities graduated with a good academic record. Twenty-six new students approached the centre for support. In the upcoming academic year, the OLS aims to collaborate with Ashoka's partner universities to create a wider gamut of resources for inclusive higher education spaces. Members of the team attended the 'Dialogues on Disability' programme in Germany in August 2018.

OFFICE OF STUDENT AFFAIRS (OSA)

The OSA offers programmes and services that help foster a stimulating intellectual life outside the Ashoka classrooms. It oversees student activities, student governance, and campus events. It also organises workshops such as leadership programmes to aid in the overall growth of Ashoka's undergraduate student body. The OSA serves as a key link between students, faculty, and the administration. The areas of campus life that the office oversees include residence life, sports, health and safety, and the student societies.

OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS (OAA)

The OAA administers the full spectrum of Ashoka University's undergraduate academic experience. This ranges from course scheduling and registration to course assessments and faculty feedback. The OAA works closely with faculty in developing academic programmes. It also liaises with the Office of Student Life in ensuring cohesiveness between academics and extra-curricular programmes at Ashoka. At the end of the year, the office releases the 'Deans List', honouring students with the best academic records.

CAREER DEVELOPMENT OFFICE (CDO)

The CDO aims at helping students evaluate their career goals, prepare for recruitment, explore new possibilities, and navigate the tangled web of job-searching. The office offers one-on-one counselling sessions and workshops for skills such as resume building, appearing for interviews, and writing cover letters. They also work on creating avenues for employers to interact with students and foster these relationships to facilitate recruitment. In 2017-18, 273 students opted in for placements across batches and received a total of 323 offers from the 165+ companies that participated in the recruitment process.

CENTRE FOR WRITING AND COMMUNICATION (CWC)

The CWC works closely with the academic community in Ashoka to develop critical thinking, writing, and communication skills. The CWC provides writing and pedagogical support across disciplines. This is done in-class and through lectures, creative workshops, and one-on-one sessions. It also designs and implements learning modules specific to students who need additional learning support. The centre is led by its Director, Durba Chattaraj.

The centre conducted over 1,800 one-on-one sessions during the academic year 2017-18. In April 2018, CWC hosted a two-day, national conference on writing theory and classroom pedagogy called Reflections on Writing. Scholars and professionals from 13 institutions across the country attended the conference. The centre also introduced Research Forum, a platform for the academic staff to share their research.

CENTRE FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP (CfE)

The CfE serves as an academic centre while incubating and accelerating start-ups. It aims to nurture the entrepreneurial endeavours of students, fellows, and faculty alike. The centre is committed to assisting students in every stage of the life cycle of an enterprise. This commences right from ideation and initiation to incubation and investment. It does this for both mainstream innovations as well as ventures around social innovation and sustainability. Its Director, Priyank Narayan, leads the centre.

The flagship programmes of the CfE include the Entrepreneur in Residence (EiR) programme and the AIM Smart City Accelerator programme. Other than these programmes, the centre offers a minor in entrepreneurship for undergraduate students. It conducts events and institutes awards such as Start-up Ashoka, Hult Prize, Ashoka Pillar Award, and a speaker series. Until the start of the 2017 session, the EiR programme has incubated 30 start-ups and the AIM Smart City Accelerator programme has incubated 14.

The CfE will be offering two courses in the upcoming year. It is also in conversation with University of Cape Town and Tel Aviv University, Israel, for collaborative programmes for the academic year 2018-19.

ASHOKA CENTRE FOR WELL-BEING (ACWB)

The ACWB offers counseling and psychological support for students, staff and faculty at Ashoka. The ACWB was established to provide a safe space that offers free and confidential individual and group counseling support. A large part of the centre resources are spent on promoting the value of good mental health to improve individual coping capacity through skill building. Director Arvinder J Singh leads the centre.

This year, over 50 volunteers signed up to be a part of the Dial-a-Peer helpline which offers emotional support through trained student volunteers. Additionally, the Friends of ACWB programme encouraged students to create awareness through campaigning opportunities. The well-being lab within the centre offers training programmes, one of which was the hugely successful Gatekeeper programme created in consultation with the University of Pennsylvania CAPS. Through this programme, over 40 RA's and 90 cohort leaders were trained in identifying signs of anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation within the community, and connecting those in need of help to the centre.

Finally, the centre conducted mandatory sessions for well-being for the 700+ students of the incoming undergraduate and YIF batches during the orientation for this academic year, in addition to sessions with their parents. Over the next year, the centre aims to continue its work by offering itself as a resource for external conferences as well as creating more opportunities for capacity building for all stakeholders of the Ashoka community.

"Ashoka has provided me tremendous academic support through one-on-one interactions with professors and peer tutors. Assistance from the Office of Learning Support and the Centre for Writing and Communication has helped me complete my assignments. I hope to join the civil services and contribute to society, rather than depend on it."

KUNWAR ARORA (UG 2020)

Centres
at Ashoka

Strategic Nonprofit Management – India
July 31 – August 4, 2017

Ashoka has established eight Centres of Excellence that foster thought leadership, generate knowledge, and create new avenues of research in areas of social relevance. The aim of these centres is to encourage academic and research collaborations in order to establish an exciting interdisciplinary environment on campus. Three, out of these eight centres, work primarily with students and have been mentioned in the last section [page 37]. At present, there are 80-plus research projects conducted across various centres.

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOUR CHANGE (CSBC)

The CSBC was established with a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in close partnership with Professor K Viswanath (Harvard TH Chan School of Public Health) and WPP. The centre designs and tests behavioural change interventions in areas such as nutrition, sanitation, gender, and agriculture. For this, it works closely with the central and state government, NGOs, academic institutions, and the private sector. The CSBC's vision is to establish an Indian institution that is globally reputed for thought leadership and excellence in impactful behaviour change interventions for low-income and marginalised populations. Its Director, Neela Saldanha, leads the centre.

Over 2017-18, the centre initiated several projects, including the creation of a behavioural lab to test interventions in low-income populations. It also designed a nutrition behaviours database to effectively target interventions and expand the use of fast-growing digital technologies to reach underserved populations.

SHRUTI SHUKLA (YIF 2016)

"When I first read, 'become socially committed agents of change', I didn't quite understand what agents of change meant. Now through experience, I realise that it means having the grit to sustain and the empathy to serve others, not as preachers but as their equal. I think this is the most important value I learnt as a Fellow."

