



APRIL-JUNE 2021



# Monthly Bulletin

VOLUME L, NO. 4-6



Raja Rammohun Roy (1772 - 1833)

**THE ASIATIC SOCIETY**  
1 PARK STREET • KOLKATA-700016



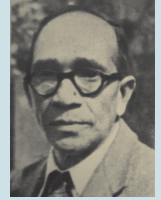
## COVER DESCRIPTION

A full figure portrait painting measuring 90" x 60" of Raja Rammohun Roy is housed in the Victoria Memorial Hall in oils on canvas done by an eminent painter, Atul Bose, in 1956.

By kind permission of the Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata



**Atul Bose** (1898–1977), an Indian painter, was an expert in portraying realistic landscapes, portraits and village scenery.



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## From the Desk of the General Secretary

### Dear Members and Well-wishers,

You will kindly bear with us for the inordinate delay in publishing our *Monthly Bulletin* since April, 2021. Apart from some organizational constraints the limiting factors were imposed again due to the second wave of COVID-19. We had to revert back the same process of total Lockdown (since 15 May 2021) and partial unlocking phase reducing the regularities in our usual transactions and routine work. I think all of us would kindly consider these factors for the discontinuity in issuing our otherwise very regular *Monthly Bulletin*.

In order to make up the backlog we have decided to combine three numbers i.e. April, May, June, 2021 at the moment. Our essential focus in this number has been to report in brief the findings of various research projects both internal as well as external. Simultaneously we have also attempted to bring into relief about some sectional activities of the Society. In addition to all these, there are a few other entries containing some academic input for the benefit of our readers.

A cursory glance into the important days and occasions during these three months reveals that we have stepped into 250th year of birth anniversary of Raja Rammohun Roy. In fact we have decided to hold a year-long programme on his contributions to the intellectual development and other areas of social reforms in this country. We have passed hundred years of Presidential assignments of Mm. Haraprasad Shastri (1919-20) and Sir Asutosh Mookerjee (1921-22) at the Society. Some of our visionaries and men of eminence were born during these months (April to June) such as Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (26.06.1838), Rabindranath Tagore (07.05.1861), Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis (29.06.1893), Satyajit Ray (02.05.1921) etc. We have conducted within these limitations a few academic programmes through webinar such as 'An Audio-visual Depiction of the Illustrated Persian Manuscript of the 17th Century: Farhang-i-Aurang-Shahi' on the occasion of the World Environment Day on 5 June 2021 and live webinar on Panorama of a Pandemic (Part-II) on 16 June 2021. The speakers were Dr. Sankar Kumar Nath, Medical Science Secretary of the Asiatic Society and Dr. Kajal Krishna Banik, an eminent doctor in this field.

With a heavy heart let me also put it on record that we have lost our immediate former President, Professor Isha Mohammad (11.05.2021), Dr. Subir Kumar Dutta, former Medical Science Secretary of the Society (14.05.2021) whose immense contributions have enriched the Society in very many ways. We have also lost two of our dear colleagues, Shri Asto Ghosh (03.05.2021) and Shri Harish Chandra Das (26.05.2021) who had served the Society with their committed services all along.

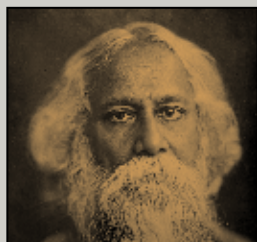
Let us hope we will soon be able to overcome the present crisis that we are passing through.

Please keep well and keep safe.

(S. B. Chakrabarti)  
General Secretary



Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (26.06.1838)



Rabindranath Tagore (07.05.1861)



Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis (29.06.1893)



Satyajit Ray (02.05.1921)

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

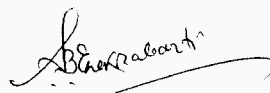
**ALL MEMBERS WERE REQUESTED TO BE PRESENT**

**APRIL**

**THE MEETING WAS HELD ON MONDAY, 12TH APRIL, 2021 AT 5 P.M.**

1. Confirmation of minutes of the meeting held on 1st March, 2021.
2. Communication from Council by the President under Regulation 49(g).
3. Any other item with the permission of the Chair.

Dated : 31st March, 2021

  
(S B Chakrabarti)  
General Secretary

**MAY**

**THE MEETING WAS HELD ON MONDAY, 3RD MAY, 2021 AT 5 P.M.**

1. Confirmation of minutes of the meeting held on 12th April, 2021.
2. The President is to place all the resignations tendered by the General Secretary, Treasurer and other members of the Council [except Dr. Bishnupada Dutta ] in the Monthly General Meeting for the consideration of the members under Regulation 38.
3. Any other item with the permission of the Chair.

Dated : 29th April, 2021

  
(Swapan Kumar Pramanick)  
President

**JUNE**

**THE MEETING WAS HELD ON MONDAY, 7TH JUNE, 2021, IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE  
TERMINATION OF THE 237TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the last Ordinary Monthly General Meeting held on 3rd May, 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 : 26th May, 2021

  
(S B Chakrabarti)  
General Secretary

## AGENDA OF THE 237TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY HELD THROUGH VIDEOCONFERENCING

ALL MEMBERS WERE REQUESTED TO BE PRESENT

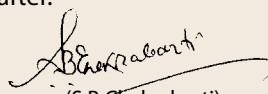
THE MEETING WAS HELD ON MONDAY, 7TH JUNE, 2021 AT 5 P.M.

The following business was transacted as per Regulation 50 of The Asiatic Society:

- i. To hear the Annual Report of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata for the year 2020-21, prepared by the Council, in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 41, Clause (f);
- ii. To consider and adopt the Balance Sheet, the Audited Accounts and the Auditor's Report of the Society for the year 2019-20, referred to in Regulation 59A, along with the observations of the Council thereon, if any;
- iii. The General Secretary is to read out the names of the awardees of various Medals, Plaques and Lectureships of the Asiatic Society for the year 2020.

A notice of any motion arising out of the Annual Report and the other papers as aforesaid may be given at the Meeting or within seven days thereafter.

Dated : 26th May, 2021





  
(S. B. Chakrabarti)  
General Secretary

### PROGRAMME






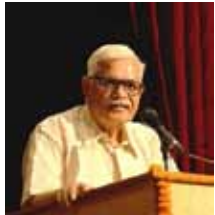
|  |   |
|--|---|
| Presentation of Annual Report of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata for the year 2020-21   | Dr. S. B. Chakrabarti,<br>General Secretary, The Asiatic Society    |
| Presidential Address   | Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick,<br>President, The Asiatic Society |
| Presentation of Audited Accounts and Auditor's Report of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata for the year 2019-20                     | Dr. Sujit Kumar Das, Treasurer,<br>The Asiatic Society              |
| Announcement of the names of the awardees of various Medals, Plaques and Lectureships of The Asiatic Society for the year 2020 | Dr. S. B. Chakrabarti, General Secretary,<br>The Asiatic Society    |
| Vote of Thanks   | Dr. Sujit Kumar Das,<br>Treasurer, The Asiatic Society              |









## THE ASIATIC SOCIETY AWARDS FOR THE YEAR 2020

|   |  |
|---|--|
|    | <p><b>TAGORE PEACE AWARD</b><br/><b>Professor William Radice</b><br/>Eminent English Poet and the Translator of Rabindranath Tagore, for his Significant Contribution to the Development of Human Understanding towards Peace.</p>               |
|   | <p><b>RABINDRANATH TAGORE BIRTH CENTENARY PLAQUE</b><br/><b>Professor Viswanathan Prasad Tiwari</b><br/>Eminent Hindi Poet, for his Creative Contribution to Human Culture.</p>  |
|  | <p><b>PANDIT ISWAR CHANDRA VIDYASAGAR GOLD PLAQUE</b><br/><b>Shri Harsh Mander</b><br/>Eminent Human Rights, Peace Worker and Columnist, for his Significant Contribution to Contemporary Social Issues.</p>                                     |
|  | <p><b>INDIRA GANDHI GOLD PLAQUE</b><br/><b>Ustad Amjad Ali Khan</b><br/>Padma Vibhushan, eminent Indian Classical Sarod Player, for his Significant Contribution to the Understanding of Inter-Cultural Co-operation towards Human Progress.</p> |

## List of Awardees

|   |   |
|---|---|
|    | <p><b>PROFESSOR SUKUMAR SEN MEMORIAL GOLD MEDAL</b><br/><b>Professor Samiran Chandra Chakrabarti</b><br/>Former Director of Centre for Vedic Studies at Rabindra Bharati University, for his Significant Contribution in the Academic field.</p>  |
|    | <p><b>MEGHNAD SAHA MEMORIAL GOLD MEDAL</b><br/><b>Professor Sriram Ramaswamy</b><br/>FRS, J.C. Bose National Fellow and Professor of Physics at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, for his Significant Contribution in the field of Physics.</p>                                 |
|    | <p><b>BARCLAY MEMORIAL MEDAL</b><br/><b>Professor Partha P. Majumder</b><br/>National Science Chair and Distinguished Professor and Founding Director, National Institute of Biomedical Genomics, Kalyani, for his Significant Contribution to the Development of Biological Science.</p> |
|   | <p><b>G.S.I. SESQUICENTENNIAL COMMEMORATIVE MEDAL</b><br/><b>Professor Talat Ahmad</b><br/>Vice-Chancellor, University of Kashmir, for his Significant Contribution in the field of Earth Science.</p>  |
|  | <p><b>DR. NARESH CHANDRA SEN GUPTA GOLD MEDAL</b><br/><b>Justice Fathima Beevi</b><br/>Former Judge of the Supreme Court of India, for her Significant Contribution in the field of Society &amp; Law in Ancient and Medieval India.</p>  |
|  | <p><b>PROFESSOR SUHRIT CHANDRA MITRA MEMORIAL PLAQUE</b><br/><b>Professor Girishwar Misra</b><br/>Eminent Social Scientist and Psychologist, for his Significant Contribution to Psychology.</p>  |

## List of Awardees

|   |   |
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|    | <p><b>PROFESSOR HEM CHANDRA RAYCHAUDHURI BIRTH CENTENARY GOLD MEDAL</b><br/><b>Professor Kesavan Veluthat</b><br/>Eminent Indian Historian, for his Creative Contribution in the Academic field.</p>  |
|    | <p><b>S C CHAKRAVARTI MEDAL</b><br/><b>Professor Dipak Kumar Barua</b><br/>Former Professor of Pali, University of Calcutta and former Director, Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, Nalanda, for his Significant Contribution in the field of Ancient Indian Languages.</p>   |
|    | <p><b>R P CHANDA CENTENARY MEDAL</b><br/><b>Dr. Annapurna Chattopadhyay</b><br/>Former Reader and Head of the Department of History, Raja Narendra Lal Khan Women's College and Guest Teacher of Vidyasagar University, West Medinipur and veteran Archaeology Researcher, for her Significant Contribution in Archaeology.</p> |
|   | <p><b>RANADHIR ROY MEMORIAL GOLD MEDAL</b><br/><b>Pandit Kushal Das</b><br/>Eminent Indian Classical Sitar and Surbahar Player, for his Creative Contribution in Instrumental Music.</p>  |
|  | <p><b>PROFESSOR NIRMAL NATH CHATTERJEE MEDAL</b><br/><b>Dr. Abu Saeed Baidya</b><br/>Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at Department of Geological Sciences, Jadavpur University, for his Significant Contribution to the Knowledge of Economic Geology.</p>  |
|  | <p><b>SARATLAL BISWAS MEMORIAL MEDAL</b><br/><b>Ms. Madhuparna Paul</b><br/>Senior Research Fellow at Department of Geology, University of Calcutta, for her Best Published Work in Mineralogy and Petrology.</p>   |



## List of Awardees



### **PANDIT ISWAR CHANDRA VIDYASAGAR LECTURESHIP**

#### **Professor Amiya Dev**

Former Professor of Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University and former Vice-Chancellor, Vidyasagar University, for his Significant Contribution in the field of Humanities.



### **RAJA RAJENDRALAL MITRA MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP**

#### **Professor Tapati Guha-Thakurta**

Eminent Cultural Historian, for her Notable Contribution in the field of Indological Studies.



### **INDIRA GANDHI MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP**

#### **Professor Ramachandra Guha**

Eminent Indian Writer and Columnist, for his Significant Contribution in the field of Historical and Philosophical Trends.



### **PROFESSOR SUNITI KUMAR CHATTERJI MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP**

#### **Professor E. Annamalai**

Eminent Linguist, for his Significant Contribution in the field of Linguistics.



### **DR. SATYENDRA NATH SEN MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP**

#### **Professor Asis Kumar Banerjee**

Emeritus Professor of Economics, University of Calcutta and former Vice-Chancellor of University of Calcutta, for his Significant Contribution in the field of Social Science.








### **DR. PANCHANAN MITRA MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP**

#### **Professor Sarit Kumar Chaudhuri**

Professor of Anthropology at Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh and former Director, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya, Bhopal, for his Significant Contribution in the field of Anthropology.

## List of Awardees

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|    | <p><b>AVA MAITI MEMORIAL ANNUAL LECTURESHIP</b><br/><b>Professor Malini Bhattacharya</b><br/>Eminent Academician in the field of the Women's Movement, for her Significant Contribution towards Development of Indian Women.</p>  |
|    | <p><b>DR. BIMANBEHARI MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP</b><br/><b>Professor Kanan Bihari Goswami</b><br/>Former Professor and Head, Department of Bengali, Rabindra Bharati University and Emeritus Professor, Department of Bengali, Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda University, for his Notable Contribution in the field of Bengali Language and Literature.</p> |
|    | <p><b>SWAMI PRANAVANANDA MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP</b><br/><b>Dr. Nrisingha Prasad Bhaduri</b><br/>Eminent Indologist, for his Significant Contribution in the field of Religion and Culture.</p>  |
|   | <p><b>PROFESSOR MAYA DEB MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP</b><br/><b>Professor Meena Hariharan</b><br/>Professor at Centre for Health Psychology, University of Hyderabad, for her Significant Research Work on the Psychological/Social Problems of the Downtrodden Indian Rural Women.</p>  |
|  | <p><b>SUDHA BASU MEMORIAL BIENNIAL LECTURESHIP</b><br/><b>Professor Jogen Chowdhury</b><br/>Eminent Indian Painter, for his Significant Contribution in the field of Fine Arts and Culture.</p>   |

*Design & Layout*  
**Dhiman Chakraborty**  
*Controller of Finance, The Asiatic Society*



## President's Column

### Post-Truth-Blurring Facts with Fiction

In the July 13, 2020 edition, the *Washington Post* claimed that the then U. S. President, Donald Trump made more than 20,000 false or misleading claims throughout his tenure. In the American Watergate Scandal, President Nixon arranged to fix surveillance instruments at the office of the Democratic Party, which constituted the opposition. When this was exposed, President Nixon had to resign. American War against Iraq, which was mercilessly directed against President Saddam, was based on a false and escalating propaganda, that Iraq is a potential danger to humanity as it has stockpiled nuclear weapons and that it was the burdening duty of the Americans to liquidate Iraq in order to save mankind. These and such other numerous incidents have been happening throughout the world, where there is a feeding of a certain type of orchestrated news which will give birth to a certain type of desired outcome or beliefs, actions, movements – in the mind of the audience. When constructing news, different types of invented data or falsified data are produced. In some cases, even audio-tapes from a different situation at a different location is produced to 'prove' the reliability and authenticity of data. In many cases, news is framed like nursery rhymes aimed at promoting/reinforcing such sentiments as pseudo nationalism, provincialism, ethnic identity and the like. Most of the news in modern times are not aimed at promoting freedom of thought or expression – these, on the other hand, provide a kaleidoscope within which we should restrict our thinking. Sentiments or emotions are bolstered in such a way as to create a world of illusion making people run for an object which is not real. Obviously such a situation is potentially dangerous for a democratic society where people are thought of as hoards of followers rather than as being capable of rational and conscientious thinking. Information are manipulated to construct a favourable public opinion. This tendency multiplies manifold during election times, but not necessarily restricted to elections. On the other hand, it emanates from and affects the very foundation of modern society.

To describe the nature of the present era, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, in his *Wings of Fire* has commented, from pre-historic times, man has fought for food and shelter. With the passage of time, war has occurred to secure primacy of one's religion or for securing one's ideological supremacy. But today's era is characterized by the fight for supremacy in the economic and technological fields. As a result, economic and technological power

has become the means for securing political power and world domination. This political power is preserved and manipulated by constructing news which are fed upon the people leading people to believe that this is true. This results in a desired level of opinion on the part of them.

To denote this situation, the concepts of 'post-truth' and of 'post-truth' regime, have been applied by thinkers. Though the idea is not new, the term has been coined only recently. In 2016, Oxford Dictionary gave credit to a Serbian American play writer Steve Tesich for using the term first in 1992. The Dictionary defined the term as referring to "circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotions and personal beliefs". Tesich drew our attention to some events in contemporary American society which exemplify how political leaders manipulate information and events to influence public opinion leading him to make the statement: "we as free people have truly decided that we want to live in some post-truth world" and that "we are rapidly becoming prototypes of a people that totalitarian monsters could only drool about in their dreams".

This strategy of deception to control human mind is not new. The French Philosopher, Pareto, while forwarding his theory of the 'circulation of elites', opined that power never changes hands from the elites to the masses and that only one group of elites is replaced by another. They provide lip service to make people believe in the ideals of 'democracy', 'progress' or 'development' only in order to continue their rule. This situation of controlling news has increased manifold today with increasing power of technology in modern times. We have to remember that the word 'development' is not a panacea and that it has created a world having unequal impact on different classes and groups. Control of knowledge is linked with the control of power. Foucault showed that there is an intimate relation between power and knowledge and

that those exercising power have control over knowledge. The process of socialization makes the process of exercise of power on human mind appear as normal.

This process has been intensified in the late capitalism era where it has started selling ideas along with the products. The whole 'body shop' economy is based on ideas relating to patriarchal mind set related with 'femininity'. The attributes of feminine beauty like 'fairness', 'body shape' or vital statistics including the whole idea of consumerism are thus social creations and these influence the market. A vital link has been created between culture and economy. In fact, commodification has made economy cultural and culture economic. Adorno, a theorist of the Critical School of Sociology, had analysed how the culture industry represents a new form of ideological domination through 'mass deception'. Can we deny that the whole idea of 'Valentines day' is more economic than cultural induced by the ideas of gifts and presentations? One can even argue that 'love' itself has been commodified in this consumerist society.

Technological advancements have given birth to an entirely different mode of communication (Whats App, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter) where communications is made at the virtual level instead of the physical level. The internet society is a virtual society wherein the individual is free from the constraints of space and time. One's immediate neighbourhood, the people living in the nearby shanties or such surrounding phenomena like poverty or unemployment can easily be ignored where an individual lives in a 'make believe' world created by technology. Individuation is taking place due to which individual way of thinking is solely discussed without taking social problems in consideration; in the process, paradoxically, individuation is hampering the empowerment of the individual. Man becomes victim to a culture of falsehood and public life is the victim of deceptions, manipulations and falsehood. Due

to separation of time and space, a process of disembedding is happening. Social relations become independent of local contexts of interaction. A process of deterritorialization is occurring and individual is liberated from his traditional moorings based on family, kinship, neighbourhood and his own immediate community. In such a situation, he becomes easily the victim of propaganda based on unrealistic ideas.

The media, instead of hindering the process and instead of acting as the fourth pillar of democracy, is helping the process of the disempowerment of the individual. In a highly unequal and differentiated society, as our society is, the media mostly acts as a propaganda house lured by advertisements, positions of influence and power or even sometimes overt or covert threats. The 'disembedded' individual falls victim to the lure of a make-believe situation. As the social world becomes fragmented and competitive,

individual becomes the members of an imagined community based on religion or linguism or regionalism or other obscurantist ideas. People's interests are diverted from real issues. As people become increasingly unable to discern facts from fictions, politicians, bureaucrats or the existing order of privileges deliberately take recourse to falsehood deals to lure and deceive the citizens. The process is multiplied during election times because in order to retain or attain power, all sorts of lures are offered to people and this is what has been termed as a post-truth phenomenon. The real issues affecting the life and livelihood of the people are camouflaged and all sorts of frivolous issues are raised and come to the fore. The nexus between the powerful class and the powerful media helps quicken this process of camouflaging. Technology comes in handy to form this nexus and the isolated existence of the individual makes him fall to the lure of such 'post-truth' phenomena.



(Swapan Kumar Pramanick)  
President



Professor **Ranjit Sen**, a Life Member and the erstwhile General Secretary of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata and currently a Council Member representing the Employees' Union of the Society, has been awarded the D.Litt. Degree by the Council of the Jadavpur University for his thesis on the colonial urbanization of Calcutta. He was awarded Ph.D. degree by Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata, in 1983 for his thesis on the transformation of Bengal's body politic in the eighteenth century and his D.Litt. degree by the same University in 1986 for his thesis on Economics of Revenue Maximisation in the early colonial period in Bengal.



(1933-2021)

## **Professor Isha Mahammad : Artist, Administrator and Teacher**

I was about 16 when I joined the college of art as a student, after completing preparatory years, Professor Mahammad was my first teacher in the painting department, that's the time I realised how meticulous and disciplined person he was. Our class started at 10:15 AM, and he was there before any of us arrived –it was a tremendous learning process. He taught us how to hold the pallet, how to arrange the colours and keep our brushes and oil cans clean, honestly later on as a teacher I tried to teach the same to my students – he had a very unique method of teaching. He demonstrated drawing from life models, he taught us how to use transparent watercolour and the various techniques of oil painting. When he demonstrated I remember students and teachers from other classes came and stood spellbound behind him. He inspired us to explore new methods and media. What I realised was, his understanding of paintings and art in general was incredible, he understood the possibility in each one of us and thus our learning went on. He has by then travelled to the west, and very often took us to the library to discuss history of art both Indian and Western.

