



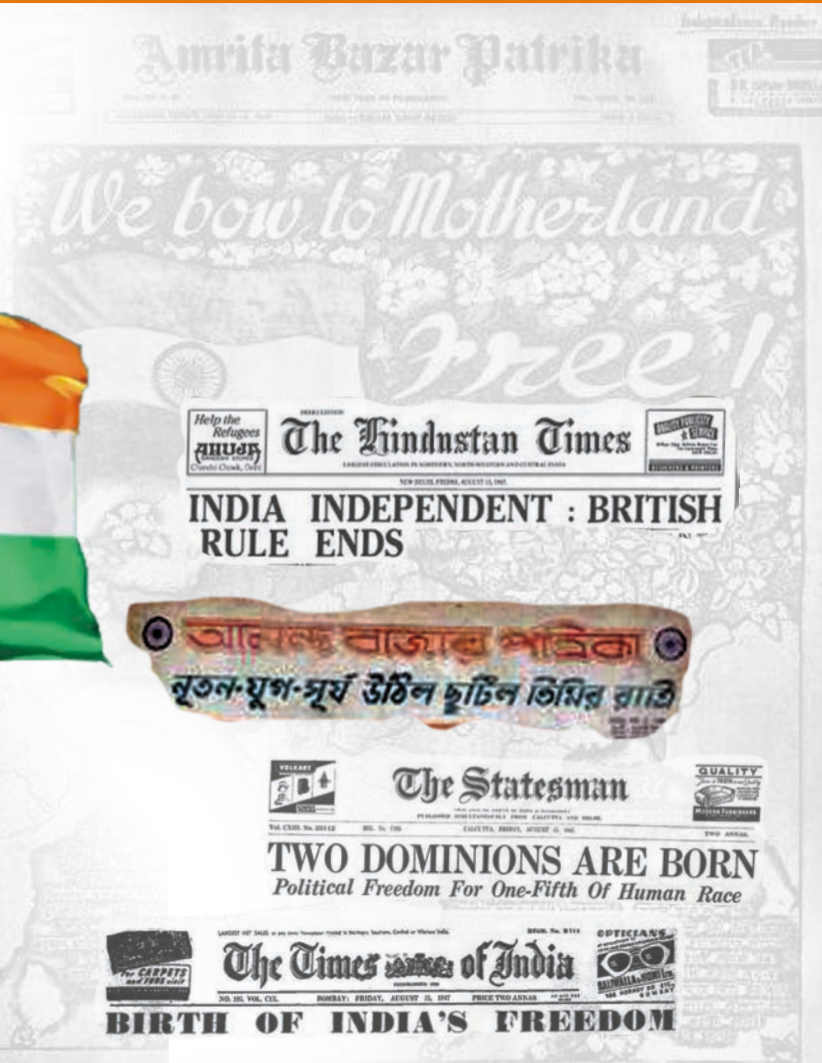
JULY-SEPTEMBER 2021



# Monthly Bulletin

VOLUME L, NO. 7-9

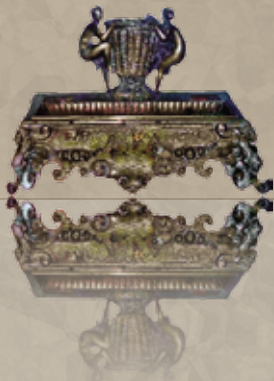
75  
Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav



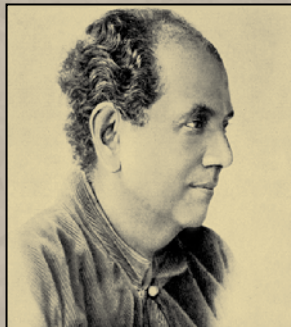
THE ASIATIC SOCIETY  
1 PARK STREET • KOLKATA-700016

# Contents

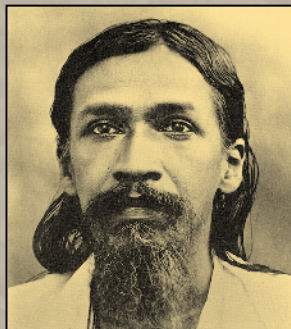
■ From the Desk of the General Secretary	1	<b>Report from the Library</b>	
■ Monthly General Meetings	4	■ Library beyond the Walls: Services and Activities of Asiatic Society Library during the COVID-19 Pandemic Pritam Gurey	43
<b>President's Column</b>		<b>Report from the Museum</b>	
■ Inclusion of Castes in Census Enumeration Swapan Kumar Pramanick	5	■ Museum of The Asiatic Society Keka Adhikari Banerjee	48
<b>Paper read in August 2021</b>		<b>Report from the Conservation Section</b>	
■ Review of Oil Paintings of Atul Bose in the Collection of The Asiatic Society Isha Mahammad and Somnath Mukherjee	8	■ Encapsulation of Palm Leaves Ramaprasanna Sinha, Gouri Mitra, Kalyan Sen and Dibakar Maity	59
<b>Paper read in September 2021</b>		<b>Summary of Research Projects</b>	
■ Rammohun Roy: The Moderniser and the Advocate for Women's Cause Swapan Kumar Pramanick	10	■ Final Results of the Research Project entitled 'Society as Reflected in the Principal Upaniṣads' Mrinal Kanti Gangopadhyay	62
<b>In Memoriam</b>		■ A Study of Two Migrated Tribal Populations Living in the Urban Metropolitan City of Kolkata Amrita Das Gupta	71
■ Remembering the Predecessors S. B. Chakrabarti	12	■ Highlights of The Asiatic Society Project on Science and Technical Education in India Sujata Banerjee	75
■ Professor Dilip Coomer Ghose Pallab Sengupta	13	<b>Space for Research Fellows</b>	
■ Professor (Dr.) Mihir Kumar Chakrabarti Saswati Mukherjee	14	■ Healthy Mothers Lead to a Healthy Nation: The Importance of Female Physical Education in 20th Century Bengal Basudhita Basu	77
■ Gentleman, Scholar, Orator : Journey of a Prolific Writer and a Man of Principles Samik Mukherjee	16	■ Sustainable Menstruation Practices in Times of COVID-19 Pandemic Parama Chatterjee	80
<b>Art Appreciation</b>		<b>Heritage Matters</b>	
■ The Painted Chalchitra of Bengal Nandini Chakraborty	18	■ Bowl of Buddha Phani Kanta Mishra	83
<b>Remembering Rammohun</b>		<b>Events</b>	
■ Rammohun in 'Tuh-Fat-UI-Muoyāhiddin' (একেস্বর-বিশ্বাসীদিগকে উপহার) : A Glimpse of Shifted Paradigm for Religious Skepticism Mahidas Bhattacharya	23	■ प्रगति में सदा बाधा बनी रही जाति प्रथा : इरफान हबीब	87
<b>Remembering Abanindranath</b>		■ Visit of His Excellency, Professor Adam Burakowski, Ambassador of Poland to India to Society on 13.08.2021	89
■ Abanindranath Tagore : 150th Birth Anniversary Ratan Parimoo	27	■ Release of 75th Anniversary of Indian National Army and Provisional Government on 14th August 2021 at The Asiatic Society	90
<b>Remembering Sri Aurobindo</b>	30	■ 75th Independence Day Celebration at The Asiatic Society, Kolkata on 15.08.2021	91
<b>Remembering Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan</b>	31	■ Study Visit of the Committee of Papers Laid on the Table (COPLoT) – Rajya Sabha and Meeting of the Hon'ble Members of the Committee with the Representatives of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, on 21.08.2021	92
<b>Treasures of The Asiatic Society</b>		■ Visit of Foreign Dignitaries in The Asiatic Society, Kolkata	93
■ Popular Edition of the <i>Asiatick Researches</i>	32	■ In-house Staff Training Programme on 'Scientific arrangement of Museum Objects: Problems and Prospects'	95
■ Composition of the Council in the year 1947	33	■ YouTube Release of 'Rivers of Knowledge' (A Film on The Asiatic Society by Gautam Ghosh) on the occasion of 275th Birth Anniversary of Sir William Jones on 28th September 2021	96
<b>Focus on North-East India</b>		■ Webinars in the months of August and September, 2021	97
■ Arunachal Pradesh : A State in the Trans-Himalayan Region with Unique Ethno-Linguistic Diversity Shyam Sundar Bhattacharya	34	<b>Books from Reader's Choice</b>	
<b>Economy of Forest Resource</b>		■ Dusk to Dawn : Poetic voices on the current times—South Asia and Beyond Tapati Mukherjee	100
■ Mahua — A Potential Game Changer of Community Livelihood Soumen Basu	37	<b>Books Accessioned during the Last Month</b>	102
<b>COVID is Continuing</b>			
■ इसानी दुनिया में कोविड-19 का तांडव राम आह्लाद चौधरी	40		



## From the Desk of the General Secretary



Abanindranath Tagore (07.08.1871)



Sri Aurobindo (15.08.1872)



Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (05.09.1888)

Dear Members and Well Wishers,

I feel happy to share with you for being close to the clearance of the backlog of the Monthly Bulletin with this number. We have already cleared combined number of April, May, June, 2021 and with this combined number of July, August, September, 2021 we will be through towards updation.

As usual many important occasions and dates of remembrance have crossed us during the period under consideration. Notable among them are the following:

We have already observed the 75th year of Independence on 15.08.2021. This national event has been declared by the Government of India as **Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav**. The nation as a whole will celebrate the occasion throughout the year in very many ways. The Society will also hold some programmes in this regard. Incidentally the 15th August is also the birthday of Sri Aurobindo. This year it was his 149th birth anniversary (15.08.1872 – 05.12.1950). Abanindranath Tagore, the pioneer painter and litterateur, just reached his 150th birth anniversary (07.08.1871 – 05.12.1951). The pioneer philosopher and the former President of India Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan was born on 05.09.1888. There were some very important occasions related to the struggle for Independence which figured in the annual calendar during the period of our present coverage of the Bulletin in July-September. For example, the Bill for Independence of India was placed in British Parliament on 5th July, 1947. The Indian Independence Law received Royal assent on 18th July, 1947. The National Flag was hoisted for the first time in Parsi Bagan (Calcutta) on 17th August, 1906. Rabindranath Tagore laid the foundation of Mahajati Sadan, the historic monument and public meeting place, in 1939. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose took over the charge of the INA on 25th August, 1943. Mahatma Gandhi started his fasting for 21

days to ensure Hindu Muslim unity on 18th September, 1924.

The continuity of the usual constraints of COVID-19 that chased us through these months led to a very difficult kind of adjustment and adaptation in the pattern of overall living in general and in the style of work in particular. In course of this new orientation we have been used to certain socio-cultural and technological mechanism. We are not yet very sure whether we will get back to our accustomed habits of interaction in the past or we will have to tinker with the new pattern under compulsion. However, in spite of the odds hanging on our shoulders we have somehow been able to carry forward our academic activities during this difficult time. For example, during these three months i.e. July, August, September, 2021 the following programmes have been organised by the Society in virtual mode :

A Hindi webinar on 'Nabajagaran ke Sandharv mein Raja Rammohan Roy ki Bhumika' was organised on 24.07.2021. The Coordinator was Professor Ram Ahlad Chowdhury. The eminent Historian, Professor Irfan Habib was among the speakers. A two-day virtual international workshop on the various aspects of Manuscriptology and Palaeography in collaboration with Bhaktivedanta Research Centre, Kolkata, Department of Ethnology, History of Religions and Gender Studies, Stockholm University and Sri Jagannath Research Centre, St. Paul Cathedral College, Kolkata was organised on 24-25.07.2021. The Coordinators were Professor Tapati Mukherjee and Dr. Bandana Mukherjee. A Special Lecture was delivered by Dr. Phanikanta Misra, Regional Director (Retd.), Eastern Region, on 'Rakhaldas Banerjee – Life, Achievements and Victimization during the British Rule'. A Live webinar was held on 04.08.2021 on 'Academic Integrity and Research Ethics'. The speakers were Dr. Arun Kumar Chakraborty, Librarian, Bose Institute and former Director General, Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation and Dr. Kishore Chandra Satpathy, Chief

Librarian, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata. Dr. Satyendra Nath Sen Memorial Lecture, 2020 was delivered on 07.08.2021 by Professor Asis Kumar Banerjee, former Vice-Chancellor, Calcutta University on 'Economic Policy in the time of COVID'. A cultural programme was organised on 08.08.2021 by our Library Section on the occasion of 80th Death Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. An exhibition was launched through You Tube premiered on 19.08.2021 entitled 'Rare photographs available at the Archives of the Society's Museum' based on Oriental Races and Tribes - Photo Series by William Johnson. The K. K. Handiqui Memorial Lecture 2020 was delivered by Professor Tapodhir Bhattacharjee, former Vice-Chancellor of Assam University, Silchar on 'Poetics of History in the Sanskrit Secondary Epics' on 07.09.2021. Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar Lecture 2020 was delivered by Professor Amiya Dev, former Vice-Chancellor, Vidyasagar University on 'Sutra Vidyasagar' on 09.09.2021. Indira Gandhi Memorial Lecture 2019 was delivered by Professor Rajmohan Gandhi, eminent scholar and former Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) on 'The Journey of Partition : Some Poorly remembered happenings' on 13.09.2021. Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji Memorial Lecture 2019 was delivered by Professor Ramkrishna Bhattacharya, eminent scholar on The Ancient School of Indian Materialism on 'Interpolations and Interpolations – within – Interpolations : Ramayana Ayodhyakanda, cantos 100-102 (critical edition) : A Case Study' on 16.09.2021. Professor Maya Deb Memorial Lecture, 2020 was delivered by Professor Meena Hariharan, Professor at Centre for Health Psychology, University of Hyderabad on 'Cardiac Health of Indian Women : Biopsychosocial Interventions' on 21.09.2021.

Apart from this we have also started holding some of our meetings in skeleton physical form maintaining all the formalities of COVID-19. For example, His Excellency the Ambassador of Poland to India Professor Adam Burakowski along with his three officials

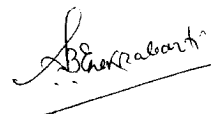
visited the Asiatic Society on 13.09.2021. They met the available Council Members for some academic interaction and later on visited our Library and Museum. The book entitled the *75th Anniversary of Indian National Army and Provisional Government* (edited by Professor Purabi Roy) was released on 14.08.2021 by Air Chief Marshal (Retd.) Arup Raha. In the said meeting Professor Radharaman Chakrabarti, former Vice-Chancellor of Netaji Subhas Open University, Kolkata delivered a lecture on the occasion of 125th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. The Council meeting of the Asiatic Society was also held in physical mode on 24.08.2021.

Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar Gold Plaque 2019 along with citation was handed over to Professor Suranjan Das, eminent Historian of Modern India and currently Vice-Chancellor, Jadavpur University, at his office room on 31st September, 2021 by

Dr. S. B. Chakrabarti, General Secretary and Dr. Sujit Kumar Das, Treasurer of the Asiatic Society. Durga Prasad Khaitan Memorial Gold Medal 2019 awarded to Professor Amalendu Bandyopadhyay (posthumously), eminent Astronomer and Former Director, Positional Astronomy Centre, Kolkata, Paul Johannes Bruhl Memorial Medal awarded to Professor Sampa Das, Professor and Head of the Division of Plant Biology at Bose Institute, Kolkata and Sarat Chandra Roy Memorial Medal 2019 awarded to Dr. Nilay Basu, a researcher, along with citations were handed over to them in the Monthly General Meeting held on 6th September, 2021. This arrangement was made due to the pandemic situation.

Let us hope we would be able to carry on with our multiple programmes through both virtual and physical mode depending on the prevailing situation.

Please keep well and safe.



(S. B. Chakrabarti)  
General Secretary



**AGENDA OF THE ORDINARY MONTHLY GENERAL MEETINGS OF  
THE ASIATIC SOCIETY HELD THROUGH VIDEOCONFERENCING**

**ALL MEMBERS WERE REQUESTED TO BE PRESENT**

**JULY**

**THE MEETING WAS HELD ON MONDAY, 5TH JULY, 2021 AT 5 P.M.**

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the last Ordinary Monthly General Meeting held on 7th June, 2021.
2. Notice of Intended Motion, if any, under Regulation 49(d).
3. Matters of current business and routine matters for disposal under Regulation 49(f).
4. Consideration of reports and communications from the Council as per Regulation 49(g).

Dated : 30th June, 2021

**AUGUST**

**THE MEETING WAS HELD ON MONDAY, 2ND AUGUST, 2021 AT 5 P.M**

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the last Ordinary Monthly General Meeting held on 5th July, 2021.
2. Notice of Intended Motion, if any, under Regulation 49(d).
3. Matters of current business and routine matters for disposal under Regulation 49(f).
4. Consideration of reports and communications from the Council as per Regulation 49(g).
5. The following paper was read by Dr. Somnath Mukherjee:  
"Review of oil paintings of Atul Bose in the collection of The Asiatic Society" by Professor Isha Mahammad and Dr. Somnath Mukherjee

Dated : 29th July, 2021

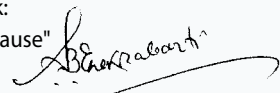
**AN ORDINARY MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY WAS HELD  
ON MONDAY, 6TH SEPTEMBER 2021 AT 5 P.M. AT THE VIDYASAGAR HALL  
OF THE SOCIETY**

**MEMBERS WERE REQUESTED TO KINDLY ATTEND THE MEETING**

**AGENDA**

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the last Ordinary Monthly General Meeting held on 2nd August, 2021.
2. Notice of Intended Motion, if any, under Regulation 49(d).
3. Matters of current business and routine matters for disposal under Regulation 49(f).
4. Consideration of reports and communications from the Council as per Regulation 49(g).
5. The following paper was read by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick:  
"Rammohun Roy: The Modernizer and the Advocate for Women's Cause"

Dated : 26th August, 2021



(S B Chakrabarti)  
General Secretary



## President's Column

### Inclusion of Castes in Census Enumeration

Of late, there has been an increasing effort on the part of various caste groups to include their names within the Census Enumeration so that the exact number of people belonging to various caste groups can be officially known and recorded. There was an all party delegation from Bihar recently to the Prime Minister making this demand. The West Bengal Chief Minister has said that she has no objection if this demand is conceded by the Central Government. It may be noted that the same demand was made prior to the 2011 Census also though it did not fructify. But this time, indications are there that the demand may be accepted and caste enumeration column may be reintroduced in the Census.

On paper, this demand may appear to be legitimate and harmless. After all, it is the business of the Census authorities to enumerate and record the various groupings of people. And caste is a ubiquitous group including all sections of Hindu (and also the Muslims and Christians having caste like groupings). But before any decision is taken in this respect, we have to look carefully at our historical experiences. The caste column was there right from the beginning of Census. When the first Census in India was introduced during the years 1867-1871, recording of caste groups began to be made from that period. Problems began to emerge from that time itself. In that Census, two Tamil peasant castes, namely Vellalas and Padiyachis, wanted to be recorded as belonging to a higher varna – the Vellalas protested against being branded as Shudras, wanted to be called as Vaishyas while the Padiyachis wanted to be called as Kshyatriyas. Those having any idea about castes in India know that uncertainty relating to positions constitutes a hot item of debate in the local caste hierarchy and there are claims and counter claims in this regard. This increased manifold when in 1901, Sir Herbert Risley, the then Census Commissioner, decided to provide in the Census an accurate record of the *ranking of Jatis* in the local hierarchy as well as the Varna affiliation of each. This census enumeration was seen and interpreted by the people as the Government sponsored channel of caste mobility. This inclusion in Census reports became the equivalent of traditional copper plate grants declaring the status, rank and privileges of a particular caste or castes.

As one Sociologist (G.S. Ghurye) puts it, “various ambitious castes quickly perceived the chances of raising their status. They initiated conferences of their members and formed Council to take steps to see that their status was recorded in the way they thought was honourable to them. Others that could not but resent this ‘stealthy’ procedure to advance, equally eagerly began to controvert their claims. Thus a campaign of mutual recrimination was set on foot”.

Another Census Commissioner of the 1911 Census operations, O'Malley, opined thus, "there was a general idea in Bengal that the objective of the Census is not to show the number of persons belonging to each caste, but to fix the relative position of different castes and to deal with questions of social superiority - hundreds of petitions were received from different castes --- their weight alone amounts to one and a half mound - requesting that they might be known by a new name, be placed higher up in the order of precedence, be recognized as Kshatriyas, Vaishyas etc. Many castes were aggrieved at the positions assigned to them and complained that it lowered them in public estimation".

The method of making such a claim was also a novel one. The occupation, style of life or name of the caste group would be identified with a traditional mythic figure, e.g. the Vedas of Mysore would identify themselves with Rishi Balmiki or the Kurabas (Shepherds) with Kalidasa who was believed to have been a shepherd by caste. And always, obliging Brahmin Pandits were there to provide *Vyabasthas* or rulings to the effect that the caste in question was indeed a high one.

Additionally, caste sabhas were constituted and convened. They represented to the Census authorities the demand of individual castes to belong to a particular Varna and not a lower one. Claims to belong to a particular Varna were not uniform but sometimes varied from one Census to another. For example the Napits (Barbars) claimed Kshatriya status in the 1911 Census, Vaidya status in the 1921 Census and Brahmin status in the 1931 Census; the Blacksmiths claimed Kshatriya status in the 1921 Census and Brahmin status in 1931 Census; the Namasurdras claimed Brahmin status in the 1931 Census. Such examples were numerous.

To facilitate the process of claiming and getting a higher status in the caste hierarchy, many castes attempted to abdicate their

traditionally assigned occupations which had a lower ritual status. Many a time it invited violence on the part of the locally dominant caste to enforce performance of their traditionally assigned duties. For example, the Rajputs and Bhumihaar Brahmins of North Bihar used violence against the Ahirs (cowherds) who claimed to be Kshatriyas and donned the sacred thread. To combat the challenge posed by the dominant upper castes, many local castes expanded their organizations by forming caste sabhas through a process of 'horizontal stretch'. The result was the emergence of unprecedented caste turmoil throughout India.

Analyzing the whole process, M.N. Srinivas, a noted sociologist, commented "in short, the attempt to use the Census to freeze the rank of castes had the opposite effect of stimulating mobility and also increased inter caste mobility. It is small wonder then that the nationalist Indians began to regard the recording of caste at the Census as yet another manifestation of a sinister design on the part of the imperialist British to keep alive, if not exacerbate, the numerous divisions already present in the Indian society". The nationalist movement was opposed to the recording of castes in the Census.

So, over the years, the caste turmoil became so bitter, so vociferous and clashing that at the 1941 Census, the British Census Commissioner altogether eliminated the caste column from the Census enumeration.

In attempting to turn the wheel once again, after a gap of 9 decades, are we forgetting the historical experience? Already there are enough symptoms in the body politic about the enhanced and deepening activities of caste groups. Inclusion of backward caste and identifying them for reservation benefits was an issue left unresolved by the framers of the Constitution. The Centre is framing one such List, and the States, influenced by the local caste lobbies, are framing another List. The recent judgment of the Supreme Court that only the Centre is entitled to



frame such a List had created so much of furor and turmoil that the Centre has recently amended the Constitution to negate the effects of the judgment of the Supreme Court. Commissions have been formed one after another, “creamy layer” concept has been introduced, 50% ceiling in reservation has been stipulated – which again is being challenged now - , the notion of ‘forwards’ and ‘backwards’ within the backward caste has been invented but we are still unable to solve the problem. Instead of attenuating, caste conflicts and rivalries and competing claims are increasing day by day.

It appears that if the caste column is again introduced in the Census, there will be yet another stimulus to caste consciousness and caste rivalry. The caste column was introduced in the centre as an imperialist ploy to divide the people. Is the Government of free India trying to do the same to ‘divide and rule’?



(Swapan Kumar Pramanick)  
President

*“Long years ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom.”*

**Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru**

## Review of Oil Paintings of Atul Bose in the Collection of The Asiatic Society

Isha Mahammad\* and Somnath Mukherjee\*\*

Wading through various ups and downs on a long passage, the Asiatic Society, Kolkata has ascended to a prestigious Institution of National Importance, conferred upon by Shrimati Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India in the year 1984. Today we are fortunate enough to have enormous Collection of books and journals, manuscripts and antiquities, coins and illustrated albums of very high historical values and artistic excellence. In such a situation we have also acquired and accumulated a big range of portrait paintings in oil, bust-sculptures of Italian marble and other durable materials of very high Western tradition of Italian Renaissance to the legacy of Royal Academy Art in London.

Before coming to the moot-point, I would like to focus on the establishment of a public Institution like Indian Museum, Geological Survey of India and other survey offices used to commission Government Art School for making documentation of various art and artifacts for presentation and record. But unfortunately the systems of education in our country were never give an equal status of general education (History, Literature and Science) with that of visual arts. As a result, highly educated personalities, Scientists, Mathematicians and so on were not properly exposed to the aesthetic excellence of highly creative manifestation of art and its socio-culture importance and its appreciation in a

proper perspective. Naturally sculptures and artists were kept aside as a mere craftsmen, of course, they were and they are still now, but aesthetic understanding will not develop until we can provide a moderate space in Asiatic Society for an Art Gallery with a view of facilitate and serve a double purpose as (i) visitors, including our members and research scholars will be further enriched by a direct and first-hand visual communication, which is the only way of learning visual arts, its historical background and untold messages to uplift human soul. In our opinion, it is pertinent to mention here that the spirit of Buddhism and Christianity were spread through visual art (sculpture and painting) much more effectively than various texts. We can look back to the art of Gandhara, Ceylon, Borobudur, China and Japan for example.

In this connection Government Art School (Estd.1864) played a vital role in shaping a new tradition of teaching visual art in Western Style in our country along with three more Art Schools - Bombay (Mumbai), Madras (Chennai) and Lahore. From 1907, the establishment of *Indian Society of Oriental Art* by Silpacharya Abanindranath Tagore and E.B. Havell, the then Principal of Calcutta Art School germinated a new wave of Nationalism in Indian Art which got stronger momentarily. Government Art School of Calcutta opened a new department of Indian Style of painting. Against this, a stronger movement started by a young talented powerful artist like Atul Bose who took the lead in 1930's, which is duly elaborated in later paragraphs. Unfortunately

\*Former President of The Asiatic Society, deceased on 11th May, 2021

\*\* Council Member, The Asiatic Society

he has not been given his due respect and regarded his career as a teacher and a painter as a failure, a career of frustration and the missed opportunities of an undoubtedly gifted man.

The Asiatic Society collected two paintings – one P. N. Bose was commissioned to him and the other one C.C. Ghosh as a gift by his wife Devyani Bose, which has so long been kept in a corner with utter negligence causing a severe damage to its physical health, has to be restored immediately. His facial and flawless drawing and handling of oil of oil colour and brushing are remarkable. We have to study so much more to understand logically the impact of Western-Education in our present-day life including fine-arts.

### **Atul Bose - An Artist of Rebel**

Born towards the end of the 19th century, Atul Bose left his engineering studies to the study of art and went on to become one of the greatest exponents of the western of the Western Style of realistic painting in the in the country, standing firmly against the movements of Oriental Art sweeping Bengal at that time. He was also a leading figure of the art movements and art organisations in Bengal of the 1920's and 30's, striving for proper public recognition and appreciation of artists in general - of his fellow 'realists' in particular in the background.

The artists first shot of fame with a lively charcoal drawing of Sir Asutosh Mukherjee, the astounding Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University, done from barely half an hour's sitting (1922). Titled *Bengal Tiger*, the drawing was reprinted in many books and periodicals and made his name familiar in Bengal. At that time, he was a part of a group of enthusiastic young 'realists' who first brought out a

well-illustrated art-journal and then organised fairly large scale annual art exhibition.

In 1924, the University of Calcutta awarded him a fellowship to study at the Royal Academy in London. Freed from 'Social' activities, finding himself in the right surrounding for his artistic development, he soon blossomed as a full-fledged artist. In 1930 Bose was commissioned by the Government of India to paint two royal portraits after their originals in London. Highly praised at home and abroad, these art works established his reputation as a portrait-painter, a designation which he carried for the rest of his life. Characteristically, he resumed his social activity with vigor, drawing upon the support of his newly acquired connections, which ultimately resulted in the establishment of the Academy of Fine Arts, Calcutta in 1933.

From 1945 to 48 Bose served as the Principal of Government Art School, Calcutta where he had taught earlier for two short periods between his sojourn to England. From about 1950, he was increasingly taken up with commissions to make portraits of one 'national leader' after another, many of than life-size. Recalling these paintings, the artist wrote at the end of his lift, "some of their canvases are tainted, not painted." Whether one agrees or not, one gets a glimpse into his personality from these works.

Artist Atul Bose gave up his professional portrait-painting in 1967 owing to failing eye-sight caused largely by the strain of these works. Once he regained workable eye-sight a few years later, he quietly resumed works dear to him - now much smaller in size and in chalk and charcoal or pastel on paper - gathering a few willing learners around him. He passed away at his residence after a brief illness in 1977.

# Rammohun Roy: The Moderniser and the Advocate for Women's Cause

Swapan Kumar Pramanick  
President, The Asiatic Society

## Abstract

Raja Rammohun Roy was, in a true sense a moderniser and a forbearer of Indian Renaissance. Reason, rationality, and a life long concern for human rights were the three pillars of his activity throughout.

Rammohun gave original and unconventional interpretation of Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity. He showed how Hinduism has deviated from the classical religious concept of monotheism. The later day deviations and distortions in Hinduism are at the root of contemporary social evils. This originality of interpretation of religion alienated and antagonised the conservative, dogmatic proponents of all the existing religions.

Rammohun was a true rationalist, a moderniser, a champion of women's rights and a life-long crusader against social oppression of any type. He firmly believed that with the inculcation of western values of rationality and freedom, and with the help of the western system of education, India will again stand on its feet, and will gain freedom and self-government. He was both a universalist and a nationalist at one and the same time.

The two cardinal values which Rammohun adopted were rationality and freedom of mind. Rammohun had a world view, and this view was to look at the external world and interpret it with a free mind and make an objective and unprejudiced analysis of all external phenomena. He spoke out against all

forms of injustice, inequality and immorality, by working for an impartial judiciary, fair taxation, introducing the western type of education and ensuring freedom of the press.

Rammohun was a nationalist of a unique type. On the one hand, he swears in the name of British rule and of the benefits it has bestowed upon the Indian. Behind this mask of loyalty and reverence, there are severe points of criticism and a warning that if the situation does not improve, India would opt for freedom. Rammohun talks of the oppression of the zamindars on ryots and asked the British government to improve the conditions of the ryots.

Rammohun's urge for freedom led him to criticise the Press Censorship Bill. In introducing the bill, the British government was behaving like a despotic government with an intention to suppress freedom of expression. This was a measure which was calculated to suppress truth, protect abuses and encourage oppression.

Rammohun's attitude to British government was not static but underwent changes - from conditional support through disillusionment to a vision of independent India. He was a believer in 'Constitutional reforms' within the British empire. He believed in an India which is capable of improvement and progress, just like any other civilised nation. Rammohun never believed in the inherent superiority of western civilisation.

Rammohun was also an internationalist

and any development in the international arena which was in favour of asserting people's voice was welcomed by him. He had a 'cosmopolitan sympathy' for contemporary popular struggles all over the world.

Rammohun was an ardent champion for the cause of women, and he was in favour of promoting gender equity and justice. He spoke adversely against the deprivation of women from property rights and noted that this was a deviation from the norms of traditional Hindu law. This was the principal cause of *Satidaha* system and for polygamy.

Rammohun also denounced caste system, noting that it stands against the spirit of national unity among the Hindus and that it is dehumanising. He advocated widow remarriage system. Rammohun met, point by point the arguments against women's rights made by those who were championing the subjugated status of women. His writings represent a strong voice for the indictment of patriarchy.

Regarding the banning of *Satidaha*, Rammohun played a decisive role. He was in favour of arousing people's consciousness against this inhuman and brutal practice. This he did with the help of religious literature by

promoting an alternative interpretation of textual literature.

The modernity of Rammohun is evident in three distinct areas. First his writings on various social, economics and political issues. In these, he led by the belief that institutions are made by men and that they exist for men. This belief led him to propagate for extensive institutional reforms. Secondly, Rammohun was a passionate observer of deteriorating condition of the lower classes of society. He noted the emergence of middle classes in society, and observed that this would bring in a new epoch - the middle classes would act as the harbinger of social reconstruction and change. Thirdly, Rammohun was instrumental in stimulating intellectual debates and discussions. He promoted an extensive use of the printing press, and initiated and developed what is known as the 'associational culture' in 19th Century Bengal. He was the founder of the Bramho Samaj Movement which had a tremendous influence on the contemporary and subsequent Indian society. He had a vision of a future India which would be rational and resurgent. He had thus a decisive influence in setting the course of modernisation of India.





