



Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Special Lecture  
Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati

# **A Beautiful Mind!**

## **Social Cognition in Wild Bonnet Macaques**

**Prof. Anindya Sinha**

**Date: Tuesday, 06 December 2016**

**Time: 4 pm**

**Venue: Mini Auditorium**

Social primates appear to be knowledgeable about one another's behavior to different extents. But do they know as much about one another's beliefs and intentions? Are they adept at recognising the similarities and differences between their own and others' states of mind? What are the mental mechanisms that allow them to establish cultural traditions? Attribution of mental states to other individuals could manifest itself in diverse situations as, for example, when individual animals closely observe the actions of others, when they interact competitively, or when they deceive each other in the social sphere. Explorations into the phenomena of social learning and phenotypic flexibility also contribute to our understanding of distributed cognition, a relatively new approach that treats behavioural coordination and communicative interactions in primates as directly observable cognitive events rather than using behaviour as a basis for inferences to invisible mental events such as intentions. This talk will examine some of the theoretical and philosophical issues in animal cognitive psychology, with a particular focus on social knowledge, tactical deception and the acquisition of cultural traditions, processes integral to the behavioural biology of wild bonnet macaques, a primate species found commonly in peninsular India.

### **About the Speaker**

Anindya Sinha is currently Professor at the National Institute of Advanced Studies in Bangalore and Senior Scientist at the Nature Conservation Foundation in Mysore. He studied botany in Calcutta University and earned a doctorate in molecular biology from the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai, in 1993. His early research concerned the social biology of wasps, population genetics of elephants and the classical genetics of human disease, which he pursued in the Indian Institute of Science and National Centre for Biological Sciences, both in Bangalore. His research interests over the last two decades have, however, primarily been in the areas of animal behavioural ecology, cognitive ethology, population and behavioural genetics, and conservation biology, particularly of primates and elephants. He is also interested in the philosophy of biology, biology education and the popularisation of science, and has lectured extensively in a variety of educational and research institutions both within and outside India.