1985 was a new beginning for me, joined as a young lecturer at the college of art, Professor Mahammad was the officer-in-charge then. His superb way of running the college was unbelievable; in spite of his work pressure in the office he regularly took classes in the department, participated in every event in the college– he worked like a clock.

Professor Mahammad as an artist has gone through a few phases, but the subject matter remained the same, he painted common people around the city; empathy with the deprived people was clearly visible in his paintings, later on he developed a surrealist trend in his work. He was a socialist and was deeply concerned about the unequal social condition; undoubtedly he was a wizard of portraiture, many of his life size works are preserved in important institution all over country, he had many exhibitions in important galleries of India and abroad.

As the President of The Asiatic Society he organised national and international events, with great confidence. He was very mild-mannered and friendly person with strong personality, an excellent father to his son Shamim, daughter Pinky, and also a dutiful husband. His demise has undoubtedly created huge void in the art world.

With respect from core of my heart,

**Dipali Bhattacharya**  
Former Principal  
Government College of Art and Craft, Calcutta

## Professor Subir Kumar Dutta : A Teacher of Teachers



(1935-2021)

*Do not judge a book by its cover, do respect the  
downtrodden people and create an environment to develop their talents.*

Professor Subir Kumar Dutta often used to say above mentioned words to us to motivate the young generation for the cultivation of humanity in general and science in particular. We are paying our heartfelt homage to this renowned senior-most pathologist and legend in the field of Pathology and Bacteriology in India, who passed away on 14 May 2021 due to COVID-19, a sad demise, a great loss to the medical fraternity as well as to the common people. He was really a harbinger of the poorer section of the society and they are mourning the death of Dr. Subir Kumar Dutta (Dr. S. K. D.) with tears in the eyes.

Dr. S. K. D. was born on 24 November 1935 at Calcutta in his Taltala residence. His father, Dr. Sailendra Nath Dutta was also a physician and nephew of great physician scientist Dr. Kartik Chandra Bose. Dr. S. K. D. passed Matriculation from Hindu School in 1951, probably in the last batch of the Matriculation Course, ISC from the then Presidency College in 1953. After that he was admitted to Calcutta Medical College and passed MBBS in 1958. His thirst for knowledge continued to be increased and for that matter he did DCP in 1963 from School of Tropical Medicine, Calcutta; Dip. Basic Med. Sc. from University College of Medicine, Calcutta in 1964 and thereafter did M.D. in pathological science in 1968 from Calcutta University. He had a bright academic career.

As a teacher in the faculty of medicine Dr. S. K. D. was both outstanding and popular too, no doubt, a teacher of teachers. A long history of attachments in the teachings posts— a Clinical Pathologist at NRS Medical College (1963-67), Clinical Tutor, NRS Medical College (1968-74), Lecturer in Pathology UCM (1974-86), Reader (1986-89), Professor (1989-2000) and Dean of Medicine in 1996-97 and 1998.

Within this long span of teaching career, at least 20 students did MD and 2 students did PhD in Pathology under his tutelage and guidance. He was the paper-setter and examiner of MBBS, DCP, MD, DNB, BDS at different universities in Assam, Odisha, Patna, Calcutta University, AIIMS etc.

Even Dr. S. K. D. was involved in various praiseworthy research works like female infertility, immunopath of Sarcoidosis, neuro immunology, Arsenic toxicity and so on, which for that matter created at least 75 papers to his credit, published in national

and international journals. Even he contributed chapters and suggestions in different medical text books like, *Textbook of Gynecology* by D.C. Dutta, *Anticancer Botanicals* by Sukanya Bhattacharya etc. He acted as an Editor of the renowned century-old *Calcutta Medical Journal* for a long time.

Dr. S. K. D. used to take part in many a conference both in the country and abroad and was the President of Indian Association of Pathologists and Microbiologists in 2004. The conferences were normally adorned with his precious orations from which a large section of students were benefitted.

Dr. S. K. D. was the Executive Director of the reputed Scientific Clinical Laboratory Pvt. Ltd. at Taltala and due to his untiring dedication for last 60 years, this laboratory stands atop with full of sincerity, high quality, faithfulness and excellence.

Dr. S. K. D. was attached to lot of Educational Institutions as General Council, West Bengal University of Health Sciences; Vice-President, West Bengal Medical Council; Public Health Advisory Group, West Bengal State Council of Science and Technology; Fellow, West Bengal State Medical Faculty; Medical Science Secretary, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata; Chairman, Institutional Ethical Committee, I.P.G.M.E.R., Eye Care and Research Centre, Calcutta University. Moreover, he was the Member of Governing Body of Institute of Reproductive Medicine; Research Committee, Thakurpukur Cancer Hospital; Bio-ethics Committee, National Institute of Cholera and Enteric Diseases; Indian Medical Association; Calcutta Medical Club; Diabetic Association of India etc. He was the Founder-fellow of Indian College of Pathologists, IMA Academy of Medical Specialities (Pathology) and State Medical Faculty (W.B.).

Apart from his professional activities, Dr. S. K. D. was actively involved and poured his efforts and suggestions for the bettermost and upliftment of the social beneficence, which led him to work as President, People's Relief Committee; President, Ganadapan; President, Anath Bhandar; Vice-President, Vivekananda Swasthya Seba Sangha; Member, Indian Red Cross Society, Hind Kusth Nibarana Sangha, Bengal Tuberculosis Association, Mohan Bagan Athletic Club, Life Member of Calcutta Club, Cricket Association of Bengal, Bharat Sabha etc.

Throughout his life Dr. S. K. D. used to think of, do as much as he could and give valuable suggestions and plannings for the betterment of any pro-people work in the society. For that matter, he became the well-wisher and advisor of Taltala Public Library (established : 1842), Medical Service Centre, *Taltala Darpan Patrika*, Prabin Sudhijan Samity, Madhya Kolikata Sangskritic Sanstha etc.

For his outstanding contributions as a teacher, Professor Subir Kumar Dutta was conferred 'Eminent Teacher Award' by Calcutta University in 2003. He was awarded with prestigious 'Sailendranath and Manjula Dey Memorial Medal-2019' from Asiatic Society. A long list of awards and honours— ' Dr. B. C. Roy Memorial Award (2017) from Medical College Ex-students' Association; 'Life time Achievement Award (2010)' from IMA; 'Bishistha Chikitsak Samman' (2019) from Govt. of W.B.; 'Life time Achievement Award' (2016) from Ghosh Destidar Institute for Fertility Research; 'Life time Achievement Award' (2017) from Rotary Club of East Calcutta; 'Life time Achievement



## In Memoriam

Award (2017), NRS Medical College Ex-students' Association; 'Life time Achievement Award' (2019) from Sambad Pratidin and so on.

With the Sad demise of Dr. S. K. D. we have lost a valiant personality, an ardent academician, a dedicated research worker, a great teacher, a charming fatherly personality, helpful friend, a saintly philosopher and above all a divine human being, always with a sweet smile on the face. People will remember him for years to come.

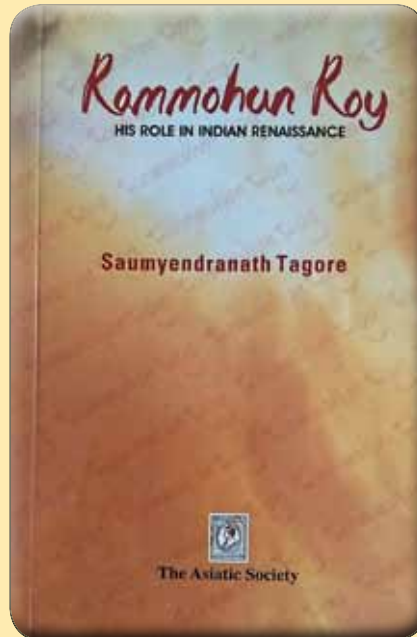
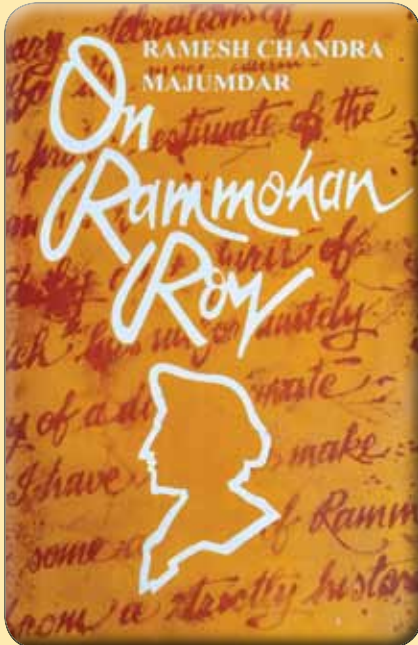
We pay our homage to this great person.

[Acknowledgement : Mrs. Nandita Basu, Mr. Amal Dey]

**Dr. Sankar Kumar Nath**

Medical Science Secretary, The Asiatic Society

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## Condolence Message



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**Asto Ghosh**

The Members, Staff members and Research Fellows of the Asiatic Society are extremely shocked to learn about the sad and sudden demise of Shri Asto Ghosh, Cook of the Asiatic Society who expired at night on 3 May 2021. His service to the Society was undoubtedly remarkable. His long association with the Society was of immense help to his colleagues as well as to the office.

The Members, Staff members and Research Fellows of the Society will miss him very much. They express their heartfelt condolence and share their grief with all the members of the bereaved family and pay homage to his memory. May his noble soul rest in eternal peace.

Kolkata, the 27th day of May, 2021



**Harish Chandra Das**

The Members, Staff members and Research Fellows of the Asiatic Society are extremely shocked to learn about the sad and sudden demise of Shri Harish Chandra Das, Security Guard of the Asiatic Society who expired at night on 26 May 2021. His service to the Society was undoubtedly remarkable. His long association with the Society was of immense help to his colleagues as well as to the office.

The Members, Staff members and Research Fellows of the Society will miss him very much. They express their heartfelt condolence and share their grief with all the members of the bereaved family and pay homage to his memory. May his noble soul rest in eternal peace.

Kolkata, the 27th day of May, 2021

## A Journey through European's Oil Painting in the Collection of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata

**Somnath Mukherjee**

Member of the Council, The Asiatic Society

Everyone, in one day or other, interested in the progress of Arts and Fine Arts in India, attained over the years, is well aware of the rich and fine collection in Kolkata's Asiatic Society, Victoria Memorial Hall and Academy of Fine Arts. It primarily consists of specimens of paintings of different schools in India, in particular, paintings of master artists, contemporary graphic art and miniatures and also rare value of manuscripts.

Few persons are, however, aware that the Asiatic Society has also collected, over the years, a sizeable number of oil paintings, in various forms, preferably engravings, done by British artists of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The criterion of their selection is that these must mainly relate to Indian subject – architecture, historical events, buildings, palaces, monuments, tombs, historical ruins, forts, bridges besides landscapes – mountains, rivers, valleys, waterfalls, river banks, ghats. These are apart from their artistic value, of immense relevance, not only as contemporary artistic studies on India, but also as visual documents of history of the period to which they relate.

Sir William Foster compiled a list of 64 British painter, professional and amateur, who came to India between 1760 and 1815. The list is perhaps more illustrative than exhaustive. At any rate there is evidence to show that till the middle of the eighties of the 18th cent, there arrived in India at least 23 artists from Britain. On an average their performance fell short of their seal or interest. So far as the pre-Daniell era (1785-93) is concerned, the

portrait painters apart, the most significant, though not the most successful was William Hodges.

Hodges was the pioneer among the British landscape painters in India, and any art-gallery which may possess his album of engravings, not to speak of his paintings in oils, may well feel proud of them. Unfortunately, little is known of his work in India even though unlike any of his contemporaries or successors Hodges has left behind an Account of Travels in India (1760-83). His works were not as prolific as Daniells' but even though one can hardly ignore the fact that we owe to him for one of the earliest Calcutta scenes. A view of Calcutta from the Fort William is quite noteworthy.

The alien Britishers in the early days of their rule were not likely either to check the decay of indigenous artistic traditions or to initiate a new and fruitful movement for resurgence of the artistic instinct and activities of this land.

These early Britishers, the makers of the British empire in India, were men of little learning and culture, whose only object was to expand the Company's trade and political hegemony in India and to acquire vast fortunes for themselves in the offing. It is true that reports of the fabulous wealth of the company's servants attracted a large number of British artists to India. But the conditions in the 18th and 19th centuries were not suitable for any real and happy commingling of ideas and modes of two alien traditions to prepare the ground for a new movement in art.

Tilly Kettle arrived in India in 1764 and the news of his success induced many others of his profession to follow him. Till 1820 the flow of British artists to India was more or less, continuous and regular; they worked for the company's new Nawabs and for Indian princess and nobles. After 1820 the regular flow stopped as a result of saturation in the demand for works of the British artists.

The paintings executed by the British artists in India fall into three categories. In the earliest days the fashion seems to have been for large-size oil paintings a mode that was entirely alien to India. Tilly Kettle, John Zoffany and Arthur Devis were the three best exponents of this mode and the new craze amassed a vast wealth of his art. John Smart, Ozias Humphrey and George Chinnery were the leaders of the art of miniature painting, particularly portraits on ivory. This mode ousted the large-sized oils from favour. The third category of British painting in India consisted of water-colour drawings, either as ends in themselves or as studies for subsequent oil paintings, engravings, aquatints or lithographs. William Hodges, Thomas and William Daniells (uncle and nephew) and others executed in this mode a large number of views and landscapes which were highly popular in Europe.

Among the western artists who sojourned in India, a few belong to the top rank, because of several Royal Academicians were among them. The paintings executed by them in various media were also certainly not small in number. As for instance the Asiatic Society and Victoria Memorial Hall in Kolkata have in their collection 18 oil paintings, 140 original works by Thomas and William Daniells. It is surprising that the works of the British artists did not evince any Indian feeling or produce any impact on indigenous painting. The west and the east had definitely contrasting traditions of art and it was difficult to combine the two unless a mutual understanding was possible. The style and modes which the British artists brought to India

was firmly established in the western mould from which any derivation was considered to be a sacrilege. Their sense of superiority precluded, again, any receptive attitude or mood on their part so as to enable them to know and understand the Indian modes and techniques with reverence.

Later, from the second quarter of the 19th cent., Indian artists received some training in Western techniques and styles for works under company's commissions. At that time indigenous traditions had reached practically the lowest ebb, and the artists in their moribund state had already lost the instinct and capability required for a better understanding and assimilation of the alien trend. Little could they imbibe of the new techniques and styles, much less of their feeling and spirit. The result was the emergence of some mixed styles, commonly called Anglo-Indian or Indo-British, in different parts of our country, their divergences mainly depending on the differing indigenous modes. On the whole, none of these styles can be said to have much artistic merit. Their main purpose was illustration and documentation. In Eastern India the Patna School of Painting furnished as are instance of this mixed art.

With the growth of Western education schools of art were established in different centers for art instruction to Indians. Presided over by European artists the courses of teaching in such schools aimed at copying faithfully Western works of art in occidental technique and modes. In such a method there was very little scope for originality or individuality. In fact, qualities were then baulked at. In spite of the fine delineative skill, the paintings of the students and artists trained in this method lacked character and appeared to be sham and ineffective. No great art can be fostered by ignoring the traditions of the soil and its environment.

The Asiatic Society has a large collection of oil paintings containing 78 in number as per the accession register. The list of oil painting is as follows :

## Art Appreciation

| Sl.no. | Acc. no. | Title                         | Artist              |
|--------|----------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1.     | 31       | Cupid Asleep on a Cloud       | Sir Joshua Reynolds |
| 2.     | 40       | A Pastoral Scene              | James Ward          |
| 3.     | 47       | Prasanta Kumar Tagore         | Thomas Roods        |
| 4.     | 65       | The Judgement of Paris        | Unknown             |
| 5.     | 66       | The Choice of Hercules        | Unknown             |
| 6.     | 78       | Premendra Mitra               | Unknown             |
| 7.     | 1        | The Ford : A View in Scotland | Robert Home         |
| 8.     | 17       | Foul Weather at Sea           | Robert Home         |
| 9.     | 64       | Nirmal Kumar Bose             | M. Biswas           |
| 10.    | 73       | Henry Whitelock Torrens       | Unknown             |
| 11.    | 58       | Satyabrata Samasrami          | Unknown             |
| 12.    | 13       | The Two Daniells              | Robert Home         |
| 13.    | 55       | Sir Thomas Holland            | Unknown             |
| 14.    | 43       | John De Witt                  | David               |
| 15.    | 14       | The Village Ghat              | Robert Home         |
| 16.    | 44       | Self-portrait                 | George Chinnery     |
| 17.    | 45       | Himalayan Symphony            | Nicholas Roerich    |
| 18.    | 51       | The Women taken in Adultery   | Domeni Chino        |
| 19.    | 42       | Warren Hastings               | Kettle              |
| 20.    | 27       | H. T. Prinsep                 | F.R. Say            |
| 21.    | 15       | Ruins of Mahabalipuram        | Robert Home         |
| 22.    | 16       | Ruins of Mahabalipuram        | Robert Home         |
| 23.    | 5        | Earl of Minto                 | Robert Home         |
| 24.    | 10       | General Jones                 | Robert Home         |
| 25.    | 12       | Charles Earl Cornwallis       | Robert Home         |
| 26.    | 11       | Richard Marquis Wellesley     | Robert Home         |
| 27.    | 37       | Robert Home                   | A. Gregory          |
| 28.    | 6        | Mr. J. D. Patterson           | Robert Home         |
| 29.    | 3        | Sir Edward Paget              | Robert Home         |
| 30.    | 23       | H. H. Wilson                  | Robert Home         |
| 31.    | 68       | The Muleteer                  | Unknown             |
| 32.    | 33       | View in Wales (Sunrise)       | A. Devis            |
| 33.    | 41       | Sir Edward Ryan               | T.B. Lawrence       |
| 34.    | 52       | Return of the Prodigal        | Banifazi            |
| 35.    | 49       | The Farmer's Household        | G. S. Moreland      |

## Art Appreciation

| Sl.no. | Acc. no. | Title   | Artist              |
|--------|----------|---|---------------------|
| 36.    | 69       | The Death of Cardinal Wolsey                                | Unknown             |
| 37.    | 38       | William Wilberforce Bird                                    | Francis Grant       |
| 38.    | 59       | N. Annandale  | Unknown             |
| 39.    | 63       | Pramatha Nath Bose  | Unknown             |
| 40.    | 28       | Dr. John Adam   | George Beechy       |
| 41.    | 21       | Dr. James Hare  | Robert Home         |
| 42.    | 20       | Dr. John Laired   | Robert Home         |
| 43.    | 74       | Sir David Ochterlony  | Unknown             |
| 44.    | 34       | Dr. George Green Spilsbury                                  | Krum Holtz          |
| 45.    | 24       | The Ruins of a Bridge                                       | Robert Home         |
| 46.    | 76       | Satyendra Nath Sen  | Paritosh Sen        |
| 47.    | 18       | Sir William Jones   | Robert Home         |
| 48.    | 30       | Sir William Jones as a Boy                                  | Sir Joshua Reynolds |
| 49.    | 32       | View in Wales (sunset)                                      | A.Devis             |
| 50.    | 35       | Cleopatra   | Guido               |
| 51.    | 53       | The Crowning of Marie De Medici                             | Rubens              |
| 52.    | 62       | David Ezra  | Unknown             |
| 53.    | 75       | Durbar held by Rajah of Kotah in honour of William Bentinck | Unknown             |
| 54.    | 77       | Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar                             | Ashesh Kumar Mitra  |
| 55.    | 2        | Shah Ghaziu-d-din Hayder, King of Oudh (1814-1827)          | Robert Home         |
| 56.    | 4        | A. Pelican  | Robert Home         |
| 57.    | 7        | Dr. Simon Nicholson F. R. C. S.                             | Robert Home         |
| 58.    | 8        | Dr. John Fleming  | Robert Home         |
| 59.    | 9        | Nusserat Jung, Nawab of Deccan                              | Robert Home         |
| 60.    | 19       | Sir George H. Barlow  | Robert Home         |
| 61.    | 22       | Col. J. Grant Duff  | Robert Home         |
| 62.    | 25       | Sir William Jones   | Robert Home         |
| 63.    | 26       | Raja Sir Radha Kanta Deb Bahadur                            | F. R. Say           |
| 64.    | 29       | A Hindustani Family   | George Beechy       |
| 65.    | 36       | Ferdinand Stoliezka   | Dickinson           |
| 66.    | 39       | Arthur Grote  | Knight              |
| 67.    | 46       | A Ghat at Benaras   | Daniell             |
| 68.    | 48       | Cathedral at Antwerp  | Stenwich, the Elder |
| 69.    | 50       | The Lake of Lugano  | J. E. Limerat       |

| Sl.no. | Acc. no. | Title                       | Artist    |
|--------|----------|-----------------------------|-----------|
| 70.    | 54       | The Infant Christ           | Rubens    |
| 71.    | 56       | Phillippee Due D'Orleans    | Unknown   |
| 72.    | 57       | Raja Rajendra Lala Mitra    | Unknown   |
| 73.    | 60       | Sir Norman G. A. Edgley     | Unknown   |
| 74.    | 61       | Head of an Old man          | Unknown   |
| 75.    | 67       | The Triumphal Arch of Titus | Unknown   |
| 76.    | 70       | The Affrighted Horse        | Unknown   |
| 77.    | 71       | The Rabbi-A Jewish Doctor   | Unknown   |
| 78.    | 72       | C. C. Grose                 | Atul Bose |

From the above list of British and European painters, some of them are to be specially mentioned for our acquaintance such as Tilly Kettle, Sir Joshua Reynolds, Arthur Devis and G. S. Morland.

