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CONTENTS

LECTURES

The Journey to Partition : Some Poorly Remembered Happenings <i>Rajmohan Gandhi</i>	1
Bengal Renaissance and Indian National Movement Subhas Chandra Bose : The Heir Apparent <i>Radharaman Chakrabarti</i>	13
Economic Policy in the Time of Covid <i>Asis Kumar Banerjee</i>	29

ARTICLES

Archaeology and Public Culture : Glimpses from Early Twentieth Century Bengal <i>Madhuparna Roychowdhury</i>	51
Rediscovering Indian History : The Inter-Relationship of Archaeology and the Notion of Cultural Heritage, 1831-1926 <i>Shreya Roy</i>	77
Kālī's Mount : Śiva/Śava Śiva's Position in the Bengal Iconography of Kālī <i>Arghya Dipta Kar</i>	101

GLEANINGS FROM THE PAST

On the Ruins of Buddha Gayá – <i>Babu Rajendralala Mitra</i>	141
--	-----

NOTES ON GLEANINGS

A Prelude to the Making of 'the Great Buddhist Temple' at Bodhgaya <i>Gautam Sengupta and Rajat Sanyal</i>	157
--	-----

BOOK REVIEW

Klaus Mylius, *Vergleichende Grammatik der literarischen Prākṛt- Sprachen*, Beiträge zur Kenntnis südasiatischer Sprachen und Literaturen, 34, Wiesbaden : Harrassowitz Verlag, 2020.

Samiran Chandra Chakrabarti ... 167

Vijay Gokhale, *The Long Game : How the Chinese negotiate with India*, Penguin Random House, 2021.

Rangan Dutta ... 173

*The Journey to Partition: Some Poorly Remembered Happenings**

Rajmohan Gandhi

To be awarded the Asiatic Society's *Indira Gandhi Lectureship* for 2019 was an honour for me. To be able this evening to deliver the stipulated lecture despite intervening hurdles and blows is my good fortune.

History is a vast and, in the end, mysterious universe. You may try to explore one or two of its countless tiny spheres and return with a little knowledge, which will remain hopelessly insufficient.

Some will ask if you can explain why India's independence was lost in the 18th century and regained in the 20th, why the country broke up into two political pieces to begin with and then into three. Some will tell you, without exploring the place, how everything unfortunate that happened could have been avoided.

My purpose in this lecture is not to show how Partition could have been averted. Rearranging the past is not possible for anyone, not even perhaps for an Almighty God. The past has to be understood, not changed.

Understanding the past might assist us in addressing difficult situations in the future. It is in this spirit that I will recall a few happenings related to the 1947 Partition.

Before recalling these events, let me inform listeners that to Indians like me who grew up before that Partition, places such as Dhaka, Chittagong, Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar felt as familiar a part of our world, of my world, as Mumbai, Patna, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, or Chennai may seem to all of us today.

* *Indira Gandhi Memorial Lecture* for the year 2019 delivered on September 13, 2021, at the Asiatic Society, Kolkata.

There are five stations on the journey to Partition that I want, in chronological order, to look at. Some of these stations no longer exist in our mental maps.

I call the first of these stops :

Missed opportunity? The Jinnah proposal of 1928

In 1928, twelve years before the Muslim League asked for India's partition, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the League's president, made a bid for an accord among all Indian political parties on the basis of a grand *quid pro quo*. Under his scheme, the Muslim League would give up the separate Muslim electorate, which the Empire had granted in 1909, and accept joint electorates across India.

In return, the Indian National Congress, the Hindu Mahasabha and the Sikhs would accept that in any future constitutional arrangement Muslims would have more than a 50 percent share in the legislatures of undivided Bengal and undivided Punjab, both of which possessed Muslim majorities. Also, proposed Jinnah, Muslims, constituting about a quarter of the population of India at the time, should be assured a third of the seats in a central legislature.

This bold proposal did not sound altogether unreasonable or even unpleasant. In 1916, led by Tilak and Annie Besant, the Congress had reached a pact with the Muslim League whereby, for the sake of a joint effort for self-government, the Congress accepted a separate Muslim electorate.

Many found the idea of different Indians voting as separate entities hard to stomach. They also remembered the Hindu-Muslim unity that had existed between 1919 and 1922, a period that saw nation wide opposition to the Rowlatt Act against free speech and a nationwide Non-cooperation Movement in which Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, and others took part.

Some therefore responded positively to Jinnah's proposal. But politicians from different sides knocked it down. Calling separate electorates non-negotiable, Sir Muhammad Shafi¹, who headed the Punjab Muslim League, said that Jinnah did not speak for the

province's Muslims. Punjab's Hindu Sabha leaders said they would take joint electorates, but not give up the weightage for non-Muslims which the Empire had provided in the legislatures of Bengal and Punjab. Sikh leaders were even firmer in opposing what sounded like mandatory Muslim rule in the undivided Punjab of that time.

In Bengal, while the death in 1925 of Chitta Ranjan Das had removed a giant committed to Hindu-Muslim partnership, Subhas Bose's mind was focused on ensuring that complete Independence was declared as the Congress goal, and Dominion Status rejected in advance, which was also the position taken by Jawaharlal Nehru.

