



Monthly Bulletin

VOLUME XLIX, NO. 3 ■ MARCH 2020

Remembering
International Women's Day
Sunday, 8 March



**GENERATION
EQUALITY**

REALIZING
WOMEN'S
RIGHTS FOR AN
EQUAL FUTURE

THE ASIATIC SOCIETY
(AN INSTITUTION OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE)
1 PARK STREET • KOLKATA-700016

ENLIGHTENED WOMEN

Associated with us in the past

* **Aloka Chattopadhyay**, Buddhist Scholar

* **Amita Roy**, Archaeologist

* **Archana Sharma**, Scientist

* **Asima Chatterjee**, Scientist

* **Bela Dutta Gupta**, Sociologist

* **Debala Mitra**, Archaeologist

* **Eliky Zannas**, Indologist

* **Gouri Aiyub**, Writer & Social Activist

* **Gouri Dharmapal**, Sanskrit Scholar

* **Jasodhara Bagchi**,
Feminist Critic & Activist

* **Kajal Sengupta**,
Eminent English Teacher

* **Kitty Scoular Dutta**,
English Literature Critic

* **Lady Ranu Mukherjee**, Patron of Art

* **Maitreyee Devi**, Poet and Novelist

* **Maya Dev**, Psychologist

* **Nabaneeta Dev Sen**,
Writer & Academician

* **Phularenu Guha**, Social Activist

* **Prabhati Mukherjee**, Indologist

* **Rama Chaudhary**, Sanskrit Scholar

* **Rama Niyogi**, Scholar in Numismatics

* **Srimati Tagore**, Dancer and Composer

* **Stella Kramrisch**, Art Historian

* **Sukumari Bhattacharji**, Sanskrit Scholar

* **Supriya Acharya**, Social Activist

* **Swati Ganguly**, Chinese Scholar

* **Tulika Sen**, Sociologist

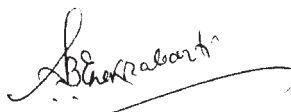
List is not exhaustive

AN ORDINARY MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, 2ND MARCH, 2020 AT 5.00 P.M. IN THE VIDYASAGAR HALL OF THE SOCIETY

MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO BE PRESENT

Agenda

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the Ordinary Monthly General Meeting held on 3rd February, 2020.
2. Exhibitions of presents made to the Society in February, 2020.
3. Notice of Intended Motion, if any, under Regulation 49(d).
4. Matters of current business and routine matters for disposal under Regulation 49(f).
5. Consideration of Reports and communications from the Council as per Regulation 49(g).
6. The following paper will be read:
" 'Deviant'/Defiant Women and Discourses on the Women's Question in Colonial Bengal by Professor Aparna Bandyopadhyay.


(S B Chakrabarti)
General Secretary

The Asiatic Society
1, Park Street
Kolkata 700016

Dated the 15th day of February 2020

‘Deviant’/ Defiant Women and Discourses on the Women’s Question in Colonial Bengal

Aparna Bandyopadhyay*

The paper will seek to unsettle the long established understanding of women in colonial Bengal as passive beneficiaries of reformist interventions or as pliable objects recast into moulds of respectability by a western educated intelligentsia. The widely held notion that women internalized the nationalist construct of the ‘new woman’ – an amalgam of selective western virtues and the traditional ideals of *satitva* and *patibratya*, – and demurely accepted the nationalist resolution of the women’s question, has already come under scrutiny from feminist scholars who have drawn attention to the voices of dissent raised by women through their critical prose and autobiographical writings. Focusing especially on high caste Hindu and Brahmo women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the paper argues that women, by asserting their choice in marriage and remarriage, and by entering into non-marital intimate relation-

ships, challenged the norms of heterosexual intimacy upheld only by a patriarchal moral regime. Stigmatised as sinful and deviant and severely punished, women in love defied the patriarchal straitjackets of passivity, propriety and respectability, and asserted their freedom to choose and their right to be the

arbiters of their own minds and bodies. ‘Deviant’ or defiant are, therefore, not mere adjectives applied to a tiny group of women belonging to the colonial Bengal, these are also indicative of the innate significance of the social and cultural change associated with women at large in years to come. The paper will attempt a more nuanced understanding of the social and cultural milieu of colonial Bengal by throwing the spotlight on these ‘de-

“কেহ কেহ বলেন, নারীগণ বিদ্যা শিখলে বিধবা হয়। কেহ বলেন, ইহারা বিদ্যা রসাস্বাদনে প্রবৃত্ত হইলে আর সাংসারিক কার্যে হস্তক্ষেপ করিবে না। কোন কোন মহাত্মারা বলেন, স্ত্রীগণ বিদ্যা শিক্ষা করিলে তাহাদিগের চিত্ত চঞ্চল হইবে, আর সেই চাপল্য হেতু তাহারা স্বীয় স্বামীকে উপেক্ষা করিয়া স্বাধীন হইতে চেষ্টা করিবে, এবং মনোমত ব্যক্তিকে পত্র দ্বারা আমন্ত্রণ করত উপপতিত্বে বরণ করিবে। কেহ বলেন, ইহারা বিদ্যাভ্যাস করিলে বুদ্ধিবল প্রাপ্ত হইয়া পুরুষবৎ ব্যবহার করিতে প্রবৃত্ত হইবে, তাহাতে আমাদের মান সম্ভ্রম একেবারে খর্ব হইবে। হায়! বিদ্যা শিখিলে বিধবা হইবে? বিদ্যার কি পতিঘাতিনী শক্তি আছে, যে তদ্বারা নারীগণ পতিরত্নে বঞ্চিত হইবে?... নারীগণ বিদ্যাভ্যাস করিলে যে দ্বিচারিণী হইবে ও সাংসারিক কার্যে উপেক্ষা করিবে তাহার প্রমাণ কি? বিদ্যা কি নিকৃষ্ট পদার্থ যে তৎ সংস্পর্শে নারীগণ নিকৃষ্টমার্গে পদার্পণ করিবে?”

কৈলাসবাসিনী দেবী : হিন্দু মহিলাদিগের
হীনাবস্থা (কলকাতা, ১৮৬৩), পৃ. ৬৫

viant’ women and their everyday acts of resistance and self-assertion, and will try to evaluate their long-lasting effect on the consciousness, thought and activities of women in the rest of the twentieth century and beyond.

*Associate Professor of History, Diamond Harbour Women’s University, South 24 Parganas, West Bengal



From the Desk of the General Secretary

Dear Members and Well-wishers,

A number of academic programmes were organized in the month of January-February 2020. A special lecture was delivered by Professor Suranjan Das, Vice-Chancellor, Jadavpur University, Kolkata in the memory of renowned historian the late Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya on 3rd January 2020. The programme was in collaboration with Paschim Banga Itihas Samsad. L. P. Tessitori Memorial seminar was organized in the Society in collaboration with Rajasthani Pracharini Sabha and the Asiatic Society, Kolkata on 4th January 2020. Dr. Biman Behari Mazumdar Memorial Lecture 2018 was delivered on 10th January 2020 by Professor Radhavallabh Tripathi, former Vice-Chancellor, Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi. A two-day seminar cum workshop was organized on 13-14 January on 'Contributions of Women Scientists in Developing Indian Science & Society' in collaboration with AIPSN and the Asiatic Society, Kolkata. The Foundation Day Programme was successfully organized on 15th January 2020 and the details were reported in the February 2020 Bulletin.

A Book Release ceremony was held for the 3-volume book *A Comprehensive History of*

Modern Bengal, 1700-1950 edited by the late Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya on 27th January 2020. The set of books was released and a lecture on Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya was delivered by Professor Dipesh Chakrabarty, eminent historian, University of Chicago, USA. A Santali Translation of Rabindranath Tagore's *Vidyasagar Charit* done by Professor Boro Baske of Santiniketan was released on 2nd February 2020 at

Stall No. F15 of the International Kolkata Book Fair 2020.

A seminar was held at the same venue on 4th February 2020 on Vidyasagar and Women's Education. On this occasion Professor Miratun Nahar, Professor Uttara Chakraborty and Professor Tapati Mukhopadhyay delivered lectures. Another seminar was held on Vidyasagar and Contemporary Bengali Intellectuals on 5th February 2020 where Dr. Soumen-

dranath Bera and Professor Pabitra

Kumar Sarkar spoke. On 7th February 2020 another seminar on the Role of Vidyasagar in Development of Modern Bengali Prose was organized and the speakers were Professor Amiya Kumar Deb, Shri Manoj Bhattacharya, former MP, Shri Shyamsundar Bhattacharya, and Dr. Jyoti Bhusan Datta. A Quiz competition on Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar and his times was organized there on 8th February 2020. The Quiz competition was conducted by



Medallion installed at
Rajendralala Mitra Bhavan

From the Desk of the General Secretary

Dr. Nirmal Bandyopadhyay and Dr. Jagatpati Sarkar. A special lecture was delivered by Dr. David Curtley, Emeritus Professor at Western Washington, USA on the topic 'Religion and Politics in Bijayram Sen's Tirthamangal' on 4th February 2020. Annual Presentation programme by the Research Fellows of the Society was organized on 5th February 2020.

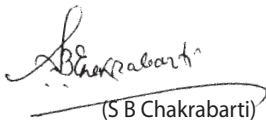
One-day seminar was organized for celebrating the two hundredth birth anniversary of Akshay Kumar Datta and Contemporary Bengali Culture (15.07.1820 – 18.05.1886) on 14th February 2020. The Key-note Address was delivered by Professor Md. Saiful Islam of Bangladesh. Introduction to the theme of the seminar was made by Professor Satyabati Giri. Lectures were delivered by Professor Swapan Basu, Dr. Manas Pratim Das, Professor Sanat Kumar Naskar, Shri Ashis Lahiri, Professor Shyamal Chakrabarti and Dr. Rajeswar Sinha.

At the Salt Lake building 199th birth anniversary of Rajendralala Mitra, the first Indian President of the Asiatic Society was organized on 15th February 2020. An exhibition on "First Bengali Illustrated Magazine: Bibidhartha Sangraha (1851-1856)" was put up at Rajendralala Mitra Bhavan, CL 24, Sector II, Salt Lake, Kolkata 700091. The

President of the Asiatic Society inaugurated the exhibition at 4 p.m. followed by two lectures. These were delivered by Professor Swapan Basu and Professor Tapati Mukhopadhyay on Rajendralala Mitra and his contributions to the development of Bengali Journalism. The Asiatic Society, Kolkata in collaboration with Pratichi (India) Trust, Kolkata released the Study Report on *Living World of the Adivasis of West Bengal : Ethnographic Exploration* on 19th February 2020. The publication was released by Professor Amartya Sen, Nobel Laureate at the Society premises.

A number of academic programmes are already scheduled to be organized during the month of March 2020. About three seminars will be organized in three places of North-East India viz., Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh, Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh and Cotton University, Guwahati, Assam.

Hope, with your kind help and co-operation as ever we will be able to fulfil our commitments.


(S B Chakrabarti)
General Secretary



Audience in the Exhibition Hall listening to the lecture of Professor Tapati Mukhopadhyay

Some New additions of Portraits in the collection of the Asiatic Society

Raja Rajendralala Mitra (1822-1891)



A three-quarter portrait in the oil on canvas (size 38" x 37" with frame) of Raja Rajendralala Mitra seated in a majestic way on red velvet cushioned chair with arms resting on the hand rest. In one hand he is holding a book and the other is left casually loose. He puts on a chapkan on which also puts on a thin yellowish translucent garment as a style of the aristocracy of the time having all other embellish in every fitting to his title as 'Raja'.

His face covered with a typical turban with a red stripe on it, is beautifully composed on the canvas with dark bluish background has made the lively portrait thrash out to the

viewers with command and compassion. This portrait is already started flaking at places and should be renovated without any further delay.

Rajendralala Mitra was one of the pioneer Indologist, but at the same time he was a profound nationalist devoted to enlightening the people about the glories of Indian Cultural traditions in their proper perspective.

A scion of the aristocratic Mitra (Kayastha) family of Surah, an eastern suburb of Calcutta, Rajendralala was born at their ancestral residence on 16.2.1922. Rajendralala showed signs of promise from his childhood and when he was only nine years old he was admitted in Bysack's Hindu Free School. In later days he acquired wide knowledge in varied subjects in Sanskrit, Bengali, Persian and English.

The year 1846 was a land mark in the life of Rajendralala, when he came to be associated with The Asiatic Society, the erudite institution with its rich treasures of books, manuscripts and antiquities, as its Assistant Secretary and Librarian.