#### TILLY KETTLE (1735-86) ENGLAND (CLASSICAL PHASE OF BRITAIN)

Kettle studied in the St. Martin's Lane Academy and improved himself by copying Reynold's portrait of 'Marchi' with variations. His first work, in the early 1760's is wholly dependent on Reynolds, and of rather good qualities. In the middle of the 1760's, he was travelling the Midlands and then settled in London, where he leaned somewhat to the style of Cotes. His masterpiece is 'An Admiral in his cabin issuing orders' 1768 at Highnam court. This excellent and original composition should have won him a place in the Academy, but he was disappointed, and this may have led him to go to India in 1769, the first painter of any consequence to make that journey.

In India he prospered exceedingly from 1769 to 1776 doing numerous portraits of the Native Princes and Nawabs. But success did not attend his return to London, although such portraits as 'Admiral Kempenfeldt', 1783 at Greenwich are fully up to the level of Dance and Hone. After a short visit to Dublin he died in the Syrian Desert on his way to India to recoup his fortunes. Kettle's portraits can be readily recognized by his tendency to render

the human skull as of the shape of a football, but he has a pleasant and decorative key of colours and ranks fairly high among the lesser portraits of the time. (Portrait of Warren Hastings)



#### SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS (1723-92)

Anyone who seeks to estimate the qualities of Reynolds must take into account his virtues both as a painter and as an historian. It is easier to criticize him as a painter. He was seriously insensitive to draughtmanship, if by 'draughtmanship we mean only a feeling for the beauty of line, a quality which Gainsborough possessed in a high degree.'

It is worthwhile therefore to define the range of his variety, and to try and indicate the principles which controlled it, and which give a unity to Reynolds's work as a whole. A consideration of Reynolds in relation to Kneeler and Van Dyck will help to make clear his range. Kneller had been a master of the historical portrait in the sense that he had a fine eye for the lineaments of the face (men) and for the outward and visible marks of character: but he fitted his admirably observed faces into a set of stock patterns, which did nothing to bring out and a good deal to conceal the character of the sitter. His men are all dissimulators with different faces, and most of his women are puppets. Van Dyck, on the other hand, was extremely sensitive to the shades of personal character and even modified his brushwork in accordance with his view of his sitter. But his sitters almost all belonged, in England, to the small circle of the court and are invested with the same kind of elegance.

The strata of society from which Reynolds drew his sitters were much more varied than had been the case with Van Dyck, and Reynolds, in his best portraits, shows as much concern with the character of the type to which his sitter belongs, as with the individual character of his sitter. The raising status of the British artist was the principal objective of Reynolds's life and the mainspring of his conduct as first President of the Royal Academy. It was an objective in which he was wholly successful and his achievement in this field may be thought to have contributed more than anything to making possible the flowering of a British school of painting of which we may be legitimately proud.

There is a trait of character, revealed in a story from Reynolds's early youth, which marks him out from the generations before him and suggests the forerunner of the romantic period. Before serving his apprenticeship to Hudson in London, there was a discussion at home of an alternative career for him, and he broke out with the statement that "he would rather be an apothecary than

an ordinary painter". Hogarth, one may surmise, would have sympathized with this, but the ambition of all earlier British 18th cent. Portraitists, was to be a successful ordinary painter. It was this spirit, in which he set out, which means Reynolds's journey to Italy was so memorable and so different from all earlier painters' years of Italian study.

He sailed for Italy with his friend Commodore (later Admiral and viscount) Keppel, landed in January 1750, and remained in Rome until May 1752, when he came home overland with short stays at Florence, Parma, Bologna, Venice and Paris. Early in 1753 he settled in London and by 1755 he had as many as a hundred sitters and was employing considerable studio help. The art work with which Reynolds secured his reputation was the 'Commodore Keppel of 1753 at Greenwich. By no means all Reynolds's portraits make so complete a break away with the old style. Heroic overtones were not always possible and the great bulk of his commissions were for more domestic portraits than for full-lengths. A typical example is the Mrs. Francis Beckford of 1756 at the Tata Gallery, a single three-quarter-lengths figure, in a far from easy or natural pose, and with as much emphasis on the dress, created and enriched by a journey that he made to Flanders and Holland in the summer of 1781. On this occasion he particularly studied Rubens and was impressed by the combination of dramatic and informal elements in some of his portraits, and also by the rich texture of his picture surface. The result was apparent at once in his own work and at its height in the Academy of 1786, at which he showed 'The Dutchess of Devonshire and her Daughter' and 'Joshua Sharpe'. It is instructive to compare the picture of the Dutchess with the Anthrop group of her mother with herself as a child painted a quarter of a century before. Both are, in a sense, intimate pictures of a mother and child (c.f. Asiatic Society's collection, William Jones as a boy).

But the serenity of the earlier picture, which owes allegiance to the Italian masters



of the High Renaissance, has given a way to a lively and dramatic style akin to Ruben's Baroque. The timeless has given place to the modern, and there is something more modern about the later work which announces the age when fashions in dress and gesture made up a large part of the character of men and women. Reynolds kept a fine balance between his baroque curtains of sealing – wax red, the shimmering muslins and the glossy blacks of men's or women's dress, and his closely characterized faces.



The Joshua Sharpe and the 'Lord Heathfield' (Royal Academy 1788) may be taken as among the finest examples of his latest style of men's portrait, one a study of a man of thought (c.f. William Jones as a boy), the other of a man of action.

Both are pictures of types as well as of individuals, and much richer compositional resources have gone to their making than in his earlier portraits.

Not all his later works is contrived with such thought and he used the classical mode, which perhaps comes most easily to him on appropriate occasions even in his latest works. But until his eyesight began to fail in 1789 and he was forced to give up painting,

he was constantly developing new resources in his creations. Judged by the standard of the very considerable number of his finer works, we can say without hesitation that he was the chief intellectual force in the first great age of British painting.

**GEORGE MORLAND**  
(26/8/1763 - 29/10/1804)

English genre, landscape and animal painter whose work was much imitated in England during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

At the 10, Morland exhibited sketches at the Royal Academy and was apprenticed from 1777 to 1784 to his father, Robert Morland, a painter and picture restorer. In 1780 his first signed engraving was published, and in 1781 his painting, 'A Hovel with Asses' was exhibited at the Academy. He studied briefly at the Royal Academy Schools and held in his first one-man show of paintings on private premises. In July 1786 he married Anne Ward, sister to William Ward, the engraver. After settling in London, Morland soon abandoned portraiture for sentimental rustic genre, which through wards engravings, satisfied a steady public demand for the picturesque. Morland's best work occurred between 1787 and 1794, after which his painting deteriorated.

George Charles Morland was an English genre painter, the son of a minor artist and art dealer, to whom he was apprenticed before entering the Royal Academy Schools in 1784. He set up as a portrait-painter in London in 1785, but soon discovered a more lucrative practice in painting sentimental fancy pictures of the type popularized by Francis Wheatley. About 1790 his interests shifted to rustic and picturesque themes. His best compositions date to the early 1790s and include a variety of farmyard and hunt scenes, coastal views with smugglers, and gypsy encampments, to which he was apparently no stranger during the course of his dissolute life. His debt to the 17th century Dutch landscapists is most evident in his winter landscapes,

which are rich in texture and masterly in design. Morland's promising development was halted by the rapid decline of his health and powers after 1800.

Before I conclude the journey I may recall and acknowledge the untiring efforts made by Professor Isha Mahammad with valuable guidance. In his last Presidential Address in the Annual General Meeting 2020, he spoke eloquently "Coming back to art and artifacts and most valuable possession of oil paintings of the Society, to be taken care of for the posterity. About 70 oil paintings, some of which are quite invaluable for its time, quality and history.

"From the very beginning of my assuming the charges as President of the Society.... I took special interest and care for proper identification of the works and started to write artistic excellence and appreciation of the works, their physical condition and with elaborate, historical notes.... which are all published in the Monthly Bulletins of the Society and now these paintings were photographed by professional, needs to be published in a Book form as an illustrated catalogue."

Again I may mention here that the Asiatic Society has its possession a few paintings which have been the stamp of a period from Renaissance to Neo-classical and Romantic. For example, a painting titled 'Cleopatra' by Guido Reni of Italian Renaissance and 'Farmers Household' by G. S. Moreland and a few more are of Dutch and French origin, valuation of which may soar up to a million dollar of parted with the any renowned Museum of London.

So I humbly request of the present authority of the Asiatic Society that they should provide a space of the new two-storey on the existing building, required for Art Gallery. Storage and display of those paintings as to further develop and awareness and knowledge of our proud possession and at the same time save/protect them from total

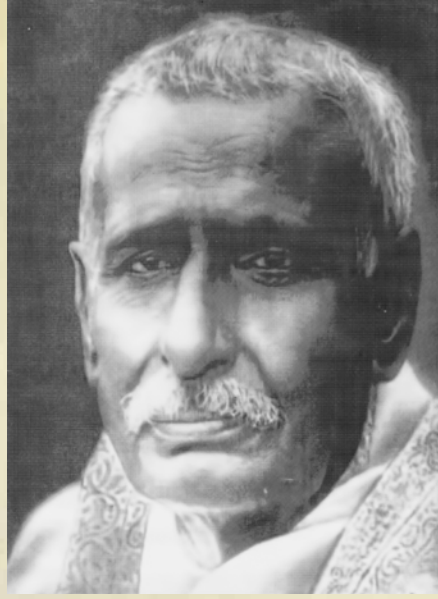
decay. With such activities we may pay our homage to our former President Professor Isha Mahammad. May his soul rest in peace.



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## Mahamahopadhyaya Haraprasad Shastri (1853-1931)



आचार्यमनीषि-हरप्रसादशास्त्री स्मरणे

दीपक घोष

प्राचीनप्राच्यविद्या युगयुगसुचिता भारतीयत्वमूर्त्तो  
कालेऽनादौ स्फुटात्मा कुसुमितमुकुला पूतचिन्मृत्तिकायाम् ।  
वेदप्राणा सुसिक्ता विबुधजनगणैः संस्कृतप्राकृताद्यैः  
भाराक्रान्ता समुच्चा फलधनविद्या भारते भारतेऽस्मिन् ॥१॥

सेयं विद्या सुवर्णोज्ज्वलकरनिकिरा शाश्वती भारतीया  
प्रास्तं याति क्व हंहो नभसि विधिवशाद् भारते वङ्गदेशे ।  
काले काले विवर्णा विलयपथपदा वङ्गियास्तद् विमूढा  
आशाच्छन्ना तमोभिर्घनघनसदृशैर्मार्गरोधः पुरस्तात् ॥२॥

अर्वाचीना प्रतीच्या चलचलचरणा भिन्नरूपाऽपरैका  
विद्या स्थानं विलिप्सुर्नवनवविषया चाकचिक्याऽभिनुतना ।  
प्राञ्चि प्रान्ते विकीर्णा वियति बहुतरं भारते वङ्गभूमे-  
राविर्भूता युगान्तं रचयति किमु वा दण्डिनी राजवेशा ॥३॥

यात्येकतोऽस्तशिखरं किल पूर्वविद्या  
विद्यैकतः समुदितः किल पश्चिमान्या ।  
तेजोयुगस्य युगपद् व्यसनोदयाभ्या-  
माविष्कृतं नवयुगं नववङ्गभाले ॥४॥

वङ्गस्य भाग्यगगनं परिभासयन्तो  
दुर्मेशक्तिपुरुषाः प्रतिभाप्रदीप्या ।  
उत्तोलितोर्द्धपरिघाऽभयदद्विबाहू  
ये केचनोदयमिता युगसन्धिकाले ॥५॥

तेषां भवानेकतमः सुदुर्लभः  
समं चलिष्णू भवतो द्विबाहू ।  
प्राच्या प्रतीच्या च समं मनीषा  
कविर्मनीषी नवसव्यसाची ॥६॥

शास्त्रे सुशाणितधियो वयमेव नान्ये  
काव्ये सुकोमलधियो वयमेव नान्ये ।  
नूनं कठोरकुलिशाः सुकुमारपुष्पा  
वङ्गे वयं नवतया भवता प्रपन्नम् ॥७॥

नास्तिक्यबौद्धेष्वपि दर्शनेषु समं भवान् सागरपारयातः ।  
सर्वं समं संस्कृतपालिशान्त्रं हरप्रसादाद् हरति स्वधियि ॥८॥

प्राचीनराशीकृतपुस्तिकासु या मुद्रिता या न च मुद्रिता अपि ।  
सनातनी धीर्भवतोऽखिलासु स्वच्छन्दतः क्रीडति सव्यसाचिन् ॥९॥

विद्यावंशे भारते वङ्गभूमौ दीप्तो दीपः प्राक्तनानामृषीणाम् ।  
अम्लानास्तां दीपधारोत्तरेषु धन्यो धन्यो मातृभूमेः सुपुत्रः ॥१०॥

पूर्वं समाविर्भवतीह वङ्गे  
सार्धैकयुक्ताच् छतवर्षकालात् ।  
शास्त्री मनीषी स हरप्रसादः  
श्रद्धाञ्जलिं स्वीकुरुतां वितम्रम् ॥११॥

## Mm. Haraprasad Shastri and The Asiatic Society

**Bandana Mukherjee**

Research Officer, The Asiatic Society

This is a brief note about the versatile genius and outstanding scholar of Indian Studies in the 19th to 20th century – Mm. Haraprasad Shastri, who occupied the glorious chair of the President of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata from 1919-1921.

Mm. Haraprasad Shastri was an erudite Sanskrit scholar, who belonged to the Brahmin *Nyayaratna* family of Naihati. In fact, he had an innate inquisitiveness of studying multiple branches of learning viz. Languages and Linguistics, Archaeology, History, Philosophy and Literature. This is revealed through his publications in the Journals, Memoirs etc. of the Asiatic Society [Pl. see *Index to the publications of the Asiatic Society* by Sibadas Choudhury, pp. 271-272 no. 4158-4184]. Other than Sanskrit, Mm. Haraprasad Shastri knew Pali, Prakrit, Apabhramsa languages and varieties of scripts that helped him read manuscripts. His studies on the unpublished materials, brought out many new ideas and theories that widened the scope of researches on Indological studies.

The talent of Mm. Haraprasad Shastri grew in full form after his association with the Asiatic Society, Kolkata. He became the member of the Asiatic Society on 5 February 1885. The Society subsequently made him its Vice-President for life. Mm. Haraprasad Shastri initiated the study of Indology under the guidance of Raja Rajendralala Mitra. It was Rajendralala Mitra, the first Indian President of the Asiatic Society, who brought young Haraprasad to the Asiatic Society as

his Research Assistant. His technique of teaching and constant inspiration motivated the young scholar to understand the intricacies and problems of reading unknown texts.

Following the footsteps of B. H. Hodgson and Csoma de Koros, Rajendralala Mitra started to search and collect manuscript from different sources of India and Nepal. In this work he was assisted by Haraprasad Shastri. The result of searching of manuscripts by Rajendralala Mitra was reflected in his monumental work of *Notices of the Sanskrit Manuscripts* in 15 volumes [first series vol. I-X, part I by Rajendralala Mitra and part 2 of vol. X to XV including an index volume completed by Haraprasad Shastri]. In the introduction of the *Notices of the Sanskrit Manuscripts*, Rajendralala Mitra acknowledged the academic assistance rendered by Haraprasad Shastri, which is as follows :

“Babu Haraprasad Shastri offered me his co-operation and translated the abstract of 16 of the larger works.”

The Society entrusted Haraprasad Shastri with the task of collecting manuscripts in 1891 after the sad demise of Rajendralala Mitra and appointed him as a Director for Conducting Operation in search of Sanskrit and vernacular manuscripts. Next year in 1892 he was elected joint -Philological Secretary of the Asiatic Society and also was entrusted with the charge of editing Sanskrit texts under the Bibliotheca Indica series. He visited Nepal four to five times in 1897-1899, 1907, 1909 and 1921. He went to different

parts of India such as Rajputana, Gujrat, in search of manuscripts. The result of his search was published from the Society in the form of Reports. He submitted 6 Reports on his tours viz.

1. *Reports on the search of Sanskrit manuscripts for 1895-1900 A. D.*
2. *Reports on the search of Sanskrit manuscripts for 1901-1902 to 1905-1906 A. D.*
3. *Reports on the search of Sanskrit manuscripts for 1906-1907 to 1910-11 A. D.*
4. *Preliminary Report on the operation in search of manuscripts on Bardic Chronicles (JL. 1912 NS. Vol. viii).*
5. *Report on a tour in Western India in search of manuscripts of Bardic Chronicles.*
6. *Notes on palm leaf manuscripts in the Library of H. E. the Maharaja of Nepal (1897 A. D.)*

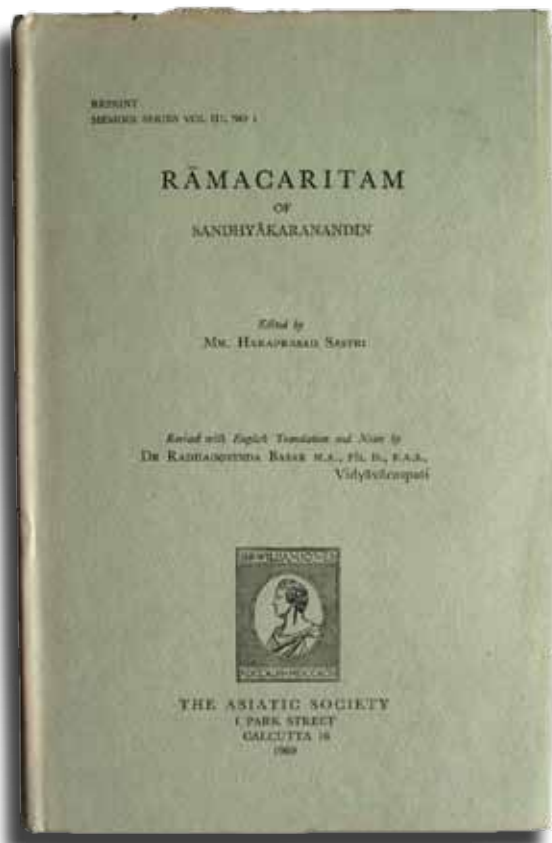
7. *Catalogue of palm leaf and selected paper manuscripts belonging to the Durbar Library of Nepal [2 volumes] 1905-1915.*

The fruit of his endeavour culminated into the collection about 11,000 manuscripts, which were presently in the possession of the Asiatic Society Museum as the Govt. Collection of Manuscripts. His sharp intellect, devotion and sincerity made him realise that only discovery of unknown text is not sufficient. Therefore, he felt it necessary to publish and utilise the materials for the greater benefit and knowledge of the scholars. With this aim in view he started preparing subject-wise descriptive catalogue of the entire collection of 11,000 (approx) manuscripts mentioned above.

Out of 14 substantial volumes of catalogues, six volumes of *Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts* in the Govt. collection came out in print during life time of Rajendralala Mitra. Eight more volumes came out after the death of Rajendralala Mitra due to the endeavour of Haraprasad Shastri. The scholars of Manuscriptology, all over the world, till today have been carrying out their Research work with the help of these publications of the Asiatic Society. Moreover, the format of cataloguing manuscripts followed by Haraprasad Shastri is till now regarded as the model format throughout the manuscript libraries in India. The Preface of each volume of manuscripts was enriched with the valuable discussions on the particular subject of the manuscript as entered in that volume including all necessary information, both academic and technical.

In addition to that Haraprasad Shastri wrote many articles and edited texts on the basis of his searched materials which were published in the Journals, Memoirs and edited manuscripts in the Bibliotheca Indica series of the Asiatic Society. The name of some of his publications are given below:

1. *Ramacaritam* by Sandhyakara Nandi [Memoirs 1910-pt. 4 vol. III pp. 1-54]



2. *Catuhṣatikā* by Aryadeva, [Memoirs 1910-4 III pp. 449-514]
3. *Vallālacarita* by Anandabhata [B. I. 164]
4. *Six Buddhist Nyaya Tracts*[ *Bihaddharma Purāṇa*, *Bihatsvayambhu Purāṇa*, *Śaunaka śāstra* etc. ]
5. *Aphosiddhi*, *Kṣaṇabhaṅgasiddhi* and two more texts by Ratnakirti.
6. *Avayavinirākaraṇa* and *sāmānya-duṣanadik-prasārita* by pandit Asoka.
7. *Śrī-dharma-maṅgala : A distant echo of the Lalita-Vistara* [JASB. 1895 vol. LXIV]
8. *Antaravyāpti samarthana* by Ratnakara Santi.
9. *Dhelāi-caṇḍī A form of tree worship*. [JL. 1902- LXXI(3): 1-3]
10. *Recovery of lost epic of Āsvaghosa*[L1909] and so on about 23 papers in the Journal of the Asiatic Society [*Index to the publications of the Asiatic Society* by Sibadas Choudhury. Pp. 271-272 no. 4158-4184].