Professor Dilip Coomer Ghose  
(25.12.1932 - 09.08.2021)



Professor (Dr.) Mihir Kumar  
Chakrabarti  
(19.09.1936 – 02.09.2021)

## *Remembering* the Predecessors

The demise of Professor Dilip Coomer Ghose (25.12.1932 - 09.08.2021) and Professor Mihir Kumar Chakrabarti (19.09.1936 – 02.09.2021) at a relatively ripe age is a natural phenomenon in the rites of passage in our common life. Sometimes death of a person re-inforces the dormant bond with other surviving members. I had the opportunity of working with both of them, rather closely, being in the Council of the Asiatic Society for the last few years. Professor Ghose and Professor Chakrabarti functioned in the Asiatic Society in various capacities. Professor Ghose had held the positions of General Secretary, Treasurer and Vice-President of the Society at different times for a considerable period. He started his professional career as a Lecturer in History in Vivekananda College (1957-1958) and after serving Chandannagar Government College, Darjeeling Government College had ended up at Maulana Azad College in 1997. In between he was Registrar, Rabindra Bharati University (1977-1982). Apart from the Asiatic Society he had also held the position of Director, Institute of Historical Studies, Kolkata (2011-2014). He was Coordinator of Indira Gandhi National Open University for a long time which functions from Maulana Azad College. Basically he was an academician as well academic administrator. In addition to this

he had equal interest in sports and athletics, music and cultural activities. After talking to his daughter I got the impression that he was a very caring husband, father as well as a grandfather. His unique style of imparting academic and intellectual stimulation in the mind of the children was unique. I have always noticed in him a very composed and jovial personality with sound judgement on critical issues that he had to deal with in his work. It still rings in my ears his baritone voice while he was participating in Society's seminars. He was ever relevant, brief with incisive intervention.

Professor Mihir Kumar Chakrabarti was a scientist by profession and aptitude. He was Professor and Head, Computer Science Division at the Indian Statistical Institute during (1970-2002). Before becoming the General Secretary (2010-2013) he had also served as the Sectional Secretary of Physical Sciences at the Asiatic Society (2003-04 – 2009-10). He was duty bound, disciplined, punctual and attentive to details while disposing his task in hand. He had a pleasant personality with a smiling face and sense of humour. I had enjoyed his company, specially on two occasions when we had visited once in Guwahati (2011) and next in Nagaland (2013) in connection with two outreach programmes of seminar of the Asiatic Society

in collaboration with the Gauhati University and Kohima Science College.

In a sense I have inherited a legacy of both Professor Ghose and Professor Chakrabarti in my present assignment as the General Secretary of the Society. I have also inherited the legacy of Professor Ghose in the position of President of the Kolkata

Society For Asian Studies. I have learnt from them a lot and received their advice at times while discharging my responsibilities at the Asiatic Society.

**S. B. Chakrabarti**  
General Secretary

## Professor Dilip Coomer Ghose

It is indeed a hapless task if someone has to script an obituary for a person who was quite close with him for a long time.

Since early eighties of the last century, I have known Dilipda, officially known as Professor Dilip Coomer Ghose, when he was the Registrar of Rabindra Bharati University where I had just joined as a Lecturer. After going through my joining report and related papers, he was elated to find out, that like him I too was an alumni of Presidency College. And that was the beginning of a long journey of our cordial relation.

After his term as Registrar was completed, he returned to his original cadre, member of West Bengal Education Service. But that did not stop our contact, now usually over telephone. Later when Dilipda was once again in limelight in the activities of The Asiatic Society, almost a daily tryst with me was but a natural corollary, as by then I too was deeply involved in the different activities of this great institution. Before sharing those memories, I would briefly narrate the vast milieu of his activities.

2.

Dilip Coomer Ghose was born on Christmas day 1932. After graduating from Presidency College he completed Master's Degree from University of Calcutta in Modern History and

also took a degree in Law. Then he joined WBES as a Lecturer in History and taught in many Government Colleges. He also served in a number of important official positions in the Education Department of the Government of West Bengal, like Special Officer, UGC; Officer Incharge, Law Cell; State level Officer, Planning Forum; ADPI (UGC) to name a few. In between all these responsibilities he had worked as the Registrar of RBU.

He also served in many capacities in other institutions as well. He was elected as the General Secretary of The Asiatic Society for five terms, as Treasurer and as Vice President for more than one term. Dilipda was also the Director in the Institute of Historical Studies and Coordinator of Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU). He has been a member of Governing Bodies of leading institutions like Scottish Church College, St. Paul's College, Loreto College et al and served as President of some well-known schools of Kolkata as well.

3.

Throughout his very active public life, Dilipda also was associated with myriad bodies like Amateur Athletic Federation of India, Kabaddi Federation of India, West Bengal Kabaddi Association ( as Jt Secretary), Bengal Olympic Association, Troilokyo

Sangeet Parishad, Theatre Centre, Rotary Club of Kavithirtha, Bharat Scouts and Guides and many such organisations.

Dilipda was awarded Dr P. C. Chunder Excellence Award. He was nominated as the Man of the year 2000 and also received "The 2000 Millenium Medal of Honour for Humanitarian and Professional Accomplishment" by American Biographical Institute. He was awarded Certificate of Honour for Personal Positive Contributions for Development of Friendship between India and Russia.

He has delivered prestigious lectures in Indian Science Congress Association, Bengal National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Gandhi Smarak Nidhi — Rajbhavan, Zoological Survey of India, Roerich Exhibition — Gorky Sadan, Md. Ishaque Endowment Lecture of Iran Society, Dr. N. Roy Endowment Lecture at the Institute of Historical Studies, Sahid Jatin Das Endowment Lecture of Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.

4.

All these information are but just an external portrayal of the stature of Dilipda.

I knew him as an excellent administrator, several glimpses of which I can still recollect from the memories of working as his colleague in The Asiatic Society. I have seen how he tackled the most difficult administrative problems with a calm and cool poise. His motto in administration was (quoted from memory) — "Do not take a hasty decision, whatever be the situation. Decide after a detailed analysis. And once you decide, do not yield and forgo that, whatever be the outside pressure. Ultimately your stand will be vindicated." Thus Dilipda taught me a great lesson and indeed it worked successfully when I had to take crucial administrative decisions in later years in the Society. In this regard I consider him as a teacher whom I respected immensely till the last day of his life.

Professor Dilip Coomer Ghose will always remain as an inspiration and an idol not only to me but to many others in The Asiatic Society and outside who saw and was enriched by the multidimensional personality of this man.

**Pallab Sengupta**

Former President, The Asiatic Society

## Professor (Dr.) Mihir Kumar Chakrabarti

It is with profound grief we announce that our beloved Professor Mihir Kumar Chakrabarti left for his heavenly abode on 2nd September, 2021.

The second child of Late Lalit Mohan Chakrabarti and Late Girija Rani Chakrabarti, Mihir was born on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1936 in the small village of Kalkipur close to Sundarban in South Bengal.

Mihir's initial education was in the village school 'Ramkamal Vidyapith' founded by his grandfather Late Ramkamal Chakrabarti. When the family shifted to Kolkata in 1950, Mihir resumed his schooling at 'Scottish Church Collegiate School'. Post completion in 1954, he secured admission in 'St. Paul's College' and then 'City College', from where he graduated with Physics Honours. He then



proceeded to complete his Master's Degree in Radio Physics and Electronics from University College of Science and Technology, Kolkata, popularly known as 'Rajabazar Science College, Calcutta University' in 1962.

Soon after, he joined the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) in Kolkata. He was then seconded to Jadavpur University (JU), Kolkata to work with a team of engineers who designed and developed the first indigenously built digital computer christened ISI-JU to mark the joint achievement of the two institutions. This computer was commissioned in 1966 by the then Union Education Minister Professor M C Chagla.

Post this hallmark endeavour, Mihir resumed his engagement with ISI, but soon chose a sabbatical to pursue his PhD from Leeds University, UK.

Feted with a PhD Degree, Mihir returned to Kolkata as an Assistant Professor, ISI in 1970, and continued to become Associate Professor and eventually Professor, from where he retired in 2002. During his tenure at ISI, he headed many important committees and positions. Mihir was the Dean of Studies during 1986-1988, Professor-in-Charge of the Physical and Earth Sciences Division during 1994-1996, and of the newly formed Computer and Communication Sciences Division during 1996-1998. He chaired and participated in various selection committees for recruitment and admission, providing a rich contribution to the growth and development of the esteemed institute.

Post retirement, with his love for academia, he joined the Institute of Technology and Marine Engineering at Diamond Harbour, Kolkata as Founding Principal. Under his tutelage, the Institute soon established itself as one of repute in the field of engineering and maritime studies.

He served the Asiatic Society as General Secretary for two consecutive terms during 2010-2013. During his tenure, he arranged a public lecture series by stalwart researchers and educators on various topics such as the history of electronics computers. He led the initiative of digitization of various documents in the Society.

Professor Mihir Kumar Chakrabarti was a revered member of the academic community of Kolkata, and a loving family man. He was very disciplined, systematic and professional yet always ready with a smile and an anecdote or two to share. A pragmatic person, Professor Mihir was well known for his open views and was often approached by many for his sound advice. He lived a full and productive life and his contribution to academia will be remembered by many. His demise leaves an irreplaceable void in the lives of many that he touched.

**Saswati Mukherjee**  
Professor & Head  
DIST  
Anna University



## Gentleman, Scholar, Orator

### Journey of a Prolific Writer and a Man of Principles

I

Former Netaji Subhas Chair Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Calcutta ; former Emeritus Fellow in Political Science, University Grants Commission, New Delhi ; and former Professor of Public Administration at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi , Professor Asok Kumar Mukhopadhyay (born: 07-12-1940, died: 18-08-2020), was a legendary figure in Political Science.

Graduating in 1960 from Presidency College, Calcutta, with first class honours in Economics and Political Science, Professor Asok Kumar Mukhopadhyay passed his MA in Political Science from the University of Calcutta in 1962 with first class marks with special papers in Sociology and Social Anthropology. He did his Ph.D from London School of Economics and Political Science (London University) in the year 1972 on *The Politics of Water Supply—The Case of Victorian London*. His second Ph.D was from the University of Calcutta in the year 1973 on *The Panchayat Administration in West Bengal*.

Professor Mukhopadhyay did his Post Doctoral Research from : 1) Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi on *Municipal Government and Urban Development*, and, 2) National Institute of Urban Affairs, New Delhi on *Municipal Personnel Management*.

The learned Professor had a long, brilliant

teaching experience spread over a period of four decades. He began his illustrious teaching career from Presidency College, Calcutta (1963-1970). He taught at two other Government Colleges (Taki Government College and Hooghly Mohsin College) between 1973 and 1979. In 1979, he joined University of Calcutta where he served till his retirement in 2005. In between he taught at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi (1982-1984) on deputation.

Professor Asok Mukhopadhyay served Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), New Delhi, West Bengal Public Service Commission, Orissa Public Service Commission, University Grants Commission (UGC), New Delhi; National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), New Delhi; in different capacities as paper-setter, examiner and head-examiner since 1973.

Recipient of Mahendra Nath Medal from the University of Calcutta, Asok Mukhopadhyay served on interview boards of Staff Selection Commission (Government of India), Eastern Region; West Bengal Public Service Commission; Universities in and outside West Bengal.

Professor Asok Kumar Mukhopadhyay received Paul H. Appleby Award from Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi on October 18, 2013 for rendering

outstanding services to Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi and to the field of Public Administration.

A brilliant academic, gentleman par excellence and a powerful orator, Asok Kumar Mukhopadhyay, will be remembered for his simple style of living, benign nature and affectionate behaviour. His classroom lectures were unbiased, non-partisan, objective and open-minded.

Asok Kumar Mukhopadhyay has done substantive research in the fields of Urban and Rural Government and Politics in India and abroad. His research interests included *Public Administration, Comparative Politics, Political Thought, Political Theory, Political Philosophy and Political Sociology*.

## II

The esteemed Professor often referred to two great minds, one from Ancient India and other from Medieval Europe. *Lord Buddha*, on his death bed, advised his close disciple Ananda to seek necessary enlightenment from inner soul and one's own conscience while confronting any problem. The celebrated Italian poet and philosopher *Dante* in his long epic poem *Divine Comedy* observed that the darkest places in hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis.

He repeatedly emphasized that the roots of Indian culture are in the idea of plurality of views and choices. Any genuine democrat, whether in power or out of power, must have a moral commitment to preserve this plurality in order to be acceptable to the people.

## III

Admiration and respect for his teachers was the hallmark of Asok Mukhopadhyay's illustrious career. Throughout his life, he held in high regard, the role of teachers who were instrumental in shaping his life and giving it proper direction. Their guidance, advices and suggestions played a prominent role in various stages of his life and helped him reach the pinnacle of success. Some of them include Upendranath Ghosal (Political Science), Nirmal Chandra Bhattacharyya (Political Science), Subimal Kumar Mukherjee (Political Science), R C Ghosh (Public Administration), N C Roy (Public Administration), Bhabatosh Dutta (Economics), Dhires Bhattacharyya (Economics), Dipak Banerjee (Economics), and, George Jones (Political Science).

## IV

Three prophets of Indian nationalism – Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghosh, and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose – cast a profound impact and deep-seated influence throughout Asok Mukhopadhyay's life and career. Their philosophy, teachings, ideas and thinking had a significant effect on his beliefs, ideology, principles and thought process.

Asok Mukhopadhyay strongly believed that mind and spirit, though abstract, are as essential to our fitness as a strong heart. The rough, inclement and stormy conditions that appeared on his life's horizon; when a sense of resignation engulfed him fully or partially; they taught him in no uncertain terms to have an unwavering faith in destiny.

**Samik Mukherjee**  
Freelance Journalist

## The Painted Chalchitra of Bengal

Nandini Chakraborty

Assistant Professor, Government College of Art & Craft, Calcutta

Idol-worship among Hindus is not only a part of spiritual practice in Bengal but also celebrated as a festival. Durga Puja, the worship of mother goddess 'Durga', is considered the main annual festival among the Bengalees. In spite of being a Hindu festival, people of every community living here, join to celebrate the festival. As the *Devipaksha* starts with the *Mahalaya*, Bengali people gear up for their most favourite festival of the year. The main rituals are done on the five days starting from Mahashasti to Vijaya Dashami. Then the idols are immersed in a river, preferably in the Ganges. Other than Debi Durga, there are many more Hindu deities who are worshipped throughout

the year. Though the festival of Durga Puja, stays for a few days, the people connected to this festival in any way, work hard, year long for a perfect finishing. The idol-makers, the decorators, the lightmen, painstakingly work day and night before the puja, to satisfy the puja organizers. The idol makers normally get two types of orders. One is for the royal, aristocratic and famous families, for whom the idols made are simple and mostly *ekchala*, preferably made at their own residence (bonedi barir pujo) and other idols are made for the pandals, made of bamboo poles, coloured clothes and decorations that range from small temple-like structures to huge buildings. At Kolkata, most of the idols



The hand-painted Chalchitra

are made at the Kumartuli area. Known to all, for the beautiful and diverse art of making life-size idols with clay.

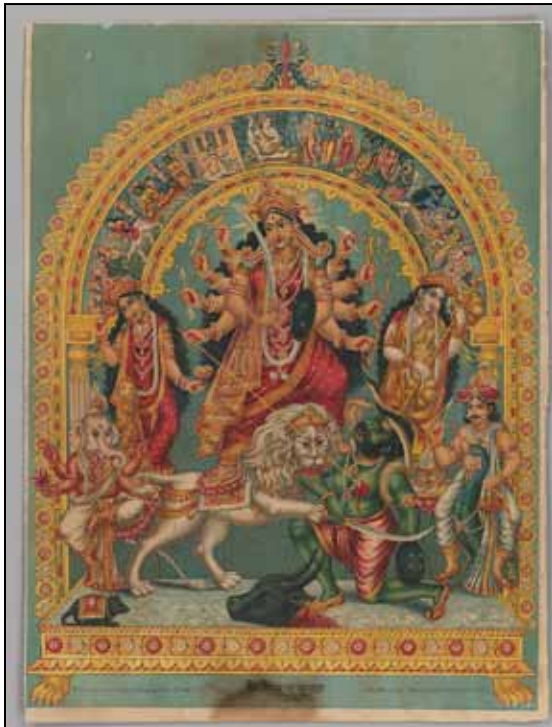
In Bengal, Chalchitra is deeply connected with Hindu idol worship. It is a Bengali word, where 'chal' or 'chala' means covering and 'chitra' means painting. So when a Chala, the semi-circular outer backdrop of a Hindu idol, specially Durga, is painted, it is called the Chalchitra. It can also be termed as *Durga chal* or *Debi chal*. Chalchitra is a metamorphosed form of halo or '*Prabhamandali*', found in the Indian sculptures of the ancient period. Primarily these were used to give proportion to the structure[1]. The tradition of using Chalchitra is very old and is still maintained in Bengal. Once, it was attached to every traditionally made Durga idol inevitably, in Kolkata and surrounding districts of Bengal, such as 24 Parganas (North & South), Howrah, Hooghly, Burdwan, Nadia, Murshidabad, Birbhum, Bankura and Midnapore[2]. Painting

upon chalchitra is a form of folk art, closely allied to the style of *Patachitra* and earlier people mostly from the patua community used to paint them. It represents the compartmentalized illustration of an unconnected story which shows that this technique of narration was much favourite to the craftsmen of Bengal, and was practised by the craftsmen, patuas and the clay modeller simultaneously with great interest. Therefore, it appears that this storytelling character in narrative panels was the fashion of the age and one of the characteristics of the then Bengali art and influenced the patuas to a great extent[3].

This painted arch-shaped design of the chalchitra may easily remind one of the semi-circular architraves wrought with carvings found from the Stupas at Sanchi near Bhopal in Madhya Pradesh[4]. There are several evidences of early paintings and lithographs from Bengal where the use of chalchitra can be noticed. In the Kalighat Pata Painting from Calcutta, titled 'Durga and Mahishasura', the lithograph painting from Bengal School, titled 'Durga slaying the Buffalo Demon Mahishasura' and the wood-cut print titled 'Goddess Durga', the presence of painted chalchitra is clearly visible.

Similar lithograph prints of 'Sri Sri Durga' can also be seen from the collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and The British Museum. The early Bengal oil on canvas paintings on Durga at Chitrakoot Art Gallery, are also noticeable in this regard.

A few varieties of chalchitra, engraved on ivory, wood, stone or sculptured out of metals are also found. In the ivory carvings of Goddess Durga from the collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, minutely done carvings on the Debi chal can be



Sri Sri Durga, Chromolithographic print on paper from the collection of The Met Museum



Ivory-carved Durga idol from the collection of Victoria and Albert Museum, UK

seen. The carvings of mythological figures on ivory are worth appreciation of the craftsmen of Bengal. Though chalchitra is not only used for Durga idols, but also other deities like Jagaddhatri and Basanti, it is widely used. For the Rash festival, celebrated at Nabadwip, in the district of Nadia, the chalchitra plays a significant role. Except paintings, other decorations are also done upon a Chalchitra. Being an integral part of the Hindu idol, normally, the Debi chal also gets immersed in water along with the idol after completion of worship. As they

are painted traditionally, with no change in subject matter and used for a much shorter period, that also in a subtle manner, so it is rarely accepted as a great work of art. The chalchitra often gets hidden by the beauty of the gorgeous idol and her decorations such as Devi Durga's elongated crown or other decorative elements. Sometimes the floodlight also becomes an obstacle to view the chalchitra properly, as the shadow of the idol interrupts in proper noticing the chalchitra. There are a few examples of chalchitra preserved at the Ashutosh Museum and Gurusaday Museum of Folk Art, Kolkata, but with these few examples, it is not possible to understand every aspect connected to it, be it the construction of the structure, the technique or process of colouring or the subjects painted on it.

The chalchitra of 'Ekchala Pratima' is a single structure, stretched from one end to another end, made for the idol of Durga along with her four children, Laxmi, Saraswati, Ganesha and Kartikeya. The makers who prepare the framework of the Chalchitra, need a very keen eye to ensure the right proportion of the structures. The wooden and bamboo canes are first cut into pieces according to the size and shape required, then in a traditional way, cloth is attached to it tightly. Then layers of clay or mud are applied on the cloth. As the process takes some time, preparing



Artist Tapas Bhattacharya, from Nabadwip, painting a chalchitra

and drying the clay-coated cloth, so at present, instead of painting directly on it, painted papers are being pasted to the bamboo structures to fulfil the purpose. According to the structure of the chalchitra, it can be classified into four types: i) Bangla chal, ii) Markini chal, iii) Mothchauri chal, and iv) Tanachauri



Detailing of a Chalchitra

chal. All four types are still followed by the makers of chalchitra structure, but Markini chal is the most common one. Earlier there were three more types, which are now extinct. They are Girje chal, Sarbasundari chal and Dothaki chal. The reason behind the extinction of these could be the scarcity of skilled workers who used to make such chalchitra structures earlier and also lack of patronization[5].

Before painting the chalchitra, the background is prepared first. A few layers of chalk-dust is applied on the dried up clay-coated cloth, to cover the pores. Normally the background of the chalchitra is painted in blue. Though exceptionally pink is also used.

Then intricate paintings of Mythological scenes about the life of Goddess Durga are beautifully done by hand. Firstly demarcation of border is done following sketches of the figures. For painting the chalchitra, the same trend is mostly followed by the artists of Bengal. There is limited space for subjective innovation by them. Different characters from mythology are placed horizontally without any divisional line between them.

The continuous panel is divided into two parts by an image of Shiva seated at the top centre of the chalchitra. Sometimes to put more emphasis, His figure is done in a monumental relief with clay[6]. Architectural

settings around indicate the abode of Shiva in Kailasa and on both sides of this setting, there are scenes of battle between Gods and Demons(Asuras). The scene of Goddess Durga slaying the demon, the scene of the coronation of Ramachandra, images of Kali, Radha and Krishna are also depicted on the chalchitra. All of these episodes signifies an assimilation of Shakti and Bhakti cult[7]. Earlier the chalchitra was lengthwise longer compared to the present ones. Once the artists could draw all the characters in detail. But due to the decreasing size of chalchitra, they now compromise with fewer characters than before. It is much easier to paint on paper rather than draw the figures directly on the chalchitra. For painting the chalchitra, in general, vibrant colours like blue, yellow, green, red, brown, black and white are used. Different shades are obtained by mixing two or more colours. The colours, which are mostly prepared from vegetable extracts and minerals, mixed with glue as a binding material. White colour is made from the dust of conch shell or chalk-dust, red with cinnabar or ochre, black with common soot. Yellow is obtained from orpiment, which is a sulphide of arsenic and is found as a natural stone. The colour blue is prepared from cultivated indigo. Though chemical colours are also being used by the artists nowadays.

The highly shaded figures of Shiva and the sweeping black outline of the dramatically poised combatant figures of the chalchitras bear a close similarity to the pata style of painting and was definitely a popular offshoot of the same idiom[8]. Earlier people from Midnapur and Krishnanagar of Bengal known to be patuas, were experts in this field. But presently because of the unavailability of a skilled artisan and lack of interest of patua artists, idol makers themselves are painting the chalchitra, though there are exceptions. When the idol makers are considerably free, they paint the chalchitra on paper and supply them to the nearby shop (*Dashakarma*), so that it could be purchased whenever needed by the puja organizers.

Presently the trend of using hand-painted chalchitra is decreasing rapidly. Various factors are worrying the artists at present. With the concept of 'theme' puja, the new age idols are made accordingly. Fewer idols are now made in a traditional manner in and around Kolkata. The scarcity of expert artists is also a major problem. The artists are losing interest as they get low wages for painting the chalchitras. They are bound to make many adjustments now. The commercially printed chalchitra is also a thing to worry for them. As these are mass-produced and cheaper compared to the painted ones, so to save time and money both, puja organizers are leaning on them, instead of the traditional chalchitra. The future of painted chalchitra is uncertain. Though the ray of hope is, despite many difficulties still some artists are continuing the work because they love to paint the debi chal. In some localities in Kolkata like the Bagbazar Sarbajanin and mostly all aristocratic families (bonedi bari) in and around Kolkata like Shovabazar Rajbari etc., the tradition of using chalchitra is still continuing. We all should come forward to support these slowly fading art form, so that

the art of painted chalchitra continues further.

In the concluding observation, it can be said that painting is an exquisite expression of human thought, and nature is an eternal source of inspiration. The chalchitras, painted by artists with indigenous materials, has not changed much down the ages. Though the tradition has been continuing with a very decadent stage, still the patuas of Bengal, with the decorated chitras, welcome and celebrate the auspicious occasions. The contemporary artist or designer did not influence them, but there are many artists trained in formal schools or colleges, who could look-up to continue this little tradition with great care.

#### Picture courtesy:

Sri Sri Durga. Metropolitan Museum of Art[US]. Accession Number 2018.275. ca. 1885-95. chromolithograph print on paper.

Shrine to Goddess Durga. Museum number 02466(IS). C. 1895. Ivory carving. Victoria and Albert Museum, United Kingdom.

Mr. Tapas Bhattacharya, artist, Nabadwip still continuing the painting tradition of Chalchitra.

#### References:

- [1] Chakraborty, Sudhir (1993) *Chalchitrer Chitralakha* (in Bangla), Dey's Publishing. Kolkata. p 24
- [2] *ibid.* p 20
- [3] Chakravarti, Sipra [1998 & 1989(Combined)] Manuscript, Pata and Scroll Painting in the 19th and 20th Century. Indian Museum Bulletin. Kolkata. p 46
- [4] Ganguli, Kalyan Kumar. (1963). Chapter 6, Designs in the Traditional Arts of Bengal. Directorate of Industries, Govt. of West Bengal. Kolkata. p 40
- [5] Chakraborty, Sudhir. p 30
- [6] *ibid.* p 51
- [7] Chakravarti, Sipra. p 46
- [8] Ganguli, Kalyan Kumar. p 40.



## Rammohun in 'Tuh-Fat-Ul-Muoyāhiddin' (একেশ্বর-বিশ্বাসীদিগকে উপহার) :

### A Glimpse of Shifted Paradigm for Religious Skepticism

**Mahidas Bhattacharya**

Council Member, The Asiatic Society

As we arrive at Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar's two hundred years birth centenary, the country appears to have entered into a phase of Raja Rammohun Roy's 250 years, if we consider 1772 to be his date of birth. For people in general, Rammohun and Vidyasagar present a pair of legendary personalities who complemented each other in introducing and developing several ideas of modern Indian thought. They pioneered an epoch-making shift in the socio-cultural domain bringing it out of a dark long phase under the dominance of Brahmanism and Islamic Feudalism.

While mostly, it lies in the instinctive tendency of Indians to mythify and ritualise the birth-death dates of men canonised in history without enquiring about their historical or contemporary relevance, these two men stand out to some extent like exceptions. Any criticism directed against them too participates in the dialogue of investigation, of contextualising and of deciphering their relevance. By their mode of contribution, their foundations of discursivity, they have constituted a more rational space in the consciousness of the common folk (and not merely the intelligentsia) and continue to do so while you read this piece. While Vidyasagar occupies a more visible imprint in the

mind of people, what underlines is his complementary follow up to the new school of thoughts initiated by Rammohun Roy which were essentially that of adopting a rational approach for introducing religious skepticism.

1772 stands as an important milestone in the timeline of British Colonialism because the initiative for a systematic implementation of political power to rule India was adopted that year. Rammohun was born amidst Warren Hastings being appointed as Governor General, and the country being burdened with turmoil. At 16, he was deeply influenced by the concept of Unitary God, a type of Monotheism, by the Quran and our ancient Vedantic thought, which didn't have a proper recognisable space during the expansion of Aryanism, and therefore Brahminism dominated with its Dharmaśāstra and their commentators. Practices of image worshipping, cruel customs, unworthy illogical conventions etc. developed during this period and continued. The young boy was expelled from his home for his idea of a unitary god. He then travelled North India till Tibet to understand the tenets of Buddhism and the people of these provinces while pertaining to his own views.

It was then that a type of skepticism

developed within him as he looked at everything that surrounded him. Perhaps that has handed over us a man of versatile character who would go on to establish the Indian identity, especially that of Bengalis with a new paradigm of enlightening in the socio-cultural domain.

This exile was a turning point in Rammohun's life. His own unique notion stood posing against the brutal myths that dominated society and turned people's lives into hell. He took advantage of his own individual liberty as much as available to nourish ideas of liberation, emancipation of women, agricultural rights for farmers, removing discrimination from British judiciary, right of press, freedom of speech and many more to rescue the common folk from brutal encroachments of Brahminism and the prevalent casteist impositions at the later life.

But what is to be noted is that prior to these developments he had composed a text quite less known to us - *Tuḥfat-UL-Muwahḥhidin* (একেশ্বর-বিশ্বাসীদিগকে উপহার). It was published when he was 32. The title provides an outlook as to what we are to perceive of Raja Rammohun Roy. But, what must be taken into further consideration is that the text did not only address the religious point of view, but adopted a broader logical sketch in accordance with the necessities of the contemporary social landscape. Originally produced in Farsi, the English translation was brought forth by Moulavi Obedulla in 1884 and a Bengali translation by Sri Jyotirindranath Das in 1949. The present text is collected from *Rammohan Rachanabali*, edited by Dr. Ajit Kumar Ghosh, published from *Haraf Prakasani*.

Mr. Das, the translator, wrote in his introduction that in days of early childhood he had heard the high admiration of a book titled 'Tuḥfat-UL' by Rammohun. This generated in him an interest to visit the original at a later time in life. Due to

linguistic barriers, he set himself up for an English Translation and was highly impressed by the intensive rationalist approach that Rammohun takes up against dogmatism. Later, his friend Dr. Kalidas Nag encouraged him for publication who also actively participated in editing of the translated text. The addition of subtitles in the text has been done on Dr. Nag's advice.

In introduction Rammohun quoted from another Arabic Text of his - *Mānājāru Tul Ādiyān* 'Discussion on Different Religion' - as mentioned in this *Tuh-Ful*, was lost. He wrote that the belief of an Supreme Power/authority (পরমসত্তা) as the creator and governor of this world is common to all religious beliefs, but they are all not unanimous in shapes and merits of power. The *Upāsānā* and worshipping are external practices, derived from such beliefs only. Besides, some religious sects ignore others and feel that their ancestors are unquestionable (নির্ভুল). According to Roy, these so-called 'unquestionable' ancestors being simply human, may have committed mistakes. Now if each group even with their difference of opinion from other sects is to be considered unquestionable (অশক্য), one must quite reasonably admit that other views or opinions should not be adhering to non-contradictions i.e. there is supposed to be no conflict. But the fact is different. He goes on to propose another point that if all are erroneous, one can easily negate all or mention some as erroneous. That being considered, one belief cannot permit another to impose its erroneousness on itself due to the lack of sufficient reason. He wanted to bring out this idea to *Ājambāsī* (Non-Arabians) and to succeed in his purpose, he wrote the text in Farsi. Also, probably at that time he was not well versed in English. He learned English when worked as Dewan under Jhon Digby (a collector of Rangpur), he learned English. This was around in 1905-1909. But *Tuḥfat-UL*, was published before that.

The translator added a comment about subtitles of text and that was introduced by Dr. Kalidas Nag for clear readability of the text. For example - Happiness by identifying the truth (সত্য নির্ণয়ের আনন্দ), The wrong and unjust under the miracles (অলৌকিকতার আড়ালে অন্যায়), The killing and atrocities in the name of Religion (ধর্মের নামে নির্যাতন ও নরহত্যা), is judicial intellect the influence of Satan (বিচারবুদ্ধি কী শয়তানের প্ররোচনা?), Social Education and the sense of truth (সামাজিক শিক্ষা ও সত্যবোধ), Impact of religious priest on the common people (সামাজিক শিক্ষা ও সত্যবোধ), Social consciousness of self and for others (স্বার্থ ও পরার্থ সমাজ চেতনা) Meaningless retractions (নিরর্থক বিধিনিষেধ), Common rights of man in the world (পৃথিবীর মানুষের সাধারণ অধিকার), Identification of the mystery of nature – creations and creator (প্রকৃতির রহস্য আবিষ্কার – সৃষ্টি ও সৃষ্টিকর্তা), Miracle (অলৌকিকতা), Influence of supernaturalism in present India (বর্তমানভারতে অতিপ্রাকৃত প্রভাব), Relevancy of rationalist views (যুক্তিবাদের সার্থকতা), The tradition of the past and the modern proof (অতীতকালের ঐতিহ্য ও আধুনিক প্রমাণ), Legend of religion and historical criticism (ধর্মগ্রন্থের কিংবদন্তী ও ঐতিহাসিক সমালোচনা), Unique God and intermediate thought (অদ্বিতীয় ঈশ্বর ও মধ্যবর্তী মতবাদ), Brahminism and Islam (ব্রাহ্মণ্য ধর্ম ও ইসলাম) etc. are major.