In recognition of his high academic eminence and significant contribution to human knowledge the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland elected him an Honorary Fellow in 1865 and the Calcutta University conferred on him its highest degree of Doctor of Laws (Honorio Cama) in 1876. The Government also decorated him with the honorific titles of Raja Bahadur in 1877, C.I.E. in 1878 and finally Raja in 1888. He passed away in Calcutta on 26.7.1891 after a short illness.

A versatile genius and a profound scholar, Rajendralal possessed an inexhaustible fund of energy and enthusiasm, every steps of which he devoted to the service of his motherland, in the sphere of academic as well as socio-cultural life of his time.

Nirmal Kumar Bose (1901-1972)



A portrait painting in oil on canvas (size 29" x 23" without frame) of Sri Nirmal Kumar Bose by an insignificant artist Mr. M. Biswas has been acquired by the Asiatic Society and included in its collection of portrait paintings. This is somehow unfortunate to observe that the person is clad with white kameez upto the chest is composed in such a manner that it gives a viewer with a kind of suffocating feelings as it has no breathing space on the top of the head and also on both sides of the shoulder. Moreover, the face without proportionate neck and shoulder made it look a bit of demonic with staring in the front with an angry look.

It is a pity that such a person with highly educational and intellectual background

should be painted with such poor skill and nohow of portrait painting. We suggest that the artwork should be kept in the store than on display.

Nirmal Kumar Bose was born in Calcutta in undivided Bengal on 22nd January 1901. Bose received his school education from different schools of three states in the country namely Bihar, Bengal and Orissa. He passed his matriculation, intermediate (science), Bachelor of Science with honors in Geology and Master of Science with honors in Geology and Master of Science (Anthropology) in the year 1917, 1919, 1921 and 1924 respectively. He studied first Geology then Anthropology at the University of Calcutta and did MSC from Calcutta University in 1923-24.

Bose had an unusual varied career. He taught for sometimes at the department of Anthropology and was still 1959 reader in human Geography, in the department of Geography at the Calcutta University. He was invited as visiting professor at the University of California, Berkeley and the department of Anthropology, University of Chicago in 1959. He was also invited to deliver lecture at the University of Wisconsin and Michigan. He was also director of the Anthropological Survey of India from 1959 to 1964.

Nirmal Bose was remarkably devoted in equal measures to the pursuit of Science and the service of humanity. Although he held various high positions with great distinctions, this was a small part of his life. He was drawn into the national movement at a young age and this gave a distinct stamp to his scientific and literary work.

In recognition of his excellent work in Anthropology he was awarded Annandale gold medal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1948. He was elected as the President of Anthropology and Archaeology Section of Indian Science Congress in 1949. He was elected a fellow of the National Institute of Science of India in 1955. He was a devoted Social Worker and served in various capaci-

ties in many philanthropic organizations. He received Padmashree in 1966.

On 15th October 1972 after a remarkable fruitful life devoted in equal measure to the pursuit of Science and the service of humanity. He has left behind standards of work that will both daunt and inspire succeeding generations of Anthropologists and Sociologists.

Premendra Mitra (1904-1988)



The Asiatic Society has a portrait painting of Premendra Mitra in oil on canvas (size 60 x 70 cm without frame). The portrait is done by some insignificant artist and therefore the work has no signature on it and in the accession register it is recorded as artist unknown.

Whatever may it be, we are concerned

with the quality of an artwork, which is so much below the standard that the Society may keep this in storage only.

The artist, being incapable to thrush out the principle-image from the canvas, had laid a bluish colour-tone around the face like a kind hallow and the white kameez and yellowish shawl are done like a popular scene-painter having no knowledge of doing portrait-painting and drapery in proper established way of the naturalistic style of painting.

In our opinion, the painting should be kept in the store than on display.

Premendra Mitra was an Indian poet, novelist, short story and thriller writer, film director in the Bengali language. He was also practitioner of Bengali Science fiction. Premendra Mitra was born in Varanashi, where his father Gyanendranath Mitra was an employee of the Indian Railways and because of that he had the opportunity to travel to many places in India. Having lost his mother he was brought up by his grand parents in Uttar Pradesh and spent his later life in Kolkata and Dhaka (Bangladesh). He was a student of South Suburbon School (Main), and enrolled for a B.A. at the Scottish Church College in Kolkata which he left prematurely to study agriculture in Santiniketan. He returned to education first in an under graduate course in Dhaka and in 1925 at Ashutosh College in Calcutta where he assisted the research work of Ray Bahadur Dinesh Chandra Sen. During his initial years he started as a school teacher and rediscovered his talents for creativity in writing and eventually became a Bengali author and poets. He spent almost his entire life in a house at Kalighat and passed away in the year 1988.

Somnath Mukherjee
Somnath Mukherjee

Isha Mahammad
Isha Mahammad

2nd & 3rd March, 2020

Extending Horizon of Indian Anthropology: Contemporary Research and Emerging Inter-disciplinary Concerns: A Collaborative Seminar to be organized by the Department of Anthropology, R.G. University, Arunachal Pradesh and The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, Venue: RGU.

4th March, 2020

One-day International Seminar on 'Iswarchandra Vidyasagar Towards Modernity: Science, Society and Public Health' organized by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar Bi-centenary Birth Day Celebration Committee, Kolkata, in collaboration with The Asiatic Society, Kolkata at the Vidyasagar Hall of The Asiatic Society.

Co-ordinators: Proposer: Prof. Susnata Das, Dr. Sankar Kumar Nath, Prof. Shyamal Chakrabarti & Prof. Ananda Deb Mukherjee.

5th & 6th March, 2020

Annual Presentation Programme[3rd year] by the Research Fellows in the premises of the Society at 1 p.m.

12th March, 2020

K.K. Handique Memorial Lecture by Dr. Mukundakam Sharma, Former Justice, the Supreme Court of India, on the topic 'Law & Religion' at 3 p.m.

13th March, 2020 [Tentative programme]

A Seminar for celebration of the 150 years of Periodic Table of Chemical Elements by Russian Chemist Mendeleev on 13th March, 2020. Proposer: Prof. Dulal C Mukherjee, Life Member, The Asiatic Society at the Vidyasagar Hall of The Asiatic Society .Time: 2:00 p.m.

13th March, 2020

A One-day Seminar on Historical Links to Contemporary Convergences of India-Japan Relations in the Humayun Kabir Hall of The Asiatic Society at 11:00 a.m. Co-ordinator: Prof. Lipi Ghosh.

20th & 21st March, 2020

A National Seminar on 'Journey of Anthropology in North-Eastern India during the last 100 years' would be held in Dibrugarh University in collaboration with The Asiatic Society, Kolkata and Dibrugarh University.

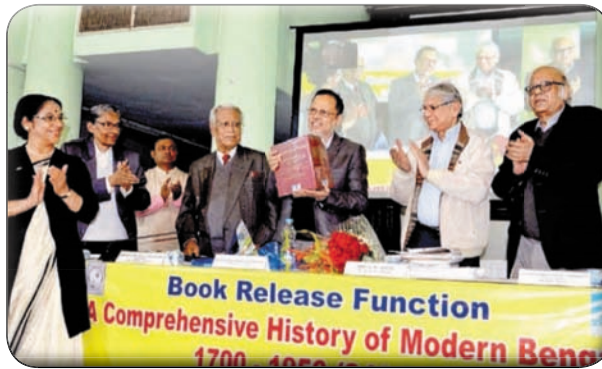
Co-ordinator : Prof. Sarthak Sengupta, Dibrugarh University.

28th March, 2020

Prof. Ashin Dasgupta Memorial Lecture in collaboration with Pashim Banga Itihas Samsad, Kolkata at the Vidyasagar Hall of the Asiatic Society. Co-ordinator: Prof. Arun Kr. Bandopadhyay, Historical & Archaeological Secretary, The Asiatic Society.

Release of *A Comprehensive History of Modern Bengal, 1700-1950*

Three extraordinary things were associated with the formal release of *A Comprehensive History of Modern Bengal, 1700-1950*, (a 3 Volume Set) at the Asiatic Society Kolkata on 27 January 2020. First, Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya conceived and completed the work in collaboration with more than 60 contributors from India and abroad within a record time of only two years since the inception of the project. Second, Primus in association with the Asiatic Society Kolkata made it a publication record of publishing the manuscript running into 3000 pages within a year of the submission of the script. Third, Professor Dipesh Chakrabarti of the University of Chicago, gave a wonderful introduction of Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya as a historian and editor of this magnificent work before releasing it in a meeting presided over by Professor Isha Muhammad, President of The Asiatic Society. Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Society welcomed the large gathering of learned and interested people assembled for the occasion, and highlighted the uniqueness of the project launched by the Society three years ago. Professor Subhas Ranjan Chakrabarti, Vice President of the Society, made a brilliant exposition of Professor Bhattacharya's idea of conceiving the project, and then gave a succinct account of what these three



(L-R) Professor Malabika Bhattacharya, Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, Sri Amiya Baul, Professor Isha Muhammad, Professor Dipesh Chakrabarti, Sri B. N. Verma and Professor Subhas Ranjan Chakrabarti

volumes, edited by him, contained with the active collaboration of more than 60 contributors on the social, economic, political, environmental and cultural history of Bengal. While releasing the book, Professor Dipesh Chakrabarti mostly talked from his personal memory about Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, the teacher and historian, and what the audience got in

return was the very unique picture of a person whose academic interests, research, teaching, appeal and conversations in the last six decades were far-flung. Dipesh ended his introductory note by making the briefest comment on Bhattacharya as the editor of the volume. According to him, very few

people have the capacity, courage and idea of initiating such a comprehensive project of history with such wide coverage and completing it within such a short time at an age and predicament with which Professor Bhattacharya did it. Dipesh even admitted that he could not do it, but added that the volume is an excellent indication of collaborative work on the history of modern Bengal under the able guidance of Professor Bhattacharya, a volume which will work for reference for the students of history and interested readers for several decades to come.

Professor Arun Bandopadhyay
Historical & Archaeological Secretary,
The Asiatic Society, Kolkata

Study Report on *Adivasis* released by Amartya Sen

The report of a unique ethnographic study – *Living World of the Adivasis of West Bengal* – was released on Wednesday, 19 February 2020 by Professor Amartya Sen, the Nobel laureate, economist, philosopher and Chairman of the Pratichi Institute at the hallowed precincts of The Asiatic Society. This research project resulted from a distinctive collaboration between Pratichi Institute and The Asiatic Society and has attempted to present the perspectives of the Adivasi communities. One of the strategies was to involve researchers and investigators from such backgrounds, a number of whom were present at the function.

The 40 notified Adivasi tribes of West Bengal constitute 47 per cent of the total Scheduled Tribe population. The report has attempted to address the wide knowledge gaps – among both specialized academics and the general public – regarding who these Adivasis are, where they live, what they do, their socio-economic status, their cultural and linguistic practices. Wide socio-economic variations between the different Adivasi groups and within the specific Adivasi communities, despite having been shown in the Census data, have hardly attracted any attention either in public policy or in general discussion. Their rich linguistic and cultural heritage and their potential to interact with other societies on equal terms do not seem to

have found any base among the apparently mainstream societies.

In his address after the release of the publication, Professor Sen expressed his appreciation for The Asiatic Society and Pratichi working together to bring about the much-needed larger understanding of and empathy for prob-



(L-R) Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, Professor Isha Muhammad, Professor Amartya Sen, Dr. Manabi Mazumdar, Sri Kumar Rana and Dr. Sujit Das

lems and concerns peculiar to each of the Adivasi communities. He said members of different Adivasi groups, not just in Bengal but all over India, had had to suffer numerous deprivations over centuries – especially in the spheres of education, healthcare and social security – which caused them

huge loss of respect and self-esteem disempowering them from achieving anything worthwhile in the view of the so-called mainstream societies. Professor Sen emphasized that it shouldn't be difficult to provide tribal people with proper education which was the key to facilitating the identification of their problems and coming up with collective solutions.

The President of The Asiatic Society, Professor Isha Mahammad, felicitated Professor Sen. On behalf of Pratichi, Dr. Manabi Mazumdar and Mr. Kumar Rana spoke about the nature of the collaboration and the key findings that emerged. The programme was ably conducted by Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary of The Asiatic Society.

Janajit Ray
Pratichi Institute

Release of Tagore's *Vidyasagar-Charit* in Santali At the International Kolkata Book Fair on 2nd February 2020

The book launch programme of *Vidyasagar-Charit* in Santali was inaugurated by Professor Satyabrata Chakrabarti, the General Secretary of the Asiatic Society. In his speech Professor Chakrabarti said that the Asiatic Society is proud to launch the book *Vidyasagar-Charit* in Santali that it has published. He felt great satisfaction to say that this was the first time in the history of the society that a Santali book was being published and that also at a time when the nation is celebrating the bi-centenary birth anniversary of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, one of the great social reformers of our country. He extended his gratitude to Dr. Boro Baske for carrying out such a pioneering task of translating the *Vidyasagar-Charit* of Rabindranath Tagore and hoped that this book will help the people of the community to understand what the ideas of Vidyasagar stood for. Vidyasagar spent a considerable amount of time among the Santals in the last stage of his life. He then requested Dr. Baske to share his experiences of translating *Vidyasagar-Charit* into Santali.