The centre conducted numerous seminars and workshops such as a documentary film-making course and a workshop in partnership with the Gates Foundation to introduce students to the concepts of behavioural science.

The CSBC is also collaborating with producers such as BBC Media Action and MTV to create evidence-based entertaining dramas in the areas of sanitation, and sexual and reproductive health.

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL IMPACT AND PHILANTHROPY (CSIP)

The CSIP is South Asia's first academic centre focused on enabling strategic philanthropy for greater social impact. It provides funders and civil society organisations evidence-based insights and knowledge products to increase scale and impact. It also convenes platforms for collaborative learning, and offers programmes to strengthen sustainability in civil society. The centre is led by its Director, Ingrid Srinath.

In addition to providing credible and reliable data-driven insights, the centre also strives to build a culture of evidence-led discourse and decision-making through its projects. It nurtures new leadership by offering a range of initiatives, including an 18-month social sector fellowship programme. It additionally offers programmes for senior non-profit leaders on institution building, governance, and sustainability. These programmes are created in partnership with other academic institutions and sector experts. The CSIP also aids students seeking careers in the social sector.

In the academic year 2017-18, the centre conducted three research studies and launched several projects, including the Social Innovation Summit. The CSIP provided a seed grant to the India Development Review, India's first online knowledge platform on social impact. In July 2017, the centre, in collaboration with Harvard Business School, launched its flagship executive education programme, Strategic Non-profit Management, India (SNMI). The five-day residential course for Indian non-profit leaders aims at building sustainable institutions at scale.

CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN GENDER AND SEXUALITY (CSGS)

Established in 2015, the CSGS aims to study the broader spectrum of questions relating to both gender and sexuality. This spectrum includes issues of inequality, fantasy, pleasure, identity, and politics. Set in the interdisciplinary liberal arts context of the University, the centre is committed to studying the many issues that are encountered at these intersections and address them through scholarship and activism. The centre is led by its Director, Madhavi Menon (Professor, Department of English).

CSGS regularly offers summer internships to students and organises several events on the University campus such as a speaker series, student seminars, workshops, performances, and film screenings. The centre brings together academics, performers, and activists through its speaker series, ISHQ (Issues in Society, History, and Queerness), and the performance series, ADA (Art-Desire-Activism) that run throughout the year.

Professor Gilles Verniers from the TCPD in conversation with Indian politician Renuka Chowdhury.

In November 2017, the CSGS and the Wellesley Centre for Women jointly organized "Sex/Ed", an international conference held in New Delhi. The CSGS also developed a series of 10 short training films in 2017, recognising a lack of effective training resources in India that are specific to the university context. These films, along with a specially designed training manual, are being disseminated at schools and colleges across India to be used starting in the academic year 2018-19.

GENPACT CENTRE FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP (GCWL)

The GCWL is an industry-academia partnership aimed at transforming leadership to a gender-neutral state and bringing women's leadership to the forefront. The GCWL's diligence, guided by academic research and industry benchmarks, is aimed at influencing policy and systemic changes across the Indian corporate and social sector. These changes aspire to support the presence of women in the Indian workforce, reduce female attrition, and foster a merit-based system for advancements to leadership positions. Director Harpreet Kaur leads the centre.

The GCWL successfully ran Leadership Labs at Ashoka University for two consecutive years. The Lab, an ongoing eight-month initiative, empowers young women by providing them with professional and personal tools that enable them to realise their full potential in the workplace.

In February 2017, the centre organised UN's first regional consultation on applying a 'Gender Lens to United Nations Working Principles on Business and Human Rights'. The conference received over

Top, (*from* L to R) : Harpreet Kaur (GCWL), Sarita Motwani (TCS), Preeti Kalra (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation), Deepti Tillai (JobsForHer), and Monica Dhar (Reliance) in a panel discussion at a GCWL event organised in April 2018.

200 delegates from across 34 countries. The centre also offers a course on women, business, and human rights for undergraduate students.

TRIVEDI CENTRE FOR POLITICAL DATA (TCPD)

The TCPD conducts empirical research and promotes data-driven research, policy work, and journalism by producing and disseminating open access political data. It also aims at enhancing knowledge and understanding of political processes and dynamics by conducting research based on the data collected, in partnership with individual scholars or academic institutions. Through the year, the centre initiates dialogue with institutions and organisations such as the Election Commission of India and the Association for Democratic Reforms for matters relating to data sharing and standardisation. Sudheendra Hangal (Professor, computer science) and Gilles Verniers (Assistant Professor, political science) lead the TCPD.

The TCPD covered six state elections this year, collecting data on the main parties' candidates. This led to the publication of more than 20 articles that appeared in *Scroll.in, Hindustan Times, Indian Express, Economic Times, Navbharat Times* and *The Wire*, in English, Hindi and Urdu. This year, the TCPD received Ashoka University's first private research grant, from Facebook, to study the under-representation of women in national and state politics in India.

The centre entered into numerous partnerships in the academic year 2017-18 with organisations such as the Center for International Research (CNRS), Sciences Po Paris, University of Bordeaux, The Centre for Policy Research, and *Hindustan Times*. It also built personal, non-institutional research collaborations with various scholars such as Wendy Singer (Kenton College) and Virginie Dutoya (University of Bordeaux).

Ghar ki Baat:
Family in the World of Literature

RITA KOTHARI

Rita Kothari writes in several languages, and works on borders, language politics and translation. She has to her credit several monographs, translations, edited volumes and awards. She is with the English department at Ashoka University.

A poem by AK Ramanujan leaves a sharp picture of a deer, hunted and desperate to escape, but is not able to, for 'living among relations binds our feet.' Families are central to who we are, what we become and do not. They bind us, bestowing upon us through those bonds, a sense of belonging and security. Occasionally, the binding is noose-like – encircling and drawing away breath. The paradox of family lies in this, in being both the source of misery and liberation, of security and its absence. However this can only do so much to help understand the institution. Whilst being inside the institution experience obfuscates its theorisation, and being outside (and seeing your 'self' entirely as an autonomous entity) inhibits insight into the seduction and shackles of the family. Literature provides, through stories and narratives, sufficient intimacy and the required distance to understand, almost like a foster family. It may show us foster homes more caring than biological families. When Oedipus (in Sophocles' play) was abandoned by Laius and Jocasta, it was his foster parents that bring him up, but that does not make him entirely free of his past. Psychoanalysts have, over the years, had a field day studying the Oedipal guilt, the nightmarish fear of incest that resides deep within cultures. However the Greek spectators of *Oedipus the King* would have also pondered over free will versus fate and destiny. When children commit acts out of ignorance and harm parents, are they to be blamed? Are the sins of parents only their sins, and not spill into the lives of the progeny? Were they sins at all?