The content of each subtitle is original. Cause of gladness, the first subtitle, elaborates true happiness of life, lies in defining truth within human relation, merits and demerits of individual, merits and demerits of other species, and truth in religions impartially. The unsurpassed job of a perfect man works with the utility and information of an object and accountability of the result of different acts. But everything is now under our ignorance (অজ্ঞানতা). People of different religious schools of thought indulged their ideas over and above the pure truth (বিশুদ্ধ সত্য) with miracles (অলৌকিকতা) introducing the persuasive language (মনভোলানো ভাষায়).

Religious leaders attract common folk and shape their followers with specific

thought in such a way, they go that extent to kill or torture believers of other schools without any hesitation. Whatever be the sinful acts, they do with a sense that they will be relieved by the faith of their leaders. People adhere to non-rational mythological thought and pass their valuable time of life. Their faith increases on the same. The so-called leaders of such groups label the person, who raises any question or investigates into these beliefs, is under Satan's influence (শয়তান).

How does such a belief develop among us? It is nothing but a social practice, derived through imposed absurd and miracle stories since early childhood by relatives, reliable persons and members of that society to which they belong. Gradually a belief or faith develops within their mind. “ অপরিশ্রুত বয়সে যখন মানুষের যুক্তিগুলো নমনীয় থাকে সেই সময়ে নানাভাব তার মনে ছাপ ফেলতে পারে। তখন যদি সে তার পূর্বপুরুষদের যত আজগুবি ও আশ্চর্যজনক ঘটনার কথা অনবরত শুনতে থাকে, এবং যে সম্প্রদায়ের মধ্যে মানুষ জন্ম বড় হয়ে উঠেছে সেই সম্প্রদায়ের মতে বিশ্বাস করলে যে কত সফল পাওয়া যায়, এ সম্বন্ধে নানা প্রশংসার কথা যখন তাঁর আত্মীয়-স্বজন ও প্রতিবেশীর মুখে সর্বদা শুনতে পায়, তখন সেই সব মতের সত্যতা সম্বন্ধে তার মনে একটা দৃঢ় বিশ্বাস জন্মে যায় যে সে তার'র ঐ নবগৃহীত মতে অনেক ভ্রান্তি থাকা সত্ত্বেও অন্যমত অপেক্ষা নিজ গোষ্ঠীর মতকেই অধিক মূল্য দেয়। এবং দিনে দিনে ঐ মতেই নূতন নূতন আসক্তি ও বিশ্বাস বাড়িয়ে তোলে।” The intensity of attractions and beliefs is petrified through the practice of years in such a way, that when they become mature in their life, they remain reluctant to find out the truth against falsehood, or illusion or irrationality.

Humans, by nature, formulate social laws and methods for the purpose of existing collectively in harmony. These laws accept ownership of separate individual property and speak in favour of security of individuals against harm from others. Every human society, irrespective of man whether in an island or at the top of a hill, has this common practice and the idea of state and ruling system is derived from this.

He felt several meaningless restrictions

(निरर्थक विधिनिषेध, शौचाशौच এবং शुभाशुभ व्यापार) imposed over two basic beliefs of all religion - *ihakal* and *parakal*, have become most harmful obstacles for social development by making common people aimless, disturbed and illusive (উদ্ভ্রান্ত ও বিপর্যস্ত).

The common people with religious beliefs have strange practices. Whenever they face something strange, being unable to identify the reason immediately they adopt the idea of miracle or supernatural power behind that. But Rammohun wrote that all such mysteries or miracles depend on this material world within their diverse conditions. If those events are analysed in detail a declaration can be made that the universe is related with the existence of all these matters. But due to practice of narrowness, when the cause remains unknown, miracles occupy major space, and the religious leader manipulates these as the result of their miraculous power only. Roy was surprised how a man with a logical mind would accept such a matter without proof.

In India the Gurus make their followers to believe the presence of God within a tree, stone or any animal, simultaneously also make them hostile to other groups. Rammohun experienced such practice everywhere. When he was in London appearing for the Unitarian Association, he delivered these words - "In the first instance, the Hindoos and the Brahmins, to whom I am related, are all hostile to the cause; and even many Christians there are more hostile to our common cause (the concept of Unitarian view) than the Hindoos and the Brahmins."

Within 15 to 16 pages, whatever is placed by Rammohun is nothing else than the development of skeptic views from a broader perspective with logical arguments against superstitions, role of religious leaders and priests, followers of different religious groups, meaningless socio-cultural practices, irrational myths and absurd

stories, necessity of logical mind, love for truth, concept of unitary power for peoples' welfare etc. flourished during the era of Brahminism and the Islamic Feudalism etc. The purpose was updating peoples' intellect in general and finally he appealed to all for their truthful pure attention to ideas that described above without any partiality and dogmatic view for the peace in mankind.

Unfortunately people of India, including a greater section of Bengalese also have failed to go against Gurubād and tried deliberately to some extent to avoid such enlightened ideas relieved as a path for a new arena. Since 1833 we have had our series of leaders in Religions and in the Political sphere. Dogmatic commitment towards leadership or beliefs in the greater part of democracy is functioning as an inbuilt phenomenon. The cultivation of miracle, idea of prodigy (ক্ষণজন্মা) etc. without rational cause-effect principle between individual and socio-political-religious sources play the key role even today. Probably due to that Tagore wrote "The difference in our standpoint and temperaments has made the Mahatma look upon Rammohaun Roy as a Pygmy while I refer to him as a giant." (The Cult of the Charka - Rabindranath).

The above passages of Rammohun before becoming 'Rājā Rammohun' were obviously a set of statements from an epoch-making character who desired common people's skeptic views covering several aspects of socio-cultural life at the beginning of 19th century and highly relevant even today in this 21st Century's India and the world of religious brutality.

## References

- Ghosh, Ajit (ed). 1973. *Rammohan Rachanabali*, Haraf Prakashani, Calcutta.  
Tagore, Rabindranath - *The Cult of the Charka* (from the English writings of Tagore), New Delhi, Sahitya Academy.

## Abanindranath Tagore : 150th Birth Anniversary

**Ratan Parimoo**

Former Emeritus Professor, Department of Art History  
MS University of Baroda

It is a privilege for me to be invited to write a tribute to Abanindranath Tagore on the occasion of his one hundred and fiftieth birth anniversary. I shall focus on larger aspects of Abanindranath's works which include writings also, besides his paintings as the leader of revivalists and the consequent modernist movements in India, during the first half of the 20th century. In my studies I have considered Abanindranath along with Gaganendranath and their uncle Rabindranath, who together stand at the fountainhead of the modern movement in Indian art manifesting three distinct dispositions of mind, tendencies and attitudes, which continue to condition the contemporary Indian painting. Interactions between Rabindranath on one hand with Abanindranath and Gaganendranath on the other hand, have a significance for the growth of personalities of the two younger nephews as creative artists. It was not just filling certain roles in their uncle's compulsive theatrical ventures, but the affectionate association and opportunity also helped them to realise their own creative potential even though, through the pictorial medium.

Abanindranath emerged as the leader of 'Revivalism' in the manner he first worked out its form in his own creative paintings. However 'Revivalism' in Indian art is a larger preoccupation which involved cultural activists such as the British art administrator, E. B. Havell, and was taking place in the backdrop of social reforms in the Indian society and the nation wide Independence Movement. The intellectual struggle for

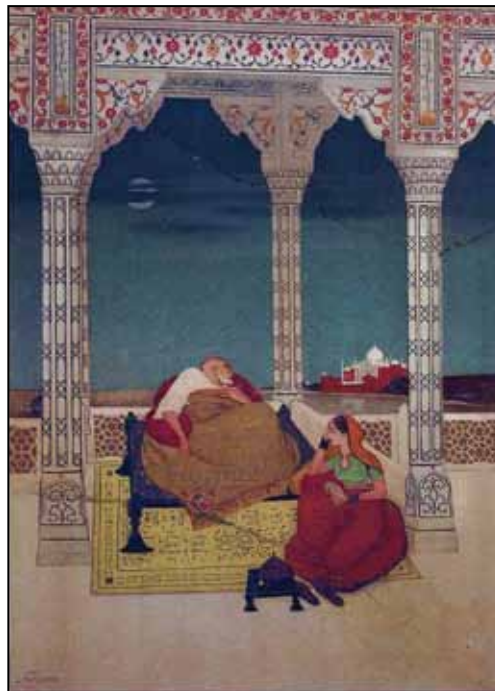
recognition of the artistic value of traditional arts as well as their practical grasp by contemporary artists, interestingly and simultaneously laid the foundation for transition to early modernity. Abanindranath's genius lies in his attempts at a synthesis of several styles (mostly of Oriental origin). He was thus an eclectic but in Indian context the first to evolve an individual style. Therefore quite rightly has been given the title, 'father of modern Indian art.' This is a genuine modern Indian art inspired by Oriental traditions in contradistinction to a modern Indian art of subsequent generation, which is supposed to be inspired by Western movements.

In spite of his ingrained 'realism' by early training under European art teachers, Abanindranath was too much concerned with Indian and indigenous style. Even if he had mastered the techniques that he synthesized, his preoccupation remained with style. In his development we observe a slow progression leading to a stage when it could be said that he reached a point where the style is one with his personality. Although his working period lasted for nearly half a century, his output, though large, is rich and versatile in its own way, which includes writings on art such as the Bhageshwari lectures at the Calcutta University. We quote here a passage from one of his early essays, 'Shadanga': "Forms impelled by *bhava*-feelings and passions--would naturally lose all restraint and assume attitudes devoid of beauty and orderliness. At such times *lavanya* (grace) or the artistic sense steps forward removes all enormity and

excess of contortions which would otherwise mark the dignity and beauty of feelings and forms."

In one of his own writings he had exhorted artists to be fully seeped in Indian culture, one of the ways being to read Kalidas and Epics and Puranas, even Persian poetry. Thus one of his earliest sets of paintings, *Krishna Lila* (c. 1895-1900) was based on *Vaishnava Padavali*, which had been among the influences on Rabindranath Tagore's poetic expressions. Abanindranath in his early set of *Krishna Lila* paintings took stylistic elements from Rajput school of Indian miniature paintings such as figure types and

flatter compositional constituents. Next followed the folios of *Ritu Samhara*, in which, besides the 'flat design', he worked out certain areas in interesting details. The well known 'Last Days of Shah Jahan', considered among his Mughal painting series was done in 1901, which won the silver medal in the Delhi Durbar exhibition in the following year. It was praised for delicate colouring and the foreshortening of the Emperor's head. In fact this painting can



Last Days of Shah Jahan (*Shah Jahaner Mrityu*)

be regarded as a Mughal painting infused with 'bhava', one of his own notions of his artistic objectives. The period from 1905 to about 1910 is a turning point. Now Abanindranath came face to face with Oriental art (through the visit of the Japanese art connoisseur Kakuzo Okakura) which led to the innovation of the 'wash' phase. Apart from the much

talked of 'Bharat Mata', the most important series of paintings in the 'wash technique' was based on the 'Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam'. In his earlier painting, 'The Traveller and the Lotus', he had created the imagery of the archetype of the sad lover, which was now further explored with metaphors and symbolism. With the Omar Khayyam series, Abanindranath was hailed for having evolved an Indian naturalism and a definite Indian style at the same time. This phase of 'wash technique' culminates with the collapsing camel of the 'End of the Journey'. During the next two decades more masterpieces were created, the 'Buddha Charita', among

them Buddha's *Nirvana*, the Phalguni paintings, based on Rabindranath's play in which he portrays a *baul* singer, the *Animal Life* and *Playmates*, besides a large number of landscapes (known as *Shahzadpur Landscapes*) representing rain-drenched Bengal countryside. The latter echoed prose and poetry of Rabindranath at the same theme.

The decade of the 1920s is quite prolific and represents the second phase of 'wash style'. This

decade culminates with the major series of paintings based on *Arabian Nights*. It was after a long break that Abanindranath returned to a theme of romantic past, but from Islamic world. These elaborately structured paintings signify once again adaptations of compositional types variously from Mughal, Kangra and Persian examples.

The folios titled, 'Sindbad', and the other one, 'The Hunchback of the Fish-bone', have been much discussed by critics. Concurrently Abanindranath continued with his preoccupation with Portraiture. One type was in pastel colours, for which family members and some favourite pupils had posed. These colourful portraits were executed in what may be called 'Impressionist style'. He did a set of significant historical portraits of the Mughal dynasty, which included Nurjahan, Zebunissa and Aurangzeb in 'wash' style. In all of these the character and expression was the focus. The stylised masks were also a sort of continuation of portraiture, in which he used his likeness also. He consistently made portraits of Rabindranath from youthful to old age. Characters from his plays such as Tapati are particularly noteworthy. During the late 1930s Abanindranath remained involved with the themes of Kavikankana Chandi Mangal, Krishna Mangala and Hitopadesh. They also represent his last phase. To some extent these share elements of simplicity with



Omar Khayyam

folk paintings, especially the Chandi Mangal. The Krishna Mangala paintings illustrating episodes from Krishna's boyhood are even bolder in their brush work and composition. In these paintings, the images are delineated in large scale, making them more dramatic and enhanced by spontaneous brush work. In a way the spontaneous style ran parallel to the several phases of Abanindranath's work which should be considered intrinsic to his personality.

Abanindranath's total work serves the example for the Indian painter to feel a sense of confidence in his capacity to create art and that one could create art of world significance, because in the past Indian artists had been able to do so. (Hence the relevance of glorification of the past achievements in the Indian arts in various media.) Evolving a personal style as the aim of a painter was the personal triumph of Abanindranath. The clue to this was not only free adoption but also mastering of various techniques including some of the several indigenous techniques and processes that he had revived.



“Aurobindo was basically and inherently a nonconformist. He refused to conform to any pattern. In so far as every nonconformist is a revolutionary he was par excellence a revolutionary. In the field of politics he was the most fiery patriot and the most ardent nationalist. Centuries of exploitation of India, Indian resources and Indian population made him relentless champion of Indian Nationalism. The existentialism of today is not the existentialism of Sri Aurobindo. He believed in that existentialism which makes men forever free, to react to every daily recurring and every new challenge of life with an abiding faith in the ultimate supremacy of man and God. The nuomenon he has all the phenomena in its caressing embrace. He was a confirmed believer in the purpose and destiny of the Universe and of men. His existentialism therefore was not purposelessness. But he was no mere theoretician, no mere spectator, no mere abstract philosopher and no mere idealist. He had a blue print, if there can at all be a fixed technique to become the free and emancipated man. His Purna Yoga shows the way. In that respect also he was a nonconformist. From the Vedas, the Tantras and the Shaivas he took a good part of his inspiration but fashioned them into something which was entirely his own contribution.”

**P. B. Mukherji**

*Source: 'Inaugural Address',  
Sri Aurobindo: A Collection of Seminar Papers, 2004,  
The Asiatic Society, Kolkata*





“Hinduism developed an attitude of comprehensive charity instead of a fanatic faith in an inflexible creed. It accepted the multiplicity of aboriginal gods and others which originated, most of them, outside the Aryan tradition, and justified them all. It brought together into one whole all believers in God. Many sects professing many different beliefs live within the Hindu fold.”

“In a sense, Hinduism may be regarded as the first example in the world of a missionary religion. Only its missionary spirit is different from that associated with the proselytizing creeds. It did not regard it as its mission to convert humanity to any opinion.”

“The Hindu method of religious reform is essentially dramatic. It allows each group to get to the truth through its own tradition by means of discipline of mind and morals. Each group has its own historic tradition, and assimilation of it is the condition of its growth of spirit.”

“The Hindu theory that every human being, every group and every nation has an individuality worthy of reverence is slowly gaining ground. Such a view requires that we should allow absolute freedom to every group to cultivate what is most distinctive and characteristic of it.”

**Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan**

Source: ‘Conflict of Religions the Hindu Attitude’, *The Hindu View of Life*



## Popular Edition of the *Asiatick Researches*

It is well known that the Asiatick Researches – the first publication of the Society appeared in the year 1788 with the subtitle, 'Transactions of the Society instituted in Bengal, for enquiring into the History, and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia'.

Detailed minutes of the monthly meetings as well as annual general meetings of the Asiatic Society were written in the Proceedings of the Asiatic Society. Since its inception in 1784, records of every meeting were being kept regularly and from 1788 it was published along with the Asiatick Researches. As a separate publication it was started in the year 1865. Later it was published as Journal & Proceedings of the Asiatic Society.

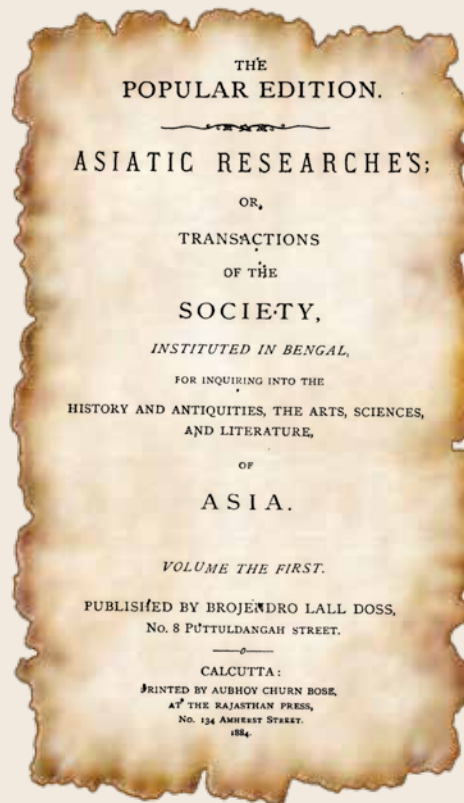
Proceedings depicted the detailed records of the day to day business of the Society. Proceedings also contain valuable materials on different subjects and also help in present and future research.

In the proceedings of the meeting of August 1884, we found one interesting information in item no.6, that Babu Brojendra Lal Doss of no. 8 Puttuldangah Street, presented one 'Popular edition of the *Asiatick Researches*, Vol.1, No.2' in the meeting. It is evident that the

Asiatick Researches was so popular and in demand among the intelligentsia that even a popular edition was also published. Brojendra Lal Doss published the first two volumes in 1884-1885 from Calcutta. These two volumes were printed by Aubhoy Churn Bose at the Rajasthan Press, no. 134, Amherst Street.

It was through the Asiatick Researches the knowledge of eastern glorious past history, science, literature, its varied, enriched culture, etc. transmitted to the western academic world and at the same time played a

significant role in discovering India's past and in the evolution of historical consciousness of its people which enlarged the domain of knowledge and also contributed to the growth of modern India.



## Composition of the Council in the year 1947

India became independent in the year 1947. But this significant event was not depicted in the Proceedings of the Asiatic Society which were included in the 'Year Book' during those days. There is no record of any form of celebration— seminar, lecture, exhibition, etc. in the proceedings of monthly meetings, on annual general meetings of 1947. But if we look into the composition of the Council, the governing body of the Society, we may observe that most of the members of the Council were Indians in the year 1947. Though small in number, Indians were associated with the governing body from the 19th century onwards. First entry of Indians in the Asiatic Society was in the year 1829 when Dr. H. H. Wilson proposed some Indian names— Baboo Dwarkanath Thakur, Babu Prasanna Kumar Thakur, Baboo Rasamaya Dutta, Baboo Sivchundra Das and Baboo Ramkamal Sen, and they were elected as members.

In 1832 Ramkamal Sen was elected Secretary and later, Rajendralala Mitra became the first Indian President in 1885.

### APPENDIX I.

#### LIST OF MEMBERS OF COUNCIL, COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES BOARDS, ETC., OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BENGAL FOR THE YEAR 1947

##### Council

- President.*—Dr. Bimala Churn Law.  
*Vice-President.*—Dr. R. C. Majumdar, Dr. S. K. Chatterji, Dr. S. L. Hora and Mr. Percy Brown.  
*General Secretary.*—Dr. K. N. Bagchi.  
*Hony. Treasurer.*—Mr. K. P. Khaitan.  
*Philological Secretary.*—Dr. N. Dutt.  
*Jt. Philological Secretary.*—Dr. M. Ishaque.  
*Natural History Secretaries.* } *Biology.*—Mr. A. P. Benthall.  
   } *Physical Science.*—Dr. W. D. West.  
*Historical and Archaeological Secretary.*—Dr. H. G. de G. Westheimer (deceased); Mr. H. Waddington from 7-7-47.  
*Medical Secretary.*—Lt.-Col. C. L. Pasricha.  
*Library Secretary.*—Khan Bahadur K. M. Asadullah (*resigned*); Dr. N. Roy from 3-11-47.  
*Members of Council.*—Maharajadhiraja U. C. Mahtab of Burdwan, Dr. M. N. Saha, Mr. Shahid Suhrawardy (*resigned*); Dr. A. H. M. Mohiyuddin from 1-12-47; Mr. C. C. Blagden and Mr. H. F. Bensly.

Prepared by Sujata Mishra

## Arunachal Pradesh : A State in the Trans-Himalayan Region with Unique Ethno-Linguistic Diversity \*

Shyam Sundar Bhattacharya  
Philological Secretary, The Asiatic Society

Arunachal Pradesh, erstwhile North-Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA) is situated at the extreme North-East of India bordering three countries, Bhutan to the West, China to the North and North-East and Myanmar to the East. It has the inter-state boundaries of Nagaland in the East and the South-East and Assam in the South.

As per 2011 Census Arunachal Pradesh with its population of 13,83,727 in a land area of 83,578 Sq. Km. and with a lowest density of 17 persons per Sq. Km., is a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual state. There are 26 major tribes and about 60 sub-tribes and some minor tribes which account for the 68.78 per cent of the total population.

Members of each ethnic group make a distinction between their respective speech forms and consider themselves belonging to different ethno-linguistic communities, although there are significant similarities of their speech forms of different tribes and sub-tribes.

In Arunachal Pradesh there are several spoken languages, a few written languages

including a considerable number of dialectal forms covered by language continuums, one dialect merging into the next and one language blending into the neighbouring ones. Moreover, linguistic diversities are marked by fuzzy linguistic boundaries around the states and international borders. As a result boundaries between languages of the speech communities are not always sharply demarcated. Therefore there is a lot of confusion between ethnic and linguistic affiliations of the speech communities.

According to the last Census 2011 there are all the 22 Scheduled Languages (as in the country) and 90 Non-Scheduled Languages (out of total 99 in the country) plus total of 'others' with 10,000 or more speakers at all India level. These 22 + 90 = 112 languages are linguistic abstractions of more than 200 mother tongues reported by the people of Arunachal Pradesh indicating their perception of linguistic identity which requires special attention. A Table containing the languages with speakers strength (1000 and above is listed here) as per Census 2011.

\* This paper is based on the present author's L. N. Chakravarty Memorial Lecture entitled 'Linguistic Profile of Arunachal Pradesh' delivered in the Institute of North-East India Studies, Kolkata, in January, 2020.

**Table : Arunachal Pradesh**

Sl. No.	Languages	Speaker Strength
1.	Assamese	53951
2.	Bengali	100579
3.	Bodo	7095
4.	Hindi	98187
5.	Maithili	2963
6.	Malayalam	4012
7.	Manipuri	2835
8.	Marathi	2297
9.	Nepali	95317
10.	Odia	520
11.	Punjabi	3674
12.	Santali	1689
13.	Tamil	1246
14.	Telugu	1653
15.	Urdu	1294
16.	Adi	240026
17.	Ao	1891
18.	Bhotia	62458
19.	Deori	4844
20.	Garo	6597
21.	Karbi / Mikir	1536
22.	Lushai / Mizo	14431
23.	Miri / Mishng	10402
24.	Mishmi	420127
25.	Monpa	12398
26.	Munda	1427
27.	Mundari	1378
28.	Nissi / Dafla	395745
29.	Nocte	30308
30.	Rai	3897
31.	Tamang	1057
32.	Tangsa	3654
33.	Tibetan	4557
34.	Wancho	58450
35.	Others	75606

In fact, this area serves as a corridor for four language families of South-East Asia: Sino-Tibetan (Tibeto-Burman and Sinitic), Tai-Kadai, Austro-Asiatic (Mon-Khmer)

and Hmong-Mien barring a few Indo-Aryan Languages like Assamese (in contact situation, the language is Nefamese), Bengali, Hindi and Nepali.

It is to be mentioned here that no language can be considered as the language of the majority for the entire state. But various linguistic groups of Arunachal Pradesh although have the minority status in the state, constitute a majority in the area where they are mainly spoken.

Tamo Mibang and P. T. Abraham grouped the speech forms of the Monpas, Sherdukpens, Akas and Mijis, as spoken in the Western Region under Western group on the basis of their similarities in the linguistic structure. The Central group comprising Adi, Apatani, Hill Miri, Nyishi and Tagin share common features in their linguistic and cultural systems. The other groups who inhabit the Eastern parts of the state, viz: Noctes, Tangsas and the Wanchos can be brought under one linguistic stock. The speech form of the Mishmis is considered to be closer to the Central group of languages.

It reminds us of the groupings once done by Varrier Elwin of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh into three similar cultural groups on the basis of their religious and other cultural practices – Western, Central, Eastern.

Since Arunachal Pradesh is multi-ethnic and multi-lingual and no single language of the state commands a majority of the entire population communication across the speech communities is only possible through a link language. English, the official language of the State is used in administration. As all the schools are affiliated to the Central School System, English is used as the medium of instruction. Hindi and English are taught as subjects in the school. Though Assamese (Nefamese) is used in some domains, but it is not promoted. The use of the mother tongue is normally limited to home domains. But, they are either Hindi or English alternately in many occasions.

The spread of languages leads to

increase contact resulting in the use of other languages in addition to their mother tongues. The 2011 Census reports 260 million (26.01%) Indians speak at least two languages and more than 70 million (7.10%) speak three or more languages and this practice of bi-lingualism / tri-lingualism is predominantly the characteristic of the linguistic minorities in the country. It can be observed that bi-lingualism / tri-lingualism is very high among the speakers of all the linguistic communities of the State. Bi-lingualism is predominantly in Hindi and

English, and in other numerically bigger languages of the region.

For the Indigenous people of the state whose rate of bi-lingualism is as high as 81.4% to Bhotia and 72.14% to Miri / Mishing and many others (like Monpa 70.04%, Tibetan 76.87%, Mishmi 68.04%) compared to national average of 26.01% in 2011 Census. Similarly, the average incidence of tri-lingualism is also very high in the state (30.48%), e.g. 36.72% in case of Adi, 25.76% in case of Monpa and 20.95% in case of Bhotia, compared to the national average of 7.10%.

*“The object of our Republic is that it should provide justice, liberty and equality to all its citizens and promote the sense of fraternity among the people inhabiting different States, professing several religions, speaking different languages and following various customs and sects.”*

**Dr. Rajendra Prasad**

## Mahua — A Potential Game Changer of Community Livelihood

Soumen Basu

West Bengal Biodiversity Board

India with around 49,000 plant species so far known – there are wide varieties of such plants, which are traditionally used by the tribal for livelihood and have potentiality of commercial utilisation. If sustainably used, this could prove to be a boon to the traditional people living in close proximity of the forest lands. A few of such plants are *Mahua*, *Rhododendron*, *Kachnar*, *Moringa*, *Palash*, etc. Especially *mahua* is one such novel plant which is occupying a unique space in the ethnic as well as economic life of the indigenous community.

*Mahua* or the Indian Butter Tree scientifically known as *Madhuka longifolia* (Koenig) Macb. is one of the most important Indian forest trees not because of its timber but on account of its fleshy edible flowers.

*Mahua* trees are distributed from India to other Asian countries like the Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka to Australia (Behera *et al.* 2016). In India, large numbers of *mahua* trees are found in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, West Bengal, Gujarat and Rajasthan. In West Bengal these trees are seen abundantly in Danga forests of Dakshin Dinajpur, Bankura, Purulia, Purba Medinipur and Birbhum.

The leaves of *mahua* contain organic matter, minerals, phosphoric acid, silica, alkaloids, flavonoids, protobassic acid etc. These are expectorant and also used for chronic bronchitis and cushing's disease. The leaves are also used as poultice to relieve from skin diseases like eczema.

*Mahua* flowers are well known for its sugar property and nutrient content. India annually produces more than 10 lakh tonnes of *mahua* flowers. Adivasi women make laddus from the *mahua* flowers. The flowers contain vitamin C which acts as antioxidant and carotene, calcium and phosphorous besides fats and proteins. The flowers are widely used in traditional medicine as antibacterial, anthelmintic, analgesic, antioxidant and anti-cancerous bioresource.

The mature but unripe fruits are used in preparation of jam, marmalade or syrup, jelly (sometimes combined with guava). *Mahua* flowers are also mixed with these products for sweetening and flavour.

Apart from socio-economic aspects *mahua* tree fixes atmospheric nitrogen in soil, binds soil and check erosion.

After a hard day's work in forest collecting fruits, flowers, roots, shoots, tubers, etc. and tilling whatever little land is there for cultivation, a glass of refreshing locally distilled liquor is most nourishing and rejuvenates the lost energy for most of the tribal communities. Octogenarian Raghu Soren could not recollect how long this practice is in vogue. He has seen his father and uncles regularly sat for a drinking and *adda* session each afternoon under this tree. He would listen about various political and social issues in their discussion. He met with his wife Rani Hansda under this very tree during one of this session. This *adda* session was a part of tribal society from time immemorial.



*Mahua Fruit*

But things have changed a lot after the invasion of Foreign Liquors. Young generations who go to towns for labour work are exposed to this synthetic varieties which lacks the natural ingredients, purity and tradition. Drinking habits also changed from group drinking to drinking in private. The lack of raw materials and declining customer base is making the age-old ritual of *mahua* making a dying practice. New generation is not interested to learn the traditional knowledge about *mahua* making, which may extinct this ritual.

This traditional liquor has a good potentiality to revive the rural economy. Many entrepreneurs believe this liquor, consumed in many parts of the country, already has tremendous potential. Proper marketing through effective value chain could expose the spirit to different markets which may uplift the rural fiscal scenario. It could also lead to a new kind of tourism, hinged on the "mahua experience" if government approves the making and sale of the liquor on a larger scale.

Not only Mahua, there are different varieties of local brews made in our country. Goa (Cashew feni), Northeast (Rice bears), Rajasthan (Keshar kasturi), toddy versions in Kerala and Chhattisgarh are some of the notable contributors of this genre. But lack of legal endorsement and other facilities, as are showered on the IMFL versions, are not only defeating the spirit of entrepreneurship but

also depriving the rural economy to revive & flourish.

There are age-old perceptions about the consumption of *mahua*, associating it with deep inebriation, moral laxity and tribal poverty. This perception continues to influence the way the government looks at *mahua*. There is a ban on the sale of *mahua* in government-regulated shops in many states as it is neither bottled nor branded. Independent India still follow the Mohwra Act 1892 (Banning making and selling of liquor made from *mahua* flower). *Mahua* dominated the life and culture of tribal communities till the British clampdown to safeguard their revenue from this home fermented and pot-distilled liquor.

*Mahua* is currently relegated as 'Country Liquor' which is defeating its chance to be considered as one of the iconic brands like Mexican Tequila, American Bourbon or Champagne of France. Many popular alcohols across the globe were first consumed as country liquor which later evolved and found wider markets after international standards for distillation were developed.



*Mahua Tree*

According to a report the annual turnover of a *mahua* producing area is around Rs. 50/- to 60/- lakh crore depending on the season. A bottle of *mahua* in a tribal area is sold for around Rs. 200/-. If properly produced and bottled it would cost Rs. 1,000/- including export and import duties, excise and GST, and the cost of transporting.