Expressing his gratitude to Professor Satyabrata Chakrabarti and the publishing secretary, Professor Ramkrishna Chatterjee, for publishing the book, Boro Baske said that the programme was indeed a matter of pride for the people who love Santals and their language and literature. He felt honoured that the book was being launched in the Kolkata Book Fair in the presence of renowned personalities of Bengali and Santali language and literature. Baske said, "I have done a literal translation of Rabindranath Tagore's *Vidyasagar-Charit* into Santali and it is



Dr. Boro Baske explaining his experience of translating the work in Santali. Professor Archana Banerjee and Professor Meruna Murmu – two leading scholars are present in the dais

called *Vidyasagar-Chaichalan* in Santali. The book is translated in two scripts Olchiki and Bangla. There are a lot of debates and discussions around a literal translation. Is it possible to translate literally one language's literature into another language? Every literature has its history and cultural background and translating means that we translate its words, its content, but we cannot translate its sounds, tastes and emotions. Realizing these limitations, I went for a literal translation of *Vidyasagar-Charit* into Santali because I believe that the first translation of any book should be done literally. It gives the direct taste of the original writing to the readers of



Professor Amiya Kumar Bagchi delivering his speech. Professor Pabitra Sarkar and other distinguished scholars are in the audience

the other language. The adaptation and other kinds of experimental writings will also be benefited from that translation. I had faced several hurdles in the process of translation, as we are aware that Bengali and Santali belong to two different groups of languages, and their sounds and structures have distinct differences. Though over the time Bangla has enriched herself by borrowing words from Santali but Santali has hardly been influenced by the Bengali language. Thus, it was obvious that not many suitable Santali words were available to translate the Bengali words and expressions.

I also found it difficult translating the words related to history and culture, for example, *Abhimanyu*, *chandimandap* and even *Bidhobabibaha*. Since there are no direct words to express such terms in Santali, I have explained them in the end notes. The words that created ambiguities in the trans-

lation have been kept in their original form.

The strength of the Bangla language much depends on its power of adaptability in an ever changing socio-cultural scenario. On the other hand, Santali strongly relies on its root words. The more words Santali will borrow from other languages, the more vulnerable it will make herself. Many Santali words have in recent times been mixed with other modern languages, and gradually new spoken words are evolving which have no connection with the original Santali terms. Thus, without finding the original root words it was difficult to translate the deep and thoughtful ideas of the book. P.O. Bodding's *Santali-English* and A. Campbell's *English-Santali Dictionaries* have been immensely helpful to me in finding such root words. And even in the modern age the importance of these dictionaries have not diminished. Bodding had a long association with the Asiatic Society. He

has done all his literary work in roman script which is still being used by Santals in various parts of India, Bangladesh and Nepal. To reach out to Santals of all regions and for inclusiveness too, I feel the important literary work such as this should be published in roman script too besides in Olchiki and Bangla script."

Boro Baske then requested Professor Pabitra Sarkar, former Vice-chancellor, Rabindra Bharati University, former Vice-chairman, West Bengal State Council of Higher Education and former chairman, Committee on Santali language in Olchiki script, Govt. of West Bengal, to share his views. Expressing his pleasure for being invited, Professor Sarkar lauded the work done by the Asiatic Society and Dr. Boro Baske. He said that translated literature had all along been the subject of debate among scholars. However, the work of translation from one language to other has been going on and it should be. It is through translation that one's language and literature has been enriched and that the people of different life-styles and cultures could come to know each other. When we translate a people's literature we translate their culture too. Professor Sarkar also said that having been the chairman of the committee of Santali language in Olchiki in 2001, he was quite aware of the dilemma that the Santals had regarding choosing a script to pursue an education in their mother-tongue. Santals mostly use Olchiki and Bangla scripts for writing Santali in the state and there were several opinions placed in favor of both scripts. But, since most of the people from the community favored Olchiki, the Government took the decision that Olchiki be used as the medium of instruction in state schools. He wished that Santali language may flourish. Translation work such as this one would be a great boost to the cause.

Professor Amiya Kumar Bagchi, Professor of Economics and Former Director of the

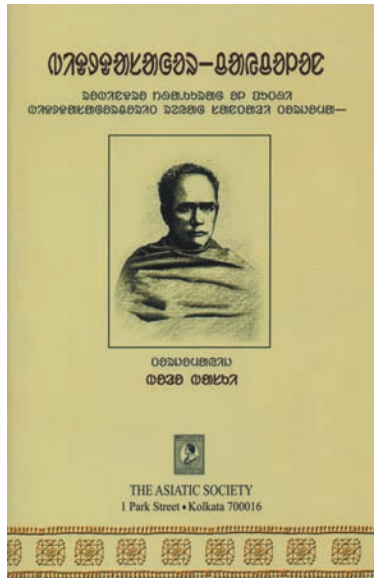
Institute of Development Studies, Kolkata, said that he was pleased to know that the Santali translation of *Vidyasagar-Charit* was being released. He hoped that by that both the language and the literature would benefit. He lauded the initiative of the Asiatic Society and the translator.

Professor Maroona Murmu, Jadavpur University said that she felt quite clueless as what to say since most of the previous speakers had already spoken positive about the issue. However, she read out an excerpt of Vidyasagar where he said more than a hundred years ago that Bengalis need to learn so much from Santals where human values are concerned. He felt they were more civilized than many of us, the Bengalis, in many ways. She later pointed out the name of a Bengali dictionary where a few years ago the meaning of 'Santal' had been given as a community of savages. Professor Murmu argued that when a great social reformer like Vidyasagar already had talked highly about Santals and he had even lived with them for many years in Karmarter village, how a scholar of the modern age could still use the word 'savage' about Santals. "Does the extra praise of Santals that we often come to hear and witness in various writings or films only reveal the hypocrisy of so-called civilized society? How long shall we go on deceiving ourselves?"

Mr. Sarada Prasad Kisku, the well-known Santali writer, said that Vidyasagar spent the last stage of his life among the Santals in Karmatar. He felt dejected by his fellow elite Bengali friends in Kolkata and even by his own family members. It was then that he found solace among the poor and simple-natured Santals. He founded a school, 'Nandankanan', and a health clinic for the local people. Vidyasagar also supported the poor Santals by selling and distributing rice, clothes and vegetables at a lower price after buying them from the market. He understood the mentality of the Santals and they

too loved him equally. Mr. Kisku also said that there was a time when he used to visit the Asiatic Society regularly along with senior Santali writers like Sri Mondal Hembrom, Sri Guru Charan Murmu, Dr. Probodh Kumar Bhowmik, Dr. Pasupati Mahato and others and used to discuss the development of Santali language and literature. Nowadays, this connection has been severed. He hoped that through this publication the dialogue between the Society and Santal writers will resume. He felt that the Santali translation of *Vidyasagar-Charit* would be highly respected among the Santals.

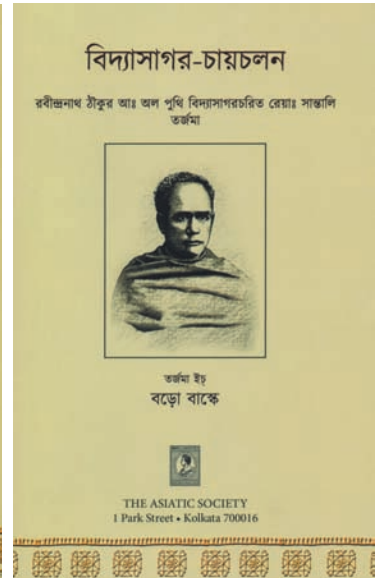
The last speaker of the session was Dr. Archana Banerjee. She said that she studied and learnt to speak Santali while studying in Santiniketan. She travelled extensively in Santal villages while doing her research work. She felt that some parts of the vibrant Santali language and culture were gradually erased from the community memory. For example, the Sorhai songs



Vidyasagar-Charit in Olchiki script

which tell about the Santals past and of their human fellowship. Dr. Banerjee said, "Vidyasagar was so close to the Santals of Karmarter that he who never has been a devotee of gods and goddesses himself, put the shal timber in the religious place of Santals, the 'Jaher than', and bowed before it. Santals also fondly called him 'Karam Guru', the learned Santal." Dr. Archana Banerjee sang two Santali sorhai songs at the end.

The vote of thanks was delivered by Professor Ram-



Vidyasagar-Charit in Bengali script

krishna Chatterjee. He said that he was happy to see that at such short notice so many important people could make time to come. Nobody had rejected his request when told about the purpose of the day's event. This was a sign of the importance of the event. On behalf of the Asiatic Society he thanked Dr. Boro Baske for his great work of translating *Vidyasagar-Charit* into Santali. He also thanked all the invited speakers and the audience for attending the programme.

Dr. Boro Baske
Santiniketan

(Photos by Sunder Manoj Hembrom and Sudipto Mukhopadhyay)

Folklore Workshop: An Academic Continuum

Dr. Madhuri Sarkar

One of the most popular workshops of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata accredited by Peer Review Committee of Govt. of India, has been Folklore Workshops which were being held consistently for 10 sessions from 2002-

2014 on various aspects of Folklore Studies. Professor Pallab Sengupta, former President of The Asiatic Society & former Vidyasagar Chair Professor of Rabindra Bharati University had initiated these Folklore

Workshops in 2002 and conducted till 2014. After a gap of 5 years, keeping in tradition, the 11th Session of the Folklore Workshop was held from 16-20th December 2019 under the title "Language & Aesthetics of Folklore". The coordinators this year were Professor-Ranjana Ray, Anthropological Secretary of The Asiatic Society & Dr. Chandramalli Sengupta, Academic Committee member of The Asiatic Society. Out of more than 100 applications received with minimum qualification of Master's degree in any discipline, 56 participants were selected for the 5 days' Workshop. In the Inaugural Session General Secretary Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti delivered the Welcome Address where he spoke about the

popularity of folklore workshops and also the Asiatic Society's role in the field of folklore studies. The theme of workshop was introduced by Jt. Co-ordinator Dr. Chandramalli Sengupta who gave an idea about the various



(L-R) Professor Isha Muhammad, Professor Pallab Sengupta, Professor Ranjana Ray, Dr. Chandramalli Sengupta and Dr. Sujit Das in the Inaugural Session

topics of folklore that were dealt with in previous sessions. Stressing the specializations in folklore, she talked about the focus of this year's workshop on language of various forms of folk literature like tales, riddles, proverbs, rhymes and so-

cial dialects and aesthetics of different forms of folk art like dance, drama, song, sculpture, painting, folk craft etc. She also mentioned the different parameters of studying language and judging aesthetics in folklore vis-à-vis so called sophisticated literature and art. The key-note address was given by Professor Pallab Sengupta who pointed out that the main difference between classical and folk aesthetics depend mostly on different socio-economic and cultural perspectives. Another point he made was that maxims of decency and indecency in art and culture varies according to socio-cultural differences and this difference is often reflected through languages. He added that folk language has