Jinnah's proposal was therefore not seriously considered by either the Bengal Congress, or the Punjab Congress, or the All India Congress. At the end of 1928, an All Party Conference held in Kolkata rejected the Jinnah proposal, with the INC adhering to an alternative plan (drafted by a Congress committee headed by Motilal Nehru) which accorded substantial minority weightage for Hindus in Bengal, Hindus and Sikhs in Punjab, and significant weightage for Muslims in UP, Bihar, Bombay and Madras.

The only concession the Congress offered was a willingness to raise the Muslim share in a Central Assembly from 25 percent to 27 percent.

The fates too played a role, for Lajpat Rai, who in 1928 sounded unexpectedly willing, for the sake of Hindu-Muslim unity, to free Punjab's Muslims from the burden of minority weightage, died in November that year, after being struck by police *lathis* during a demonstration in Lahore.

Shortly before his death, Lajpat Rai had pointed out that, thanks to their numbers, Muslims had become dominant in Punjab despite minority weightage. He argued that if Punjab's Hindus and Sikhs were willing to give up weightage, not only would they secure joint electorates, Hindus would gain politically in provinces across India and at the centre.²

In publicly taking this position, Lajpat Rai had separated himself from most of Punjab's Hindu and Sikh leaders. Would Punjab's story

have taken a different course had the Lion of Punjab, as Lajpat Rai was known, lived longer? Who can tell?

Saying to Jinnah that he was prepared personally to concede the Muslim demands, Gandhi evidently pointed out that the Sikhs had declared that they would back out if changes were made to the Nehru Report.³

Moreover, at this point of time, Gandhi's mind was on another large-scale fight with the Raj. In October 1928, he said that he hoped to hit upon a path of struggle 'which I may confidently commend to the people' (*Young India*, 11 Oct. 1928). A little more than a year later, the Civil Disobedience campaigns started, beginning with the Dandi Salt March.

In short, history had sidelined Jinnah's interesting and by now forgotten proposal.

My second stop is called :

Punjab's Unionist Party, or a bridge that was not built

We should recall that the Muslim League, the party that demanded Partition in 1940, was slow to acquire influence in Bengal and Punjab. In both provinces, there were moments of opportunity when, who knows, an understanding or alliance between the Indian National Congress and other political forces might have prevented Partition.

Undivided Bengal's largely Muslim peasant parties had little in common with the feudal chiefs who founded and governed the Muslim League in the region. Why the Congress in Bengal failed to create an understanding with these pro-peasant forces is a subject on which there has been a good deal of published research. I would like to refer to what happened in Punjab, where the Congress missed an opportunity of a very different kind.

Undivided Punjab's Unionist Party, founded with British blessings in the early 1920s, was unabashedly pro-Empire. It was active in finding soldiers for the Empire — Muslim, Sikh and Hindu soldiers — from Punjab's villages. Punjabi soldiers always formed a large proportion of the Empire's Indian army.

But the Unionist Party was also pro-farmer. It claimed that protecting small and big farmers from debt and money lenders was its main goal.

The Unionist Party's pro-feudal and pro-Empire outlook did not make it a desirable partner for the Indian National Congress or for the nationalist movement as a whole. Yet there was one valuable quality to the Unionists. Not only was their party multi-religious; containing Sikh and Hindu farmers as well as the bulk of Muslim farmers, *the Unionist Party stayed firmly aloof from the Pakistan demand.*

A Congress-Unionist alliance could have kept the Muslim League at bay in undivided Punjab. However, the Punjab Congress remained too Hindu and too urban to attempt this until 1946, which was very late in the day.

A researcher would find that an anti-feudal sentiment in the Congress Left combined with an anti-Muslim sentiment in the Congress Right to block a possible understanding with people like Fazl-i-Husain who led the 'feudal' and 'agricultural' Unionist party.

From 1916 to 1921, Fazl-i-Husain was close to the Congress and the nationalist movement. But the Raj succeeded in detaching him as well as persons like the Jat leader, Chhotu Ram, and finding roles for them in undivided Punjab. As part of imperial strategy, both Fazl-i-Husain and Chhotu Ram were knighted.

In the 1920s and 1930s, Gandhi's occasional feelers for an understanding with the Unionists were disliked by progressives in the All-India Congress and even more strongly by the Punjab Congress and other Hindu leaders in the province, who resented Fazl-i-Husain's efforts to obtain reserved places for greatly under-represented Muslims in Punjab's colleges and government departments.

Prominent Muslims in the Unionist Party were key to avoiding polarisation in Punjab. Forming a majority in their province, Punjab's Muslim farmers and peasants were free of the insecurities on which the League had built its strength in UP, Bihar and Bombay presidency. The Unionist Party was the preferred party of Punjab's Muslims.

But until the elections held in the 1945-46 winter, the Punjab Congress remained opposed to approaching the Unionists. In opting to fight both the League and the Unionists, perhaps the Punjab Congress took on one foe too many.