Lack of legal endorsement is helping the middleman to exploit the tribal community and cornering the profit. Legal help can promote livelihood schemes in tribal forest areas to a great extent as the tribal constitute over 8% of our population.

A Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) centric holistic development model for tribal-forest areas can usher in a new era. Reforms may be initiated by (a) reforming the trade to make it fair & equitable to the tribal gatherer; (b) promoting local level primary value addition; (c) doing everything necessary to increase production; (d) facilitating technological upgradation from production to sale at the best price through market intelligence. If integrated with the implementation of Biological Diversity Act, 2002 which advocates for access to biological resources and sharing of benefits arising from their utilisation, it could be a game-changer for the dismal rural economy and tribal lives. SHGs in coordination with Biodiversity Management Committees can be fruitfully engaged after training and provision of equipment. By convergence with various development schemes under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005 and others, it would leverage the funds necessary for the working capital requirements. Corporates can also be encouraged to utilise their Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) funds to develop infrastructure and marketing.

With the national government promoting traditional culture, ease of doing business to

make India emerge as 'Atmanirvar Bharat', it is time to forgo some still vogue out-dated laws & acts which do not fit-in today.

Biodiversity is the most important natural element for bringing down poverty, developing sustainable livelihoods and helping communities to adopt with climate change effect. An appreciable percentage of the tribal people live in forests and forest fringe areas. They are mostly dependent on wild plant resources and some subsistent farming for their sustenance. *Mahua* is one of those bio-resources which are directly linked to livelihood development of the tribal in the form of 3 F's – feed, fodder and fuel. But due to lack of infrastructural facilities like post-harvest storage and modern technologies for value addition at source is hindering the optimal potentiality and boon for the poor tribal.



## इंसानी दुनिया में कोविड-19 का तांडव

राम आह्लाद चौधरी

आजीवन सदस्य, एशियाटिक सोसायटी

कोविड-19 का भयानक तांडव कब खत्म होगा; किसी को यह बात पता नहीं है, लेकिन दुनिया यही चाहती है कि कोविड-19 की महामारी से यह इंसानी दुनिया किसी तरह बचे। इस महामारी का अभी तक पता नहीं चला है कि आखिर इसका वायरस कैसे फैलता है। इस वायरस को बचने का सही-सही इलाज संभव नहीं हो पाया है। इंसानी दुनिया को बार-बार यह झेलना पड़ता है। इस तरह की महामारियों की कमी इस दुनिया में नहीं है। महामारियों से जूझते हुए इंसानी दुनिया को अपनी रफ्तार बनाने के लिए लगातार आगे बढ़ना पड़ता है; हमारा इतिहास इस बात का गवाह है। इतिहास निश्चित रूप से यह शिक्षा देता है कि आखिर किस समय में किस तरह का प्रलय हुआ था और उस प्रलय का मुकाबला इस दुनिया ने किस तरह किया था।

जब-जब कोविड-19 के संबंध में विद्वानों ने चर्चाएं शुरू की हैं, तब-तब यह सवाल उठ खड़ा हुआ है कि कोविड-19 प्रलय है या प्राकृतिक प्रकोप है या महामारी है। यह भी सवाल उठ खड़ा हुआ कि इसे प्रयोगशाला में तैयार किया गया था तथा पूरी दुनिया को रसातल में मिलाने के उद्देश्य से इस वाइरस को छोड़ दिया गया। हालांकि इस प्रश्न का सही जवाब तब सामने आ गया, जब

चीन ने 20 जनवरी 2020 को 'नेचर' पत्रिका को इस वाइरस के संबंध में खास परिचय देते हुए यह बता दिया कि इस वाइरस का जीनोम सीक्वेंस क्या है। सिर्फ इतना ही नहीं; चीनी वैज्ञानिकों ने और कई डाटा उपलब्ध कराने की कोशिश की, जिन डाटाओं के जरिये सार्वभौम टीकाकरण करने में सुविधाएं हुईं।

इन सुविधाओं की समीक्षा करने के बाद यह कहना अनुचित नहीं होगा कि कोविड-19 भी अन्य महामारियों की तरह एक महामारी है; जिसकी शुरुआत 29 दिसम्बर 2019 को हुई। हो सकता है कि इसकी शुरुआत इस दिन से पहले हो चुकी हो, लेकिन अभी तक इस संदर्भ में न कोई ठोस सबूत मिला है और न ही किसी विद्वान का बुनियादी वक्तव्य आया है, तब यह सवाल उठता है कि इसी तारीख को इस कोविड-19 की शुरुआत क्यों मान ली जाए। इसलिए कि इस दिन चीन के वुहान शहर में इस वाइरस की निशानदेही देखने को मिली; देखते-देखते इसका भयानक रूप पूरी दुनिया में देखने को मिला। भारत के केरल राज्य में 30 जनवरी 2020 को इसकी पहली निशानदेही देखने को मिली। धीरे-धीरे इस महामारी ने अपने पैर फैलाये।

पूरी दुनिया ने इस महामारी का तांडव देखा;

क्या अमेरिका, क्या यूरोप, क्या अफ्रिका और क्या भारत- कोई गांव, कोई कस्बा शायद हो जहां इसने किसी-न-किसी को मौत के मुँह में न ढकेला हो। ऐसा महसूस हुआ कि इंसानी दुनिया इस महामारी के सामने कितनी बौनी है। बौद्धिकता की सारी सेवाएं कुंठित होने लगीं। इस तांडव ने न केवल कंगूरों को तोड़ गिराये बल्कि बुनियाद को भी लहलुहान कर दिया। पहली बार इस इंसानी दुनिया ने देखा कि किस तरह बुनियाद से लहू गिरता है और किस तरह से लहू पसरता है। सदमे में इंसानी दुनिया नाक तक डूब गयी। पर काल का चक्र घूमता रहा, समय गुजरता रहा। अहसास होता था कि 2020 के अंत तक कोविड-19 चला जायेगा, क्योंकि इस दौरान साधारण उपचारों और आम परहेजों के जरिये इंसानों ने अपनी जानें बचाने के लिये अद्भुत तरीकों को अख्तियार कर लिया। लेकिन 2021 के शुरू होते ही कोविड-19 की दूसरी लहर आने की खबरें आने लगीं।

मार्च-अप्रैल 2021 तक कोविड की लहरों की विभीषिका सामने आ गयी। चारों तरफ हाहाकार मच गया। इसकी पहली लहर ने विश्वव्यापी सदमा को जन्म दिया, जबकि इसकी दूसरी लहर ने विश्वव्यापी इंसानी तकलीफों को सामने ला खड़ा किया। इतनी मौतों की खबरें मानव सभ्यता ने पहली बार अपनी आँखों से देखी! ऐसा लगा कि दुनिया की लाचारी ही असली सच्चाई है और बाद बाकी सब व्यर्थ!

लेकिन इंसान हिम्मत कहाँ हारता है; उसकी हिम्मत के सामने कोविड-19 का तांडव जरूर बंद होगा। इंसान ने हिम्मत दिखायी। टीकाकरण का रास्ता अपनाया गया। आज नहीं तो कल और ज्यादा देर होगी, तो परसों पूरे विश्व में टीकाकरण होगा। इसकी लहरों को कमजोर होना ही होगा।

टीकाकरण का अभियान शुरू हुआ। धीरे-धीरे यह भरोसा होने लगा कि निश्चित रूप से टीकाकरण से इंसानी दुनिया को राहत मिलेगी। विद्वानों ने इस तरफ कदम बढ़ाया, वैज्ञानिकों ने नये-नये आविष्कार के जरिये इस कोविड-19 के कहर को दूर करने के लिए नया रास्ता दिखाया। सामाजिक-आर्थिक-साहित्यिक गतिविधियों के जरिये आम जनता के बीच यह स्थापित किया गया कि घोर मे घोर संकट में भी इंसान जीने की राह बना लेता है। शायद इसलिए इंसान के इर्द-गिर्द इतनी सारी समस्याएं आती हैं और इंसान ही इन समस्याओं का कोई-न-कोई हल निकाल लेता है।

इस कोविड-19 के प्रलय से बचने के लिए अर्थशास्त्रियों ने अनुमान लगाया है कि यदि पूरी दुनिया में सार्वभौम टीकाकरण अभियान को सफल किया जाए तो कुल खर्च पचास अरब डालर आयेगा। हालांकि दुनिया के विभिन्न देशों में टीकाकरण अभियान शुरू हो चुका है। अमेरिका की आबादी के 40 फीसद तक टीकाकरण की पहली खुराक पहुँच चुकी है। पहली खुराक यूरोपियन यूनियन में आबादी के बीस फीसद तक पहुँची है। अफ्रिका में यह खुराक 3 फीसद लोगों तक पहुँच पायी है। भारत में टीकाकरण की पहली खुराक दो फीसद लोगों तक पहुँची है। तीसरी दुनिया के देशों में टीकाकरण को सफल करने के संबंध में जो समस्याएं दिखती हैं, उन समस्याओं में प्रमुख समस्या है- राजकोषीय मदद। हालांकि विश्व मुद्रा-कोष ने यह बताया है कि सशर्त कर्ज देकर इस समस्या का निदान करने के उद्देश्य से वह आगे बढ़ सकता है। विभिन्न देशों में इस संदर्भ में अपनी-अपनी परिस्थितियों के अनुसार मदद लेने या मदद देने जैसे विषयों पर चर्चाएं हो रही हैं, लेकिन ज्ञातव्य हो कि इन चर्चाओं के

केंद्र में यही सवाल है कि किसी तरह इंसानी दुनिया की तकलीफ को कम किया जाए। इस संबंध में यह भी प्रश्न उठा है कि यदि बौद्धिक संपदा अधिकार में तब्दीली की जाती है, तो निश्चित रूप से सार्वभौम टीकाकरण का अभियान पूरे विश्व में सफलतापूर्वक सम्पन्न होगा।

सार्वभौम टीकाकरण के बारे में यह भी कहा जाता है कि यदि पेटेंट कानून में तब्दीली लायी जाती है, तो इससे भी इंसान को लाभ मिल सकता है। कई देशों में लाइसेंसिंग व्यवस्था में तब्दीली लाकर टीकाकरण के तौर-तरीकों में बदलाव लाने पर विचार-विमर्श किया जा रहा है। उम्मीद की जाती है कि इससे इंसानी दुनिया के लिए एक नया रास्ता खुलेगा। इस रास्ते पर चलते-चलते निश्चित रूप से एक रास्ता बन सकता है। सबसे बड़ा सवाल यह है कि इंसानी दुनिया के सामने जो रास्ता बन रहा है, उस रास्ते पर कैसे आगे बढ़ा जाए। इस बारे में विद्वानों का यह मानना है कि विश्वव्यापी असमानता को कम करना ही पड़ेगा; आखिर क्या कारण हैं कि इतनी असमानता बढ़ने लगी है। एक तरफ अपने दम-खम पर इसी दुनिया में एक देश सार्वभौम टीकाकरण करने का आश्वासन देता है, जबकि इसी दुनिया के एक-दूसरे देश को दस बार यह सोचने के लिए बाध्य होना पड़ता है कि आखिर किसकी कैसी शर्त को किस रूप में माना जाए ताकि सार्वभौम टीकाकरण का अभियान सफल हो।

इस महामारी के दौरान निश्चित रूप से भयानक-भयानक संकट सामने आया है; लेकिन यह भी सच है कि विभिन्न माध्यमों के द्वारा लोग भी एकत्रित हुए हैं। इस महामारी के दौरान बहुत बदलाव आया है। उस बदलाव से कितना लाभ होगा; कोई नहीं जानता है लेकिन यह सच है कि इंसान इस महामारी के सामने हथियार नहीं डालेगा। यह जो हथियार नहीं डालेगा, इसी से साबित होता है कि इंसानियत की रक्षा करना सबसे बड़ी बात है। इस महामारी के दौरान एक बात पूरी तरह स्पष्ट हो गयी है कि एकजुटता का सच्चा वाहक इंसान ही है।

विभिन्न कार्यक्रमों के जरिये इस एकजुटता को बढ़ाने का प्रयास किया गया है। इस संदर्भ में द एशियाटिक सोसाइटी, कोलकाता की भूमिका पर चर्चा करना अनुचित नहीं होगा, क्योंकि इस सोसाइटी ने विभिन्न कार्यक्रमों के जरिये इस विषम परिस्थिति का शानदार ढंग से मुकाबला किया। अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय स्तर के विद्वानों ने इस दौरान विभिन्न विषयों के जरिये जिस तरह पूरी दुनिया में अलख जगाने का काम किया, ठीक उसी तरह अधिक से अधिक लोगों के बीच मैत्री व शांति के संदेश के जरिये इस सोसाइटी ने सर विलियम जॉस के सपनों को कारगर साबित करने का बेनजीर दृष्टांत स्थापित किया; बेनजीर दृष्टांत विश्व मंगल की भावना का सदा अमर संदेश देता रहेगा।

# Library beyond the Walls: Services and Activities of Asiatic Society Library during the COVID-19 Pandemic

**Pritam Gurey**

Librarian, The Asiatic Society

*“The only thing that you absolutely have to know, is the location of the library”*

**- Albert Einstein**

Library of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata being part of a two hundred and thirty-seven years old Society is like a deep ocean of knowledge that includes a rich and multifarious collection of information resources like manuscripts, artefacts, books, journals, etc. The rare, archival and historic nature of the information resources makes the library very unique and important to research scholars and academicians of the country and abroad.

The library is enriched with more than 1,33,453 books and 1,09,000 bound volumes of journals. These information resources are in Asian and European languages (Arabic, Bengali, English, Pali, Persian, Prakrit, Sanskrit, Urdu, Russian, Sino-Tibetan etc.). The hybrid nature of the collection of the library which includes print and digitised information resources attract users from different parts of the world. The library has been offering bibliographic and document delivery services to users from any part of the world. The library of the Society is not only centred to build user-centric collection building but also to build user demand-based services.

During the pandemic COVID-19, the library services were provided beyond the walls so that academic interest is not hampered. As

we all can assume that - discontinuing library services during COVID-19 would almost be like closing the door of knowledge as well as snatching the psychological peace of the book-lovers and academicians. Keeping in mind the prevailing situation, the library of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata has rendered many services to satisfy the academic needs of its potential and distinctive user community to the extent possible.

## **Services rendered by the Library during Covid-19 Pandemic:**

The sudden outbreak of Covid-19 has left the whole world in a state where the dependency on remote services has increased and where ICT based platforms played the role of a saviour. There is no exception in the field of library services also. But sudden switching from physical to digital platforms is never an easy task to cope up with. Despite all these, the library of the Society has provided the following services which are noteworthy:

- **Remote Access to WebOPAC (Online Catalogue):**

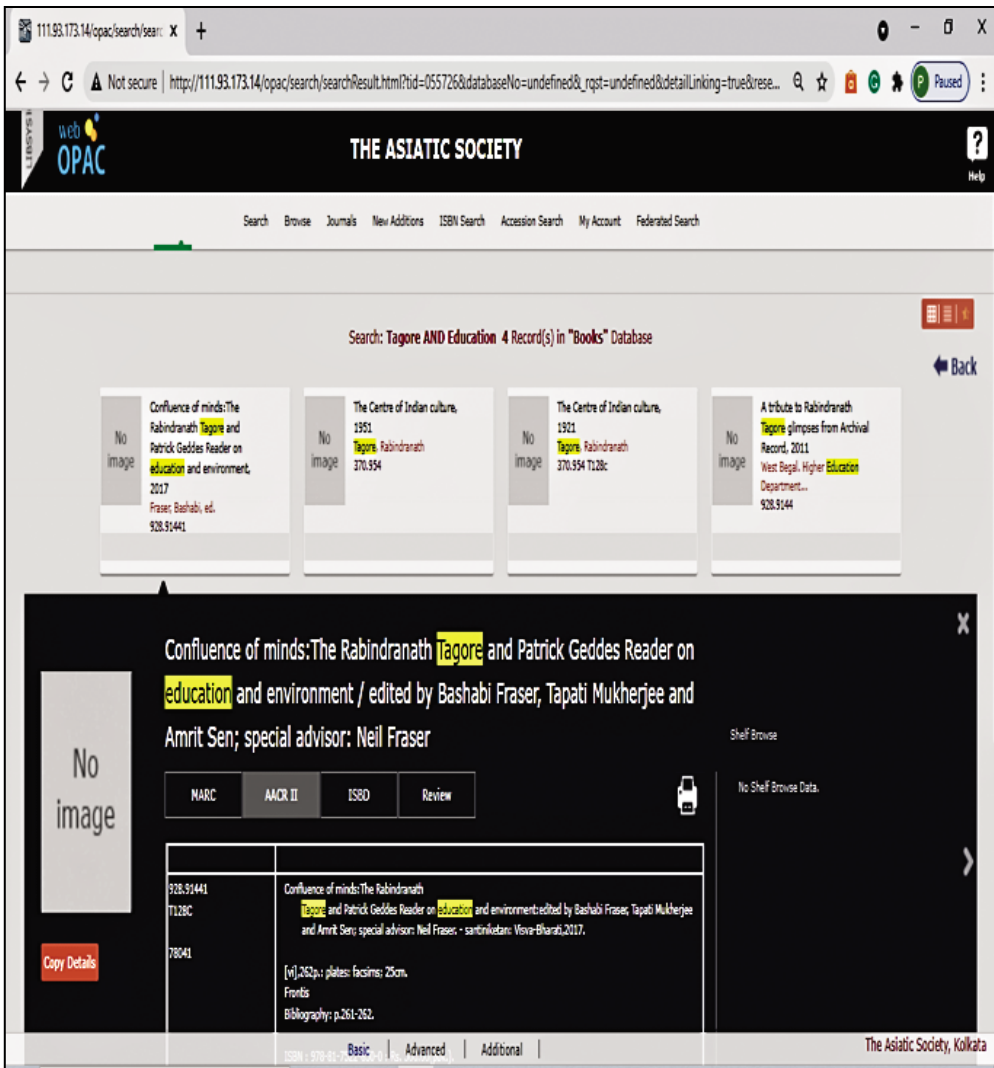
The WebOPAC of the library is dynamic. The database is being updated regularly in LibSys10 Library Automation Software.

• **Remote Access to MOPAC (OPAC on Mobile):**

The MOPAC is the version of OPAC which is smartphone compatible keeping in mind the usage of smartphones by the majority. Thus, the collection of the library can also be browsed from smartphones & tablets with ease.

WebOPAC and MOPAC are utilised by the members of the society, research scholars, staff members, officials as well as the general public for searching catalogue entries. The documents can be searched in different

ways by broadening or shortening the criteria with the use of Boolean logic and an advanced search facility. Search fields may be based on author, title, series, place of publication, publisher, subject, ISBN, accession number, etc. The role of WebOPAC and MOPAC to help the academic community or any other person to get information regarding the collection without visiting the library during this pandemic is significant.



WebOPAC Search Interface

- **Link to Access Subscribed E-Journals through Library Webpage:**

Details of all the subscribed journals (print and electronic) are available on the library webpage and links are also given to ease the access.

- **Expansion from Campus Access to Remote Access to the Subscribed E-Journals:**

As a part of special service, the privilege was accorded to remotely access the subscribed journals which were usually accessible from the campus. Such e-journals includes: Sage - 42 titles, Cambridge University Press - 5 titles, Taylor & Francis - 6 titles.

- **Arrangement of Remote Trial Access to E-books, E-Journals and E-databases:**

Remote trial access to e-resources was arranged for a limited period as a part of a special service to enrich the academic community with varied academic resources. Many significant and precious documents/information resources of renowned publishers were made accessible for free which is a notable as well as noble effort of the library professionals and the publishers/vendors concerned. The publishers provided login ID/ password-based access which is also mentionable.

**Remote Trial Access:**

- ✓ Cambridge University Press: Total 705 titles.
- ✓ Sage E-books: Total No. of Books = 4140
- ✓ Oxford Scholarship Online (E-books): Total No. of Books = 9026
- ✓ Wiley Digital Archives Collection: It includes the following 4 major archives:  
Royal Geographical Society, Royal College of Physicians, Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain & Ireland and The New York Academy of Sciences.

- **Remote Access Guides:**

Guide with step by step process regarding how to search e-resources through login ID and password with images were emailed to

concerned members and research scholars along with other necessary information was provided for better and easy access.

- **Arrangements of Virtual Exhibitions:**

Virtual Exhibitions on various topics were frequently organised by Society from time to time which was highly appreciated by the scholars and media. During this pandemic, these virtual exhibitions were very effective to stay connected with the academic fraternity and disseminate information on various topics of general and specific interest.

- ✓ A virtual exhibition on the birth anniversary of Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy - "**Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy and his endearing relationship with The Asiatic Society**" on August 2, 2020
- ✓ A virtual tribute to the father of the nation Mahatma Gandhi on the occasion of his 150th birth anniversary - "**Mahatma in the eyes of a Gandhian Anthropologist Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose, erstwhile President of The Asiatic Society**" on October 10, 2020.

- **Arrangements of Webinars/ Virtual Colloquium:**

Online webinars were also arranged which were open to all. Online platforms like Youtube, Google meet, Facebook, etc., were utilised to connect to a large number of audience to break the monotony of restrictions imposed during COVID-19. The programs were made available to Youtube so that they can reach a maximum number of people and be watched repeatedly or anytime as per convenience.

July 24, 2020: An online colloquium on The role of library in higher education against a background of pandemic-sick global scenario.

*Speakers:*

Dr. Narayan Chandra Ghosh, Librarian, Indian Institute of Management Calcutta and Dr. Pritam Gurey, Librarian, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata.

August 7, 2020: An online tribute to Rabindranath Tagore on the occasion of his death anniversary - Rabindranath Tagore and Patrick Geddes on environment: Confluence of minds.

*Speakers:*

Professor Tapati Mukherjee, Library Secretary, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata and Shri Arunendu Bandyopadhyay, Noted Essayist.

• **User Awareness for E-resources/ Online Events:**

Every effort was made to make the users aware of the existing remote access through e-mails and online notices through the Society's webpage. Notices for online events were also distributed through Facebook, Twitter to reach the majority of scholars, academicians and the general public.

• **Digitization of collection:**

Digitization is one of the priorities during this pandemic as remote access may be considered as an alternative to the campus access of print resources/manuscripts. Under the in-house digitization programme by the staff of the Society, a total of 1729

manuscripts consisting of 1.7 lakhs pages (approx.) and 7785 microfiche have been digitised. Metadata and .pdf creation of 1219 books out of 5923 documents (books and journals) have been created as of now. The initiative has already been taken to accelerate the phase-wise digitisation of its rich collection through outsourcing in addition to the in-house digitization work so that these information resources can be accessed remotely without any time or geographical barriers.

• **Digital Archive of the Society:**

The digital archive of the Society is a very important initiative. The archive includes the collection of manuscripts, Society's publications (*Asiatick Researches, Journals of the Asiatic Society, Memoirs, etc.*). Till now 517 manuscripts, 575 microfiche collection materials, 504 books have been uploaded to the internal server of the society. Presently, the archive is available only on the LAN of the Society premises through DSpace content management software. In future, the database may be made remotely accessible.



DSpace Interface of Digital Archive

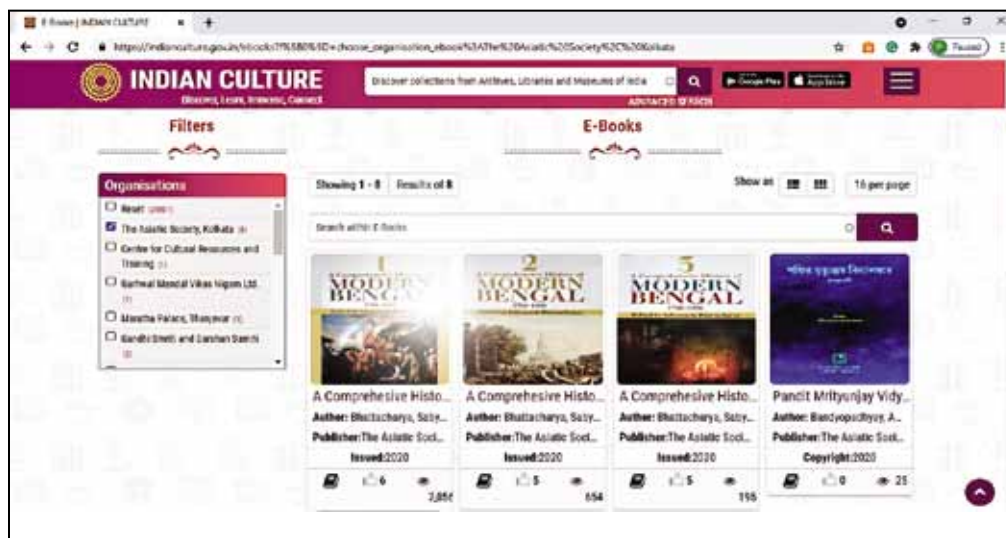


- Asiatic Society and Indian Culture platform:** Culture Portal is a part of the National Virtual Library of India (NVL) project. The Asiatic Society, Kolkata being an organisation under the Ministry of Culture is a part of the same platform.

Indian Culture is a platform by the Ministry of Culture that hosts openly accessible data of cultural relevance from various repositories and institutions all over India. The Indian

Culture Portal is a part of the National Virtual Library of India (NVL) project. The Asiatic Society, Kolkata being an organisation under the Ministry of Culture is a part of the same platform.

The Library of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata



Indian Culture portal

is continuously providing efforts to render services effectively. During the pandemic, the library reading room was open maintaining SOPs and proper arrangements were made as per COVID 19 health protocols. The library fine for overdue books was also waived off for a certain period during the lockdown with the approval of the competent authority as a good gesture.

Being a library of research and academic activities, one of the major functions of the library is to provide information assistance regarding different research and project

activities going on in the Society and build collection accordingly. The manuscripts, rare books and many digitised documents remain in demand by the users of India and abroad. The motto of the library of the Society is to create an environment where users feel "nothing is more pleasant than exploring the library". Every effort is being made to create a balanced collection of information resources in different forms (print and electronic) and also to preserve and conserve the rare and precious resources for present and future use.

## Museum of The Asiatic Society

**Keka Adhikari Banerjee**  
Curator, The Asiatic Society

The Museum of the Asiatic Society is a rich repository carrying the glorious past of Indian culture and civilization. In fact nucleus of a museum—its perception and implementation began here. Since its foundation on 15th January, 1784 the collection of various objects started with the gifts of members, non –members. The society received with thanks seven Persian manuscripts from Henri Richardson on 25th March, 1784 and the journey started there. The museum is still collecting manuscripts, paper documents and archaeological objects through gift/ donation and purchase. At present the museum has in its collection Rock Edict of Asoka (B. C. 250) which was collected from Bhabru village near Bairat in Rajasthan and written in early Brahmi script and in Prakrit language. A good number of copper plates, coins, sculptures in stone and metal, manuscripts, archival documents, lithographs, rare books, old maps, old European oil paintings, Bengal school of paintings and a few paper documents like deeds, stamps etc. are also preserved in the museum. *( For details please See the the Inventory of the museum at a glance)*

The richest asset of this institution is its priceless manuscripts, importance of which lies not in numerical strength alone but in its rich and unique contents. The present note will highlight only on the **manuscript collection** to begin with.

Raja Rajendra Lala Mitra and Mm Haraprasad Shastri were the pioneers for collecting a large number of manuscripts

from various parts of India, Nepal and present Bangladesh. According to the report of Mm Haraprasad Shastri the then



Bairat or Bhabru Edict of Ashoka  
c. 250 B.C.  
Script : Brahmi  
Language : Ashokan Prakrit



Vishnu  
Material : Black Basalt Stone;  
Period : 11th C.A.D.



from the Asiatic Society as the Notices of Sanskrit manuscript and Descriptive catalogue of Sanskrit manuscripts. In later phases many scholars like N. C. Vedantatirtha, Pulinbihari Chakravarti, Dr. Satyaranjan Bandyopadhyay edited and compiled the descriptive catalogues. In recent times a catalogue of Ayurveda by Dr. Dalia Banduri has been published comprising all three

Government of India made an annual grant of Rs. 24000/- for the safe custody and preservation of manuscripts throughout the country of which Bengal was allotted Rs. 3200/-. The provincial governments took also an initiative of preserving the manuscripts in their collection. In 1868 with the effort of Sir John Lawrence a good collection came from Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab and a regular search of manuscript started. Dr. Mitra was entrusted by the Society for collecting manuscripts with the allotted money and he collected 3156 manuscripts. He was followed by Mahamahopadhyay Haraprasad Shastri who increased the number to 11264 collecting Sanskrit and Bengali manuscripts from various parts of Bengal. Babu Dinesh Chandra Sen, Pandit Benod Behari Kavyatirtha helped Mm H. P. Shastri to collect large number of manuscripts even from present day Bangladesh. From the two old registers we come to know that the total number of manuscripts of this collection is 11379 and this is known as **Government Collection**. Both of the collectors not only collected but also carefully examined and catalogued the manuscripts which have been published

collection following the same format. After establishment of the Indian Museum approximately 12000 (later on these are properly accessioned as 11515 nos. ) manuscripts came to the Society from 1914-1918 which was purchased by Mm. Haraprasad Shastri and kept there for a long time. These are known as **Indian Museum Collection**.

As per proceeding of the society the first accession of importance was a gift from the Seringpatnam Committee (3rd Feb, 1808), from this selected manuscripts and rare books from the palace library of Tipoo Sultan followed by Colonel Mackenzie's collection of manuscripts and drawings in December, 1822. A bulk of valuable collection consisting of Arabic, Sanskrit, Persian and Urdu manuscripts comprising some from the Mughal Court and other Islamic sources received from the Fort William Collage Library at a great expense and trouble under the superintendence of Godwin, Carey, Gilchrist and other Oriental scholars. The collection is known as the **Society Collection**. Most of the manuscripts of this collection are written in hand made and country made paper in both ink and bound in book forms.

Following the predecessors, determined and systematic efforts were made to resume the manuscript collection of the Society through Gift/Donation and Purchase. A bulk of manuscripts were received from Kapil Math, R. K. Dev's private collection, Belur Math, Nabadwip, Baranagar and Tarun Goswami. Eminent personalities like Purnadas Baul, Anantalal Thakur, Sukumari Bhattacharya Kalikrishna Bagchi, Bholanath Sengupta, H. B. Sarkar etc. have enriched the collection of manuscripts through their personal gifts. The Society has a Manuscript Purchase Committee constituted with scholars of various languages who examine the rarity and necessity of the manuscripts for purchase. Call for manuscripts in daily newspapers are given. Later on whatever collection of manuscripts received by the society through donation or purchase are familiar as the **Society Collection** whose beginning starts with the collection of Fort William college library as mentioned earlier.

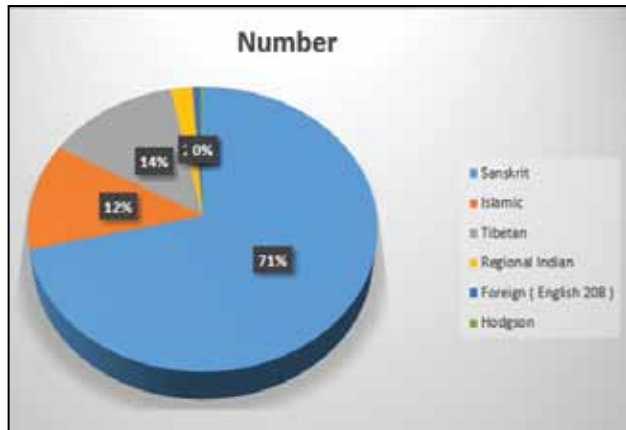
At present the collection of manuscripts is rich and varied in subject and covers twenty-six languages and fifteen scripts like

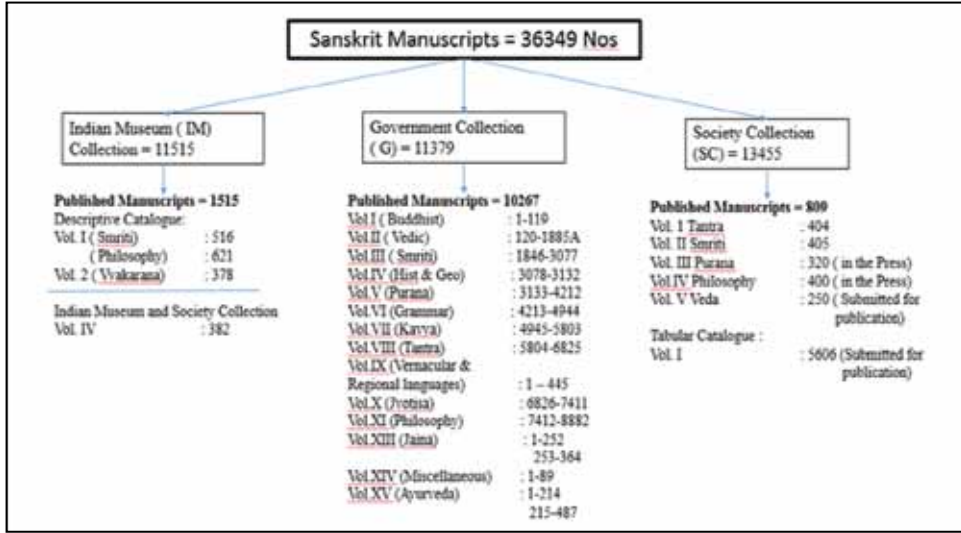
Nagari, Newari, Gouri, Kutila, Gupta, Brahmi, Ranjana, Sarada etc. On the basis of languages manuscript collection can broadly be divided into **Sanskritic Section**, manuscripts of **Regional languages**, **Islamic Section**, **Tibetan and South-East Asian Section** and manuscripts of **English and other Foreign languages**. Another very important collection namely Hodgeson collection containing 127 manuscripts mainly related to Buddhism is of worth mentioning. The materials on which the manuscripts are written vary from palm to palmyra leaves, barks of different trees, handmade and machine-made papers of various grades.