Resource Persons interacting with the Scholars in the workshop

a distinct character of its own as it has its roots spread in different strata of the society. Presidential Address was given by Professor Isha Mahammad in which he recounted his childhood memories of listening to folk stories. This session ended with Vote of Thanks by Dr. Sujit Das, Treasurer of The Asiatic Society. A total of 13 Academic Sessions were held in this workshop. The first academic session began with an introduction by Jt. Co-ordinator Professor Ranjana Ray about rules & regulations of the Workshop. First lecture was given by Professor Pabitra Sarkar who spoke on “Urban & Folk Aesthetics” where he threw light on difference between both, and how one should evaluate each. This was followed by Professor Bikashkanti Midday’s lecture on “Language, Dialect & Folk Language” and Dr. Rajasree Mukhopadhyay’s on “Aesthetics of Classical & Folk Art : A Comparative Study” where she used beautiful slides to show differences between both. The second day began with an engrossing lecture by Dr. Debtusi Misra Chaudhuri on Women’s Language and the psycho-socio factors behind it. It was followed by Professor Pallab Sengupta’s lecture on “Rockney, Cockney & Language of the Underworld” where he made an interesting observation about

how young generation unknowingly incorporate such language in their deliberations. Dr. Saugato Chattopadhyay spoke on “Aesthetics of Folk Craft : Emphasis on Conch art” and Professor Kakali Dhara Mondal on “Aesthetics of Folk music” where she also presented a few folk songs herself to introduce the different genres and varieties of folk music. The third day had Sri Subhamoy Mandal, eminent novelist as speaker who spoke on “Folk language in Modern Bengali Literature”. Himself being an author, he explained the need and psychology behind the use of folk language in his own writings along with speaking about other authors. This was followed by Professor Ratna Basu who gave a memorable lecture on “Folk Language in Classical Literature” quoting from Classical Indian texts. The next session had an enchanting lecture on “Slang & Invectives” by Professor Pallab Sengupta where he pointed out with various examples how with change of time and society, words and expressions tend to lose or gain the nomenclature of Slang and also how psychology works behind usage of invectives. This was followed by a wonderful lecture demonstration by Professor Mahua Mukhopadhyay on “Aesthetics of Folk Dance” where along with her explanations, dancers showed

various authentic forms of folk dances of Bengal. Sri. Amitabha Mukhopadhyay and Sri Ayan Mukhopadhyay rendered vocal and instrumental support to the performances. On the fourth day the first lecture was given by eminent architect and artist Sri Arunendu Bandyopadhyay on “Aesthetic impact of Folk Art on Bengal School of Art” which was again an audio-visual treat for the class. He showed how such form of art has been used in urban spaces, yet artists receive no recognition in the cultural world. Next Dr. Chandramalli Sengupta spoke on “Language of Folk Literature” where she discussed popular folk tales, proverbs, riddles, rhymes to identify different forms of languages used in different genres of folk literature & allied areas and how psychology is a key factor behind such languages. In the next class Professor Soumitra Basu spoke on “Aesthetics of Folk Drama”. Being a playwright and actor himself, his explanations were based on first hand experience where he stressed on minimality as a part of aesthetics, which he himself adopts in his productions. The last academic session was on performance in which actor & television anchor Smt. Jayeeta Goswami held a captivating story session where she read popular folktales from *Thakumar Jhuli* and recited some well-known folk rhymes. The session ended with folk songs presentation by popular folk singer Smt. Shampa Biswas. All the Academic Sessions had QA time where participants interacted enthusiastically with the resource persons. It was interesting to note that some re-

source persons in this workshop had been participants themselves few years back and atleast a couple of participants have attended all 11 sessions of this workshop, which showed the academic continuum that this event has created over two decades. The last day, as per the rules of the Workshop, was scheduled for Presentation by participants who were grouped according to their choice of topics. 54 participants spoke on a variety of topics like Folk Literature, Folk Performing Art, Folk Visual art, Folk Craft, Folk Aesthetics, Social Folklore, Folk Language, Folk Philosophy. The presentations were evaluated by Professor Pallab Sengupta, Professor Shyamsundar Bhattacharya, Professor Mahua Mukhopadhyay, Dr. Sisir Kumar Majumdar and Dr. Madhuri Sarkar in two parallel sessions. Some participants gave excellent presentations and earned Grade A from evaluators. Valedictory Session was chaired by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, Vice President of The Asiatic Society. Professor Ranjana Ray summed up the entire seminar in her speech. Valedictory Address was given by Professor Satyabati Giri, former professor of Jadavpur University where she made valuable comments about each & every class. On the request by General Secretary Professor Pallab Sengupta also addressed the gathering.

The Workshop concluded with presenting certificates to successful participants by General Secretary Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, Shri Shyamsundar Bhattacharya, Professor Pallab Sengupta & Professor Ranjana Ray and photo sessions by participants.

National Seminar on Women in Science: Indian perspective



Women Scientists in the seminar : Row 1 (L-R) Ms. Geeta Mahashabde, Professor Nandini Mukherjee, Ms. Bahata Anshumali Mukherjee, Ms. Malar Selvi, Dr. Manjila Bera; Row 2 (L-R) Professor Bindu Bambah, Professor Julie Banerjee, Dr. Priyadarshini Karve and Professor Anita Rampal

The Asiatic Society, Kolkata organised a two day national seminar on 'Role of Women Scientists in Developing Science and Society in India' jointly with All India People's science Network on 13th and 14th January 2020. More than 115 participants including distinguished women scientists and science activists from 14 states of our country participated in this national seminar. Dr. P Rajamanickam, General Secretary of AIP-SN, in his remark in the inaugural session highlighted the role gradually playing by his organisation in removing gender discrimination still prevailing in various parts and fields of the country.

Key-note address was delivered by Professor Rajeswari Raina, who is presently teaching in the department of International Relations and Governance Studies of Shiv Nadar University, UP. In her very eloquent speech

Dr. Raina tried to address the question of 'women in science' with her acquired knowledge which speaks that i) both women and science are shaped by historical and institutional forces, and ii) more number of women in science is worthwhile only if these numbers come with excellence and relevance.

The inaugural session was followed by seven academic sessions.

Academic Session 1: *Women Endeavors in Medical Education in India with special reference to Anandibai Joshee & Kadambini Ganguly.*

Chair: Dr. Anita Rampal, Educationist, Delhi University. **Speaker 1:** Professor Srimonti Sarkar, Bose Institute: Anandibai Josee, the torch bearer woman in medical education in India. **Speaker 2:** Dr. Moumita Chatterjee, Medica Super Speciality Hospi-

tal, Kolkata: Medical Education in Colonial Bengal, Social Stigma and Role played by Kadambini Ganguly.

Academic Session 2: *Women in Biology : Past and Present.*

Chair: Professor Anupama Ghosh, Bose Institute, Kolkata. **Speaker 1:** Prof. Chitra Mandal, IICB, Kolkata : Pre-independence Endeavors in Biology and Contribution of Janaki Ammal. **Speaker 2:** Dr. Chandana Chakrabarty, Formerly of CCMB, Hyderabad: Role of Women Scientists in post independence Biological Research.

Academic Session 3: *Women in Anthropology, Sociology and Archeology: Special mention, Works of Debala Mita and Iravati Karve.*

Chair: Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanik, Ex-Vice Chancellor, Vidyasagar University. **Speaker 1:** Dr. Gautam Sengupta, Former Director General, ASI, Kolkata: Women in Archaeology with Special Reference to Debala Mitra. **Speaker 2:** Ms. Priyadarshini Karve, Pune: Life and Works of Iravati Karve.

Academic Session 4: *Women in Physics and Astronomy: Pre and post independent India.*

Chair: Dr. Sabyasachi Chatterjee, IIP, Bangalore. **Speaker 1:** Dr. Suprakash C. Ray, Writer, Kolkata: Bibha Choudhuri and Her Role in Pre-Independence Indian Research. **Speaker 2:** Professor Bindu Bamrah, University of Hyderabad: Women in Physics in Post Independent India.

Academic Session 5: *Women in Chemical Science with a special mention to Asima Chatterjee*

Chair: Dr. Prabir Kumar Das. **Speaker 1:** Professor Julie Banerjee, Formerly of CU: Asima Chatterjee and Chemical Research in India. **Speaker 2:** Professor Syamal Chakrabarti, CU: Role of Darshan Ranganathan and other Indian Women who Pioneered Post Independence Indian Chemical Research.

Academic Session 6: *Women in Engineering and Mathematics: Special reference Rajeswari Chatterjee*

Chair: Professor Pradip Kumar Majumder, The Asiatic Society. **Speaker 1:** Professor Nadini Mukherjee, JU: First Women in IISc faculty: Engineer Rajeswari Chatterjee. **Speaker 2:** Ms. Bahata Angsumali, Software Professional, Bengaluru: Resent Studies on Indus Valley Inscriptions.

Academic Session 7: *Environment and the Role of Women Scientists with Special Reference to Anna Mani*

Chair: Professor Chitra Mondal, IICB, Kolkata. **Speaker 1:** Ms. Tejal Kanitkar, Tata Institute of Social Science, Mumbai: Environment Development and Women. **Speaker 2:** Mr. T. Gangadharan, Former President, KSSP, Kerala: Pivotal Role of Anna Mani in Developing Indian Environmental and Atmospheric Research.

Valedictory Session:

Co-ordinator: Dr. Arunabha Misra, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata.

Speaker : 1. Dr. Anita Rampal, Delhi University: Problems and Prospects of Women in Present Day Science Education and Research Arena. **Speaker : 2.** Ms. Geeta Mahashabde, Nabanirmiti Learning Foundation, Pune : Better Science Education for Younger: Experience of NLF. **Speaker : 3.** Dr. T V Venkateswaran, Senior Scientist, Vigyan Prasar: Women in Science: Role of Science Communicators.

The two-day seminar was concluded with a vote of thanks extended by Dr. Arunabha Mishra, Co-ordinator of the programme who expressed his solidarity and best wishes to all the participants from 14 different states, the resource persons, the AIPSN and the Asiatic Society authority for all kind of support in conducting this national seminar and making it a success. He assured a proceedings or a publication from the Society after getting all the full papers from the Resource Persons in near future.

Dr. Arunabha Misra

International Women's Day and its Many Histories

Malini Bhattacharya*

When we observe International Women's Day on 8 March every year we sometimes fail to recall that it has not one, but many histories. It started being observed in different parts of the world on different days until by common consent the women's movement accepted 8 March universally and this later got the formal seal of approval from the UN. It came to acquire an official status supported by UN declarations of 'women's year' and 'women's decade' and through various sovereign states taking part in the UN-sponsored global conferences in 1975 (Mexico), 1980 (Copenhagen), 1985 (Nairobi) and 1995 (Beijing). These events came to their official conclusion with the 'Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action' being endorsed by the participating states. But all this must not make us forget the multiplicity of struggles and aspirations at different levels of women's movements constituting the history of 8 March.

Further while there is no doubt that this symbolic marking of a particular day of the year as 'Women's Day' originated in the West, more specifically in Europe, the United States of America and Russia, eventually it also assumed specific dimensions in the so-called developing countries of Asia and Africa. It was not in mimicry of the women's movement in the West, but as an expression of their own felt needs that women in these countries including India came to observe the day for an annual stocktaking of what they had achieved and where they had lagged behind. It cannot be denied however that at that point of time a strong sense of

solidarity had also developed among women's movements worldwide which seems to have got somewhat fragmented in the last two or three decades.

Sometimes those of us in the women's movement in India who continue to observe 8 March as a day for women's solidarity are asked: if you have not yet achieved the benchmark towards which 8 March aspired, then what is the use of still observing it? Or, conversely, if these goals have been already achieved, then why do you keep on observing it? I think such questions overlook this historical dimension of a living movement in which the goal is not fixed and finite, but keeps on shifting with social-political changes as they emerge even while we are trying to negotiate the immediate present. Achievements, thus, do not signify any absolute closure, but open up into a new problematic since social reality changes all the time.

We may recall that the observance of 'women's day' is associated in its origin with women workers and that the first 'women's day' was observed by textile workers organised by the women's wing of the Socialist Party of America and 15000 such workers came out in the streets of Chicago and New York demanding reduction of working hours and better wages on 3 May, 1908. After this, the Second International Socialist Women's Conference in 1910 took the resolution to organize a special women's day every year in which the demand for women's suffrage was to be added to the economic demands of working women and it came to be observed in differ-

* Professor of English (Retd.), Jadavpur University.

ent European countries and Russia on different dates such as 2 March, 19 March, 3 May etc.

However, it was in the first phase of the Russian Revolution in 1917 that the women workers of Petrograd decided to observe Women's Day on 8 March (23 February by the old style Julian calendar then in use in Russia) by striking work and rallying in the streets. Their cry was 'Bread and Peace!' They also called for an end to monarchy.

From that time, gradually it was this date that came to be accepted as Women's Day. Just as the demands of the women workers initially gave shape to the spirit of Women's Day, similarly in America, the entire women's movement came to have an added historical dimension as a result of the deep racial schisms in it and the efforts within the movement to overcome it. Women's Day would not mean the same to a black woman as to a white one just as it would resonate differently for women from affluent classes in our country in the early 20th century demanding female suffrage and those from the ranks of the labouring poor working in textile mills or jute mills. Unless we perceive these different, sometimes even conflicting strands within the women's movement, it would be difficult to appreciate the full implications of Women's Day.

As far as we know, Women's Day first came to be observed in India in 1951 and in West Bengal, Mahila Atmaraksha Samiti which had its training in women's issues through the Bengal Famine of 1943 and the partition of India, had an important part to play in adopting the concept of Women's Day for India. Contacts that MARS and other

women's organisations developed with the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) in the post-Second World War situation ensured also that at this stage the issue of world peace became the basis of solidarity with women's movements in other countries and was an important message of Women's Day in the early years of Independence.

