



SEPTEMBER 2019

# Monthly Bulletin



VOLUME XLVIII, NO. 9



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



জননী ভগবতী দেবী

বঙ্গদেশের সৌভাগ্যক্রমে এই ভগবতীদেবী এক অসামান্য রমণী ছিলেন। শ্রীযুক্ত চণ্ডীচরণ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় মহাশয়ের রচিত বিদ্যাসাগর-গ্রন্থে লিখোগ্রাফ-পটে এই দেবীমূর্তি প্রকাশিত হইয়াছে। অধিকাংশ প্রতিমূর্তিই অধিকক্ষণ দেখিবার দরকার হয় না, তাহা যেন মুহূর্তকালের মধ্যেই নিঃশেষিত হইয়া যায়। তাহা নিপুণ হইতে পারে, সুন্দর হইতে পারে, তথাপি তাহার মধ্যে চিত্তনিবেশের যথোচিত স্থান পাওয়া যায় না, চিত্রপটের উপরিতলেই দৃষ্টির প্রসর পর্যবসিত হইয়া যায়। কিন্তু ভগবতীদেবীর এই পবিত্র মুখশ্রীর গভীরতা এবং উদারতা বহুক্ষণ নিরীক্ষণ করিয়াও শেষ করিতে পারা যায় না। উন্নত ললাটে তাঁহার বুদ্ধির প্রসার, সুদূরদর্শী স্নেহবর্ষী আয়ত নেত্র, সরল সুগঠিত নাসিকা, দয়াপূর্ণ ওষ্ঠাধর, দৃঢ়তাপূর্ণ চিবুক, এবং সমস্ত মুখের একটি মহিমময় সুসংযত সৌন্দর্য দর্শকের হৃদয়কে বহু দূরে এবং বহু উর্ধ্ব আকর্ষণ করিয়া লইয়া যায়—এবং ইহাও বুঝিতে পারি ভক্তিবৃন্দের চরিতার্থতা-সাধনের জন্য কেন বিদ্যাসাগরকে এই মাতৃদেবী ব্যতীত কোনো পৌরাণিক দেবীপ্রতিমার মন্দিরে প্রবেশ করিতে হয় নাই।

বিদ্যাসাগরচরিত, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর, বিশ্বভারতী, পৃ.২১-২২



**AN ORDINARY MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY  
WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, 2ND SEPTEMBER, 2019 AT 5.00 P.M.  
IN THE VIDYASAGAR HALL OF THE SOCIETY**

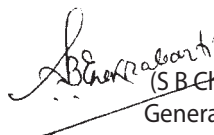
**MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO BE PRESENT**

*Agenda*

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the Ordinary Monthly General Meeting held on 5th August, 2019 at 5 p.m.
2. Exhibitions of presents made to the Society in August, 2019.
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 : Chandicharan Bandyopadhyay : *The Architect of Vidyasagar* by Asit Baran Giri

The Asiatic Society  
1, Park Street  
Kolkata 700016

Dated the 16th day of August 2019

  
(S.B. Chakrabarti)  
General Secretary



View of the meeting  
of the Council of the  
Asiatic Society held  
on 26th July 2019 at  
Rajendralala Mitra  
Bhavan

## CHANDICHARAN BANDYOPADHYAY : THE ARCHITECT OF 'VIDYASAGAR'

Asit Baran Giri\*

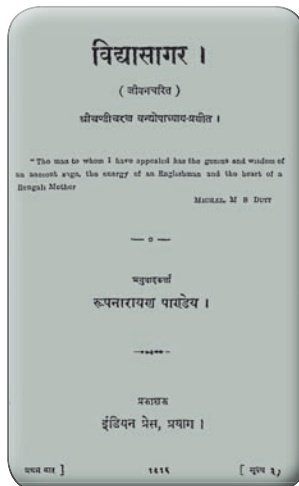
Little do the legends bother to think about sketching their own portraits or penning a profile because they are to do the duties, they are destined to. Devoted as they are to doing as much good to as many people in as many ways and for as long as possible, never does it occur to them to script something like an autobiography. The mission they embody, the vision they visualize, the path they emulate, the deeds they do, the ends they have in mind, the means they follow – all these in their totality perhaps prompt their posterity to pen a profile or a biography with a trepidation like: "Others abide our question. Thou art free. / We ask and ask – Thou smilest and art still, / Out-topping knowledge. For the loftiest hill, / Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty ..."

And the biography thus written, if it stands the test of time, makes the biographer as legendary as the legend he has written about. For this reason, what St. John has been to Jesus, Boswell has been to Dr. Johnson, Sri M. to Sri Ramakrishna and Chandicharan to Vidyasagar.

It'd be befitting on the august occasion of the bi-centenary of Vidyasagar to venture to pen a profile of his biographer, named Sri Chandicharan

Bandyopadhyay who, on being inspired by Sri Narayan Chandra Bandyopadhyay, the son of Vidyasagar, took pains to collect and coalesce, to cull and collage every gem of an information, scanty though, for long four years to humbly endeavour to write a biography, titled 'Vidyasagar'. To know about Chandicharan is really to know about a man of letters, self-schooled and self-taught. Born (in 1858) to Ramkamal Bandyopadhyay, a 'Sārbabhauma', who had been an inhabitant of Nalkunra, a village

under Barasat Sub-division to the east of Jasore-Khulna, in the district of 24 Parganas of British India, young Chandicharan was fated to have little opportunity to pursue his studies to fetch him a formal degree, owing largely to a family feud (that made his father leave for Kashi i.e. Benaras). But neither penury nor his family fury could stand in the way of his getting educated. A Good Samaritan, in the form of a man of magnanimity, named Radhakanta Bandyopadhyay, came to his rescue. To add to his quest for both 'light and sweetness', he got attracted to 'Brāhmadharma' and in course of time had himself espoused to it which in its turn rid him of pettiness of mind & prejudices of every kind, thereby transforming him into "a preacher of Brāhmadharma".



\* Life Member, The Asiatic Society.

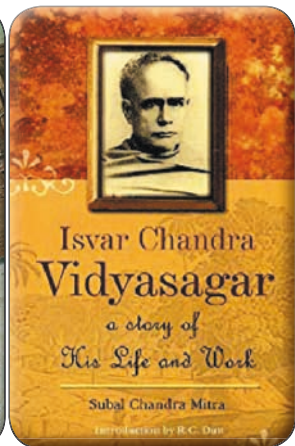
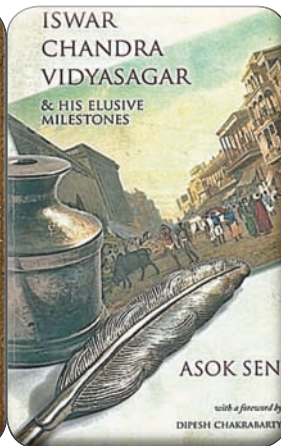
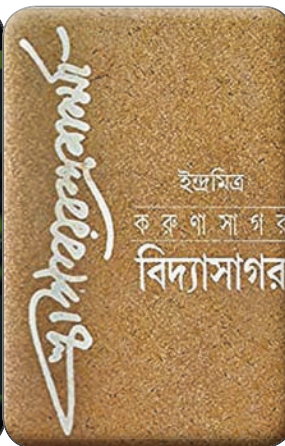
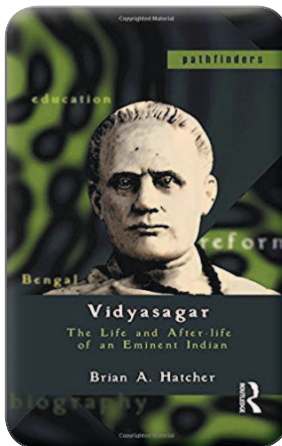
Broad-minded as he was, little did he hesitate to wed a girl, belonging to a caste lower than his.

He tried his hand in different genres of literature that include 'Adrishtalipi' (1914), 'Kamalkumar', 'Kirtigatha' (1924), 'Jiban Sopan' (1824), 'Vidyasagar' (1895), 'Vidyasagar' (Hindi translation, 1916), 'Vidyasagar Chhatrajiban' (1896), 'Papur Jibanlabh' (considered to be his autobiography), 'Monoramar Griha' (1892), 'Ma O Chhele' (1<sup>st</sup> Vol. 1887), 'Ma O Chhele' (2<sup>nd</sup> Vol. 1889), 'Swadesh Renu' (1905) and 'Sir Basudeb Jibani' (1916).

Here it'd be apt to underline an important point that all the four biographers, including Chandicharan, happened to be the contemporaries of Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. Sambhuchandra Vidyaratna (1828-1911), the brother of Vidyasagar, was the first to have composed the biography of Vidyasagar, titled 'Vidyasagar Jibancharit'. Next to him was Beharilal Sarkar (1855-1921). While Chandicharan (1858-1916) was the third in row, Subal Chandra Mitra (1872-1913) was the fourth to have written a big book of biographical account of Vidyasagar. Chandicharan, unlike his predecessor Beharilal Sarkar who had his 'Vidyasagar' published in 1302 (i.e. 1895) and Subal Chandra Mitra, his successor, who had his 'The life of Iswar Chandra

Vidyasagar' published in 1902, had had the proud privilege of having to come in contact with the holy company of Vidyasagar.

Chandicharan in his lifetime had it published in consecutive two editions of which the very first edition was published in Jyaistha 1302, i.e. in 1895, but the next three editions, though published during his lifetime, were brought out by Sri Chintamani Ghose, the proprietor of Allahabad Indian Press Limited. So great was this book in demand outside Bengal that it had to be published in Hindi translation (made by Rupnarayan Pandey) in 1916. Chandicharan got himself associated with the Bangiya Sahitya Parishad and was on her Executive Committee right from the very first year. Chandicharan was also in regular touch with the greats of Bengal of whom mention may be made of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee. One day, (Dated 7<sup>th</sup> Pous, 1323 BS) on the way back home during evening from Sir Asutosh's place, he met with a fatal tram-accident that cost his life. He succumbed to the injuries he had sustained on being trampled by the tram. He died as a pentagenarian, at the age of 58 in 1916. The leading periodicals of the time like the *Dharmatattwa*, the *Prabashi*, the *Bharatbarsha*, the *Manashi* and the *Marmabani* paid a befitting tribute to this eminent man of letters.



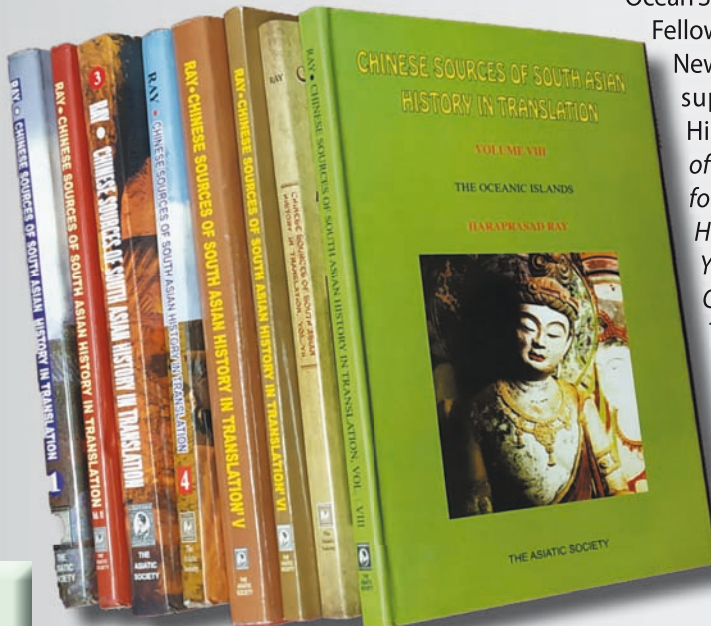


## Leading Sinologist of the Country passed away : A great Loss to The Asiatic Society

We deeply mourn the sad demise of Dr. HARAPRASAD RAY, Associate Professor of Chinese, JNU, New Delhi (Retd), Senior Fellow and Scholar supervisor, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata-16. He was a father figure in Chinese Studies in India. His educational Qualifications were – 1952 : MA in Sanskrit (Gold Medalist); 1956 : Sino-Tibetan Research Scholar in Chinese : University of Calcutta; 1965 : National Scholar in Chinese at Hong Kong University; did advanced studies in Modern and Classical Chinese; also did diploma in Contemporary Chinese Literature; 1989 : Ph. D in India-China

Relations from JNU; Thesis : Trade and Diplomacy in India-China Relations–A Study of Bengal during the Fifteenth Century A.D. First ever study of India during 15th Century based on original Chinese sources, published in 1993. Professional Experiences: 1957-1959 (Jan) : Lecturer in Sanskrit at F.C. College and S.C. College in West Bengal; 1959 (19 Jan)-1963 : Chinese Language expert (Class-I) at the Ministry of Defence, G.O.I., New Delhi; 1969(11 July)-1975(early June) : Lecturer in Chinese, School of Foreign Languages, Ministry of Defence; 1975 (10th June) –1983 (Jan) : Assistant Professor in Chinese, JNU, New Delhi; 1983-1996 (31Jan) : Associate Professor in Chinese JNU; 1997-1998(March): Senior Fellow, Society for India Ocean Studies, New Delhi; 1998-2000 (Feb) : Senior Fellow, Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi; 2000 : Senior Fellow-cum- Scholar supervisor, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata. His publications include : *Chinese Sources of South Asian History in Translation: Data for Study in India–China Relations through History* (8 Volumes) Asiatic Society, Kolkata, *Yoga Gita* (Bengali) Yogiraj Publications, *Contribution of P. C. Bagchi on Sino-Indo Tibetology*; Asiatic Society. Besides he contributed to a number of international seminars in India, China, Germany, U.S.A., Britain and other places and also in journals of international repute. His departure is an eternal loss for Academics in Chinese Studies in India.

**Atreya Bhatta**



## Professor J. V. Naik, Chairman, Board of Trustees of The Asiatic Society of Mumbai, passed away



Professor J. V. Naik  
(1934-2019)

Professor J. V. Naik, a doyen amongst historians of modern India, passed away on 22 July 2019. His demise has left a void in the field of historical scholarship on Maharashtra and the present generation of scholars have a rich legacy to live up to.

Professor Naik was born in Goa on 14 May 1934. He migrated to Mumbai in the 1950s for further studies and completed his post-graduation from the University of Bombay, as it was then called, in 1960. He started his teaching career at the Elphinstone College, later taught at the Ismail Yusuf College in Mumbai and retired as Professor and Head of the Department of History, University of Mumbai after a distinguished career of 35 years.

He was awarded a Fellowship of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute at the University of Toronto in Canada in 1982. He was UGC Visiting Fellow at the M.S. University of Baroda in 1991 and the Shivaji University, Kolhapur from 2000 to 2001. He was elected the General President of the Indian History Congress in 2007, the highest distinction accorded by fellow historians, in recognition of his work. His Presidential address was titled, 'The Reformer and the Quest for Social Justice in Indian History.' He presided over sessions of the Akhil Maharashtra Itihas Parishad in 2006 and the Konkan Itihas Parishad in 2011. He delivered many endowment lectures and presented papers at national and international conferences.