In his Punjab strategy, Jinnah, it seems, proved wiser than the Congress. Ignoring Punjab's Muslim League, which until 1945 was as urban as the Punjab Congress, he proposed an alliance with the Unionist Fazl-i-Husain in 1936. Fazl-i-Husain rebuffed Jinnah but died soon thereafter.

His successor in the Unionist Party, Sikander Hyat Khan, who became Punjab's Premier in 1937, defeating both the Congress and the League in provincial elections, was willing to enter into the so-called Jinnah-Sikander pact which took Muslim Punjabis closer to the Pakistan goal.

My third stop is in the summer of 1946. I call it :

The Cabinet Mission Plan, or the "success" that was not

It was clear in the summer of 1946, a year after the end of the war, that India's freedom was not going to be prevented. The only question left was whether the Empire would hand over to one India or to two.

About two years earlier, during 14 talks held in Mumbai in September 1944, Gandhi had offered Jinnah, in terms of area, the very Pakistan that would emerge in 1947, while adding that any division should be accompanied by a treaty of friendship or bonds of alliance between the separated parts.

Categorically rejecting Gandhi's proposal, Jinnah said he wanted all of Bengal, and all of Punjab, and Assam as well, adding that any treaty or alliance with India would cripple Pakistan's sovereignty.

In the summer of 1946, three British cabinet ministers spent three months together in India in a bid to find agreement on the transfer of power. In their opening meeting with Jinnah, these ministers, jointly described as the Cabinet Mission, asked the League leader if he was willing to accept Gandhi's Pakistan area if it came without any treaty or bonds.

No, replied Jinnah. He wanted total sovereignty *plus* his large Pakistan.

One of the three ministers, Stafford Cripps, then came up with a brilliant scheme of a three-tiered independent India. In this plan, Provinces, which would remain undivided, would form the bottom tier, two Groups of provinces (one in the northwest and another in the east) the middle tier, and a Union the top tier. If they agreed to combine, the two Groups in the middle, one comprising all of Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and the NWFP, the other consisting of all of Bengal and Assam, would constitute, within India, a Large Pakistan, although the Cabinet Mission did not use that phrase.

Jinnah said he could accept the scheme if the Union was nominal and the Groups could later secede from it. The Congress said it could accept the scheme if the Union had real power and if provinces like the NWFP, where a Congress ministry had been elected earlier in the year, and Assam, where Muslims constituted a minority, could opt out of the Groups from the start.

At this stage, in an ideal world, the Mission should have said to the Congress that the League had to be conceded a large area if it was to agree to a Union, and to the League that it had to unreservedly accept a Union if it wanted a large area. A sacrifice of territory had to match a sacrifice of sovereignty.

Instead, the Mission chose to sacrifice clarity and consistency. Following talks in Shimla, it drafted a document that the League could interpret one way, the Congress another, and both accept.

Instead of speaking clearly (and, if need be, inviting rejection from both sides), the Mission spoke in two voices. On 16 May it produced an ambiguous plan which both the Congress and the League 'accepted' with opposing interpretations, enabling the Mission to claim 'success'.

This 16 May text said in one place (Para 15) that provinces 'should be free to' form groups and elsewhere (Para 19) that they 'shall' do so. Later, Cripps would candidly say to the House of Commons that the wording was kept 'purposely vague' so as to enable both sides to join the 16 May scheme.⁴

On 24 May, an aide to the Mission and a future British MP, Woodrow Wyatt, advised Jinnah that though Pakistan had not been conceded, he could accept 16 May 'as the first step on the road to Pakistan'.⁵ On 6 June the League formally 'accepted' the 16 May plan, while adding that 'complete sovereign Pakistan' remained 'its unalterable objective' and claiming that 'the foundation of Pakistan' was 'inherent' in what it described as the plan's 'compulsory grouping' and what it saw as an implied 'right of secession'.⁶

Explanations and assurances of the opposite kind were offered to the Congress, enabling it to 'accept' the 16 May scheme even as it held that the phrase 'should be free to' ruled out compulsory grouping.

Tragically, the double-speak that marked these negotiations of 1946 added to the mistrust that existed in India's climate. It contributed to the sequence of killings that began in Kolkata in August 1946, spread to East Bengal in September, to Bihar in October, U.P. in November, and Punjab in March 1947. Cleverness did not produce peace.

My fourth stop is *after* the Direct Action of August 1946. I call it:

Suhrawardy after the August 1946 "Direct Action"

Bengal's Muslim League Premier at the time, Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, is inescapably associated with the violence that marked Kolkata on August 16, 1946, the 'Direct Action Day' called by Jinnah, the League president, and on the following two days.

Hindus were the principal victims on August 16, but the position was quickly reversed. On 21 August 1946, in a letter he wrote to C. Raja gopalachari, Vallabhbhai Patel spoke of 'a good lesson for the League, because I hear that the proportion of Muslims who have suffered death is much larger'.⁷

A year later, with Partition about to take place, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh would become chief minister of West Bengal, and Suhrawardy was on his way out.