It is interesting that these questions play out even in the *Mahabharata* and here too, on the site of the family. Like the curse upon Laius, Yudhishthir's refusal to withdraw from the game of dice also has implications on those around him. Yudhishthir was invited by his uncle Dhritrashtra to join him in a game of gambling. This gesture was not made out of a familial feeling, but to make Yudhishthir lose all that belonged to him. In both cases, the characters were playing out pre-ordained destiny, so where is moral responsibility to be pinned? Do family members simply find themselves in a predicament, or do they not see that no action is ultimately an individual action? In fact, *Mahabharata* very often pits the idea of dharma not only within, but also against the family. That is what makes dharma (truth) or sukshma (subtle).

Texts such as *Oedipus* and *Mahabharata* remind us that that the rich and powerful are not free of allegiances individuals owe, and the crosses they bear. They provide both the certitude of relationships along with the fragility that attends upon them. For instance, we know that Bhima was as brave as Arjuna, if not more, and yet he must remain a caricature so that someone else gets taken more seriously. Oedipus cannot live happily with his wife, not because there's too much falsehood, but there's excessive truth around him. His ignorance or denial does not make it go away, it remains in the memory of ordinary people. These are also texts where families cannot be in denial. The families in these texts are *out*, public. However we are not privy to all interactions within families, and the intricacies of such interactions are beyond our understanding. How do we understand those? Once again, literature provides a sneak-peek into other families, whose truths lie deep in the crevices of the hall of fiction, or sometimes in the kitchens and *aangans* (courtyards) of households. Such churning characterizes the course on Literature and the World, starting in my first monsoon semester at Ashoka.

1. The University cafeteria has both indoor and outdoor seating and is a popular space for students, faculty and administration to convene.

2. Sanskrit scholar Sheldon Pollock delivers the keynote address at the UG Convocation 2018.

3. The Student Commons is one of the several areas in campus that allows for students to work on group assignments, practice on individual projects or just unwind.

4. Core Founders Ashish Dhawan, Pramath Raj Sinha, Sanjeev Bikhchandani and Vineet Gupta greet Founder Harshbeena Sahney Zaveri.

5. Students pose after Chakra, a 3-day long sporting event that included everything from football to Extreme Frisbee.

6. Dwight Jaggard addresses Fellows in Dr Reddy's Auditorium. Prof. Jaggard was the first faculty member to join Ashoka at its inception.

7. Political and social activist Aruna Roy addressing students at the UG convocation 2017.

8. Deputy Dean Aniha Brar speaking to YIF students at the orientation.

9. ASP scholars enjoy a quick snack over evening tea.

10. The indoor sports complex houses several facilities for students, including a swimming pool, shooting range and basketball and badminton courts (pictured here).

11. Journalist Ravish Kumar holding a *baithak* with Ashoka students. The University hosts several formal and informal sessions for students to interact with notable people from across professions.

12. Dean Vanita Shastri and her team with the award for 'Excellence in Internationalisation' given to Ashoka at the fourth FICCI Higher Education Excellence Awards.

13. From left to right: Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, Founding Chancellor Andre Beteille and Founding Vice-Chancellor Rudrangshu Mukherjee at the campus inauguration in 2014.

14. The accessible nature of the gym for students of varying athletic abilities makes it a popular post-class destination.

15. Nobel Laureate Venkatraman Ramakrishnan lighting the ceremonial lamp along with Chancellor Rudrangshu Mukherjee at the UG convocation 2017.
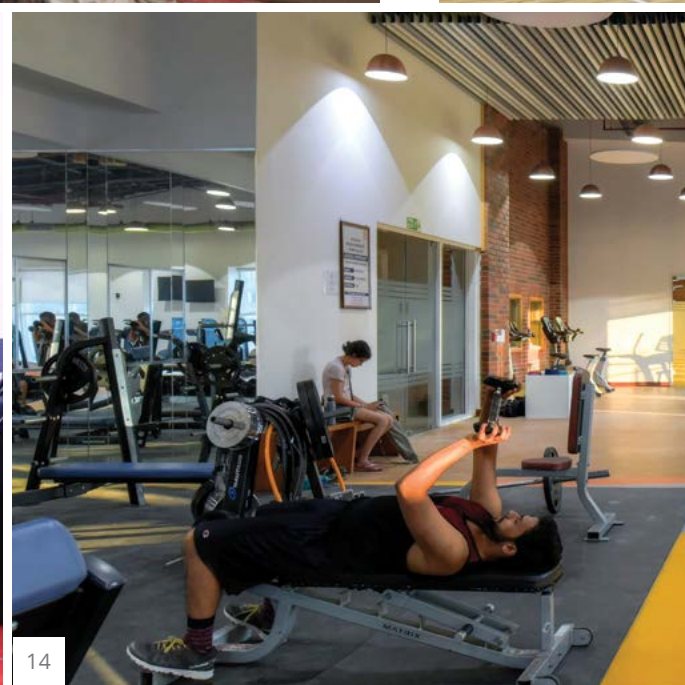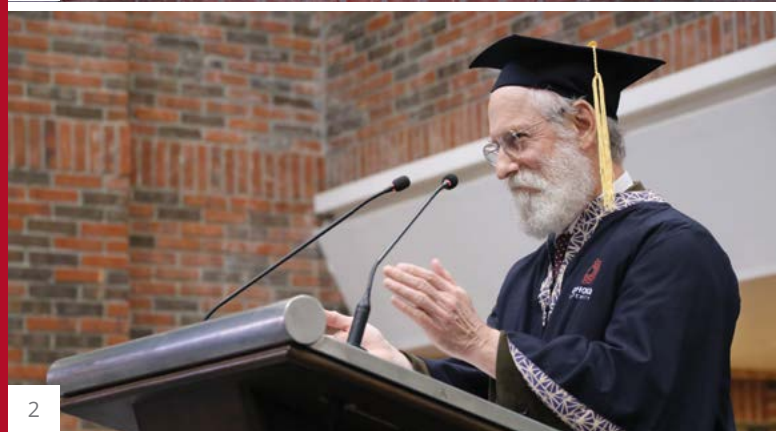
Ashoka
Scholars
Programme (ASP)

After completing the three-year undergraduate programme, students can choose to pursue further research and study for a fourth year at Ashoka. Known as the Ashoka Scholars Programme, the additional year earns Scholars a postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Studies and Research (DipASR). All students who have completed at least 92 credits of their degree programme are eligible for admission. Once enrolled, Scholars have a pool of several tracks to choose from. They can use the year to complete a minor, turn a minor into a second major, choose a specialisation, or prepare for a master's degree. Academic advisors and the GESP support students in constructing thesis arguments and choosing the right programme for their graduate studies.