Professor Naik's main contribution was in the ideas, institutions and persons that shaped the history of modern Maharashtra. He explored the hitherto neglected period of early nineteenth century Bombay and called the phase from 1822 to 1857, 'the seed period of Bombay's intellectual life.' His pioneering research was on Bhaskar Pandurang Tarkhadkar and his critique of the economic policies of the English East India Company as early as the 1840s, years before Dadabhai Nowroji's espousal of the Drain theory.

Professor Naik worked on the British secret official view regarding Lokmanya Tilak and Gita Rahasya which Tilak wrote while imprisoned in the jail at Mandalay. Naik also wrote that Tilak was one of the first to introduce Karl Marx and his concept of class conflict to India. He also examined in depth the history of institutions in Maharashtra like the Ganeet Shilpa Vidyalaya, the Paramahansa Sabha, the Prarthana Samaj and also wrote about the Sarvajanik Ganeshotsav started by Tilak. Moreover, Naik studied the contribution of intellectuals such as Bhau Daji Lad, Bhau Mahajan, Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and also India's pioneer of birth control and sex education namely Raghunath Dhondo Karve.

The Asiatic Society of Mumbai published a selection of Professor Naik's essays in 2016 titled, 'The Collected Works of J.V. Naik: Reform and renaissance in nineteenth century Maharashtra' edited with an introduction by Murali Ranganathan. Prior to this, in 2014, the Society published his book on 'The Jervis Brothers' co-authored with Prabha Ravishankar as part of the Founders and Guardians

Series of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai. The Series was initiated by Dr Aroon Tikekar, the late President of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai, and one of the closest associates of Professor Naik. His colleagues at the University of Mumbai, Mariam Dossal and Ruby Maloni edited a collection of essays in honour of Professor J.V. Naik titled, 'State Intervention and Popular Response: Western India in the Nineteenth Century' published by Popular Prakashan in 1998.

Professor Naik was associated with many institutions. He was Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai, Trustee of the Mani Bhavan Gandhi Sangrahalaya, Member of the Raja Rammohan Roy Library Foundation, Ministry of Culture, Government of India and the National Book Trust.

Professor Naik came to symbolise historical scholarship on Maharashtra at national and international forums. He developed a close association with colleagues, scholars, friends and students which traversed disciplinary boundaries. He will be fondly remembered by his students and his grasp of the subject, emphasis on rigorous empirical research as well as his distinct oratorical

style will be a benchmark for the present generation of scholars.

One of his favourite quotes was that of Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade which is, 'Humanise, Equalise and Spiritualise.' Above all, Professor Naik revered Mahatma Gandhi and the principles for which he stood. It is indeed noteworthy that one of the last Seminars Professor Naik attended at the Department of History, University of Mumbai on 3 October 2018 was the Seminar on the 'Relevance of Gandhism in the 21st Century' to commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary Year of Mahatma Gandhi. It will be a fitting tribute to Professor Naik to end this note with Mahatma Gandhi's seven dangers to human virtue which he so often quoted :

Wealth without work, Pleasure without conscience, Knowledge without character, Business without ethics, Science without humanity, Religion without sacrifice, Politics without principle.

**Dr Manjiri Kamat**

Professor, Department of History  
University of Mumbai







## From the Desk of the General Secretary

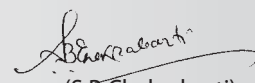
Dear Members and Well-wishers,

During the last one month we have organised or have taken part in a number of academic programmes held at the Asiatic Society or outside. A small exhibition was put up in the Museum Section on the 158th birth anniversary of Acharya Prafulla Chandra Roy. The eleventh Monthly Lecture on “Remembering Mahatma Gandhi” was delivered by Professor Suranjan Das, Vice-Chancellor, Jadavpur University, on 9th August, 2019. His subject of discussion was ‘Challenges of Education in India : Relevance of Gandhian Thought’. Professor Maya Deb Memorial Lecture was delivered by Professor Anjali Roy, Former Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, University of Calcutta, on 13th August, 2019 on the topic ‘Selected Psycho-social Issues Related to New Educational Policy’. A special lecture was delivered by Dr. Atiur Rahaman, a famous Economist of Bangladesh and Former Governor of Central Bank of Bangladesh on “Rabindranath Tagore and Rural Development : Experiences from Patisar”.

Two seminars are slated for this month — one on ‘Relevance of Swami Vivekananda’s Philosophy of Education in Modern India’ (12.09.2019) and the other on ‘Probing Social Reform in India in the Nineteenth Century : Vidyasagar’s Legacy in the Long Run’ on the occasion of his bicentenary (26th and 27th September, 2019). Three publications of the Society will be released on the occasion. The Hon’ble Minister of Culture, Government of India, Shri Prahlad Singh Patel is expected to be present during the inauguration. This apart, In-house Training in Museum, a book release on the Vidyasagar in collaboration with Vidyasagar Charcha–O–Gabeshana Kendra, Kolkata on the occasion of the Teachers’ Day (05.09.2019) are also scheduled.

Programme on digitization is picking up. The Society was represented in some programmes outside, for example, the General Secretary was present at the Ashutosh Memorial Auditorium and spoke on the occasion of the birth anniversary of late Dr. Pratap Chandra Chunder on 05.08.2019. The General Secretary also participated in a National Seminar at Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Manav Sangrahalaya (IGRMS), Bhopal on the ‘Status of Ethnographic Museum in India’ on 28.07.2019 as well as in a seminar on ‘Mahatma Gandhi and Tribal and Rural Development’ organised by the Anthropological Survey of India, Kolkata, on 09.08.2019.

Let me share with the Members that at the instance of Ministry of Culture, Government of India, the Society has agreed to extend the loan period of Zhabdrung Statue to Royal Government of Bhutan for another 5 years i.e. ending in December, 2024.

  
(S.B. Chakrabarti)  
General Secretary



## TWO REMARKABLE PAINTINGS IN THE COLLECTION OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY



**'THE RABBI' (An oil painting on canvas)**

A painting in the collection of The Asiatic Society is quite an interesting work of arts done on a moderately big size canvas (43" x 34") in oils and suitably ornated with heavy golden guild frame. This is a portrait of a Jewish physician titled 'The Rabbi' as per accession register no. 71, and the name of the artist is not known, neither a trace of a signature is visible on the canvas. The portrait is arranged on the canvas in a diagonal order from upper left-hand corner to the right-side corner of the viewer, showing the palm is almost touching the frame. The Doctor is clad in a black jacket on white shirt and typical black Jewish-cap sitting by a table, kept his right arm and his palm on a big size book, appears to have been consulting in thoughtful mood, casually looking outside with an inquisitive glance

as if the artist caught him just unaware. The well matching colour of the background and the table-cover with heavy dark-maroon drapery hanging behind his back and partly showing a pillar with a glimpse of evening sky shown on the Doctors left is skilfully achieved to create a feeling of depth in the painting. Besides all these very common practice of nineteenth century portrait paintings, the artist has captured the mood with the pulsating colour of the skin of face and nimble hands done with masterly ease, yet I wonder, why the artist did not signed his work with date. The painting is wonderful. It should be kept with care and displayed on suitable wall of the Society. It will be a kind of viewer's delight and Society's pride.

The word 'Rabbi' in Hebrew language called 'my teacher' or 'my master'. In Judaism, a person qualified by academic studies of the Hebrew Bible and the Talmud to act as spiritual leader and religious teacher of a Jewish community. Ordination can be conferred by any rabbi, but once teacher customarily performs this function by issuing a written statement. For many generations the education of a rabbi consisted almost exclusively of Talmudic studies, but since the 19th century the necessity and value of a well-rounded, general education has been recognised. The portrait referred here is a representation from Jewish community of old Calcutta, teaches something to the Jewish people.

### **THE MULETEER (an oil painting on board)**

A cute small oil painting titled "Muleteer" is in the collection of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, is quite attractive, appears to have done directly from nature, like English landscape, painting tradition set by Constable, quite a number of which are kept in Victoria and Albert Museum, London. Constable,

however painted a number of Landscape paintings in big-sizes from the works already done by him as stated. Here this small painting has captured a vast area of farm-land tillers, field worker and cattle breeders. Mules and donkeys are the very useful animals for them, as they can carry heavy loads and the owner as well.

A little beyond one can see some activities are on with the people of the soil and their cattle on harness. Distant horizon is very skilfully done with free brushing, depicting mounds and hills merged with the overhanging floating white clouds on the blue. In spite of having all those necessary atmospheric details the painting is not over burdened with

superfluous tit bits, perfectly maintained its principal theme. 'The Muleteer' is a small painting with monumental quality. It should be preserved with due care.

This subject was very much appreciated by a Flemish painter Pieter Andreas Rijsbrack (1690-1748), who was active in England in the first half of the 18th Century. He is particularly known for launching the vogue of topographical views of English Country houses, garden and harvest field. At international

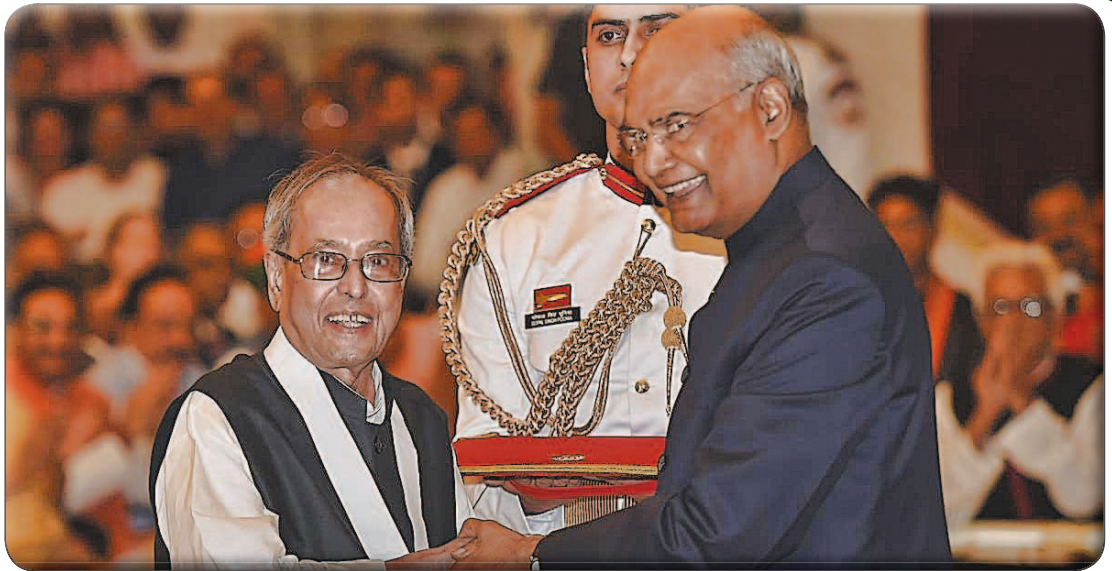


Here we can see the Muleteer has collected heavy heaps of fresh fodder of green grass placed them on the animal's back and its mouth is covered with a sack so that it cannot go astray for a munch. In front of the mule on the right side corner a man is cropping the green grass with sickle to make a further heaps kept in dark shadows.

auctions, landscape paintings of Rijsbrack, more reminiscent of the classicizing style of his father, are regularly offered for sale. As for example is the travellers in a classical landscape. A work in a similar style entitled A Southern Landscape with Muleteer is part of the collections in our institution though it is small in size.

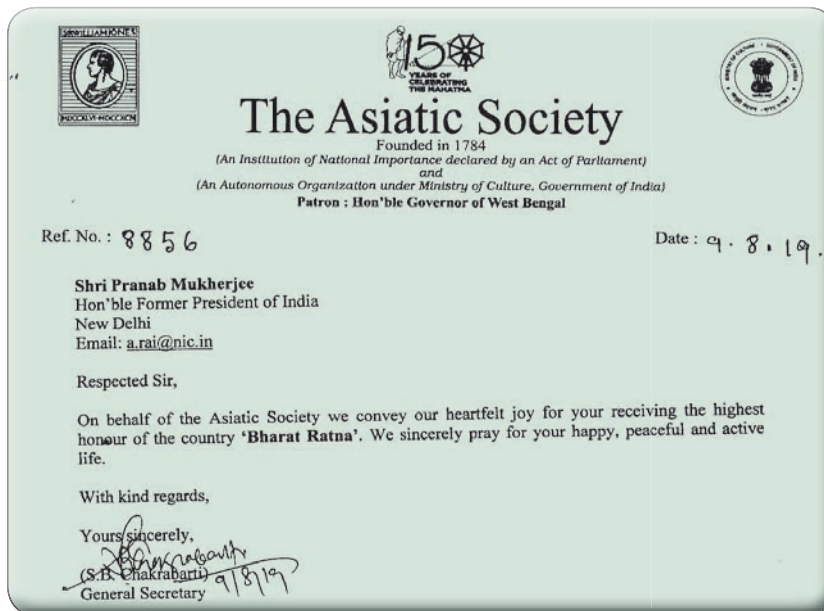
*Somnath Mukherjee*  
Somnath Mukherjee

*Isha Mahammad*  
Isha Mahammad



President Ram Nath Kovind (right) awards former President Pranab Mukherjee the 'Bharat Ratna' at the Rashtrapati Bhavan

**Letter to Sri Pranab Mukherjee, former President of India,  
from Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata**



## Growing Fraternity between Bangladesh Asiatic Society and The Asiatic Society, Kolkata



Mohammed Mohsin is felicitated with bouquet by the President of the Asiatic Society on the occasion of his visit to The Asiatic Society, Kolkata on 8th July 2019. Toufique Hasan, Bangladesh Deputy High Commissioner, Kolkata in the Centre



Letter from Mohammed Mohsin, Life Member, The Asiatic Society, Dhaka, former Foreign Secretary / Ambassador of Bangladesh to Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata

Dear Dr. Chakrabarti,

On my return to Dhaka, I have been very much remembering with gratitude the courtesies & the warm welcome that your good self & your colleagues extended to my good colleague, our Deputy High Commissioner in Kolkata Mr. Toufique Hasan, when we visited the historic Asiatic Society.

2. We felt deeply grateful for the time you all had kindly spared to welcome us as well as brief us about the research & other activities of the Society, despite your preoccupations. We really enjoyed the time we spent with you as well as the discussions that followed.
3. Since it was my first visit to the Society premises in Kolkata, I was very much overwhelmed not only by the discussions that followed between us as well as going around the Library & the Archive. I wish I could spend a few days to go through the various materials you have in the Archive as well as in the Library.
4. On my return to Dhaka, I have had the opportunity of briefing our current President as well as a few other Members of our Asiatic Society in Dhaka, about my visit & the discussions we have had.
5. I do hope to hold further discussions with my colleagues in the Asiatic Society here & would be glad to find ways as to how we could forge a relationship so as to facilitate regular contacts between our 2 Societies. It would be my pleasure to know, if you have any concrete suggestion in the matter.