On August 9, 1947, Gandhi stopped in Kolkata on his way to Noakhali in what had become Pakistan's East Bengal province. Claiming that both India and Pakistan were his countries, Gandhi planned to spend Independence Day, August 15, in Noakhali, where he had worked for peace for three months in the previous winter.

However, Suhrawardy told Gandhi that Kolkata needed him. Gandhi answered that he would put off his Noakhali visit provided, he told Suhrawardy, 'you and I are prepared to live together' in the city under the same roof. Added Gandhi:

We shall have to work till every Hindu and Mussalman in Calcutta safely returns to the place where he was before. We shall continue in our effort till our last breath. I do not want you to come to a decision immediately. You should go back home and consult your daughter... [T]he old Suhrawardy will have to die and [become] a fakir.⁸

Suhrawardy accepted this unusual invitation. Gandhi remarked that some Hindus had warned him that Suhrawardy was 'not to be relied upon'. But then, added Gandhi, some Muslims imagined him (Gandhi) 'to be a hypocrite' and an enemy of Muslims.

'God alone knows men's hearts,' said Gandhi, adding that he would trust Suhrawardy even as he hoped to be trusted himself.

Both [of us] will live under the same roof (Gandhi declared), and have no secrets from each other. We would together see all the visitors. People should have the courage to speak out the truth under all circumstances and in the presence of those against whom it had to be said.⁹

On the morning of 13 August 1947, Gandhi left his Sodepur ashram, Suhrawardy left his house in the city, and Hydari Manzil, 'an old abandoned Muslim house' in Beliaghata, a run-down Hindu-majority locality, became Gandhi's latest "ashram", with Suhrawardy as his latest ashram-mate.

Accusing Gandhi of a pro-Muslim bias, a band of angry young Hindus asked him to leave Beliaghata. Gandhi had two sessions with the group, including one in Suhrawardy's presence. If Beliaghata's Hindus invited their Muslim neighbours to return, he said to them, he and Suhrawardy would move to a predominantly Muslim area until Hindus were invited to return there.

Pyarelal has recorded that the young men were 'completely won over' by this offer,¹⁰ and another irate group was pacified when

Suhrawardy boldly admitted responsibility for the Great Calcutta Killings a year earlier.¹¹

The next day, 14 August, was so different that it became possible for Calcutta's residents to imagine that 'there never had been bad blood between the Hindus and the Muslims'. An elated Gandhi wrote in his journal, *Harijan*:

In their thousands they – the people of Kolkata — began to embrace one another, and they began to pass freely through places which were considered to be points of danger... Indeed, Hindus were taken to their masjids by their Muslim brethren and the latter were taken by their Hindu brethren to the mandirs. Both with one voice shouted 'Jai Hind' or 'Hindus-Muslims! Be one'.¹²

When, next morning, after India had become independent overnight, Gandhi opened his eyes in a Muslim house in one of Calcutta's poorest corners.

In the afternoon, he conducted a prayer-meeting in an open ground in Beliaghata. Thousands of Muslims and Hindus attended. Making an unusual request, Gandhi asked to be driven anonymously around the city. He wanted to take in more of Calcutta's joy and also to probe whether it was a miracle or an accident. In his paper *Harijan*, Gandhi wrote:

16 Aug. :By whatever [words the change in Calcutta] may be described, it is quite clear that all the credit that is being given to me from all sides is quite undeserved; nor can it be said to be deserved by Shaheed Saheb (Suhrawardy). This sudden upheaval is not the work of one or two men. We are toys in the hands of God. He makes us dance to His tune...¹³

After Jinnah's death in September 1948, Suhrawardy perceived a role for himself in Pakistan. Moving there in March 1949, he helped formed the Awami League in opposition to the Muslim League. In September 1956, Suhrawardy became Pakistan's Prime Minister as the leader of the Awami League with the support of the Republican Party.

As Pakistan's Prime Minister, he asked for joint electorates. He also declared that Pakistan should provide, in his words, the "guarantee of equal citizenship to all, irrespective of religion, race, creed and culture."¹⁴

After serving for 13 months as Prime Minister, Suhrawardy was removed from office, shortly before Ayub Khan imposed army rule on Pakistan. Later, his fight for democratic rights resulted in imprisonment. In 1963, Suhrawardy died of a heart attack.

My last stop is called:

The Radcliffe boundaries

The lines that Cyril Radcliffe, the British judge, quickly drew across the maps of undivided Bengal and undivided Punjab in the summer of 1947 have come to symbolize for many the unnatural character of the Partition. Poems and cartoons have highlighted the peculiarity in an Englishman arriving on a subcontinent he had never previously visited and producing, in a few short weeks, maps that would fix boundaries for two billion people today.

As a symbol, the lines that Radcliffe drew convey a memorable image, but history is more complex than a poem, a cartoon, or even a map, and satirising a white judge is too simple an ending for any study of the 1947 Partition.

Cyril Radcliffe was hardly the sole member of the Boundary Commission that settled our borders. In fact, there were two commissions, one for Bengal and the other for Punjab, and each commission consisted of four Indian members plus Radcliffe, the Chair.

The Bengal Boundary Commission consisted of justices C. C. Biswas, B. K. Mukherji, Abu Saleh Mohamed Akram and S.A.Rahman – and Cyril Radcliffe.

