

Dhyana-The Society for Consciousness and Awareness

The word Dhyana is derived from the Sanskrit word “Dhyai” which means “to think of”. Our endeavors to explore are marked by engagement with issues that range from the philosophical to the social, and from the spiritual to the political. Dhyana is a non-competitive society oriented towards equal participation and learning for all.

Office Bearers:

Coordinators: Anukriti Roy, Ayushi Singh, Bani Kaur

Staff Advisors: Dr. Megha Dhillon, Ms. Manisha Chaurasiya, Ms. Shama Norien Major, Dr. Sushila Mahariya.

Detailed (descriptive report)

This year Dhyana attempted to engage with the various dimensions of consciousness. It sought to challenge the notion that consciousness may only be addressed and understood by those who walk a spiritual path. Rather the concept of consciousness is multi-dimensional in nature and thus may be discussed from a variety of perspectives. The events of the academic year began with a discussion enabled by Dr. Smita Sehgal, Associate Professor of History at LSR College. Dr. Sehgal discussed the Devdasi tradition of India and how it had evolved in different parts of the country over the course of hundreds of years. The session brought to the fore not only issues of gender-based oppression, but also of caste and class and how these social categories often intersect to shape people’s lives.

Dhyana also organized an interactive session with Ms. Madhavi Menon, Professor of English and Director, Centre for Studies in Gender and Sexuality, Ashoka University. Dr. Menon works at the juncture of identity, desire, literature and politics. At LSR, she discussed her latest book titled ‘A History of Desire in India’ which put into conversation the major ideas of queer theory in India’s past and present.

In surveying different mediums of learning, Dhyana organized a book discussion on the ‘Liberation of Sita’ written by well-known Telugu author Volga and translated into English by T. Vijay Kumar and C. Vijayasree. The session was facilitated by Dr. Megha Dhillon, Assistant Professor of the Psychology Department at LSR. The book tells of a very different heroine from that of Valmiki’s *Ramayana*. It is an important addition to the thousands of retellings of the epic. The *Liberation of Sita* is not a Ramayana of war and rivalry, but a re-envisioning of the epic through *Sita’s* eyes. Dr Dhillon discussed various characters in the book and the learnings that readers could gather from the perspectives presented by the characters.

The final event of the year was a session with Dr. Shernaz Cama, Associate Professor of English at LSR. She spoke of the great epic poems from the East and West including Vyasa's Mahabhartar and Homer's *Iliad*. Although these epic poems were authored by different people in very different parts of the world, they are alike in being considered as some of the greatest literature ever produced. The poems are all-encompassing in their scope and grand in their vision. Dr. Cama's discussions of these poems included many constructs ranging from heroism and revenge to morality and the place of women in histories largely written by men.

List of speakers

S.No	Name	
1	Dr. Smita Sahgal	Associate Professor (History),LSR
2	Ms.Madhavi Menon	Professor of English and Director, Centre for Studies in Gender and Sexuality, Ashoka University
3	Dr. Megha Dhillon	Assistant Professor (Psychology),LSR
4	Dr. Shernaz Cama	Assistant Professor (English),LSR