Universal suffrage had been attained and equal rights for women recognised in



Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg,
Pioneers in International Women's
Movement

the Indian Constitution, not as certain fault-finders say without any special efforts made by women, but precisely because their full and courageous participation in all the different arenas of the Freedom Struggle had ensured that the issue of their rights could not be ignored. What is significant is that from the early 1970s, at a time when the Feminist movement in different countries was highlighting the persistence of patriarchy even in liberal democratic and socialist systems, there was a resurgence of women's movement in India too pointing out that together with economic deprivation and social oppression (as of caste), patriarchy was an important factor in the continuing prevalence of inequality within the social rubric.

The 1974 Report on the status of women in India, 'Towards Equality', prepared by some of the veterans of that movement was one of the sign-posts pointing to its resurgence. It was around this time that the Women's Day, simultaneously promoted by the UN, assumed a new significance for the movement. The vital interventions of the movement in the arenas of women's work, their continuing oppression through dowry, domestic violence

and survival of retrograde customs like suttee and instant triple talaq, the persistence of sexual violence more particularly on dalit and Adivasi women succeeded in establishing the discourse of women's rights in the public domain and in deciding for the next two or three decades the trajectory of changes in law and state policy.

The whole point of my argument is that Women's Day assumes its significance only in the dynamic context of the women's movement and that this is true in India too. In recent times, as scoffers have pointed out, it seems that its celebration is turning into the special preserve of consumers who can afford to avail themselves of the 'special offers' of the Women's Day held out by the horn of plenty of the global market. On the other hand, for most women who toil ceaselessly

both at home and outside to make ends meet it is a day like any other day. The marketization of Women's Day portraying its celebration as the luxury of the rich wholly subverts the history of the women's movement. The



Fatima Sheikh

Savitribai Phule

Two Pioneers in "Beti Padhao" Movement in 19th century Maharashtra

social reform movements of Vidyasagar whose bi-centenary we are now celebrating, or of Jyotirao and Savitribai Phule, came at a time when most women had no voice of their own, but we cannot fail to acknowledge that the efforts of such pioneers enabled the women's movement to emerge in the next generation. Similarly, even toiling women unaware of Women's Day today, but fighting moment to moment for human dignity at home and in the working place, bear the legacy of the women's movement and continue to uphold the real significance of 8 March.

‘পক্ষপাতদুষ্টি’ বিদ্যাসাগর

আমি স্ত্রীজাতির পক্ষপাতী বলিয়া, অনেকে নির্দেশ করিয়া থাকেন। আমার বোধ হয়, সে নির্দেশ প্রসঙ্গত নহে। যে ব্যক্তি রাইমণির স্নেহ, দয়া, সৌজন্য প্রভৃতি প্রত্যক্ষ করিয়াছে, এবং ঐ সমস্ত পদগুণের ফলভোগী হইয়াছে, সে যদি স্ত্রীজাতির পক্ষপাতী না হয়, তাহা হইলে তাহার তুল্য কৃতঘ্ন পামর ভূমণ্ডলে নাই।

বিদ্যাসাগর রচনাবলী (চতুর্থ খণ্ড)

প্রথম প্রকাশ ২৯ জুলাই ১৯৬৯, ১৩ শ্রাবণ, ১৩৭৬ বিদ্যাসাগর তিরোধান দিবস

Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz : The First Feminist of the Americas

Malabika Bhattacharya*

Historically it was the colonization of Central and South America in the 16th century by Spain which gave birth to Mexico, one among several colonial states in the New World. All the colonies became replicas of Spain, both socially and politically. Therefore, it is not surprising that throughout the 16th and 17th centuries Mexico had a purely male dominated society. The 17th century was probably, the worst for women. The principles that governed society had hardened; they were immutable. A woman's place was subservient to that of a man. Hers was a restricted life which was to be lived strictly according to the rules set down by men.

In this stifling ambience there was this woman who was brave enough to raise her voice. And she did so from within the prison-like walls of a convent. It is interesting to delve deep into the psyche of this unusual woman, a poetess of extraordinary skill and sensitivity, and of incredible courage.

By 1680 Sor Juana, though not yet thirty, had become one of Mexico's greatest literary

figures. But she was not a celebrity in the conventional way.

Her fellow Mexicans of the day were curious about her as if she were some rare species. Critics, even recently, have found the unique quality of her intelligence inconsistent with the fact that she was a woman, and that too a 17th century nun.

Even in those days there were some women who were educated by husbands or fathers. But Juana Ines (as was her name before she joined the Christian Order) was virtually self-taught. As a young girl, she took up her own mind like a simple tool, discovered its uses on her own, and mastered them with neither teacher nor fellow student to encourage her or explain to her. She eked out her education

from the books in her maternal grandfather's library. Incidentally, her mother, Isabel, was illiterate and unmarried.

When Juana reached the age of thirteen, she was, by the standards of her day, learned. She had studied on her own literature, science and history, together with Latin and Nahuatl (the pre-hispanic language of



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the Aztec civilization). By now she had the beauty which one reads about in various descriptions of her, and which is evident in the few portraits that have survived. At this time she was considered to be old enough and adequately attractive to find a husband.

It so happened that at this point in her life Juana was taken by her family to Mexico, the capital city. There her uncle presented her before the Viceroy, Marques de Mancera, who was incredulous that a young girl from a humble family living in the mountains could be so well-read. The Viceroy invited a jury of forty professors from the university to test Juana's knowledge. The professors questioned her; they held her up to the light, squinted at her, and appraised her like a rare gem that freakishly had faceted and polished itself unaided, on its own. The Viceroy was astounded by the intellectual calibre of this young girl. Later the Viceroy is known to have remarked that Juana defended herself like a Royal Ship assailed by small boats ("a la manera que un Galeon Real se defenderia de pocas chalupas que embistieran").

Juana survived by comparing herself to young Christ teaching in the temple. She was always modest about her talent believing that it belonged to God. However she was conscious too of a certain resemblance. She used the analogy of Christ and the Pharisees — a superior mind crowned by thorns ("cabeza que es erario de sabiduria, no espera otra corona que de espinas"). This she wrote much later in her defence in her autobiographical *Respuesta a Sor Filotea*.

After her trial she became a celebrity. Like most celebrities, she seemed to have been created suddenly, pushed up like an island. Soon the Court adopted her. She was made lady-in-waiting to the wife of the Viceroy. Her new status deepened her sense of solitude. In fact throughout her life Juana was haunted by loneliness. This was the price she had to pay for being *different*, for being a woman with a mind of her own.

Mexican society was not prepared to accept a woman with such an independent mind. She had to surrender to the demands of society. Adolescence was in her culture a moment of self-renunciation for a woman, when she was forced to choose between two veils: the white or the black, that of a bride or that of a nun. She chose the second; she became a nun. She became Sor Juana Ines de la Cruz.

May be for Juana entering the convent was a practical decision, not an emotional one. If she married Christ, it was purely a marriage of convenience. In her writings she explained candidly that she became a nun so that she could live alone without any household encumbrances and thus have the liberty to study. She felt that any woman who needed the love of a man to sustain her was worthy of nothing but contempt because there was selfishness in such love.

About women she wrote:

She who loves because she is beloved
with no more noble a reason,
belittles her lover, and loves
only her own adoration.

Of men she wrote even more scornfully:

Ignorant men, you who disclaim
women with no reason,
you do not see you are the reason
for what you blame.

Emphasizing her disdain she added:

With such pressing desire,
why is it goodness that you require,
You who have caused her shame?

During the twenty years she lived in the Carmelite convent of San Jeronimo she wrote copiously, the most famous of which is her epic poem *Primer Sueno*. Gradually Sor Juana's prestige and fame grew. She was called *La Decima Musa* (the tenth Muse) and *La Fenix de Mexico* (the Phoenix of Mexico).

However her fame was never free from controversy and criticism.

Disaster struck in 1691. Her comments on a Sermon given by a certain Portuguese Jesuit incensed the Church authorities. In her defence she wrote *Respuesta a Sor Filotea*, one of the greatest documents of Spanish prose ever written. It was the first manifesto for intellectual rights of women in the Hispanic world.

It was the last thing she wrote. After that she withdrew into silence. In 1695, while nursing plague victims in the city, she fell prey to the disease.

The fact that she dared to proclaim her fondness for disinterested thought makes her a modern figure. Despite the brilliance of her poetic creations and the pathos of her death, there is something unrealized and fragmentary in the life and work of Sor Juana. Because she was a woman her epoch did not provide her with the intellectual nourishment she required. We sense her loneliness and yet her spirited nature in all her writings.

Sor Juana was a saint, martyred to the cause of intellectual freedom. She was also the first Feminist of the Americas.

When the Caged Birds Sing

Shreya Roy*

'Alright, come'n fight!' – these words remind us of Nabaneeta Dev Sen. She was more like Ashapura Devi, Pratibha Basu or Maitreyee Devi, who established their free spirits and their rights as a woman in a lopsided patriarchal society through their fluid words and encouraging stories. At some point of her life, Nabaneeta Dev Sen's family was formed with her mother, Radharani Devi and her two daughters – we may say it, 'a woman's world!' It was as if she had made affectionately a matriarchal space in her own home, called *Bhalobasa*, which also reflects in some of her works, like, *Seeta theke Suru*, *Nati Nabaneeta*. According to her, women, irrespective of religion or class, are expected to uphold the accepted social values. She also questioned 'with such a burden on our conscience how are we, women, to laugh at the system, even though we are being crushed by it?' In her writings, she has given more preferences to 'women's stories' than 'men's

stories', we may identify it as a different genre of autobiographical writings. Though, whenever we use the words 'woman's autobiography', the first thing that comes to our mind is Rassundari Devi's *Amar Jiban* (1876), the first autobiography of a Bengali woman. Autobiographies involve a relationship between two entities, the narrating self and the narrated self in the text. Despite their seeming convergence or identity, the gap between the two can never close entirely. Rassundari was unique in her quest for education. Though she never raised her voice in disobedience to society, her life itself was a forceful protest. She was one of the first persons to realise that education had a value of its own. She wrote, 'My day would begin at dawn and I worked till two at night...I longed to read books. But I was unlucky, those days women were not allowed to read'. Somehow, she obtained one page of a religious text and another handwritten page of her eldest son. During the time spent in the kitchen, she hid them behind her long veil. While cooking she would secretly look at them and try to recall

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her childhood impressions. It was a long and hard journey but she ultimately succeeded.

The only nineteenth century housewife who was very near to considering herself at par with her husband was Kailasbasini Debi. Though she was grateful to her husband Kishori Chand for her education and well-being she never forgot her worth. In the memoir *Janaika Grihabadhur Diary* (1953), Kailasbasini Debi's account of her youth glows with the happiness of conjugal relationship in which the act of learning English from her husband, almost similar in enjoyment with activities like playing cards and other indoor games which they shared, occupies a prominent place. Sumit Sarkar has suggested that such concern with the education of women in Bengal was less an ideological preference for liberalism and more an expression of certain acute problems of interpersonal adjustment within the family on the part of the early generation of western educated males who attempted 'a limited and controlled emancipation of wives' – as Nikhilesh did in Rabindranath Tagore's novel *Ghare Baire* – as a 'personal necessity for survival in a hostile social world'.

On the other hand, Binodini Dasi was the first generation of professional female artists in India who joined the theatre groups in 1874 and continued to act on stage till 1886. She helped to build the *Star Theatre* by donating all that she could afford. But her sacrifice was not recognised either by her co-artistes or by the larger society. Her bitterness prompted her to write her own auto-

biography, *Amar Katha* (1913) to expose the hypocrisy of the contemporary society. The boldness with which she wielded her pen amazes us.

Gradually women acquired an independent mind and for the first time a generation gap yawned between the parents and their daughters. Women were influenced by the political turmoil, the war, famine and finally partition shook them a lot. Sarala

Devi Chaudhurani was Rabindranath's niece, a famous singer and a sympathiser of the extremist movements in Bengal. From *Jibaner Jharapata* (1944), we came to know that Sarala organised the youth and inspired them to learn the martial arts. She was the first woman to preside over an all-male gathering. After setting the first stanza of the song *Vande Mataram* to tune, Rabindranath left it to Sarala to do the rest. She not only did it but sang the song for the first time in the 1905 Congress session. Sarala was close to the revolutionary terrorists.



The tradition once started continued through Bina Das and Manikuntala Sen, which is evident from their memoirs, *Shrinkhal Jhankar* (1947) and *Sediner Katha* (1982) respectively.

On the other hand, at the same time, the Indian People's Theatre Association (IPTA) was formed as a cultural wing of the Communist Party of India to construct a cultural identity at the crucial political juncture of the world war, nationalist projects, and the potential realization of independence. If for the older actresses of the mainstream theatre, the issues centred on self-assertion, for the

IPTA actresses, theatre became a site of empowerment. Through its political ideological overview and the new programme, the IPTA transformed the actress position in general, and elevated it to another level of self-identity and empowerment. In Reba Roychowdhury's *Jibaner Tane Shilper Tane* (1999), we can notice a natural shift between the 'I' and the 'we'. The 'we' in this case is not in relation to only co-actresses, but refers to the men evolving naturally out of a sense of comradeship and the political agenda. It helps us in formulating a picture of the life of the performers in the IPTA commune and also the performances and the engagement of the women in the cultural squad which actively engaged in voicing political issues and focused on burning social problems of the ordinary people of India of that particular time.