The members of the Punjab Commission were justices Mehr Chand Mahajan, Teja Singh, Din Mohamed and Muhammad Munir— and Cyril Radcliffe.

In both commissions, it was only when the four Indian judges neutralised one another by their separate and contradictory opinions that Radcliffe had the chance to make his own binding decisions. Moreover, he had no other option.

At the time and later, many took it for granted that the four Indians would give separate and conflicting verdicts. Yet the four were judges, not lawyers. They would have violated no norm or convention had they sat down together and tried to reach an agreement. That did not happen. Even though great violence was near at hand and foreseeable,

judges on the subcontinent were reluctant to step out of their communal or partisan cocoons to try to avert it.

Unable to agree on a better boundary, were not the Indian judges on the commission headed by Radcliffe also responsible for the lines he drew?

Let us recognize, moreover, that Pakistanis are even more critical of Radcliffe's lines than Indians.

No doubt *divide and rule* was the imperial principle. Sadly, however, among the leaders, the people, and even the judges of undivided India, the willingness to *give and take* for honourable compromise seemed in short supply at critical moments.

With this I end my travel to some of the less remembered points on the journey to Partition from 1928 to 1947. Thanks for listening.

Notes

¹ Knighted in 1925 on completing a five-year term on the Viceroy's Council.

² Ayesha Jalal, *Self & Sovereignty*, London: Routledge, 2000, pp. 308-09.

³ From note of Afzal Haque, who was present, quoted in G.A. Allana, *Jinnah*, Lahore: Ferozsons, 1967, p. 213.

⁴ House of Commons Debates, 8 June 1946, quoted by S.R. Mehrotra in Phillips and Wainwright (ed.), *The Partition of India*, London: George Allen and Unwin, 1970, p. 218.

⁵ Nicholas Mansergh & E. W. R. Lumby (eds.), *Transfer of Power, 1942-47*, vol. 6, London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, pp. 684-7.

⁶ J. Ahmad (ed.), *Historic Documents of the Muslim Freedom Movement*, Lahore : Publishers United, pp. 522-23.

⁷ Durga Das (ed.), *Sardar Patel's Correspondence*, vol. 3, Ahmedabad: Navajivan, p. 40.

⁸ *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 89, pp. 30-31.

⁹ *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. 89, pp. 30-31.

¹⁰ Pyarelal, *The Last Phase*, vol. 2, Ahmedabad: Navajivan, 1958, pp. 367-8.

¹¹ *Collected Works*, vol. 89, p. 43, footnote 3.

¹² Gandhi, writing on Aug. 16, 1947, in *Harijan*, Aug. 24, 1947. *Collected Works*, vol. 89, pp. 48-49.

¹³ Gandhi, writing on Aug. 16, 1947, in *Harijan*, Aug. 24, 1947. *Collected Works*, vol. 89, pp. 48-49.

¹⁴ Mohammad H. R. Talukdar (ed.), *Memoirs of Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy* Karachi: OUP, 2009, p. 53.

[This lecture relies greatly on the writer's earlier research, including for *Understanding the Muslim Mind* (Penguin, 1987), *Patel* (Navajivan, 1990), *Good Boatman* (Penguin, 1995), *Mohandas* (Viking/Penguin, 2006) and *Punjab* (Aleph, 2013).]

*Bengal Renaissance and Indian National Movement
Subhas Chandra Bose : The Heir Apparent**

Radharaman Chakrabarti

Based on my talk at the Asiatic Society on the occasion of Netaji's 125th birth anniversary, this paper takes the Bengal Renaissance as a distant though significant backdrop. I do not think that would require a new definition of the Renaissance, of which there are a plenty. All I desire to submit is that the Renaissance, as I see it, was much more than a passing phenomenon – far wider in its impact than it had within Bengal's *social territory*. Also, contrary to conventional view, it need not be shelved in a one-century slot. For, it did have a natural spill-over from the 19th to the 20th century. Time span apart, I would also believe that Bengal Renaissance substantively covered more than the literary-cultural or religio-social domain. It became, significantly, a foreshore of the political cross currents soon to inundate Bengal and the land mass beyond.

Before I proceed, I should share with you a piece of kindred thought which I came by in the writings of the distinguished historian, also a senior member of this Society, Professor Ranjit Kumar Sen. In his *র্যাডিক্যাল চিন্তাধারা ও বিকল্প জাগরণ*¹ Professor Sen offers a perfect Bengali rendering of renaissance – not নবজাগরণ but নববোধোদয়। This seems to be quite apposite to our purpose. Sen observes :

“এই বোধোদয় যে নূতন ধারার সূচনা করেছিল... সেই ধারার বাইরে, তার সাথে সমান্তরালভাবে, ধীরে ধীরে আত্মপ্রকাশ করেছিল, বিকল্প এক জাগরণ, সে জাগরণে নিবীৰ্যতা ছিল না।”

* The Lecture was delivered at the Vidyasagar Hall of the Asiatic Society on 14th August, 2021 on the occasion of release of the book entitled “75th Anniversary of Indian National Army and Provisional Government”.