At the end of the academic year 2017-18, 79 per cent of the graduating cohort expressed interest in the programme. In the academic year 2018-19, 134 scholars will form the new ASP cohort.

From the founding ASP cohort that graduated in 2017-18, six students enrolled in fully funded PhD programmes at schools such as Brown University and Emory University. Fourteen students joined master's programmes at esteemed universities abroad. The universities they will be joining include schools such as University of Oxford, London School of Economics, University of Chicago, University of Washington, and University of Sussex.

"Learning from world-class faculty and a diverse peer group in an intellectually stimulating environment makes the Ashoka academic experience transformational. It has taught me to think critically, listen carefully, and argue coherently. I'm now more comfortable with ambiguity, more cognisant of others' opinions, and more willing to laugh at myself."

ANIRBAN KUNDU (ASP 2018)

Young Scholars
Programme (YSP)

The YSP is a unique summer residential programme that introduces outstanding high school students to the idea of a liberal arts education. The week-long course exposes students to multiple disciplines through interactive learning. This covers a range of activities such as lectures, workshops, discussion groups, project work, presentations, and performances.

The programme received an excellent response in the academic year 2017-18, with a growth of 38 per cent. Moreover, of the 170 students who joined, 111 were women. Students from 136 schools, 18 states, and 41 cities attended the programme. The University also hosted two international students from Ethiopia. The programme was conducted by 16 Ashoka faculty.

Master's and PhD
Programmes

MA IN LIBERAL STUDIES (MLS)

In 2015, Ashoka launched its first postgraduate degree programme – the MLS. Admission is open to students who have graduated from the YIF programme, and are accepted by a faculty mentor to work on a specific research project as a Graduate Assistant.

Since 2015, MLS students have worked on a vast array of disciplines, including human-computer interaction, cognitive psychology, literary theory, and macroeconomics. Five former MLS students are currently pursuing their PhDs in psychology (University of Austin, Washington University, Saint-Louis and University of Maryland), political science (UC Santa Barbara), and social anthropology (University of Edinburgh).

As compared to the academic year 2016-17, when the MLS cohort consisted of nine students, 15 students were admitted to study in the 2017-18 cohort. The students studied a variety of subjects ranging from English, history, and philosophy to psychology and computer science.

MA IN ECONOMICS

The master's degree in economics provides students with an opportunity to train in modern economics by highly qualified academics in the field. The academic approach brings together cutting-edge economic theory and rigorous data analysis. The University has an agreement with MIT J-PAL under which up to 10 master's students engage in internships where they will be trained in Randomised Control Trial (RCT) methodology. The internship lasts for approximately seven months, starting from the end of the second semester to the end of the third semester.

The first MA (Economics) cohort comprises 25 students. Out of the 428 students who appeared for the entrance exam at the end of the academic year 2017-18, 21 students have been selected to form the second cohort.

PHD PROGRAMME

The PhD programme aims to cater to all disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and the natural sciences. In the academic year 2016-17, Ashoka opened applications for PhD programmes in biology, economics, English, and computer science.

In the academic year 2017-18, the University admitted 21 PhD students in five disciplines (biology, history, computer science, economics, and English). All students receive a monthly stipend and an annual contingency grant from Ashoka. More departments will be admitting students to programmes in the 2018-19 session.
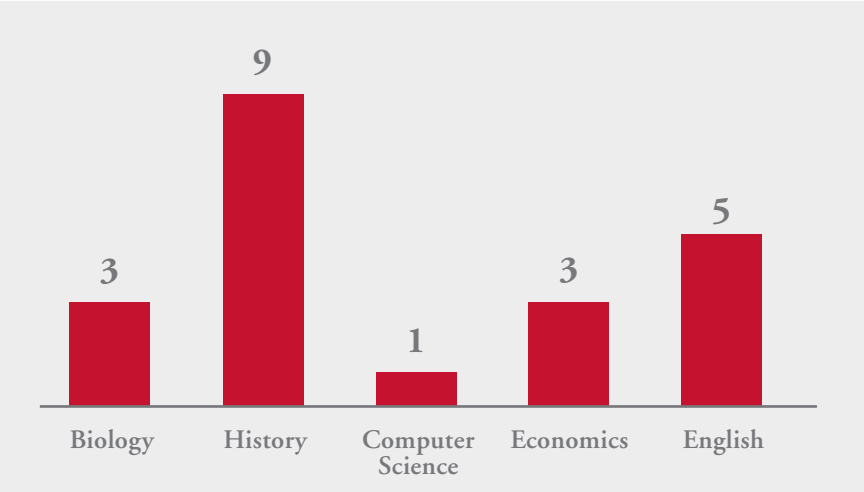
PhD Admissions (2017–18)

Right: Economist and former member of the Planning Commission and the national advisory committee, Professor Mihir Shah takes a class on the Political Economy of India's Development for YIF students.

Faculty
Research

Ashoka's stature as a research-oriented institution has grown rapidly since the inception of its undergraduate programme in 2014. The University's institutional functioning is geared towards enabling and supporting faculty members to undertake rigorous and collaborative research. Results can be seen in a number of published papers, conferences attended, presentations, grants, and awards throughout the year.

