



Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi

Civic Campus: Integration of Academic & Local Spaces for Extending Community-Based Mental Health Services

Outreach and Extension Division and School of Human Studies jointly organized an awareness session on Civic Campus: Integration of Academic & Local Spaces for Extending Community-Based Mental Health Services. The event was held on Friday, 29th August 2025, from 11:00 AM - 1:00 PM, at the Kashmere Gate Campus, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University Delhi. The lecture, delivered by Dr. S.P.K. Jena, former Senior Professor and former Head of the Department of Psychology at the University of Delhi, was particularly relevant given the recent establishment of a National Task Force on Mental Health for Students under the guidance of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India. This initiative was planned to encourage civic engagement through service-based learning, community-based events, and to normalize mental health dialogues.

The session was initiated by Dr. Pratima (Event Coordinator) with a welcome speech. She introduced the event's objectives and welcomed the panel members-

- Dr. S.P.K. Jena (Guest Speaker, Clinical Psychologist and Former Head of the Department of Psychology, University of Delhi)
- Prof. Rukmini Sen (Director, Outreach and Extension Division)
- Dr. Rachna Chaudhary (Dean, School of Human Studies)
- Dr. Urfat Anjem Mir (Dean, School of Undergraduate Studies)

An introduction to the lecture's theme was given by the student coordinators, in which they highlighted the importance of conducting this session to help re-imagine campuses as inclusive spaces that nurture well-being and stronger community engagement.

A Facilitation Ceremony was also held to honour our esteemed Guest Speaker, Dr. S.P.K. Jena, with tokens of appreciation by Prof. Rukmini Sen, Dr. Rachna Chaudhary, Dr. Urfat Anjem Mir, and Dr. Pratima.

Thereafter, a video presentation prepared by the Outreach and Extension Division Student coordinators was showcased, which shared glimpses of the initiatives undertaken by the Outreach and Extension Division over the years and emphasized the importance of community welfare. This visual narrative set a strong foundation for the discussions ahead.

The welcome address was delivered by Prof. Rukmini Sen, who greeted the dignitaries and participants with warm regards. The address emphasized the collaborative vision of the program and the shared responsibility of academia and community. She also highlighted the active participation of the Division along with the involvement of NSS and NCC units of our university in working towards these initiatives.

This was followed by the opening address, delivered by Dr. Urfat Anjem Mir, who highlighted the broader vision of civic engagement and the role of higher education in creating healing spaces for society. It reinforced the importance of partnerships between universities and local organizations while also motivating the students to increase their understanding of the sociocultural context of our communities and striving to work towards their better livelihood.

The distinguished speaker, Dr. S.P.K. Jena, was formally introduced, outlining his expertise and significant contributions in the field of psychology, mental health, and community outreach.

The lecture delivered by Dr. S.P.K. Jena emphasized the importance of mental hygiene, stressing that mental health services should not remain confined to professional settings but must evolve through collaborative efforts between campuses and local organizations. The speaker highlighted that campuses should go beyond providing space and instead actively engage with communities, making them reflective and participatory. A key focus was on the transfer of behavioural technology from labs to real-world settings, ensuring that knowledge translates into meaningful action. Drawing connections to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (2030), the speaker advocated for community need assessments to lower resistance, along with understanding behavioural loops that perpetuate impoverished conditions. Mainstream evaluation, outreach to underserved areas, and delivering resources and care were seen as crucial for sustainable impact. The importance of action-oriented projects was stressed, particularly those that identify areas of intervention and empower communities. Through his own experiences of organizing and creating programs like tailoring, paper-bag making activities for women, a special emphasis was placed on skill development programs for women and children, highlighting how an experience-based and evidence-based approach can foster resilience, independence, and community growth.

The lecture was engaging and thought-provoking, leaving the participants with a fresh perspective on civic campus engagement.

A brief interactive Q/A session followed, where participants raised questions related to challenges in implementation, expanding the reach to more closed-off areas, how to break the barriers created by stigma around mental health, and the sustainability of programs. The speaker responded with practical strategies and innovative insights, drawing from his own experiences.

The event concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks delivered by Dr. Pratima, who expressed gratitude towards the guest speaker, the Vice-Chancellor of AUD, panel members, student coordinators for arranging the program, and the IT and Estate teams for logistical support. A special thanks was extended to the participants for their active participation and for contributing to making this event a success.

To conclude, the lecture served as a powerful reminder that academic campuses hold the potential to go beyond classrooms and become active civic spaces fostering holistic well-being. It inspired participants to envision their role in bridging academic learning with community service, thus extending mental health support to society at large.



