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COURSE CLOSE-UP

Environment matters

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Ambedkar University. Photo: Apecial Arrangement

A master's course offered at Ambedkar University Delhi combines work and theory to help students understand social and ecological issues.

Environment and sustainability are widely debated topics that assume greater significance when viewed in the backdrop of development activities. Administrations around the world are expected to seek a balance between concerns of development and environment in policy making. Therefore, environment should not be viewed from any single perspective like purely scientific, technical or social justice concerns.

Keeping these factors in mind, the MA in Environment and Development course offered at Ambedkar University Delhi has been designed with an interdisciplinary focus that combines insights from the natural and social sciences, says Dean, School of Human Ecology, Asmita Kabra.

The course aims to give students a comprehensive understanding of social and ecological issues by combining field work and theory. At least 25 per cent of the course involves a field-based component, which is meant to help students assess the applicability of theories on the ground, says Dr. Suresh Babu. The field component includes a 4-6 week summer internship after semester 2 and an 8-credit dissertation in semester 4.

There are multiple layers from law to biodiversity to the urban that need to be examined to gain a deeper understanding of the environment and various other related elements. "So we seek to create 'generalised specialists' who can speak across disciplinary languages and bring them together and see the cross connections between them", says Dr. Kabra.

The core courses offered in the first year include environmental law, policies and governance; development and social change; research methodology, etc. Students get to select electives of their choice in the second year.

With this they can create their own profile, for example in the field of environmental management, applied ecology or political ecology. The MA programme offers 22 elective courses which include topical elements such as adaptation to climate change; applied population ecology; ecological resoration in practice; urban development and environment.

A defining feature of the course is the eight-credit dissertation. With strong focus on independent research, students get an edge over others while applying for higher studies and scholarships, according to Dr. Praveen Singh.

The placement record in this MA programme has been 100 per cent, according to Dr. Kabra. So far, students have been placed with leading environmental consultancy organisations, social and environmental impact assessment agencies working for corporate and government organisations, CSR organisations that fund environmental action or activism on the ground, and leading think tanks. Several students have received prestigious fellowships or obtained admissions in programmes of higher studies within India and abroad.

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