With warmest regards,  
Mohammed Mohsin

## The Bengal Renaissance and the Asiatic Society benefited reciprocally

Extract from the speech by Justice Chittatosh Mookerjee, Hon'ble former Chief Justice of Bombay High Court, delivered on the occasion of the 235 Annual General Meeting and Award Giving Ceremony of the Asiatic Society held on 3rd June 2019 at the Vidyasagar Hall of the Society



**Professor Isha Mahammad, the President of the Asiatic Society, Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, the General Secretary, Professor Sujit Kumar Das, the Treasurer, the members of the Asiatic Society and ladies and gentlemen,**

I feel honoured to be present on the occasion of 235<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting and the Award Giving Ceremony of the Asiatic Society.

I initially hesitated to accept this invitation, because I belong to the legal fraternity and I have been far removed from the academic and research arena. But I reminded myself that from its inception many legal luminaries have been closely associated with this Society. Sir William Jones, the founder and the first President of this Society was a jurist and a Judge of the Supreme Court at Calcutta. On 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1784, at the initiative of Sir William Jones, a meeting of distinguished citizens was held in the Grand Jury Room of the Supreme Court with Sir Robert Chambers, the Chief Justice of the Court, presided over the meeting. Later on, the Society changed its venue of meetings, but throughout its existence, the Society has remained steadfast in pursuit of spread of knowledge about the glorious

civilization and culture of India, in particular and in general, the other countries of the Asian Continent.

I offer my respectful homage to Sir William Jones. He was a distinguished graduate of Oxford University and an erudite scholar of Greek and Latin. Even before he arrived in India, Sir William Jones already had deeply studied Persian and Arabic languages. He was eager to come to India and learn about Indian Civilization and in particular Sanskrit language and literature. After arrival in India he learnt Sanskrit. He translated into English language *Manu Samhita* and other Sanskrit texts. But it was his English translation of Kalidasa's *Abhijnanasakuntalam* which had drawn the attention of western scholars and thinkers like Max Mueller, Goethe and others to the vast wealth of the Sanskrit literature and the richness of the ancient culture of Indian subcontinent.

Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji in his speech delivered on the occasion of celebrations of bicentenary of the birth of Sir William Jones said that the one benefit of the foreign domination over India was we were able to know ourselves. We had only a dim awareness about our glorious past, the richness of our literature and philosophical thoughts, our relationship with other neighbouring countries. In short, we had almost forgotten about our past heritage.

Thus the greatest achievement of Sir William Jones and the succeeding generation of scholars who worked in the Asiatic Society was to awaken us to know ourselves. Our self respect grew by a long

and arduous process. Our craving of independence and for emancipation from foreign rule developed.

Warren Hastings, the second Governor General had encouraged both Persian and Sanskrit languages. The Calcutta Madrasa was established in 1780. The Sanskrit Colleges were started a few years later at Banaras and Calcutta. In 1776 Nathaniel Halhed translated in English language a Code of Gentoo Law.

In 1778 Halhed with the help of Panchanan Karmakar printed Bengali grammar. Charles Wilkins translated *Bhagavad Gita* in 1785.

Thus when Sir William Jones arrived in India, already beginning had been made in the study of our ancient law and literature. But, Sir William Jones who by establishing the Asiatic Society started a systemic and comprehensive study of the Indian civilization in its various facets. In his inaugural speech on 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1784 Sir William Jones stated the widest scope of the investigation be undertaken by the Society "whatever is performed by man or produced by nature".

Thus the succeeding generations of scholars like Rajendralala Mitra, Pandit Hara Prasad Shastri and others studied various branches of Science, Art, Literature. I pay my tribute to Rajendralala Mitra, the first Indian to be made the President of your Society and made great contributions towards preparation of catalogue of the manuscripts of the Society.

The Renaissance in Bengal may not have been directly ignited by the works done in the Asiatic Society. But the researches conducted by the scholars in the Asiatic Society contributed to growth of awareness of their true self by Indians and thereby generated in the Indian minds the spirit of self respect and a pride in the achievements in various fields of our ancient civilizations.

The Asiatic Society which in course of time became the store house of objects of art of various

ancient manuscripts and other objects promoted establishment of other learned and research and survey institutions like Indian Museum and Surveys set up by the Government. The first session of Indian Science Congress Association in the year 1913 was held in the Asiatic Society over which my grandfather Sir Asutosh Mookerjee presided.

Please permit me to recall the long close relationship between this Society and my revered grandfather Sir Asutosh Mookerjee and his two of his sons Justice Rama Prasad Mookerjee and Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee. All three of them served as the president of the Asiatic Society and were closely associated with the Society.

The Society installed a bust of our grandfather Sir Asutosh Mookerjee, whenever I have occasion to visit the Society, in spite of my physical infirmities, I climb up the grand staircase of the old building so that I may offer my deep regards to my illustrious ancestor. I also recall that Sir Asutosh's desire was to be a researcher in mathematical subjects. In fact, when researches in mathematics were not known in our country, Sir Asutosh contributed a number of his research papers to the *Journal of the Asiatic Society* and also to foreign Journals. When his wish to remain a research scholar was not fulfilled he 'drifted' to law. But he continued to promote research and actively participated in the deliberations of the Asiatic Society and other learned bodies.

Before I conclude, I congratulate and felicitate all who would be awarded today fellowship, medals, prizes etc.

I once again convey my thanks to the Society for giving me the opportunity to address today's meeting. I have every hope that the Asiatic Society will continue to promote advancement of knowledge.



15 July 1820 – 18 May 1886

## The Bi-Centenary of AKSHAY KUMAR DATTA

### Satyendranath Bera\*

Along with Pundit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, this year also marks the bi-centenary of Akshay Kumar Datta, another unforgettable figure of the nineteenth century Bengal Renaissance. Both of them were born in Bengal under the British rule in the same year, 1820. Vidyasagar was born on 26 September. Akshay Kumar Datta was born on 15 July. Akshay Kumar died on 18 May 1886, five years before Vidyasagar breathed his last.

Akshay Kumar Datta's father Pitambar Datta was working in the police department and lived in Kidderpore.

Akshay Kumar was a self-educated man. Although he received his school education at the Oriental

Seminary in Kolkata, his father's premature death did not allow him to pursue much in institutional education.

After the death of his father, he had to leave school and become busy with his income. By his own initiative, he majored in subjects like mathematics, geography, physics, botany. He was a polyglot. In addition to English, Bengali, Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit, he learned French, Greek, Latin, Hebrew and German. The contribution of Oriental Seminary teacher Hardman Jeffrey to Akshay Kumar's education is memorable.

At the age of only twenty-three, in 1843, Akshay Kumar was appointed editor of the celebrated Bengali periodical *Tattwabodhini Patrika*, the organ of the Tattwabodhini Sabha, a forum founded by Debendranath Tagore. He was in that position for about twelve long years in a row.

However, Akshay Kumar Datta's career in journalism began much before he came in touch with Debendranath Tagore, in another Kolkata-based influential vernacular newspaper of the period, Ishwar Chandra Gupta-edited *Sangbad Prabhakar*.

He also published a monthly magazine titled *Vidyadarshan* in his own initiative in the year 1842.

Akshay Kumar joined the Tattwabodhini Sabha at the very beginning when it had been founded in October 1839. He also served as the Assistant Secretary of the Sabha for some time. In the year 1840 Akshay Kumar was appointed as the teacher of Tattwabodhini Pathsala, a school set up under the auspices of the Sabha.

The *Tattwabodhini Patrika* was a unique and most-celebrated achievement of the Tattwabodhini Sabha for its editing style, its diversity of content and quality of language. Although Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was not a Brahma, he was associated with the editorial work of the periodical. Personalities like Ishwar Chandra Gupta, Rajnarayan Bose, Rajendralala Mitra, among others also actively took part in the running of the Patrika.

Debendranath Tagore wanted to bring out the organ emphasising primarily on the propagation of

\* Life Member, The Asiatic Society



Brahmoism. But Akshay Kumar-edited *Tattwabodhini Patrika* focused on modern education, culture, literature, and science. In particular, Akshay Kumar played the role of a pioneer in promoting scientific reasoning and radical ideas.

Although Akshay Kumar was initiated into Brahmoism during the early phase of his association with the Sabha, his adherence to scientific view and unorthodox approach did transform him radically in his personal life.

Akshay Kumar's fearless progressive stand on his contemporary social and political issues like women education, polygamy, widow remarriage, zamindari system, Indigo cultivation is evident in many of his essays published in *Tattwabodhini Patrika*.

Akshay Kumar was a pioneer in writing science in Bengali. His first book *Bhugol* was published in 1841. At that time, he was a teacher of the *Tattwabodhini Pathsala*.

His another celebrated book, *Bahyabastur Sahit Manab-Prakitir Sambandha Bichar* was published in two parts. The first part was in 1851, the second part in 1853. *Padarthavidya* was published in the year 1855. No book on physics was published in Bengali before.

Akshay Kumar Datta's *Charupatha* was very popular as a children's text book. The first part was published in 1853. The second part was published in 1855. The third part was brought out in 1859. The popularity and sale of *Charupatha* gave Akshay Kumar financial support in his later life. But from that time onwards he became seriously ill.

He left the job of headmaster of the Normal School, Kolkata, in 1859 for his illness. He joined the Normal School in 1855, at the request of Vidyasagar.


In the midst of his illness, he wrote his most outstanding book *Bharatbarsiya Upasak Sampraday*. The first part was published in 1870, then the second part in 1883, the year before his death.

Akshay Kumar should also be remembered for his financial contribution to the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (IACS) at the time of its establishment by Dr Mahendra Lal Sircar in 1876.

Akshay Kumar Datta spent the last one-and-a-half decades of his life in his river-side palatial building (known as 'Shovonodyan'; in English, 'Botanic Garden') at Bally, Howrah. The ruins of his building are still visible.

Apart from his outstanding contribution to the spread of science education, scientific temper and sense of reason, Akshay Kumar's ideas and contribution in child education in particular deserve due attention and research. His contribution to the study of scientific terminology cannot also be forgotten. He also contributed immense to the development of modern Bengali prose as one of the pioneers.

Akshay Kumar Datta's multi-faceted contribution should be studied widely at all levels. Especially in today's critical times, the initiation of a new discourse on the life and contribution of Akshay Kumar is of immense importance and, indeed, relevant in a new way.



... With his friend and contemporary Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820–91), Dutta represents an exceptional stream of thought and consciousness. Quite extraordinarily, at a time when religion had become the preferred mode of self-expression for Western-educated Hindus, both Vidyasagar and Dutta extended their critique of contemporary Hindu faith and practice to the point of incredulous irreverence. While Vidyasagar argued that he had no need for a God who was powerless in preventing the merciless oppression of the weak and the innocent, Dutta insisted that honest human labour was likely to be as productive by itself as labour coupled with prayer. In true algebraic fashion, Dutta placed the value of faith and prayer as 'zero'. ....

Amiya P Sen, *Remembering Akshay Kumar Datta, The Progressive Bengali Thinker Behind The Reformist Brahma Samaj*  
Firstpost, May 19, 2019



শিল্পী : গৌতম পাল



### জয়তু বিদ্যাসাগর

দুশো বছরের অপেক্ষা শেষে  
আজ উপনীত দ্বারে,  
একবার শুধু ফিরে দেখো  
তুমি তারে।  
এরাই স্বাধীন, এরা পরাধীন  
মননে সৃজনে আজো,  
হে সাগর তুমি বিদ্যার চেউ  
নতুন করিয়া সাজো।  
আজিও জানেনা কাহার তরেতে  
মুখে ফোটে নানা বাণী,  
অমর্যাদার শিখরে চড়িয়া  
করে শুধু হানাহানি।  
সমাজ সেবার অবশেষ খুঁজে  
বেড়েছে শুধুই ক্লান্তি,  
বিদ্যাসাগর ছবি থেকে নেমে  
কাটাও মোদের ভ্রান্তি।  
নমি আরবার চরণে তোমার  
নিঃশেষ যেন না হই আবার,  
দাও বল দাও ভাবনা নতুন  
যেন পারি ফের জ্বালিতে আগুন,  
চিন্তা ভাবনা কাটিয়ে জড়তা—  
ভুলে বিদ্বেষ স্বার্থ শঠতা,  
আনিবই আলো অন্ধকারেতে—  
সাথে লয়ে বীর জনতা।

সত্যব্রত চক্রবর্তী



# Two-Day International Seminar on "Revisiting the Life & Times of Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar" : A Brief Report



Professor Swapan Chakraborty releasing Vidyasagar Rachanasamagra published by Vidyasagar University



Professor Ranjan Chakrabarti Vice Chancellor, Vidyasagar University and Professor Isha Mahammad, President, The Asiatic Society on the dais

### First Day

(At Vivekananda Sabhagriha, Vidyasagar University on 23 July 2019)

The jointly organised Two-Day International Seminar on "Revisiting the Life & Times of Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar" by Vidyasagar University, Midnapore and The Asiatic Society, Kolkata was held on 23 & 25 July 2019 to mark the bi centenary

of Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, the great educationist and social reformer par excellence.

The inaugural session, held at Vivekananda Sabhagriha, Vidyasagar University, was attended by a large number of students, teachers, officers, staff, members of the press and many guests. Professor Sibaji Pratim Basu, Convenor, Vidyasagar Bicentenary Celebration Committee, VU and Dr. Sujit Kumar Das,



Professor Sibajipratim Basu delivering the Welcome Address before the Distinguished Audience

## Remembering Vidyasagar

Treasurer, Asiatic Society, Kolkata delivered Welcome Addresses on behalf of the two institutions.

Professor Ranjan Chakrabarti, the Vice-Chancellor and the inaugurator, spoke about the importance of Vidyasagar after 200 years, and in this respect he discussed at length the popular images of this great man. Professor Swapan Chakraborty, Kabiguru Rabindranath Tagore Professor of Humanities, Presidency University, Kolkata presented a textual analysis of how Vidyasagar combined the spirit of 'para'/other with 'sva'/self in his life and work. Professor Isha Mahammad, President, The Asiatic Society, in his Presidential Address, also spoke about the importance of the occasion. Professor Anwar Husain from Bangladesh; Professor Damodar Mishra, Dean of Arts and Commerce, Vidyasagar University; Professor Subrata Kumar De, Dean of Science, VU and Dr. J. K. Nandi, Registrar, VU, were also present on the dais. Dr. Nandi offered the formal vote of thanks at the end of the inaugural session.

The First Business session began with the keynote address of Professor Syed Anwar Husain. Dr. Amiya Samanta chaired the session. He read out his speech, which mesmerised the audience for its depth and relevance. His essay was divided in three parts: the conceptual part, the sociological part and the evaluative part.

