

Report for the Website

Department of History

Event Name: Interdisciplinary Programme on ‘Caste in History: Through a Cross-Disciplinary Lens’

Organized by: Department of History in Collaboration with IQAC, Shri Shikshayatan College

Date: 1 October 2024 (Tuesday)

Time: 11 am onwards

Venue: Room 303, Shri Shikshayatan College

Duration: 3 hours

Total Number of Attendees: 135

Students (from the host Department and others): 105

Faculty Members: 30

Resource Persons:

Dr Sharmila Ghosh (Associate Professor, Department of Bengali, Shri Shikshayatan College)

Smt. Alpana Nayak (Assistant Professor, Department of Hindi, Shri Shikshayatan College)

Dr Udit Mitra (Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Shri Shikshayatan College)

Learning Objectives:

1. To explore the historical evolution of caste as a mode of social stratification and social subordination through a history of its literary and sociological imagination.
2. To foster a cross-disciplinary, multilingual, and intertextual approach to a historico-sociological phenomenon through participatory learning, ICT methods, and performative understanding of time, body, and space within the rubric of caste.
3. To enrich understanding of caste through a theory, and representation, and to inculcate the ramifications of social stratification through affective engagement among students and faculty.

Brief Description of the Event:

‘Caste in History: Through a Cross-Disciplinary Lens’, an interdisciplinary program organized by the Department of History in collaboration with the Internal Quality Assurance Cell of Shri Shikshayatan College, was held on October 1, 2024.

The event was flagged with opening remarks by Teacher-in-Charge, Dr. Papiya Chaudhury who spoke of the relevance of caste in modern times, and its many incipient ways of operating in everyday institutions. The program commenced with a film screening of Satyajit Ray’s 1981 adaptation of Munshi Premchand’s short story *Sadgati*.

Following this, Smt Alpana Nayak (Department of History) spoke about ‘Premchand on Caste’, situating Premchand within the social condition of India in the late nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries. She spoke at length about the limits and liminalities of representation and yet touched on the effectiveness of literature in evoking affect and critical inquiry among readers.

Connected to the theme of purity and pollution that ran through Sadgati and in Smt Nayak's lecture, Dr Udit Mitra (Department of Sociology) gave a lecture on 'Caste in Society: A Sociological Perspective'. She largely focused on Louis Dumont's classification of caste through his seminal work *Homo Hierarchicus*, and explained the distinguishing features of stratification within the caste system.

The final talk was delivered by Dr Sharmila Ghosh (Department of Bengali) in a lecture titled '*Jater Bichar Korbe ke? Prekshit Bangla Sahitya*'. Dr Ghosh delved into the representation of caste in multiple texts in Bengali literature from the medieval to the modern. She mentioned the representation and connotations of caste in Charyapadas, in folk canons, and in the works of Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, Lalan Fakir, and Rabindranath Tagore. She ended her caveats on Tagore's dance drama 'Chandalika', which subsequently paved the way for students of the Department of History to perform relevant excerpts from the dance drama. The event also saw wall magazines from students of semester one, on the theme 'Social Stratification down the Ages' at the event venue, thereby furthering future pathways for discursive and creative engagement.

Learning Outcomes: The event ended on a high note of holistic engagement of a theme that deserves further scholastic inquiry and community consciousness.

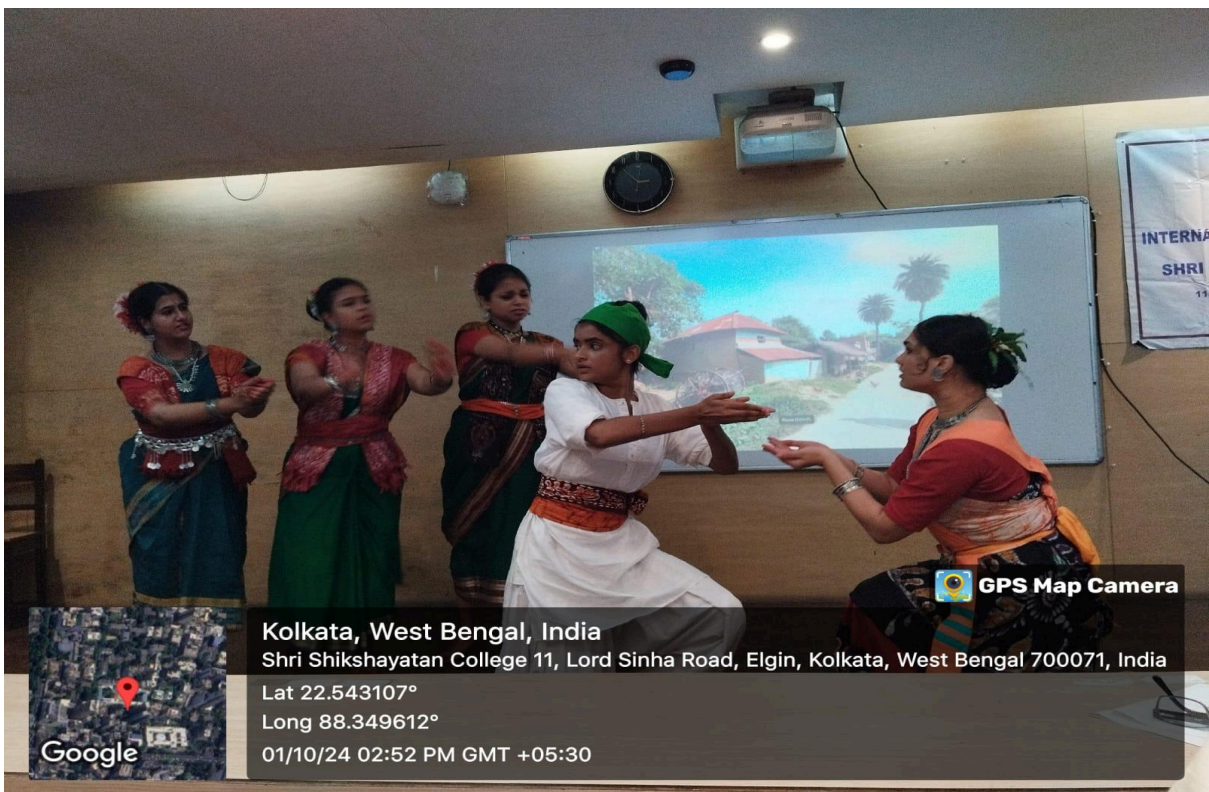
1. Spark a multidisciplinary dialogue between caste, history, society, and literature through screening a cinematic adaptation and discursive engagements.
2. Create a ground for further research and inquiry on multipronged approaches towards caste in history.



Fig 1: Collective photo of faculty members, resource persons, and students at the programme



Figs.2,3,&4: Talks by Smt. Alpana Nayak, Dr Sharmila Ghosh, & Dr Udita Mitra



Figs. 5 &6 Department students perform *Chandalika*