Haraprasad Shastri made a sensational discovery of the manuscripts of *Caryāgīti* in 1907 [also known as *Caryāpada-āścarya-carya-viniścaya*] from Nepal in Buddhist Apabhramśa dialect. This discovery provided the world a unique specimen of old Bengali language and proof of the existence of Buddhist literature in Bengal

in the ancient period by the *Siddhhācārya* of Bengal. In this respect he was an epoch-making scholar in the renaissance of education in Bengal. He edited the songs of Siddhas and published by the name of *Dohakosa*, *Ḍākārṇavatantra* and also his famous book "*Hazar Bacharer Purana Bouddha Gaan o Doha*" published from Bangiya Sahitya Parishad in 1916. The Manuscript of *Caryā-carya-Viniścaya* and *Ḍākārṇavatantra* are available in our collection of the Society.

The manuscript of the text like *Vanaratnakara* was also found by him in Nepal and later on was published by the Asiatic Society. This manuscript is the first specimen of the eastern regional prose.

Haraprasad Shastri helped Shri Ramesh Chandra Dutta on his translation of *Rgveda*. In the introduction of his book Ramesh Chandra acknowledged the service of Haraprasad Shastri and wrote "I may not complete this stupendous work without his assistance".

His achievement in the field of Indological studies is yet unsurpassable. In the Centenary Year of Mm. Haraprasad Shastri's Presidentship of the Asiatic Society let us pay our respectful homage to this celebrity of all times.

“আমাদের সৌভাগ্যক্রমে সাহিত্য-পরিষদে হরপ্রসাদ অনেকদিন ধরে আপন বহুদর্শী শক্তির প্রভাব প্রয়োগ করবার উপযুক্ত ক্ষেত্র পেয়েছিলেন। রাজেশ্রলালের সহযোগিতায় এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটির বিদ্যা ভাণ্ডারে নিজের বংশগত পাণ্ডিত্যের অধিকার নিয়ে তরুণ বয়সে তিনি যে অক্লান্ত তপস্যা করেছিলেন, সাহিত্য-পরিষৎকে তারই পরিণত ফল দিয়ে এতকাল সতেজ ক’রে রেখেছিলেন।”

– রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

## In Memoriam

**Biswanath Banerjee**

Former President, The Asiatic Society

Mahamahopadhyay Haraprasad Shastri was an outstanding scholar of Indian Studies in the 19th-20th century (1853-1931). A versatile genius he was never to tread on a beaten track and had an urge to find out new lines of research with scientific methodology and dig out fresh matter and materials broadening the horizon of Indological researches. His original and pioneering contributions have enriched our knowledge to a great extent. Primarily a student of Sanskrit trained in the traditional set up he did never allow himself to be influenced or bound by any type of orthodoxy. He was not only much ahead of his time himself in his ideas but his researches put the subject of Indology in a more advanced state of maturity. He could wield his pen with equal ease and competence on any topic of social, cultural or literary interests. He was a Sanskritist and his mastery over the language helped him to see and study Sanskrit texts with a different approach, particularly the unpublished ones fascinated him most.

We may say that Haraprasad started his research career in an age when informative source-materials were not available. He had to cut out his own way by undertaking a project with imagination and hunting for materials to give shape to it. His efforts and investigations did not always succeed but a true researcher was to pass through such failures and oppositions in those days and Haraprasad had to struggle hard to reach his goal and achieve success in his projects and ideas. His ceaseless and untiring efforts to study

the unpublished manuscript-materials did bring out many new ideas, principles, accounts etc. to give a new look to the knowledge of Indology and widen the scope of the subject. With the help of these hitherto unknown manuscript-materials he could solve many knotty problems of Bengal's history, culture and social affairs. He was not a historian nor did he write any history of Bengal but his Bengali writings in different journals and elsewhere do convince us of his history-conscious mental make-up. He has enlightened us on many indistinct and dark chapters of Bengal's literary and cultural history particularly his contribution to the study of Bengali scripts is remarkable. The prevalent idea of the time that the origin of Bengali literature was due to the efforts of the followers of Shricaltarya of the 16th century was not acceptable to him and that he was right in his ideas was proved beyond doubt when the manuscripts on different *Mangalakaryas, Shrikrishna-vijaya, Adbhutaramayana* etc. were unearthed one after the other. His study on the evolution of Bengali scripts is result of an intensive enquiry on the problem and this has been our path-finder and chief guidance to the study of relevant materials. We did not have till then any knowledge of the Bengali scripts older than the Islamic period, and the *Pandit* trained in the *catuspathi* rightly guessed about the existence of older scripts. His theory about evolution of Bengali scripts, and firm conviction



of the existence of older Bengali scripts prior to the Muslim period, was firmly established when valuable texts like the *Vimalaprabha*, a voluminous commentary on the *Kalacakrcitantra* written during the reign of king Harivarmadeva, Abhayakaragupta's *Kalacakravatara*, *Kuttanimatcim* of Damodargupta, Ratnakirti's *Apolicisiddhi* etc. were discovered. With the discovery of the manuscript of *Ramacarita*, a *Dvashaya-karya* by Sandhyakara Nandi in 1897 Haraprasad could establish an authentic tradition of an analytical history of Bengal before the Muslim rule. In 1907 he made a sensational discovery of the manuscripts of *Caryagiti* which provided to the academic world a marvellous specimen of the old Bengali language. With his characteristic critical approach and intensive editorial acumen he edited these songs of the *siddhas* and published them along with the *Dohakosa* and *Dakarnava* under the title of *hazar bacharer purana Bangla Bauddha gana O doha* (one thousand year old Bengali Buddhist songs and dohas). The discovery and critical editions of these unpublished Sanskrit and old Bengali texts added a new dimension to our Indological studies particularly to our Buddhist studies. Haraprasada's contributions to this branch of Indian studies which showed and explained to the academic world the existence of the very important Tantric phase of Buddhism are remarkable and in this regard Shastriji's position has been that of a *Pioneer*. Post Mahayana Buddhist studies owe a great deal to this scholar of Bengal. The Sanskrit epic poem *Saundarananda-Kavya* of Asvaghosa was known only by its name of that time, and it was again our Shastri who discovered in Nepal fragments of the poem along with its commentary by one Sarvananda of Bengal (*Vandyaghatiya*) and his edition of the fragments vindicated to the world that Bengal was acquainted with

this poem while the rest of the world did not have any glimpse of it. His edition of Vidyapati's *Kirtilata* informed us of many unknown links and relations between Bengali and Maithili languages and their cultural history. The manuscript of the text like *Varnaratnakara* was also found by him in Nepal and, later published by the Asiatic Society, it gave us the first specimen of the eastern regional prose. It is no exaggeration to say that we do not have in anybody else such a scientific approach to Sanskrit studies with such a wide range of subjects and depth as we find in the writings of Mahamahopadhyay Shastri. His modernity, his treatment of varied subjects with scientific methodology and competent grasp over the subjectmatter as evident from the books, articles, lectures or edited texts should indicate the right path to future generations.

No account on Mahamahopadhyay Haraprasad can be even partially true or complete if his relation with Raja Rajendralala Mitra is not considered. The talent or genius in Shastri grew to its full bloom after his association with the Asiatic Society of Calcutta. He joined the society in 1885 and was subsequently made its Vice-President for life. He was elected President of the Society for 1919-21. It was Rajendralala who brought the young Haraprasad to the Society as his associate in researches. He was initiated into the study of Indology by Rajendralala and under his guidance and inspiration gradually became trained in the technique and methodology of scientific studies. The rest field of study and work in the society and the inspiring leadership of Rajendralala helped the young scholar to develop in himself a correct understanding of the intricacies and problems of Indology. It was clear to him that ancient Indian wisdom and learning lay largely enshrined in the unpublished manuscript texts and Rajendralala's

guidance and inspiration motivated him to take to the study of these unknown texts. Society's treasure of such texts became his first love and he engaged himself whole-heartedly in the collection of valuable manuscript texts which formed the nucleus of Indological researches in the society. In this area also he was a true associate and real successor of Rajendralala. After the demise of his mentor in 1891 Haraprasad was appointed the society's Director of the operations in search of Sanskrit manuscripts. By his inquisitiveness, sincere devotion and sharp intellect he did realise that only the discovery of the unknown texts was not sufficient, the responsibility of a true researcher was not to cease only with the finding out of the texts, more necessary and important it was to know, publish and utilise the materials for greater benefit and knowledge. With the one idea of attracting active interest and attention of scholars covered to the invaluable treasures of manuscripts he started preparing Descriptive Catalogues of Sanskrit manuscripts following the footsteps of Cecil Bendall and Mitra. It was a unique endeavour and interested Indologists all over the world were benefited by the Catalogues. It was from Rajendralala that he got the training of proper utilisation and publication of such manuscripts with new matter and materials. The *tenth* volume of Notices of Sanskrit Manuscripts started by Rajendralala was completed after his death under the supervision of Haraprasad. We may get some idea about the wide range and depth of his knowledge if we look into his introductions to these volumes of Catalogues. A glance over these volumes will make it clear to understand the stupendous problem and the success achieved by him in describing the texts on various subjects within in various scripts. Scholars all over the world have drawn unhesitatingly on the

source materials provided by Shastri in these descriptions. Such work initiated by Mitra and Shastri is continuing in the society even now, and manuscript libraries at many places have emulated them in the matter. The association of Haraprasad with Rajendralala has not only proved to be very important but has been of great consequences in the history of Indological researches. Haraprasad's deep knowledge of Sanskrit, Pali, different Prakrits including *Avahatta* helped him evolving a new type of Bengali prose with elegant Bengali mixed with colloquial idioms. His Bengali writings on varied topics including novels and fictions bear testimony to it. To some extent his Bengali prose style resemble the prose style of Bankim Chandra whom he assisted by collecting materials for the history of Bengal. Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal of Rajendralala has served as a source book for many of our poets and writers including Rabindranath. He also assisted Ramesh Chandra Dutta in translating the Rigveda while he himself contributed some very significant essays in Bengali like Calcutta two hundred years ago, Division of castes, Kuchinagara, Santideva, Vidyapati, two periods of our glorious times etc. All these activities of assistance and independent compositions were accomplished at the same time, and one may be struck with wonder to know that within thirty five years of age he could exhibit such a rare intellectual capacity and original thinking in so many academic spheres. Just as engaged himself under the guidance of Rajendralala in exploring the different phases of Indology, the same manner he selected some areas of his liking to probe into and scarify his ideas and line of thinking. Investigations into the problems of Bengali language and literature including the scripts formed some such theme of the research of his own liking. He made a sincere effort to

write a comprehensive history of Bengali language and literature. Genius is a faculty that enlivens anything it touches, and that has been proved by the life and academic pursuits of the great savant.

Pandit Haraprasad Shastri's close and intimate association with another great Research Institute of Bengal, the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, cannot be overlooked while discussing his contributions and activities. The Parishad was founded in 1894 and Shastri joined it in 1897. Perhaps his deep attachment to Bengali literature and language now got a favourable atmosphere in developing towards a successful accomplishment. Earnest scholars who gathered around him in the Parishad have given us an authoritative account of the traditional culture of Bengal and the Bengalees. We may reasonably maintain that no history of these two great Institutes of Bengal, The Asiatic Society and the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad, can be complete or authentic without a grateful remembrance of the service rendered by the illustrious *Pandit*.

It is now more than seven decades that Shastri has left this mortal world

but has left behind academic treasures and inspiring examples of his dedicated pursuits which can sustain sincere scholars for more than a century. It is our common experience in universities and Research Institutes that themes of research for higher degrees are generally selected from all sorts of hackneyed topic repeated several times with different titles mostly not caring for untrodden areas. Both the supervisor and the researcher ignore the manuscript materials which would give them a chance to bring to light new and fresh matters for the scholarly world. It is a pity that senior teachers of the time are perhaps not encouraging their scholars to emulate the example set by Shastri.

I do not find it worthwhile to remember the savant on occasions only and remain with closed eyes to his life and activities. The best tribute to the memory of the great 'Pandit' will be offered only when youngsters and their seniors will come forward to emulate the Mahamahopadhyay and enrich our knowledge.

'Let him bless us with beneficial intellect'!

*Courtesy : Memorial Volume (হরপ্রসাদ স্মরণে), Department of Pali, University of Calcutta, 2001*

The true way of serving God is  
to do good to man

*Remmohun Roy*

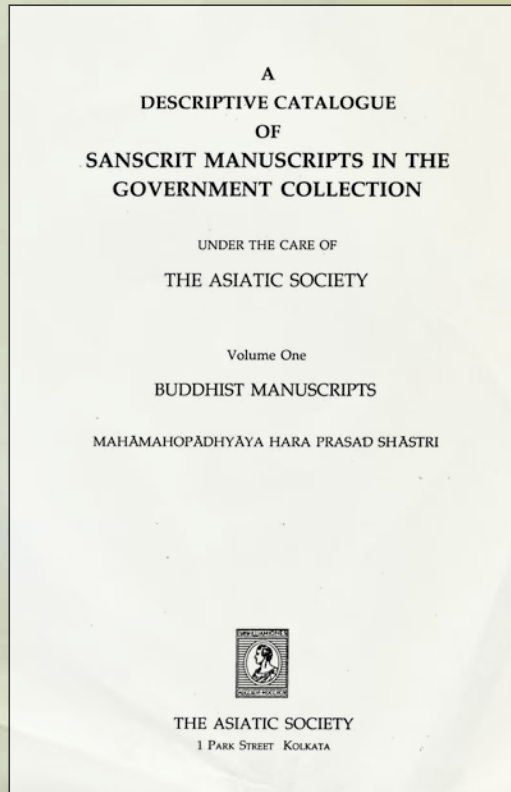


### 'Foreword' to the Second Edition of the Following Book

Mahāmahopādhyāya Haraprasad Sastri's Descriptive Catalogue, volume I, was published in 1917. It is not just a catalogue. It is a classic work, in which one would find a brilliant account of the Buddhist Manuscripts preserved in the Asiatic Society. Each of the manuscripts has been studied by Haraprasad Sastri with admirable attention and care. It is easy for the investigator to have a fair idea of the manuscript which he wants to study. This brilliant work was long out of print. The Asiatic Society now reprints it, and hopes that it would be helpful to all scholars devoted to Buddhist studies. Kolkata

**Ramakanta Chakrabarty**

Former General Secretary and Former President, The Asiatic Society





## Sir Asutosh and The Asiatic Society of Bengal

Debdutta Chakraborty

Assistant Secretary of Asutosh Mookerjee Memorial Institute, Kolkata

Johan Van Manen, a Dutch scholar associated with the Asiatic Society later became the first elected General Secretary to the Society in his tribute to Sir Asutosh Mookerjee wrote:

“The share which the Asiatic Society of Bengal had in totality of Sir Asutosh’s intellectual and practical activities can only have represented a small part of a life lived at high speed and under great pressure, yet this share was enough not only to influence the policies and the work of our Society, but I might say almost to dominate them for decades.” (P. Thankappan Nair, *The Living Legacy of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary Commemorative Volume*, National Library of India, Kolkata, 2014, pp. 344).

The secret of Sir Asutosh’s ascendancy in the Asiatic Society was described by Johan Van Manen in the following words:

“...His method was to work with the

human material available, but he neither despised frailty nor associated people with him for their faults, but for the measure of their capacities, whatever it might be. He knew imperfection well enough and was not blind to limitations, but he knew how to utilize even limited capacity...” (Ibid)

Sir Asutosh joined the Asiatic Society in 1886, after being elected as a member on the 5<sup>th</sup> May of that year. Dr. Rajendralala Mitra, another celebrated Indian Member proposed his name. A few months after his election, Asutosh, then a young man of twenty-one, contributed his first paper to the Society, the subject being one of Indian Philology, a note on a passage in the *Mrichchhakatika*. An abstract of his note was printed in the *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society* for 1887 together with an interesting little discussion to which it gave rise. Next came a series of fourteen

mathematical papers, several of a highly abstruse nature, of which about a dozen were printed in full in the *Asiatick Researches* of the Society during the four years from 1887 to 1890 and the rest in abstract in the *Proceedings of the Society*. In 1912 Sir Asutosh edited the Sanskrit legal work, *Vyavahara Matrika* of Jimutavahana (*Memoirs of the Asiatic Society*, Vol. III, 1912).

However, in the course of time, the dynamic young researcher transformed himself into an organizer, inspirer and a visionary leader and became pre-eminent in the Asiatic Society for these qualities.

In 1888 Sir Asutosh was elected on the Physical Science Committee of the Society. In the next three years he was re-elected on this Committee as well as on the Library Committee; and then from 1892 to 1900 on these two Committees and on the Philological Committee as well. In 1903 he obtained a place on the Council; next he was elected Vice-President fifteen times from 1904 to 1924. He was Treasurer in 1906 and 1913; Librarian from 1917 to 1920. He was made a Fellow in 1910. He represented the Society as Trustee on the Board of Trustees of the Indian Museum from 1907 to the time of his death. He was four times elected President of the Society, holding the office each time for the statutory maximum of two years, and established a record, never approached

before in the annals of the Society. Such a record of service, though unique, but characteristic of the man, was recognized in 1923, when Sir Asutosh was simply put on all Committees of the Society, like the three ex-officio members. Sir Asutosh was a member of the Asiatic Society for thirty-eight years. At the time of his death, he had been fifteenth in rank of seniority of all three hundred fifty members.

To the very last days of his life, Sir Asutosh's warm solitude for the Asiatic Society remained unaltered. Johan Van Manen gave a moving account of Sir Asutosh's last visit to the Society, shortly before he died. (P. Thankappan Nair, *The Living Legacy of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee 150<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary Commemorative Volume*, National Library of India, Kolkata, 2014, pp. 345-46)

In his inspiring addresses in the Asiatic Society he spoke about unchartered territories which were waiting for dedicated research workers. He was always encouraging promising young researchers in various ways. In 1913 he communicated a paper written by Nalinikanta Bhattasali on *A forgotten kingdom of East Bengal*. The same year he proposed the name of Ramesh Chandra Majumdar for Membership of the Asiatic Society. In 1917 he proposed the names of Satyendra Nath Bose, Meghnad Saha and I.J.S. Taraporewala for Membership of the Society.

*"The true significance of the appearance of a new generation of investigators, anxious to pursue research in the field of oriental antiquities, can hardly be mistaken, and we should all of us, without hesitation, welcome and encourage them in what we hope may prove to be their lifelong task."*

– Asutosh Mookerjee



## Bankim's First Forgotten Protagonist: A Representation of the "new woman" in Colonial India

**Shrabasti Ghoshal**  
Independent Researcher

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's first English novel *Rajmohan's Wife* was serialised in *Indian Field*, a small circulation, shortlived periodical, edited by Kishori Chand Mitra, in the year 1864. The novel unfolds the story of beautiful and passionate Matangini, who is married to a villainous man called Rajmohan. The novel also provides us with an astonishingly detailed account of the ups and downs of the women's lives in contemporary society.

The novel begins as a realistic representation of middle class Bengali domestic life and moves on to portray the picture of the "new woman". It foregrounds the effort to break hitherto sacrosanct barriers. It is the first Indian English novel which focused on a woman of uncommon vitality, who refused to be completely subjugated either by her brutal husband or by the expectations of the society. She was brave, dynamic, independent and breathed the very spirit of the then rising India.

Time and again, Bankim had compared the image of the nation to a mother figure, who protected her children against colonial destruction. In *Anandamath*, Mahatma Satya showed Mahendra two maps of India in consecutive rooms. While the first map had a halo around Mother India, the second one showed her in rags and tatters under the British rule.

Mahatma and his men fought to bring back the lost glory of our Motherland. Matangini herself is a potent symbol of this idea. She was ravaged pitifully by her unscrupulous and insolent husband.

The author treats Matangini's unrequited love for her sister's husband with sympathy, though the ending of the novel invokes ambivalence and anxiety on the author's part to maintain the social order. She cannot be returned to the conjugal space from which she has dislodged herself. Sending her to her parent's house was a temporary solution after which she had to succumb to death to maintain the social order of that time.

In spite of the unhappy ending, throughout the novel, Matangini is seen as the dynamic spirit who embodies the hopes of an entire society struggling to attain dignity and selfhood against the face of misery and suffering. Her personal traits-- her valour, independence, passion, vitality, adventurousness, reluctance to be restricted by the traditional norms and the irresistible urge to break the established codes-- are required for building of a nation.