The next session was chaired by Professor Gopa Datta, Jadavpur University. In this session, there were two speakers : Dr. Amiya Samanta & Professor Chittabrata Palit. According to Dr. Amiya Samanta Vidyasagar's project of mass education through vernacular was in conflict with the colonial policy of primarily of elite education in English and through the process of filtration that will reach the masses. The conflict came to a breaking point over the issue of female education.

Professor Chittabrata Palit said that it is now fashionable to project all renaissance personalities as children at that times, which means *inter alia* servants of the Raj. This again means that they were promoters of British India. Thus, Rammohan does his cosmetic *sati* movement to please the British

authority and their intellectual civil society. In the same train Vidyasagar also plays the same second fiddle by trying to promote widow remarriage.

The next session had three speakers: Professor Amitrasudan Bhattacharya, Professor Sumit Mukherjee and Dr. Biswajit Ray. Dr. Dilip Sinha, President, Vidyasagar Smiritiraksha Samiti, Karmatanr (Jhargram) chaired the session.

In his deliberation, Professor Amitrasudan Bhattacharya shared his experience about the 'discovery' of the first edition of Vidyasagar's most popular primer, *Varnaparichay*. Professor Sumit Mukherjee analysed the role of Bhagavati Devi to shape the personality of Vidyasagar.

The last speaker, Dr. Biswajit Ray argued that vernacularization is a complex process related to the identity politics. It was no different in the nineteenth century Bengal. Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, an illustrious Bengali prose writer, worked on the three related aspects of that process. The presentation focused upon the process of vernacularisation to reread 'Bengal Renaissance' in a critical light.

### Second Day

(At Vidyasagar Hall, The Asiatic Society on 25 July 2019)

The second day of the Two-Day International Seminar to commemorate the Bi-centenary of Pandit



Professor Uttara Chakraborty, Dr Amiya Kumar Samanta and Professor Susnata Das

## Remembering Vidyasagar



Professor Ranjan Chakraborty, Professor Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty and Professor Ashis Lahiri



Professor Tapati Mukherjee, Professor Swapan Pramanick, Sri Pranatosh Bandyopadhyay and Professor Kritya Priya Ghosh

Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar commenced on 25 July, 2019 at The Asiatic Society, Kolkata. The proceedings started off with felicitating Ms. Aruna Roy, noted political and social activist, by awarding her with Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar Gold Plaque for championing causes of social justice tirelessly over the years.

Thereafter, the first business session started which was chaired by Dr. Amiya Kumar Samanta. The theme of the session was 'Vidyasagar, Colonialism,



Professor Ramkrishna Bhattacharya

Modernity and Progress'. Professor Uttara Chakraborty initiated the discussion in this session. The title of her presentation was 'The Feminine and Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar'. The speaker tried to bring out Vidyasagar's empathy and his

involvement with the feminine by discussing his various activities – his association with Bethune School and girls' education, the pivotal movement

for widow remarriage, his gladness at viewing the first post-graduate young woman, and eager support to others who followed her and yet towards the end of his life his avoidance of the issues raised by the Age of Consent Bill (1891). Professor Susnata Das presented his thoughts after Professor Chakraborty. His presentation was titled as 'Modernity and Nationalist Thought of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar within Colonial Perspective'. His presentation sought to locate Vidyasagar's nationalist outlook and identify his political thoughts within the wider perspective of modernity and colonial rule.

The second business session's theme was 'Vidyasagar and Social Reforms' and the session



Professor Sourindra Nath Bhattacharya and Professor Atiur Rahman

## Remembering Vidyasagar



Ms. Aruna Roy, noted political and social activist is awarded with Pandit Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar Gold Plaque for championing causes of social justice tirelessly over the years.

was chaired by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick. Professor Kritya Priya Ghosh was the first speaker of this session and the title of his presentation was 'Common Sense Philosophy and Vidyasagar's Social Reforms'. His discussion focused on the stress Vidyasagar gave on common sense and reiterated Vidyasagar's belief that Sastras and Lokachars were ingrained in our social system. Reforming the social system would require the support of the Sastras and that would be reinforced by statutory legislations. Next speaker was Professor Tapati Mukherjee and the theme of her presentation was 'Tradition rejuvenated: Vidyasagar's interpretation of the Dharmasastras'. Her presentation highlighted the ways in which Vidyasagar prudently used Sastric texts in favour of female education, in introduction of widow remarriage and in abolition of Polygamy. Prantosh Bandyopadhyay presented his ideas hereafter. His presentation was titled as 'Vidyasagar: Chetana O Karmosadhanar Utsa Sandhane'. The speaker talked about the rational nature of Vidyasagar and his dedication in ensuring basic human rights. He also highlighted Vidyasagar's emphasis on doing away with social evils and superstitions.

The third and the last business session of the day was on the theme of 'Reception of Vidyasagar: During his time and after' and it was chaired by Professor Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty. The session's first speaker was Professor Ranjan Chakrabarti. His presentation

was titled 'Remembering Vidyasagar: Whether in Stone or through Living Deed'. He spoke on historiographical knowledge of Vidyasagar and the way he is viewed in popular culture. The next speaker was Ramkrishna Bhattacharya and the theme of his presentation was 'German Reception of Ishvara Chandra Vidyasagara in the nineteenth Century'. He spoke of the respect bestowed on Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar by the scholars in Germany in their works. Vidyasagar's work as a litterateur, an educationist and a social reformer finds mention in many German works. The session's last speaker was Professor Ashis Lahiri and the theme of his presentation was 'Vidyasagar's Battle: Rivals and Comrades'. The speaker drew attention to the continuity of the thoughts of Vidyasagar and its relevance in the later years. The ideas espoused by Vidyasagar along with Akshay Kumar Datta, laid the foundation of an empiricist account of science and philosophy in India.

The international seminar came to an end with the Valedictory session chaired by Professor Syed Anwar Husain and the speech was delivered by Professor Sourindranath Bhattacharya.



A Two-day International Seminar  
on  
**Probing Social Reform in India in the  
Nineteenth Century: Vidyasagar's  
Legacy in the Long Run**

will be held on 26-27 September 2019  
at the  
Vidyasagar Hall of The Asiatic Society

Key-note Address to be delivered by  
**Professor Brian A. Hatcher**



### Traditional Hall renamed as Vidyasagar Hall



The Hall in the first floor of Sir William Jones Bhavan ( old building ) of the Asiatic Society was known as “Traditional Hall” in the past. It was renamed as Vidyasagar Hall in the year 1995 to pay tribute to this great scholar. The idea to rename the Hall was perhaps mooted a couple of years back on the occasion of the death centenary celebrations of Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar.

This old building of the Society was built in 1808 by a French builder. Extensive use of glass for skylight is a novelty of this Hall. This Hall witnessed a number of memorable meetings, lectures and many august gatherings of famous learned personalities, both Europeans and Indians. The historic decision to establish a museum was adopted from a meeting held in this Hall on 2nd February, 1814.

Lord Curzon’s famous speech in 1902 on Protection of Ancient Monuments, was delivered from this Hall. The first session of the century old Indian Science Congress was inaugurated in this Hall where Sir Asutosh Mookerjee delivered the inaugural speech. Since the establishment of this Hall, galaxy of distinguished scholars from various disciplines and from different parts of the country and abroad have enriched the knowledge of Man and Nature as per the cherished desire of Sir William Jones.

Though built for the extensive use of the Society, the Hall has been also accessible to the public for academic discourses since inception. In 1822 the Hall was permitted for use to the Serampore Missionaries for a course of lecture on Phrenology. Medical and Physical Society of Calcutta held their meetings regularly in this Hall. The Hall was also used by the learned Societies like Agricultural and Horticultural Society of India, The Photographic Society of India for their occasional meetings.

*Sketch : Sri Dhiman Chakraborty*

*Text : Ms Sujata Misra*

# Vidyasagar – As perceived by the Nepalese Literati

Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty

In 1974 the North Bengal University brought out an anthology, *Vidyasagar Smaranika* ( Edited by Haripada Chakraborty), a bilingual tribute in Bengali and Nepali to Vidyasagar to commemorate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth.

Five eminent Nepali literateurs and educationists wrote on Vidyasagar. It would be appropriate to recall this perception of Vidyasagar among non-Bengali speaking people.

Parasmani Pradhan(1998-1886) contributed greatly to the development and recognition of the Nepali language in India. He played a major role in the recognition of the language as a major Indian language by the Sahitya Academy. He was a grammarian, lexicographer, poet, playwright, essayist, an editor and educationist. He received several awards from the governments of India and Nepal. He begins his essay by noting that in this country it would be rare to find a person who is not familiar with the name of Vidyasagar. He proceeds to evaluate Vidyasagar in under four heads: educationist, author and editor, social reformer and philanthropist and situates his outstanding achievement in all of these fields. His conclusion is that Vidyasagar's greatest contribution was to try and establish a new system of education which 'taught young men to realize that education empowers them to stand on their own feet and to consider themselves as inferior to nobody. He not only preached this but practised this to the hilt.'

Suryavikram Jnavali is another pioneering critique and essayist who, in his essay, sought to assess Vidyasagar's contribution to Bengali language and literature (particularly a new style of prose) and compares his contribution with that of Bhanubhakta

Acharya, recognised by the Nepalese as the 'Adikabi' for his Ramayana. Jnavali had in 1940 edited the Bhanu Smarak Grantha, published by the Nepali Sahitya Sammelan, to commemorate Bhanubhakta's

70<sup>th</sup> death anniversary and also edited a new edition of his Ramayana in 1954. "Vidyasagar is recognized by the Bengalis as the pioneer of modern Bengali prose. A creative use of the Sanskrit

language endowed new dynamism to the Bengali language and created it as a powerful vehicle of lucid expression. He also provided the grammar of the language. In the case of Bhanubhakta, we see him as the creator of modern Nepali language. He gave direction to a language which lacked it by liberating it from the shackles of Sanskrit grammar and using it to create great poetry. This is why he is recognized as the pioneer of modern Nepali language and literature and hailed as the 'Adikabi'."

Dilliram Timsina taught Nepali at the Banaras Hindu University and wrote Benaresko Chitthi (Letters from Benares) a collection of epistolary articles on the life of Benares. He begins by noting that Vidyasagar belonged to the genre of people who created history did not just write it. Presenting a brief overview of his achievements, he concludes that Vidyasagar explored the various aspects of social life with an incisive insight. By introducing a new prose style in Bengali he paved the way which was trodden later by his successors. His multifaceted genius, broad and generous perspective, honest and simple living, his steadfast devotion to truth will ever be a source of inspiration to his countrymen.

Suryakala Thapa taught at the Ramkrishna B. T. College, Darjeeling. In her tribute she concentrated on Vidyasagar the educationist. Vidyasagar's creative

विद्यासागर : एक चिनारी—श्रीडिल्लिराम तिमसिना ...  
ईश्वरचन्द्र विद्यासागर तथा भानुभक्त—सूर्यविक्रम श्येक्याली...  
शिवाशास्त्री—ईश्वरचन्द्र विद्यासागर—सूर्यकला थापा ...  
दयासागर ईश्वरचन्द्र विद्यासागर—पारसमणि प्रधान ...  
ईश्वरचन्द्र विद्यासागर र उनका युग—प्रा. लक्ष्मी देवी सुन्दास



imagination, she wrote, always sought new ways to ensure social progress. She finds three main points in this endeavour: "development of language and literature, ability to express feelings and experiences fully in one's own language and utilization of the good points of English education to develop our own society....This new and real education would endow independence of judgement and become a vehicle of social change and progress. Vidyasagar gave his life to the attainment of such an education. He was the brightest star in the firmament of Renaissance Bengal!"

Lakhi Devi Sundas, who taught at the Loreto College, Darjeeling and Darjeeling Government College, was a well-known poet and essayist. In a brief tribute she takes an overview of Vidyasagar's achievement and notes that "the care with which he sowed the seeds of education and literature, nurtured them, and worked for women's emancipation should inspire the later generations to preserve them". "His achievements meant his name was not confined only to Bengal, but was revered by the whole of India."

### People of Karmatanr observing 129th Tirodhan Diwas of Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar on 29th July 2019



It may be recalled that Nandan Kanan, Karmatanr is the historic place where Vidyasagar dedicated 17-18 years of his last life to the services of the most oppressed people from tribal and other communities and also edited 6th edition his book *Varnaparichaya* for the beginners of Bengali language.

# A Lonely Prometheus

Amalesh Tripathi

### IDIOMS OF IMPROVEMENT: VIDYASAGAR AND CULTURAL ENCOUNTER IN BENGAL

By Brian A. Hatcher

(Oxford University Press; Rs. 475).

The theme of this book is the dynamics of cultural encounter between the West and the East and its convergence on and through vernacular in Bengal in the middle decades of the 19th century. The title comes from Ranajit Guha's thesis that an urge for improvement lay behind everything in England of the 1780s, which naturally coloured the vision of colonial rulers. But why from Guha? Contrast between an improving Britain and the decline and fall of its classical predecessor — the Roman Empire — was implicit in Gibbon. On a lower level the "agricultural/industrial revolution" of Britain lent strength to such view, say in Adam Smith, especially in contrast to the *ancien régime* France rushing headlong towards the deluge of the Revolution. The evangelist, the utilitarian, the Anglicist, even the Orientalist, were filled with the idea, though they expressed it in different terms: the merchant through free trade; the manufacturer through export of cheap textiles; the evangelist through proselytization; the Anglicist through the spread of the English language (the last two combined in Charles Grant, chairman of the East India Company); the imperialist through expansion of

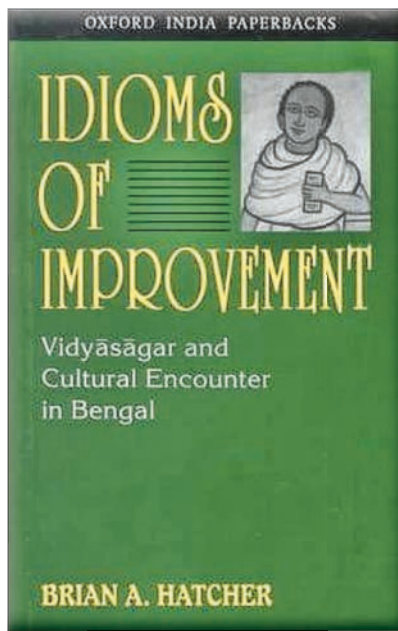
enlightened rule. Suddenly everybody was interested in the "improvement of the body and soul of the benighted Hindoos".

Brian Hatcher has chosen Vidyasagar as an exemplar of this spirit. But, in one way, Vidyasagar's position is exceptional. He is "a veritable *Triveni*" — not merely the confluence of two great cultures but also of a less visible one: the Bengali world. "While

one goal of my work", Hatcher writes, "is to shed light on the world-view of an intriguing and influential individual, a no less central goal is to situate the Indian and European themes in Vidyasagar's world-view within the local, or vernacular, space of Bengal".

