



ANJAN GHOSH PUBLIC LECTURES

**Organized by
Department of Sociology
The University of Burdwan
Golapbag, Burdwan
7th July, 2011**

INAUGURAL SESSION.



From Left Prof. Anirban Banerjee, Prof. Arup Kumar Chattopadhyay,
and Prof. Swapan Kumar Pramanik

The Department of Sociology, The University of Burdwan, organized the Anjan Ghosh Public Lectures on 7th July, 2011. The lectures were held at the P.N. Bhadury Memorial hall of the Department of Botany at the Golapbag Campus of the University in Burdwan. It was sponsored by The University of Burdwan. There were over a hundred participants who included teachers, students, research scholars and members of the general public. There were two lectures. The entire programme was divided into three sessions, namely, the Inaugural Session, the First lecture and the Second Lecture.

In his “Inaugural Address”, Prof. Anirban Banerjee, Head of the Department of Sociology of The University Of Burdwan and Chairman of the Organizing Committee, dwelt on the *raison d’etre* of the function, namely to



Dr. Sourav Madhur Dey was in charge of announcements

honour the memory of the late Dr. Anjan Ghosh (1951-2010), sociologist and radical left-wing political activist, who was also his teacher. Dr. Anjan Ghosh was, in fact, teacher of many of our Faculty Members. When the Department of Sociology was formally inaugurated in 1990, two Bengali sociologists Profs Prasanta Ray and Anjan Ghosh, addressed the inaugural seminar. Since then Anjanda, as the Faculty Members fondly called him, was intimately

associated with this department in various capacities. There is in the library of Sociology Department, an invaluable gift of one hundred books bequeathed by Dr. Ghosh. The Department has preserved them as the *Anjan Ghosh Collection*. Whenever we needed his services, Anjanda would unfailingly come-whether at Board meetings, examination related meetings or selection committees. Towards the end of his address, Prof. Anirban Banerjee introduced the Guest Speakers, Prof. Swapan Kumar Pramanik and Prof. Abhijit Mitra. While inaugurating the function, the learned Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Prof. Arup Kumar Chattopadhyay, spoke glowingly of the intellectual achievements of Dr. Anjan Ghosh and the international context of his work.

The first lecture was presided over by Prof. Arup Kumar Chattopadhyay, Dean of the Faculty of Arts of The University of Burdwan. Guest Speaker, Prof. Swapan Kumar Pramanik Vice Chancellor (Retired) Vidyasagar University and former Professor of Sociology, Calcutta University spoke on *Ambedkar: A Social Activist*. Before commencing the lecture, Prof. Pramanik thanked the Department for inviting him to speak and paid glowing tributes to late Dr. Ghosh. He said that the experience of the Sociology Department of Burdwan University with Dr. Anjan Ghosh is not unique. Prof. Ghosh served other



Prof. Swapan Pramanik delivering his address

universities with equal élan and sincerity. He recounted his experience at Vidyasagar University. When Dr. Anjan Ghosh was requested by him to help the fledgling Sociology Department, he put his heart and soul into the matter. He also pointed out that Dr. Anjan Ghosh was one of the leading lights of the Sociological Association of West Bengal and it is on his initiative that the organization could bring out its publications.

After paying tribute to the memory of Dr. Anjan Ghosh, Prof. Pramanik began his lecture *Ambedkar: A Social Activist*. He showed that Ambedkar's social activism and social thought were shaped by his own biographical experience of the practice of untouchability. Ambedkar was discriminated against by society due to his being from an untouchable caste—the Mahar. The Congress resolutions on untouchability, were, in Ambedkar's mind, superficial and were a ploy to gain their allegiance. Even some members of the Congress, like Annie Besant were hostile towards untouchables and openly expressed their hatred for them. Ambedkar adopted a more radical stance towards caste than Gandhi. While Gandhiji criticised untouchability and called for its abolition, he was against abolition of the caste system. Ambedkar, however, called for the annihilation of caste. He organized the untouchables to fight against upper caste oppression.

Ambedkar was strongly influenced by Marxism. He adopted some of its tenets, like class struggle, and socialism. But he differed with Marxists on the role of violence in social change. He also criticized Indian Marxists for mindlessly applying the class framework to analysis of Indian society. He said that there was no equality even among the Indian proletariat, which was divided on the basis of caste distinctions.

In Ambedkar's theory of *social democracy*, he shows that democracy was a way of life which recognizes liberty, equality and fraternity. For him, democratic socialism will only lead to economic reconstruction but not social reconstruction. He adopted the Buddhist model of social reconstruction.

Ambedkar observed that rights must be protected not by law but by social and political situations. Political democracy must be based on social democracy. He observed that from January 26, 1950, the day India would become a republic and adopted a new Constitution, India will enter an era of contradictions because there will be contradictions between political democracy and economic inequality, between fabulous wealth and absolute poverty.

Ambedkar wanted to build a *socialistic pattern of society*. But the framers of the Constitution made some basic rights non justiciable (by incorporating them into Directive principles of State Policy). Ambedkar wanted nationalization of land and industries. He advocated collective farming along socialistic lines. He also said that the government should distribute land among farmers without regard to caste and creed. Ambedkar was the champion of reservations. He advocated planned social change. Prof. Pramanik concluded by emphasising on the need to revisit Ambedkar.

In the second session, which was chaired by Prof. Biswajit Ghosh, Professor of Sociology, The University of Burdwan, our second Guest Speaker, Prof. Abhijit Mitra, Retired Professor of Sociology, Burdwan University, spoke on his chosen theme, *Sociology Today*. Prof. Mitra recollected his association with Dr. Anjan Ghosh, in whose name this lecture was being



Prof. Abhijit Mitra delivering his address. Chairing the session to his left is Prof. Biswajit Ghosh

organized. They had participated in a seminar, “Sociology in the 21st Century,” organized by the Department of Sociology, Burdwan University, in 2000 to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Sociology Department. In this lecture, Prof. Mitra observed that entry into Sociology should be through literature because literature deals with social life, roles and relationships. The sociologists of the 21st century should concentrate on 1) the individual and 2) the body.

Dr. Ananda Mohan Kar, Assistant Professor of Sociology of The University of Burdwan, gave the vote of thanks. He thanked The University of Burdwan for sponsoring these lectures and Botany Department for allowing the Department of Sociology to use the hall. The sessions were ably compeered by Dr. Sourav Madhur Dey, Assistant Professor of Sociology, Burdwan University. Two of our Faculty Members, Prof. Bibhas Bagchi and Prof. Ananta Kumar Biswas contributed to making the event a success. The office staff of the Department, Sri Tanmoy Choudhury and Sri Pratyush Ghosh also contributed to the success of the event.



Dr. Ananda Mohan Kar delivering the Vote of Thanks

Text: Prof. Anirban Banerjee
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