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ANIRVAN GHOSH

The Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences

Transcript of an Interview
Conducted by

William Van Benschoten

at

University of California, San Diego
San Diego, California

on

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From the Original Collection of the University of California, Los Angeles



Anirvan Ghosh

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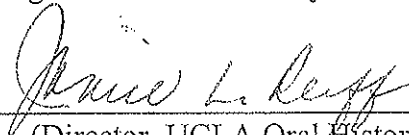
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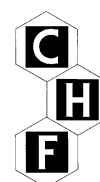
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ANIRVAN GHOSH

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ABSTRACT

Anirvan Ghosh was born in Bloomington, Indiana—Ghosh’s parents were graduate students there—the older of two children. After a brief time at Rice University in Houston, Texas, Ghosh’s family moved to Kanpur, India, where Ghosh grew up. His father was a chemistry professor; his mother taught at local schools and colleges until she received a faculty position teaching comparative literature. Ghosh lived his life in an academic setting, being heavily influenced by the work of his parents and their interest in traveling and showing their children various sites. He stayed in the Indian educational system (which he describes in detail) until he was seventeen years of age at which point he matriculated at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech).

While transitioning into the American educational system, Ghosh undertook undergraduate research projects in the laboratories of Jack Beacham, Thomas Tombrello, and Jerome Pine. In addition, he was afforded the opportunity to work in Thomas S. Reese’s lab at Woods Hole Marine Biological Laboratory, a place at which he had a “defining” moment during a neurobiology course. Ghosh decided to pursue a graduate education and was torn between attending Stanford University or Harvard University, ultimately choosing the former. At Stanford, he studied under Carla J. Shatz researching brain-cell development

After hearing a talk from Michael E. Greenberg at a Gordon Conference, Ghosh became interested in doing his postdoctoral research with Greenberg at Harvard Medical School in the field of molecular neurobiology, focusing on experiential cortical development in the brain. Although neither he nor his wife had ever lived on the East Coast, they decided to move there with their son given the density of universities and potential job opportunities. Upon finishing his postdoctoral research, Ghosh accepted a position at Johns Hopkins University, though soon after decided to move on to a position at the University of California, San Diego.

The interview concludes with Ghosh recounting the establishment of his Hopkins laboratory, his transition to San Diego, and his current and future research goals. In addition, Ghosh reflects upon patents; the privatization of scientific research; competition and collaboration in science; the national scientific agenda; underrepresented groups in science; the source of his ideas; and last, but certainly not least, the impact of the Pew Scholars Program in the Biomedical Sciences grant on his work.

UCLA INTERVIEW HISTORY

INTERVIEWER:

William Van Benschoten, Interviewer, UCLA Oral History Program. B.A., History, University of California, Riverside; M.A., History, University of California, Riverside; C. Phil., History, UCLA

TIME AND SETTING OF INTERVIEW:

Place: Ghosh's office, University of California, San Diego.

Dates, length of sessions: February 2, 2004 and February 3, 2004

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Persons present during interview: Ghosh and Van Benschoten.

CONDUCT OF INTERVIEW:

This interview is one in a series with Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences conducted by the UCLA Oral History Program in conjunction with the Pew Charitable Trusts's Pew Scholars in the Biomedical Sciences Oral History and Archives Project. The project has been designed to document the backgrounds, education, and research of biomedical scientists awarded four-year Pew scholarships since 1988.

To provide an overall framework for project interviews, the director of the UCLA Oral History Program and three UCLA faculty project consultants developed a topic outline. In preparing for this interview, Van Benschoten held a telephone preinterview conversation with Ghosh to obtain written background information (curriculum vitae, copies of published articles, etc.) and agree on an interviewing schedule. He also reviewed documentation in Ghosh's file at the Pew Scholars Program office in San Francisco, including Ghosh's proposal application, letters of recommendation, and reviews by Pew Scholars Program national advisory committee members.

ORIGINAL EDITING:

Carol Squires edited the interview. She checked the verbatim transcript of the interview against the original tape recordings, edited for punctuation, paragraphing, and spelling, and verified proper names. Words and phrases inserted by the editor have been bracketed.

Ghosh reviewed the transcript. He verified proper names and made minor corrections and additions.

Carol Squires prepared the table of contents and TechniType Transcripts compiled the guide to proper names.

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