Article

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Papiya Ghosh: (8 October 1953 – 3 December 2006)

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Tuktuk Ghosh

Professor Papiya Ghosh belonged to the legion of academicians who strove ceaselessly to push the frontiers of knowledge and impart quality education to younger generations. That she succeeded, in the face of several odds and in environments that were not the most conducive, is testimony to her grit, determination and commitment, which are indeed inspirational.

That such a remarkable life should be cut short with ruthlessness, beyond comprehension, by criminals, should give pause for thought for all right thinking global citizens. The authorities have put down the barbarity to robbery, but this strains credulity. To date, the real motive and the mastermind have not been unravelled.

Professor Ghosh was born to family of professionals, third of four daughters. Her father, Ujjal Kumar Ghosh, was a bureaucrat of the Indian Administrative Service, serving in the State of Bihar. Unfortunately he fell victim to a political murder, early in his career and it was left to his wife, Purnima Ghosh, to raise Papiya and her siblings single-handedly, in an all female household.

It is a supremely puzzling coincidence that Prof. Ghosh and her father were murdered on the same date, in the same city, five decades apart!

Professor Ghosh did her family proud and earned academic distinctions all through. She was educated in the Patna and Delhi Universities of India. She started her career as Lecturer in History in the Hindu College of the University of Delhi, in 1977. In 1979, she shifted to Patna University, where she taught for almost three decades, with short stints at other renowned Institutions. Patna University, in 1979, was being deserted by the best and the brightest, as it was beset with manifold problems, but Prof. Ghosh was not one to turn her back on a difficult and complex setting. She gave of her best to her students through innovative and unique teaching pedagogies and ensured that they were not denied the most up-to-date knowledge. For this Prof. Ghosh has earned the enduring gratitude and admiration of hundreds of students.

Specializing in Modern Indian History, Prof. Ghosh received Fellowships from the Indian Council of Historical Research, Indian Institute of Advanced Study and Nehru Memorial Museum and Library. She was Rockefeller Fellow at the Institute of South Asian Culture, University of Chicago, Fellow at the Institute of Triangle South Asian Consortium, North Carolina State University and Visiting Professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She was Advisor to Asian Development Research Institute and a Member of Pakistan-India Peoples' Forum for Peace and Democracy.

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Professor Ghosh was an intense and original researcher and contributed to many seminars, conferences and reputed national and international Journals such as the Indian History Congress, the Indian Historical Review, the Indian Economic and Social History Review, Social Scientist, Refugee watch, Journal of Historical Studies, Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East. She worked on gender issues, the problems of the 'Muhajirs' and Dalit Muslims, the South Asian Diaspora, particularly Bihari Muslims during and after partition, and popular syncretic culture.

Four of her books have been published posthumously and a few articles, too. *The South Asian Diaspora, Extending the Subcontinent* (Routledge, 2007) was released only a few days after her gruesome and untimely end. The details of her academic contributions can be seen on her website, 'Honouring Papiya' (www.papiyaghosh.com).

Papiya Ghosh was single and feisty and believed in living for others and giving her all for their betterment.

To celebrate and memorialize her unique and appealing persona, a trust has been set up, details of which can be found on the website www.purnujjalpapiyaghoshmemorialtrust.com.

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