After a thorough physical verification a clear picture of the manuscript collection with proper accession number is discernible. At present the museum of the society possess approximately 51, 022 manuscripts in total. Among them Sanskrit manuscripts are 36349 in number comprising of all three collection discussed above and that can be represented by a pie chart. The cataloguing of the Society Collection is still in progress.

### The collection of the manuscripts

Manuscripts	Number
Sanskrit	36349
Islamic	6203
Tibetan	6792
Regional Indian	1158
Foreign (English 208)	393
Hodgson	127
<b>Total</b>	<b>51022</b>





Some of the rare Sanskrit manuscripts are: *Lalitavistara*, (NS. 873 in Newari script), *Rgveda Padapāṭha* copied in 1362 A. D is perhaps the oldest manuscript of *Rgveda*, *Bṛhati*, *Amrita-Vindu* ( 11th Century A. D), *Rāmayaṇa* of Ramananda (11th Century A. D), *Daṇḍalakṣana Vidhi* of Vinayaka Bhaṭṭa (Śaka 1750), *Vivādabhaṅgārṇava* of Jagannath Tarkapancanan (1837 A. D), *Kiraṇāvalī*, *Nartaka Nirṇaya*, *Sangīta Kalpalat* , *Rāmaçarita* of Sandhyakar Nandi etc. There are a good number

of manuscripts on Alchemy like *Rasārnavakalpa*, *Rasapradīpa* *Rasadīpikā*, *Rasakalpa* etc. Astronomy and Mathematics such as *Siddhāntaśiromaṇi*, *Gaṇitamālā*, *Bījavivṛṭikalpalatā*, *Yotiṣaratnamālā* etc,

Mention may be made about the *Vijñānanidhi* manuscripts. On October 15, 2008 through a letter of National Manuscript Mission dated 12-02-2007 intimation received by the society that four manuscripts were awarded as *Vijñānanidhi*-Treasure of India. Those are as follows.

<i>Kubjikāmatam</i> ,	Folio; 79 Size: 305. X 5. 5 cm. Line: 7 Script: Later Gupta Script Language: Sanskrit Subject: Tantra Material : Palm Leaf	Date : 7th Century A. D.
<i>Matrieya Vyākaraṇa</i> ,	No. of Folios: 4 [F. 3-7] Size: 30. 5 x 5. 2 cm. Language: Sanskrit Script: Newari Material: Palm Leaf	57th regnal year of Gopāladeva of the Pāla dynasty of Bengal i. e. approximately 10th century A. D. It is one of the rarest manuscripts on the biography of future Buddha and His Teachings. This has also been awarded by UNESCO as Memory of World Register.

<i>Kālacakrāvātāra</i>	Author: Abhayākara Gupta Folio: 7 [ F. 1-7] Size: 30. 5 x 5 cm. Script: Gouḍī (some Newari scripts are mixed) Scribe: Dhanaśrīmitra Material : Palm Leaf	Śaka 1047 = 1125 A. D.
<i>Sampuṭaṭīkā</i>	No. of Folios: 84 (F. 1-83) Duplicate Folio: F. 11 Size: 32 x 5. 5 cm. Language: Sanskrit Script: Old Newari mixed with Gouḍī. Material: Palm Leaf	NS 145= 1025 AD

The *Matrieya Vyākaraṇa*, and *Laghu Kāla Çakratantrarāja ik* have been registered in the Memory of World Register by UNESCO.

#### Rare and Illuminated Manuscripts :

A good number of rare and illustrated

manuscripts decorated with gold and silver, brilliant natural colours or elaborate designs and miniature paintings are preserved in the Society. Some of these manuscripts are given below :

Sl. no.	Call no.	Title	Folios	No. of illustrations	Subject and date of manuscripts
1.	G-4713	<i>AṣṭasāhasrikāPrajñāpāramitā</i>	179	12	981 A. D.
2.	A-15	<i>AṣṭasāhasrikaPrajñāpāramitā</i>	186	35+2 on wooden pata	1071 A. D.
3.	G-4716	<i>Āryāparimitāyurnāma—mahāyāna sūtra</i>	6	3	11-12th A. D.
4.	G-4203	<i>AṣṭasāhasrikaPrajñāpāramitā</i>	293	4	1148 A. D.
5.	G-9989A	<i>AṣṭasāhasrikāPrajñāpāramitā</i>	1	3	Late 12 A. D. year 18 of the reign of Govinda Pāla.
6.	B-35	<i>Pañcarakshā</i>	200	5	1265 A. D.
7.	G-10760	<i>ParamārthanāmaSaṅgīti</i>	14	2	15 A. D.
8.	I. M. 103336	<i>Devīmāhātmya</i>	53	25	1738 A. D.
9.	I. M. 5864	<i>VivekaPañcāmṛta (Hindi)</i>	205	6	1852 Samvat, 1795 A. D.
10.	G-10715	<i>CaitanyaBhāgavata (Bengali)</i>	227	4	By Vṛndāvan Dās. 1265 B. , S. = 1860 A. D.
11.	G-10741	<i>Dhāraṇi</i>	103	8	1843 A. D.

Sl. no.	Call no.	Title	Folios	No. of illustrations	Subject and date of manuscripts
12.		<i>Burmese Rāmāyaṇa</i>			<i>Rāmāyaṇa</i>
13.	PSC -4	<i>Jāmi'u'tawārikh</i>	124	21	Historical work of Rashiddud- Din IX or Beginning of X C. A. H. 16 A. D.
14.	PSC -127	<i>Āīn-i-Ākbarī</i>	220	3	Statistical Account of the Mogul Empire under Akbar, by Abul-Fadl b Mubarak, Allami, XI or beginning of XII C. A. H. 18 A. D.
15.	P. III. Col. 1289	<i>Kulliyāt-i-Sa'dī</i>	497	5	Poem 1808 A. D.
16.	PSC. 824	<i>Dīwān-i-Makhfī</i>	168	4	Collection of poems 1213/1223 A. H. (approx. ) by Md. Amin Beg. 1835 A. D. ,
17.	PSC. 217	<i>Amīr Nāma</i>	208	48	A Biography of an AFgan Chief by KhariyyatKhess, copied in 1251 A. H. 1835 A. D.
18.	PSC. 1367	<i>Farhang-i-Aurung Shāhī</i>	601	307	Avoluminous naturalistic encyclopaedia of India by Hidayatul-al-Qurayshi al Hashimi-a; Jafari, XI C of the beginning of the XII C. A. H. 18 A. D.
19.	P. Cur. Coll. 677	<i>Tarjumā-i-Mahābhārat</i>	672	20	19 A. D.

They are unique in portraying delicacy of their lines, elegance of composition and charming colour schemes. The subject matter of these manuscripts are mainly related to Buddhism, Jainism and Vainavism. Perso-Arabic Manuscripts having different themes

are still bright in colour. Preparation of a catalogue of these illustrated manuscripts is under process. One of the manuscript- ***Devīmāhatmya*** (dated to 1738 C. E) having twenty-five illustrations display it's own identity in it's miniatures.

**Aṣṭasāhasrika  
Prajñāpāramitā**  
Acc. No. - A-15  
Newari Samvat 191,  
1071 C. E  
Material: Palm Leaf  
Script: Newari



**Dhāraṇī Saṃgraha**  
Acc. No -G- 10843  
Script- Newari  
Language- Sanskrit



**Devīmāhātmya**  
Acc No- IM 10336  
Script- Devanāgarī  
Language- Sanskrit  
Date-1738 C. E





**Farhang-i-Aurang-Shāhi**

by Hidayatu'l-lah b.  
Muhsin al Qurayshi al  
Hashimi al-ja'fari

17th Century C. E.

Acc. No. -  
Language: Persian,  
date: End of the XI ca.  
or the beginning of the  
XII ca. A. H.  
A Voluminous  
naturalistic  
encyclopedia of  
India dedicated to  
Aurangzib.



The manuscripts of regional languages cover Assamese, Bengali, Marathi, Rajasthani, Gurumukhi, Kannad, Tamil, Malayalam, Hindi etc. Some very rare Bengali manuscripts comprising Ramayana ( BS 1080), Mahabharata ( Paragali Mahabharata and Chuti Khan's AsvamedhaParvaetc), Ekadasi Mahatya ( BS 1087), Khanar Bachan, Caitanya Bhagavata and many manuscripts on Vaisnavism are of great value. A good number of Rajasthani Manuscripts in the possession of the Asiatic Society have been published in two parts: Part I comprises of 114 manuscripts by V. B. Trivedi and revised and edited by Sukumar Sen (1957) and part II compiled and edited by Ambika Charan

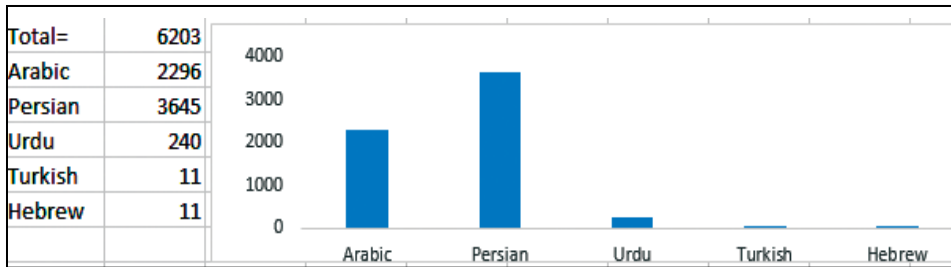
Mhmiya comprises of 522 manuscripts (2002). The work of Mr. Luigi Pio Tessitori in translating the original Bardic Manuscripts is unforgettable. Most of these works contain short treatise of literature, eulogies, bhakti cult-tantra, astrology and astronomy, festivals, art and crafts which all portray the colourful Culture of Rajasthan. Similarly, Asamese manuscripts gifted by Lt. Neuffille in 1825 comprises of Kamarupa itihasa, Kirtana and Badagita, Bhakti-Pradipa etc are priceless collection of the Society. All these manuscripts of regional languages are well documented and catalogued.

The Islamic collection of 6203 number of manuscripts comprises of Arabic, Persian,

Urdu, Turkish and Hebrew languages which are indeed very rare, rich and varied in their textual contexts along with a beautiful calligraphy. Some of the manuscripts have exquisite illustrations with gold, silver and vegetable colours. Some of the rarest of the rare manuscripts under this section are *Padshahnama* bearing Emperor Shah-Jahan's autograph, *Jami-ut-Twarikh*, a sixteenth century illustrated manuscript relating to the history of Chenghis, Khan and

his descendants, *Ain-i-Akbari*, -----*Tarjuma-i-Mahabharat* ( 20 illustrations), *Diwan-i-Makhfi* with four illustrations dated to 1213/1223 AH. i. e 1835 A. D, *Farhang-i-Aurang Shahi*- a natural encyclopaedia of India, *Shahnama*, *Al-Quran* etc are of worth mentioning.

Many of these manuscripts have been edited and published. The total collection along with published and unpublished manuscripts may graphically be represented.



Language	Published / Unpublished	Catalogue	Edited/Compiled	Year of Publication	No. of Manuscripts	Remarks
Arabic (2296 Manuscripts)	Published	Descriptive	W. Ivanow Revised and edited by M. Hidayat Hossain	1939	1200	Vol. I
	- Do -	Descriptive	Began by M. Hidayat Hossain, continued by M. Mahfujul Haq and compiled by M. Ishaque	1949	341	Vol. II
	- Do -	Tabular	M. S. Khan	1980	233	Vol. I
	- Do -	Tabular	M. S. Khan	1999	239	Vol. II
	Unpublished	Tabular	Compiled by S. S. F. I Al Qaderi	-----	283	Submitted for Publication
Persian (3645 Manuscripts)	Published	Descriptive	W. Ivanow,	1926	1781	Persian society collection (PSC)
	Published	Descriptive	W. Ivanow	1927	756	Persian Curzon collection (PCC)
	Published	Descriptive	W. Ivanow	1927	168	Persian Society collection (PSC), 1st supplement

Language	Published / Unpublished	Catalogue	Edited/Compiled	Year of Publication	No. of Manuscripts	Remarks
Persian (3645 Manuscripts)	Published	Descriptive	W. Ivanow	1928	174	Persian Society collection (PSC), 2nd supplement
	Published	Descriptive	Compiled by M. Abdullah and edited by M. Firoze	2009	498	Persian Society 3rd collection (PSC),
	Published	Descriptive	R. K. Dev		268	
Urdu (240 Manuscripts)	Unpublished	Descriptive	Compiled by Abdur Rauf		240	Submitted for publication
Turkish	Unpublished	-	-		11	Accessioned and documented in tabular form
Hebrew	Unpublished	-	-		11	-

Of the Tibetan collection the society possesses a complete set of Kanjur and Tanjur texts of Buddhist scriptures and some extra canonical works. These manuscripts were collected by Csoma-de-Koros and B. H. Hodgson. All these Tibetan manuscripts are well documented, catalogued and some are published by the Asiatic Society. Tibetan *Astahasrika Prajnaparamita* written on Nepalese indigenous paper and in silver lettering with wooden cover engraved in gold lettering, Tibetan Smon-lam Text are some rare manuscripts of the collection. Besides Burmese, Javanese, Siamese and Ceylonese manuscripts containing different subjects of literature, language, religion,

custom, geography, science are interesting for the study of history and culture of those countries.

Tibetan Manuscripts Total in number : 6792  
 Asiatic Society Collection – Kanjur : 744  
 Tanjur : 4053

- TantraTika : 3172
- Sutra Tika : 818
- StotraTika : 63

Lhasa Collection - Kanjur : 808  
 Miscellaneous Collection –  
 Kanjur & Non-canonical Manuscripts : 1242  
 Brisma Collection – Kanjur : 214

Published

- Lhasa Kanjur : 448
- Non-canonical : 330
- Brisma Kanjur : 214  
(In the press)

#### Asiatic Society Museum Inventory at a glance

List of Inventories kept in the Museum section	Number / Volume	Remarks
Manuscripts	51022	Catalogued
Rare Books	1076	- Do -
Plates (Litho + Photo + Miss. Drawings)	613	Catalogued and list published in journals of The Asiatic Society. ,

List of Inventories kept in the Museum section		Number / Volume	Remarks
Maps		238	Catalogued and submitted for publication
Siamese Book (Rare)		300	Catalogued and published
Tibetan Books (Rare)		48	Catalogued
Chinese Books		590	Published catalogue.
Paintings (Old European and Bengal School of Paintings)		148	Accessioned and catalogue of old European paintings published (see C. R. Wilson's catalogue and monthly bulletin of The Asiatic Society,
Coins	Gold	108+ 2 broken pieces of coin + 1 coin blank + 2 remnants coins blank + 7 metal bits.	Published
	Other than gold	Silver Coin : 113, Punch marked Coin : 01 and Copper Coin : 508.	Catalogue unpublished
Copper Plate Inscriptions		43	Catalogued (see C. R. Wilson's catalogue)
Bust		19	Published
Photographs (PL)		96	Accessioned and catalogued
Photographs (EP)		37	- Do -
Album		06	- Do -
Deeds and Certificates		13	Accessioned
Asiatic Society Building Plan		87	Accessioned and catalogued
Sculpture and Metal object		34	Accessioned
Printed inscription		23	- Do -
Stamp (1st Album)		39	- Do -
Stamp (2nd Album)		28	- Do -
Stamp (3rd Album)		03	- Do -
Scroll		03	- Do -
Indian Alphabet		21	- Do -
Archival Files		1984	Documentation is going on.

## Encapsulation of Palm Leaves

Ramaprasanna Sinha<sup>1</sup>, Gouri Mitra<sup>2</sup>, Kalyan Sen<sup>3</sup> and Dibakar Maity<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Conservation Officer, <sup>2-4</sup>Conservation Assistant (LIA)

The Asiatic Society, Kolkata is one of the oldest repositories of materials of culture and has the large collection of rare books, journals, manuscripts, oil paintings and several other materials. The Conservation Laboratory Division of the Society started functioning during 1984-85 to conserve these precious materials for posterity. These rich collections without proper preservation and conservation may face a threat to survival against improper climatic, physical, chemical and biological factors.

Conservation was defined in International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) Principles for the Care and Handling of Library materials (2010) as specific practices taken to slow down deterioration and prolong the life span of an object by direct intervening in its physical or chemical make-up. One of the important aspects of conservation of books, manuscripts is their transformation on a new support confirming retention of materials as much original as possible. This is done as a last resort to revive the condition of a brittle, worm eaten books and manuscripts. Selection of the materials and technique to fix them require technical knowledge for effective conservation where the role of the skilled restorer is a very important one. The procedure which restorer adopts includes examination, documentation, consolidation and cleaning, etc.

The Binding and Mending unit of the Society is a part of the Conservation Unit

which is involved in the mending and binding works of books, journals, accounts ledger etc. Binder/Mender staffs of the conservation also check the quality of binding done by outside book binding firms time to time.

In general, paper conservation can be done either by Preventive measure (Passive way) or by Curative measure (Active way).

- Preventive measures include a good storage facility, good house-keeping and proper pest control.
- Curative measures include cleaning, de-acidification, fumigation, mending, encapsulation, and lamination.

### Conservation Section of the Society performs the work in following steps:-

1. Removal of the spine of the books.
2. Pagination of the loose pages of the manuscripts & books.
3. After wards patches are recued carefully
4. De-acidification (as per requirement):
  - a) Aqueous de-acidification with lime water.
  - b) Non-aqueous de-acidification with Barium Hydroxide & Methanol.
5. Lamination (as per requirement):
  - a) Brittle books are laminated with tissue & CMC paste.
  - b) Severely brittle or fragile books are laminated with tissue paper, acetated foil and acetone which is known as sandwich process.

The Fumigation of books and manuscripts are also done in the Conservation Section.

### Encapsulation of Palm Leaves:

Encapsulation is a method of stabilizing paper-based objects by sandwiching the object between slightly larger inert films of polyester and sealing the edges together.

The Asiatic Society currently has many rare manuscripts written on palm leaves that need to be preserved by the aforementioned method. It is being observed that most of such palm leaf manuscripts are not in good condition. They are mostly brittle. There are some manuscripts with some portion of the leaf missing or being worm-eaten and often found to be stuck to another leaf. The missing portions of such leaf are being filled to that exact size with another fresh palm leaf. The process to encapsulate such rare valuable is as follows:



Figure 1

Figure 1 shows the condition at which the palm-leaf manuscript is received. Once the palm leaf manuscripts are received, the cleanup process is started. The cleanup process mainly involves dusting the outer cover of the manuscript. Then the outer cover is opened carefully and each leaf is separated using blunt knife/scalpel.

From Figure 2, it is seen that each leaf is separated and cleaned very softly using a brush. Initiation of pagination and documentation also starts simultaneously with the separation and soft cleanup process. Numbers on each leaf are lamented (if required) in the process of pagination.



Figure 2

The documentation is like a course summary of a patient in the hospital. It contains all the vital information required by the Conservation Officer to approve the preservation process. Once approved by the Conservation Officer, treatment process is followed as mentioned in the document step by step.

The treatment begins with wax paper being placed on a large table.



Figure 3

From Figure 3, we can see that the palm leaves are placed on top of the wax paper maintaining a distance among them. Mostly, it is observed that a maximum of 8 palm leaves can fit easily in one wax paper. Natural oil, citronella is then mixed with rectified spirit and applied on the wax paper having palm leaves to make it flexible.



Figure 4

The wax paper is then left alone for 5-6 days for the palm leaves to dry up. Once dried, the palm leaves are arranged according to pagination. A polyester film is placed on the table; a paginated palm leaf is placed on top of it. Double sided tape is applied around the palm leaf keeping a minimum distance. A fresh polyester film is placed over it and then it is cut by scissor keeping the distance of an inch.

The treated document encapsulated in the polyester paper can be retained for more than 100 years. If needed, the treated document can be taken out easily by cutting the edges. The preserved document is transparent, water proof and moisture free making it easy to handle.



Figure 5

The whole process requires expertise of the restorer in each and every step so that the restoration work is done maintaining a quality and the originality is preserved as much as possible. The Conservation Section is continuously providing efforts to preserve and conserve the rare and precious resources for present and future use.

#### References

Adcock, E. P. (n.d.). IFLA Principles for the Care and Handling of Library Material. Retrieved August 24, 2021, from <https://www.ifla.org/files/assets/pac/ipi/ipi1-en.pdf>

*“We should have but one desire today – the desire to die so that India may live – the desire to face a martyr’s death, so that the path to freedom may be paved with the martyr’s blood.”*

**Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose**

## Final Results of the Research Project entitled 'Society as Reflected in the Principal Upaniṣads'

Mrinal Kanti Gangopadhyay

Life Member, The Asiatic Society

### Uniqueness of Upaniṣad

The Upaniṣad literature is a unique achievement of the ancient mankind in the intellectual sphere. In the remote past, when almost the whole world is steeped in the darkness of ignorance as the light of civilisation has not yet dawned upon it, the Indian sages make this gift of light and enlightenment preaching wisdom and sagacity to humanity at large. Though Indian regionally, it acquires universality with the passage of time. Scholars all over the world are overwhelmed with its depth and grandeur as they go through these ancient masterpieces. "Anyone who reads the Upaniṣads in the original Sanskrit will be caught up and carried away by the elevation, the poetry, the compelling fascination of the many utterances through which they lay bare the secret and sacred relations of the human soul and the Ultimate Reality. When we read them, we cannot help being impressed by the exceptional ability, earnestness and ripeness of mind of those who wrestled with these ultimate questions. These souls who tackled these problems remain still and will remain for all time in essential harmony with the highest ideals of civilisation."<sup>1</sup>

That the Upaniṣad belongs to the latest phase of the development of traditional Vedic literature and represents a distinct kind of literature is a fact beyond dispute.

To say the least, in Upaniṣad, we meet with a new environment; there the emphasis is rather on knowledge, and not on action. Scholars have, not unreasonably, evinced interest as to the reason behind this shift of priority, and as usual, come up with different opinions. We have already made before, in passing, in the introduction, a very brief remark in this regard. We may now note a few more points.

### Nature of Upaniṣad

Acknowledging that the origin of Upaniṣad literature as it has been handed down to us is somewhat hard to trace, some argue that Hindu tradition accords to Upaniṣad the same status as the other species of Vedic literature, the *Mantras* and the *Brāhmaṇas*; both are regarded as 'revelation', as works not ascribable to human authors. Thus, in the absence of any help from this source, we are left to conjectures.<sup>2</sup>

The Upaniṣads contain many short and pithy statements resembling set formulas. They are found embedded in passages which seem to amplify and illustrate the truth enshrined in them. These sayings are also often styled as *upanīṣad*. This leads to the probable conclusion that, in the beginning, the term was applied to only formulas containing, in a nutshell, some important truth of Upaniṣadic



philosophy; for example, the well-known *mahāvākya* of the *Chāndogya* (6.8.7), *tat tvamasi*, teaching the ultimate identity of the individual self (*jīvātman*) with the supreme self (*paramātman*). The preceptor communicated such philosophic formulas to the pupil along with expository discourses, which, it is surmised, assumed in course of time a definite shape, though not committed to writing yet, giving rise to the Upaniṣads as we now have them. At a later time, when all the ancient lore of the Hindus was brought together and arranged, the Upaniṣads in this form were appended to the *Brāhmaṇas*.<sup>3</sup>

### Upaniṣad and Ritualism

The Upaniṣads primarily represent a spirit different from and even hostile to ritual and the philosophy underlying the sacrificial teaching of the *Brāhmaṇas*. We have, in the *Muṇḍaka*, for example, a clear onslaught against sacrificial ceremonial, stating that one who hopes for real good to accrue from Vedic rites is a fool and is sure to be overtaken again and again by death and decrepitude.<sup>4</sup> However, this antagonism gradually disappears or at least is considerably softened. It indicates that the Upaniṣadic doctrine more and more triumphed and so an attempt was made to reconcile them.

The divergence between the two views of the *Brāhmaṇas* and the Upaniṣads, is explained by some as due to the divergence in ideals between the Brahmins and the Kṣatriyas, the priests and the princes in ancient India. This may be probable to some extent in view of the fact that the Upaniṣads ascribe more than one of their characteristic doctrines to royal personages and represent Brahmins as seeking instruction of them in respect of those doctrines. Of course, an alternative explanation is also possible. The prominence given to the Kṣatriyas does not mean that they were the original

propounders of the doctrines, the credit being really attributable to the Brahmins; it rather implies that the wise Brahmins were patronised and honoured by the ruling class as most of the Brahmins, too much attached to rites and rituals, were averse to accord due recognition to the sages of the Upaniṣads belonging to their own class.<sup>5</sup>

### Upaniṣad: Emancipation of Thought

We have another section of scholars who look upon the Upaniṣads from a different perspective, claiming that they usher in a new era of 'emancipation of thought'. In the Upaniṣads there is a discernible shift from *karmakāṇḍa* to *jñānakāṇḍa* and the reason is not far to seek. People are fed up with futile, endless discussions on sacrificial implements, spells and such other insignificant things and of course, the fees suitable for a priest. As if the people were dying for a breath of fresh air. However, there is also a word of caution. The emergence of the new spirit does not amount to an abrupt break with the past or an open revolt against ritualism.<sup>6</sup>

"But all these should not mean, as the over-enthusiastic writings of some of the modern may incline us to imagine, that there was in the Upaniṣads an abrupt break with the past or an open revolt against ritualism. There was, in fact, nothing of that nature. We still find the rich patrons of the philosophers – even the great Upaniṣadic philosophers like King Janaka himself – employing priests to perform the *yajña* and the priests vying with each other with profounder knowledge of the ritual details and the consequent demand for a greater sacrificial fee. Even the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the *Chāndogya*, considered philosophically to be most important, are not free from the reverential speculation on the ancient rituals, some of which must originally have been only the fertility magic of the primitive times. The earlier part of *Chāndogya*, which

is said to be of the nature of an *Āraṇyaka*, is full of the magical efficacy of the ancient chants; the Vedic songs and melodies are persistently claimed to possess an inherent efficacy in fulfilling the desire for rain, cattle and offspring.”<sup>7</sup>

### Upaniṣads Preach a Single Philosophy

Incidentally, we may mention here a question, perhaps not meriting a long discussion, but nevertheless not to be overlooked completely, which many scholars have concerned themselves with. Do the Upaniṣads present a monolithic philosophy or actually deal with heterogeneous elements? Some scholars are enthusiastic advocates of the former, while others, adamant in opposition, adhere to the latter.

Thus, for example, we may quote the remarks of Winternitz, who, under the heading ‘the fundamental doctrines of the Upaniṣads’ says: “that which is of the greatest value in the Upaniṣads is those fundamental thoughts, on the basis of which we can speak of a ‘philosophy of the Upaniṣads’, above all, the fundamental doctrine which pervades all the genuine Upaniṣads, and which can be summed up in the sentence ‘*The Universe is the Brahman, but the Brahman is the Ātman*!’”<sup>8</sup> He emphasises further that the entire thought of the Upaniṣad philosophers revolves around the two conceptions of Brahman and Ātman, and, in order to be able to understand the philosophy of the Upaniṣads, it is necessary to get a clear idea of these conceptions.<sup>9</sup>

### Criticism of Above

Before coming to the reactions of the scholars of the opposite camp, we may recapitulate what we have already set forth in the foregoing pages. While analysing and commenting upon the contents of each Upaniṣad we have seen how diverse the

subjects are it deals with. In some, there is practically nothing about Brahman or Ātman and very little of things philosophical in nature. We find queries about the origin of the world, an account of the succession of teachers and pupils, an example of a convocation address, steps to be taken for the birth of a worthy son and daughter, diet suitable for the pregnant wife, even a remark on birth control, matters physiological, methodology for a scientific enquiry, and so many other mundane things and whatnot.

Moreover, it may well be surmised that the sages of the Upaniṣads were different individuals, belonging to different regions of the country, having their own penchant and predilection for a particular doctrine. The conjecture that they all met at a place and decided upon what to advocate and what not does not seem logical.

Thus the contention that a single coherent philosophical doctrine runs through all the major Upaniṣads is hardly convincing.

### Let us now come to the context proper

Thus one scholar, cautioning that there is an obvious risk in subscribing to the claim noted above, remarks: ‘Not that the Upaniṣads do not mention these (*brahman* and *ātman*) or that the doctrine does not hold a predominating importance for those texts. However, the circumstance of the philosophical and proto-philosophical discussions existing side by side with all sorts of archaic elements clearly shows that the Upaniṣads are far from being philosophical treatises of the later sense. Further, however much may be the orthodox claim to the contrary, it will be wrong to expect any monolithic philosophical view consistently worked out in the Upaniṣads.’<sup>10</sup>

### Further Criticism and Arguments

Different scholars have countered the ‘single philosophy of the Upaniṣads’

theory on different grounds. For example, Bhandarkar<sup>11</sup> reasons that that the Upaniṣads teach not one but various systems must follow from the fact that they are compilations, just as the *Rgveda-Saṃhitā* is. Giving his own opinion Thibaut<sup>12</sup> says that if anything is evident, even on a cursory review of the Upaniṣads – and the impression so created is only strengthened by a more careful investigation – it is that they do not constitute a single whole... Not only are the doctrines expounded in the different Upaniṣads ascribed to different teachers, but even the separate sections of one and the same Upaniṣad are assigned to different authorities. In fact, instead of putting much faith on a philosophy of the Upaniṣads, it would be wiser to remember that their inner structure reveals that they are heterogeneous in their material and compound in their composition and that in them the various strands of thought are almost inextricably interwoven, and the teaching presented is with difficulty reduced to self-consistency.

In this context, we should not forget to give due credit to Barua,<sup>13</sup> who tries to reconstruct the different philosophical views more on an objective basis than on a subjective one, i.e. what we actually come across in the *Āraṇyakas* and the Upaniṣads. He takes the views rightly belonging to the different individual philosophers mentioned in the texts. We are thus told about the philosophies preached by, among others, Mahīdāsa Aitareya, Gārgyāyaṇa, Prataṛdana, Uddālaka, Bālāki, Ajātaśatru and Yājñavalkya. Some philosophers of lesser eminence also are mentioned. Barua considers Mahīdāsa Aitareya ‘the father of Indian philosophy’ and asserts that with Yājñavalkya of the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* not only the thought of the post-Vedic period came to a close, but the future course of the development of Indian philosophy

also was largely anticipated. In spite of some exaggeration there is an element of truth in Barua’s contention that during the time of Yājñavalkya the whole of northern India was resounding with the clash of philosophical battle.

### Historicity of Upaniṣad Thinkers

It has also been pointed out that it is difficult to say with certainty to what extent real historicity can be attached to the individual thinkers mentioned in the Upaniṣads. For instance, we find *vaṃśa* or line of teachers, with major variations, in the Vedic literature, in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and the so-called *Vaṃśa Brāhmaṇa* attached to the *Sāmaveda*. But we are yet to understand their true significance.