We may bring two different genres of autobiographies into this discussion— Baby Halder's *Alo Aandhari* (first published in 2002 in Hindi and 2004 in Bengali) and Tahmina Khatun's *Chena Mukh Achena Manush* (2019), both representing the post-colonial Bengali as well as Indian Society. Baby Halder, a lower caste Bengali woman and a domestic worker broke new ground by authoring her autobiography, *Alo Aandhari*. She told the life story of a neglected daughter, girl, wife and mother. The book narrates the story of a woman, who has succeeded to overcome a life of hardship and poverty. But more than that, it is a book about reading, a book about books, a book about hope and despair. It is not a literary book; the writer is someone

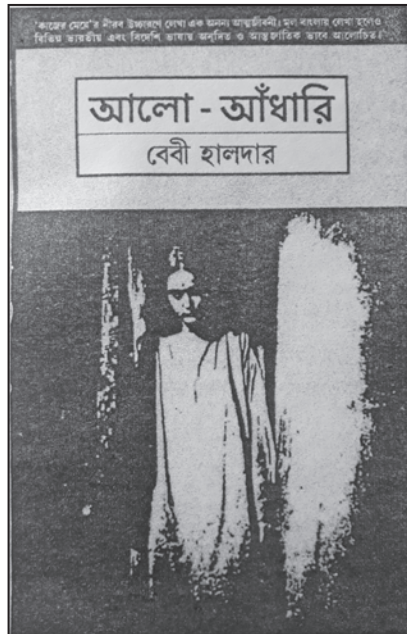
who almost learns to write as she goes along, whose prose goes from being sometimes staccato, sometimes stilted, to being expressive, and elegant. Her life affords us an insight into the temporal and spatial transition from colonial past to the postcolonial present. Baby's recounting of her neglected childhood, her brutal marriage and work life, her friendship with several other working-class men and women resonated with the experiences

of millions of other Indian women. Urvashi Butalia has aptly said that for us, it also remains a book that has been inspirational in many small ways, a book that reminds us that there is so much that needs to be said and written about women's lives.

The book *Chena Mukh Achena Manush* deals many aspects like, religion, politics and society. Tahmina Khatun has questioned the so-called progressiveness of Bengali society. She has boldly penned her feelings in a clear way which is very much different from the traditional history of writing autobiography. Tahmina has faced the crisis of an independent woman, when he refused to mention

her 'religion' in the admission form of an educational institution. She has married Sukumar Mitra, a scribe. But she has not changed her religion or surname. As a result she has to face many problems in her 'progressive' society. The autobiography of Tahmina is not the narrative of problems she faced but the story of overcoming the challenges without doing any compromise. Thus it inspires the readers to fight against the odds.

The autobiographies record many odds, which the women have to face in their lives. At the same time these autobiographies



show how hesitant and fumbling women began to overcome their difficulties gradually. Women's autobiographies increasingly show the coming together of the *personal* and the *political*. However, women's history was not exactly caught within the binary of tradition and modernity, compliance and resistance, home and the world, rather women re-worked

the culture-domesticity space reserved for them in a range of ways and also extended the norms of the home into the public sphere and all of these facts may be coincided at a certain point which led us to rethink of German Marxist activist Clara Zetkin and her contributions for the *International Women's Day*.

Women And Nature Share A Powerful Moral Connection

Mahua Sarkar*

Since 1970s, the eco-feminist perception has assumed a significant place in the study of environmental issues. The term "Ecofeminism," as coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 and developed by Vandana Shiva from an Indian perspective, means that women have a more unique relationship with nature than men, due to the former's intuitive ethics of bearing, caring and preserving. This philosophy believes that the social and patriarchal psyche that leads to the domination and oppression of women is directly linked with the social mindset which leads to the abuse of the environment. Even without delving deeper into the debates regarding the complexities of this ideology, it can be said that women have brought a different perspective to the issue of environmental crisis. The role of women vis-à-vis

environment down the ages is very difficult to determine, as there is a lacuna of archival materials. It is very difficult to get the voices

of women themselves,

thinking loudly about their concern for nature. These thoughts are relevant to the celebration of the International Women's Day (March 8), a global moment celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality. Today, women play a critical role in managing natural resources on family and community levels and are most affected by environmental degradation. In communities around the world, women manage water, sources for fuel, and food, as well as both forests



LIFE'S EMBRACE: In 1973, women in Uttarakhand, India, saved trees from being felled by hugging them. This was the famous Chipko movement

and agricultural terrain. Worldwide, women and girls are up to 14 times more likely than men to die in a disaster. They often find themselves confined to traditional gender

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roles that limit their ability to lead, which can make them more vulnerable when disaster strikes. In an online debate ahead of the International Day for Disaster Reduction (October 13), organised by the Thomson Reuters Foundation and the BRACED programme, environmental scientists have discussed how women have become more resilient to climate extremes. Recently in Latur, Aurangabad, India, as many as 500 women from rural and urban areas, including school teachers and college professors planted 5,000 sapplings of 70 different species under the plantation drive for the preservation of the environment. This drive was organized

under the aegis of the Mission Green Earth, the Art of Living and International Association for Human Values at Nagzari village and Manjara River Rejuvenation Project. This event shows that women are the key to supply food, water, nutrition and everything necessary to sustain their village. Their role within the community is indispensable. They are the worst sufferers due to environmental disaster of the present day and they can react to it in their best possible way. It is now worthwhile to see what should governments, aid agencies and businesses do differently to protect lives and put women and girls at the core of disaster risk reduction.

Mahesh Rangarajan on Significance of Ecofeminism



It is enormously significant, a field that highlighted the gender dimension to nature, which is crucial, yet often overlooked. At one time, ecofeminism was criticised by some feminist scholars who felt it may not appreciate all the diverse ways different women experience nature. But it's a path-breaking idea in terms of how it makes people see important linkages there.

The feminist scholar, Bina Agarwal, for instance, has written on how women across much of South Asia don't have property rights. They often don't have individual property rights, which makes them extremely dependent on men. But crucially, they also lack collective rights — to ponds, commons and forests. Yet, this can be very important

in creating cooperation and renewing the cycles of life there.

Ecofeminism plays a phenomenal role in awakening a deeper consciousness. For instance, in the 1980s, fisherfolks' movements across India raised the problem of trawlers fishing too close to the coast, devastating the marine ecology which small fisherfolk actually protect. But another issue that came up alongside was that their goods were sold by women. However, fisherwomen were not allowed to board state transport buses as people objected. Therefore, they literally had to walk miles each day. It took organised protests by women before many states rethought. Finally, the authorities came up with new ways to let the fisherwomen ride state buses. It is extremely important therefore to understand that production, gender, dignity and nature always go together.

Extract from : TOI, 8 February 2020

Mahesh Rangarajan, Professor of History and Environmental Studies at Ashoka University

The (Ir)relevance of 'looking married'

As a privileged, upper caste Bengali, living away from home for work, I was suddenly put on the map one fine day, as I got married. I never realized the burden of expectation I was unknowingly carrying on my physical appearances until I walked out into the world, a married woman, and faced the sheer disappointment on the faces of my immediate family and distant relatives, neighbours (who I have barely spoken to all my life) and my colleagues who sighed and exclaimed that I didn't 'look married' (in North India the phrase that I heard more than once was 'shaadishuda nahi lagti'). I knew I looked like the same person that I was before the wedding day and I knew I didn't have to wear my marital status as a part of my appearance. I could see women stealing a quick look at my forehead and my left hand, not so subtly, and releasing a short sigh, which obviously implied how ours is a rotten, disobedient, 'modern' generation, where 'modern' is nothing but euphemism for morally loose and disobedient. Choosing to not abide by the dictates of society's idea of 'looking married' is something that I decided to do. Similar remarks tainted with strong judgement from all these sources continue to haunt women like me as they not only look down on the modern women these days ('ajkalkar meyera') who seemingly have forgotten their roots but also bear the connotation that they don't prefer to look married so as to still be in a position to be offered inappropriate favours and attention to get their work done, as we all know that's how women succeed at their workplace.

One wonders why the newly married woman is pressurized into being a decked-up possession, flaunting all of the 'shringar' from marital blessing in the form of sindoor, sankha (white conch shell bangle), pola (the red bangle), and noa (the iron bangle), accessories which broadly serve two functions: 1. At

a social level, identifies the woman as a possession of a household, someone who's unattainable as she's already been spoken for. 2. At a religious level, these accessories are meant to bring health and happiness in the life of the son of the house, the husband. The trick of using a glowing red colour to mark possessions as tamed is also observed in cattle-rearers who smear their herd of sheep and other dairy animals to distinguish them as pets from a larger herd of untamed free cattle. The 'modern' woman questions and wonders if the holy 'noa' is a rudiment of the iron shackles ('beri') that are traditionally used to keep prisoners from running away. 'Noa' in an upper middle-class household has now got a fancy makeover with a gold coating, but, in essence, remains an iron cuff. These four primary signifiers of a 'married woman' (sodhoba) are so prominently placed in the physical appearance of a woman that you cannot not notice these markers. Religion has imperceptibly been seeped into these rules so that one equates the length and volume of the sindoor with the lifespan of one's husband. Sankha-pola is meant to be worn with utmost care and never taken off, lest there should be a tragic fall in the house. Add the whole paradigm of 'auspicious' and 'inauspicious' to these signifiers and what we have is married women standing at the forefront of happy events such as weddings, conveniently excluding women whose current existence is not being validated by the presence of a husband. Hindu weddings are infamous for this discrimination and so are the celebratory parts of pujas. Women without husbands can only go as far as slaving for moksha by being the priest's assistant, while the women with husbands participate in 'dhunuchi dance' and in 'sindoor khela', where in the latter they smear each other with the sindoor that widows have lost their so-called right to. What we mostly overlook is how a bare colour emerges

as a patriarchal tool to rein in the women who despite their independent accomplishments are rendered as the marginalized, ironically so, at the end of the religious festivities to celebrate a female goddess.

In a fragile society built on the ego of male Brahmin priests, one can barely expect anything more than looming sense of insecurity over the power of free women as they tend to

question and offer alternate perspectives into our traditions. The need of the hour is also a ritual cleansing, for it is through the old that the new will come to light. This women's day may the marital status cease to be the identity, and the voice be heard instead.

Rudrani Mukherjee
Publishing Professional

Remembering Miss Shefali

In years following India's independence, Arati Das a refugee girl was forced to migrate to Calcutta from East Bengal and rose to fame as a celebrated cabaret dancer by the name of Miss Shefali. Inhabiting the world of illicit desires, Shefali danced and lived her life to the fullest, ferrying herself from upmarket nightclubs to sordid commercial theatres of North Calcutta till she was banned and banished from both worlds on grounds of obscenity and perversion of culture. The book *Kolkata Cabaret: Bangali, Younata ebang Miss Shefali* authored by me is based on five years of ethnographic research on Calcutta cabaret where Miss. Shefali privileges the voice and agency of the disenfranchised dancer who talked back against the sexual double standard of the middle class elite and the democrat-

ic state that denied her the right to dance and livelihood. Her narrative offers a fascinating blend of sexual vulnerability and empowerment, where she established herself as a devious and subversive force in popular culture, emphasizing simultaneously her power and control as a redoubtable erotic performer of her times. Highlighting the politics of pleasure Miss Shefali has fiercely challenged the highly reductive stereotypes of "victim feminism" that occludes many other currents embedded in it.

On 27 January 2020, sitting on a wheelchair Shefali arrived the Oberoi Grand of Calcutta for one last time to release the book on her life and times. Her toes that once danced the night away setting European clubs on fire were placed firmly on the footrest of a wheelchair. Her eyes flickered up as she unwrapped the book and went down memory lane nostalgic to share tales of the good old days.

She breathed her last on 6th February 2020 at her north Calcutta residence. She left behind a host of questions to her elite readers/ audience.

Do not rest in peace Mum. Play havoc with our moral universe with your dirty dancing!