I am gratified to see that he accepts my (Vidyasagar: Traditional Moderniser, 1974) emphasis on the important role of indigenous sources and modalities of change. He puts it in a different way, though. Vidyasagar had to reconcile European rationalism and humanism with the Sanskritic discourse of self-restraint and duty, and he did it within the

Bengali idiom of *yatana* (<*yatna*). But this *yatana* must not be equated with Guha's "improvement". The European and Sanskritic idioms participate in the creation of a third, indigenous idiom. "It is this process of convergence that I call vernacularization". In fact, *yatana* becomes the keyword, though it changes meaning like a chameleon changes its colour.



Where does all this semantic display end? To my utter amazement, "Kulinism explains Vidyasagar's conduct"! For evidence, Hatcher relies on the sloka enumerating the nine *kula-lakshanas* of a kulin brahmin, and Vidyasagar's portrait of his grandfather Ramjoy. One must not forget that Vidyasagar went much further back than Adisura in search of the archetype of a true brahmin, and added to his qualities some of an archetypal Protestant. A considerable part of his social reform programme was against forced widowhood and he traced it to child marriage and aberrations of kulin polygamy. Derozians had fired the first salvo at kulinism and Kulina-Kulasarvasva was staged a little after. In mid-century the Kulin was in bad odour. Vidyasagar would be the last person to take his side.

Unnecessary diversions mar the merits of this book: the history of Bengal, the characteristics of a brahmin (especially kulin), the clan system. Did Ramjoy's proclivities (including occasional banditry!) play any a role in shaping Vidyasagar's character? Besides dedication to learning and duty, Hatcher emphasizes proneness to anger and stubbornness as brahminical traits. He cites the example of the mythical Durbasa! This was emphatically not so. Vya- sa or Dadhichi, not Durbasa or Parasuram, was the role model of a brahmin.

Similarly, Hatcher is not content with referring to the Orientalist-Anglicist debate but takes pains to regroup each under different subheadings. Wilson was a cosmopolitan Orientalist, Rammohun Roy an improving Anglicist, Alexander Duff an evangelical Vernacularist, and Macaulay an imperialist Anglicist. Vidyasagar, in this tabulation, falls in the category of "improving Vernacularist". This typical American subtlety has already caused enough amusement in sociological class distinctions from upper-upper, upper-middle, middle-upper down to lower-lower, whatever that is.

Hatcher accepts Visvanathan's thesis that the Government's education policy was a "mask of conquest". The intention was to communicate surreptitiously the truths of the English Christian

civilization while appearing to avoid the charge of religious indoctrination. The missionary forays into Vernacularism, again, were *pre- paratio evangelicum*. Such an interpretation is partially true. I can quote Dundas against Charles Grant and Wellesley against William Carey. The provision of a lakh of rupees for Indian education in the Charter of 1813 did not underline any coherent policy but confusion. It was worst confounded by debates between the Orientalists and the Anglicists (and the Vernacularists) till Macaulay cut the Gordian knot in his Minute of 1835. Hatcher is familiar with the growing literature around the founding of Hindu College and Sanskrit College, but not with Bentinck's or Macaulay's letters nor even with H.T. Sharp's selections. He is not exactly right in affirming that Vidyasagar, although a product of Wilson's Sanskrit College, "stands closest to William Carey". Under his principalship, Sanskrit College came to be a "Vernacularist laboratory", but minus Carey's aim of conversion to Christianity. India sought knowledge, not speech nor faith.

In his Report of 1850, suggesting reforms of Sanskrit College, Vidyasagar shows this. Two things are important here — (1) access to Western culture, history and science through Bengali textbooks (like his *Jivanacharit*, *Bodhadaya* and *Nitibodh*) and (2) establishment of a department of English which would introduce modern philosophy of Europe, exposing the errors of ancient Hindu philosophy (idealism of Vedanta). The Report of 1853 stressed Sanskrit College's role as a normal school for vernacular teachers well-versed in Sanskrit and English. I have shown that Lieutenant-Governor Halliday's Minute was based on Vidyasagar's "Notes on Vernacular Education" and formed the basis of the Government of India's Minute of 1854. The wealth of Sanskrit vocabulary (form) would be combined with the progressive English world-view and rhetoric (especially, a harmonious adjustment of the breath group of words with their sense group) till a Bengali vernacular was fashioned, supple enough to percolate to the masses as well as offer a creative

## Remembering Vidyasagar

outlet to the elite. Where the “filtration theory of Macaulay and Trevelyan had failed, this frontal onslaught would succeed. To crown all, he would (and did) establish vernacular schools for males and females, often without formal permission of the Government. Wood’s grants-in-aid rules would not allow this, causing friction that led Vidyasagar to leave the college, almost a bankrupt. This is certainly not bourgeois behaviour, which calculates utility by cost and never throws self-interest to the wind. Vidyasagar would maintain many of the schools out of his pocket or even by borrowing.

Hatcher makes *yatana* the central focus of Vidyasagar’s pedagogy. It is not English didacticism but “continued operation of Indian discourse patterns.” Hatcher’s digression to educational thought in Britain c. 1800 wants to make a point. It was a policy of social control of the working classes through inculcation of respectability, loyalty, frugality and industry. Benjamin Franklin on the other side of the Atlantic defined virtue, the result of such education, in terms of worldly success. Does the ancient Sanskrit discourse envisage some such idea? Yes, says Hatcher, if we translate *niti* as “morality of ambitious men”. Such translation is possible only for scholars like Barbara Miller (Max Müller or Macdonell would never have done it). Hatcher does not even ask how such a bourgeois view could emerge in years B.C. or early A.D. In one breath he says, “Bodhadaya is heavily imbued with bourgeois values” and links industry to prosperity; In the next he says it would be wrong to equate Vidyasagar’s textbook morality with Guha’s “hard-boiled bourgeois individualism”. What does he exactly mean?

Who knew that there were such nuggets of wisdom in Varnaparichaya? In Hatcher’s view, it vernacularizes such themes as industry. Contrast Gopal with Rakhil. Don’t we find Gopal’s *satishaya*

*parishrama* in Newton and *yatana* and *parishrama* in Duval? Vidyasagar clearly establishes the linkage among education, industry and prosperity. Yet it was not bourgeois ideology but moral norms of Nitisastra transformed in the developing idiom of the Bengali language. Hatcher even traces the influence of Bhartrihari’s Nitisataka in Iswarchandra’s prize-winning Sanskrit composition of 1839 along with Nitisastra, vernacularized in precolonial Shishubodhak.

As for dharma, Hatcher links the Brahmo ideal of *brahmanistha grihastha* to the Mahanirvan Tantra. Should we forget the stand taken in the Upanishads and the Mahabharata, in which the same ideal was preached? In the Indian context the *rishi* (householder) has always been distinguished from *muni* (ascetic). In Vidyasagar we find the convergence of the brahminical style of Ramchandra Vidyavagish’s sermons and Akshoy Kumar Dutta’s confident rationalism. Restraint never implies renunciation à la Sankara but perfection of our capacity as moral agents. This world-affirming ideal of man’s responsibility for fellow men was the most distinct characteristic of Vidyasagar, finding expression in his zeal for *paropakara*. He never completely abandons the specific code of the Dharmasastra tradition in favour of Dutt’s modernist universalism.

In conclusion, I cannot but feel that the word *yatana* has been laboured to death, while many important aspects of Vidyasagar’s life and work have been neglected. In 19th Century Bengal, he was a lonely Prometheus, who suffered much for his compulsive urge for *paropakara*. He could have said with Aeschylus:

*I pitied mortal men; but being myself not thought  
To merit pity, am thus cruelly disciplined.*

(Prometheus Bound)

*The Statesman*, September 27, 1996

## বিদ্যাসাগরের হোমিওপ্যাথিক চিকিৎসার ডায়েরী প্রসঙ্গে

ইন্দ্রাণী ঘোষ

১৮৬৬ সালে মেট্রোপলিটান ইনস্টিটিউটের সার্বিক দায়িত্বভার গ্রহণের সময় থেকেই হোমিওপ্যাথি চিকিৎসার প্রতি ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর আগ্রহী হয়ে ওঠেন। ছাত্রদরদী বিদ্যাসাগর সেই সময় তাঁর পরিচালিত মেট্রোপলিটান বিদ্যায়তনের ছাত্রদের এবং প্রতিবেশী অঞ্চলের বসবাসকারী মানুষজনদের শরীর-স্বাস্থ্য-অসুখ-বিসুখ প্রসঙ্গে যাবতীয় তথ্যাদি হোমিওপ্যাথি চিকিৎসা পদ্ধতির নিয়মানুযায়ী নিয়মিতভাবে ডায়েরিতে লিপিবদ্ধ করবার অভ্যাসটিকে আয়ত্ত করেছিলেন। এরফলে একটি বিশেষ অঞ্চলের স্বাস্থ্য সম্পর্কিত সমস্যা ও তার নিরাময় প্রসঙ্গে একটি সমীক্ষা তৈরির কাজও সম্পন্ন হয়ে যেত। এই সময়কালটিকেই আমরা বিদ্যাসাগরের হোমিওপ্যাথি চর্চার সূচনা পর্ব হিসেবে চিহ্নিত করতে পারি।

সমাজকল্যাণমূলক আন্দোলনের দিশারী বিদ্যাসাগর ছিলেন হোমিওপ্যাথি চিকিৎসাবিজ্ঞানের একজন মুখ্য প্রবর্তক। ঔষধের উৎকৃষ্টতা, মূল্যের অল্পতা এবং সেবনের সুবিধা

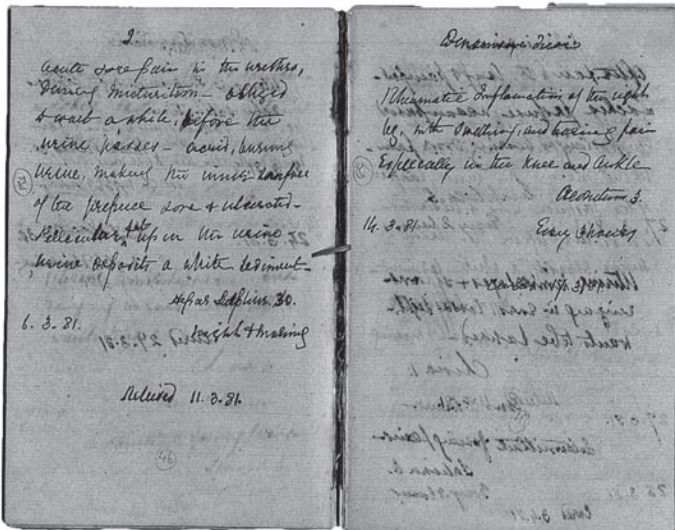
সন্দর্শনে “মুগ্ধতাই বিদ্যাসাগরকে একজন সুচিকিৎসক হবার প্রেরণা জাগিয়েছিল।” কার্মাটাড় থেকে একবার রাজনারায়ণ বসুকে তিনি পত্রে লেখেন—“আমি কল্যা অথবা পরস্ব আপনাকে দেখিতে যাইব স্থির করিয়াছিলাম, কিন্তু এরদপ দুইটি রোগীর চিকিৎসা করিতেছি যে, তাহাদিগকে পরিত্যাগ করিয়া যাওয়া কোনোমতে উচিত নহে। এজন্য ২/৪ দিন দেওঘর যাওয়া রহিত করিতে হইল।”

হোমিওপ্যাথিক চিকিৎসা সম্পর্কিত বিদ্যাসাগরের স্বহস্তে লেখা মাত্র একটি ডায়েরির সন্ধান এখন পর্যন্ত পাওয়া যায়। অত্যন্ত মূল্যবান এই নথিটি, বিদ্যাসাগরের অন্যতম উত্তরসূরী ক্ষিতীশপ্রসাদ চট্টোপাধ্যায়ের পত্নী মঞ্জুশ্রী চট্টোপাধ্যায়ের সৌজন্যে সত্তরের দশকে রবীন্দ্রভারতী প্রদর্শনশালা, জোড়াসাঁকোয় সংগৃহীত হয়।

কালো চামড়ায় মোড়া আদ্যস্ত ইংরেজীতে লেখা এই ডায়েরিটির মোট পৃষ্ঠা সংখ্যা ছিয়ানব্বই। লিখিত পৃষ্ঠা সংখ্যা স্বাক্ষরবিহীন এই দিনলিপিটির রচনাকাল ১৯.৯.১৮৮০ থেকে শুরু হয়। টানা বছর তিনেক তিনি এই ডায়েরিতে যাদের চিকিৎসা করেছিলেন, তাদের ব্যাধি, ঔষধ ও উপশমের ইতিহাসটি লিপিবদ্ধ করেছিলেন। ডায়েরিতে প্রাপ্ত শেষ তারিখ ১৩.৯.১৮৮৩। ডায়েরিটির দৈর্ঘ্য ৭.৫ সেমি এবং প্রস্থ ৫ সেমি। ডায়েরিটিতে রচনার স্থান ও কাল অনুপস্থিত। অনুমান করা হয়, রোগীর



বিদ্যাসাগরের  
হোমিওপ্যাথিক চিকিৎসার  
ডায়েরী



## Remembering Vidyasagar

তালিকায় প্রাপ্ত, হরিমোহন, শরৎকুমারী, মৃগালিনী, মোক্ষদা দেবী, হেমলতা, সারদা, কুমুদিনী, গঙ্গামণি দেবীরা তাঁর পারিবারিক বৃত্তেরই মানুষ ছিলেন। বিভিন্ন রোগের জন্য বিদ্যাসাগরের ব্যবহৃত ঔষুধের তালিকার কিয়দংশ এখানে উপস্থাপন করা হল।

Symptoms of Disease	Medicine prescribed
Malignant furuncle left thigh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bryonia 6, every 3 hours for 12 days</li> <li>• Rhus tox 6, 3 times daily for 8 days</li> <li>• China 3, for 3 days</li> </ul>
Cancer in the uterus of three years standing, continuous fever, no taste in food, burning in uterine region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aceticum acidum 1/3 for 21 days</li> <li>• Arsenicum 30 for four days, feeling of comfort, incomplete</li> </ul>
Enlargement of breast with tenderness, in the formation of milk pain in nipples, milk scanty, apprehension of death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calcarea Carb 12, three times a day</li> <li>• Chamomilla 12, three times a day</li> <li>• Agnus Castus 6, thrice daily</li> </ul>
Aversion to occupation, Headache with aversion to all food, vesicles on tongue, thirstlessness, hard stool, palpitation of heart, stiffness of knees, sweating, weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sepia 12, Night &amp; morning 10 days</li> </ul>
Melancholy, anxiety and impatience, annoyed by least noise and light, offended by least things, feeling of sand in the eyes, expression of desire for sour things, thirst and dryness of the mouth, rumbling in the bowels, respiration short with cough and frothy expectoration, pain in the right and left chest, periodically reporting complaints of burning in the internal and external parts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arsenicum 6, thrice daily</li> </ul>
Says one thing for another when speaking, vertigo, objects appear indistinct, sensation in the right eye film over the eye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connabil Sal 6, night and morning</li> <li>• Sulphur 6</li> </ul>
Large boil on left hip	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arnica 3, two days</li> <li>• Hepar Sulphur 6, one day</li> <li>• Silicea 6, two days</li> </ul>
Child, dry cough, appression of chest, too much mucus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calcarea 12, one globule 3 days</li> <li>• Sulphur 30, 2 days</li> </ul>
Yellowish discharge from the genital organ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aconitum 6, thrice daily 4 days</li> <li>• Sepia 30, thrice daily for 13 days</li> </ul>
Heaviness in the head, aching pain in the forehead, restlessness, violent pressure in the forehead, bad smell in the mouth, unusual thirst, vomiting of blood, violent heart burn, tension of the abdomen, extreme constipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sulphur 6, 3 days</li> </ul>
Apprehension of death, flushes of heat in the face, dryness of mouth, no appetite, cold perspiration of the face, pain in abdomen after eating, not breath, pain in the small of the back, disturbed sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobelia inflata 30, 3 days</li> <li>• Sepia 12/30, 3 days</li> </ul>

Courtsey : Dr. Keka Adhikari and Ms. Baishakhi Mitra

## ABOUT VIDYASAGAR



On the memorable occasion when Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa called on Vidyasagar in his residence at Badur Bagan, the great saint has said

'Uptil now I have seen only canals , marshes or a river at the most. But today I am faced with the Sagar, the ocean.'

