

Title – The Living Past: Comprehending India
Faculty: Vijay Kunjeer

Objective:

Living in a world that is rapidly changing one is often faced with a stark question regarding the nature and objective of human life. At such times, a remarkable discipline that assists the search for this nature and objective is History. History has often been seen as a study of the past and nothing about this discipline can be farther from the truth. History is about us, here and now. In that situation all ways of thinking about the past need to be directed to investigate the ‘present’ necessity of enquiring into the ‘past.

The following course aims to do so by involving the learner in a rather comprehensive inquiry into the nature and objective of the present probing the past.

Course Content:

Unit 1: What is history?

- Time, space and society
- Historical method, historical sense
- History: Convergence of Science and Art

Unit 2: India

- Span and expanse
- Unity in diversity: celebration of unity or negation of diversity
- Multiple selves

Unit 3: India influences: Buddhism

- Buddhism – a world religion
- Buddhism’s Indian career – from a *nirvana* in the 6th century B.C. to *smiles* in the 20th century A.D.
- The lord in art, architecture, sculpture and literature
- Prevailing in India and prospering abroad

Unit 4: India influenced: Sufism

- Sufism – a faith or merely an offshoot of a faith
- Sufism in India
- Syncretic practices and plurality in ideas
- Significance of *qawwali* in Sufi practice

Unit 5: Caste

- How was caste cast?
- Caste and gender
- Colonialism and caste
- Are Indians hard wired to perceive the world in the cast of caste?
- Will caste ever die?