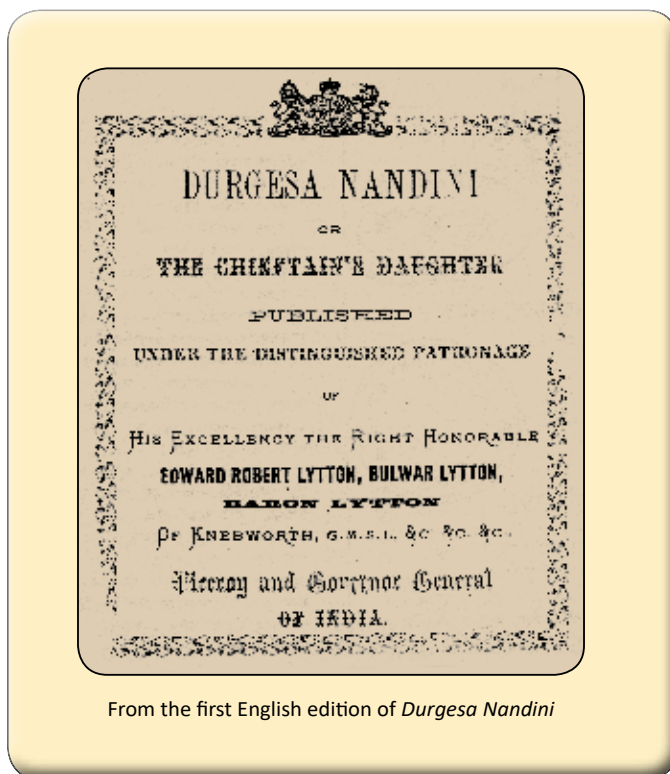
However, the women of that time were dehumanised and were living in a claustrophobic atmosphere. They had to live a caged life. Their identities were ignored and they were regarded as the property of their husbands. Though Matangini is the protagonist

of the novel, she is mentioned in the novel as the wife of Rajmohan. This exposes the grim fact that she, having no freedom of own, has no control over her selfhood, her body and sexuality. This shows the fact that a woman's identity is constructed by the society based on her relationship with the men--she is someone's mother, wife, daughter, sister or widow. Although in the present novel, Rajmohan interests us very little as a person, Matangini's identity, as announced in the title, is irrevocably connected to her marital status.

In spite of all these, the greatness of the novel lies in the fact that Matangini stands out as a woman of character. Her bold expression of her extramarital love disregarded her ties with traditional social values. To her, the passion of love was more overwhelming than codes and ethics. Matangini's sincerity and bravery is seen in her solitary journey in the dark night through forest, water, storm and

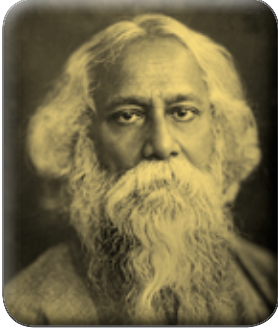
lightning. This echoes Radha's tryst with Krishna in Vaishnava love poetry, when she braved these obstacles to meet Krishna secretly. As Radha embodies the amorous nature of the women in India, so does Matangini, in her rendezvous, when she untangles her hair and covers her face partially to avoid detection in the moonlight. She is like the "Abhisarika" in Sanskrit love poetry-- the heroine who goes out to meet her lover secretly and against all odds, natural and human.

Thus, her strong-willed nature and transgressive behaviour are explored with fervour by the novelist. According to Makarand Paranjape, she is the spirit or personification of modern India itself. Though she is burdened by sorrow and anxiety under the control of an unworthy husband, she emerges and transgresses her boundaries to assert her love. Though she does not have a happy ending, her crossing the threshold indicates that India and her women were rising.



From the first English edition of *Durgesa Nandini*





## Rabindranath and Suniti Kumar : Mutual Adoration

**Krishna Bhattacharya**

Former Professor & UGC Emeritus Fellow, Dept. of Linguistics,  
University of Calcutta

Rabindranath Tagore was a towering figure in the cultural history of Bengal. Moreover, he was a unique 'Complete and Integrated Man, with a Mind of the widest perception'. And Suniti Kumar Chatterji was a true polymath, 'the Nestor Modern of Indian linguistics', a philologist of international repute, and a scholar in various fields of Indology.

Though Rabindranath (7th May, 1861–7th August, 1941) was senior to Suniti Kumar (26th November, 1890 – 29th May, 1977) by twenty-nine years, age was not a barrier in reciprocating heartfelt admiration to each other. To Suniti Kumar, Tagore was *Viśva-maṇḥ* 'One who has a Mind for All' and *Vāk-pati* 'Lord of speech'.

Chatterji (1961) admitted that throughout his life he was overpowered by the multifaceted personality of Tagore. At the age of fourteen when he was a student of the Moti Sheel Free school he became acquainted with Tagore's poems from *Chitra* and *Katha O Kahini* through his classmate Sri Gaur Gobinda Gupta (Chattopadhyay, *Jiban-katha*, p. 89). Later during the period of the Banga-Bhanga (Partition of Bengal) Movement and the Nationalist Movements Suniti Kumar

heard Rabindranath to deliver lectures in meetings and used to watch him with great reverence from afar. Later he met Tagore for the first time in 1911 at Santiniketan when he was a Post-Graduate student in the department of English language and literature, University of Calcutta (ibid., p. 87). In his own words, "this linguistic study of English was preparing my mind for a study of the history of my own mother tongue, Bengali, and of the sister Aryan languages of India. .... I discovered that Rabindranath himself, in some of his remarkable essays, had made some very pertinent suggestions about the nature of the Bengali language in some of its salient characteristics..... I went [to Santiniketan] with recommendations from some friends, including one from Sri Gaur Govinda Gupta .... I was given a very cordial reception .... I broached before him my interest in Linguistics, and I wondered how he was himself interested in the subject" (ibid., p. 88). Thereafter Chatterji began to meet Tagore occasionally and visited his library in Santiniketan.

Before his moving abroad for higher studies in 1919 Suniti Kumar had some more connections with Tagore. He attended many

of the discussions and readings on art and literature with an active interaction organized by the *Bichitra Club*, an organization established by the Tagores at their Jorasanko residence in Calcutta. It was an organization devoted to the development of literature and Fine Arts.

Gradually Suniti Kumar made Tagore feel affection for him. It is known from Dr. Gourchandra Saha's *Rabindra-Patrali* (Dey's, 1984) that in 1918 Tagore referred him to Sri Pramatha Chaudhuri for a post with a certificate recommending him as 'an uncommonly competent scholar'.

After the publication of Suniti Kumar's magnum Opus *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language (ODBL)* by the Calcutta University in 1926, Rabindranath read the book meticulously and made margin notes on many pages. He was moved and admired Suniti Kumar profoundly. Thereafter the relation between the two became more and more intimate. In the preface of this ODBL (p.xvi) Chatterji acknowledges Tagore's original insightful contributions to Bengali Linguistics. He offered his tribute to Tagore in the following way,

"The first Bengali with a scientific insight to attack the problems of the language was the poet Rabindranath Tagore, and it is flattering for the votaries of Philology to find in one who is the greatest writer in the language, and a great poet and seer for all time, a keen philologist as well, distinguished alike by an assiduous enquiry into the facts of the language and by a scholarly appreciation of the methods and findings of the modern Western philologist. The work of Rabindranath is in the shape of a few essays (now collected in one volume)....., the earlier of which appeared in the early nineties, and some fresh papers appeared only several years ago. The papers may be said to have

shown to the Bengali enquiring into the problems of his language the proper lines of approaching them."

Hereafter Tagore began to invite Chatterji to join different committees and participate in the activities of Visva-Bharati. Incidentally, at that time the word 'Kristi' was prevalent in Bengali as the corresponding word for English 'Culture'. But Tagore was not satisfied with this word. Tagore asked Suniti Kumar to find out a better word. Chatterji found the word 'Sanskriti'. He discussed with Tagore about it and ultimately Tagore approved it as a corresponding word for English 'Culture' in Bengali.

The postal correspondences between Tagore and Suniti Kumar probably began from 1927 (Dr. Gourchandra Saha's *Rabindra-Patrali*, Dey's, 1984). There are some letters which were written to Suniti Kumar by Tagore and vice-versa and some which Tagore wrote to others with reference to Suniti Kumar. To give one or two examples we can refer to one letter where Tagore was enquiring about the status of the publication of the book *Rabindra-sangame Dwipamay Bharat O Shyam-Desh*. In another one he requested Suniti Kumar to be more active regarding the welding of new letters for writing foreign words in Bengali as the editor of Bichitra had agreed to do so. In one letter to Bimal Narayan Chaudhury Tagore expressed his opinion regarding Bengali spelling reform and asked him to consult Suniti Kumar for his valuable opinion especially regarding the spelling of 'Prakrit Bangla' words.

In 1938 Tagore published a book called *Bangla Bhasha Parichay* 'Introduction to the Bengali Language' and he dedicated the book to Suniti Kumar with the sobriquet of *Bhashacharya* 'Master of speech'. Tagore also made incidental references to Suniti Kumar in his different writings and even in one of

his novels called *Shesher Kabita* 'the last poem or farewell song'. Amit Ray, the hero of this novel used to read Suniti Kumar's ODBL during his vacation.

Suniti Kumar accompanied Tagore during his tour in Indonesia and Thailand (erstwhile Malaya, Sumatra, Java, Bali and Siam respectively) and benefitted immensely from this tour. After this tour Suniti Kumar became a prime advocate of the culture of far South East. He used to keep a detailed diary of the tour with all the details of Tagore's movements and activities. During this period of tour Suniti Kumar delivered many lectures on Indian art and culture and also on Tagore's Santiniketan and its objectives. As a by-product of this tour he wrote a book titled *Dwipamay Bharat* (1940, the second enlarged edition is called *Rabindra-Sangame Dwipamay Bharat O Shyam-Desh*, 1965) and was greatly appreciated by Tagore. He admired Suniti Kumar's power of minute observation and his power of expression in Bangla. Tagore gave two epithets to Suniti Kumar - *Lipi vacaspati* 'writer master of letter' or *Lipi Sarvabhauma* 'emperor in letter writing' or *Lipi Chakravarti* 'supreme letter-writer' (in *Java- Yatrir Patra*, pp.616).

Suniti Kumar was a connoisseur of art and a confluence of world culture. Further

he was very fond of Indian and European Classical music and of Rabindrasangeet till his death. Suniti Kumar has acknowledged his debt to Tagore regarding the discovery of his own self. I quote him, "This affection of his [of Tagore] was for me one of the greatest things in my life. .... It was rooted in his sensing that my interest in language was closely interwoven with my interest in Man and in the surroundings of Man. .... Rabindranath discovered it for me." (Chatterji, 1961, p. 126).

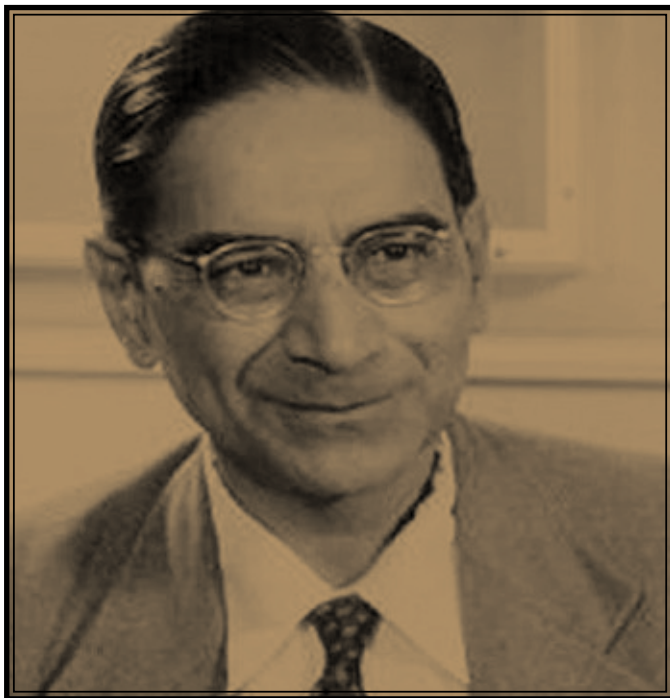
The bond between the two great souls was rooted in their love for language, literature, music, art, culture and humanity.

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“Sir William Jones was not only an incarnation of the intellectual curiosity of the highly cultivated and humanistic eighteenth century Europe – he was something more: his work has meant more for us Indians than what he himself or any compatriot of his was conscious of.”

**Suniti Kumar Chatterji**, President (1953-55, 1970-71), The Asiatic Society



## Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis

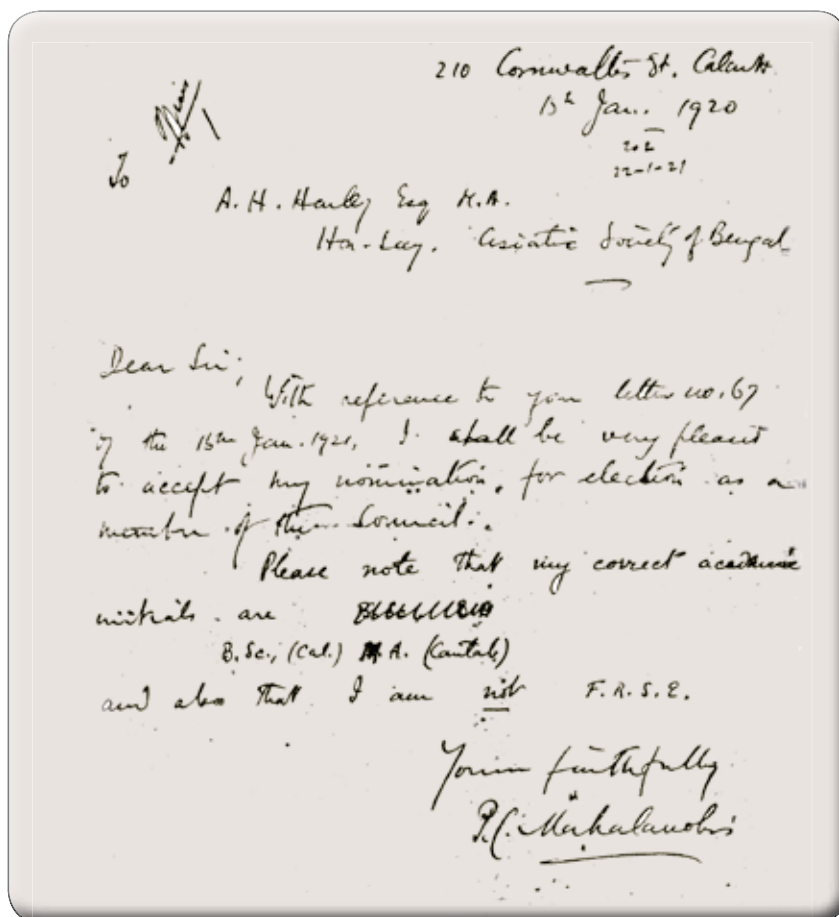
Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis's most profound contribution was published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1930. The context in which Mahalanobis published his work in the Asiatic Society's journal is presented below in his own words:

*"I also used the  $D^2$ -statistic for the analysis of extensive measurements given by H. Lundborg and F. J. Linders in their great publication on 'Racial Characters of the Swedish Nation' (Swedish Institute for Race Biology, Upsala, 1926). I prepared a memoir containing (a) theoretical work on  $D^2$ -statistics, (b) its application to the Swedish material, and (c) the comparison of about 750 values of  $C^2$  and  $D^2$  to which I have already referred, and sent it to Karl Pearson in 1929 for *Biometrika*, but the paper was not accepted for publication. I, therefore, sent a second copy to R. A. Fisher requesting that he might communicate to some other journal for publication. In the mean time Karl Pearson, without sending any information to me, had published the anthropological portion of the work on the Swedish material under my name in a paper on 'A Statistical Study of Certain Anthropometric measurements from Sweden' (*Biometrika*, Vol. 22, 1930. 94-108). This naturally prevented the publication of the full paper in England. The theoretical portion of the work was subsequently published in the form of a paper*

## Remembering our Visionaries

'On Tests and Measures of Group Divergence', in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, New Series Vol. 26. 1930, No. 4. The second portion on the Swedish material, as already noted, was published in *Biometrika*. I had sent to the Asiatic Society of Bengal the third portion of the original memoir (which dealt with the comparison of about 750 values of  $C^2$  and  $D^2$ ). It appeared, however, that papers dealing only with Asiatic matters could be published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*; and as the  $C^2$  and  $D^2$  coefficients related mostly to non-Asiatic races it was held that this portion of the paper could not be published in this journal. The work on the comparison of  $C^2$  and  $D^2$  values was thus never published...."

Source: Partha P. Majumder, "In the Year of His 125th Birth Anniversary, Remembering an Association between Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis and the Asiatic Society", *Monthly Bulletin*, The Asiatic Society, XLVI (7): p. 10.



A letter from Professor Mahalanobis to the Honorary Secretary of The Asiatic Society of Bengal. This letter is one of the eight letters preserved in the Archive of the The Asiatic Society

## Satyajit Ray



Both sides of the Plaque

Satyajit Ray was awarded Rabindranath Tagore Birth Centenary Plaque by The Asiatic Society in 1987

### List of Ray Films (In Chronological Order)

| Year | Name  | Category     |
|------|---|--------------|
| 1955 | Pather Panchali (Song of the Little Road)           | Feature Film |
| 1956 | Aparajito (The Unvanquished)                        | Feature Film |
| 1957 | Parash Pathar (The Philosopher's Stone)             | Feature Film |
| 1958 | Jalsaghar (The Music Room)                          | Feature Film |
| 1959 | Apur Sansar (The world of Apu)                      | Feature Film |
| 1960 | Devi (The Goddess)                                  | Feature Film |
| 1961 | Rabindranah Tagore                                  | Documentary  |
| 1961 | Teen Kanya (Three Daughters)                        | Feature Film |
| 1962 | Kanchenjunga  | Feature Film |
| 1962 | Abhijan (The Expedition)                            | Feature Film |
| 1963 | Mahanagar (The Big City)                            | Feature Film |
| 1964 | Charulata (The Lonely Wife)                         | Feature Film |
| 1964 | Two   | Telefilm     |
| 1965 | Kapurush O Mahapurush (The Coward and The Holy Man) | Feature Film |
| 1966 | Nayak (The Hero)                                    | Feature Film |

## Remembering our Visionaries

| Year | Name  | Category     |
|------|---|--------------|
| 1967 | Chiriyakhana (The Zoo)                                      | Feature Film |
| 1969 | Goopy Gyne O Bagha Byne (The Adventures of Goopy and Bagha) | Feature Film |
| 1970 | Aranyer Dinratri (Days and Nights in the Forest)            | Feature Film |
| 1970 | Pratidwandi (The Adversary)                                 | Feature Film |
| 1971 | Sikkim  | Documentary  |
| 1971 | Seemabaddha (Company Limited)                               | Feature Film |
| 1972 | The Inner Eye   | Documentary  |
| 1973 | Ashani Sanket (Distant Thunder)                             | Feature Film |
| 1974 | Sonar Kella (The Fortress)                                  | Feature Film |
| 1975 | Jana Aranya (The Middleman)                                 | Feature Film |
| 1976 | Bala  | Documentary  |
| 1977 | Shatranj Ke Khilari (The Chess Players)                     | Feature Film |
| 1979 | Joi Baba Felunath (The Elephant God)                        | Feature Film |
| 1980 | Hirak Rajar Deshe (Kingdom of Diamonds)                     | Feature Film |
| 1980 | Pikoo (Pikoo's Day)   | Telefilm     |
| 1981 | Sadgati (The Deliverance)                                   | Telefilm     |
| 1984 | Ghare-Baire (Home and the World)                            | Feature Film |
| 1987 | Sukumar Ray   | Documentary  |
| 1989 | Ganashatru (Enemy of the People)                            | Feature Film |
| 1990 | Shakha Proshakha (Branches of the Tree)                     | Feature Film |
| 1991 | Agantuk (The Stranger)                                      | Feature Film |



“The usual credentials for a director making a film for the first time would be either to have served a longish term as a first assistant to a director, or to have been a cameraman, or, at least, a writer of film scripts. I had been none of these things. What I did have was long years of looking at films—firstly, in my school days, as a film fan, and later as a serious student of the cinema, reading about techniques and taking hieroglyphic notes in the darkness of an auditorium.”

**—Satyajit Ray**  
 (“Film Making”, *Our Films, Their Films*)

## The Paris Commune (1871) : A Lingering Legacy

**Subhasish Ghosh**

Associate Professor of History, Dr. Kanailal Bhattacharyya College

On 26 March, 1871, more than 2 lakh Parisians took on their national government and voted in favour of a municipal government, the Paris Commune. Engels called the Commune, an ideal example of the “dictatorship of the Proletariat”. The Commune posed itself “as a rival, revolutionary source of authority to the French national Government”. It openly questioned the authority and legitimacy of this government. The Commune’s origin and spectacular flourish owed a lot to the revolutionary legacy of France, spanning almost a century. Along with this revolutionary legacy, one has to recognize the role of the emerging class consciousness among the French workers during the Second Empire.

The origin of the Paris Commune lay deeply rooted in the legacy of the Revolution of 1789, particularly in the revolutionary Commune of Paris in 1793. The memory lingered and nostalgia remained alive. In Victor Hugo’s *Les Miserables*, a Bishop and a Conventionist, named G, were in conversation on the French Revolution of 1789. The Conventionist

strongly argued: “...the French Revolution was the greatest leap forward for mankind since the coming of Christ. Incomplete, yes; but sublime. It released all kinds of social unknowns... It was good. The French Revolution is mankind’s crowning achievement.” When the bishop reminded him of the atrocities of 1793, the Conventionist retorted: “A cloud had been hanging over us for fifteen hundred



years... it finally burst. You want the thunderclap to task” (Ch. 10 ). One must remember that *Les Miserables* was completed and published in 1862, when Hugo was thick in anti-Empire politics. Paris, had a chequered past of street fighting and of barricades. The Paris Commune took it to new heights of courage and dedication.

The February Revolution of 1848, however, provided a much more immediate inspiration. To the Communards of 1871, the Revolution of 1848 was a creative experience. Louis Napoleon reinstated manhood suffrage, but throughout his rule, elections were manipulated. Coercion was ruthless and rampant.



