

Congress Concept

The Delhi History Congress is dedicated to addressing various aspects of history and heritage, exploring the ties between people and their pasts, and fostering widespread awareness about the historian's craft, including its wider dissemination. The conference aims at creating an open environment for scholarly exchange on themes of historical and contemporary relevance. In its inaugural session, the conference addressed four major themes; Gender and Sexuality, History of Architecture, Business History and History of Science and Technology. Continuing from the last session, following themes have been chosen for this year's session:

- I. Inequalities and Institutions
- II. The Social and the Quotidian
- III. Crime and Punishment
- IV. Myth and Reality

This year's conference will delve into the seemingly paradoxical yet absolutely intertwined relationships between institutions, ideas, morality, materiality and our belief as well as legal systems. All the four themes of this year's conference are dedicated to exploring these symbiotic relationships.

I. Inequalities and Institutions

Our society is marked by a diverse array of institutions - social, religious, educational or political, to name a few. These institutions have defined the structure of any given social context for most part of our history, but they inherently tend to carry certain premises that contribute in building unequal socio-economic relationships. Whether it be social institutions such as family, marriage, etc. or political and religious institutions, all of them function within the bounds of these set relationships and hence, simultaneously become the instrument of imposition as well as the location of reproduction of these inequalities. This panel aims to explore the intertwined relationship between institutions and inequalities, dwelling on questions such as how different institutions have created and sustained inequalities across various historical contexts; what have been the nature of these inequalities; what have been the nature, methods and outcomes of resistance; etc.

II. The Social and the Quotidian

The theme draws attention to the everyday lives, the broader societal structures, and the interplay between these two. The quotidian or daily experiences reflect the details of individual lives, whether in terms of the material dimension, mental and physical health, interpersonal relationships, and especially the repose in affective domains. The broader societal norms which engulf the everyday find expression in the form of rituals, daily practices and individual behaviour. These activities in their wake leave a vast amount of artifacts. The material artifact not only connects the everyday practice with the social norms; but also connects the present with the past. Be it clothes, buildings, toys, accessories, pots, seals, coins, painting, sculpture etc. there is an enormous archive all around us in the social world that illuminates the social and the quotidian.

III. Crime and Punishment

Crime and punishment are often seen as central themes in understanding the societal order and justice. Both are defined by the 'law of the land', and have a temporal dimension and psycho-social implications. The seeming absoluteness of law comes under scrutiny when looked at from a closer perspective in the constantly changing historical time and space. Law is constantly being defined

and re-defined by our needs, values, and ethics, all of which are subject to historical change. Both the state and society end up playing a very important role in defining what is legal, and what is not. Some of the issues we wish to highlight in this theme relate to defining and interrogating singular ideational definitions of crime. Further, how does violence - physical or mental - affect the perception of criminality? What should be the punishment for crime, and what are the parameters to measure a suitable punishment for any crime? Who defines the boundaries of criminal behavior, especially when it comes to issues of sexuality and sexual violence? How does law become a tool in the hands of the state, and what are the means to counter or challenge these? And of course, how do social asymmetries implicate perpetrators and victims? The implications of customary law, tradition and community centered justice also provide important entry points.

IV. Myth and Reality

Myths are ubiquitous in cultures, and their relation with 'reality' is in terms of the ideas and values they offer, even as much as their creation is embedded in society. We are constantly surrounded by myths or references to myths in our daily lives. These appear in the form of stories about divinities, legendary figures, and even historical entities, and are intrinsically tied to the assertion of power and identity. Political underpinnings of myth are known from ancient times, and the process of 'myth-making' involves the creation of an ideological apparatus and a material and ideological investment. Modern and contemporary times have seen a great challenge in both myth-making and myth-busting, due to the newer forms of media and communication. How do we unravel these processes and critically understand the structures that enable myth-making, and what do these tell us about the times when they originated and flourished, are some of the important questions to be explored.

The above mentioned themes serve as broad directives for proposals, intending to guide (but not limit) the submissions within the wider scope of the respective fields. All the panels are centered around the said themes and papers exploring these themes across chronological periods are welcome.