The English department has built a strong foundation in interdisciplinarity, exploring literature across borders – the borders of language, culture and disciplines. This reflects in published books such as Jonathan Gil Harris's *Masala Shakespeare*, Rita Kothari's *A Multilingual Nation* and Madhavi Menon's *A History of Desire in India*. In May 2018, Janice Pariat published her widely acclaimed novel, *The Nine-Chambered Heart*. In other departments, Nayanjot Lahiri (history) has written on DD Kosambi for an edited volume and Pratyay Nath (history) has published his essay on Akbar's sieges in *Journal of South Asian Studies*. Scott Dixon (philosophy) has published an essay on metaphysics in *Oxford Studies in Metaphysics*. Research publications in the social sciences include Malvika Maheshwari's (political science) new book *Art Attacks: Violence and Offence-Taking in India.*

In economics, research publications include scholarly articles in journals like *Theoretical Economics* (Bhaskar Dutta), *Comparative Economic Studies* (Biswajit Banerjee), and *Economic and Political Weekly* (Kanika Mahajan). Pulapre Balakrishnan from the same department has also published extensively in subjects such as the national budget and globalisation for national publications like *The Hindu*.

In the mathematical sciences, Rajendra Bhatia has a large body of published work on linear algebra and matrices, and has delivered invited lectures at Institute Henri Poincare, Paris, and GYPSA Labs at Grenoble, France. Dario Darji has published on topology and linear dynamics, Krishna Maddaly on the Anderson model and Kumarjit Saha on the Brownian web. The computer sciences departments research during the year established its strength in cryptology (Mahavir Jhawar's collaboration with NTU Singapore), environmental sound classification (Ravi Kothari), and big data and urban informatics (Anirban Mondal).

Bridging the gap between science, technology and the humanities, Johannes Burgers of the Department of English conducts cutting-edge research in digital humanities. Using computational and GIS tools, he is working on *A William Faulkner Spacial History* with funding support from the University of Virginia.

In the natural sciences, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya's (physics) work has been published in the prestigious *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London*. Research in biology is primarily focused on evolutionary biology, immunology and neurobiology.

AWARDS AND HONOURS (2017-18)

- LS Shashidhara (biology) was elected Associate Member of The European Molecular Biology Organisation (EMBO) for his outstanding contribution to science. He is the third Indian to be elected to the body.

- Scott Dixon (philosophy) won the Marc Sanders Prize in Metaphysics. He received a USD 10,000 cash prize and was published in a leading international journal.

- Bikram Phookun (physics) received the INSA Best Teacher Award.

- Justin McCarthy (performing arts) received a Lifetime Achievement Award for Bharatnatyam from the Natyanjali Trust during the Nartaka Festival, Chennai.

- Nayanjot Lahiri (history) received the Asiatic Society of Mumbai's Honorary Fellowship for Life.

- Imroze Khan (biology) received the Early Career Research Award from the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB), DST. This grants him funding support for research in the biological sciences for three years.

- Anup Padmanabhan (biology) was awarded the Wellcome Trust/DBT India Alliance Intermediate Fellowship.

SRINATH RAGHAVAN

Srinath Raghavan is visiting professor of International Relations at Ashoka. He is also Senior Fellow at the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, and Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Department of War Studies, King's College, London. Prior to joining academia, he spent six years as an infantry officer in the Indian Army.

India's relationship with the United States seems poised at the edge of uncertainty. While the Trump administration continues to accord a place to India in its strategy for the 'Indo-Pacific' and even Afghanistan, the American president has made it clear that India owes this to the United States because of the trade surplus that it enjoys. More pointedly, Washington has placed India on an exchange rate watch list and slapped tariffs on aluminum and steel imports from India. New Delhi has responded with tariffs of its own. What does all this portend for the future of India-US relations? My recent book, *The Most Dangerous Place: A History of the United States in South Asia,* argues that if we want to understand where the two democracies are headed, we need to grasp the long history of their interaction over the past 230 years. Trade and economics bulk large in this story. The first US merchant ship, the *United States*, touched the shores of India in December 1784. The subsequent story of India-US interactions could well be told as a tale of commercial ambitions continually thwarted – initially by the East India Company's monopoly and later by British India's trade policies. Not until the advent of the Second World War in 1939 were the Americans well-positioned to prise open Britain's imperial trading bloc. Even as the Roosevelt administration extended lend-lease supplies to India, it sought to negotiate a treaty of commerce and navigation with India that would accord most favoured nation status to the United States. Eventually, Washington forebore from pressing its demands owing to the 'unsettled world conditions'.

Following India's independence, successive American administrations attempted to negotiate trade and investment agreements but were rebuffed by an

India committed to building an autarkic industrial economy. Although New Delhi's policies irked the Americans, they continued to funnel extraordinary amounts of economic aid to India until the early 1970s. As President Eisenhower put it, if they didn't provide such aid, 'we could be sure that Soviet Russia would do so'.

Even after the Cold War ended and India embarked on reforms, economic relations with the United States retained a thorny edge. India's restrictions on foreign equity investments and its policy on intellectual property rights led the George HW Bush administration to place it on the 'Super 301' watch list. These issues as well as others such as India's stance at the WTO remained areas of serious disagreement down to the Obama administration. Yet it would be incorrect to regard recent developments as merely continuous with older problems. Since the early 1940s, economic friction between the two countries has been smoothened by the larger strategic objectives that the United States sought to pursue: the war against Japan and Germany; the Cold War against the Soviet Union; the expansion of globalisation thereafter; and, most recently, preserving American hegemony in Asia against potential challenges from a rising China.

Trump's ascent to power underscores the discontent with the globalism of previous decades and a turn towards emphasising America's narrower national interests rather than its hegemonic role with all the attendant costs. To what extent will an America that is unwilling to shoulder the burden of ensuring the security and prosperity of its closest allies enable the rise of India? This may well be the most important foreign policy question for New Delhi.
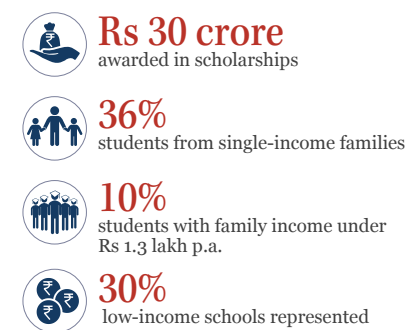
International
Partnerships

Academic programmes at Ashoka are delivered in collaboration with leading institutions. Ashoka's partner institutions work with the University to provide academic resources and innovate on pedagogical techniques. The partnerships also provide opportunities for students to participate in summer abroad programmes with access to international faculty.
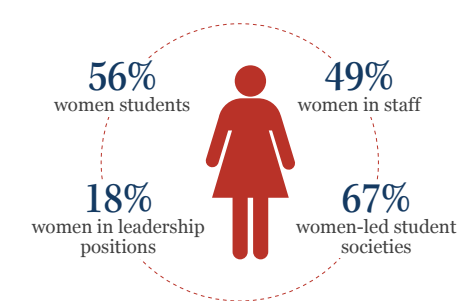
The University of Pennsylvania, University of Michigan, Carleton College, King's College London, Sciences Po, Trinity College, UC Berkeley, Wellesley College, and Yale University have all entered into partnerships with Ashoka. Other institutions include Centre for South Asia (Stanford University), University of Sheffield, HEC Paris, Tel Aviv University, Lehigh University, Duke University, Aizu University, and Victoria University of Wellington.