“Keith considers that it is credulous to think that such important Upaniṣadic philosophers as Yājñavalkya and Sanatkumāra were historical persons. Moreover, practically the same philosophical view is often attributed by the Upaniṣads to different teachers. At the present stage of our historical knowledge, therefore, it is perhaps safer to accept Thibaut’s suggestion that in the age of the Upaniṣads certain broad speculative ideas were in circulation; these were presumably not ‘the creation of any individual mind, but the general outcome of speculations carried on by generations.’ ‘In the Upaniṣads themselves, at any rate, they appear as floating mental possessions which may be seized and moulded into new forms by any one who feels within himself the required inspiration.’”<sup>14</sup>

So we find that there are so many issues and problems, doubts and controversies, debates and deliberations and arguments and counterarguments. This is nothing unusual; it is rather welcome. It is unavoidable for a seeker after truth. Doubt is a precondition for debate. Without doubt, there is no debate; no critical examination

without doubt and no truth without a critical examination.

It is not necessary to dilate upon more, rather it is time that we assess what we have gained and what not.

### Upaniṣads Rich in Social Contents

We have made a survey of the principal Upaniṣads to the best of our ability from a specific point of view. We have seen, on the basis of evidences collected from the original texts of the Upaniṣads, that, notwithstanding their value as discourses on the highest wisdom (emphasised by so many eminent scholars), they are also rich in social contents; there are facts there that make us aware of the environment prevailing in the society at that ancient time.

### Life is Bliss, Not Suffering Only

We find that the sages of the Upaniṣads do not only try to convince us that this life is as deadly as poison and our sole aim should be to get rid of it and aspire wholeheartedly after the realisation of the supreme soul to achieve freedom from pain and miseries. The facthood of suffering is undeniable; we are ever tormented by grief and miserableness. But we should not meekly surrender to them and desist from the thought of redemption. We need not be pessimistic. Life is not a bed of roses, but life is not only a bed of thorns either. The Upaniṣadic sages enliven us with the unequivocal declaration that, in the end, there is nothing else, but ānanda, bliss *par excellence*. Life is joy and life is desirable.

In the *Taittirīya* (3.6.1), again, we find that Bhṛgu is intensely intent on finding out the ultimate cause of the world, the great principle of which the creatures are born, and in death, disappear into. He practises penance, step by step, and ultimately arrives at the conclusion that Brahman is bliss (ānandobrahmetivyajānāt), for really beings here are born from bliss; when born, they

live by bliss and into bliss, when departing, they enter. It is advised that the only way to salvation is the realisation of Brahman. But what this Brahman really is? Brahman is pure existence (*sat*), pure consciousness (*cit*) and pure bliss (ānanda). Hence, the condemnation by some philosophers that life is suffering and suffering only is not the whole truth, it is one-sided and debatable.

### Upaniṣad and Women

Again, let us consider, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (2.4.1ff), the instance of Yājñavalkya, the peerless Brahmaid. What does he do when he wishes to renounce the stage of the householder (*grhastha*) and enter that of the anchorite (*vānaprastha*)? The sage is a man of considerable wealth and property. He has to leave everything behind. So he calls in his two wives and informs them of his wish to divide his wealth between them. He acts like an ordinary householder and does what a normal man would do in such a situation. Unlike what a man of wisdom is supposed to do, he does not remain unconcerned with mundane life, but, rather like a person, sensible and judicious, steps in the right direction. This is remarkable in the context of the Advaita contention that all this worldly existence (*saṃsāra*) is, after all, as illusory as water in a mirage. The sage is a responsible person who does not shun his duties.

Incidentally, this act of Yājñavalkya points to another fact. In the household the wife also should have a place of honour and trust. She is no less important than the husband and is an equal partner in the vicissitudes of life.<sup>15</sup> The sage apparently does not consider a woman to be a 'door to hell'. To him the wife is an object of love and respect. He seeks her opinion at a critical juncture of his life. Also remarkable is Maitreyī's discourse with him. She is a lady of distinction, educated, learned

and spirited, a Brahmvādinī. She confronts her husband with the question whether or not she will be able to attain, with wealth, the highest aim of life, *amṛta*, deathlessness. On being told that no amount of riches can lead one to that exalted position, she asks: 'What should I do with that by which I do not become immortal (*yenāhaṃnāmṛtāsyām, kimahaṃtenakuryām*)?' She is not a meek woman whose only aim in life is to worship the husband as god and live the dull life of a housewife. So we may assume that, at that age, society is liberal enough to allow even a woman to excel in the study of Vedic lore. What a contrast with the situation in later days when the punishment for a woman daring to utter a single syllable of a Vedic mantra is cutting off of her tongue!

### **Uddālaka, Lifelong Seeker after Truth**

We may also mention the name of Uddālaka Āruṇi of the *Chāndogya* as another corroborative instance. We have already made, in the second chapter, a study of the activities of this great intellectual. Here it will be sufficient to say a few words by way of recapitulation.

All available evidences on Uddālaka unanimously point to one fact, he had an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. He was untiring in his efforts to learn more and more, and a lifelong student in a literal sense. He had no inhibition as to whom he could learn from. He made no discrimination of his teachers, high and low. According to tradition, he studied at Taxila, perhaps the most famous seat of learning in the ancient period, where aspirants from all over the country (foreigners even) thronged with a view to receiving the best of education.

Uddālaka was not interested in problems of philosophy only, he had varied interests, and constantly endeavoured to go into the root of the puzzles he encountered and unravel their mystery. His solutions may no

doubt appear naïve or nothing remarkable, but we should be unjust to lose sight of the fact that he belonged to the remote past, about sixth century B.C.

Success or failure is not so important as is the spirit. We may quote the brief remark of a scholar (notwithstanding the obvious exaggeration): "Both in his tendency towards biological speculations and in his conceptions of Matter and Spirit Uddālaka shows a close resemblance to Anaxagoras. Like Pythagoras again, he seems to have conceived a tripartite (trivṛit) universe, or contemplated a three-fold division of the formed universe into the region of the element of fire, that of water or air, and that of food and earth."<sup>16</sup>

### **Uddālaka, First Natural Scientist?**

That Uddālaka had a scientific bend of mind is proved by his method of enquiry, his academic activities. We have seen how he tried to reach a conclusion, not arbitrarily, but logically, on the basis of the joint method of agreement in presence and agreement in absence. It seems that he was well aware of the fact that a seeker after truth should proceed unswayed by emotions or prejudices; one should do so relying on solid facts that might be established by observation and experiment. Many of his instances indicate how he put this theory in practice also. We have noted some of them earlier and need not repeat them here. In fact, some scholars believe that the honour of being the 'first exponent of the atomic theory' in the Indian tradition should be conferred upon him.<sup>17</sup> Here we may perhaps recall (though at the cost of repetition) the claim made by at least one scholar that the crown of the 'first natural scientist of the world', should be put on, not Thales of Greece, but our very own Uddālaka of India, the great savant of the *Chāndogya*. It is deplorable, it has been

pointed out with facts and arguments, that, because of the questionable bias of Europe-centrism on the part of a section of the historians of global sciences, Uddālaka is deprived of the credit he deserves.<sup>18</sup>

### Objection to Above

Of course, someone owing to allegiance to the age-old tradition created by the interpreters and protagonists of the Advaita may object that, in spite of all this glory and fame, Uddālaka remains, above all, an ardent Advaitin, and we cannot ignore his singular contributions to the Advaita school of thought. He is said to be the author of one of the four *mahāvākyas* straightway indicating the fundamental thesis that the individual self is identical with the supreme self (*tat tvamasi*). Uddālaka should be remembered more as an advocate of the Advaita philosophy than as anything else.

### Reply to Objection

However, the question is, even conceding that the above statement is of great importance and is definitely associated with the name of Uddālaka, can it be said with certainty that what the statement emphasises is nothing other than a basic tenet of the Advaitins? The term *tat* is said to mean the supreme self, and the term *tvam*, the individual self; but is there any guarantee that no other meanings of the terms are possible? One of the preconditions for determining the significance of a sentence is that one should be cautious to see whether it fits in with the context or not. If it fits in, one can accept it; if not, one cannot. Otherwise there is a chance of being led to a wrong conclusion. That it is not easy to interpret the meaning of *tat tvamasi* as supportive of the Advaita even for the best of the commentators is evidenced by his grappling for the intended implication by resorting to means far from the usual. As it is not possible

to get at the meaning through the primary power of denotation (*abhidhā*), one has to seek the help of the secondary power of denotation (*lakṣaṇā*), which is intricate, not easily intelligible and somewhat far-fetched.

Besides, as we have seen, there are scholars who think otherwise and say that the term *tat* here does not stand for the supreme self. Uddālaka is not an Advaitin. It is better to consider him a hylozoist. We should adhere to a particular conclusion only after sufficient critical deliberations.<sup>19</sup>

We do not have much else to say. We hope that we have been able to give the reader an idea of what our objective in this study is. We shall conclude making just one more little point.

### Society, Why in Upaniṣads?

We find in the Upaniṣads that alongside of philosophy society also is there. Even if we cannot categorically aver that philosophy is the only avowed objective of the Upaniṣads, internal evidences clearly point to the fact that they "represent a great chapter in the history of the human spirit and have dominated Indian philosophy, religion and life for three thousand years. Every subsequent religious movement has had to show itself to be in accord with their philosophical statements. Even doubting and denying spirits found in them anticipations of their hesitations, misgivings and negations. They have survived many changes, religious and secular, and helped many generations of men to formulate their views on the chief problems of life and existence."<sup>20</sup>

In short, when we carefully go through the texts of the Upaniṣads we cannot help finding that, explicitly or implicitly, they often mirror the condition of the society prevailing at the time. In the instances of general literary creations too we find that they portray, willingly or unwillingly, the social environment, besides fulfilling their

basic motive of providing the connoisseur supreme delight, delight far above the mundane level (*lokottarāhlāda*).<sup>21</sup> Of course, occasionally, an author himself may purposefully set his narrative in the background of a momentous social event in history and the creation may naturally contain elements socially relevant. The fact is well known and well accepted, and examples are not difficult to find. All this is true of the Upaniṣads also, which, though generally acclaimed to serve as texts for satisfying the spiritual aspirations, for uplifting the people from the mundane to the transcendent, help the inquiring mind to have a peep into the society and culture prevailing at the time.

### Man and Society Complementary

This is perhaps unavoidable and the reason is not far to seek. Man is a social animal. He is very much within society, and so is society. One cannot survive without the other. Man reacts with society and society reacts with man. Society enjoins rules to ensure the welfare of man and man abides by them to prevent society from withering away. This interaction goes on and remains alive. No responsible person can remain unaffected by the social environment he is present within. We have seen how, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka*, Yājñavalkya acts. He is a man of wealth and means. He wishes to renounce the world and enter into the life of a recluse. Social norms demand that he should make a settlement of his property, which he has to leave behind. What does he do? He is a responsible member of the society. He calls in his two wives and tells them of his wish to divide his wealth between them. It may have other implications or not, but it also shows how Yājñavalkya, the great man of wisdom, gives proof of his allegiance to social constraint.

We, the Indians, are the proud inheritors

of a glorious culture and tradition. In an ancient age when almost the whole of the earth was steeped in deep darkness as the light of civilisation was yet to dawn upon it, India was one of the few regions that were illuminated with the effulgence of intellectual brilliance and higher consciousness. Our forests and rivers, hills and mountains, homes and hearths, serene hermitages and humble dwellings reverberated with the sweet, deep, solemn and sonorous chanting of mantras by the seers and the sages, the preceptors and the pupils. Men of wisdom enlivened us with the vision of a higher life, urging us to realise that, after all, we were the progeny of the immortal and not animals just following the dull and monotonous daily routine of eating and drinking, sleeping and waking and copulation. There was a life far above, endless and ever enchanting. Our seers and sages were perhaps the earliest chroniclers in the world to show what a great height a man can reach by dint of discipline and dedication, hard labour and firm resolutions. We should feel proud that we are the children of this country. We breathe its air, drink its water, feed on food growing on its soil and move about on its affectionate bosom.

### Trends of Indic Researches

However, as we try to trace the course of Indic researches, sometimes we meet with an unfortunate situation. It seems that there were two trends, opposed to each other, of assessing the achievements of the ancient Indians. One we may describe as 'apologetic' and the other as 'chauvinistic'.

According to the former, we had nothing to boast of. We were not original in any respect. We were borrowers from the western, all our theories and ideas being second-hand. We were inferiors and others were superiors. We cannot deny that the western scholars were the first to show us

the wonder that India was, but at the same time we cannot also be sure that they were always impartial and genuinely respectful. Many a time it was found on critical scrutiny that the theory of 'foreign influence' they advocated was hollow and baseless.

As if as a reaction to the above we have the latter, according to which, we were brilliant in everything, we were pioneers in every field, be it a branch of the arts or the sciences or anything else. We were the greatest, the most superior and indebted to none. From the ancient time we had, for example, airplanes to fly in the sky, expertise in plastic surgery to accomplish astonishing cures, and so on and so forth and whatever that is possible and found under the sun. We need not learn from others; rather others should take lessons from us. The Vedas, the most ancient creations of mankind, are the repositories of all that is worth knowing and if anything is not there, it is nowhere in the world.

### Right Viewpoint

It is needless to say that both these extremes are untenable and both are to be steered clear of. We should not pass any judgement swayed by personal sentiments or pride, but on an objective basis. We should tread on the path of reason and adopt a sound methodology to see what really is there and what is not. We should not belittle what we have achieved, and we should neither be ecstatic about what we have achieved not.

### Notes and References

- 1 S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upaniṣads*, Preface.
- 2 Even among the upholders of Vedic authority there is divergence of opinion as to the authorship of the Veda. Mīmāṃsā says that the Veda has no author, it is *apauruṣeya*. Sāṃkhya claims that it is authored by great

sages like Kapila and others who have acquired supernatural powers through the practice of *yoga*. According to Nyāya, it is the pronouncement of Īśvara, omniscient and ever-unerring.

- 3 For a discussion on the meanings of the word *upaniṣad*, see M. Winternitz, *A History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I, Part I, pp.211f.
- 4 Cf. *Muṇḍaka* 1.2.7-10.
- 5 Cf. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, p. 49.
- 6 Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Indian Philosophy : A Popular Introduction*, pp. 44ff.
- 7 *Ibid.* p. 45.
- 8 M. Winternitz, *op. cit.*, p. 215.
- 9 *Ibid.*
- 10 Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
- 11 R. G. Bhandarkar, *Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism and Minor Religious Systems*.
- 12 G. Thibaut, *Sacred Books of the East*, XXXIV. Introduction, c III.
- 13 Benimadhab Barua, *A History of Pre-Buddhistic Indian Philosophy*, pp. 51-187.
- 14 A. B. Keith, *The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upaniṣads*, pp. 601ff.
- 15 Cf. King Aja's remark (*Raghuvamśa* 8.67) while lamenting over the unexpected death of his dear wife Indumatī : *grhiṇīśacivaḥsakhīmi thaḥpriyaśiṣyālalitekalāvidhau*. The wife is the mistress of the house, for she looks after the well-being of the household; she is a beneficent adviser, for she is ever ready to offer the right advice in the hour of need; and she is a dear friend delighting her husband with a smile and sweet words.
- 16 Benimadhab Barua, *op. cit.*, p. 124.
- 17 See *supra*, ch. II, *Chāndogyopaniṣad*, achievements of Uddālaka.
- 18 See Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, *History of Science and Technology in Ancient India*, Volume Two, Chapter 7 (Uddālaka Āruṇi : The First Natural Scientist).
- 19 We have already examined all these problems under *Chāndogyopaniṣad* in the second chapter.
- 20 S. Radhakrishnan, *op. cit.*, Introduction, General Influence, p. 17.
- 21 A good example is Śūdraka's *Mṛcchakaṭīka*. Some scholars surmise that in the *Raghuvamśa* Kālidāsa refers to the exploits of the great Gupta emperor Samudragupta.



# A Study of Two Migrated Tribal Populations Living in the Urban Metropolitan City of Kolkata

**Amrita Das Gupta**

Research Fellow, The Asiatic Society

The term and concept of *tribe* is too controversial among the Anthropologists and Social Scientists. Many Anthropologists and Sociologists focused on various tribal populations among whom Sarat Chandra Roy was one of the path-finders in this context. The tribal people in India have come in contact with different Hindu and other communities and assimilation is taking place due to cultural contact. The present work is mainly done on the two migrated tribal groups namely, the Mundas and the Oraons in Kolkata metropolitan city on the basis of the concept of social change and proper conservation of tribal cultural heritage. There is a hamlet near eastern bypass at the back of Ruby General Hospital in Anandapur, where several families of Mundas and another place known as Garagachha in Panchasayar area of Garia, where a number of Oraon families live for many generations. In present context migration is happening even to the urban areas for the betterment of the lives and livelihood (Roy, 1912). They have no such written documents for their migrations to West Bengal or other places from their original homeland. These groups were brought to the city and given land to clear and settle. There was a lot of change since then, both in the expansion of the city and in the cultural milieu of the tribes. The purpose of research was to find out how the original material, social and religious aspects of the tribes preserved even through the cultural

impact of heterogeneous population in their respective areas of migration.

The areas of field study as well as the tribal populations were selected purposefully as both of them were dominant in their respective places in urban metropolis. The ultimate goal of the researcher was to find out how the tribal identity of the Mundas and Oraons is maintained in urban context. To execute the goals assigned some methodologies are followed like structured and unstructured schedules with relevant queries, observation, case studies and interview methods. Both primary and secondary sources related to work are used.

The present study on the migrated Mundas and Oraons of Kolkata metropolitan reveals complete or partial assimilation of the tribal culture with other main stream culture of the city. Some of the original traits of their home land persist in a changed form. The researcher witnessed some social changes, which affected the lives of migrated tribes directly, even broke down the tribal solidarity. The key factors of the social change are modernisation, impact of Hinduisation, involvement of Christian missionaries, advancement of education, constant growth of township and other related factors.

Woman education is quite apparent in case of both the communities, while school drop out cases of males are found. The boys had to leave school in search of jobs. Occupations of both the males as well as females of Oraon

and Munda communities are the direct impact of modernisation and urbanisation. Though material lives of both the tribes were undergoing changes through time in their original homeland, but in the present urban context the change is much more rapid. The researcher finds no such marked differences in the material lives between the groups. The effect of westernisation is also found in case of using and enjoying different valuable gadgets in present context. The migrated Oraons as well as Mundas almost forgot their own languages or maybe they feel awkward to converse in their original languages. They speak in a mixed language known as *Sadri*. In the city in their respective places they live with other caste groups and imbibed their social lives. The younger generations are much eager to avail of the educational policy and polity. They have taken up rituals of marriage, *annaprasan* etc from their Hindu neighbours. The Hindu priest takes the leadership in the worship of the urbanized Oraons of Uttar Garagachha and accordingly the Oraon *pahan* takes the responsibilities of the Mundas and Oraons of Mundapara regarding rituals and worship. By performing some rituals connected with marriage, death and pregnancy period in shorter form in the locality the migrated groups try to conserve their cultural heritages properly in their respective places. Gap in inter-generational relationship is quite noticeable in both the groups except in few cases.



Oraon Pahan or priest of the Mundas of Mundapara



Bastu or Gram puja at the 'than' of Mundapara

It is interesting to notice some combined Hindu and tribal customs among both the groups. They still practice some of their own festivals or rituals as well as some adopted from the neighbouring caste groups in spite scarcity of lands. Conversion to Christianity is an issue in Mundapara. A number of Oraons and Mundas of Mundapara have converted to Christianity. At Garagachha no Christian Oraon is found. The converted Christians believe that education by the missionaries help them to improve their lives. Even foreign languages are included within their education which is the effect of westernisation. The birth anniversary of Birsa Munda, whom the Mundas consider as their God is observed with grandeur with the involvement of other community members as well. The Mundas perform the *Gram/Garam* or *Bastu Puja* twice a year. Oraons also perform *Sitala Puja* in their area. The religious practices and rituals of both tribes show the effects of cultural assimilation in urban context. The effect of Hinduism is very much prominent in both the areas. Some of them have become disciple of Anukul Thakur also. This may be considered as another example of sanskritisation. Both the tribal groups borrow the urban culture besides maintaining their own beliefs and traditions respectively by which they are able to establish them in urban set up. Both the groups perform different rituals and festivals throughout the years as per their capacities which is still an example

of preserving their own cultural heritages in urban metropolitan city.

The social change indicates a social threatening in any society's social position and security. The tribals are continuously losing their indigenous traits with contact with other tribal groups and Hindu as well as other neighbouring communities. The researcher witnessed some social changes, which affected the lives of migrated tribes directly, even broke down the tribal solidarity. The struggle of them is still continuing for settlement in the lands with the impact of urbanisation and requisition of land by the realtors, which was cleared and cultivated by their ancestors long years back. Different political parties use them for their own purposes during their tenures. Some of them have grievances against the Government policies or decisions. Few people have their own lands but are unable to cultivate due to unavailability of proper irrigation system and surrounding urbanised structures. The demographic profiles of both the tribes have much similarity in their respective areas. Their profiles show the effect of culture of both modernity and traditionalism. Many modernised dresses, jewellerys; ornaments are being used by the young tribals in both Mundapara and Uttar Garagachha. Traditional food and drink items are taken along with urbanised forms of food and drink.

The inter-tribal and intra-tribal relations are now in better condition but still there are some conflicts regarding rank in modern society. The Santals of Mundapara have some unusual feelings against both the Oraons and the Mundas as the former feels that their customs are still very strong and they rigidly try to maintain their original traditions but the latter are least interested to carry on their own cultural traits in changing situation due to lack of sincerity and tribal solidarity. The clubs that are located in both the regions help them to solve problems and if necessary they may contact the local leaders or ministers and other authorities.

Social solidarity is observed in different life cycle ceremonies of birth, marriage and death. Diversified occupational systems invite social ranking and status formation in the tribal societies and it resembles the study conducted by Martin Orans in 1965 on the Santal. Constitution of India, irrespective of State and Central Government make quota system and provide special privileges to the tribal communities for the development of their economic condition. Higher official posts in service sectors are also occupied by some members of the tribal communities, which shows a remarkable social change in the lives of the tribals. It is admitted that they are continuously merging themselves to assimilate the mainstream culture in urban areas which may be termed as "Sanskritisation" on the one hand and on the other hand the elderly tribal people are trying to maintain social solidarities through retention of some of the intangible part of the culture of their original homeland. The researcher as a student of Anthropology has worked on the social changes of two migrated tribe, namely, Munda and Oraon, living in urban set up Kolkata from an etic point of view with the help of the tribal groups. This is a limitation of the researcher to make the study by an emic view, still she tried to reach in to the core of the heart of the tribals with an interaction with them, so that they could share their crisis, feelings without any hesitations.

## References

- Bose, N.K. 1975: *The Structure of the Hindu Society*, New Delhi: Orient and Longman.
- Das, Amal Kumar and Raha, Manis Kumar, 1963: *The Oraons of Sundarban*, published by Sri D. N. Majumder at temple press, Kolkata.
- Orans, Martin, 1965: *The Santal: A tribe in Search of Great Tradition*, Wayne State University Press, Detroit.
- Roy Burman, B.K., 1982: *Transfer and Alienation of Tribal Land*. In Buddhadeb Chaudhuri (Ed.) *Tribal Development in India: Problems and*

*Prospects*, Inter India Publication, New Delhi.  
Roy, Sarat Chandra, 1912: *The Mundas and their country*.

\_\_\_\_\_, 1915: *Oraons of Chhotonagpur: their History, Economic Life and Social Organisation*, Ranchi.

Sachhidananda, 1964: *Culture Change in Tribal Bihar*, hacker's press and Directories Ltd.

Srinivas, M.N, 1966: *Social Change in Modern India*, Allied publishers, Printed in the USA, Published in 1966 1st by the University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, California, Indian

edition published by Allied Publishers Pvt Ltd.  
Vidyarthi, L.P.1961: *The sacred complex in Hindu Gaya*, Bombay.

### Websites

1. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scheduled\\_Castes\\_and\\_Scheduled\\_Tribes](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scheduled_Castes_and_Scheduled_Tribes)
2. [aspedia.ivikn/social-welfare/scheduled-tribes-welfare/ ministry-of-tribal-welfare](https://aspedia.ivikn/social-welfare/scheduled-tribes-welfare/ministry-of-tribal-welfare)
3. <https://www.quora.com/Who-are-scheduled-tribes>

*“Independence is no doubt a matter of joy. But let us not forget that this independence has thrown on us greater responsibilities. By independence, we have lost the excuse of blaming the British for anything going wrong. If hereafter things go wrong, we will have nobody to blame except ourselves.”*

**Dr. B. R. Ambedkar**

# Highlights of The Asiatic Society Project on Science and Technical Education in India: A study of the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore and Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur (1909-1964)

**Sujata Banerjee**

Research Fellow, The Asiatic Society

History of Science is still a developing field of research in India. The assumption that institutions shaped the nature of scientific enquiry is becoming more and more pervasive in the lore of history of science. However, the writing of institutional history in India is at its initial phase. This project has aimed to bridge the gap in the current literature on the development of scientific enterprise in India by analysing the developments related to scientific and technical education in the first half of the twentieth century that directed the development of a scientific temper in post-colonial India. The twentieth century saw the developments of ideas germinating from the need related to the economic development of the country. This was reflected in the educational sphere and hence on the institution building of the country.

The idea of specialised training in higher learning when it came to engineering education happened specially in twentieth century India. MIT and the Johns Hopkins had already cleared a path for the progressive development of specialised training in education. The developments/inceptions of institutions like the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) and the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) can be seen as a spectacular phenomenon in an otherwise bleak situation.

There were a number of science and technical institutions opened in the twentieth century in comparison to the nineteenth century. In India, as in many other countries, politics and ideology skewed the allocation of resources or defined the structural patterns of engineering education as practised in the country. Each nation's approach to engineering education matched the particular institutional ecology of each country and the specific emphasis they placed on engineering knowledge and skills relevant to their military, civic, commercial and industrial enterprises.<sup>1</sup> The projects shows that India as a whole in many respects was an exception to this system, but some of its engineering institutions were historical exception to the contemporary course of developments in the country as a whole.

The project tries to critically examine the new patterns of growth for development in engineering education in India with special reference to the IISc. and IIT, Kharagpur (Kgp). The charged political environment in twentieth century India functioned as a platform for transformation. The IISc. and the IIT systems helped to change the role of the engineer from being merely a technical worker to a national planner. The main goal of my project was to do an in-depth study

of engineering education with respect to the making, and development of these two institutes as a part of a national agenda. It would therefore be useful to treat engineering education as 'national education', following the concept from Sumit Sarkar's book on Swadeshi movement.<sup>2</sup> Soon this 'national' became interconnected with 'international' or 'global', particularly in between the two World Wars, and after.

The project intends to show that engineering education was used as an economic and social weapon in the twentieth century and would argue that the changes brought about in the system of education altered the thought process of the society. The introduction of changes in technical education initiated by these institutes helped shape society for the coming years and built the class of the 'Elite - engineer'. Engineering education acquired the status of national education as opposed to the general idea of education during this period. The two premium institutions (a part of the native innovative consciousness) tried to bridge the gap between science and technology specially, when it came to making

an engineer. The project argues that it was the pattern introduced by the IISc., which brought about changes in the educational environment of the country and eventually led to the burgeoning of industry-based education, provincialism in education and finally overcoming provincialism, the IIT system.

#### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Atsushi Akera, Bruce Seely, "A historical survey of the structural changes in the American System of Engineering Education" in Steen Hyltdgaard Christensen, Christelle Didier, Andrew Jamison, Martin Meganck, Carl Mitcham, Byron Newberry, (et.), *International Perspectives on Engineering Education: Engineering Education Practice in Context*, Volume 1, (Switzerland: Springer, 2015), 9.
- <sup>2</sup> Sumit Sarkar, *Swadeshi Movement in Bengal 1903-1908*, (Permanent Black, 2010), p.33; see also, Arun Bandopadhyay, "Technical Education, Swadeshi and Development in Bengal: The Story of Engineering in the Global Context of the Early Twentieth Century" in Suparna Gooptu (ed.), *Themes and Individuals in History*, (Kolkata: K.P.Baggchi & Company, 2019), 33-66.

*"We must not for a moment forget, it is a birthright of every individual to receive at least the basic education without which he cannot fully discharge his duties as a citizen."*

**Maulana Abul Kalam Azad**

# Healthy Mothers Lead to a Healthy Nation: The Importance of Female Physical Education in 20th Century Bengal

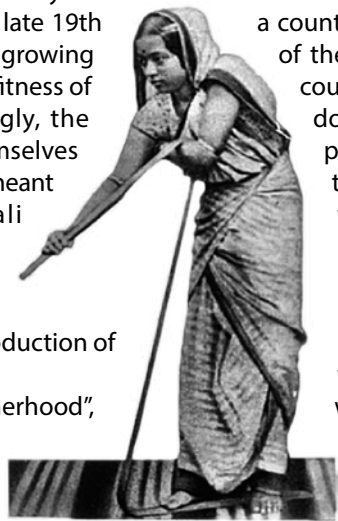
**Basudhita Basu**

Research Fellow, The Asiatic Society

Body and health were also brought under the ambit of female education by the beginning of the 20th century. Gradually, women realised that they should not be satisfied with their lean and beautiful appearance only, but they should also aspire to make themselves capable of appearing in the outer domain. Even important political figures like Annie Beasant advised the young girls of India to practise physical exercises in the open air as that enhanced strength and vitality.

A plethora of articles, essays and tracts belonging to the late 19th century highlighted the growing interest in the physical fitness of women. But, surprisingly, the advice of keeping themselves healthy was not always meant to encourage Bengali women in fighting for their nation (as was the case for Bengali men) but for ensuring the production of healthy children.

The notion of “motherhood”, for several years, had been glorified by patriarchy in Bengal. Hindu thoughts



শ্রীমতী রেবা দাশ ১৯৩৬ সালে মহিলা সমিতির  
বাৎসরিক অনুষ্ঠানে লৌহ পাটা বক্র করেন

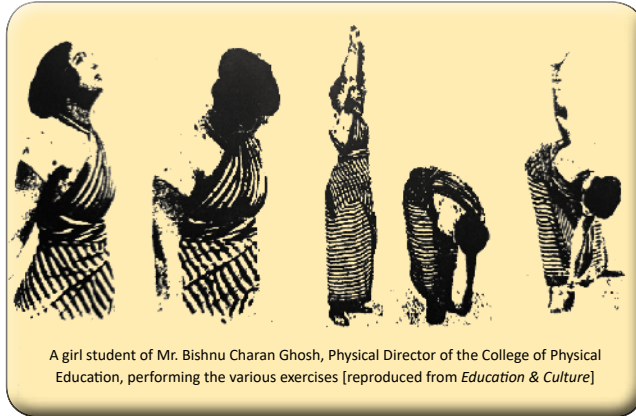
eulogised her importance as the begetter of male children. It was believed that her chief role was to bear and rear a family. Bengali mothers needed to be schooled to make them aware of their responsibility as mothers. These mothers would nurture the new generation to produce the future of the Bengali race. Thus, women should take to physical exercise to secure a healthy and prosperous child. An article published in *Cooch Behar Darpan* pointed out that these strong women would become wives, then mothers. The health of the future citizens of a country depended on the physical health of the women. Therefore, like their male counterparts, they should be allowed to do physical exercises. Another article published in *Bharatvarsha* reiterated the similar statement that women who would become mothers in the future should ensure their proper education. Therefore, she would have to be taught the significance of physical fitness. Both the articles were advocating the participation of women in exercises like skipping and drill. Playing *lathi*, sword fighting and swimming also had the same importance for the enhancement of their physical strength. Dr.

Ramesh Chandra Roy advised women to be conscious about the fact that they were the procreators of the next generation as well as the future of the Bengali nation. Therefore, as weak mothers

cannot produce healthy generations, the Bengalis were consequently lagging behind the people from other states. Sarojini Devi advised every Indian girl to take part in sports to attain strength, bravery, independence, beauty and to bear physically healthy sons for the greater glory of the motherland.