It is this robust alternative coming up as sequel to the great awakening that provides the leitmotif of a turning point in India's national movement of freedom. And my main purpose is to locate Subhas Chandra Bose, precisely at that point.

When the invitation to speak here came from my good friend Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary, Asiatic Society, I was seized with one question : how do I, in the first place, relate Bose to the magnificent tradition the Asiatic Society stands for. And I wanted that it had to be more substantial than some casual connection that may or may not have been on record. At least I am not aware of Subhas having any occasion to visit the Society, during his stay in Calcutta, which was frequently interrupted by long incarcerations in far away prisons.

A certain conjecture then surfaced in my mind : How about Bengal Renaissance of which the Asiatic Society was one of the fountain heads? With that clue I engaged myself in a mental geometry. I saw that if I joined the dots starting from the high point of Bengal's cultural awakening through episodic milestones upto the point of intersection of the 19th and 20th centuries, I got a clear set of parallels emerging, and if I further extended it upto 1939, I thought my task would be easier.

The year 1939, we all know, is taken as the high watermark of our national movement. It precipitated attainment of independence by less than a decade, thanks to the belated realisation of the Congress patriarch of the urgency of giving the British an eviction notice, for there was no way a mass uprising could be bottled up any longer. Even then, the final call was deferred till 1942, when the global war was going on in full swing and the Indian soldiers were drafted by the colonial masters to die for them in distant lands of west and south-east Asia. Perhaps it would not be out of place to mention here the fact that near about this time confabulations were afoot in the Far East, with the fugitive revolutionary Sri Rashbehari Bose working out the idea of an armed assault on British India from outside. This did materialise, but not before Netaji's take over of INA² to be its

Commander-in-chief and Head of the Provisional Government of India in exile. Since this paper is not about Netaji but about the other Subhas, still a dedicated Congress man in 1939, and yet several notches above the run-of-the-mill leadership at the helm of affairs.

So back to 1939, we find the country passing through a critical juncture, and strikingly, the single most magnetic figure at this point was none other than Subhas Chandra Bose, who had just come back from his forced exile in Europe at the risk of being re-arrested on arrival.³ The come-back of Subhas heralded re-emergence of the forces of anti-imperialist resistance. For the Congress that meant a difficult choice before the entrenched leadership to carry on with the facile trade-off tacitly agreed with the British rule, to remain happy with the sops offered by the new Government of India Act 1935 and forget about civil disobedience or send a green signal to the restless masses to restart their agitation. That latter course indeed would have put the British in a most uncomfortable position, with the war clouds thickening in Europe and the Munich appeasement of Hitler hanging on a slender thread (1938).

But then the Congress leadership was labouring under persistent prevarications on assuming a pro-active role, which had the effect of pushing back the mass upsurge and providing the colonial masters a much needed breathing space. That was the point when Subhas Chandra stood head and shoulders above the status quoists. And the grand strategy he had in mind was multi-layered, consisting of five major elements: (a) civil society recovery (b) thorough revamping of the Congress outfit, (c) subversion of the administrative postures of the British government by and through elected India ministers in the provinces, (d) a calculated propaganda to reduce the monopoly hold of Westminster on British India's export-import much to the detriment of India's prospective trade with East European countries and (e) connecting the political activities of the Congress in the princely states with its mainstream policies and movements.

These components of action would act as precursor of a final blow right from the grassroots. They were soon to be elaborated in his

Haripura Address as the President of the Indian National Congress (1938). All in all that speech was a clarion call for battle-readiness — indeed a Charter which the Indian Civil Society must be attuned to before the battle lines were actually drawn.

For my little narrative the Haripura Address provides the *rationale* for linking Renaissance rationalism with a robust reconceptualisation of Indian national movement. What I am trying to drive at is this: there was a remarkable convergence of two parallel awakenings — the one originating in the social and cultural effervescence of 19th Century Bengal and the other steadily shaping up with the spread of a radicalised nationalist urge all over India. It was as though power packed ideas and animated action were coming closer to a long awaited fusion.

Could I illustrate my point with reference to two memorable anthems, *বন্দে মাতরম* of Rishi Bankim, the first ever invocation of the motherland, and the other anthem, also composed by a sage, poet Rabindranath, titled at that time *ভারত ভাগ্যবিধাতা*। Was it not more than an ordinary coincidence that the National Congress, verily a political platform adopted both these songs, within a space of fifteen years (1896-1911) in their Calcutta plenum? By then the poet himself became an iconic figure spearheading the Swadeshi Movement. Would it be too subjective to read into this a convergence of the Mother Bengal image of Bankim and the God of Indian destiny of Tagore's construction?

If we go a little further back and look up the records of *জাতীয় গৌরবেচ্ছা সম্পাদনী সভা* set up by Rajnarayan Basu (1866), there we see resolutions being adopted that easily mingled the social with the political – though, of course, in a nascent form. Of this overlap we get further confirmation in Professor Sumit Sarkar's *Critique of Colonial India*, where the overtly Academic Association of Derozian fame, is on record raising its voice for some organised public initiative needed to implement urgent social reforms. By implication, that could not have been totally apolitical⁴.