Ashoka University is committed to making a high-quality education accessible to deserving students, irrespective of their backgrounds. In the last seven years, Ashoka has provided need-based scholarships worth Rs 87.05 crore to 1,434 students. This is India's largest higher education scholarship programme.

Socio-economic Diversity 2017-18

Rs 30 crore
awarded in scholarships

36%
students from single-income families

10%
students with family income under Rs 1.3 lakh p.a.

30%
low-income schools represented

Gender Diversity

56%
women students

49%
women in staff

18%
women in leadership positions

67%
women-led student societies

Inclusion, Diversity
& Social Impact

AKSHAY BARIK (YIF 2015)

"I was fortunate to receive a full scholarship at Ashoka. YIF allowed me a high-quality education and helped break the notion of 'educational exclusivity' enjoyed by the privileged".

12
countries

25
Indian states

30%
students from Tier II and Tier III cities

250
schools represented

Student
Life

In 2017-18, Ashoka continued to foster its active student life through events, lectures, workshops, and field visits. These events revolved around the themes of leadership, inclusion and diversity, social impact, and personal and professional development.

Students have access to a wide variety of co-curricular activities that are enjoyable and intellectually engaging. They are encouraged to form clubs and societies to pursue social, cultural, intellectual, and professional interests. At present, there are over 30 clubs. They cover a wide range of activities from music, dance, theater, debating, and poetry to comedy, art appreciation, and gaming.

The Office of Student Affairs oversees the functioning of and supports these clubs through infrastructure, grants, and mentorship.

Sports

The Department of Exercise and Sports aims to promote a healthy sporting spirit within the University in addition to inspiring and nurturing talent. For this, the department aims to reach out to every member of the Ashoka community through specially-designed activities and events.

The University has initiated coaching sessions in football, ultimate frisbee, shooting, table tennis, basketball, cricket, swimming, yoga, zumba, badminton, lawn tennis, mixed martial arts, and squash.

The University celebrated several sporting achievements in 2017-18. Trisha Mukherjee (UG 2020) won a bronze medal at the World University Shooting Championship held at FISU Malaysia. The girls basketball team won four major national tournaments during the session.

Biology at Ashoka – Bushcrickets to the Human Brain

KAVERI RAJARAMAN INDIRA

Kaveri Rajaraman Indira (Bittu) is an associate professor of biology and psychology at Ashoka. Prior to joining Ashoka University, he was an INSPIRE-faculty at the Central University of Hyderabad. He was also a DST-Dr DS Kothari fellow at the Center for Ecological Sciences, Indian Institute of Sciences. Bittu received a PhD from Harvard University in neuroscience.

Although most of us are aware that our brains influence our behaviour, we rarely understand the deterministic relationship between brain and behaviour. The relative obscurity of neuroscientific research and the lack of neuroscientific information in school syllabi contribute to this lack of public understanding. This leaves us all with a sense that, for example, society influences our behaviour at some non-material-level. However, interesting research shows us that social interactions influence our behaviour through processes involving physical changes in our brains hardware. The structure of neurons in the brain modify with experience, and enable us to change with every social experience. The human brain is massive, consisting of about 86 billion interconnected neurons, with each neuron making connections with up to a 1,000 others. It is hard to trace these networks and assess how they influence our behaviour. Due to ethical and logistical constraints on understanding human brains, the scientific community tends to look for answers in smaller, more tractable living systems.

At Ashoka, our lab looks at smaller systems, such as worms, insects, and fish – animals so small that people don't usually even imagine that they have brains. We look at the function and evolution of communication systems, in crickets and bushcrickets – the insects heard singing loudly at night to attract mates. We are interested in how effective communication occurs between them and what adaptations improve communication. For example, we figure out how listeners distinguish calls of their own from those of other species. Or, more importantly, we look at how they avoid predators and parasites which eavesdrop on their acoustic calls to find their prey. By answering these questions, we get a better understanding of how these neural communication behaviours drive evolutionary change. You might wonder how this kind of research on insect communication might affect our understanding of humans. Well, we share these behaviours with insects – we also try to listen to each other, find each other, and deal with acoustic noise – think of a crowded market place. We think of these as trivial tasks and yet these are computationally very difficult, much harder than doing elementary mathematics. For example, it is very difficult for us to program computers to solve auditory tasks, while they can be easily programmed to do simple calculations. Perhaps we find these kinds of auditory pattern recognition tasks trivial and mathematics difficult simply because our brains are computational systems optimised for performance in pattern recognition.

Another question we are working on at Ashoka is one that affects many students – that of mathematical cognition. We do our research on two systems: zebrafish and semi-feral dogs. In one of Ashoka's laboratories, zebrafish are being trained in mathematical tasks. It sounds funny but this work will eventually enable us to study the neural basis of such cognition using calcium imaging in larval zebrafish. When it comes to dogs, our goal is to explore mathematical cognition and inference in animals with whom humans have a strong behavioural understanding to be able to elicit more complex behaviour. All of this could be done through large-scale, citizen-science-based data.

From bushcrickets to feral-dogs, it might be hard to imagine these species could lead us to answers about ourselves. At Ashoka, the quest to make these connections outside and within our brains is neverending.

The Chief Minister's
Good Governance Associates (CMGGA)

The current Associates hail from over 15 states and bring a varied range of professional and educational experience to the programme. Fifty-seven per cent of the Associates working at the district and state level are women. More than 60 per cent of the Associates hold postgraduate degrees.

During the academic year 2017-18, 70 projects were initiated across Haryana. Of these, three have completed their pilot successfully and are now being implemented across the state. A majority of the projects have proved successful and sustainable in their respective districts.