Thus, Physical Education was introduced in the female academic institutes but the ideology beneath this introduction was different in comparison to the Boy's School in Bengal. Sports and Physical Education in the Boys' schools were introduced to create disciplined boys who would be loyal supporters of the Raj. Even when the Bengali men realised the importance of physical culture, they practised it to create a strong Bengali *Jati*. It was considered that a healthy body and physical fitness were the foundation stones of a healthy *jati*. But the situation was different for women. Contemporary newspapers and magazines advised the Bengali women to be disciplined and healthy to give birth to healthy sons who were considered the future of the nation. These healthy boys, born of physically fit mothers were expected to fight for their motherland. Thus, being healthy and disciplined would help women to reorganise the inner domain of their household and make them begetters of healthy male progenies.

Suparna Ghosh, in her article 'Sporting Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Bengal :



A girl student of Mr. Bishnu Charan Ghosh, Physical Director of the College of Physical Education, performing the various exercises [reproduced from *Education & Culture*]

The Gendered Perspective' offered a new dimension by judging the growth of "new woman" and her "womanhood" in the light of the 19th-century conception of the effeminate

Bengali *babus* who were recognised by the British for their weakness and fragility and whose strength needed to be revived. This "new woman" had now been offered a new assignment of performing a specific and crucial role of rearing a special breed of men who would be known for bravery, patriotism and nationalism. Thus it was believed that the nation required strong sons to fight against colonial rule and needed daughters who would support these "nationalistic, strong" men in their fight against the British Raj.

## NOTES

### Newspapers / Periodicals

- 'Bharatiyo Balikader Shiksha', *Mahila*, Jaistho, 1322(B.S), May 1915.
- Bharatvarsha*, Poush ( December- January),1339 (B.S), 1933.
- Cooch Behar Darpan*,1349 (B.S), 1942, Paila Kartik ( Octobar)
- 'Narir Swastha',*Bangalaxmi*,6th barsha,10thsankha, Sraban,1338 (B.S), July, 1931.
- 'Pratiyogitai Nari',*Prabasi*, 25th Bhag, 1 khand, 4th Sankha, Srabon, 1332 (B.S.), July, 1925.
- 'Women's part in physical culture', *The Modern Student*, Vol-III, July 1935.

### Books

- Bagal, Jogesh Chandra and Subhendu Sekhar Mukhopadhyay, *Hindu Melar Ittibritta*, Mitra O Ghosh, Kolkata, 2011.
- Bandopadhyay, Kaushik, *Playing for freedom: A*



*Historic Sports Victory*, Standard Publisher, New Delhi, 2008.

Bhattacharya, Tithi, *The Sentinels of Culture: Class, Education, and the Colonial Intellectual in Bengal*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005.

Borthwick, Meredith, *The Changing Role of Women in Bengal*, Princeton University press, Princeton, 1984.

Chatterjee, Amitava (ed.), *People at Play: Sports, Culture and Nationalism*, Setu Prakashani, Kolkata, 2013.

Chatterjee, Partha, *The Nation and its Fragments*, Partha Chatterjee Omnibus, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999.

Chowdhury, Indira, *The Frail Hero and Virile: Gender and the Politics of Culture in Colonial Bengal*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1998.

Sarkar, Tanika, *Hindu wife, Hindu Nation, Community, Religion, and Cultural Nationalism*, Indiana University, Bloomington, 2001.

## Journals

Bagchi, Jasodhara, 'Representing Nationalism: Ideology of Motherhood in Colonial Bengal' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol-25, Issue no. 42-43, 20th Oct 1990.

Basu, Basudhita, 'Gendering Sports in Colonial Bengal', in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 52, Issue 35, Sep, 2017, pp. 32-36

'Sports Education in Colonial Bengal: A Double-edged Sword?'; *South Asian Research*, Vol, 38, Issue, 3, Oct, 2018, pp. 268-286, DOI: 10.1177/0262728018798966.

## Thesis

Bhattacharya, Suparna, 'Women of Bengal in Sports: 1905-1985', Ph.D. Dissertation, Jadavpur University, 2007.

*"It is the prime responsibility of every citizen to feel that his country is free and to defend its freedom is his duty. Every Indian should now forget that he is a Rajput, a Sikh or a Jat. He must remember that he is an Indian and he has every right in this country but with certain duties."*

**Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**

# Sustainable Menstruation Practices in Times of COVID-19 Pandemic

**Parama Chatterjee**

Research Fellow in Women's Studies, The Asiatic Society

Menstruation has always been one of the disregarded issues in India. There are lots of taboos and superstitions attached to this process. Menstruation has often been stigmatised in the society which makes it all the more frustrating to address the complexities of problems faced by menstruators in India (Goonj, 2021). The sustainable menstruation concept has ecological, economic, educational as well as sociological dimensions. The ecological dimension is concerned with the re-usability of menstrual products and disposability of the products without causing harmful effects on the environment. The economic dimension is concerned about low cost production of menstrual products. The educational dimension is concerned with the knowledge and awareness about sustainable and healthy menstruation, effects of menstruation on sexual and reproductive health of women and experiencing menstruation without social taboos and superstitions.

According to the Menstrual Health Alliance of India, there are approximately 336 million menstruating women in India of whom 36% use disposable sanitary napkins. That 12.3 billion sanitary pads are disposed of in India annually, creating 113,000 tonnes of menstrual waste. They pile up every year and are mostly non-biodegradable. The products stay in the ground, not decomposing, and sucking in water, stopping its natural flow (Basu, 2018).

The Covid-19 pandemic has shaken the whole world in various ways. Many people have been infected and succumbed to death caused by the lethal virus. Many people are struggling every day to cope with adverse impacts of this pandemic and lockdown. They are facing loss of livelihoods, job insecurity, domestic violence, stress and depression. Education, economy and the health sectors have faced the worst hit. People are in constant threat of livelihood insecurity as many of them do not have sustainable and secured employment opportunities. Poor people are the worst sufferers. The menstrual health of women are also deeply affected by this pandemic. The physiological and psychological health of women are affected during menstruation and the pandemic has imposed upon them additional stress. Some women cannot afford the pads during this pandemic because of financial insecurity. In the given circumstances sustainable menstrual practices can be an alternate, effective, comfortable, eco-friendly and economic option.

Various organisations have focused on the use of sustainable menstrual hygiene products at low cost. Goonj's menstrual hygiene initiative "Not Just a Piece of Cloth", founded by Anshu Gupta and Meenakshi Gupta, has been working towards breaking the silence surrounding menstruation for almost two decades. Their "MY Pad" initiative

was launched in order to make cloth pads more accessible to women. Currently, more than five million cloth pads have been made and distributed across India. This has been made possible by converting old clothes into pads, thus reducing the cost. Eco Femme began its journey when founder Kathy Walking moved to India from Australia and experienced the problem of disposing her sanitary pads. She found that the disposal of these pads was not environment friendly. She started the initiative of making cloth pads in Auroville, Pondicherry. Unlike disposable sanitary napkins, they can be washed and re-used for years and they are made of natural material — cotton — that is biodegradable and also healthy for women's bodies.

Another is Kamakhya, an initiative in Udaipur started by Laad Lohar, an Adivasi woman. She made these pads so that the young adolescents do not miss their school days due to menstruation. Lohar makes these cloth-pads during her free time and goes from village to village to teach other Adivasi or marginalised women on how to make these pads (Tariang et al., 2019).

It can be seen after the corona virus outbreak that COVID-19 is bringing nature close to us. We are now valuing the importance of nature. We know that the risk of infection is much less in open air. It means that nature adds protection to our lives. People have started giving importance to eco-friendly products. Women are practising sustainable menstrual products in this situation mainly for two reasons; first one is comfort and second one is financial

reason. Most of the people are staying at home, free of worry of staining and experiencing less discomfort. In this situation many women are inclining towards alternative menstrual products which are sustainable. These are made of eco-friendly materials and are very comfortable and reusable. It is easy for them to practise these at home where they can wash the products regularly and use safe and cleaner toilets. Reusable sanitary pad and menstrual cup makers have reported significant growth in sales, between 30% and 80%, since the lockdown started. Researchers have found that many women are switching into eco-friendly options regarding menstrual products. These products are safe and reusable and environment friendly (Dhar, 2021).

**PERIODS DON'T STOP FOR PANDEMICS**  
WHAT COVID-19 MEANS FOR MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND HYGIENE

**THE PROBLEM**

The current pandemic highlights and further exacerbates the menstruation-related challenges many women and girls face around the world.

- 1. Restricted access to public facilities:** Many women and girls are unable to access public facilities like schools, workplaces, and public restrooms, which are essential for menstrual health and hygiene.
- 2. Pooring period supplies and supplies:** Many women and girls are unable to access their period supplies and supplies, which are essential for menstrual health and hygiene.
- 3. Restricted access to products:** Many women and girls are unable to access their period products, which are essential for menstrual health and hygiene.
- 4. Lack of access to safe and sanitary products:** Many women and girls are unable to access safe and sanitary products, which are essential for menstrual health and hygiene.

**ACTION NEEDED**

**During the pandemic:**

Periods don't stop for pandemics. It's critical to include menstrual health and hygiene in COVID-19 emergency response interventions and policies across sectors, including health, education, SDG#8, WASH and gender.

Specifically, we call on all relevant actors to:

1. Ensure that all women and girls have access to safe and sanitary products, including period products, and that they are able to use them safely and hygienically.
2. Ensure that all women and girls have access to safe and sanitary products, including period products, and that they are able to use them safely and hygienically.

**Beyond the pandemic:**

The COVID-19 crisis will eventually pass. Once the pandemic is over, it is time for urgent action to address the ongoing global crisis in menstrual health and hygiene.

- For women's and girls' health.
- For human rights.
- For menstrual and reproductive health and rights.
- For girls' education.
- For economic development.
- For gender equality.

**2030**

By 2030, we must ensure that all women and girls have access to safe and sanitary products, including period products, and that they are able to use them safely and hygienically.

**FOR A WORLD IN WHICH EVERY WOMAN AND EVERY GIRL CAN ACHIEVE HER FULL POTENTIAL AND REALISE HER DREAMS – IT'S TIME FOR ACTION!**

#MHDAY2020 #ITSTIMEFORACTION #PERIODSINPANDEMICS

COVID-19 has connected us more towards the nature and made us think about the environment. This pandemic has proved that sustainability is the key to the survival of mankind. Sustainable menstrual products protect us as well as the environment. They are also very low cost compared to the sanitary napkins sold in the market. Sustainable products are good for our health as they do not contain chemicals or adhesives. They can be washed and re-used. So hygienically they are also safe. Many women are staying at home and are facing job insecurities. Many men are facing livelihood issues in this pandemic. If the women switchover to sustainable menstrual products then the cost will be cheaper compared to regular pads. The economic burden will be less if we practise sustainable methods. A single reusable pad can last at least two to three years. Thus the alternative menstrual products are in huge demand during this pandemic (Dhar, 2021).

Clean cotton cloth is a cheaper option for millions of women who cannot access or afford disposable pads because, it is eco-friendly, accessible, affordable, reusable and sustainable. For the women of cities and towns familiarity, possibility of reuse, sensitivity to price and environmental impact makes cloth a viable option (Tariang et al, 2019).

The sustainable ways of hygiene has become far more important at present. The access to menstrual hygiene products was disrupted during this pandemic situation. The most widely used menstrual products cause environmental damage as discussed above.

Moreover, the world is already dealing with the bio-medical waste generated by the PPEs and other necessities for the treatment of the COVID-19 patients. Thus the need of the hour is to look towards sustainability in menstrual hygiene. Understanding the pros and cons of all the menstrual hygiene products can help the women make their informed choices (Gupta, 2020).

Thus the COVID-19 has made the menstruation greener or GREEN is the NEW RED according to the emerging concept of sustainable menstruation.

### References

- Basu, A. (2018), "Sustainable Menstrual Hygiene" Retrieved on January 2019 <https://thewire.in/environment/compostable-sanitary-pads-sustainable-menstrual-hygiene>
- Dhar (2021), "World Menstrual Hygiene Day: COVID & Lockdown Making Periods "Greener", Retrieved on July 2021 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/world-menstrual-hygiene-day-covid-lockdown-making-periods-greener/articleshow/83044396.cms>
- Green the Red (2021), "Switch to Eco-friendly Menstruation" Retrieved on July 2021 <http://www.greenthered.in>
- Goonj (2021), "Not Just a Piece of Cloth" Retrieved on July 2021 <http://goonj.org/njpc>
- Gupta, A. (2020), "Sustainability in COVID-19 Lockdown: The Many Menstrual Sanitary Options Available for Women Worldwide" Retrieved on July 2021 <http://www.timesothenews.com>
- Tariang et al (2019), "Is Green Menstruation Possible?" Down To Earth, Retrieved on July 2021: <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/waste/is-green-menstruation-possible--64796>

# Bowl of Buddha

**Phani Kanta Mishra**

Former Director, Archaeological Survey of India (Eastern Region)

## Introduction

The Buddha's preaching of pious life also included giving up covetousness without much of material possessions. It is meant for begging for alms and receiving them with satisfaction, whether the donor gives more or less, was one of the ethical parts of the daily routine of the Buddhist community. The great sage practised what he preached and led by examples. Representation of a huge bowl in Gandhara sculptures and elsewhere probably indicates that the bowl originally was in proud possession of the Lichhavis of Vaisali. It registers that the presence of such bowls in the monasteries replicating the one used by lord Buddha as the leader of the entourage, symbolising the Buddha through the dharma actions, united with the sangha as unified, best symbolised by the triratna of Buddhism. Vaishali was celebrated in the early ages of Buddhism for the possession of the alms bowl of Lord Buddha. The alms bowl was given by the Tathagata to the Lichhavis when they took leave of him on their northern frontier, which I have identified with Kesariya, 30 miles north-west of Vaishali. The very existence of the much famed Buddha's alms bowl is known from various ancient literatures and travel accounts of the pilgrims.

## Literary and Archaeological Evidences

A few of the literary references may be mentioned here for the purpose of rightful identification of the alms bowl. Firstly there is Fa-hien's description of the original Bowl.

There are three translations available of his work, written in Chinese character, that of Remusat, Beal and Giles respectively. The three translations differ from one another. The common description of the bowl from all these three translations, 'appears to be of mixed colour, though predominantly black, capacity about 8 to 9 litres and 4 rims seen clearly as if four Bowls have joined together' and is of approx 2 inches thick. While describing the size of the Bowl Fa-hien mentioned about its containing capacity. The description of Fa-hien, the Chinese pilgrim who had visited this sub-continent during early part of the 5th Century A.D. fits well with the Bowl in question, know that he had seen the bowl with his companions at Fohu-Sha or Purushapura shortly after 400 A.D. While describing the career of the celebrated Asvaghosha, Taranath a renowned Buddhist scholar of 12th/13th Century A.D. from Tibet has mentioned that "The King of the little Yu - Chi invaded Magadha and carried of the bowls of Buddha and Asvaghosha." This must have taken place sometime during the 2nd Century A.D. according to Taranath. Asvaghosha was a disciple of Parsva, who conducted the 3rd Buddhist council under Kanishka, while Hiuen Tsang made him a contemporary of Nagarjuna, who is famous as the contemporary of the same king. Therefore, the bowl must have been carried of either by Kanishka himself or by his successor Huvishka early in the 2nd Century A.D. From the account of Fa-hien it would appear that an attempt was made by

the king of Yu - Chi to remove the bowl from Gandhara, most probably to Kabul or even to Balkh, which was the capital of the later kings of the great Yu - Chi. No date can be fixed for this attempt, but probably it took place during the 3rd Century A.D. as the pilgrims Hiuen Tsang and Sung-yun who both visited the region during 620 A.D. do not mention about the alms bowl. It is almost certain that it had already been shifted from Gandhara before their visit. This shifting cannot be

### The History of the Alms Bowl

In the days of the Gautama Buddha, around 5th Century B.C. Magadha or a larger part of present day Bihar had its capital at Vaishali. According to Cunningham, "It was celebrated in the early ages of Buddhism for the possession of the Alms-Bowl of the Buddha..." In the 2nd Century A.D. Kanishka, the Kushana king captured Magadha and took the begging bowl (Bhiksha or dana



Picture showing original petal design along with few cusped -arch designs in the bottom portion of the Bowl

placed later than 450 A.D. when the followers of Buddhism took with them the famous alms bowl of the Buddha and set it up in their new city of Gandhara or Kandahar. In Cave No. 17 of Ajanta, lord Buddha is portrayed begging for alms from his wife and son Rahul keeping aside all claims of possessions and relation in the path to salvation. The bowl depicted here is a small one, used by the Master. But its shape was probably replicated while the bigger one was made. The hemispherical shape of the smaller one as represented in the Ajanta paintings, the bowl in bigger size as depicted in the sculptures of Gandhara, appears to be similar to the present bowl in question.

patra) of the Buddha to his capital Purushpura (present day Peshawar). Around 425-450 A.D. Gandhara was conquered by the little Yu - Chi under Kitolo who was a despiser of Buddhism. The followers of Buddhism carried of the sacred bowl with them to Kandahar. For centuries it was in the abyss of oblivion and lay at the Sultan Wais Baba shrine near Kandahar till 1980's. For many a years it was housed in an obscure little Muslim shrine. Dr. Bellew describes it as a huge bowl, carved out of a solid block with six lines of Persians inscriptions. The copy of that inscription is presently lost but as Dr. Bellew remembers the reading of the names Sulankuddin and Mahmud. Cunningham also



Picture Showing interior of the Bowl



The Buddha with his Bowl begging for alms from his wife and son. Cave No. 17, Ajanta

opines that the bowl was probably carried off by the people of Gandhara, who migrated westwards to the banks of Arghanbad in the ancient 'Arachosia'. In 1980's during the regime of the President Najibullah, the bowl was shifted to the National Museum, Kabul, Afghanistan and its old glory was revived.

### The Description of the Bowl

As per the deputation order F.No. 1-3/2014-CEP dated 01.05.20\4 Dr. Phani Kanta Mishra and Dr. G S Khwaja, Director (I/C), Epigraphy Branch, Nagpur landed Kabul on 02.05.4 with the specific purpose of physical verification of the Bowl, supposed to be of Lord Buddha, kept in the National Museum, Kabul. It is

a hemispherical vessel of grey/blackish stone polished in the exterior (in all probability of sand stone) having a diameter of about 1.28 m and a thickness of 8 cm at its rim portion and approx. 69 cm in height. It has six lines of inscription in Persian. Each line measures approx. 7 cm to 7.3 cm. The lotus leaf is at the bottom and it measures approx 41.5 cm in height. The depth of the bowl from the interior measures around 69 cm. It is a single piece of stone carved out of quarry. The exterior portion has a shining polish and the interior is plain and simple devoid of any superimposition. 24 delicately chiseled petals are carved round its base, some of which are still in its original shape that indicates that the vessel is of an earlier period. The cusped arch design like common Mughal arches as noticed in the bottom portion, in all probability is a later superimposition on the original petal-like carvings which gives the bowl an Islamic ambience. The interior portion of the bowl has become lighter in colour

due to the encrustation caused by the prolonged use of the bowl for the religious purpose. It is assumed that the six line Persian inscription engraved on the bowl may be a superimposition of the later period. The inscription could indicate verses from the Holy Quran.

### Conclusion

The stone out of which the bowl is carved, is in all probability made of sand stone, which is uncommon in that region, while very much available in the eastern part of India. All the Ashokan pillars are made of this same Chunar sand stone. Also the description of Fa-hien, who has identified the bowl matches

well with the present bowl. The alms bowl in the sculptures, particularly of Gandhara and the one in Ajanta cave says that some of the artisans had actually visualised the object and represented it perfectly, which again is in accordance with the present one. National Museum, Kabul displayed the object as the alms bowl of Buddha. Naturally it can be well assumed that they have enough supporting documents to identify the same as they did. If one examines the bowl carefully they will observe the 24 delicately chiseled petals are carved around its base, some of which are still in its original shape that indicates that the vessel is of an earlier period. The cusped arch design like common Mughal arches as visible today in the bottom portion, in all probability is a later superimposition on the original petal-like carvings to give the bowl an Islamic ambience. The history / literature and the evidences given by Fa-hien, Huien- Tsang and Cunningham with the indication of the bowl being carried off to Kandahar and kept in a Muslim shrine till 1980. The same bowl was carried to the National Museum in the same year to Kabul has the circumstantial relevance that this bowl had the glory of the past. There was a Persian Calligraphic inscription added in a later period around the bowl in six lines, which could indicate verses from the Quran. It also carries early Brahmi script inscription evidences. However no further efforts were made by Epigraphy Branch to decipher this valuable piece of inscription. The untouched few petal leaves at the bottom are big evidence that the original bowl had the plain petal leaves and in the later period the linear Muslim designs was carved on it. Hence, it can be supplemented that the calligraphic



Sculpture showing the huge Alms Bowl held by two Soldiers. *Gandhara*

inscription are of the later period. Heritage does not belong to any country. The history of the Indian subcontinent is a collective responsibility. So when a terrorists group destroys some ancient artifacts it is a blow on world heritage. We have seen again and again how such groups can bring shame to entire humanity by destroying priceless artifacts. The Bamiyan Buddha is the ideal example of how much such fanatics can hurt our heritage. The Buddhist heritage in Afganistan is priceless. Site such as hadda, Takhte-e Rostam, Bamiyan have yielded some of the most iconic Buddhist structures and sculptures. However, unfortunately all of the history of Afganistan is in jeopardy now. National museum of Afganistan itself has published a press release with safety concerns for the artifacts kept there.



## प्रगति में सदा बाधा बनी रही जाति प्रथा : इरफान हबीब

राम आह्लाद चौधरी



देश की प्रगति में जाति प्रथा सदा बाधा बनी रही है। इसने समाज में घृणा को फैलाया है। समाज का विकास तभी संभव है, जब जाति प्रथा को समाज से समाप्त करने के लिए पहल की जाए। यह बात प्रो. इरफान हबीब ने 24 जुलाई 2021 को कही।

इस दिन एशियाटिक सोसाइटी द्वारा आयोजित वर्चुअल संगोष्ठी को संबोधित करते हुए उन्होंने यह भी कहा कि राजा राममोहन राय के विचारों की प्रासंगिकता आज भी उतनी ही है, जितनी कल की, इसलिए कि राजा राममोहन राय ने ब्रितानी हुकूमत के दौरान किसानों के हित में संघर्ष को एक नया आयाम दिया था। इस दिन एशियाटिक सोसाइटी ने राजा राममोहन राय की 250 वीं सालगिरह मनाई।

राजा राममोहन राय का जन्म सन् 1772 में हुआ था तथा उनका देहावसान 1883 में हुआ था। राजा राममोहन राय सही अर्थों में आधुनिक भारत के जनक हैं, उन्होंने हिंदी भाषा और हिंदी साहित्य को समृद्ध करने में महत्त्वपूर्ण भूमिका का निर्वाह किया। कोविड-19 की महामारी की सारी चुनौतियों का सामना करते हुए एशियाटिक सोसाइटी ने इस दिन जिस वर्चुअल संगोष्ठी का आयोजन किया। उस संगोष्ठी का विषय था "नवजागरण के संदर्भ में राजा राममोहन राय की भूमिका" इस संगोष्ठी में देश के महत्त्वपूर्ण विद्वानों ने हिस्सा लिया। विभिन्न विश्वविद्यालय के प्रोफेसर, शोधार्थी, छात्र-छात्राओं ने भी इस संगोष्ठी में भाग लिया।

एशियाटिक सोसायटी के महासचिव डॉ. सत्यव्रत

चक्रवर्ती ने स्वागत भाषण देते हुए कहा कि राजा राममोहन राय की 250 वीं सालगिरह पर आयोजित इस संगोष्ठी का यही उद्देश्य है कि राजा राममोहन राय के विचारों पर दृष्टिपात किया जाए, जिन्होंने प्राचीनता और आधुनिकता की विशेषताओं को बेहतरीन ढंग से प्रस्तुत किया है। सच्चे अर्थों में उन्होंने सार्वभौमिक संस्कृति के व्यापक मूल्यों को विकसित किया। संगोष्ठी के विषय पर आलोकपात करते हुए कलकत्ता विश्वविद्यालय के हिंदी विभागाध्यक्ष प्रो. राम आह्लाद चौधरी ने कहा कि राजा राममोहन राय ने नवजागरण में अहम भूमिका का निर्वहन किया जब आम आदमी को अपने अधिकारों से वंचित किया जा रहा था तब राजा राममोहन राय ने अपने अधिकारों को हासिल करने के लिए क्रियात्मक आयोजन पर बल दिया था। समाज गुलामी के चलते अवैज्ञानिकता के अंध कुएं में डूबने लगा था, ऐसे विकट समय में राजा राममोहन राय ने तार्किकता और वैज्ञानिकता के जरिए पूरे समाज में अलख जगाने का प्रयास किया। राजा राममोहन राय ने अनुवादों के जरिए हिंदी साहित्य को विस्तार दिया तथा हिंदी पत्रकारिता को नई रोशनी देने के संदर्भ में भी राजा राममोहन राय ने शानदार भूमिका का निर्वहन किया। ब्रितानी हुकूमत की ओर से राजा राममोहन

राय के अखबारों को बंद करने की विभिन्न साजिशों की गई तथा तरह-तरह के बेवजह नियम कानून थोपकर राजा राममोहन राय की पत्रकारिता की केंद्रीय वाणी यानी अभिव्यक्ति स्वातंत्र्य को चकनाचूर करने की कुचेष्टा की गई, इसके बावजूद राजा राममोहन राय ने उस समय भी अभिव्यक्ति स्वातंत्र्य के पक्ष में जनमत तैयार किया था तभी तो आधुनिक आर्य भाषाओं के कई अखबारों का पहला प्रकाशन केंद्र कोलकाता बना। राजा राममोहन राय ने सती प्रथा से लेकर जाति प्रथा के विरुद्ध लाजवाब संघर्ष किया। महिलाओं को भी जीने का अधिकार है इस बात से इस समाज को परिचित कराने वाले राजा राममोहन राय का नाम सर्वोपरि है। राजा राममोहन राय ने सती प्रथा को रोक दिया तथा यह साबित कर दिया कि पाखंडों के बल पर शास्त्रों के सच्चाईयों को नहीं बचाया जा सकता है।

इस विषय पर प्रकाश डालते हुए कथा-शिल्पी लाल सिंह ने कहा कि राजा राममोहन राय इस देश के प्रथम व्यक्ति हैं जिन्होंने जिज्ञासा करने के अधिकारों के लिए न केवल संघर्ष किया बल्कि जिज्ञासा के जरिए संवाद स्थापित होता है, इस बात को भी प्रमाणित कर दिया। तर्क और तार्किकता के लिए राजा राममोहन राय ने सदा संघर्ष किया। उनका संघर्ष व्यक्तिगत नहीं था उनके संघर्ष का दायरा विश्व-मंच तक व्याप्त था। यही कारण है कि उन्होंने दुनिया के विभिन्न हिस्सों से ज्ञान अर्जित किया, विभिन्न भाषाओं को सम्मिलित किया तथा विभिन्न क्षेत्रों की कमजोरियों को दूर करने की

लगातार कोशिश की। अलीगढ़ मुस्लिम विश्वविद्यालय के हिंदी विभाग के अध्यक्ष और प्रोफेसर रमेश रावत ने इस विषय पर गंभीरता से विचार करते हुए कहा कि राजा राममोहन राय ने अपने समय की सारी भ्रांतियों से मुठभेड़ किया तथा अंग्रेजी शिक्षा के अहमियत को समझा। आधुनिक शिक्षा के प्रचार-प्रसार के जरिए बदलते मूल्यों का वस्तुनिष्ठ अध्ययन संभव है, इस तरफ भी राजा राममोहन राय ने पूरी दुनिया की नजर खींचने का प्रयास किया था। राजा राममोहन राय के विचारों को समझने में गांधी और टैगोर के विचारों से मदद मिलती है।

प्रो. इरफान हबीब ने राजा राममोहन राय को दी गई राजा की उपाधि के संदर्भ में कहा कि जब उन्हें राजा की उपाधि मिली तब कुछ अंग्रेजों ने इसकी आलोचना की। राजा राममोहन राय ने उस आलोचना का साफ-साफ जवाब दिया। उनके व्यक्तित्व कृतित्व पर प्रकाश डालते हुए प्रोफेसर इरफान हबीब ने कहा कि राजा राममोहन राय ने इंग्लैंड की भूमि पर खड़े होकर भारत के किसानों के पक्ष में स्थाई लगान लागू करने की बात कही थी इसलिए कि उनका ज्ञान इस बात का साक्षी है कि कहां किसका विरोध करना चाहिए और क्यों विरोध करना चाहिए ; इन दोनों सवालों के उत्तरों से राजा राममोहन राय भलीभांति परिचित थे। राजा राममोहन राय के व्यक्तित्व से हमें बहुत कुछ सीखना अभी भी बाकी है। प्रो. राम आह्लाद चौधरी ने धन्यवाद ज्ञापन देते हुए संगोष्ठी की समाप्ति की घोषणा की।

*"To me, peace between Hindus and Muslims is more essential than the proclamation of independence."*

**Mahatma Gandhi**

## Visit of His Excellency, Professor Adam Burakowski, Ambassador of Poland to India to Society on 13.08.2021



His Excellency, Professor Adam Burakowski, Ambassador of Poland to India visited the Asiatic Society, Kolkata on 13th August 2021. He was accompanied by Ms. Michalina Seliga, Third Secretary, Ms. Marta Kuśnierska, Expert, Political-Economic Section, Embassy of Poland in New Delhi and Mr. Joydeep Roy, Chief Consular Officer, Honorary Consulate of Poland in Kolkata. Welcoming Professor Burakowski and the Polish team, Dr. S.B.Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Society gave a brief account of the activities of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata pointing out the earlier visit of the Ambassador of Poland to India at the Society in 2012.



In his speech, His Excellency, Professor Adam Burakowski narrated the collaborative socio-economic projects and cultural activities that Poland has been doing in India since decades. He was also nostalgic narrating his personal connection with the city of Kolkata and with Santiniketan and his love for the Bengali language and culture.

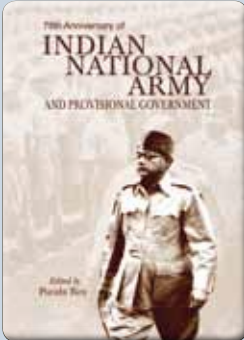
Professor Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty, Vice-President of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata while presiding over the meeting focused on the various activities of the Society in brief and the intellectual connection of the city of Kolkata with Poland specially on the occasion of film festivals. During the interactive session on 'Polish Cultural, Art & Heritage Work and other History based topics', Professor Tapati Mukherjee, Library Secretary, Professor Rajkumar Roychoudhury, Physical Science Secretary and Professor Somnath Mukherjee, Member of the Council took part in the discussion.

After the interactive session, the Polish team visited the Museum, Library and Conservation Section of the Society. Special display of rare books and museum exhibits were arranged on this occasion. The Hon'ble Ambassador and the members of the team appreciated the Society's efforts in preserving its rich treasures.

*Prepared by : Dhiman Chakraborty*  
Controller of Finance, The Asiatic Society



## Release of 75th Anniversary of Indian National Army and Provisional Government on 14th August 2021 at The Asiatic Society



At the beginning an invocation 'Kadam Kadam Badhaye Ja' was rendered by our staff member of the Society Shri Asim Kumar Dutta. Then Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti delivered the Welcome Address giving a background of the occasion. Professor Purabi Roy, the editor of the book, briefed about the book. Shri Arup Raha, Air Chief Marshall (Retd.), released the book with a short speech. In his oration he highlighted that Indian National Army is not a forgotten chapter. It is the obliterated pages of history that remained untouched for the last seventy years. Nowadays it is a great challenge before the scholars from the defence as well as civilians to unearth the untold facts of our past records.

Professor Radharaman Chakrabarti delivered the lecture on 'Bengal Renaissance, India National Movement: Subhas Chandra the Heir Apparent' on the occasion of 125 years of birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. He spoke eloquently about the Bengal Renaissance focussing on some Bengali intellectuals and cited their writings. He recounted that Subhas Chandra Bose was a great national leader of the country.

Professor Basudeb Barman, presided over the programme and spoke on the historical role played by Netaji. Dr. Sujit Kumar Das, Treasurer of the Asiatic Society placed the formal Vote of Thanks. The programme ended with the National Anthem rendered and led by our staff members.



