REPORT ON THE ACADEMIC TALK: "CAN FOUR LEVELS OF ANALYSIS EXPLAIN WAR AND PEACE? CIVILIZATION AS THE FIFTH LEVEL"

Organised by: Departments of Political Science and History, Shyam Lal College (Evening)
Date: 8 October 2026
Time: 3:00 PM
Venue: Seminar Hall, Shyam Lal College (Evening)
Resource Person: Professor Upendra Choudhury, Department of Political Science, Aligarh Muslim University (AMU)

Introduction

The Departments of Political Science and History of Shyam Lal College (Evening) jointly organised an academic talk titled "Can Four Levels of Analysis Explain War and Peace? Civilization as the Fifth Level" on 8 October 2026 at the College Seminar Hall. The talk was delivered by Prof. Upendra Choudhury of the Department of Political Science, Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).

The programme sought to explore the significance of civilizational perspectives in understanding international relations, particularly the questions of war, peace, conflict, and cooperation. By bringing together the disciplines of Political Science and History, the event provided an interdisciplinary platform for examining how historical experiences, cultural formations, and civilizational frameworks can contribute to our understanding of international politics.

The central theme of the talk was the possibility of extending conventional levels of analysis in International Relations by considering civilization as a fifth level of analysis. The discussion encouraged participants to reflect on the explanatory possibilities of civilizational approaches and their relationship with existing frameworks for understanding international affairs.

Proceedings of the Talk

Professor Upendra Choudhury introduced the theme by engaging with the established levels of analysis used to understand war and peace in International Relations. The talk invited participants to consider whether these frameworks adequately account for the historical and cultural dimensions that shape relations between political communities.

The proposition of civilization as a fifth level of analysis opened up questions about the role of shared historical experiences, cultural traditions, collective identities, and long-term civilizational encounters in shaping political behaviour and international relations. It also encouraged participants to think beyond approaches that explain conflict and cooperation

exclusively through individual leaders, domestic political structures, or the international system.

The talk was particularly significant for the interdisciplinary dialogue it fostered between History and Political Science. It highlighted the importance of historical knowledge in understanding contemporary international relations and encouraged students and faculty members to consider how civilizational perspectives might complement, challenge, or complicate conventional theoretical approaches.

An Interactive Academic Discussion

One of the most significant aspects of the programme was that it evolved beyond a conventional speaker-centred talk into a shared platform for academic discussion and intellectual exchange. Rather than remaining a one-way presentation followed by a brief question-and-answer session, the event developed into an engaging conversation in which the Principal and faculty members actively intervened, raised questions, and brought their own perspectives to the discussion.

The interventions and viewpoints offered by the Principal and faculty members enriched the conversation by introducing additional interpretations and encouraging critical engagement with the central proposition of civilization as the fifth level of analysis. The exchange demonstrated that academic talks can become spaces where ideas are not merely presented by a resource person but are collectively examined, questioned, and developed through dialogue.

The discussion also reflected the value of bringing together different disciplinary orientations and intellectual experiences. The participation of faculty members helped broaden the scope of the conversation, making it an opportunity for collective reflection rather than simply an individual lecture. This interactive format reinforced the importance of open academic dialogue in developing a more nuanced understanding of complex historical and political questions.

The discussion was further enriched by the enthusiastic participation of students and faculty members from various departments of the College, who actively raised questions, sought clarifications, and shared their perspectives on the issues under discussion. Their questions brought diverse viewpoints into the conversation and encouraged further engagement with the theoretical and historical dimensions of civilizational approaches to International Relations. The active participation of students and faculty members transformed the talk into a vibrant academic exchange, demonstrating a shared interest in exploring complex questions beyond disciplinary boundaries. It also provided students with an opportunity to engage directly with a senior academic, critically examine theoretical propositions, and participate in meaningful intellectual dialogue.

Interdisciplinary Significance

The joint organisation of the talk by the Departments of Political Science and History reflected the shared concerns of the two disciplines with questions of power, conflict, identity, and historical change.

The theme offered an opportunity to consider how historical processes and civilizational encounters might inform contemporary debates in International Relations. It also encouraged participants to examine the relationship between historical continuity and political change, while remaining attentive to the limitations of treating civilizations as uniform or internally homogeneous entities.

The programme thus underscored the importance of interdisciplinary approaches in higher education. By bringing historical perspectives into conversation with theories of International Relations, the talk encouraged participants to engage critically with established frameworks and consider alternative ways of interpreting global political developments.

Conclusion

The academic talk by Prof. Upendra Choudhury was a valuable initiative towards promoting interdisciplinary learning and intellectual engagement at Shyam Lal College (Evening). By examining the proposition of civilization as the fifth level of analysis in understanding war and peace, the programme opened up important questions about the relationship between history, culture, identity, and international politics.

The event's significance lay not only in the subject of the talk but also in the manner in which it unfolded. The active interventions of the Principal and faculty members transformed the programme into a collaborative discussion platform, demonstrating the value of academic exchange in which ideas are explored through multiple viewpoints rather than received passively.

The joint initiative of the Departments of Political Science and History reaffirmed the importance of interdisciplinary dialogue in enriching teaching and learning. The programme provided a meaningful opportunity for faculty members and students to engage with theoretical questions, exchange perspectives, and reflect on the possibilities and limitations of civilizational approaches to understanding international relations.

Selected Pictures from the Event



Figure 1. Professor Nachiketa Singh, Principal, Shyam Lal College (Evening), University of Delhi, with our Guest Speaker, Professor Upendra Choudhury, International Relations, Department of Political Science, Aligarh Muslim University and other faculty members.



Figure 2. Our Guest Speaker, Professor Upendra Choudhury, International Relations, Department of Political Science, Aligarh Muslim University, delivering his talk.



Figure 3. Professor Nachiketa Singh, Principal, Shyam Lal College (Evening), introducing the topic and addressing the audience


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