Aishika Chakraborty
Professor, School of Women's Studies
Jadavpur University



Miss Shefali with the Author in Oberoi Grand Ball room

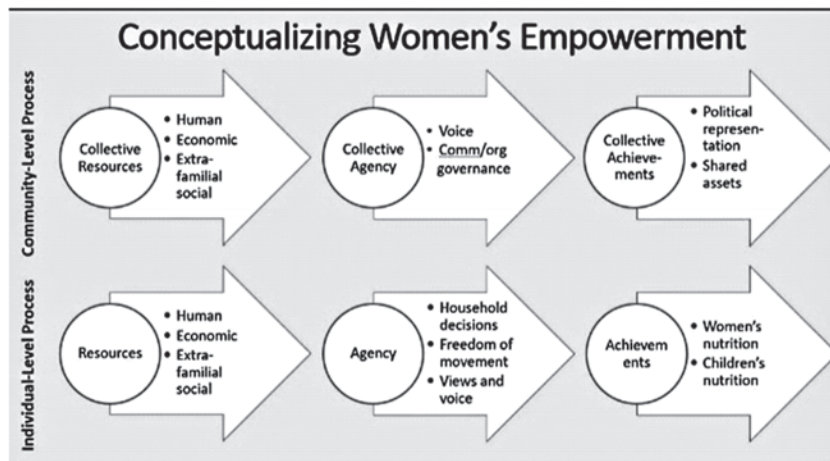
Normalising Menstruation: Education and Empowerment

Dr. Parama Chatterjee*

Women empowerment is a very important and multi-dimensional process. It gives women the power to choose and the power to make their own decisions. To conceptualise women’s empowerment the framework of Naila Kabeer is very pertinent. This framework depicts women empowerment as a “dynamic process, in which women acquire resources that enable them to develop voice-the capacity to articulate preferences – and agency – the capacity to make decisions –to

participation in organisations, access to peer networks, and access to role models outside the family; and economic resources or material assets such as earnings, property and land (Yount, 2017).

Menstruation which is a normal physiological process is a very important part of women’s lives. It is especially significant for the adolescent girls because the onset of menstruation is a unique phenomenon for them (Desai, S. et al 2013). Like women’s sexuality,



Dr. Yount’s Conceptual Framework for Women’s Empowerment Elaborated from Kabeer (1999)

the topic of menstruation is also a taboo in the Indian society. Still many women in South Asia are uncomfortable to discuss about menstruation in public. This is compounded by gender inequality and patriarchy which excludes women and girls from decision making process (Fernandes & Mahon, 2010). Women’s body is culturally coded and governed by socially sanctioned

fulfil their own aspirations (Kabeer, 1999). These resources include human resources such as school attainment, skill development, and self-efficacy; social resources such as

norms. A woman is identified primarily with her body functions in a patriarchal society. They are denied rights over their own body and sexuality (Gopal & Sabala, 2010). Women cannot decide freely on their sexual and reproductive rights and they face discrimi-

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nation (Petchesky, 2000). Similarly, they do not have the right to menstrual hygiene. They do not have proper access and information regarding menstrual health needs. They have fear and hesitation in discussing about menstruation which is a natural and normal part of their lives. Talking about menstruation in public is shameful and there is social stigma attached to the process. Although it is a natural process and related to reproductive health of women, menstruation is still a forbidden topic of discussion in the Indian society.

We know that women's lack of education does not give them empowerment. As a result they consider the issue of menstruation to be a taboo, shameful and forbidden topic of discussion. But we have to overcome this obstacle and consider menstruation as a natural and normal issue. It is one of the health agendas like any other health issues. Women should not feel shameful or consider themselves impure or inferior due to menstruation. It is an important biological aspect of women which is related to their reproductive and general health. This idea or clear perception can only be developed through education and awareness.

Another important aspect for normalizing menstruation is the involvement of men in this discussion. We cannot just ignore and say that it is woman's issue so men should not be involved. We know that Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, a social reformer and educationist, initiated the concept of 'Widow Hindu Remarriage' and also contributed towards

education of women and changing their status (Srivastava, 2019). Thus we found that widowhood is a woman's issue but Vidyasagar being a man involved himself and initiated the concept of widow remarriage. Presently, we know about

"There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of the women is improved"-

Swami Vivekananda

Tamilnadu village but he has contributed immensely in normalizing the issue of menstruation by inventing a machine which can produce low cost menstrual pads. Both the issues are different and has taken place in different time zones and is about different topics. But in both the cases a man has taken initiatives to raise the voice for a woman's cause. It means that men should also come forward, involve and contribute in women's empowerment.

Women's voices and decision-making power will give them empowerment. This empowerment is achieved when women are educated. Educated women are not superstitious. They can understand a situation. They can conceptualise a problem if they are well educated. In the given context they can understand that menstruation is a natural, biological issue. There is nothing to be shameful or fearful about it. It is a normal topic which can be discussed with male and female. It is a natural phenomenon and there should not be any taboos or superstitions attached to this issue.

We can conclude this article by reiterating the ideologies of Swami Vivekananda regarding women empowerment. He insisted that

Voice of women is critically important for the world's future - but not just for women's future

Amartya Sen

women should be put in a position of power to solve their own problem in their own way and this cannot be possible without education. (Murugan & Sindhuja, 2017) “There is no chance of the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved” (Swami Vivekananda).

This condition can only be improved if women are empowered and the empowerment can take place when the women are educated. Through empowerment women can raise their voices and form opinions about different issues including menstruation. As Professor Amartya Sen mentions “voice of women is critically important for the world’s future—but not just for women’s future” (Sen, 2001)

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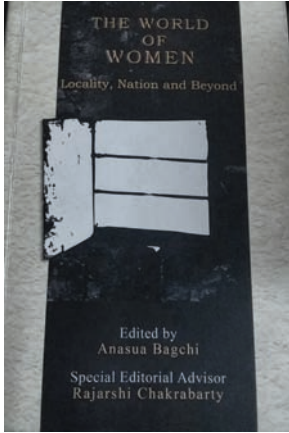
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Mr. Arunachalam Murugananthan
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Sri Debopam Das, Research Assistance in the External Project The Dictionary of Bengali Suffixes and Prefixes was the Author of the article – “A Linguistic Discussion of Number System in the Gītagovinda” published in pp. 23-26 of the *Monthly Bulletin*, February 2020. Inadvertent omission of the name of the author is regretted.



The World of Women: Locality, Nation and Beyond, Edited by Anasua Bagchi, Birutjatio Sahitya Sammiloni, August 2019, Rs. 500, Pages 258.

The theme of this year's International Women's Day reminds us the title of the report of India's first

committee on the status of women in India. *It was Towards Equality*, published in 1974. Since then we are talking of the term towards equality. But how far have we achieved towards equality? This year the theme that has been announced to celebrate the women's day is 'Each for Equal'.

Gloria Steinem, a renowned feminist, journalist and activist once explained that "the story of women's struggle for equality belongs to no single feminist nor to any one organisation but to the collective efforts of all who care about human rights". Thus, it is a collective effort of all, irrespective of gender to work for achieving gender equality. Cel-

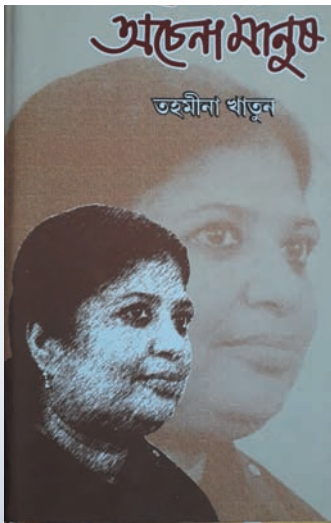
ebration of Women's Day is a catalyst in this journey towards equality.

International Women's Day can be regarded as a global day for celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women while also marking a call to action for accelerating gender equality. For that purpose a new book titled *The World of Women* deserves attention. The book is an edited one with seventeen articles within its two covers. It has been published recently by the Governor of West Bengal in a function held at Domkal Girls' College as this college spearheaded this important academic publication. This multi-authored compilation touches a number of issues related to gender. The articles in the book try to unfold new knowledge that is derived from new research and new dimension to the old discourses.

One of the major aspects of this book is to highlight the contributions made by a number of women, which ranges from well-known Swarnakumari Devi and Sarala Devi to less-known Gouri Ma and Bi Amma. Swarnakumari and Sarala Devi, belonged to famous Tagore family, were important figures in the socio-cultural and political awakening of our country. Gouri Ma had established the first women-controlled *ashrama* in the Ram-

akrishna order, namely *Shri Shri Saradeswari Ashrama*, which did play an important part in dissemination of education among women. Abadi Bano Begam, known as Bi Amma was an activist in India's struggle for independence.

Along with these individuals, this book tries to explore the world of education and literature of women. Representation of women in Victorian English literature has been investigated. The development of women education in the nineteenth century Bengal in general and growth of educa-



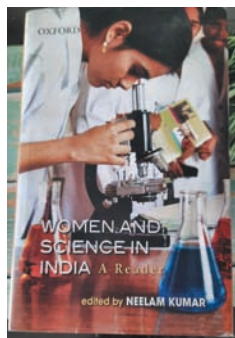
tion among Muslim women in particular has been probed by the historians. Women's position in literature has also been studied. The content of the literature of Rabindranath and Mahasweta Devi has been analysed in this regard.

The volume also touches the issues like women in sports in Indian context, women & health and women & environment. With the backdrop of the theory of eco-feminism, one of the articles has focused on the contribution of women in protecting the green globe. There the contribution of Shyamali Khastagir and Mukuta Mukhopadhyay has been discussed in a detailed manner.

Thus, this new book tries to highlight the role of women in different arena, which has often been ignored. Undoubtedly this book has added a new dimension in the studies on women. However, one can say that our aim is not to focus on the world of women as against the world of men; on the other our aim should be to build a united one world for all. The articles in the book show that the women, who had been studied here had tried to form such an equal world for all.

Dr. Sabyasachi Chatterjee
Department of History
University of Kalyani

Two Books on Women and Science



One of the chosen subjects of recent discussion is women and science, and naturally there are several publications on it in the last decade. We focus here on two books of Dr. Neelam Kumar, formerly Professor of

National Institute of Science, Technology and Development Studies (NISTADS), New Delhi. Herself a historian of science, she published her first book on the subject, which is entitled *Gender and Science: Studies Across Culture* (Foundation Books, New Delhi, 2009). This unique edited volume tries to answer three important questions: Could science become free from gender biases? Could gender and science issues go beyond race, class, colonization, and social and geographical distinctions? Are gender and science relations universal as assumed by 'ethos of science' or vary with cultures? The present book tries to strike a balance between analyses of gender dimension of science itself and the role of

the wider social, economic and cultural factors. Her other edited work entitled *Women and Science in India: A Reader* (Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2012) is a collection of articles providing an overview of Indian women engaged in science. The aim of the volume is to explore historical, sociological and economic issues related to women and science in the Indian context. It looks at the careers, participation, and attainments of women in the scientific, engineering and medical professions in India. This volume brings together the writings of prominent academics and researchers, approached from the perspectives of psychology, history, sociology and cultural studies, and ultimately linking their issues of discussion with gender theories as well.

Professor Arun Bandopadhyay
Historical & Archaeological Secretary,
The Asiatic Society Kolkata



BOOKS ACCESSIONED DURING THE LAST MONTH

ASIAN SECTION

**Ban
090
S 981y**
শ্যামলকান্তি চক্রবর্তী
যাদুঘরের ঘরে ঘরে/শ্যামলকান্তি
চক্রবর্তী। - কলকাতা : পুস্তক বিপণি,
২০০৮।
১৫৯ পৃ. : চিত্র; ২৫ সেমি
(B15320) (7.11.19)
২৫০.০০ টাকা

**Ban
181.4
B 621 a**
বিশ্বজিৎ ঘোষ
অদ্বৈত বেদান্ত ও আধুনিক
বিজ্ঞান/বিশ্বজিৎ ঘোষ। - কলকাতা :
সংস্কৃত পুস্তক ভাণ্ডার, ২০১৯।
২২,৩৬৮ পৃ. ২২ সে.মি.।
(BN68007) (2.9.19)
ISBN: 978-93-87800-38-0:
৪০০.০০ টাকা

**Ban
181.4
G 197 m**
গঙ্গাধর কর ন্যায়াচার্য
মহাজীবনের অন্তরালে :
মৃত্যু ও পুনর্জন্মের পারে শাস্ত্র
জীবন/গঙ্গাধর কর ন্যায়াচার্য। -

কোলকাতা : সেন্টার অব এ্যাডভান্সড
স্টাডি ইন ফিলসফি, যাদবপুর
বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় ও মহাবোধি, ২০১৯।
৩৭৬পৃ.; ২৫ সে.মি. (BN68014)
(16.10.19)
ISBN: 978-93-84721-14-5:
৫০০.০০ টাকা