The long and short of it is that the Renaissance spirit proved to be increasingly expansive, and national resurgence at the political level

drew its strength in no small measure from those early impulses. That explains why our nationalism did not have to be a shipload coming from distant shores of Europe. The nationalism of peoples there was born in a different historical context. That is why the leading lights of Indian awakening – Swami Vivekananda, poet Tagore, Rishi Aurobindo and Gandhi — all wanted the countrymen to take care that nationalism in India imbibed an essentially Indian character. It must, by its very nature eschew the exclusionist, supremacist and possessive proclivities of the Western State. And that precisely was a re-statement of the Renaissance outlook. As a corollary, nationalism's main task here should be to address India-specific problems, namely, of backwardness, illiteracy, superstition, divisive mentality, and unenterprising indolence. The new India of Renaissance, finally, had to be rooted in its glorious tradition branching forth into the fresh air of modernity.

As I collect and sew up these old leaves of the recent past I find it quite plausible to bring Subhas Chandra in that frame, as the heir apparent of the twin forces of Renaissance and robust nationalism. Indeed, in every sense, he was an embodiment of the essential qualities of Renaissance that included the selfless spirit of dedication to restore the glory of India, resolute resistance to oppressive forces — local as well as alien and zero tolerance of anything that was mean, parochial and irrational. Between him and his adversaries in the Congress, the clash that arose was not just of personality but mainly of values. He carried within him the thundering voice of Swami Vivekananda :

“Thou brave one, be bold, take courage, be proud that thou art an Indian, and proudly proclaim “I am an Indian and every Indian is my brother”... “India is my life... say brother, the soul of India is my highest heaven, the good of India is my own good.”

That is patriotism, the ennobling virtue of nationalism. And in politics where power play induces parochialism and indulges in shameless compromise with injustice, Subhas had that iron resolve which Tagore articulated as :

ক্ষমা যেথা ক্ষীণ দুর্বলতা, হে রুদ্র,
 নিষ্ঠুর যেন হতে পারি সেথা তোমার আদেশে।
 যেন রসনায় মম সত্য বাক্য বলি' উঠে
 খর-খড়গসম তোমার ইঙ্গিতে।⁵

Discerning readers would obviously and legitimately pause at this point and ask if I am not stretching my hypothesis too far. Am I trying to establish that the expanded Bengal Renaissance not only entered but also potentially steered all India political movements? Far, far from that, my only point is that the legacy of the essential spirit of the Renaissance did not evaporate but remained *sedimented in the public psyche*, and indirectly helped the rise of leaders who personified that legacy such as Deshbandhu or Lal-Bal-Pal trio. It was men of such caliber that were capable of achieving a break-through whenever national awakening encountered some formidable obstacle, and needed urgent recharging whenever it was likely to lose steam.

Politics apart, as far as social regeneration was concerned the need of the hour was decisive and rapid action - no dithering, no procrastination, no half-hearted gestures but concrete and effective action. One may even say that the days when obscurantism could block the way of rationality and responsibility were also over. The Congress as it stood then, we all know, was incapable of living up to these stringent criteria, having lost much of its steam since the 1930 Round Table trap, followed by the 1931 Gandhi-Irwin pact. So someone from outside the circle of policy paralysis was badly needed to take up the gauntlet. And the only choice was the rebel Subhas, who never gave in to imperialist manipulation or intimidation.

Surprisingly, that rebel happened to be Gandhi's uncertain choice to be the President of the National Congress in 1938 – much to the delight of the progressive socialist group within and to the deep dismay of the old guards around Gandhi. Some sort of a show down was predictable, and the *casus belli* was traceable to the new President's address at Haripura session of the Congress. On surface the showdown had every symptom of a simmering power struggle but deep down the impending

battle was essentially ideological. Gandhi's and his inner circle's worst fear was an imminent change of character of the Congress itself. If the revolutionary programme as announced by President Bose in the open plenum was allowed to take roots it would be irreversible. Indeed the endorsement by the rank and file was tumultuous.

Subhas was aware of the immensity of the changes that he proposed, and to carry the programme forward, he might need at least one more term and that was not without precedent. Yet that was curtly denied by the CWC (Congress Working Committee), thereby compelling the rebel to contest in an open election - which re-elected him with resounding victory over Gandhi's own choice Pattabi Sitaramaya⁶. What followed was a scandalous backroom machination that made Subhas leave the Congress - after 17 consecutive telegrams, 9 personal letters and one abortive attempt by Subhas to settle the matter personally with Gandhi. All that these sincere overtures elicited from the Supremo was a tendentious aloofness.

Anyway, I am not going to waste your time by recalling that sordid story of ill-concealed *Un-democracy* to which the Congress had reduced itself. It will be more worthwhile and closer to our purpose if we concentrate on the Haripura address of President Bose. It was *Par excellence* an integrated plan of nation building to be taken up in right earnest even before the country was actually able to achieve independence. The urgency that the President attached to it was writ large in his instruction to the Congress ministries in the provinces to initiate some of the proposed schemes, notwithstanding the impediments expected of the white bureaucracy.