Between 1848 and 1852, numerous dissidents were in exile or in prison. The plight of the Parisian working class was abysmal. The Prefect of the Seine, Baron Georges Haussmann observed that a minor rise in food prices would cause the capital's poor (roughly 70% of the total population) to fall back on public assistance. The misery of the labouring men was accentuated by the 'Haussmannization' of Paris. The main aim of this project "was to make Paris more hospitable to the bourgeoisie". Urban infrastructure definitely improved, but rapidly rising house rent drove the working class further away from the heart of Paris to its periphery. They were shunted out to the margins of Parisian life. Liberal Republicans accused Haussmann of being hand in glove with a highly centralized, undemocratic state structure. Victor Hugo decried the Second Empire of "rewarding the financial speculators while penalizing public interest". The revolutionary Republicans protested against the ghettoization of the working class in a "sub-urban semicircle". David Jordan (*Transforming Paris: The Life and Times of Baron Haussmann*, Chicago, 1995) noted, "The emotional energy of the Commune was already in place". After Haussmannization, Paris roads were broader, easy for cavalry charge, difficult for erecting barricades.

Eric Hobsbawm felt that the Second Empire of Napoleon III turned out to be a modern political laboratory. France experienced "a mutation to an industrial society", where the establishment of large scale industries led the labour to work in dreadful conditions and in exchange they earned not even the bare minimum. The class consciousness among the working class was palpable at the grass-roots. In 1864, the International Association of Workingmen ('the International') was formed and "the Manifesto of the Sixty" betrayed the increasing autonomy of the French labour movement. The mask of the 'liberal empire' of the 1860s fell and Napoleon III's carefully crafted image of being synonymous with the 'nation', cracked. In 1869 the government

cracked down on the miners and workers. Meanwhile, Louis Napoleon faced heat from other sides too. In the general election of 1869, the Republicans closed the gap with the royalists significantly. Napoleon III won the plebiscite on May 8, 1870. But the result did not reflect real mood of the common mass. Revolutionary spirit was palpable. But Napoleon III's moment of reckoning came with the Franco-Prussian war and the French defeat at the battle of Sedan in September 1870. The Emperor along with his 80000 soldiers were taken prisoners and the Second Empire collapsed. The ego of the French nation was badly hurt and France was seething. On September 4, 1870, the Parisian members of the corps legislatif, formed an interim government called 'Government of National Defence', and declared France as a 'Republic'. However, the relation between the Interim Government and the Revolutionary left was that of an uneasy truce. The former was surreptitiously pacifist and the latter candidly confrontationalist.

Paris was at the crossroads. The Parisians' emotional attachment to the embryonic Republic was evident. And when the Prussian army laid siege to Paris, the people of the city clearly favoured action. They feared that Paris would capitulate within a week. But, defying a chilly winter and terrible shortage of food and other essential commodities, the Parisians defended the capital for about four and a half months. The winter of 1870-1871 saw record dip in temperature (several degrees below zero). Along with this, torrential rain lashed on the French capital. Fuel was scarce and costly. Deadly diseases, like dysentery, small pox, pneumonia and typhoid took many lives. The main sufferers were the marginal men of Paris. In early 1871, Paris was shorn of its glamour and looked desolate. The city was sitting on a volcano, about to erupt. The Republicans urged the Parisians not to capitulate and they drew comparison with 1792-93. The newspaper *Le Reveil* wrote, "In 1792, our fathers conquered Europe, without

bread, without uniforms, without shoes, in 1871, with an arsenal full of arms and ammunition and only fighting against Prussia, we capitulate". Engels said hunger stricken Paris surrendered with her head high, which had very few parallels in history.

France was on the verge of a civil war. Prussia wanted to impose a peace on France. However, Paris was reluctant to accept Adolphe Thiers as the chief executive of the newly formed government. Thiers openly declared that his priorities were to conclude a peace treaty and tame Paris. He was the darling of the propertied bourgeoisie and landowners, who prompted him to disarm the workers of Paris. Thiers initiated a crackdown on the labor dominated areas of Paris, like Montmartre and Belleville, to seize the cannons lying there. This desperate move backfired on Thiers and he was forced to leave Paris for his new address, Versailles. The battle line was drawn.

The elections to the Paris Commune were held amid a festive atmosphere on March 26, 1871, which belied the grave situation in the city. The majority of the winning candidates were radicals. The Republican majority in Paris was now willing to vote for the Commune against Thiers and the monarchist National Assembly at Versailles. In the working class districts the victory of the socialist candidates had a more precise meaning – to give space to people previously excluded from the government. On March 28, the proclamation establishing the Paris Commune "in the name of the people", was made from the Hotel de Ville, which was symbolically decked out in both tricolors and red flags. The Commune's ideological variants were remarkable: revolutionary republicanism, utopian socialism, socialism and anarchism. The total number of members of the Commune was 81. But about 60 members used to be present in the sessions. The average age of the members was 38. Five members were above the age of 60. The youngest was the Chief of the Police, Raoul Rigault, 24 years old. The lone foreign

member was the Hungarian revolutionary Leo Frankel. The Commune declared "the flag of the Commune is the flag of the World Republic". The social origins of the members of the Commune were diverse. About 18 members came from middle class background, thirty members could be marked as 'la boheme' or rootless. At least 35 members were engaged in different manual work. In the Preface to Karl Marx's *The Civil War in France*, Engels drew our attention to the presence of various ideologies in the Commune.

The Paris Commune in its second session created eight Commissions as the executors of administrative decisions. Keeping in tune with its socialist ideology, a new Commission: 'The Commission of Labour and Exchange' was introduced. The other Commissions were: War; Finance; Justice; Welfare; Public Service; Education, General Security and Foreign Relations. To oversee the nine Commissions and to ensure coordination between those, the 'Executive Commission of Seven', comprising of four Commune appointed army Generals and four civil personnel, was established. Now, as Marx said, the Commune was "the direct antithesis to the Empire". The repercussions of Paris incidents were felt across France, but other Communes soon crumbled under governmental pressure. The Paris Commune, within its very short tenure, embarked on some significant social reforms. The most outstanding works were done by the Commission of Labour and Exchange under Leo Frankel and the Education Commission, under Edouard Vaillant. Definitely, "time was not allowed to the Commune". As black clouds of civil war began to thicken, the Commune was forced to abandon some of its reform programmes. Now the imminent task was to ensure the survival of the Commune.

On April 2, 1871, the Versailles army attacked Paris. Thiers and his allies believed that the Paris Commune symbolized a far reaching social transformation and the only way to demolish it was recourse to a civil war. Consequently, the Communards found themselves

pitted against France. As the conflict between the Commune and Versailles began to unfold, the former's weakness in terms of lack of experienced Generals or shrinking support base was evident. Many Republicans, who were ideologically close to the Commune, opted to shun violence. To them, 'revolution' was not a 'sacred' word. The Prussians were still laying siege on one part of Paris and were quite interested in the way the Civil war was unfolding. Ultimately, on May 10, Thiers signed the peace treaty with Bismarck and on 18th it was officially endorsed.

Consequently, the French war prisoners were released and it tilted the balance in favour of Versailles. On the other hand, different voices within the Commune eroded the collective spirit. The absence of a unified command did little good to the armed resistance of the Communards. Still, they displayed dedicated defiance and fought without caring for their lives. From the end of April, 1871, violence and counter-violence marked the conflict between the Commune and the Versailles army. Paris was burning. Quite a few heritage properties were consigned to flame. Anti-Commune forces blamed the Communards and particularly the women, branded as the "petroleuse", for this arson. On the other hand, Versailles resorted to rampant violence to exterminate the Communards. "La semaine sanglante" or the "Bloody Week" ( 21- 27 May, 1871 ) bore the testimony of utmost cruelty. During the last week of May, according to Emil Zola, "Paris has been nothing but a huge cemetery". The Versailles army was given free hand to massacre the Communards. The Commune fought gamely, behind the barricade or in open streets. In Pere Lachaise cemetery, after a stormy combat, 147 Communards were taken as prisoners. Then they were dragged to the eastern wall of the cemetery and fired upon. The killing spree of the Versailles army went on relentlessly even in mid-June. *Paris Journal* in its edition of 2nd June appealed, "Let us kill no more". According to historian Jacques Rougerie, at least 30,000

Communards were killed, while Versailles lost around 1200 men. 'Paris Beautiful' was now in ruins. From Chatelet to Hotel de Ville, all the buildings were bearing the brunt of heavy shelling and gunfight. The silence on the road was eerie and the air was filled with putrid smell of decomposed bodies. The trial of the imprisoned Communards was a sham. According to Rougerie, the Versailles army initiated trial against 46,835 persons, of whom 30,940 persons were never brought to trial. About 13,450 accused were convicted by 26 special "Council of Civil War". Those who could escape trial, fled to different countries of Europe. In March 1872, the National Assembly ordered 4586 imprisoned Communards to be deported to New Caledonia. The Commune was dead, but its spectre was haunting the French state. The social contour of Paris visibly changed. For nearly a decade after its suppression, the Commune continued to "reverberate throughout the French political landscape". The monarchist majority in the National Assembly elected MacMahon as president of the Republic with a mandate to establish a new 'moral order'. On July 11, 1880, both houses of the Assembly agreed to a full and complete amnesty of all Communards, including those who had been found guilty in absentia. The Third Republic apparently came to terms with the past, but in reality it never trusted the Communards, who came back to France. They continued to be under surveillance, wherever they settled. Auguste Renoir, the famous painter, wrote: "They (the Communards ) were mad men, but they had in them that little flame which never dies". In the *The Civil War in France*, Marx argued that the establishment of the Commune was "the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class". He viewed the Commune as the "actualization of modern society's fissure along a class divide". Marx later modified his views and, in a letter in 1881, wrote, the Commune was "no wise socialist". Later, Lenin, Trotsky both admired the Paris Commune, but with a note of caution that the

## Historical Juncture

Commune's fate was sealed as the revolutionaries pursued a moderate course in the hope of building a revolutionary consensus across social classes. Lenin, in 1917, pointed out, that one would not find the exact blue print of building a socialist state in the experiences of the Paris Commune. The right wing critics of the Commune often talk of a "socialist myth", built around the Commune. The insurrection was no social revolution. Rather, it was the last flickering flame of old Jacobin legacy. For Louis Greenberg, the greatest casualty of

the Commune was "the liberal dream of self-governing France", which succumbed to the centralizing, dictatorial tendencies of a Jacobin majority. Still, it can be argued that with all its shortcomings, such as gender bias, Paris Commune stands out as a landmark event in the history of the modern world. Even after one and a half century, the tales of its bravery and dedication could not be relegated to "historical oblivion". The Paris Commune still resonates in the minds of those who continue to dream of an egalitarian world.



### Visitors at The Asiatic Society on 4th March 2021



(L-R) : Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Society; Professor K. N. Dikshit, Chairman of Expert Committee on 'Origin and Evolution of Indian Culture', Ministry of Culture, Government of India; Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society and Professor Suprakash Roy, Editor-in-Chief, *Science and Culture*.

# Oh My Earth I Love You

**Asok Kanti Sanyal**

Biological Science Secretary, The Asiatic Society

The first global environmental conference, 'United Nations Conference on the Human Environment' was held in Stockholm on June 5-16, 1972. As decided in the Stockholm conference, 'World Environment Day' is being celebrated annually on 5 June since 1974. 'Stockholm-50' will be celebrated by UN in June, 2022.

This year on the World Environment Day the United Nations formal declaration of the 'UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021 – 2030)' is a positive attempt of placing ecological restoration at the forefront of the world's biodiversity and climate change agendas. Hence the UN declaration is the call for the mankind to work for saving our planet from survival crisis. UN declaration "aims to massively scale up the restoration of degraded and destroyed ecosystems as a proven measure to fight the climate crisis and enhance food security, water supply and biodiversity". The Food and Agriculture Organization also made supportive comment on the UN declaration, "our global food system and the livelihood of many millions of people depend on all of us working together to restore healthy and sustainable ecosystems for today and the future".

Over the last three decades ecosystem degradation has emerged as the biggest environmental threat around the world. The ecosystems, whether they be forests, rivers and lakes, oceans and coasts, mountains, grasslands and peat lands, or farmlands and urban landscapes which provide us ecosystem services for sustainable living on the planet, stand degraded to varying degrees

due to many factors such as developmental pressures, population growth, over exploitation, climate change, pollution, introduction of invasive alien species, and some others specific to ecosystem.

Nearly 4.54 billion years old Planet, the Earth is the home of millions of species. These numerous life forms interact with one another in many ways, including competitive, predatory, parasitic, and facilitative ways, such as pollination, seed dispersal, and the provision of habitat, and constitute an interacting and ever-changing system known as an ecosystem. Thus "Ecosystem means a dynamic complex of plant, animal and micro-organism communities and their non-living environment interacting as a functional unit" (Article 2 of the CBD). Each component of ecosystem has a definite role to play and contributes to the health and productivity of the ecosystem as a whole. Ecosystem can be as large as a desert or a forest or as small as a pond. A single tree is an ecosystem. The estimated 8 million species of plants and animals including humans living on Earth live together in what are called "ecosystems". Every component of an ecosystem depends on others. For instance, a change in temperature or sudden absence of a species of an organism in an ecosystem will have knock – on effects on others. Further, distant ecosystems rely on each other in unexpected ways.

All ecosystems, terrestrial, freshwater, marine, mangrove, mountain, coral reef, and related ones provide multiple goods and services. Millennium Ecosystem Assessment proposed 22 distinct services in 4 main

categories. The various ecosystem services can be, i) *Provisioning services* (food, fresh-water, medicine, fibre, energy, shelter, etc.); ii) *Supporting services* (detoxification, decomposition, air and water purification, nutrient and water cycling, food chain dynamics, soil fertility, etc.); iii) *Regulating services* (water regulation, waste recycling, food preservation, pollination, natural control of pest and diseases, etc.); iv) *Cultural services* (knowledge, recreation, aesthetic and cultural values, etc.). However, some ecosystems are particularly important in that they provide services that directly contribute to human well-being. The protection and restoration of those ecosystems are essentially benefit conservation of biodiversity as well as human well-being. Over the past two decades, the ecosystem services concept has increasingly been taken into consideration in decision-making processes and in international studies, treaties, and conventions.

Ecosystem restoration is the “process of assisting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged or destroyed”. It means preventing, halting and reversing the ecosystem damage. Many of the world’s ecosystems have undergone significant degradation with negative impacts on biodiversity and people’s livelihood.

The evidence suggests that Earth’s natural capital, and the biodiversity that underpins these goods and services, are being eroded. During the last 500 years 784 plants & animals got extinct. In the last century the planet has lost 35% of mangroves, 40% of forests and 50% of wetlands. The IUCN Red List (2016), reports that of the 44,837 species they have assessed, 38% are threatened and 804 are extinct. The latest Report of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), an UN organization, says this decade matters most in preventing catastrophic climate change and biodiversity loss, without which an estimated 1 million species face the threat of extinction, many within decades. WWF

Living Planet Report - 2020 mentioned that during 1970 to 2016 an average of 68% of vertebrates and an average 84% of fresh water species have been declined. More worst in Latin America and Caribbean with average decline of 94%.

Agricultural crop production has increased nearly threefold since 1970. The agricultural expansion is the most wide spread form of land-use change, one-third of the terrestrial land surface being used for cropping or animal husbandry. Globally \$235 billion to \$577 billion annual global crop output is at risk due to pollinator loss. Raw wood harvest increased by 45% - 4 billion cubic meters in 2017. Loss of coastal habitats increased risk of flood and hurricane for which 100–300 million people are in danger. 32 million hectares of forest lost during 2010–2015. By 2016, 559 of the 6190 domesticated breeds of mammals around the world used for food and agriculture, 1000 more are threatened. The human-caused processes led to losses of local biodiversity.

Currently, about 20% of vegetated surface of the planet shows declining trends in productivity with fertility losses leading to erosion, depletion and pollution in all parts of the world. By 2050 degradation and climate change could reduce crop yields by 10% globally and 50% in certain regions. Restoration of 350 million hectares of degraded land between now and 2050 could generate \$ 9 trillion in ecosystem services while clearing the atmosphere of 13–26 gigatons of greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere.

There are other facts that indicate the world is now in dire crisis of food, water, energy, timber and fiber. An estimated 795 million people worldwide suffer from hunger and 1.2 billion are in severe stress of water. It is also reported in the Global Biodiversity Report – 5 released in 2020 that by 2030, the world will require 40 to 50 per cent more food, water, energy, timber, fiber and other natural resources. Besides the crisis of essentials, biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation are

## Ecological Restoration

expected to continue, or even accelerated. It is worthwhile to mention what man is doing for instant gain out of their greed is ultimately destroying ecosystem. Over the last century we have destroyed half of the wetlands and every three seconds, the world losses enough forest to cover a foot ball pitch. Ecosystem loss is depriving the world of carbon sink.

The UN declaration for ecosystem restoration is a global mission to revive billions of hectares of degraded lands all over the globe.

India too has intended to be an active participant in this global endeavour to save the planet. The country has prepared ambitious target of restoring 26 million hectares of degraded lands by 2030.

The Western Ghats-Sri Lanka Global Biodiversity Hotspot is known for its very rich, diversified and many endemic species of flora and fauna. The non-equatorial tropical evergreen forests are home to at least 325 globally threatened flora and fauna especially vertebrates. The hotspot is also designated by UNESCO as the World Heritage Site. Western Ghats faces threats from rising population,

urbanization resulting climate change, agricultural expansion are causing destruction and degradation of the ecosystems. The wild life corridors are fragmented; invasive species are driving many endemic species towards extinction.

Since 2000, the forest regeneration programme is going on in the Annamalai Hills, Western Ghats and a excellent and encouraging result towards restoration of forest ecosystem has been documented.

India is one of the most bio-diverse countries in the world. However, most of our unique ecosystems are in a state of severe degradation today. We first think about degradation of forests, which provides shelter of nearly 80 per cent of terrestrial biodiversity, but many other ecosystems like wetlands, rivers, estuaries, grasslands and deserts, are damaged. Restoration of these degraded ecosystems is a mammoth task, still we must now fundamentally rethink to save the natural ecosystems and their biodiversity and work together towards its restoration for perpetuation of life on the Earth.



## Rejuvenating a Legacy : Restructuring and Remodelling of The Asiatic Society Museum

**Tapati Mukherjee**

Library Secretary, The Asiatic Society

According to International Council Of Museums (ICOM), "A museum is a non-profit permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and employment."

It is evident from this definition that a museum is not simply a repertoire of age-worn objects or brittle and fragile manuscripts, backdated coins and many other dilapidated materials, which hardly have any relevance in the contemporary perspective. On the contrary, a museum practically vibrates with echoes of the past, pulsating and resonating through the archaic objects, edicts, coins and manuscripts and thus forms a bridge between the hoary past and throbbing present. A museum therefore represents a colourful and living identity instead of a mummified and unattractive presence. It also presents a pivotal role in dissemination of knowledge.

The idea of museum in India germinated under the tutelage of The Asiatic Society, founded by Sir William Jones in 1784 with a view to expound both "Man" and "Nature". In their sincere attempt to unravel the treasures of the so-called "dark", unexplored east and to make them accessible to the Occident, Jones and his compatriots delved deep into the exploration of flora and fauna and assets of India. They had another objective embedded in their pursuance of Indic studies. British intelligentsia wanted to build up a bond of fellowship with

the indigenous people for the purpose of good governance, to be executed by British rulers. Initially the idea of establishing a museum was not that predominant, but since 1796, the idea of establishing a museum for The Asiatic Society, meant for preservation of the objects, collected so far, was slowly gaining momentum. Finally there was a breakthrough when in 1814, Dr N Wallich wrote a letter to the Society, strongly advocating foundation of a museum by the Society with a generous offer to shoulder the responsibility of supervising it. The Committee Of Papers, in its attempt to bring the matter to the attention of the Society explained the utility of such a museum :

"No public repository yet exists to which the naturalist or scholar can refer, and the only sources of information, beyond verbal and often inaccessible descriptions, have been found in the accidental accumulations of individuals, always of difficult access, indiscriminate selection of temporary duration and little utility.

The Asiatic Society is now called upon to adopt active measures of remedying this deficiency, and collecting from the abundant matter which India offers, a Museum that shall be serviceable to History and Science."

Based on the recommendation of the Committee Of Papers, it was resolved by the Society -

"Resolved accordingly that The Asiatic Society determines upon forming a Museum for the reception of all articles, that may tend to illustrate oriental manners and history, or to elucidate the peculiarities of art or nature in the East". The Society also made a request



to the public for donation of articles to the proposed museum. Dr Wallich was appointed "Superintendent of the Oriental Museum of The Asiatic Society".

Contribution in the form of coins, sculptures and manuscripts were collected in huge number which enriched the Society. Finally a museum under the supervision of Dr Wallich was established in 1814. In 1878, a part of The Asiatic Society Museum was shifted to start Indian Museum.

Despite transfer of many valuable objects to Indian Museum, The Asiatic Society is indeed proud of its treasured possession of edicts, manuscripts, rare books, lithographs, coins and innumerable valuable objects. At present, due to paucity of space, these treasures are not displayed for public viewing and only the scholars and researchers who visit the museum for academic purpose have the opportunity to see the museum. However the museum is at present well maintained with technical devices like CCTV Camera along with fumigation chamber air-conditioning system and modern shelves for the maintenance of old and fragile manuscripts. Recently mobile compactor has been introduced for proper arrangement, conservation and optimum use of space.

In its attempt to make the world aware of its valued possession The Asiatic Society has decided to restructure and revamp the museum, making optimum use of the space available at present. The scheme is as follows :

There will be three /four galleries to display some invaluable objects of the museum.

