

**Miranda House  
University of Delhi**

**Smt. Shakuntla & Shri KL Kishwar Memorial Essay Competition**

**Supported by Madhu Purnima Kishwar**

We are delighted to announce the Smt. Shakuntla & Shri KL Kishwar Memorial Essay Competition! This prestigious competition aims to encourage students to delve deep into their roots and document the rich histories of their families and communities.

**Essay Topics:**

- 1. My Family & Community History**
- 2. The History of My Village or Town**

\*Prizes amounting to more than Rs. 51,000/-

**Registration Link:** <https://forms.gle/RLcNErUaxVfV8e8k6>

**Important Guidelines:**

- Eligibility: Open to all students from Undergraduate to Ph.D
- Language: Essays can be written in Hindi, English, Sanskrit.
- Word Limit: 8,000–10,000 words.
- Abstract to be submitted by 9 April 2025.
- Acceptance of Abstract 10 July 2025.
- First Draft of Paper by September 2025
- Final submission of paper by December 2025
- The submissions will be online.
- We will not only celebrate the prize winners but also give publicity to all the good contributions that bring forth valuable information and insights by publishing them on a dedicated website.
- Kishwar Memorial Trust will arrange for the publication of the best essays every year in collaboration with outside experts as well as the Miranda House team.

**Judging Panel:**

Essays will be evaluated by an esteemed jury comprising academicians, policymakers, and practitioners.

This competition provides a platform for students to engage in thoughtful research and preserve invaluable histories. We encourage everyone to participate and showcase their talents!

1. **My Family & Community History, including the history of my larger kinship group.** This will involve the participant to:

- a) Conduct interviews with family and community elders;
- b) Explore historical records, if any;
- c) Family legends i.e. legendary narratives about some of the ancestors of the family.
- d) The decision-making process in the family: An Authority figure who is consensually respected by all—could be an old grandmother, Bua, elder brother, mother or father;
- e) How are intra-family and inter-family disputes resolved?
- f) Family names origins of family names;
- g) Family tree diagrams;
- h) The legend related to Kuldevi or Kul Devata, ritual/ community spiritual practices, if any;
- i) Life cycle rituals that are still being observed and those that have been abandoned;
- j) family antiques and other treasured stuff and legends/narratives if any about them
- k) Misrepresentation of the community and countering them through an insider's perspective;
- l) Genealogy registers maintained by pandas in Haridwar;
- m) Access Jaati Puranas which were traditionally preserved—either orally or in writing in almost every regional language of India. These genealogies record the self-view of each jati about its origins, descent and hereditary occupation, including the very important life-cycle rituals, it is expected to perform. For example, the Nai jati, did not just act as hairdressers but also as match-makers for communities high and low. The Jati purana of Paswans records the martial functions they performed as soldiers and commanders in the armies of Rajwadas in pre-British India.

The jati puranas often contain insights into various communities' upward or downward mobility through different phases of history. They can thus provide us with a far more genuine indigenous “subaltern” view of history and society, than the Eurocentric/ colonials narrative/ Discourse.

2. **The History of My Village or Town, including urbanised villages that have been made part of the larger urban centres:** This essay will also involve original research for each participant will need to:

- a) Interview family and community elders who have witnessed the process of change in their lifetime and carry memories of stories told by their parents, grandparents etc;
- b) Consult archival records;
- c) The process through which urbanisation took place: Was it organic or state-induced-- for example, through the acquisition of agricultural land by the government;
- d) The changing demographic composition of the village or township;
- e) Inter-community relations and traditional institutions of conflict resolution; Do traditional institutions still survive in some form?
- f) Its historical significance, including popular memories of the rulers of that area;
- g) Historical sites, including ancient places of worship;
- h) Uniquely local festivals, if any;
- i) The upward and downward mobility of various communities inhabiting the village or town;
- j) Environmental history of the village or town;
- k) The positive or negative contributions of kings, queens, mukhiyas, village elders etc.,
- l) Memories of traditional systems like jajmani, baaraabalutedaar etc.
- m) Unique products of that village, town or region.
- n) Patterns of out-migration/ in-migration from the village or town and how it has changed the character of the place for good or worse;
- o) If your family has left the ancestral village/town, do you still maintain contact with your native place?