

Endowment Lecture in Memory of Professor Karunasindhu Das

Report:

Memorial Lecture of Professor Karunasindhu Das

Date: 10th September

Time: 2:00 PM

Venue: Sanskrit Department, Jadavpur University, Kolkata

Organised by: Kolkata Society for Asian Studies

Reported by: Mithu Lahiri, Post Doctoral fellow at Kolkata Society For Asian Studies.

On 10th September, 2024 a memorial lecture was held at the Sanskrit Department of Jadavpur University to honor the contributions of Professor Karunasindhu Das. The event took place at 2:00 PM at the university premises located at 188 Raja Subodh Chandra Mullick Road, Jadavpur, Kolkata, West Bengal. The lecture was organized by the Kolkata Society for Asian Studies with the endowment grant from the family of Professor Karunasindhu Das.

Inaugural Song and Floral Tribute

The program started with a floral tribute at the feet of Professor Karunasindhu Das, followed by the Sanskrit Department students' rendition of Rabindranath Tagore's song "Aguner Parashmoni Chhowao Prane". This soulful inauguration set a tone of respect and reflection for the rest of the seminar.

Welcome Address

The event commenced with a welcome address by Professor Dr. Ashok Kumar Mahato, who expressed the significance of the program and welcomed the audience to the seminar.

President of the Memorial Program

The program was presided over by Retired Professor Dr. Bijoya Goswami of the Sanskrit Department, Jadavpur University, who introduced the theme of the memorial and remembered Professor Das's deep academic influence.

Chairperson's Address

Professor Parbati Chakraborty, the chairperson for the seminar, shared her personal experiences of being a student of Professor Karunasindhu Das. She fondly recalled how Professor Das was a cordial and supportive mentor, dedicated to his students' academic growth. She described his calm and quiet nature, his commitment to scholarly pursuits, and his frequent presence in the library, working with various texts. His significant contributions to Sanskrit grammar, Vedic literature, and manuscripts were highlighted, especially his work on the socio-cultural perspectives of the Vedic era. Professor Chakraborty emphasized how Professor Das encouraged his students to focus their research on Vedic literature and manuscripts, sharing cherished memories from her university days with him.

Memorial Lecture: Prasaṅga Sāṃgāna o Bhāratiya Saṅgīta

The highlight of the program was the memorial lecture delivered by Retired Professor Dr. Didhiti Biswas from the Department of Sanskrit, University of Calcutta. The topic of her lecture was “Prasaṅga Sāṃgāna o Bhāratiya Saṅgīta”, which focused on the influence of Sāṃgāna on Indian classical music.

In her lecture, Professor Biswas explored the origins of Indian classical music, tracing its roots back to Samgana, the songs of the Samaveda. She explained how Samgana is considered the mother of Indian classical music, influencing its styles and forms. She elaborated on the lyrical structure of Vedic songs and how these songs were performed during Vedic Yajnas. The role of the Udgata singers in these performances was also highlighted.

She further discussed the continuation of Vedic songs in the non-Vedic period and their cultural significance. According to her, understanding Vedic music helps us better appreciate Indian classical music, which has inherited much of its structure and essence from these ancient hymns.

Interactive Session

During the Q&A session, the audience asked Professor Biswas about the similarities between Vedic songs and contemporary Indian classical music. She also addressed questions regarding the limited practice of Samgana by elite

families in the Vedic period, offering insights into the socio-cultural context of the time.

Closing Remarks and Song

The seminar concluded with another beautiful song, “Anondo Dhara Bohiche Bhubane”, performed by the students of the Sanskrit Department. This emotionally charged performance brought the event to a meaningful close.

Conclusion

The memorial lecture was a fitting tribute to Professor Karunasindhu Das, celebrating his vast academic contributions and the legacy he left behind. It provided an enriching experience for all participants, particularly in understanding the historical and cultural significance of Sāṃgāna in Indian music. The event successfully blended scholarly discussion with emotional tributes, offering a comprehensive reflection on Professor Das's life and work.