Source : Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita  
(The Nectar of Sri Ramakrishna's Words, Part -III, p.191

*Courtesy : Dr Sanghamitra Chaudhury*



Once Swami Vivekananda told to Sister Nivedita that

"There is not a man of my age in North India on whom his (Vidyasagar) shadow has not fallen"

Source : Swami Vivekananda's Bani o Rachana, Vol. 9, p. 276

*Courtesy : Sri Dilip Roy*



"Ishwarchandra was not an ocean of learning only; he was an ocean of compassion, of generosity, as well as of many other virtues. He was a Hindu, and a Brahman too. But to him, Brahman and Sudra, Hindu and Muslim, were all alike. In any good deeds that he performed, he made no distinction between high and low."

– **Mahatma Gandhi**

Source : Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. V, p. 66

*Courtesy : Sharmila Chaudhury*

## Remembering Vidyasagar

### List of books on and by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar in the collection of the Library of the Society

#### ENGLISH

1.	923.654 V 655 a	Adhikari, Santosh Kumar : <b>Vidyasagar and the new national consciousness.</b> Calcutta : Vidyasagar Research Centre, 1990.
2.	923.60954 V 655 t	Tripathi Amalesh : <b>Vidyasagar : The Traditional Modernizer.</b> Calcutta : Punascha, 1998.
3.	923.654 187 ib	Banerjee, Hiranmay : <b>Iswarchandra Vidyasagar.</b> New Delhi : Sahitya Academy, 1968.
4.	923.654 V 655	<b>(The) Golden book of Vidyasagar.</b> Calcutta : All Bengal Vidyasagar Death Centenary Committee, 1993.
5.	923.6095414 V 655 l	Hatcher, Brian A. : <b>Idioms of Improvement : Vidyasagar and Cultural Encounter in Bengal.</b> Calcutta : OUP, 1996.
6.	923.7 V 655 m	Mitra, Subol Chandra : <b>Iswarchandra Vidyasagar : Story of His Life and Work.</b> Calcutta : Bengali Press, 1907. First ed. 1902.
7.	923.6 187 s	Sen, Asok : <b>Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and his Elusive Milestones.</b> Calcutta : Riddhi-India, 1977.
8.	301.42 187 m	Arabinda Poddar. : <b>Iswarchandra Vidyasagar : Marriage of Hindu Widows; tr. with an Introduction</b> Calcutta : K. P. Bagchi & Co., 1976.

#### SANSKRIT

1.	S 891.23 B 212 h.i.	<b>Banabhatta : Harsacaritam</b> : edited and revised by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. Calcutta : Sanskrit Press Depository, 1883.
2.	S 891.22 B 575 u.i.	<b>Bhavabhuti : Uttarcharitam</b> ; ed. with notes and explanations by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. 4 <sup>th</sup> ed. Calcutta Calcutta Library, 1890.
3.	S 891.21 K 14 m.i.	<b>Kalidasa : Meghadutam, with commentary Sanjivani by Mallinath</b> ; ed. by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. Calcutta : [n. pub.], 1868.



## Remembering Vidyasagar

4.	S 891.2 R 627 i	<b>Rijupatha or simple lessons</b> ; comp. by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar Calcutta : Sanskrit Yantra, 1864.
5.	B. I. 21	<b>Sarva Darsana Samgraha (or an epitome of the different systems of Indian philosophy) of Sayana Madhavacarya</b> ; edited by Iswarchandra Vidyasagara. Calcutta : The Asiatic Society, 1853-58.
6.	S 891.2108 S 634 i	<b>Slokamanjari</b> ; compiled by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar. Calcutta : Calcutta Library, 1890.
7.	S 181.4 M 178 s.i.	<b>Madavacarya Sarva-Darsana-Sangraha</b> edited by Iswarchandra Vidyasagar.- Calcutta : The Asiatic Society, 1853-58. (1986 reprint)

## BENGALI

1.	Banga 891.4408 I 87 r.d.	ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর বিদ্যাসাগর রচনাবলী। কলিকাতা : ১৯৬৬।
2.	Banga 891.443 I 87 s.b.	ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর সীতার বনবাস। ৪র্থ সংস্করণ। কলিকাতা : বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য পরিষৎ।
3.	Banga 161	ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর বিধবা-বিবাহ প্রচলিত হওয়া উচিত কিনা, এতদ্বিষয়ক প্রস্তাব। কলিকাতা : সংস্কৃত যন্ত্রে দ্বিতীয়বার মুদ্রিত, ১৯১১-২ সংবৎ।
4.	Banga 891.443 I 87 sb	ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর শকুন্তলা। কলি : বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য পরিষৎ, ১৩৮৬ পুনর্মুদ্রণ।
5.	Banga 891.444 I 87 s	ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর সংস্কৃত ভাষা ও সংস্কৃত সাহিত্য শাস্ত্র বিষয়ক প্রস্তাব। কলিকাতা : বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য পরিষৎ, ১৩৮৪।
6.	Banga 891.24 I 87 s	ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর সংস্কৃত রচনা। স্থানবিহীন, প্রকাশকবিহীন, ১২৯৬।
7.	Banga 954.14 B 456 b	বিনয় ঘোষ বিদ্যাসাগর ও বাঙালী সমাজ। কলিকাতা : ওরিয়েন্ট লংম্যান : ১৯৭৩।

## Remembering Vidyasagar

8.	Banga 923.654 I 87 bin	বিনয় ঘোষ বিদ্যাসাগর ও বাঙালী সমাজ। কলিকাতা : বেঙ্গল পাবলিশার্স, ১৯৫৭-১৯৫৯।
9.	Banga 891.4404 V 669 sr	বিদ্যাসাগর কলেজ শতবর্ষ-স্মরণিকা। বিদ্যাসাগর কলেজ। কলি : বিদ্যাসাগর কলেজ শতবর্ষ স্মারকগ্রন্থ সমিতি, ১৯৭২-১৯৭৫।
10.	Banga 891.444 S 237 b	সন্তোষকুমার অধিকারী বিদ্যাসাগরের শেষ ইচ্ছা। কলিকাতা : বিদ্যাসাগর রিসার্চ সেন্টার, ১৩৯০।
11.	Banga 370.73 S 237 b	সন্তোষকুমার অধিকারী বিদ্যাসাগরের শেষ স্বপ্ন। কলিকাতা : বিদ্যাসাগর গবেষণা কেন্দ্র, ১৩৯৯।
12.	Banga 891.209 B 21 b	স্বপ্ন মজুমদার বাংলায় সংস্কৃত সাহিত্য চর্চা : ঊনবিংশ শতাব্দী। কলি : ১৩৯০।
13.	Banga 891.4408 I 87 r.d.	গোপাল হালদার প্রসঙ্গ বিদ্যাসাগর। কলি : অরুণা, ১৩৯৮।
14.	Banga 891.444 S 237 a	সন্তোষকুমার অধিকারী আধুনিক মানসিকতা ও বিদ্যাসাগর। কলি : এম সি সরকার, ১৩৯০।
15.	Banga 923.65414 I 87 a	অমিয় কুমার সামন্ত প্রসঙ্গ বিদ্যাসাগর। কলি : ওরিয়েন্ট বুক কোম্পানি, ১৯৯৪।
16.	Banga 923.654 I 87 k	ইন্দ্র মিত্র করণাসাগর বিদ্যাসাগর। কলি : আনন্দ পাবলিশার্স। ১৯৬৯।
17.	Banga 928.9144 S 187 b	শম্ভুচন্দ্র বিদ্যারত্ন বিদ্যাসাগর জীবন চরিত ও ভ্রমনিবাস; কুমুদ কুমার ভট্টাচার্য সম্পাদিত। কলিকাতা : চিরায়ত প্রকাশন, ২০০২।
18.	Banga 923.65414 I 87 p	বিদ্যাসাগর : একুশ শতকের চোখে / সম্পাদনা : পল্লব সেনগুপ্ত ও অমিতা চক্রবর্তী। কলিকাতা : দি এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটি, ২০০৩।

## Illumination on the Independence Day, 2019



Park Street Campus

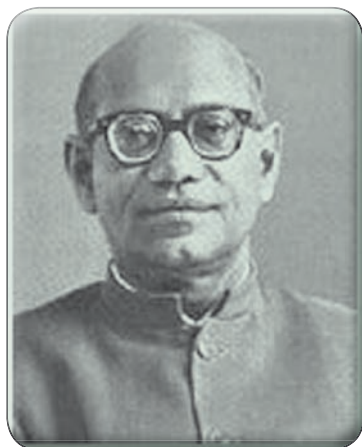


Salt Lake Campus (Rajendralala Mitra Bhavan)

## The Asiatic Society observing 73rd Independence Day



Council Members and the Staff Members of the Asiatic Society observing 73rd Independence Day on the premises of Sir William Jones Bhavan



## Bires Chandra Guha, the doyen of Indian biochemists

Srabani Sen\*

Bires Chandra Guha, the father of modern Biochemistry in India was born on 7 June, 1904 at

Mymensingh (presently in Bangladesh). He grew up in the environment of national movement, and belonged to a family that symbolized the aims, ideals and resurgent spirit of the contemporary life of Bengal, if not India. From his childhood days Guha was influenced by his maternal uncle Ashwini Kumar Dutta, a staunch nationalist, a patriot of lofty ideals and character. At the age of eleven Guha was inducted in the revolutionary 'Jugantar Party', the nightmare of the British Government. The early years of the twentieth century, in the wake of renaissance in Bengal, contributed to the early formative years of Guha's life. In fact, these influences had an in-built effect in giving direction and depth to his scientific life in later years. To understand his contributions to Biochemistry in India we have to consider not only his biochemical activities but his humanitarian, social and political activities too.

### Education and Research

Guha had a uniformly brilliant academic career as a student of science. While he was studying in the M Sc. Class in Organic Chemistry, he was naturally drawn to Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray, the father of chemistry in India and the most humanistic scientist produced in the country. Guha

was guided and trained by Acharya Ray and other galaxy of outstanding scholars who adorned the various departments of the Calcutta University Science College at that time. After one year Guha received a Tata Endowment Fellowship for higher studies and research and left for England in 1926. He showed boldness and self-confidence in choosing Biochemistry for his future scientific career when he joined Sir Jack Drummond's Laboratory at the Imperial College, London for his Doctorate degree. At that time Biochemistry was not much known in India and prospect of employment on return to India was highly restrictive and remote. Throughout his life he had taken bold steps to fulfil his mission. At Drummond's Laboratory Guha was trained in Nutrition Biochemistry and in 1929 his paper with Drummond on "Observation on the concentration of vitamin B" appeared in the *Biochemical Journal*. Later in 1931, another paper "Vitamin B and Pellagra, the etiology of Pellagra" was published in the *British Medical Journal*. In 1930, Guha moved to the Cambridge University to work on vitamins under the Nobel Laureate, Sir F. Gowland Hopkins. Hopkins laboratory was considered to be one of the leading centres for advance study and research in Biochemistry at that time. In 1932, when Guha returned to India securing PhD. and DSc. Degrees from the University of London, he carried with him a little Cambridge and its atmosphere of contagious enthusiasm, broad-mindedness and imagination and above all a deep devotion to science and scientific pursuits. However, he got a rude shock when he failed to get the newly created post of Professor of Biochemistry at the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public

\* Life Member, The Asiatic Society

Health established in 1932 at Calcutta because of his political affiliations and also due to the fact that he was not a medical Biochemist. Acharya P. C. Ray then made arrangements for Guha to carry out some preliminary biochemical researches at the Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works (BCPW). With limited scope for biochemical research at BCPW Guha initiated many lines of work on the preparation of vitamin concentrates and biologically active compounds from glandular products and on some aspects of carbohydrate metabolism particularly ascorbic acid (vitamin C) and published 38 articles in reputed journals. Guha spent most of his life working on nutrition and vitamins of which ascorbic acid played the most important role. In 1936, he took charge of the Department of Applied Chemistry as the Ghosh Professor of the Calcutta University. He understood the necessity of basic research for national uplift but also advocated for applied research simultaneously for the benefit of the people.

### Work on Nutrition Problem of India

Nutrition research was at its infancy in India when Guha returned from England. At the Applied Chemistry Department though he was extremely handicapped due to lack of requisite fund and a good laboratory he worked on protein, B vitamins, vitamin C and mineral values of different food products of India. He noticed malnutrition in India and pointed out that though typical deficiency diseases were relatively rare, the vast majority of the Indian population were living on a sub-nutritional level, which inevitably undermine their power of resistance. He could understand the interrelationship between nutrition, agriculture and medicine and opined that nutrition research institutes should work in close cooperation with organisations representing agriculture and medicine. He pleaded for a national food policy for India and according to his suggestion "Indian Nutrition Committee" was set up in 1935 with the object of coordinating nutritional work that were being carried out at different centres in India. He was

the secretary and convener of the Committee with 35 foremost nutrition workers in India. The sufferings of millions of people due to starvation and elementary need for properly balanced nutritious food during the Bengal Famine in 1943 drew Guha from the seclusion of his laboratory and literally pushed him to the fore for public cause.

### Period of Administrative Assignments

Guha was a man with a mission. He understood that scientific knowledge could only solve the food problem in India. In 1944 he took up the assignment of Chief Technical Advisor to the Food Department of Government of India. For nearly next ten years he filled in a number of positions not much related to scientific research. He conceived of plans for Food Technology Research Institute and with the active cooperation of Dr. V. Subrahmanyam, the Planning Officer in the CSIR, his ideas could gather some concrete shape. An Institute was established at Mysore and Guha served in its Executive Council for many sessions. In 1948 he joined the newly constituted Damodar Valley Corporation (DVC) and displayed considerable skill to tackle different technical and non-technical matters of DVC. This changed the hinterlands of Damodar River in proper utilization of the reserved water for agriculture and generation of electricity. He was actively associated with the administration of Indian Science Congress Association, Associations of Scientific Workers of India, Indian Council of Medical Research, CSIR, and National Institute of Sciences in India and in the executive council of several national laboratories. In the midst of his administrative preoccupations, Guha strongly advocated introduction of Biochemistry in the university curriculum. But he could not compromise with the apathy of the policy makers to changes and the administrative delays involved in the routine work of the Government. In 1953 he finally returned to the University Professorship with considerable relief and devoted his entire time, energy and his rare leadership and dynamism to research.

