

**CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN SOCIAL SCIENCES, CALCUTTA,
R-1 BAISHNABGHATA PATULI,
KOLKATA 700094**

GENERAL SEMINAR

Anindya Banerjee
Sarod player and Critic

will give a talk titled:

“The Contribution of Courtesans to Calcutta’s Musical Scenario”

The 'bais' or the 'tawaifs' were the courtesans of Calcutta. Arranging their dance recitals or 'nautches' and 'mujras' to show off one's wealth and social status was the trend since the 18th century, especially among the babus. The practice was given a boost by the residence of the ousted Nawab of Oudh, Wajid Ali Shah, and his retinue of begums and courtesans taking up permanent residence in Calcutta. Many well-known personalities became patrons of the bais, including Raja Rammohan Roy. Many, including the poet Ishwar Gupta and the famous instrumentalist Allauddin Khan have mentioned them in their writings and memoirs, often disparagingly. There is evidence of the system being in place till the 20th century. From the middle of the 20th century the tawaif system somewhat disintegrated and also changed form. Apparently, it is still there in Calcutta, but no longer practised in plain sight, but rather hidden from view like an underground river.

Date: Friday, 26th August, 2016

Time: 3 – 5 pm

Venue: CSSSC’s Seminar Room, Patuli Campus

Trina Nileena Banerjee
(Convener, Seminar Committee)

All are welcome to attend.