



CENTRE FOR ASIAN AND  
TRANSCULTURAL STUDIES  
SOUTH ASIA  
INSTITUTE



UNIVERSITÄT  
HEIDELBERG  
ZUKUNFT  
SEIT 1386

**Lecture Series on Governance and Politics in South Asia**  
Department of Political Science

## **On Democracy Capture: Why India's Experience Invites a Rethink of Democratic Theory**

**Yogendra Yadav**

*Renowned political activist and author*

The current global crisis of democracy has finally forced us to take an unblinkered view of democracy. We have had to acknowledge that there exists a contradiction between the professed ideal and the received mechanism of modern democracy. After decades of searching for a model of transition to democracy, we now need an inventory of reverse transition, of how functional and stable democracies collapse. An examination of democratic erosion in India over the last nine years suggests a distinct route, a 'democratic capture', where the mechanism of democratic mobilisation and elections has been used effectively against the ideals and institutions of democracy. This democracy capture is not just a bad accident in an otherwise lovely journey. Nor is it the story of an inevitable decline and fall of a failed democracy. There is no guarantee that this is just a passing phase. At the same time, this is not irreversible. Its contingency invites us to a new democratic theory that is alive both to the risks and the possibilities inherent in the variety of political arrangements in the contemporary world that call themselves democracy.



**Yogendra Yadav** is a well-known academic turned political activist. He was Senior Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi before plunging into full time activism in 2013. During his stint at the CSDS, he revived national election studies, co-founded a network of survey research scholars, wrote academic articles and books besides school textbooks. He was a member of the apex Political Affairs Committee of the Aam Adami Party till 2015. He is among the founders of Swaraj Abhiyan and Jai Kisan Andolan and the founder President of a political party, Swaraj India. He was in the apex coordination committee of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha that led the historic farmers' struggle. This year he walked about 2,000 km with the Bharat Jodo Yatra. Currently he is active with the Bharat Jodo Abhiyan that seeks to reclaim the Indian republic. His recent book is *Making Sense of Indian Democracy: Theory as Practice* (Permanent Black, 2020)

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**Time:** 16:00 – 17:30 CET

**Venue:** KJC, Voßstraße 2, Building 4400, Room 400.01.12