## Profile

### Researches on Ascorbic Acid and Related Areas

One of the most important contributions to Biochemistry by Bires Chandra Guha was that he found out the reason why some animals are dependent on external supply of vitamin C (ascorbic acid) for living. At the Applied Chemistry Department he built an active school of Biochemistry and started working on synthesis of ascorbic acid in rat, a species known to be independent of external supply of this vitamin and observed that all the vital organs in rat produce ascorbic acid from mannose, a sugar-like substance. He and co-workers then started working on different animals and confirmed that in evolutionary ascent the mechanism of ascorbic acid synthesis passes from kidney to liver and then disappears also from liver. This makes humans and primates totally dependent on external supply of ascorbic acid for survival as none of their organs can synthesise ascorbic acid. In 1961, Guha and co-workers reported that man, monkey, guinea-pig, Indian fruit bat and red-vented Bulbul cannot synthesise ascorbic acid due to the absence of L-gulonolactose oxidase system required for synthesis of ascorbic acid. Guha's results laid the basis at the molecular level for the biochemical mechanism involved in this dependence

or independence from the growth factor in different species in the evolutionary scale. This work has shown the importance of Biochemistry as the connecting link between the extremes of molecular genetics and species evolution in life sciences. In 1959 Guha was assigned the Chairmanship of the Biochemistry Review Committee to assess the status of Biochemistry in the country and suggest means and methods of improvement of biochemical education. However, Guha approved the first draft of the report, but most unfortunately he suddenly died in March 1962 before it could be finalized.

### Conclusion

Bires Chandra Guha's indomitable spirit, aggressive mentality and burning desire for obtaining freedom for his motherland could have landed him behind the prison bars without the wise counsel and devoted guidance of his wife, Phulrenu Guha, a doctorate in Social Science from Sorbonne University, Paris. Guha is remembered by all scientific community of the country with great respect. The depth of respect is realised by the name of a unique conference in India, the Guha Research Conference. He was a man with a mission somewhat a rare quality in this country.



### 12th Monthly Special Lecture

### **Remembering Mahatma Gandhi**

will be held on 20th September 2019 at 4.00 p.m., Humayun Kabir Hall

*Speaker* : Professor Chinmoy Guha, Dept. of English, Calcutta University

*Topic* : **Mahatma Gandhi and Romain Rolland : A Quest for Light in Troubled Times**

*All are cordially invited*

## Acedemic Events



Smt. Amita Sen, Hony. General Secretary, All Bengal Women's Union, Kolkata, delivering a lecture on 'Women and Law' on the occasion of the celebration of the International Women's Day 2019, on 8th August, 2019 in the Humayun Kabir Hall of the Asiatic Society. Dr. Bandana Mukherjee, Presiding Officer, Internal Complaint Committee on the dais.



Professor Anjali Ray, Fomer Professor, Department of Applied Psychology, University of Calcutta, delivering a lecture on Professor Maya Deb Memorial Lecture for the year 2018 on 'Selected Psychosocial Issues Related to New Educational Policy', on 13th August, 2019 in the Humayun Kabir Hall of the Asiatic Society.



Dr. Atiur Rahaman, a famous Economist of Bangladesh and former Governor, Bangladesh Central Bank, delivering a lecture on 'Rabindranath Tagore and Rural Development : Experiences from Patisar' on 16 August, 2019 in the Humayun Kabir Hall of the Asiatic Society.



Professor Suranjan Das, Vice-Chancellor, Jadavpur University, delivering a special lecture on Challenges of Education in India : Relevance of Gandhian Thought on 9 August, 2019 in the Humayun Kabir Hall of the Asiatic Society.

## Second Rajendralala Mitra Memorial Lecture, 2019



Mr Dwaipayana Mitra and Mr. Ranjanlal Mitra, the Great Great Grandsons of Rajendralala Mitra paying homage to Rajendralala Mitra.



(L) Professor K Paddayya, Emeritus Professor and former Director, Deccan College, Pune delivering 2nd Rajendralala Mitra Memorial Lecture on **Learning from the Indological Researches of Early Native Scholars** on 26th July 2019 at Rajendralala Mitra Bhavan.

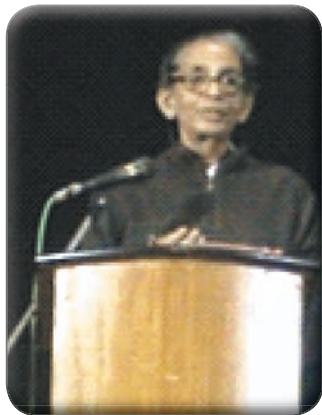
(R) Professor Goutam Sengupta, Former Director General of the Archaeological Survey of India introducing Professor K Paddayya.



## Lepcha Language, Literature and Culture : A Communication

Association of the Lepcha speech community with The Asiatic Society, which started in the middle of the nineteenth century, continues till date with the research, publication of a book and articles in the journal & bulletin of the Society. After the book fair event of 2019 where the council members of The Asiatic Society participated, the members of The Asiatic Society were invited for their active participation in 'Thikoong General G.B. Mainwaring's 194th Birth Anniversary Celebration and The National Seminar on Lepcha Language, Literature, Culture and History' held on 18th and 19th July, 2019. This was organised by West Bengal Mayel Lyang Lepcha Development Board (WBMLLDB) held at Don Bosco School, Mirik, Darjeeling. With an ode to Thikoong General G. B. Mainwaring, and a welcome speech by Ren Lyangsang Tamsang, Chairman, WBMLLDB, six books and an audio-visual CD were released by the board on the occasion.

Sri Shyam Sundar Bhattacharya (Philological Secretary, The Asiatic Society) and Dr. Satarupa Dattamajumdar, a Linguist (Member, Publication Committee, The Asiatic Society) were invited along with other dignitaries like Ren P.T. Simikmoo (Vice Chairman, WBMLLDB), Ren Nubu Tshering Lepcha, Ren Norden Lepcha, Dr. Dulal Chandra Roy, Renyoo Reena Targain (Member Secretary, WBMLLDB),



Sri Shyam Sundar Bhattacharya delivering his speech



Dr. Satarupa Dattamajumdar delivering her lecture

Professor Prakash Chandra Pattanaik, Ren Denis Lepcha, Ren Birla Lepcha, Professor Barun Mukhopadhyay, Ren Felix D'Souza, Dr. Haimanti Chattopadhyay (life member, The Asiatic Society), Renyoo Pushpa Choden Thomas Lepcha and Professor N.T. Tamsang, who shared their thought for the development of the Lepcha language, literature and culture tracing the history of the speech community. Professor Krishna Bhattacharya and Dr. Tapan Kumar Das were also present among the distinguished audience in the convention.

Sri Shyam Sundar Bhattacharya shared his experience of different aspects of Language Revitalisation in the Indian context with special reference to Lepcha. Dr. Satarupa Dattamajumdar threw light on the Lepcha indigenous knowledge by interpreting and analysing some portion of one such Lepcha text (Nyo-lik Nyosung) with reference to its relation to Indic philosophical tradition.

Discussion were carried out on the significance of Lepcha place names, personal names, Lepcha language in the present socio-political context, the Lepcha way of life over decades, analysis of Lepcha novel and Lepcha craft, etc. along with reading of Namtho Namthar using typical Lepcha rhythmic tone, recitation of Lepcha poems, rendition of Lepcha songs, enactment of Lepcha drama, etc. in the two days' event.

The meeting came to a halt with exchange of hopes and ideas among the members of WBMLLDB and the members of The Asiatic Society, regarding the developmental programme on Lepcha language (documentation, archiving, analysis and interpretation of Lepcha texts, Namtho Namthar).



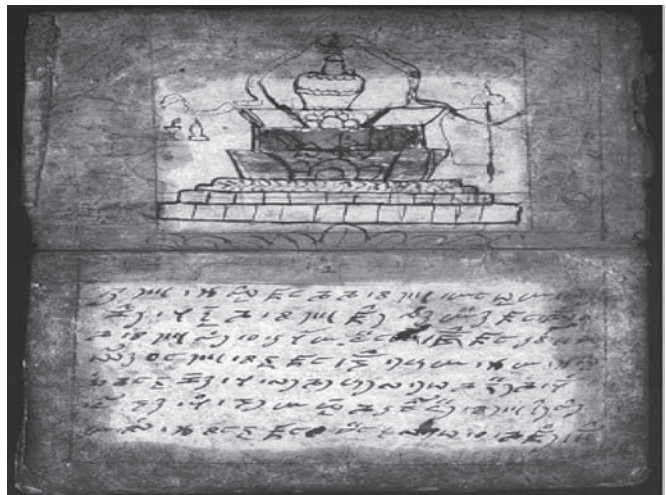
Release of the Book Publications in the Lepcha Language on the event

**A Piece of Commendable Information**

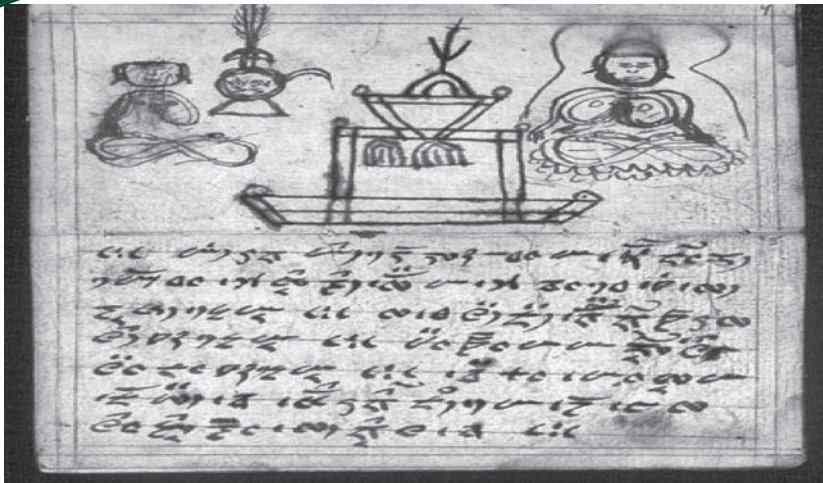
The Asiatic Society informs that the endeavour on the part of the Society to fetch the 183 Lepcha Manuscripts (known as 'Namtho Namthar') from Van Manen collection of the library of the Kern Institute of Leiden University, which started in the early part of 2018, has fulfilled its mission in July, 2019. After much negotiation from the Society, the Kern Institute of Leiden University has provided The Asiatic Society with access to the Digital Collection of the Lepcha manuscripts, widely known as Namtho Namthar.

The initiative of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata with active support from Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti (General Secretary) and Professor Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty (Vice-President) to fetch the Lepcha manuscripts commenced with the vision of Sri Shyam Sundar Bhattacharya (Philological Secretary) regarding the

prospects, possibilities and challenges involved in preservation, archiving and documentation of these Lepcha literature. The Asiatic Society has already decided to undertake a project on the documentation,



Sample Pages of Lepcha Text 'Namtho Namthar' from Digital Collection of Kern Institute, Leiden University



Sample Pages of Lepcha Text 'Namtho Namthar' from Digital Collection of Kern Institute, Leiden University

Van Manen, the General Secretary of The (later Royal) Asiatic Society of Bengal (from 1923 to 1939) collected the 183 Lepcha manuscripts during his stay in India from 1908 to 1943. It is mentionable that on the occasion of Van Manen's appointment as a member of the Library Committee of the Society these Lepcha manuscripts were exhibited at the Asiatic Society of Bengal on November 5th, 1918.

analysis and interpretation of these invaluable Lepcha indigenous texts (Namtho Namthar).

In this connection it is essential to reveal the historicity involved in the collection of the indigenous literature of Lepcha with the then (early part of 19th century) Asiatic Society of Bengal. Johan

Later these 183 Lepcha manuscripts were moved to Rijks-museum voor Volkenkunde 'National Museum of Ethnology' in Leiden after the death of Johan Van Manen. These Lepcha manuscripts of Van Manen collection are kept in the library of the Kern Institute of Leiden University at present.



## Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji Memorial Lecture on July 29, 2019

Dr. H. S. Ananthanarayana, former Professor of Osmania University, delivering Professor Suniti Kumar Chatterji Memorial Lecture on July 29, 2019 at the Vidyasagar Hall of the Asiatic Society

## Caste, Creed and Politics of the Matua Religious Sect in West Bengal

Biswajit Biswas\*

Since the Sen dynasty, caste discrimination used to humiliate the down-trodden people is making great impact in the society of Bengal. In the colonial period the upper caste Brahmins used to treat Matua as a separate religious concept. After the partition, the Matua voice grew stronger with one crore people centred over India with their demands. But their power of influence was mainly centred in West Bengal.

'Matuaism', the term which stands on the beliefs of the path followed by the 'Matuas' is based on the belief in existence of some supernatural power supposed to be omnipresent, omnipotent, judicious, omniscient and well conscious. Present research explores a huge number of 'Matua' followers reside in rural and semi-urban area in different districts of West Bengal like both 24 Pgs., Burdwan, Bankura, South Dinajpur and Nadia.

Without historical background it is too difficult to discuss how the concept emerged and played the social movement against Brahminical social system in particular time and space. *Sree Sree Harichand Thakur* considered



the father of Matua religious concept. He was one of the most popular (*Hindu Sahajiya Dharma*) religious reformers among the lower caste groups in undivided Bengal. In the middle of 16th century the political, economic, social and religious situation of undivided Bengal was almost under humiliation

and degradation. In that situation Sri Chaitanya, the religious hero of Vaishnava, came into existence with an assemblage of humanity and renaissance. Vast influence of Gaudiya Vaishnava culture and practices had been found with emergence and manifestation by 'Matua' religious sect with a new form. Prophet heralded a new era by contributing mainly to the religious, spiritual, renaissance that swept over the entire nineteenth century among the lower Hindu caste groups and also low Muslim caste in undivided East Bengal. His father was the follower of *Vaishnava* cult who used to



observe the rituals and the norm connected with it. *Harichand* was quick to notice the defects that appeared in the behaviours of *Vaishnavas*, who used to come to his house. He did not hesitate to protest against those behaviours. With age he became knowledgeable and was in a position to decide his own path of developing Matua community defying

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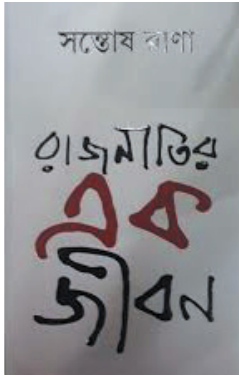
the instructions of traditional social leaders. Because of his different opinion (*Matowara – the term 'Matua' was coming from it*) and he also signified the state of mind when at his followers were called 'Matua'. It is also in vogue to call them 'Matua' because of the time of devotion to *Harinam* (exercising 'kirtan' with 'danka' and 'kasi') they become besotted to *Hari*. His son *Guruchand Thakur* was perfectly able to show how his father's religious concept could be adroitly applied to the daily life of the people in a much broader way.

