

Report of Special Lecture

“Sports as Popular Culture: A Popular History of Cricket and Football in India”

Organised by the Department of History

Type of Activity: Special Lecture (Academic Enrichment Programme)

Resource Person: Mayukh Lahiri

Assistant Professor

Department of Journalism and Mass Communication

Shri Shikshayatan College

Audience Members: 25 Undergraduate students of the Department of History
03 Faculty members of the Department of History

Date: 30 January 2026

Time: 2:00 PM onwards

Venue: Room 214, Shri Shikshayatan College

Brief Description of the Lecture

The lecture traced the global and Indian histories of organised sports, beginning with early collective sporting practices such as hunting and the Ancient Olympic Games in Greece. The resource person, Shri Mayukh Lahiri, discussed the origins of professional sports and highlighted how some sports evolved into elite pursuits, while others became associated with mass participation.

A significant portion of the lecture focused on cricket and football as contrasting cultural forms: cricket as a sport historically linked with class and elitism, and football as a more mass-oriented and collective game. Key historical moments such as the Ashes ‘Bodyline’ series (1932–33) and the Berlin Olympics of 1936 were used to demonstrate the close relationship between sports and politics.

The lecture then examined the introduction of cricket and football in India during British colonial rule. Institutions such as the Calcutta Cricket and Football Club, the formation of Mohun Bagan, and tournaments like the IFA Shield were discussed in detail. Particular emphasis was placed on Bengal as a major centre of sporting culture, where football emerged as a form of protest and nationalist expression against colonial dominance.

The speaker also addressed the communal politics of sports through events such as the Quadrangular and Pentangular tournaments, as well as the development of Indian cricket in the early twentieth century. Post-independence developments, including India’s withdrawal from the 1950 FIFA World Cup, were critically analysed.

In the concluding segment, the lecture explored sports in popular culture through films, biopics, and television series, and reflected on contemporary global political challenges affecting international sports. The session ended with a discussion on the future of sports, including its role in development initiatives and India’s aspirations in global sporting events.

The lecture was delivered using a PowerPoint presentation prepared by the resource person, which included historical visuals, timelines, and thematic slides to support the discussion.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the lecture, students were able to:

- Understand sports as an important component of popular and political culture.
- Identify the historical trajectories of cricket and football in India, especially in Bengal.
- Analyse the relationship between sports, colonialism, nationalism, and identity formation.
- Appreciate the interdisciplinary relevance of sports history in historical studies.

The lecture was well received by both students and faculty members. Students found the topic engaging, accessible, and intellectually stimulating. The interdisciplinary approach adopted by the speaker helped broaden their understanding of history beyond conventional political narratives. The programme successfully fulfilled its academic objectives and contributed positively to curricular enrichment.

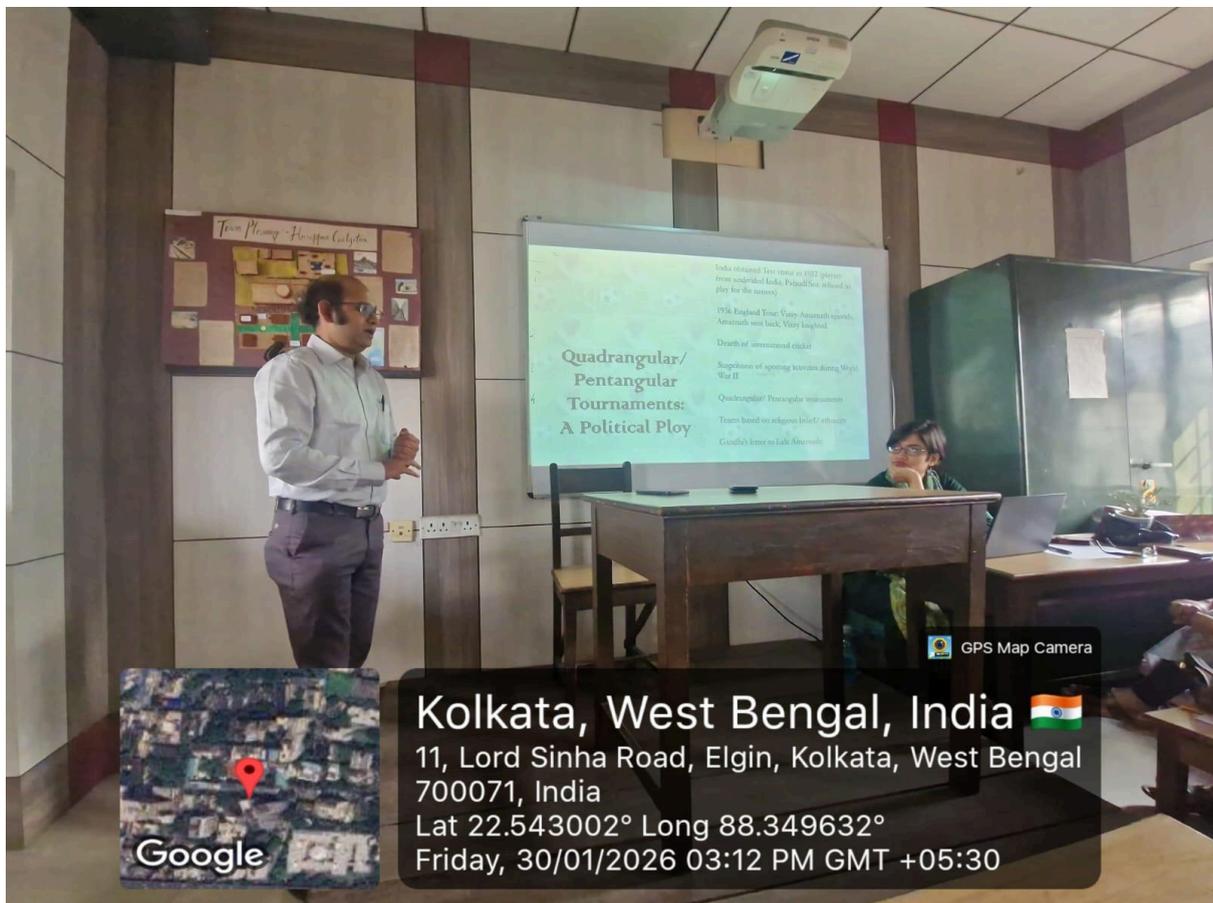


Fig 1: Shri Mayukh Lahiri during his lecture on Sports as Popular Culture



Fig 2: Group photo at the conclusion of the lectures