- 1) In the first display, the history of The Asiatic Society will be highlighted digitally.
- 2) In the second display, brief life sketches of the founder Sir William Jones and his associates will be focussed.
- 3) Contribution of Indian intelligentsia to the development of The Asiatic Society will be highlighted with special reference to Rajendralala Mitra, Ram Komal Sen, Haraprasad Shastri and others.
- 4) A short history of The Asiatic Society Museum exclusively will be the next item of display digitally.

- 5) The Asiatic Society has an exceptionally rich collection of nearly fifty thousand manuscripts, recorded in various languages and varied scripts. A few manuscripts will be displayed in digitised form.
- 6) A few rare books and lithographs like *Gita* translated by Wilkins, a stalwart of the Society will be displayed.
- 7) Depending on the availability of space, a few paintings of renowned artists will be exhibited.
- 8) Since its inception, The Asiatic Society had collected coins of different dynasties pertaining to different ages. The following extract from the Proceedings of the meeting of The Asiatic Society, held in April 1861, bears testimony to this fact: "Presentation was received - From Captain F. P. Layward.

The following is an extract from a letter from Babu Rajendralala Mitra, to whom the coins had been submitted for examination : "The collection includes several specimens that are new to the Society's cabinet. Among them may be reckoned 1 of Ilyias Shah, 1 of Sekander Shah, 1 of Ghias-ud-din, 3 of Ala-uddin Hossein Shah and 2 of Narrat Shah of Bengal. "

Considering the importance and historical value of these coins, we have planned to install a separate showcase cum cabinet in which replica of some old coins, symbolizing glory of ancient India will be showcased. Needless to say these coins will be of great interest to scholars as well as general milieu.

We have another ambitious plan. If space permits, we intend to install an exhibition of century-old Calcutta and its development through various phases of history.

It may be mentioned in this context that this plan of work has been discussed in the Advisory Committee, constituted by the Society and accordingly the plan has been chalked out.

As both our space and fund are limited we are facing several constraints. But drawing inspiration from the Sanskrit maxim "shreyangsi bahu bighnani" (you have to face hardship in every noble job ) we are hopeful that our remodelled museum will be open to the public shortly.

## Old Lepcha Manuscripts at The Asiatic Society

**Satarupa Dattamajumdar**

Life Member, The Asiatic Society

The role of The Asiatic Society in collecting and preserving the invaluable manuscripts/texts of the indigenous languages is an age-old tradition. Plaisier (2003) informs us that it was Johan Van Manen, the General Secretary of The (later Royal) Asiatic Society of Bengal (from 1923 to 1939) who collected the 182 Lepcha manuscripts during his stay in India from 1908 to 1943. Later these 182 Lepcha manuscripts were moved to Rijks-museum voor Volkenkunde 'National Museum of Ethnology' in Leiden. These Lepcha manuscripts of Van Manen collection are kept in the library of the Kern Institute of Leiden University at present.

The development in getting the access of the digital collection of 182 Lepcha manuscripts from the Kern Institute of Leiden University as a result of sustained negotiation on the part of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata took place in 2019. These Lepcha literatures are known as *Namtho Namthar*, where *nam* meaning 'year' or 'time' and *tho* meaning 'registration of records' and the second element 'Namthar' is said to have formed from *nam* meaning 'year' and *thar* meaning 'to cut bamboo cylinder slantingly' used for preservation purpose. These are written in Lepcha script. The date/period of these manuscripts is not recorded and therefore cannot be ascertained without thorough study of the contents and structure of these manuscripts.

Due to inaccessibility of the original manuscripts (which are kept in the Van Manen collection of Kern Institute of Leiden University), The Asiatic Society took the venture of printing the hard copies of these manuscripts/

texts and the process of binding and indexing were taken up as a part of the conservation process. The structure of the soft copy (digital version) of these 182 manuscripts has been examined by the present author, the pages of the printed versions of each manuscript have been verified with the digital versions, page numbering has been done (as many of the manuscripts do not have page numbers) and clipped accordingly, in order to avoid any kind of misrepresentation in the printed version.

While examining these manuscripts at the very outset it is observed that content-wise the manuscripts can be categorised into the following broad types :

1. Book of Prayer
2. Book of Worship of Gods/ Goddesses/ Lord Buddha
3. Book of Dead
4. Book of Prophecy/Divination/ Destiny
5. Book of Lepcha Language Learning and Calculation
6. Book related to Lepcha Songs
7. Book of Legends

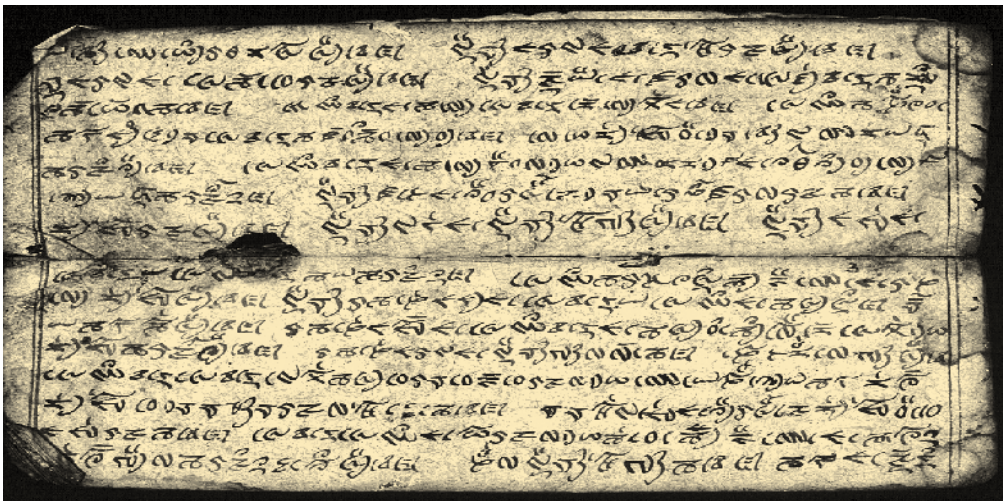
Interestingly it is observed that there are a number of manuscripts with the same title but the internal structures and the contents are different. These seem to be interesting and therefore felt to be discussed in this context. For instance, existence of a number of manuscripts with the same title -- 'choten mun-lóm' (chotyen 'monument' which implies 'religious book as monument' and *munlaom* meaning 'prayer'). Each of these texts is observed to be structurally different. Content-wise whether each of these

Chotyen Munlaom has any similarity- full or partial, or if they are radically different, is a matter of in-depth study. Initially we find total twenty-nine 'cho-ten mun-lóm' (the Manuscript numbers being L2 / L4/ L50/ L53/ L56/ L58/ L61/ L65/ L68/ L69/ L77/ L81/ L82/ L83/ L86/ L95/ L104/ L108/ L109/ L111/ L123/ L126/ L134/ L145/ L149/ L151/ L154/ L157/ L172). Apart from these there are also a number of manuscripts which are divided into different parts. There also we find 'cho-ten mun-lóm' as one of the parts of those manuscripts like Ms. No. L63 (part C.), Ms. No. L76 (part B.), Ms. No. L87 (part C.), Ms. No. L88 (part B.), Ms. No. L135 (part C.) Ms. No.164 (part C.), Ms. No. L167 (part D.). Similarly, a number of manuscripts with the same title like 'ta- she-sung' (The story of Lord Tashe [Buddha]), 'shang sá tsu' (Funeral calculations) and 'thok-dra- mun-lóm' (The Lepcha book of dead) are available in the collection. When I reported my first-hand observation to Ren Lyangsong Tamsang (Chairman, Mayel Lyang Lepcha Development Board), he expressed his utter astonishment and interest expressing the need to have an in-depth study of the contents of each 'cho-ten mun-lóm'/'ta- she-sung' /

'thok-dra-mun-lóm' /'shang sá tsu' and such other texts dealing with prophecy, calculation, Lepcha language learning, songs and legends. It is worthy to mention in this connection that some portion of one 'cho-ten mun-lóm' (in most probability, a different one from those mentioned above) which is in possession of the Lepchas of Kalimpong, was studied by the present author during her field investigation during 2008-2010 and published (Ref: 'Characterising some Indigenous Literature of Lepcha' in *Journal of The Asiatic Society*. 2011. Vol. LIII, No.4, 55-70.).

Much have been discussed regarding the potentiality involved and the necessity for documentation, analysis and interpretation of these old texts of the Lepcha language--- an endangered Tibeto-Burman language of North-East India. A project has also been submitted in 2019 by the present author and principally accepted by The Asiatic Society, to carry out the work of documentation, analysis and interpretation of some selected Lepcha Namthars, although the project could not be made functional till date. Such a project is an urgent desideratum.

Below is given a sample text of 'cho-ten mun-lóm' (Ms. No. L53)



## Mahāpurāṇa of Puṣpadanta – A study

Suchitra Ray Acharyya

Former Professor of Sanskrit, University of Calcutta

The *Mahāpurāṇa*, monumental work of Puṣpadanta is an epic by nature having more than twenty-four thousand verses, hundred and two cantos in its three volumes. This is written completely in Apabhraṃśa Prakrit of ninth to tenth century C. E. (among twenty-one types of Apabhraṃśa) having no English, Sanskrit, Hindi or Bengali translation of it. No thorough discussion of it has yet been done. Only P. L. Vaidya has edited it from several manuscripts along with short discussion.

Puṣpadanta composed his *Mahāpurāṇa* by accommodating and adjusting characters and plots in such a way that the epic could project a lesson competent to energise the society. The language of the epic is the Apabhraṃśa variety of Prakrit considered to be the one of the sweetest and most chaste form of the languages. By the insight into the structure of Apabhraṃśa variety of Prakrit one can know how the modern Indo-Aryan languages have attained their present shape from Sanskrit through the stages of Prakrit.

To discuss on this Mahāpurāṇa I have based on the topics — (1) Puṣpadanta as a poet, (2) manuscripts of the epic, (3) *praśasti*, (4) religion as reflected in the epic, (5) socio-cultural study of the epic, (6) linguistic study of the

Apabhraṃśa language of the epic which will definitely open an avenue to the intended readers. Puṣpadanta, the ninth tīrthaṅkar of the Jaina religion discussed here on sixty-three religious persons of Jaina hagiology. *Mahāpurāṇa* is a branch of *Prathamānuyoga*, a religious text of Digambara Jaina. In this *Mahāpurāṇa* twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras, twelve *Cakrabartins*, nine Vāsudevas, nine Pratibāsudevas and nine Baladevas are related as superman in the *Triṣaṣṭhiśalākāpuruṣa*. Puṣpadanta belonging to the 10<sup>th</sup> cent. CE was Brahmin by birth. His Śaiva parents were initiated to Jainism. He came to the city Mānyakheṭa where the minister commissioned him to write an epic. He spent six years to write this epic which is one of the greatest masterpieces of Apabhraṃśa literature. Generally division of a Sanskrit epic is called canto whereas division of an Apabhraṃśa epic is called *saṃdhi*.

To compose the epic *Mahāpurāṇa* Puṣpadanta took some methods by which he mainly divided his epic in the different *saṃdhis* which are hundred and two in number. Each of these *saṃdhis* contains many *kaḍabhakas* which are four versed, six versed and eight versed. All the verses composed by Puṣpadanta contain two lines. This

train of *kaḍabhaka* found in the drama and epic consisting of four lines, six lines or eight lines probably appear to have originated in Apabhraṃśa when it was the vernacular of most of the Northern India. This system started even in Western, South-western and Eastern regions also. We know that Puṣpadanta lived in Mānyakheṭa which is now situated in Karnataka i. e. south-western India where Kannaḍa language was the mother tongue. But the train of Apabhraṃśa language influenced the contemporary poets and authors. Probably for this reason Puṣpadanta composed his epic in the Apabhraṃśa language leaving his mother tongue Kannaḍa.

To speak about the source of the *Mahāpurāṇa* we can say *Digambara* Jain scholars Jinasena (II) and Guṇabhadra were closely followed by Puṣpadanta. In this respect A. K. Warder too refers to the Sanskrit work of the *Digambara* Jain scholars Jinasena (II) and Guṇabhadra. He also believed that Puṣpadanta followed them very closely. The story of the Rāmāyaṇa also may be taken as a source of the *Mahāpurāṇa*. A traditional story runs that Sītā is the daughter of Rāvaṇa. We find the reflection of this in the Puṣpadanta's work. In Jainism this story shows Rāvaṇa's fate as an example of *karmaphala* or the result of one's past actions. It was supported by A. K. Warder.

Our aim of this project is to make a discussion about the excellence of Puṣpadanta. Centre of our discussion is importance of the epic with its socio-cultural sides. Method of this project is to establish and prove the epic as a religious one by analytic and comparative

study of its social, religious and cultural aspects. This is done through the different chapters of this thesis. Apart from introduction this thesis has six chapters.

First chapter deals Puṣpadanta as a court-poet of the king Bharata. The first stanza of *praśasti* made by Puṣpadanta says that the poet Puṣpadanta obeyed the decorum of the rhetoric. In the beginning of the epic he wrote the *praśasti* verses which must be of a god or king according to the rhetoricians. Obviously the king Bharata is praised by the poet Puṣpadanta which must be taken as *stuti* of Bharata. So, without any hesitation we can say that this verse may be counted as *praśasti* or *maṅgalācaraṇa* of the epic.

Second chapter deals with the different manuscripts. To edit the *Mahāpurāṇa* of Puṣpadanta P. L. Vaidya used five manuscripts. First one was written on leaves at Ghoghā Mandir. So, it is named as 'G' by the editor taking the first letter of the place name. But such convention is not current practice. Nowadays mother MS. is named as 'A' while other are named as 'B', 'C', 'D', 'E' etc. He recognized with gratitude Professor Hiralal Jain as he secured the manuscripts for the use of the editor P. L. Vaidya.

Third chapter deals with the *praśasti* verses. Forty-eight *praśasti* stanzas are found in the different MSS. of the *Mahāpurāṇa*. Among them six are written in Prakrit. These are fifth, sixth, sixteenth, thirtieth, thirty-fifth and forty-eighth verses. Remaining verses are composed in Sanskrit. In the second, third, seventh, eighth, twelfth and thirteenth verses of the *praśasti* stanzas Puṣpadanta is reflected as a court-poet of Bharata.

Fourth chapter deals with the religion. In the Jaina hagiology, there are one hundred sixty-nine great persons. They occupy the highest position in Jaina religion. Their life-stories are variously discussed in this epic. The period of our poet Puṣpadanta is tenth century CE along with Buddhism and Jainism. Brāhmaṇism was also in existence at that time. Among the Paurāṇic-Brāhmaṇisms, Śaivism and Vaiṣṇavism were the main. Existence of Śāktas was seen among the Śaivas. We are informed that Puṣpadanta composed a famous hymn *Mahimnaḥstava* which was considered as a standard work. We know more from this portion that the poet Puṣpadanta had another name Grahila. As the *Mahimnaḥstava* of Grahila is assumed to be composed by Puṣpadanta with the surmise that the poet was devotee of Śiva.

Fifth chapter deals with socio-culture as reflected in the epic. From the verse 1. 1. 16 (*avaru vi paṇavivi sammaiṃ viṇihayadummaiṃ kovapāva-viddhaṃsaṇu*) it is known that the people of that society had clear concept of good, bad, *jñāna*, *pāpa* as the words *ñāna* and *pāva* are used here. In the verse 1. 2. 1 we get *jiṇasiddhasūrisūyadesayāhaṃ* which informs the dominance of Jainism in the society. The word *sāhūṇa* in the verse 1. 2. 2 indicates five *paramaśreṣṭhins* of the Jaina society. The word *jiṇasiddhasūrisūyadesayāhaṃ* in the verse says that the author

Puṣpadanta was proud as he was born in a country which was famous for the birth of Jinasiddha. This indicates *jinās* and *siddhas* were adored and honoured by all of that society. The verse 'coddahapuvvilla duvālasaṃgi jiṇavayaṇaviṇiggaya sattabhaṃgi(1. 2. 6)' informs about the *caturdaśadvādaśāṅga* Jaina literature which was read with respect in that society.

The most significant contribution of Jainism in the social field was the establishment of social equality among the four *varṇas* of the time that means classes were prevalent at the society.

Another contribution of a distinctive nature made by Tīrthaṅkara Mahāvīra and Jaina Ācāryas in the social field was that they raised the status of women. In the latter part of the Vedic period women had practically been reduced to the status of *Śūdras*.

Sixth chapter deals with the language and linguistic aspects of the *Mahāpurāṇa*. These aspects are: i. Apabhraṃśa is the language of the epic; Apabhraṃśa in view of Patañjali; ii. Apabhraṃśa in view of the grammarians Mārkaṇḍeya, Kramadīśvara, Puruṣottama, Rāmaśarman, Hemacandra and Trivikrama; iii. declension in the Apabhraṃśa *Mahāpurāṇa*; iv. vowel and consonants in Apabhraṃśa; v. numerals in the *Mahāpurāṇa*, ordinals; vi. phonology of the Apabhraṃśa language of the *Mahāpurāṇa*; vii. *deśya* words found in the *Mahāpurāṇa*.

# The Socio-Linguistic Profile of Kuki-Chin People of Manipur : Summary, Findings and Recommendations (with special reference to Simte)

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The Kuki-Chin community presents striking socio-cultural features in terms of ethnicity, linguistic and socio-cultural practices. The languages belonging to this linguistic groups are quite similar to one another and therefore are said to be mutually intelligible to some extent. Yet every ethnic group in this linguistic community has been striving and asserting for self-identification. As such, there has been a great contention and tension politically as well as linguistically amongst the ethnic groups who have similar cultural and linguistic traits.

This linguistic and political affiliation plays a major and dominant role in the assertion of the various ethnic groups of the Kuki-Chin languages in Manipur.

The present study as such aimed to analyse the linguistic scenario in between the various ethnic groups while focusing on Simte as a representative of the 'smaller' ethnic groups in the community.

To fulfil the purpose of the study, we had set the following goals:

1. To know which Kuki-Chin languages exist in Manipur.
2. To determine the linguistic relationship that exists amongst these Kuki-Chin languages.
3. To investigate the similarities and

differences between each of the various Kuki-Chin languages in Manipur.

4. To understand which are the 'major' and 'minor' languages amongst the group and their role in day to day life.
5. To better understand speakers' attitudes towards other Kuki-Chin languages and also towards Meithei (the state language of Manipur).
6. To have a better understanding of the bilingual abilities of the members of the various Kuki-Chin communities in Manipur.
7. To understand how 'smaller' or 'minor' languages exist and sustain in the group. For this purpose Simte language was considered and an extensive data collection was undertaken to document this language as well as to understand its language vitality amongst the other Kuki-Chin groups.

## Findings

The findings are stated according to the related Research Questions and give us a simple skeleton of the socio-linguistic scenario amongst the Kuki-Chin groups. Following are some of the principle findings:

- A] The Kuki-Chin tribal community has always struggled to search for its identity showing

- sensitivity toward one's community. Often, the ethnic groups strived to be identified through the language of their heart.
- B] The Zou and the Simte ethnic groups are closer to each other linguistically. Similarly the Paite and the Teddim-Chin are linguistically similar. Simte also shares similar features with Paite language. Thadou-Kuki is comparatively different from the aforementioned languages in terms of the lexicon and grammatical usage. Vaiphei shares common features with Thadou-Kuki.
- C] Most of the ethnic groups are dispersed across the state / states. However, we find clumps of populations segregated according to their respective ethnic groups in specific areas marking their specific territories.
- D] The ethnic groups distinctively speak their own mother tongues. However, an interesting observation brings out the fact that 'smaller' ethnic groups try to 'accommodate' their language by using the 'larger' tribal language when talking to a person from that ethnic group.
- E] The Kuki and the Zomi movements both began as a need expressed by the ethnic groups to feel secured under a large umbrella. The main objective of the Kuki movements is to bring together all the Kuki-inhabited areas together – both in present day Myanmar and those in India (Haokip, 1998). The Zomi movement too aims in this direction. However though both the movements have a common agenda, they differ only slightly with their leadership. Both movements are spearheaded by two 'major' tribal groups – Thadou-Kuki and Paite-Chin. Both of these ethnic groups are still striving for dominance amongst the Kuki-Chin groups. Today both the movements are going full-fledged and at times often conflicting one another.
- F] One often misunderstood and controversial terminology that remains till date is the Thadou and Kuki terminology. The same language is called as Thadou and also as Kuki creating a pertinent issue amongst the Thadou-Kuki speakers, not only in Manipur but also in wherever they are scattered in Assam and Nagaland.
- E] In recent times there has been a greater awareness for asserting one's own language and linguistic identity. As a result, each ethnic group has been promoting its own needs causing more divisions amongst the already scattered groups within the Kuki-Chin community. Due to this very reason, these languages are often listed as separate languages simply because the ethnic groups prefer to be identified as separate and distinct groups within the Kuki-Chin community. The most recent study case has been that of the Mate linguistic group (earlier clubbed under Thadou-Kuki but regained independent identity in 2012).
- F] The Simte ethnic community in Manipur lies scattered amongst the other ethnic communities with the Kuki-Chin umbrella. Many of them live amongst the Paite or the Zou or the Thadou and accordingly speak the language of the community they stay with. Some of them strictly maintain themselves as a Simte community. But they all claim their ancestry to the progenitor Ngaihte. There are some villages in the Churachandpur district which are established by the Ngaihte people and are still under the Ngaihte leadership. The Ngaihte people faced an identity issue, especially after the recognition of the various tribes in Manipur in 1956 by the Indian Government.
- G] The recognition of the various tribes in Manipur in 1956 was a political landmark. Thirty-three tribes have been recognised so far. The Mate tribe was recognised in 2012. This recognition of tribes was based on linguistic consideration. This left many factions as the questions related to ethno-historical and genealogy remained highly unanswered.
- H] These various issues have always been a hurdle to the unification movement amongst the various groups of the Kuki-Chin linguistic community. The various ethnic groups shouldered much solidarity and oneness as they claimed the same ancestry and cultural



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traditions. Their languages too show mutual intelligibility. Unlike the Naga languages which have no mutual intelligibility and have to use one lingua franca to communicate with one another, the various languages of the Kuki-Chin community can communicate with one another using their own languages. This is especially true in the district of Churachandpur, in Manipur. Yet with increasing political motives and the growing self-assertion, the various ethnic groups of the Kuki-Chin community have started showing preference for individualism. Due to this the balance between the various ethnic groups gets overshadowed and the 'smaller' groups and languages face trials and difficulties.

