

Debating Society Annual Report 2023-24

The Debating Society had a successful year with a range of events aimed at increasing participation in collegiate debating.

The first event of the academic year was an Asian Parliamentary Exhibition Debate on 14th September, 2023 to introduce the first-year members to this format of collegiate debating. The second event was an adjudication workshop conducted by Callistine Lewis, the former president of the Debating Society. This was an opportunity for freshers to learn about the procedure of judging parliamentary debates. The last major event of the odd semester was the 11th Pro-Am Debate Tournament. This is known in the university circuit for its unique pattern of teams, that involve a 'pro' (an individual who is not a novice debater) and an 'am'. This organization allowed a greater degree of participation and competition. The odd semester ended with regular mocks and workshops to enhance the debating skills of our members.

The first event of the even semester of the academic year 2023-24 was the Conventional Debate Tournament, on 28th and 29th January 2024. The inaugural edition of this tournament was organized by the Debating Society in Collaboration with GAEE, St. Stephen's chapter. In order to increase participation, the debate followed a bilingual pattern with the conventional debating format. The tournament saw participation from over 70 teams, from across the university circuit.

Subsequently, the Debating Society organised the Mukarji Memorial Dialogues on 4th, 6th and 8th April, 2024. The Dialogues are a series of lectures, seminars and panel discussions that enable the junior members to enhance their understanding of crucial aspects of society and open themselves to a diverse range of perspectives. This year, we held a keynote lecture on April 4th, on "Gendering Access – On Policing Identities", by Professor Nivedita Menon. The film "Writing with Fire" was screened on 6th April (this is a double Sundance winner, and a film about the emergence of India's only newspaper led and run by Bahujan women, Khabar Lahariya); the screening was followed by an interaction with the directors. The Dialogues concluded with a panel discussion, "Navigating Academic Freedom in India", led by Paranjay Guha Thakurta, PK Vijayan, Nandita Narain, and Jenny Rowena; this event was moderated by Dr. Karen Gabriel.

Lastly, the society organised the 76th Mukarji Memorial Debate on 13th-15th April, 2024. This important inter-varsity parliamentary debate saw the participation of 32 teams and 50 judges.

We had a number of our contingents winning accolades across various debating tournaments held in the circuit. Notably, Divyansh Shah, Simone Singh and Rajnish Virdhi emerged as Novice Winners at Rahat Parliamentary Debate and Lloyd Parliamentary Debate. Yashvi Singh and Ishaan Sharma were finalists at Pre-ABPD at Shri Ram College of Commerce. Aanjeneya Mishra and Gaurav Kishore were open semi – finalists at Manzar the Debating Tournament at Miranda House. Tanya Kohli, Puja Bhadu, Yashvi Dhaddha were Novice winners at 12th Natasha Ranjit Memorial Debate at Jesus and Mary College.

The Debating Society of St. Stephen's College aims to foster debating, intellectual curiosity and critical thinking through workshops, dialogues, and case prep sessions while also preparing and managing contingents for external tournaments and organizing prestigious internal events. The various accolades achieved by our debaters shows how our debating prowess has grown over the past year. We were able to successfully organize various academic workshops and events with great turnouts which helped to improve discourse over relevant issues. The decade old traditions of our society were carried on this year by the successful organization of one of the oldest and prestigious debate tournaments in India, the Mukarji Memorial Debate Tournament.

In summary, the Debating Society of St. Stephen's College has enjoyed a successful year, highlighted by remarkable achievements and contributions to the growth of our members and the wider debating community, all while upholding our proud legacy of excellence.