Launched in January 2016, CMGGA is a collaboration between Ashoka University and the Government of Haryana. The programme engages young professionals to promote transparency, efficiency, and citizen-centric service delivery across different departments in Haryana. Over a one-year period, Associates are posted in each of the 22 districts of Haryana to work closely with the Chief Minister's Office and district administrations.

The programme entered its second year in 2017-18 and 21 Associates were chosen from over 1,900 applicants. Seventy-one per cent of the first cohort expressed interest in staying directly engaged with the programme for a second year. The second year also saw the programme expand to include a team of three additional Associates who worked on various projects with multiple state departments in Chandigarh.

Participants and Associates at a training workshop on pre-school skill development organised by Barefoot College in partnership with the Women & Child Department, Karnal.

Ashoka
Archives
of Contemporary India

The Ashoka Archives of Contemporary India were created to archive and preserve primary source material for the study of Indian history with a major thrust on polity, economy, and society. The aim of the project is to establish a major centre for historical and social science research in the country.

Over the last one year, the archives witnessed an unprecedented growth in the collection of primary source material in the form of private papers. This includes material from Manmohan Singh (former prime minister), Kuldip Nayyar (diplomat, journalist, author and columnist), Chandi Prasad Bhatt (Chipko Movement leader), Nalni D Jayal (environmentalist), LM Singhvi (jurist and diplomat), BG Verghese (writer and journalist), AS Anand (former chief justice of India), Gopalkrishna Gandhi (diplomat and academic), Rauf Ali (environmentalist), HK Dua (journalist and writer), Girish Karnad (actor, director and playwright), Divyabhanusinh Chavda (wildlife conservationist), and MK Ranjitsinh Jhala (wildlife conservationist).

In March 2018, the University acquired the first major collection of former President S Radhakrishnan. The cataloguing of these collections, along with the gathering of metadata for digitisation, is already complete.

In the coming year, with the aid of trained archivists, Ashoka aims to prepare digital catalogues of collections acquired. The aim of digitising these documents is also to make them available to scholars worldwide for historical research through the Ashoka website.

Ashoka
Alumni
Association (AAA)

Ashoka's alumni are spread across more than 20 countries and over 100 career paths. The University's Board of Management instituted an Alumni Association in 2015. The Association serves as a platform for the alumni to come together and support the institution. On 1 March 2018, the alumni body elected Ashweetha Shetty as its second president.

In 2017-18, the Alumni Association adopted several initiatives to increase interaction between alumni, both locally and internationally. These efforts include mentorship, guest sessions, placements, internships, task forces and, most recently, an alumni scholarship.

Alumni at the annual Alumni Weekender organised by the AAA in June.

Campus

Located in the Rajiv Gandhi Education City, Sonepat, the University aims to provide a 21st-century learning environment that fosters creative interactions among students, faculty, founders, and guests. The campus embodies the values, ethos, and aspirations of the University – building future leaders and change agents in an environment that is transparent and dynamic. Through its architecture, Ashoka has facilitated a creative, inclusive, and collaborative learning and research environment. The architects are Perkins-Eastman, who specialise in university campus design. They have designed for Columbia University, University of Pittsburgh, New York University, and ISB Mohali, among others. The existing constructed area is divided into residential area (45 per cent), academic and research area (42 per cent) and student activity area (13 per cent).

25
ACRES

FULLY
RESIDENTIAL

1,362
STUDENTS

ACCESSIBLE

"Ashoka's infrastructure redefines what a college campus is supposed to be. From the buildings to the open spaces, from the public art to the sports facilities, every element is an experience unto itself. Not only is it aesthetically appealing, but is strongly oriented to the values of Ashoka – curiosity, collaboration, flexibility, pursuit of excellence and cross-pollination of ideas."

SURYA HARIKRISHNAN (YIF 2018)

Governance

Ashoka incorporates and adheres to the highest global standards of governance in academic institutions.

The University is completely professionally managed with several bodies overseeing academic and administrative aspects of the institution. These range from the Governing Body, Academic Council, Board of Trustees, Board of Management, and Academic Advisory Board to other internal teams that manage diverse operational matters.

The University has appointed professionals with strong competencies to supervise and execute wide-ranging administrative functions. These teams continue to scale in numbers and competencies as the University expands its capacity and operations.

Right: Ashoka Founder Rahul Bajaj with students at the Kamalnayan Bajaj Hall (student residence), 20 May 2017.

People

People

Ashoka has created – and continues to invest in – an organisational structure that fosters academic growth and administrative excellence. The University's overall leadership vests with the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor and distinct teams have been appointed to meet diverse academic and administrative requirements.

The academic side of the institution is lead by Deans and Directors of Academic Centres while the administrative functions are lead by Vice Presidents and Directors for various functions.

The University continues to attract and recruit outstanding academics to its faculty group while simultaneously investing in building administrative capabilities to address growth.

The following pages highlight the names of Ashoka's leadership teams.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Rudrangshu Mukherjee
Chancellor
Professor, History

Pratap Bhanu Mehta
Vice-Chancellor

Malabika Sarkar
Principal Advisor (Academic)
Dean of Faculty and Research

Mahesh Rangarajan
Dean of Academic Affairs
Professor, History

Vanita Shastri
Dean, Global Education and
Strategic Programmes

Deboshruti Roychowdhury
Dean of Student Affairs

Eshwara Venkatesam
Vice President, Development

Ali Imran
Vice President,
External Engagement

Munish Sahrawat
Vice President, Operations

Sachin Sharma
Registrar
Controller of Examinations

Anunaya Chaubey
Deputy Dean,
Young India Fellowship

Aniha Brar
Deputy Dean,
Young India Fellowship
(from 1.07.2018)

Neena Goel
Associate Dean,
Career Development Office

Anjoo Mohun
Director, Communications & PR

Anu Batra
Director, Information Technology

Arvinder Singh Bains
Director, Campus Administration

Geetanjali Gandhiok
Director, Development

Manish Sharma
Director, Human Resources

Rangashri Kishore
Director, Library Services

Rashmi Singh
Director, Office of Student Life

Reena Gupta
Director, Office of Learning Support

Vineet Sabharwal
Director, Admissions
& Financial Aid

Arvinder Singh
Director, Centre for Well-Being

Deepa Bhatnagar
Director, Ashoka Archives
of Contemporary India

Durba Chattaraj
Director, Centre for Writing and
Communication (till 30.06.2018)

