



FIELD VISIT TO PARTITION MUSEUM, DELHI

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Details of the Visit	
Date	9 th April 2026
No. of Participants	25
Course	Intellectual History in South Asia: Women Thinking the World
Course Code	SHS202845
Led by	Dr. Bindu K.C.

REPORT

On 9th, April 2026, a group of 25 students from the course ‘Intellectual History in South Asia: Women Thinking the World’ (Course Code: SHS202845), under the guidance of Dr. Bindu K.C, visited the DAG Guided Walkthrough | The Indian Picturesque, 22 A, Janpath, Delhi, for educational purposes.

This walkthrough is important for a course on Intellectual History in South Asia because it allows students to encounter ideas not as abstract texts, but as lived visual practices embedded in power, aesthetics, and circulation.

First, the exhibition “The Indian Picturesque” at DAG foregrounds how the picturesque—originally an English aesthetic theory—travels into colonial India. Intellectual history often traces the movement of concepts (like “nature,” “beauty,” or “landscape”), and here students can see how such ideas are translated, adapted, and institutionalised under the conditions of empire. The picturesque is not just an art style; it is a way of seeing that organizes land, people, and architecture into a harmonious, “naturalised” order—one that quietly aligns with colonial authority.

Second, the exhibition’s connection to the period of the East India Company highlights how aesthetic forms can function as instruments of governance. The picturesque did ideological work: it rendered Indian landscapes legible, possessable, and even desirable within imperial frameworks. This makes it a powerful example of how knowledge, power, and representation intersect, echoing key concerns in intellectual history.

Third, the inclusion of Indian artists—especially those associated with the Company School—complicates a simple coloniser/colonised narrative. Students can examine appropriation, negotiation, and hybridisation: how Indian artists did not merely imitate but reworked the picturesque, expanding its meanings. This opens up questions about agency, vernacular modernities, and alternative intellectual traditions within colonial contexts.

Finally, the walkthrough underscores a crucial methodological point: ideas circulate through images as much as through texts. By engaging with paintings, lithographs, and material objects, students learn to “read” visual culture as a form of intellectual production—developing skills in interpretation that go beyond conventional textual analysis.

In short, the walkthrough turns the classroom outward: it demonstrates that intellectual history in South Asia is not confined to books and philosophers, but is equally shaped by aesthetic regimes, colonial encounters, and visual epistemologies.