

The History Society

The History Society, St. Stephen's College

Summary of Annual Report 2023 - 2024

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Over the academic year 2023-24, the History Society organised a number of lectures, workshops and seminars - spreading across diverse themes and involving a number of speakers, while engaging with different media.

Lectures, film screenings and workshops were held routinely throughout the year, providing the participants with valuable insights on a range of different topics. The Inaugural Lecture, titled 'Sheher Mein Gaon: Delhi Through Its Urban Villages' was delivered by Dr. Ekta Chauhan. In October, we collaborated with the Bengali Literary Society to organise a talk by Ms. Pritha Sen on the 'Untold Stories of Bengali Cuisine'. Prof. Achin Vinayak delivered a talk on contemporary international conflicts and situated disarmament policy and contemporary global politics in a larger historical context. Prof. Pushpesh Pant delivered a lecture titled 'Indian Gastronomy: Myth and Reality'. As part of the Faculty Seminar Series, Mr. Akash Awasthi delivered a lecture titled 'Walking Inside the 18th-19th century Shahjahanabad: *Mohallahs* in Transition' and Dr. Jeena Sarah Jacob delivered a lecture titled 'Knowing Europe: Assessing the *Bhulogashtram* of Paremakal Thoma Cathanar'. Screening of films such as 'The Land Speaks Arabic', 'Ruuposh' and 'Zameer' sparked meaningful discussions and raised awareness about pressing issues like social injustice.

The Pandemic Archives Project is a unique collaboration with the Internal Quality Assurance Cell to document the experiences of the COVID pandemic across boundaries of caste, gender and class. The first workshop was conducted by alumni Rayan Chakrabarti and Syed Muhammad Khalid, who introduced the project and explained its need. In the succeeding workshops, Ms. Mythreyee Ramesh, a journalist from the Quint, spoke about her experiences documenting personal narratives on the COVID pandemic. Dr. Aditya Pratap Deo continued further ideation and discussion into the Pandemic Archives Project by discussing groups to be interviewed and devising means for further documentation. Prof. Joyce Burkhalter Flueckiger sensitised participants to the process of conducting ethnographic research, building on her own experience of writing the same.

Kaalchakra, the History Society's annual festival was organised in February in the memory of Dr. Tasneem Suhrawardy. The Society organised various events over the course of the three-day festival on the theme 'Creating Polyphonic Spaces: A Dialogue Between Academic and Popular Histories'. In the Keynote lecture, Ms. Nilofar Suhrawardy discussed the role of manufactured news in Indian media and stated its political and cultural impact. Dr. Ruchika Sharma, Mr. Eshan Sharma and Mr. Eric Chopra were part of a panel discussion moderated by Dr. Jeena Sarah Jacob. They discussed aspects of disseminating historical knowledge and information via social media - noting restrictions and changes that their content must undergo due to the same. Dr. Swapna Liddle, through an illustrated walk, discussed prevalent beliefs and conceptions about the Qutub Minar complex and addressed myths about the structures in the Complex, their origin, and their nature. In collaboration with the Quiz Club, Jeevan

Joseph and Advait Mishra organised a quiz with a set of historically-themed questions. Over forty teams from across institutions in Delhi participated. Ms. Parvati Sharma delivered a lecture where she explored the difficulties faced by history-writing and historical narratives in the prevalent psyche - one of unquestioning conviction in one's own dogmas and beliefs. *Kaalchakra* ended with a screening of the film 'Zameer', followed by an insightful discussion with the director, Prof. Uma Chakravarti.

Alongside on-campus events, the Society also organised walks in historical locations across Delhi. In walks led by the Talks and Walks heads, students visited the Partition Museum and National Museum. A walk to Old Delhi was organised to explore the settlement and layout of the Red Fort, as well as nearby parts of Chandni Chowk, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the imperial imagination of 17th century Mughal Shahjahanabad.

Alongside regular events, The History Society published student-authored articles on its online blog *Historically Speaking* and two issues of its bi-monthly periodical, *Timelapse*. *Rewind*, the official podcast of The History Society, is a collection of conversations on diverse aspects of history featuring distinguished historians, writers, curators, and individuals working at the intersection of history and other disciplines. An episode with Prof. Irfan Habib was released across streaming platforms in April.

The society's activities concluded with the release of *Tarikh*, the annual journal. The journal included student-written research papers and interviews with Professors Dilip Menon and Himanshu Prabha Ray to develop a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the theme - 'The Ocean as a Space of Exchange: Tracing Maritime Histories'.

In conclusion, the History Society successfully fulfilled its mission to promote a comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and accessible understanding of history through its activities. Looking ahead, the Society is committed to building on this momentum, furthering its dedication to the pursuit of knowledge, and fostering collaboration in the coming year.