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Delhi University's history... brought alive

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VIJETHA S N



The erstwhile ViceRegal Lodge at Delhi University , now the VC Secretariat

Sound and light show to showcase a grand story replete with fighting, blood, incarceration and, of course, some romance

After months of planning, the university's Sound 'n Light show finally saw the light of day.

"A lot of history is associated with the University, in fact, you can say the history of India has played out in a microscopic fashion in the university, especially the freedom movement," said (alumnus) **ViceChancellor Dinesh Singh.**

The erstwhile ViceRegalLodge, a massive white colonial mansion which currently houses the Vice-Chancellor's office, is where shows were held on all three evenings (14 – 16 February) of the Antardhvani festival.

He explained that the Lodge became university property in 1933 after serving as the residence of several Viceroys of the British Raj.

"Mahatma Gandhi used to stay here, and Bhagat Singh was imprisoned here . However, the Lodge's tryst with history did not begin or even end there...It used to be a hunting lodge around the 1857 revolution when all this was just a forest."

On those hot summer days in 1857, mutinous soldiers charged into the city and an Emperor was reinstated. Then suddenly the coin turned, the British were driven into hiding in the North of the city, some of them making it to Kingsway Camp and some even into the lodge.

Later on, Bhagat Singh and two of his comrades were incarcerated at the Lodge. Dungeons used for imprisoning the freedom fighter Still exist , complete with prison-like toilets and a hole to throw down food.

Politics , of course, is played out with the era of Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, both of whom have a big part in the play. “The Gandhi-Irwin Pact was signed right here.”

There is, however, a break in the history lesson with a marriage proposal.

“Lord Mountbatten proposed to his wife Edwina, who was the niece of then **Viceroy Lord Reading.**”

The grand ballroom, which may have been witness to many other romances, now functions as a Convocation Hall and it is with a Convocation that the show ends. “In 1948 the university gave honorary degrees to Jawaharlal Nehru and Lord Mountbatten ; our show ends with this.”

Photo: S. Subramaniam