**Ban
294.3
S 618 m**
সিপ্রা চক্রবর্তী
মোগল চরিতনামা ও বৌদ্ধ
দেবদেবী/সিপ্রা চক্রবর্তী। - কলকাতা
: কাজল প্রকাশনী, ২০১৯।
১০৪ পৃ. : চিত্র ; ২২ সে. মি.।
(B15319) (7.11.19)
ISBN: 978-81-934463-7-9:
২০০.০০ টাকা

**Ban
294.308
A 482**
ড. অমল বড়ুয়া প্রবন্ধ সংগ্রহ; সুমন
পাল ভিক্ষু সম্পাদিত। - কলকাতা
: বোধি নিধি পাবলিকেশন, ২০১৭।
২২৪ পৃ.; ২২ সে. মি. (B15290)
(21.10.19)
২৫০.০০ টাকা

**Ban
294.34
S 187 s**
সংযুক্ত নিকায়; সুমন পাল ভিক্ষু কর্তৃক
বঙ্গ ভাষায় অনূদিত। - কলকাতা
: মহাবোধি, ২০১৯।
৩০৮ পৃ. ; ২২ সে. মি.
(BN68015) (16.10.19)
মহাবগ্গ গ্রন্থের ৫ম খণ্ড।
ISBN: 978-9384721-15-2:
৪৫০.০০ টাকা

**Ban
294.38
S 799 s**
[স্ববির আনন্দ]
সদ্ব্যমোপায়ন/স্ববির আনন্দ বা
অভয়গিরি চক্রবর্তী আনন্দ; বাংলা
ভাষায় অনুবাদ সুমন পাল ভিক্ষু।
-কলকাতা: অমল বড়ুয়া, ২০১২।
৯৬ পৃ.; ২৯ সে.মি., (B15298)
(21.10.19)
১০০.০০ টাকা

**Ban
294.382
C 967
2V**
চুলবংশ : মহাবংশের অধিকতর আধুনিক
অংশ; মূল পালি ভাষা থেকে
ইংরাজী ভাষায় উইলহেম গাইগার

কর্তৃক অনূদিত; বাংলা ভাষায় সুমন
পাল ভিক্ষু কর্তৃক অনূদিত। -কোলকাতা
ঃ বোধি নিধি পাবলিকেশন. ২০১৫।

২য় খণ্ড; ২২ সে. মি. (B15299-
300) (21.10.19)

শ্রীলঙ্কায় রচিত ইতিহাসাশ্রয়ী বংশ
সাহিত্যের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ গ্রন্থ।

ISBN: 978-81-92531-00:
৪০০.০০ টাকা ১ম খণ্ড

ISBN: 978-81-92531-4-2:
৪০০.০০ টাকা ২য় খণ্ড

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তিপিটক। বিনয়পিটক অট্ট কথ।।
বাংলা। ২০১৮।

চুলবর্গ : বিনয়পিটকের চতুর্থ
গ্রন্থ; সুভূতিরঞ্জন বড়ুয়া ও সুমন
পাল ভিক্ষু কর্তৃক বাংলা ভাষায়
অনূদিত। -কোলকাতা : বোধি নিধি
পাবলিকেশন, ২০১৮।

২৮,২৭৭ পৃ.; ২২ সে. মি.
(B15288) (21.10.19)
৩০০.০০ টাকা

Ban
294.5
A 658 d

অরবিন্দ

ধর্ম ও জাতীয়তা/অরবিন্দ। -৫ম
সংস্করণ। -পন্ডিচেরী : অরবিন্দ
আশ্রম, ১৩৫৮।

১০৩পৃ.: ২০ সে. মি. (B15274)
(Dt. 20.9.19)

Ban
294.5512
S 943 b

সুধা সেন

ভারতাত্মা শ্রীকৃষ্ণ/সুধা সেন।
-২য় সংস্করণ। -কলিকাতা : জিজ্ঞাসা,
১৩৮৯।

৭,২৮৪ পৃ.; ২২ সে. মি.
(B15278) (26.9.19)

Ban
294.555
B 927 r

বুধানন্দ স্বামী

শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ বিভাসিতা মা সারদা/স্বামী
বুধানন্দ। -৪র্থ সংস্করণ। -কলিকাতা :
উদ্বোধন কার্যালয়, ১৯৯৫।

১২৪ পৃ.; ১৮ সে. মি. (B15280)
(6.9.19)

১১.০০ টাকা।

Ban
294.592409
S 253 p

সত্যনারায়ণ জানা

প্রাচীন ও আধুনিক দৃষ্টিতে
শ্রীমদ্ভাগবদগীতার পর্যালোচনা/
সত্যনারায়ণ জানা। -কোলকাতা :
মহাবোধি, ২০১৮।

২৪,৩২১ পৃ.: ২২ সে.মি.
(BN68016) (16.10.19)

গ্রন্থপঞ্জী : পৃ. ৩০১-৩২১।

ISBN: 978-93-84721-12-1:
৫০০.০০ টাকা

Ban
891.23
A 861 b

অশ্বঘোষ

বুদ্ধচরিত/অশ্বঘোষ; মণীন্দ্রনাথ

চক্রবর্তী অনূদিত। -কলকাতাঃ
ধর্মাক্ষর বুক এজেন্সি, ১৩৬৩।

২৩,১৮৩ পৃ.; ২২ সে. মি.
(B15281) (26.9.19)

Ban
891.23
K 19

কথা সরিৎ সাগর; কমলকৃষ্ণ

স্মৃতিতীর্থ কর্তৃক বঙ্গভাষায়
অনূদিত। -কলকাতা : সতীশচন্দ্র
মুখোপাধ্যায়, [১৯-?]।

১৯২ পৃ.; ২৪ সে.মি. (B15276)
(26.9.19)

গ্রন্থাগারে ২য় খণ্ড আছে।

৪.০০ টাকা

Ban
891.4405
B 626 b

বিজলি সরকার

বঙ্গদর্শন (১২৭৯-১৪১৮ বঙ্গাব্দ):
বর্ণানুক্রমিক লেখক সূচি/বিজলি
সরকার। - শ্যামনগর : সূক্তি প্রকাশন,
২০১৮।

১৩২ পৃ.; ১৩ সে. মি. (B15302)
(21.10.19)

২০০.০০ টাকা

Ban
891.4405
J 24

জগজ্জ্যোতি : চর্যাপদ সংখ্যা;

হেমেন্দু বিকাশ চৌধুরী। -
কলকাতা : বৌদ্ধ ধর্মাক্ষর সভা,
২০১১।

২৩৫ পৃ.; ২৫ সে.মি. (B15324)
(7.11.19)

ISBN: 978-81-86551-49-3:
৩০০.০০ টাকা

Ban
891.4405
J 24
জগজ্যোতিঃ রবীন্দ্র সংখ্যা; হেমেন্দু
বিকাশ চৌধুরী সম্পাদিত।
-কলকাতাঃ ভিক্ষু বোধিপাল, ২০১২।
২৪৭ পৃ.; ২৫ সে.মি. (B15321)
(7.11.19)
রবীন্দ্রনাথের ১৫০ বছরের
জন্মবার্ষিকী উপলক্ষ্যে প্রকাশিত।
বাংলা ইংরাজী দুটি ভাষায় নিবন্ধ
প্রকাশিত।
ISBN: 978-81-86551-60-8:
৩০০.০০ টাকা

Ban
891.441
B 163
বাইশ কবির মনসামঙ্গল বা বাইশা;
আশুতোষ ভট্টাচার্য কর্তৃক
সম্পাদিত ও সংকলিত। -পরিবর্ধিত
২য় সংস্করণ। -কলকাতাঃ কলিকাতা
বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, ১৯৬২।
৭২,৪১৮পৃ.: চিত্র; ২৯ সে.মি.
(B15272) (26.9.19)
লেখকগণঃ হরি দত্ত, বিজয়গুপ্ত,
দ্বিজ বংশীদাস, জীবন মৈত্র,
বিজয়গুপ্ত, বিষণু পাল, নারায়ণ
দেব, বিপ্রদাস, কেতকাদাস, ক্ষেমানন্দ,
যশীধর।

Ban
891.441
G 525 j
গিরিশচন্দ্র ঘোষ
জনাঃ পৌরাণিক নাটক/
গিরিশচন্দ্র ঘোষ; আশুতোষ ভট্টাচার্য
সম্পাদিত। -হাওড়াঃ সাহিত্য প্রকাশ,
১৯৬৪।

৯০,১২০ পৃ.; ২৮ পৃ. (B15273)
(26.9.19)
৩.৭৫ টাকা।

Ban
891.44109
R 116 a
আহমদ রফিক
রবি বাউল ও তার বিচিত্র ভাবনা
/ আহমেদ রফিক। -ঢাকাঃ অনিন্দ্য
প্রকাশ, ২০১২।
১৯০পৃ.: ২২ সে.মি. (BN 15317)
(7.11.19)

Ban
891.44109
U 116 k
রবীন্দ্রনাথঃ সুন্দরের উপচার; সংকলন
ও সম্পাদনা ক্ষেত্রমোহন
মুখোপাধ্যায়। -হাওড়াঃ সংকলক ও
সম্পাদক, ২০১৫।
৩৯৬পৃ.: ২৫ সে.মি. (B15322)
(7.11.19)
৩৫০.০০ টাকা

Ban
891.444
B 594 c
বিজয়কৃষ্ণ পাল
চারটি মানবতাবাদী প্রবন্ধ/
বিজয়কৃষ্ণ পাল। -কলকাতাঃ
নবদিগন্ত প্রকাশনী, ১৪১৭।
১২০পৃ.: ২২ সে. মি. (B15291)
(21.10.19)
৭০.০০ টাকা।

Ban
891.444
S 948 p
4V
সুকুমার সেন
প্রবন্ধ সংকলন/ সুকুমার সেন;

সম্পাদনা সুভদ্রকুমার সেন ও সুনন্দন
কুমার সেন। -১ম সংস্করণ ২য় মুদ্রণ।
-কলকাতাঃ আনন্দ, ২০১৮।
৪খণ্ড; ২৫ সে. মি. (BN68023-
BN68026) (7.11.19)
ISBN: 978-93-5040-467-6:
৭৫০.০০ টাকা (V.1)
ISBN: 978-93-5040-662-5:
৬০০.০০ টাকা (V.2)
ISBN: 978-93-5040-824-7:
৬০০.০০ টাকা (V.3)
ISBN: 978-93-5040-963-3:
৭৫০.০০ টাকা (V.4)

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লিয়াংসং তামসাং
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ও সম্পাদনা লিয়াংসং তামসাং;
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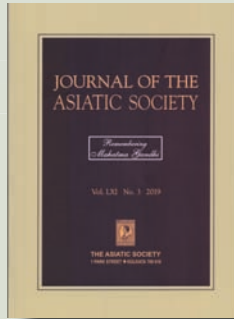
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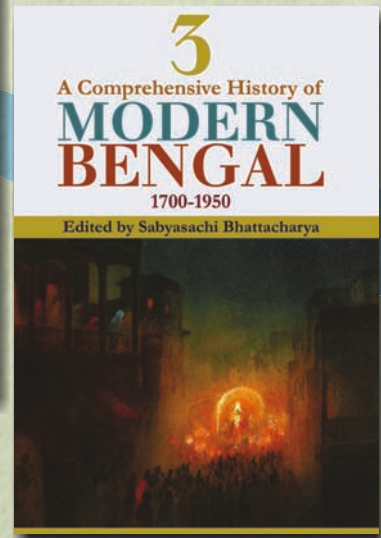
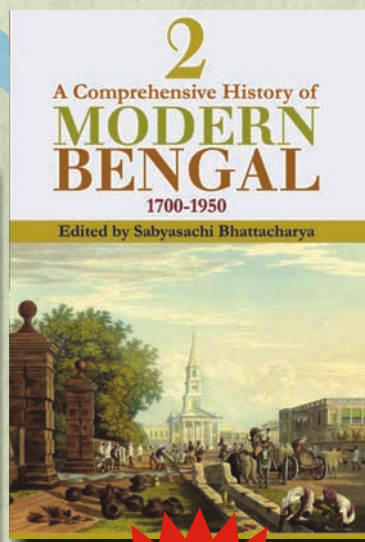
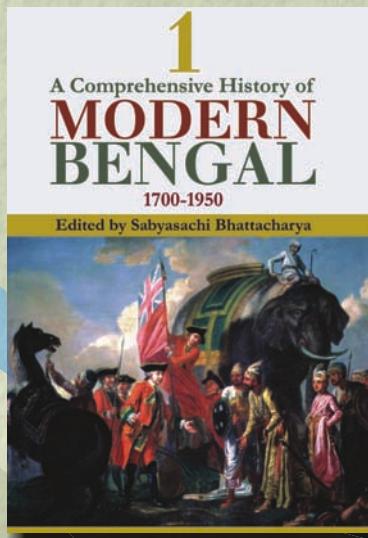
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