### Recommendations

The above findings help us to realise that modern day language planning is the need of the current times. One should aim at the development of each language group and its sub-group in order to enhance the linguistic repertoire of the entire Kuki-Chin linguistic group. Alongwith self-assertion, each ethnic group must keep the larger picture in mind – to promote the solidarity amongst each other and thus to ensure that the entire community is progressing, socially and culturally. Apart from researchers and scholars, local people need to understand this and take up active interest. This can only be done through a broad mindset where the whole benefits from the individual instead of simply emphasizing on the promotion of individual group and language.

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## The Buddhist Goddess of Dwan — Marichipichuva from Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal

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It is revealed from the *Sadhanamala* that several deities are emanated from the Dhyani Buddha Vairachana, namely, Namasangiti, Marichi, Ushnishavijaya, Sitapatra Aparajita, Mahasahasrapamardini, Vajravarahi, Chunda, Graha matraka. Among the aforesaid emanated deities from Vairachana, Marichi seems to be the first in importance. Sixteen Sadhanas in the *Sadhanamala* refer to the six distinct forms of Marichi such as—Asokakanta (two arms and one face), Arya-Marichi is same as Asokakanta-Marichi, Marichipichuva (Ashtabhujā pita or Samkshipta Marichi, the deity is endowed with three faces and eight arms), Ubhayavarahanana (three faces and twelve arms), Dasabhuja-sita-Marichi (five faces and ten arms and four legs), Vajradhatvisvari-Marichi (six faces and twelve arms).

'Marichipichuva' is endowed with three faces and eight arms.<sup>1</sup> She has three faces displaying three different sentiments (right face is red glows in heavily splendour, displaying calm sentiment) and the left one is sow face of blue colour, the front face displays passionate love and is of gold colour. The deity in the Pratyā'alidha posture' stands on a chariot which is drawn by seven sows. Below the seven sows the Rahu (the charioteer) is driven the car (the fabulous devourer of the Sun and the Moon). Among her eight arms (deity) four right hands hold the thunderbolt, the elephant goad, the arrow and the needle, four left arms bear the asoka leaf (leaf or branch),

the bow, the noose and a menacing pose of hands with the index finger pointing upwards (Tarjjani Mudra). The main deity is surrounded by four goddesses on the four sides—on the east is 'Varttali' having four arms, red is complexion with a sow face wearing red garments and with all sorts of ornaments. The deity (Varttali) carries—the noose, the asoka flower (leaf or branch), the ankusha and the needle. On the South is 'Vadali' having four arms, her colour is yellow, other features are common with the former one. Her attributes are the noose, the vajra, asoka leaf, and the needle. On the west is 'Varali' with four arms, her attributes are—the Vajra, the needle, the noose and the asoka leaf, other features are same as 'Vadali'. On the north 'Varahamukhi' with four arms carrying—the 'Vajra', the arrow, the bow and the asoka leaf with ruddy complexion. The Dhyana is—(Partial)<sup>2</sup>

...Sringaravirasaddharshiar-jambunadasa-maprabham ||  
Madhyendranilavarnasyam bhayalbibha-tsaraudrakaih. |  
Karunadhutasantaishcha sphatikendvitaranam ||  
Trivimokshamukhaistryaksham dharmasambhoganirmitam |  
Pitabharanasadvastram mayukhasukhavasanim ||  
Suchyakhshayani sivantim badhnantimmukhachakshushi |  
Hridgalenkusapasabhyam bindhantimbanakarmukaih ||  
Vajrena dusthridbhitvasokenasechanaparam |  
Prajnopayapadakrantam Marichimbhavayeda vrati ||  
Vimokshashastabhastana dushtannashtan probhavayeta |  
Padavikasasamkachadat mahishtim chatadratim||...

Several Buddhist images (gods and goddesses) are reported to have been found from

the geographical space of Purba Bardhaman district<sup>3</sup>, all these discovered images belong to the early medieval period. On the basis of such findings, it could be assumed that as a religion Buddhism was in full swing within the geographical space concerned. Recently one stone image of 'Marichipichuva' has been discovered from Bera-Dainhat (Katwa sub division, Purba Bardhaman). Presently the focus has been given on the aforesaid stone image.



Eight armed 'Marichipichuva'

Material : Chlorite stone  
 Provenance : Bera-Dainhat (Katwa subdivision)  
 Size : 4' x 2.2"  
 Time : Early Medieval period (c. 10th-11th century CE)  
 Description : The upper portion of the black slab is broken and on the double petaled lotus on which the three faced eight armed goddess stands in Pratyaldha posture is borne by a Saptaratha pedestal. The dado is carved with the figures of seven sows between two wheels. All her faces with three eyed except the one to

proper left, which is that of sow (Varahamukhi). Except her proper upper left arm holding a noose other seven are mutilated. The charioteer is Rahu. On the lotus pedestal depiction of four companion goddesses namely Varttali, Vadali, Varali and Varahamukhi. Among these four goddesses only one could be identified towards left of the main deity's leg—Varahamukhi. The main deity is clad in a transparent 'Sari' and decorated with jewellery such as—'Karandamukuta', necklace, earrings, armlets, bangles, 'urujalika' and anklets.

It is very curious that the deity of the Buddhist pantheon is like Hindu Pauranic Sun-God. Her chariot is drawn by seven sows, while that of the Sun-God by seven horses. Another interesting feature of the charioteer of the Sun-God is 'Anuru' who has no legs, but that of 'Marichipichuva' is either a goddess with no legs or Rahu. (only a head without a body). The goddess under survey is invoked by the Buddhist Lamas of Tibet during the time of sunrise, which relates her connection with the Sun-God. 'Marichipichuva' is always said to reside in the womb of the chaitya. The conception of the very female deity has a greater antiquity than the conception of either Vajravarahi or Heruka.

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| SI Nos. | Articles  | Authors                                     | Publication Details       | Brief Descriptions  |
|---------|---|---|---------------------------|---|
| 1       | A Year into COVID-19: Glancing through a Journal  | Gorky Chakraborty                           | March 2021, pp. 60-64     | Bibliographical write-up of selected articles related to the pandemic published in the <i>Economic and Political Weekly</i> from March 2020 to February 2021. |
| 2       | Academic Publishing during the COVID-19 Pandemic: Overall Trends                                      | Prasun Chatterjee                           | March 2021, pp. 35-37     | Insider's view on the challenges created by the unprecedented outbreak of the virus in the world of publication.  |
| 3       | An Idea can Change Your Life but a Virus can End it   | Sudipto Roy                                 | April 2020, p. 34         | Impact of Lockdown on corporate sector's working condition.   |
| 4       | Bengali Migrant Workers during Pandemic and Lockdown  | Monalisha Chakraborty and Subrata Mukherjee | September 2020, pp. 73-75 | Ordeal of Bengali migrant workers at different stages of Lockdown.  |
| 5       | Boredom: Plaguing Youth during Pandemic   | Chandrima Biswas                            | March 2021, pp. 18-21     | Revisiting the concept of 'boredom' among young adults against the backdrop of the pandemic.  |
| 6       | Building Our Resilience: Practising Agility in the Realm of New Generation Teaching-Learning Platform | Sanchita Goswami                            | March 2021, pp. 29-31     | Evolution of online teaching in the field of laboratory science in the era of social distancing.  |

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| Sl Nos. | Articles   | Authors   | Publication Details   | Brief Descriptions  |
|---------|--|---|-----------------------|---|
| 7       | Cleanliness is Next to Godliness   | Dr. Subir Kumar Dutta                           | June 2020, pp. 3-8    | The ways to maintain hygiene in daily life to curb the spread of the dreaded virus.   |
| 8       | Colossal Impact of Pandemic COVID-19 on Mental Health — Are We Prepared to Handle?                   | Dr. Tapas Kumar Ray                             | April 2020, pp. 28-29 | Several measures to combat mental health issues arising from the pandemic with grassroots level inputs.   |
| 9       | Corona and I   | Pabitra Sarkar                                  | March 2021, pp. 12-14 | Reflections of an octogenarian academician during pandemic on his own life and beyond.  |
| 10      | Corona Jena Manke Samkramita Na Kare ( <i>In Bengali</i> )   | Anwesa Bandyopadhyay                            | April 2020, pp. 30-31 | Lifestyle related remedies to counter Lockdown induced anxieties.   |
| 11      | Corona Virus Akraman O Amader Chaitanyer Uday: Dipesh Chakrabarty Chintabhabna ( <i>In Bengali</i> ) | Nirmal Bandyopadhyay                            | April 2020, pp. 38-40 | Critical analysis of the present pandemic based on Dipesh Chakrabarty's view on climate change.   |
| 12      | Corona's Colossal Casualties: Human Trafficking of Migrant Workers                                   | Satyajit Das Gupta                              | May 2020, pp. 42-44   | Probable impact of pandemic on trafficking.   |
| 13      | Coronavirus Disease 2019: An Overview and Update   | Dr. Agnibha Maiti and Dr. Anup Kr. Bhattacharya | April 2020, pp. 7-8   | Epidemiology, Clinical Features, Evaluation & Diagnosis and Management of the virus.  |
| 14      | Counselling in Corona Times  | Satyajit Das Gupta                              | March 2021, pp. 22-25 | New challenges in the field of mental health posed by the pandemic.   |
| 15      | COVID-19 and Basic Principles for Maintaining a Healthy Workplace                                    | Arupratan Bagchi                                | April 2020, pp. 9-11  | Guidelines on maintaining the hygiene at the workplace based on advisories from WHO, UNICEF and MoHFW, Government of India to thwart the virus. |

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| Sl Nos. | Articles  | Authors                                      | Publication Details       | Brief Descriptions  |
|---------|---|--|---------------------------|---|
| 16      | COVID -19 and Environmental Health  | Asok Kanti Sanyal                            | June 2020, pp. 11-14      | Initial impact of the Lockdown on environment.  |
| 17      | COVID-19 Pandemic and Workers in Informal Sector in India                     | Ishita Mukhopadhyay                          | March 2021, pp. 41-45     | Issue of gender among the workers of the informal sector during pandemic.                 |
| 18      | COVID-19 Quality Quarantine: The Journey of a Psychologist in its Early Phase | Poulomee Shaw                                | September 2020, pp. 76-78 | An account of personal ailment during Lockdown.   |
| 19      | COVID-19-er Siksha ( <i>In Bengali</i> )                                      | Kumar Rana                                   | July 2020, pp. 44-45      | Effect of the pandemic on public health system.   |
| 20      | Creating a Digital and Virtual Workspace for The Asiatic Society, Kolkata     | Dhiman Chakraborty                           | May 2020, pp. 49-52       | The Asiatic Society's endeavour to build digital platform.                                |
| 21      | Educationally Yours : Nothing Remains the Same                                | Sabyasachi Chatterjee                        | March 2021, pp. 32-34     | Role of COVID on reshaping the academic world.  |
| 22      | Epidemic and Ancient Indian Wisdom  | Anjalika Mukhopadhyay                        | August 2020, pp. 20-22    | Recent pandemic in the light of the ancient Indian texts.                                 |
| 23      | Future of the Past: A Short History of COVID -19 and the World beyond 2020    | Arun Bandopadhyay                            | April 2020, pp. 14-16     | Mapping the trajectory of the virus against the backdrop of the history of the pandemics. |
| 24      | How I Spent My Time during the Pandemic                                       | Amiya Kumar Bagchi                           | March 2021, pp. 10-11     | Personal account of an octogenarian academician in the time of COVID.                     |
| 25      | Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Future Population Growth in India    | Saswata Ghosh, Arup Kumar Das and Kakoli Das | August 2020, pp. 15-19    | Demographic impact of the pandemic.   |
| 26      | Lockdown: 850 Hours and Counting...   | Sunandan Chakraborty                         | May 2020, p. 48           | Personal experience of Lockdown in Indianapolis.  |
| 27      | Managing the Post-COVID Economy   | Achin Chakraborty                            | March 2021, pp. 38-40     | Importance of stimulus package for the economy suffered by the pandemic.                  |



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| 28      | Menstrual Health Situation amidst COVID-19 Pandemic: A Brief Overview                             | Parama Chatterjee                                    | June 2020, pp. 30-32  | Effect of Lockdown on menstrual hygiene of economically disadvantaged women.                      |
| 29      | My Days in Isolation: A Few Reflections   | Tapati Mukherjee                                     | April 2020, p. 13     | Views on a few events at the initial phase of nationwide Lockdown.                                |
| 30      | New Books from Reader's Choice: <i>Beyond Covid's Shadow: Mapping India's Economic Resurgence</i> | Arun Bandopadhyay                                    | March 2021, pp. 65-68 | Review article on the book mentioned.   |
| 31      | On Eco-configuring the ongoing Pandemic and the <i>Amphan</i>                                     | Dilip Kumar Sinha                                    | July 2020, pp. 33-35  | The spiral of a pandemic and a super cyclone.   |
| 32      | One Year Journey by COVID-19 Express  | Soumen Basu, Sudipta Mukherjee and Asok Kanti Sanyal | March 2021, pp. 55-59 | Tracing the causality between environmental decay and the pandemic.                               |
| 33      | Pandemics in Indian History: An Online Colloquium   | Mrunmayee Satam and Babasaheb Kambale                | May 2020, pp. 38-41   | Report of an online colloquium on the present and the past pandemics.                             |
| 34      | Prevention of COVID-19  | Dr Sankar Kumar Nath                                 | May 2020, pp. 21-23   | Detailed guidelines based on advisories of the global watchdog to arrest the spread of the virus. |
| 35      | Revisiting Camus: Life in the Time of Corona  | Chinmoy Guha   | April 2020, pp. 36-37 | Comparative analysis of life in Camus's <i>The Plague</i> vis-a-vis the present pandemic.         |
| 36      | Samajik Duratwa Bhabishyate Manusher Samajik Samparke Aghat Hanbe Na To? ( <i>In Bengali</i> )    | Jagatpati Sarkar                                     | May 2020, p. 55       | Detrimental effect of social distancing on personal relations.                                    |

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| 37      | Selections from Newspapers on COVID-19 and its Socio-economic Dimensions                      | Nibedita Ganguly                | May 2020, pp. 58-62   | Selected bibliography of COVID related write-ups appeared in different media.   |
| 38      | Staying Connected in an Unconnected World   | Swapan Kumar Pramanick          | April 2020, p. 12     | Coping up with the monotony of Lockdown by rediscovering the old acquaintances.   |
| 39      | Staying Home, Staying Alive?  | Chandrima Biswas                | May 2020, pp. 45-47   | Effect of stringent regulations of Lockdown on social relations.  |
| 40      | The Alchemy of Well-Being   | Suchintan Das                   | July 2020, pp. 30-32  | Deconstruction of the politics of mental health in the backdrop of the 'new normal'.                                    |
| 41      | The Locked Down Elderly Brains  | Subhamita Maitra                | March 2021, pp. 15-17 | Effect of Lockdown on Alzheimer's Disease and other mental ailments prevalent among persons of the advanced age groups. |
| 42      | The Pandemic COVID-19   | Dr. Sankar Kumar Nath           | April 2020, p.6       | The novelties of the virus and guidelines to combat it.   |
| 43      | The Role of Library in Higher Education against a Background of Pandemic-Sick Global Scenario | Tapati Mukherjee                | August 2020, p. 26    | Report of the online colloquium on the relevance of Library in higher education during pandemic.                        |
| 44      | The Story of C-E-I-P-Q  | Sabyasachi Chatterjee           | April 2020, pp. 17-18 | Discussion on some basic aspects of the disease.  |
| 45      | Trends of COVID-19: Understanding Facets of 13 months of the Pandemic                         | Anirban Mitra and Saswata Ghosh | March 2021, pp. 46-54 | Impact of the pandemic on global demography.  |
| 46      | Trials and Triumphs of Students with Autism during 2020                                       | Mitu De                         | March 2021, pp. 26-28 | Journey of the special children and their parents against the adversity caused by the pandemic.                         |

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| 48      | Under the Shadows of a Globalized Disease  | Jayanta Acharya   | April 2020, p. 19      | Limitations of the market economy to overcome the fallout of the pandemic.                                |
| 49      | Urgent Humanitarian Community Level Intervention for the Urban Slums has to be the Mainstay of India's COVID-19 Response | Eejrenab Natnayas | May 2020, pp. 24-27    | Discussion on policy measures to prevent the spread of the virus in the urban slums.                      |
| 50      | Vaccines and COVID-19: A Snapshot of the Global Race   | Suman Hazra       | August 2020, pp. 30-34 | Comparative analysis on the development of vaccine candidates.  |
| 51      | Visual Supports Help Autistic Students Adjust and Cope up during the Lockdown  | Mitu De           | April 2020, pp. 32-33  | Innovative ways to handle the special need of the children with Autism Spectrum Disorder during Lockdown. |

*Compiled by Samik Biswas, Publication Section, The Asiatic Society*



## Transition of Movements through Words

*New Directions in Indian Dance*, Edited by Sunil Kothari, Marg Publications, pp. 204, Published in 2003, Price: 2500/-

Dance in India constitutes different classical and semi classical forms and originated from different parts of India. But the concept of Modern Indian Dance came into the realm of the dance world in the latter half of 20th century. How the journey of modern Indian dance emerged and evolved with time and space in the world has been vividly described in the book *New directions in Indian Dance*, edited by Dr. Sunil Kothari.



Before discussing about the book, I would like to mention few words about Dr. Sunil Kothari, a dance critic, a dance anthropologist, a scholar, a writer and also a historian who left us on 27th of December 2020. In India there are very few dance historians who contributed to the Indian dance to render a new momentum with enriched diversity, and Dr. Kothari was one of them. He belonged to the famous group of post independent dance scholars. His illustrated works on Indian Dance and performing arts introduced a new direction in the cultural history of India. There are almost 20 books on various Indian dance forms including *Bharatnatyam, Odissi, Chhau, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Sattriya dances of Assam* in his credits including photo biographies of famous dancers like Uday Shankar, Rukmini Devi Arundale.

The book comprising five sectional divisions as mentioned earlier entitled – Early Experiments under which four articles by Kapila Vatsyayn, Manjusri Chaki Sircar, Mrianlini Sarabhai and Chandralekha shared their views about how the traditional or classical

dance forms evolved from different parts of the country and the concept of modern dance came into the scenario from Tagore's Navanritya to contemporary choreographies in classical formats. In the next section, Innovations in Specific Forms articles by Kumudini Lakhia, Sunil Kothari and Ranjabati Sircar described the innovations in Kathak, Manipuri and Navanritya and their evolution towards the modernity. The theory, experimentation within the classical boundaries is the highlights of these writings. Third section in this book is 'Personal Experiments' where we can see the journey of world famous dancers like Daksha Sheth, Uttara Asha Coorlawala, Astad Deboo with their narratives of various stages of their career, their struggles and creative impulses which made them renowned and famous in the world stage as the new faces of Indian dance. Another section entitled Extensions at Home and Abroad depicts the various genres of Indian dance in the world scenario. The contributors of this particular segment are Arundhuthi Subramaniam, Mamata Niyogi – Nakra, Sanjoy

## Books from Reader's Choice

Roy and Uttara Asha Coorlawala. This section elaborates the bollywood dance which is the heterogeneous composite genre with its diversity. The concluding section of the book is 'A Cross Section of Choreographic Works' which is the most interesting one consisting of some rare and precious photographs of different choreographies across the world. This section not only bestows beautiful canvas of dance but also reveals another face of the Indian dance scene depicting message with every posture.

Dr. Sunil Kothari as the editor of the book tried to amalgamate various dancers, choreographers to share their views and experiences about the journey of new Indian modern dance in the



Dr. Sunil Kothari  
(December 20, 1933- December 27, 2020)

world scenario. Dr. Sunil Kothari successfully showed the journey from the ancient classical temple art to thematic contemporary modern form. The contributors of this volume depicted the various aspects of the new directions of the Indian dance. With many challenges and obstacles the exposure of various forms bound to affect the dance movement and with this kind of research works dancers across the globe can analyse the current scenario of Indian dance movement. Dr. Kothari, being a dance patron contributed enormous works through his research to the dance world which may not be the same after his death though the quintessential man will always be the heart of Indian dance.

**Sucharita Sengupta**  
SACT, K K Das College, Kolkata

Dr. Sunil Kothari attended One-day National Seminar on 'Uniqueness of Guru Bipin Singh in the field of Manipuri Dance' organised by The Asiatic Society in collaboration with Manipuri Nartanalaya on 14th February 2018.

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