Gilles Vernier
Co-Director, Trivedi Centre
for Political Data

Harpreet Kaur
Director, Genpact Centre
for Women's Leadership
(from 1.07.2018)

Ingrid Srinath
Director, Centre for Social Impact
and Philanthropy

Kanika Singh
Director, Centre for Writing
and Communication (from 1.07.2018)

Madhavi Menon
Director, Centre for Studies
in Gender & Sexuality

Neela Saldanha
Director, Centre for Social
& Behaviour Change

Priyank Narayan
Director, Centre for Entrepreneurship

Sudheendra Hangal
Co-Director, Trivedi Centre
for Political Data

ACADEMIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Andre Beteille

Bhaskar Dutta

Christophe Jafferlot

Devesh Kapur

Jonathan Gil Harris

Kalyanakrishnan (Shivi)
Sivaramakrishnan

Kaushik Basu

Kenwyn K Smith

Ramachandra Guha

Rudrangshu Mukherjee

Ruma Banerjee

Sampath Kannan

Sharad Malik

Sunil Khilnani

Supriya Chaudhuri

ACADEMIC COUNCIL

Pratap Bhanu Mehta
(*Chairperson*)

Members
Malabika Sarkar

Mahesh Rangarajan

Vanita Shastri

Anunaya Chaubey

Bhaskar Dutta

Jonathan Gil Harris

Pratyay Nath

Alex Watson

Gilles Verniers

Ravindran Sriramachandran

Bikram Phookun

Dario Darji

Sudheendra Hangal

Mahavir Jhawar

Kai Qin Chan

Anisha Sharma

Aparajita Dasgupta

Abir Bazaz

Scott Dixon

Mitul Baruah

Durba Chattoraj

Mahavir Jhawar

Simantini Ghosh

Permanent Special Invitees
Imroze Khan

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya

BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

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Jyoti Arora

Mahesh Rangarajan

Malabika Sarkar

Pratap Bhanu Mehta

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya

Sachin Sharma

Scott Dixon

Vaiju Naravane

Vanita Shastri

Vineet Gupta

GOVERNING BODY

Amit Chandra

Ashish Dhawan

Deep Kalra

Jyoti Arora

Pramath Raj Sinha

Pratap Bhanu Mehta

Puneet Dalmia

Rudrangshu Mukherjee

Sachin Sharma

Siddharth Yog

Vineet Gupta

FACULTY (YIF)

Full-time Faculty

Anunaya Chaubey
Geetanjali Chanda
Gilles Vernier
Jonathan Gil Harris
Madhavi Menon
Malabika Sarkar
Nayan Chanda
Nayanjot Lahiri
Rudrangshu Mukherjee
Sabyasachi Bhattacharya
Kai Qin Chan

Visiting Faculty

AK Shivakumar
Apurv Mishra

Aseem Shrivastava
Bill Green
Dev Tayde
Devesh Kapur
Dilip Simeon
Dipankar Gupta
Dwight Jaggard
E. Sridharan
Flora Taylor
Gaurav Bhatnagar
Kenwyn Smith
Kim Grinfeder
Manoj Mohanan
Mihir Mankad
Mihir Shah
Partha Mukhopadhyay

Marie Helen Zerah
Patrick French
Purushottam Agrawal
Rajshree Chandra
Rinki Sarkar
Rishikesha Krishnan
Ritwik Agrawal
Rudra Chaudhuri
Sanjeev Chatterjee
Santosh Venkatesh
Shobhita Punja
Shubhashis Gangopadhyay
Sumita Chatterjee
Urvashi Butalia

Pulapre Balakrishnan
Rajendra Bhatia
Ravindran Sriramachandran
Rita Kothari
Rudrangshu Mukherjee
Sabyasachi Bhattacharya
Sabyasachi Das
Saikat Majumdar
Sandipto Dasgupta
Scott Dixon
Sieun An
Simantini Ghosh
Subhashree Chakravarthy
Sudheendra Hangal
Sumit Kumar Pandey
Swagata Bhattacharjee
Swargajyoti Gohain
Tulsi Srinivasan
Vaiju Naravane
Vinay Sitapati

Visiting Faculty

Ajit Mishra
Amit Goyal
Amy Gordon
Ananya Sharma
Ankur Sarin
Ashish Sureka (late)
Avantika Bhatia
Clancy Martin
Dario Darji
Debapriyo Majumdar
Etienne Smith
Gurbachan Singh
Hilal Ahmed
Inder Bir Passi
Josy Joseph
Kathryn Hardy
LS Shashidhara
Lavanya Rajamani
Maya Mirchandani

Mukesh Sud
Neera Chandoke
Nilanjan Sircar
Prakash Padakannaya
Ravi Kothari
Roy Perrett
Rudra Chaudhuri
Sanjay Banerji
Sanjukta Dutta
Shivshankar Menon
Siddhartha Dubey
Sraman Mukherjee
Srinath Raghavan
Sumana Roy
Tisha Srivastava
Vivek Seshadri

FACULTY (UG, MA, MLS & PHD)

Full-time Faculty

Abhinash Borah
Abir Bazaz
Aditi Chaturvedi
Aditi Sriram
Alex Solomon
Alex Watson
Anirban Mondal
Anisha Sharma
Anunaya Chaubey
Anuradha Saha
Aparajita Dasgupta
Aparna Vaidik
Arghya Bhattacharya
Aruni Kashyap
Bhaskar Dutta
Bikram Phookun

Bipasha Maity
Biswajit Banerjee
Durba Chattaraj
Geetanjali Chanda
Gilles Verniers
Gopal Krishna Gandhi
Gwen Kelly
Hariharan Krishnan
Hemanshu Kumar
Imroze Khan
Janice Pariat
Johannes Burgers
Jonathan Gil Harris
Justin McCarthy
Kai Qin Chan
Kanika Mahajan
Kaveri Rajaraman

Kranti Saran
Krishna Maddaly
Kumarjit Saha
Madhavi Maganti
Madhavi Menon
Mahavir Jhawar
Mahesh Rangarajan
Malvika Maheshwari
Mandakini Dubey
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Each contribution, regardless of quantum, is received in the spirit of public trust and as an act of faith towards Ashoka's core mission.

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