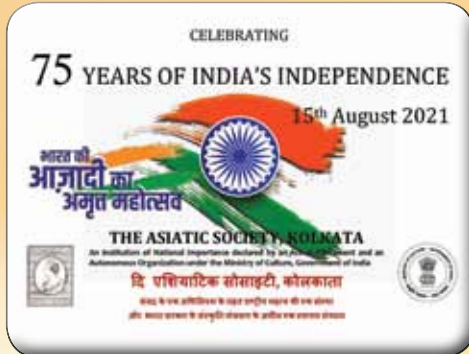
(L-R): Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, Professor Basudeb Barman, Shri Arup Raha, Professor Radharaman Chakrabarti, Professor Purabi Roy and Dr. Sujit Kumar Das

*Reported by*

**Somnath Mukherjee**

Council Member, The Asiatic Society

## 75th Independence Day Celebration at The Asiatic Society, Kolkata on 15.08.2021



The Asiatic Society, Kolkata celebrated the 75th Independence Day of India in a befitting manner on 15th August 2021 with hoisting of the National Flag at its Park Street and Salt Lake campus. After hoisting the National Flag at Park Street campus of the Society, Dr. S.B.Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Society in his speech, briefly narrated on the proposed yearlong academic programmes that the Society contemplates to undertake on the occasion of 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' including

publication & exhibition. Dr. Sujit Kumar Das, Treasurer and Dr. Bishnupada Dutta, Member of the Council who were present on the occasion spoke about the glory of 75 years of India's Independence. This was followed by performance of patriotic songs, poems & readings rendered by Shri Amit Ghosh, Dr. Keka Adhikari Banerjee and Shri Dhiman Chakraborty. The programme ended with the rendition of the National Anthem. The event was live streamed on the Society's facebook channel. Dr. Sujit Kumar Das, Treasurer hoisted the National Flag at the Salt Lake Campus followed by his speech and the rendition of the National Anthem.

**Dhiman Chakraborty**



Dr. S.B.Chakrabarti, General Secretary, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata hoisting the National Flag at the Park Street campus.



Dr. Sujit Kumar Das, Treasurer, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata hoisting the National Flag at the Salt Lake campus.



## Study Visit of the Committee of Papers Laid on the Table (COPLoT) – Rajya Sabha and Meeting of the Hon'ble Members of the Committee with the Representatives of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, on 21.08.2021



Dr. S.B.Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata with the Chairman of the Committee, Shri K.C. Ramamurthy, Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha



The Meeting in progress

The Asiatic Society, Kolkata was represented by Dr. S.B.Chakrabarti, General Secretary and Dr. Sujit Kumar Das, Treasurer. Shri Dhiman Chakraborty, Controller of Finance and Shri Arupratan Bagchi, Administrative Officer of the Society were also present to provide the necessary inputs.

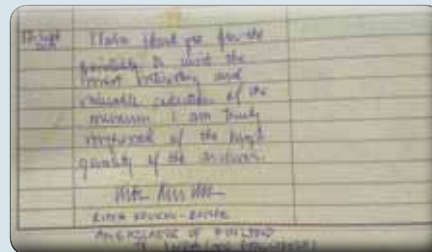
**Dhiman Chakraborty**



## Visit of Foreign Dignitaries in The Asiatic Society, Kolkata

### Ambassador of Finland to India

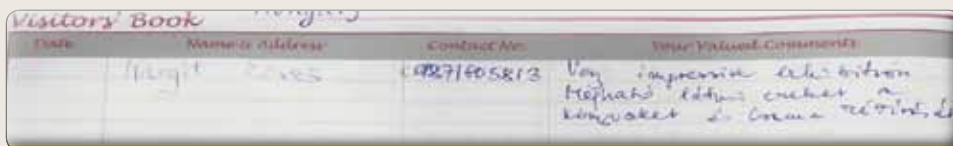
Her Excellency Ms. Ritva Koukku-Ronde, Hon'ble Ambassador of Finland to India, visited the Society on 17th September at 04:30 pm. She took keen interest in visiting the objects displayed in the Museum and the Library. She was much impressed by the richness of the exhibits which stand for the excellence of Indian culture and heritage.



### Representatives from Hungarian Embassy

Dr. Margit Köves and Mr. Amit Kumar on behalf of Hungarian Embassy visited the Society on 21st September, 2021. They visited the location of the ensuing exhibition as already proposed in collaboration with the Asiatic Society, Kolkata to organize an exhibition :

Pilgrim Scholar - Alexander Csoma de Körös Memorial Exhibition" at the Asiatic Society. After a meeting with the General Secretary and others. They finally proposed the dates from 26th October – 12th November 2021. They have informed the Society through mail that His Excellency Mr. A. L. Kiraly, Hungarian Ambassador to India will inaugurate the programme.



### Consulate General of Italy in Kolkata

Dr. Gianluca Rubagotti, the Hon'ble Consul General of Italy in Kolkata visited the Library, Museum and the old historic building of the Society on 22nd September, 2021 at 03:30 p.m. He was guided by the Philological Secretary Professor Shyamsundar Bhattacharya. He became very much impressed on visiting the Museum and the Library. Dr. Rubagotti expressed his willingness to organize an exhibition in collaboration with the Consulate of Italy and the Asiatic Society, Kolkata in the next year.



Date	Name & Address	Remarks
22/09/2021	Gianluca Rubagotti	I am pleased to see all the links with Italy books, sculptures, paintings, manuscripts. A treasure which deserves being studied with dedication.

Date	Name & Address	Contact No.	Time and Date Comments
22/09/2021	Gianluca Rubagotti		It is very important that the Asiatic Society keeps these <del>articles</del> articles by the great scholar Long Pritaneri, who contributed significantly to the development of the studies on Rajasthani languages. It also gives me immense pleasure to see books by Giuseppeucci, who spent as well time in West Bengal and is still vividly remembered.

**Keka Adhikari Banerjee**



## In-house Staff Training Programme on 'Scientific arrangement of Museum Objects: Problems and Prospects'

One Day Staff Training Programme on '*Scientific arrangement of Museum Objects: Problems and Prospects*' 2021 was organised by the Museum section at the Vidyasagar Hall of the Society on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021. The programme began with paying homage to the founder of the Society, Sir William Jones on his 275<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary falling on that day by garlanding his portrait by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society. Dr. S.B.Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Society paid his tribute to Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar by garlanding the bust of Vidyasagar whose birth anniversary was two days earlier on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2021.

The training was conducted both in online and offline modes. Two eminent resource persons namely Professor Supreo Chanda, Department of Museology, University of Calcutta and Dr. Jayanta Sthanapati, Former Deputy Director General, National Council of Science Museums, Kolkata delivered their lecture demonstrations at the training programme which had 23 participants from the Library, Museum and Conservation Sections. Dr. Keka Adhikari Banerjee, Curator, briefed on the objectives behind the training programme. In the inaugural session, Dr. S.B.Chakrabarti, General Secretary, Professor Tapati Mukherjee, Library Secretary and Professor Sujit Das, Treasurer addressed the participants. Dr. Jagatpati Sarkar, Sr. Cataloguer co-ordinated the event and the formal vote of thanks was given by Dr. Pritam Gurey, Librarian of the Society.



Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society garlanding the portrait of Sir William Jones



The Inaugural Session of the Training Programme



Dr. S.B.Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Society garlanding the bust of Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar



A section of the participants of the Training Programme

**Keka Adhikari Banerjee**



Pencil Sketch of  
Sir William Jones by  
the Society's former  
President Late Professor  
Isha Mahammad

## YouTube Release of 'Rivers of Knowledge' (A Film on The Asiatic Society by Gautam Ghosh) on the occasion of 275th Birth Anniversary of Sir William Jones on 28th September 2021

'Rivers of Knowledge' - A film on the Asiatic Society was released in the YouTube Channel of the Society on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021 on occasion of 275<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of its founder, Sir William Jones. The documentary film directed by the renowned film maker Gautam Ghosh was made and published by the Society in 2009 in commemoration of post Bi-Centennial Silver Jubilee (225 years) of the Asiatic Society. The film portrays the early life of Sir William Jones in England, his travel to India as a Jury of the Supreme Court in Calcutta and his keen interest in Oriental Studies that led to the foundation of the Asiatic Society in 1784 under the patronage of Warren Hastings, the then Governor General of India.



The Flyer for Social Media promotion of the Event

The film also narrates the legacy of Sir William Jones carried over for more than 200 years by his successors making the Asiatic Society a landmark in the world history as the oldest institution of learning. The film which was premiered in the YouTube channel of the Society (Channel ID: [www.youtube.com/c/TheAsiaticSociety](http://www.youtube.com/c/TheAsiaticSociety)) on 28<sup>th</sup> September 2021 can be viewed through the link [https://youtu.be/t5NA\\_ZirgDo](https://youtu.be/t5NA_ZirgDo)

Prepared by:  
**Dhiman Chakraborty**

## Webinars in the months of August and September, 2021

The prevailing pandemic situation and its related restrictions do not allow us to organize any lecture or seminar at the aesthetically decorated Vidyasagar Hall of the Society as per convention. Under the changed circumstances, the Society organized several events on the virtual platform during the months of August and September, 2021.

A webinar was organized on 4th August, 2021 on the topic 'Academic Integrity and Research Ethics'. Professor Tapati Mukherjee, Library Secretary of the Society introduced the theme of the webinar. Dr. Arun Kumar Chakraborty, Librarian of Bose Institute, Kolkata and former Director General of National Library was the first speaker in

the webinar and he shared his experience and expertise through his presentation on the basic ideas of author's responsibilities, copyright, plagiarism, etc. Dr. Kishor Chandra Satpathy, Chief Librarian of Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata was also present in the webinar and addressed the audience on different types of ethical violations and its consequences. The webinar witnessed a large number of participants.

The Asiatic Society, Kolkata conferred Dr. Satyendra Nath Sen Memorial Lecture for the year 2020 on Professor Asis Banerjee, former Vice-Chancellor of University of Calcutta for his significant contribution in the field of Social Science. Professor Banerjee



delivered the commemorative lecture on 7th August, 2021 on virtual mode. The topic of his lecture was 'Economic Policy in the Time of Covid.' Through his argumentative speech Professor Banerjee explored various economic policies in the context of Covid 19.

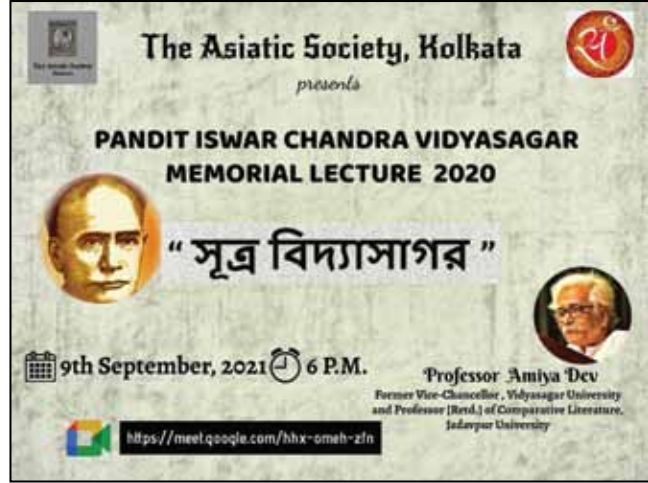
The Society organized a webinar titled 'करुणा धारय एसो' on 8th August, 2021 to pay homage to the great poet Rabindranath Tagore on his 80th death anniversary. Professor Tapati Mukherjee, Library Secretary of the Society and Professor Manabendra Mukhopadhyay, Professor of Bengali in Visva Bharati gave their



Professor Manabendra Mukhopadhyay

informative speeches on this occasion. Rabindra Sangeet and recitation presented by Shri Amit Ghosh, Smt Suranjana Chowdhury and Smt Sujata Mishra brought another dimension to the program.

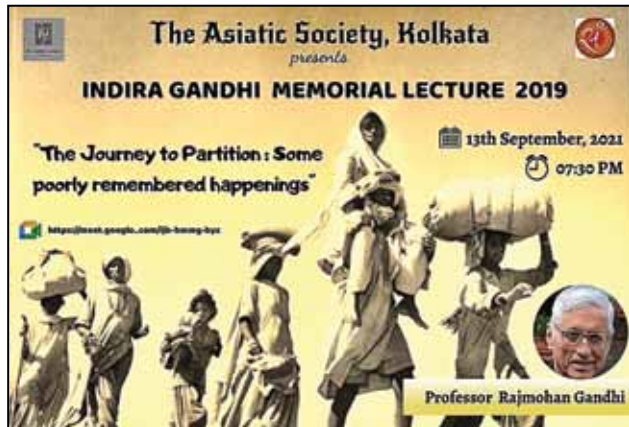
On 7th September, 2021, Professor Tapodhir Bhattacharya, former Vice-Chancellor of Assam University delivered 7th K. K. Handique Memorial Lecture on 'Quest for a Poetics of History in the Sanskrit Secondary Epics'. In his speech, Professor Bhattacharya interpreted the poet's quest for poetics of history on the basis of various poetic works belong to the subgenre of historical epic. The lecture, streamed on



Google Meet, witnessed a large number of participants.

Professor Amiya Dev, Former Vice Chancellor of Vidyasagar University was awarded Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar Lecture for the year 2020 for his Significant Contribution in the Field of Humanities. Professor Dev delivered the Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar Memorial Lecture on 9 September, 2021 virtually. The lecture titled 'सूत्र विद्यासागर' captivated the audience. The programme concluded with a recorded song of late singer Rajeswari Dutta.

Another interesting event of the month of September, 2021 was held on 13th September. On that evening, eminent scholar





Professor Rajmohan Gandhi delivered Indra Gandhi Memorial Lecture for the year 2019. In his lecture titled 'The Journey to Partition : Some poorly remembered happenings', Professor Gandhi reminisced about the sad memories of partition in several chapters. The program became very enjoyable through an interactive session with the audience.

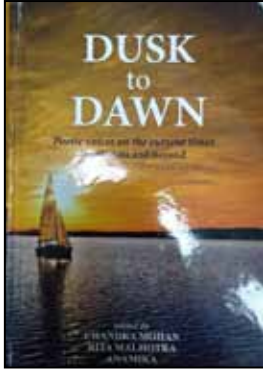
Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society presided over all the programmes and offered his Presidential remarks. Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Society delivered the welcome address. The formal vote of thanks was given by Dr. Sujit Kumar Das, Treasurer of the Society.

A two-day international webinar ('Why do we need to talk about caste?') was held in the Asiatic Society. Many scholars from the country and abroad participated in this webinar. In addition, Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji Lecture for the year 2019 was held online on 21st September, 2021. Professor Ramkrishna Bhattacharya delivered the lecture on the topic 'Interpolations and Interpolations- within-Interpolations: Ramayana Ayodhyakanda cantos 100-102( critical edition): A Case Study'.

Reported by  
**Arupratan Bagchi**  
 Administrative Officer, The Asiatic Society

*“What we deplore is not that the gate of western knowledge was thrown open to Indians, but that such knowledge was imported to India at the sacrifice of our own cultural heritage. What was needed was a proper synthesis between the two systems and not neglect, far less destruction, of the Indian base.”*

**Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee**



**Dusk to Dawn**

Poetic voices on the current times South Asia and Beyond  
Edited by Chandra Mohan, Rita Malhotra, Anamika, Heritage Publishers, New Delhi, 2021, ₹ 695

In these tumultuous days when our very existence has been thwarted by an invisible hitherto unknown little pathogen Covid-19, when half of the global population has been pushed into isolation, when we shudder at the sight of our near and dear ones turned into numberless corpses, we have no choice left, but to mourn and feel in utter desperation – is this our end, has the Dooms Day indeed approached? No. Even in this critical juncture, there are beautiful minds, poetic voices who energize and inspire us with their messages of hope, who can portray ‘challenge as opportunity’, who, like Lord Krishna in *Gita* can embolden us to combat and win over this crisis -- “Go back Corona, Return to your Barracks” (A poem by S, Rama Murthy, included in this collection). *Dusk to Dawn, Poetic voices on the current times South Asia and Beyond*, edited by Chandra Mohan, Rita Malhotra and Anamika is such a collection of poems, authored by poets hailing from India and abroad which can indeed play a role of invigorating morale booster in the hour of crisis.

Divided in three parts, part I dealing with poetic sentiments expressed in English, Part II titled as *Corona Times in Hindi Poetry* and Part III, *Corona Times in Urdu Poetry*, this collection is marked by a few redeeming features. While the horror of pandemic with its sickening impact on mankind has been embedded in most of the poems, another

realisation which emphasizes revival of ecological balance because of lockdown — imposed pollution control vibrates in a few poems. Some poets consider Corona as a leveller which makes no discrimination of caste, class and creed in its cruel attack against mankind.

In his well-perceived Introduction titled, “Challenge as Opportunity: Spring board of Covid against Corona time poetry”, editor Chandra Mohan has emphasized how these poems teach us not to lose heart in our battle against Corona, on the contrary, they “also convey a soulful message of compassion and hope”.

In his poem, “Hymn to Covid 19, novel Corona Virus Tis a new Beginning” -- the poet A .K Merchant has described how the world was racing with its plethora of plans and allied problems when suddenly Corona struck and everything fell apart.

“Humanity, already grappling with multi-pronged crises of Ecological derangement, divisive geopolitics, dangers of nuclear war, plus A host of other challenges is now plunged into a Vortex of un-dreamed of crises by “COVID-19”!

But at the same time he is firm in his conviction that this crisis is temporary and through this turmoil the planet earth will write its glorious history because this virus “is providing every individual, every institution and every community unprecedented opportunities to participate in the writing of the Planet’s glorious destiny”.

The same idea of hope has been vibrating in the poem *Sita and the Pandemic*, when poet Malashri Lal, deriving impetus from the epic Ramayana compares herself with Sita, confined in Ashoka Vatika which has similarity with our isolation caused by lockdown --

The world today is that Ashoka Vatika.  
But the poet is hopeful that this peril will  
come to an end when Hanuman will come  
to rescue the world --

But I trust Hanuman will again  
Peer down from the Ashoka tree  
... and bring the agnivaan to this new war  
of justice  
I'm told it's called a "vaccine" in modern  
term.

To some, lockdown has its benefit also as  
it has returned the efflorescence of mother  
earth because of absence of pollution --

Mother Nature is decked  
Like a new bride!  
-- (Journey of Lockdown by KG Sharma)

However cruel the Corona virus is in  
causing worldwide destruction, it makes  
no discrimination on the basis of social or  
economic disparity. BM Bhalla in his Poem  
*Pandemic, Great Leveller* emphasizes --

The pandemic has been a great leveller  
It affected the rich and the poor alike.

Sanjukta Dasgupta is more scathing in  
her attack against the present materialistic  
civilization and considers the onslaught  
leveled against mankind by Corona as a call  
for rectification --

Our post-truth world where fake news  
rules  
Where pricks of conscience seem like  
Absurd romantic rash and mushy  
sentiment  
...Baffled, the philosophy Corona Virus  
reflects  
"So they need to die to wake up."  
(*Annus Horribilis* by Malashri Laal).

In a pathetic tone Dr. Hadaa Sendoo, a  
Mongolian Poet reminds us to wear musk  
as --

"Viruses have no nationality  
Love doesn't choose skin colour."  
(*Massage from the ICU*)

In 2nd part of the collection titled --  
*Corona Times in Hindi Poetry*, Bodhisattva, a  
famous poet of Hindi literature expresses his  
frustration in this critical time in his poem

— संदिग्ध समय में कवि

एक समय ऐसा आया कि  
कुछ लिखने को बचा ही नहीं  
कवितायों और विचारकों का  
पूरा आर्यावर्त ही संदिग्ध हो गया।

Another poet Balkirti in her poem *प्रवासी  
मजदूर* expresses her concern about the  
migrant labor--

एक टूटी हुआ चप्पल की तरह  
वह उखड़ गया था 'अँगूली और अँगूठे के बीच से'।  
(*प्रवासी मजदूर*)

In part III – *Corona times in Urdu poetry*  
we encounter the noted poet Gulzar coming  
forward with a vivid description of the  
devastation caused by the dreaded virus--

गर्म लाशों गिरीं फसीलों से  
आसमाँ भर गया है चीलों से  
सूली चढने लगी है खामोशी  
लोग आये हैं सुन के मीलों से...।  
(*गर्म लाशों गिरीं फसीलों से*)

The collection of poem *Dusk to Dawn*  
is indeed a commendable piece of work  
compiled by the editors as it gives us courage  
and mental strength to fight back Corona --  
a terrible menace to the human civilization.  
We may echo the lines of the poem *Break the  
Chain* by Jameela Begum--

To break a cycle  
We make a cycle  
The cycle will not break, nor the chain of  
life  
Tomorrow to blue skies and green grass.

For future researchers on Pandemic and  
literature, this book will be a treasure store.

**Tapati Mukherjee**  
Library Secretary, The Asiatic Society

## ASIAN ACCESSION

S

181.4

P899

Prapañcahṛdayam; edited by Kanchan Lata Pandey; preface by T. Ganapati Shastri. —Delhi; Sivalik Prakashan, 2017.

ix, 103p., 22cm. (S7220)  
(19.2.19)

ISBN : 978-93-87195-07-3:  
Rs. 395.00

S

181.43

R543b

Riddle of Vyapati /translated by Rupa Bal. —Kolkata : Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 2019.

viii, 78p., 22cm. (S7249)  
(2.9.19)

This book is a translation of Vyapti panchaka of Gangesa Upadhyaya and its commentary Vyaptipanchaka rahasyam of Mathura Nath Tarkavagisa and Raghunath Sromani.

ISBN : 978-93-87800-43-4:  
Rs. 250.00

S

294.5921

V414v

Vedas.SanskritSuparnananda

2016.

Vedagranthamala. —Kolkata : Ramkrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 2016.

—v, 25cm.

Contents : V.1, pt.I. Rigveda with Bengali translation by Nilanjana Sikdar Dutta; edited by Parasuram Chakraborty, 1st mandala (Sukta 1-191), Rs. 300.00.

—V.1, pt.II, edited with Ben. tr. by Nilanjana Sikdar Dutta, 2nd to 5th mandala.

—V.1, pt.III; edited with Ben. tr. by Nilanjana Sikdar Dutta, 6th and 7th mandala, 2018, Rs. 300.00.

—V.2, Samaveda with Bengali translation by Trishna Chatterjee; edited by Parasuram Chakraborty, 2016, Rs. 300.00.

—V.3, Madhyandina samhita. V.5, pt.I, Maitrayani samhita of Krishna yajurveda; edited with Bengali tr. by Pradyot Kumar Dutta, 2018, Rs. 300.00.

—V.5, pt.II; edited with Ben. tr. by Pradyot Kumar Dutta 1st to 13th Prapathaka, 2018, Rs. 300.00.

—V.5, pt.III, edited with Ben. tr. by the Pradyot Kumar Dutta, 1st to 14th

Prapathaka 2019, Rs. 300.00.

—V.6, pt.I, Kathaka samhita of Krishnayajurveda; edited with Beng. tr. by Bhavaniprasad Bhattacharya, 1st Sthanakam to 10th Sthanakan, 2016, Rs. 300.

—V.7, pt. I, Atharvaveda samhita; edited with Ben. tr. by Taraknath Adhikari, 1st to 5th Kanda, 2016, Rs. 300.00.

—V.7, pt. II Atharvaveda samhita; edited with Ban. tr. by Taraknath Adhikari, 6th to 9th Kanda, 2019, Rs. 300.00. —V.8. pt.I Aitareyabrahmana of Rigveda; edited with Ben. tr. by Trishna Chatterjee, 1st to 20th adhyaya, 2018, Rs. 300.00.

—V.8, pt. II Aitareyabrahmana of Rigveda; edited with Ben. tr. by Trishna Chatterjee, 21st adhyaya to 40th adhyaya, 2019, Rs. 300.00.

—V.9, Arseya-Mantra-Vamśa brahmana of Samaveda; ed with Ben. tr. Bhaskaranath Bhattacharya and Rita Bhattacharya, 2016, Rs. 300.00.

—V.11, pt. I Panchavimsa brahmana; edited with Ben. tr. by Pradyot Kumar Dutta, 1st to 8th adhyaya, 2016,



—V.11, pt. II, 9th to 13th adhyaya, 2016.

—V.11, pt. III, 14th to 19th adhyaya, 2016.

—V.11, pt. IV, 20th to 25th adhyaya, 2017.

—V.12, Samaveda Sad-vimśa devatadhyaya samhitopanisad brahmana; ed & tr. by Rita Bhattacharya.

—V.13, pt. I-IV, Shklajujur veda Satapatha brahmana; tr. by Shanti Banerjee, Abhijit Layek, Sitanath Dey; edited by Shanti Banerjee.

—V14, pt. I-III. Krishnaya-jurveda Taittiriya brahmana; edited and tr. by Trisna Chatterjee,

—V.15. Atharvaveda Gopatha brahmana; ed. & tr. by Taraknath Adhikari.

—V.16. Rigveda Aitareya aranyaka; tr. by Tripti Saha; edited by Samiranchandra Chakraborty.

—V.19. Upanisad: Isa, Keno, Katha, Prashno, Mudaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Svetasvatara, Chhandogya, Brihadaranyaka.

—V.20, Nrisimhatapaniya, Jabala, Hamsa, Paramahansa, Brahma, Amritanada, Bhavana, Garbha, Kaivalya, Sannyasa, Mahanarayana, Sarvasara, Amritabindu, Pancha brahma, Kausitaki, Pranagnihatra, Atma, Nadabindu, Brahmabindu, Dhyanaabndu, Tejobindu, Yogatattva, Brahmavidya; tr. by Trishna Chatterjee, Gargi Bhattacharya and Rita Bhattacharya; edited by Ratna Basu; Chiefly edited

by Svami Suparnananda.

Library lacks 3, 4, 6-pt.I, 10, 17, 18.

ISBN: 978-93-81325-67-4 (set): Rs. 300.00 (each vol.)

**(BN68019-21) (7.11.19)**

**(BN68022)(v.2)**

**(BN68030)**

**(BN68031)**

**(BN08032) (V.S.pt.III)**

**(9.1.2020)**

**(BN68033) (V.6 pt.I)**

**(BN68034) (V.7.pt.I)**

**(BN68035) (V.7, pt.II)**

**(BN68036) (V.8. pt.I)**

**(BN68037) (V.8. pt.II)**

**(9.1.20)**

**(BN68038 (V.9) (1.1.20)**

**(BN68039) (V.II, pt. I).**

**(BN68040) (V.II, pt. II)**

**(BN68041) (V.II, pt. III)**

**(BN68042) (V.II, pt. IV)**

**(1.1.20)**

**(BN68043) (V.12)**

**(BN68044-47) (V13)**

**(10.1.20)**

**(BN68048-50) (V.14)**

**(12.2.20)**

**(BN68051) (V.15) (12.2.20)**

**(BN68052) (V.16)**

**(BN68053-54) (V19-20)**

**(12.2.20)**

**S**

**294.5925**

**P985b.s.**

Puranam. Bhagavat. Sanatan, 2017

Bhasabhadragavata; with Bengali translation by Sanatan Ghoshal Vidyavagish; edited by Kananbihari Gosvami, Nabanarayan Bandhyopadhyaya and Shampa Sarkar. —Kolkata : Goudiya Mission Paravidyapeeth Research Institute, 2017.

—v., 25cm. **(B14911)**

**(13.4.18)**

Library has Vol. I, Sakandh 1 & 2

Rs. 300.00

**S**

**294.5925**

**S241c**

Saptasati Chandi—As It Is; with English translation and meaning by Sadhan Chandra Chakravarty. —Kolkata : Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, 2018.

272p.: ill (col); 22cm. **(S7247) (2.9.19)**

It is a part of Markandeyapura

ISBN : 978-93-87800-20-3; Rs. 455.00

**S**

**294.5926**

**S948m**

Sukla, Radhesyam

Mitaksara-mimamsa (Yajnavalkyasya smriti ki tika Mitaksara Ka sangopanga Vivechan)/Hindi translation and explanation by Radhesyam Sukla. —Delhi : Prati-bha Prakashan, 2018.

xxiv, 303p., 24cm. **(H7227)**

Frontis

ISBN : 978-81-7702-432-6; Rs. 995.00

**S**

**294.5926**

**Y14a.t.**

Yajnavalkya

Yajnavalkyasamhita; edited with anvaya and Bengali translation by Ashok Chattopadhyaya and Tapati Mukhopadhyaya. —Kolkata : Chatterjee Publishers, 2002.

236p., 23cm. **(BN67867)**  
**(9.3.18)**

Contents : Vyavahar ad-  
hayaya  
Rs. 120.00

S

491.25

**M232t.s**

Maitreyaraksita

Tantrapradipa of  
Maitreyarakshita; critical-  
ly edited by Sanjit Kumar  
Sadhukhan and Sadhana  
Sarkar. —Kolkata: Sanskrit  
Pustak Bhandar, 2018.

77p., 23cm. **(S7248)**  
**(2.9.19)**

Tantrapradipa is a com-  
mentary on Nyasa of Jinen-  
drabuddhi on the Kasika on  
Astadhyayi of Panini

ISBN : 978-93-87800-49-6:  
Rs. 400.00

S

520

**B575s.j**

Bhaskaracharya <sup>1114cc</sup>

Siddhanta siromani : a  
treatise on astronomy by  
Bhaskaracharya; with com-  
mentary Vasanaabhasya, Vas-  
navartika and Marichi; ed-  
ited with notes by Murlidhar  
Sharma Jha. —1st Cosmo  
edition. —New Delhi : Cos-  
mo, 2012.

310p., 23cm. **(S7257)**  
**(23.10.19)**

Bibliography : p. 89-91  
ISBN : 978-81-307-1219-2:  
Rs. 795.00

S

520

**V287p.d.**

Varahamihira

Panchasiddhantika : the  
astronomical work of Vara-  
hamihira; with commentary  
by Sudhakara Dvivedi; ed-  
ited with English translation  
and introduction by G. Thi-  
bout and Sudhakar Dvivedi.  
—New Delhi : Cosmo, 2002

Lxxxiv, 317p. (in various  
pagings); 22cm. **(S7258)**  
**(23.10.19)**

ISBN : 81-77-55: Rs. 695.00

S

808.04912

**C495m**

Chatterjee, Indira

Maghakavya arthalamka-  
ra/Indira Chatterjee. —  
Kolkata : Sanskrit Pustak  
Bhandar, 2018

xii, 156p., 25cm. **(S7250)**  
**(2.9.19)**

ISBN : 978-93-87800-27-4:  
Rs. 300.00

S

891.21

**K14m**

Pati, Nibedita

Meghduta tika of Ranga-  
dasa : a critical edition and  
study/Nibedita Pati. —Delhi:  
Patibha Prakashan, 2018.

vi, 146p., 22cm. **(S7223)**  
**(19.2.19)**

ISBN : 978-81-7702-404-3:  
Rs. 495.00

S

891.23

**R945v.m.**

Rupa Goswami

Vidagdhamadhavam/Rupa  
Goswami; edited with in-  
troduction by Svargakumar  
Mishra. —Delhi : Sivalik  
Prakashan, 2017.

274+7p., 22cm. **(S7222)**  
ISBN : 978-93-87195-08-0:  
Rs. 795.00

S

954

**N218r**

2v

Narayana Iyer K.

(The) Parmanent history  
of Bharatvarsha (India)/K.  
Narayana Iyer. —1st Cosmo  
ed. —New Delhi : Cosmo,  
2001.

2v. (xxxviii, 519p+319p.);  
22cm. **(S7255-56)** **(23.10.19)**

ISBN : 81-7755-077-2 (set):  
Rs. 1500.00

# Awards



**Professor Suranjan Das receiving Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar Gold Plaque for the year 2019 for his Significant Contribution to Contemporary Social issues on 31st August, 2021 at his chamber at Jadavpur University from the General Secretary and the Treasurer of the Society.**



**Professor Sampa Das receiving Paul Johannes Bruhl Memorial Medal for the year 2019 from Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Asiatic Society in Society's Monthly General Meeting held on 6th September, 2021.**



**Dr. Nilay Basu receiving Saratchandra Roy Memorial Medal for the year 2019 for his Outstanding Anthropological Contribution on Transgender Research from the President of the Society in Society's Monthly General Meeting held on 6th September, 2021**



**Durga Prasad Khaitan Memorial Gold Medal for the year 2019 was awarded to Professor Amalendu Bandyopadhyay for his Notable Contribution to Science. His son is receiving the award, posthumously in Society's Monthly General Meeting held on 6th September, 2021.**

*These awards are generally handed over during the Annual General Meeting of the Society. But due to the prevailing pandemic situation the Society arranged the handing over of these awards as per the mutual convenience.*

# The Latest Publications