In the present scenario of West Bengal, the Matuas, belonging mostly to lower caste Namasudras who crossed over Bangladesh to India as refugees in different successive phases after partition and made a grandiose entry under their organisation of All India Matua Mahasangha but also from other communities in contact with the community beliefs and practices. In the electoral ground of West Bengal, they played a vital role in influencing electoral outcomes in local, state and national level elections. Organised Dalit political assertion by the Matuas and caste came to be used as an instrument of electoral mobilisation at the macro level of politics as well. In the light of these developments it has been argued that a new politics of caste has set its foot in the political scene of West Bengal. This is evident from the greater importance



given on the community identity of the candidates rather than their party identity in certain areas during the current election campaigns.

Matua as a religious sect, is gradually losing its importance as a unifying religious factor. More important is, their search for increase their capacity to bargain with those who are at the centre of power structure for share of developmental benefits.



রাজনীতির এক জীবন,  
সন্তোষ রাণা, কলকাতা,  
আনন্দ পাবলিশার্স, চারশো  
টাকা

রাজনীতির জীবন,  
জীবনের রাজনীতি

শিক্ষার সঙ্গে চেতনার যোগ নিয়ে লেনিনের নামাঙ্কিত উদ্ধৃতি সম্বলিত দেওয়াল লিখন পড়তে পড়তে আমরা বড় হয়েছি, কিন্তু কতজন সেটা মেনেছেন তা জানা নেই। বিশেষতঃ এ-রাজ্যের এখনো ব্যাপক নিরক্ষরতা দেখে মনে হবার উপায় নেই যে, শিক্ষিত বাঙালি সমাজ কথাটাকে স্বাক্ষরিত করেছে। এর মধ্যে এক উজ্জ্বল ব্যতিক্রম সন্তোষ রাণা, যাঁর স্মৃতিকথা “রাজনীতির এক জীবন” বইটির ছত্রে ছত্রে শিক্ষার নৈতিক-সামাজিক দাবির উচ্চারণ। শিক্ষাবিদরা শিক্ষা বলতে কখনোই শুধুমাত্র প্রথাগত শিক্ষার কথা বলেননি। আমাদের জীবনের চলার পথে প্রতিনিয়ত ঘটে চলা নানান সামান্য ও অসামান্য ঘটনা, নানান মানুষের নানান উজ্জ্বল মধ্যে খুঁজে পাওয়া যেতে পারে সেই শিক্ষাকে। তাই মাত্র দশ বছর বয়সে বন্যা কবলিত গ্রামের তথাকথিত এক অশিক্ষিত চাষীর কথার মধ্যেই তিনি খুঁজে পেয়েছিলেন সেই শিক্ষা। সুবর্ণরেখার বন্যায় সেবার ডুবে গেছে গ্রামের অধিকাংশ জমি। চাষীরা এসে কেঁদে পড়েছে তুলনায় বর্ধিষুঃ এক বাড়ি মালিকের দাওয়ায়। তখনই প্রবীণ শশী রাণা গ্রামবাসীদের বলেছিলেন যে, তারা এখন কাঁদছে বটে কিন্তু সুবর্ণরেখা তাদের দিয়ে গেছে সোনা।

সত্যিই তাই হলো। সুবর্ণরেখার বন্যায় গ্রামের মাঠগুলোয় যে পলি ফেলেছিল, তাতেই উর্বর হয়ে ওঠে মাঠের পর মাঠ। আক্ষরিক অর্থেই সোনালি ফসলে উপচে পড়ে জমি। তারপর বাঁধ হয়, উন্নয়ন হয়। সুবর্ণরেখার বন্যা আর ডোবায় না মাঠগুলোকে। জমিগুলোতে পড়েনা

পলি। রাসায়নিক সার, কীটনাশকে বাঁধরা হতে থাকে মাটি। তাই লেখক যখন মন্তব্য করেন যে কোনোভাবে যদি সুবর্ণরেখার বাঁধ আবার ভেঙে যায় আর গোটা গ্রাম ফের ডুবে যায় বন্যায় তাহলে হয়ত জমি ফের ফলস্তু হয়ে উঠবে, তখন লেখকের কলমে যেন উচ্চারিত হয় কবিগুরুর সেই গান, “বাঁধ ভেঙে দাও বাঁধ ভেঙে দাও বাঁধ ভেঙে দাও...”। যেভাবে রক্তকরবীর নন্দিনী ভাঙতে চায় যক্ষপুরীর শেকল, যেভাবে তাসের দেশের অচলায়তন ভাঙার কথা বলেন কবি, সেই ভাঙনের আস্থান শুনতে পাই সন্তোষ রাণার এই আকাজক্ষায়। এ বন্যা যে শুধুই সুবর্ণরেখার বন্যা নয়, এ বন্যা আদতে বিপ্লব। তাই সন্তোষ রাণার মতো বিপ্লবীরা যুগে যুগে বিপ্লবের আবাহন করার কথাই যে বলবেন, সেটাই প্রত্যাশিত। আর সেই বিপ্লব নিয়ে আসে বোধের পলি। সেই পলি থেকেই যুগে যুগে শিক্ষা পায় মানুষ। যে শিক্ষা আনে চেতনা আর চেতনা আনে বিপ্লব।

সমাজ এবং রাজনীতি পরস্পরের পরিপূরক। একটি অন্যটির অবিচ্ছেদ্য অঙ্গ। তাই রাজনীতিকে বুঝতে হলে সমাজকে জানা এবং বোঝাটা আবশ্যিক। “রাজনীতির এক জীবন” বইটিতে লেখক সমাজ এবং রাজনীতির পারস্পরিকতাকেই তুলে ধরতে চেয়েছেন। এ বইটিতে তিনি অনেকগুলি বিষয় নিয়ে আলাদা আলাদা ভাগে লিখেছেন। ভাগগুলি হলো — জন্মভূমি:সুবর্ণরেখার কোলে ধরমপুর, যেমন ছিলো ধরমপুর, আমার পরিবার, ছাত্রজীবন, রাজনীতির হাতেখড়ি, নকশালবাড়ির ডাক, পথ বদল-ভাঙন-জেলখানা, জেলজীবন, নতুন করে সংগঠন এবং সংগ্রামের পঞ্চদশ বছর। প্রতিটা মানুষেরই উচিত নিজের শিকড় সম্বন্ধে জানা এবং শ্রদ্ধাশীল হওয়া। তাতেই আত্মসম্মান এবং আত্মসমালোচনা করে নিজেকে তীক্ষ্ণ করে তোলার সুযোগ পাওয়া যায়।

তাঁর বইটিতেও সন্তোষ রাণা শুরুতেই ফিরে গিয়েছেন তাঁর জন্মভূমিতে। সুবর্ণরেখার তীর ধরে ধরমপুরের গ্রামীণ রাস্তা ধরে হাঁটতে হাঁটতে চিনিয়েছেন সেখানকার মানুষজন, সমাজব্যবস্থা, অর্থনীতি, সংস্কৃতি। দেখিয়েছেন সেখানকার শ্রেণি বিশ্লেষণ ও জাতি বিশ্লেষণ। “পশ্চিমবঙ্গে যাঁরা উচ্চবর্ণ

সেই ব্রাহ্মণ বা করণদের বাস ধরমপুরে নেই। এ গ্রামে বসবাসকারীদের মধ্যে একটা বড় অংশ জাতিতে তেলি, তারপর খন্ডায়েত, কয়েক ঘর নাপিত, কয়েকঘর তাঁতি, কয়েক ঘর স্বর্ণকার বা কামিলা, এক ঘর ধোঁপা ও প্রায় পঁচিশ ঘর দন্ডছত্র মাঝি ছিলেন।”

বিভিন্ন সম্প্রদায়ের মানুষ ও জাতিভেদ প্রথার মধ্যের দ্বন্দ্বকে উপলব্ধি করতে পেরেছিলেন বলেই সন্তোষ রাণা বামপন্থীদের নিরন্তর শ্রেণি সংগ্রামের পাশাপাশি জাতিগত নিপীড়নের বিরুদ্ধে লড়াই যে কতটা জরুরি তা তুলে ধরেছেন এই বইয়ে। সময়ের থেকে অনেকটা এগিয়ে থাকা মানুষটি তাই আক্ষেপ করে লেখেন, “ভারতীয় মার্ক্সবাদীরা, বিশেষত বাংলার মার্ক্সবাদীরা ভারতীয় সমাজে জাতি ব্যবস্থার গুরুত্ব উপলব্ধি করেননি।”

সন্তোষ রাণা নকশালবাড়ি আন্দোলনের এক সংগ্রামী সেনাপতি। তাই তাঁর “রাজনীতির এক জীবন” বইটিতে যে নকশালবাড়ি আন্দোলনের কথা থাকবেই তা প্রত্যাশিত। এই নকশালবাড়ি আন্দোলনের জন্য মানুষের মাঝে কাজ করার সময়েই রাজনীতিতে জাতিগত এ উপাদানের বিষয়টি নজরে আসে লেখকের। তিনি লিখেছেন, “বিভিন্ন জনগোষ্ঠীর মধ্যে সংগ্রামী মেজাজ একরকম নয়। যে

মালরা মধ্যজাতিগুলোর থেকে কিছুটা দূরত্ব বজায় রাখে, তাদের মধ্যে সংগ্রামী মেজাজ বেশি। আবার যে বাগদিরা মধ্যজাতিগুলোর সঙ্গে মিলেমিশে থাকে এবং তাদের উপর অনেক বেশি নির্ভরশীল তারা কিছুটা দ্বিধাগ্রস্ত। অথচ শ্রেণিগতভাবে বাগদিরা প্রায় পুরোপুরি সর্বহারা, তাদের নিজস্ব জমি তো দূরের কথা, বাস্তু পর্যন্ত নেই। তুলনামূলকভাবে, মালদের অবস্থা ভাল। তাদের মধ্যে অনেকের অল্প-স্বল্প জমি এবং নিজস্ব বাস্তু আছে। সেদিক থেকে বিচার করলে বাগদিদের মধ্যে জঙ্গি মনোভাব বেশি হওয়ার কথা ছিল। আসলে, ভারতের বাস্তব অবস্থা বিচার না করে কেউ যদি যান্ত্রিকভাবে মার্ক্সবাদী তত্ত্বকে প্রয়োগ করতে চায়, তা হলে সে ভুল সিদ্ধান্তেই পৌঁছেবে।”

ঠিক এই জায়গা থেকেই লেখকের লেখনীতে বারবার উঠে এসেছে শ্রেণি সংগ্রামের সঙ্গে জাতিব্যবস্থার বিরুদ্ধে সংগ্রামকে যুক্ত করার কথা। এভাবেই সমাজ অন্বেষক ও বিপ্লবী সন্তোষ রাণার “রাজনীতির এক জীবন” বইটি তাঁর আত্মজীবনীকে ছাপিয়ে রাজনৈতিক দলিল হয়ে ওঠে। রাজনীতির জীবন হয়ে ওঠে প্রকৃতপক্ষেই জীবনের রাজনীতি।

পুবালি রাণা

## World Photography Day, 19 August, 2019



Exhibition of rare photographs preserved in the Museum of the Asiatic Society

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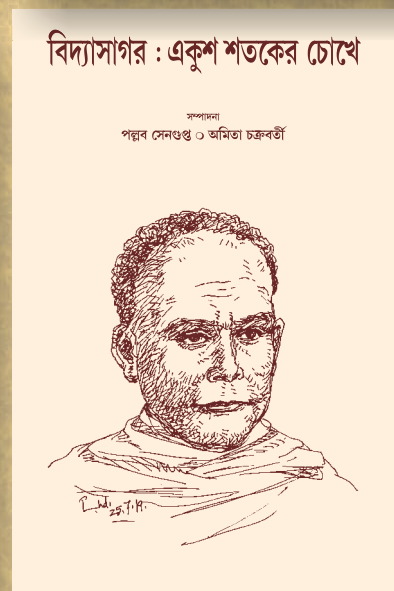
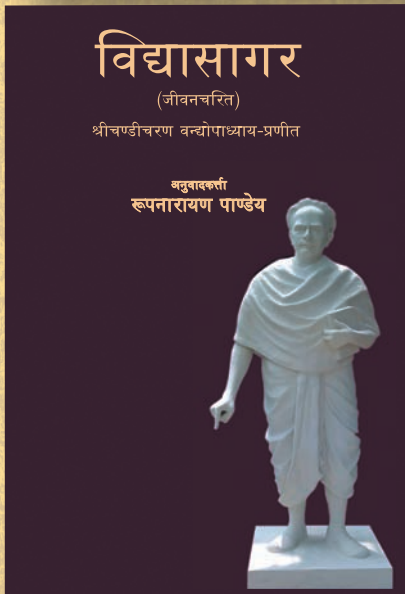
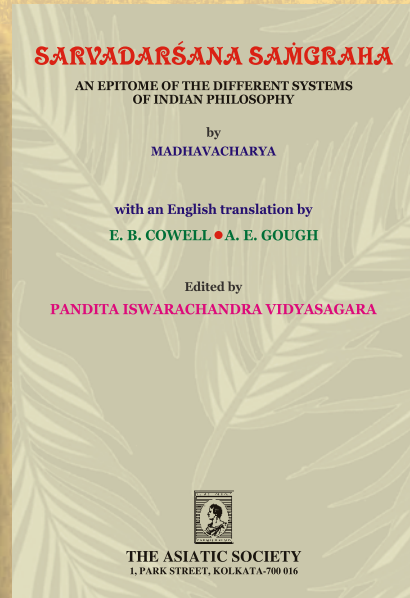
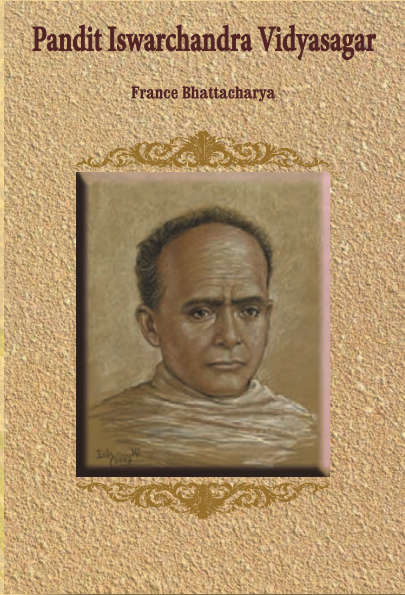


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