As we take note of the tenor and content of the Haripura proposals, we would see that the newly elected President was sort of hustling a sluggish organisation into a flurry of activities. More important, perhaps he also anticipated that occasion would arise for alternative modes of social reconstruction to come up for a public debate. In a sense the Haripura address was an open invitation for such public debate to happen. True, there was little common ground between the President's forward looking propositions and the old guards' stationary

mindset. Nonetheless, it was not necessary that the two contending approaches would result in an unbridgeable cleavage or turn into a bitter struggle for supremacy. There was enough room for a healthy exchange and comparing notes – true to a rationalist, not an intolerant, encounter as would behave any person of enlightened, Renaissance-type disposition. And Subhas, I am sure, would not be that impetuous to rule out a dialogue.

Pity that the old guards around Gandhi were the least inclined to rely on reason and take part in a systematic debate, especially as it concerned the future of the nation. Their hardened attitude all the more accentuated by Gandhi's ill-concealed egoism destroyed the prospect of a consensus. It was not a show of folly but a stubborn refusal to go by the three great teachings of Renaissance – viz., reason above impulse, unity through adjustment and precedence of the country over a self-gratifying cotery.

Coming back to the Haripura manifesto, the audience was visibly surprised that the new President was not parroting over-used, wishy-washy rhetoric. His was a well researched, well documented and well calculated projection born of wide-ranging empirical survey and of the most rigorous analysis of data. To get an idea of the kind of Bose's social research orientation, I shall rely on a rare document which has been discovered by our General Secretary, Professor Chakrabarti, who has kindly shared it with me - a 1935 paper contributed by Subhas Chandra, sent from Karlsbad, Germany for publication in the journal *Science and Culture*, a journal perhaps the first of its kind, edited by Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray and Professor Meghnad Saha, published from the University of Calcutta Science College⁷.

In that paper Bose raises seven searching questions of deep socio-Anthropological implication, to which he sought a proper scientific response. Let me cite the essential issues.

Question 1 : "The awakening that we now witness in India - is it our organic growth, a new creation or is it a mere response to the impact of the West?"

Question 2 : "What are the conditions for revivifying a civilisation like ours that has begun to stagnate.... Is there any law underlying the rise and fall of civilisations? Which could tell us how we could give a fresh lease of life to our civilisation?"

If renaissance in its accepted sense presupposes a spirit of enquiry, a disposition to go to the roots of a phenomenon, the readiness to check the validity of any supposition, however much in vogue, so as to be doubly sure about a cause-and-effect relationship of observed facts, then those fundamental queries of Subhas amply demonstrate the inherent rationalist in him of renaissance vintage.

Intellectually too, his anthropo-cultural inquisitiveness is reflected in the next three questions. The third query was : "For increasing the vitality of our nation, should we promote inter-caste or intra-caste marriage? Are exogamous marriages more conducive to the welfare of a people or endogamous?"

Similarly, the fourth question about demographic unsustainability refers to a perennial crisis facing India. Subhas asks what should be the 'proper population size' for a "nation that lives in chronic starvation". His concern arose from a perusal of the 1931 census figures which showed "increase of about 34 million ... during the previous decade." For a solution he wondered "should artificial birth control be adopted as a public policy."

The fifth question, though linguistic, had significant cultural and administrative ramification. It was about the advisability of introducing a common script for India. Though Subhas conceded that "language was more important than script" which in his view was "primarily a matter of convenience", he would still advocate adoption of a common script for inter-language transfer or flow of ideas. His choice was the Roman script and his only doubt was "if our Mohammedan brothers would accept it."

The next question may sound a bit queer. Bose was asking if "a uniform, improved diet for India - in particular for Bengal and Madras" was advisable. The question arose "in view of the unscientific and unhygienic menu" in prevalence over there.

The Seventh and the last point was more of a life-style suggestion that had much to do with the external appearance of Indians who displayed a confusing range of variation in their dress habits. Bose was candid and flexible on this point. In his words: "While I do not desire or advocate abolition of the provincial dresses which have a charm of their own, I feel that alongside there should be a common dress" each to be easily identified after all as an Indian.

While one can see in these questions the genuine spirit of enquiry born of a renaissance type impetus, they also indicate the way Subhas's mind was actually working at that time. He was seized with the structural causes of backwardness and disunity in India. And he wanted to strike at the roots, wherever they were. These and many similar issues, as he presented before the leading scientists of India for deliberation, got prioritised in the address he would deliver eventually as President of Haripura Congress. Great archival value therefore attaches to his paper published in *Science and Culture*⁸ 'as a key' to the understanding of a far-sighted statesman that Subhas had already become.

The Haripura address can be rated as the first ever blue print or better still, rational charter spelling out in minute details what needed to be done immediately and on a long haul for state formation well ahead of attainment of formal independence. To begin with, Subhas alerted the nation of the evil design of the imperialist to keep the subject race divided. The country was already partitioned into the India of the princely states and India under British paramountcy. The newly elected President would want the Congress to double up its not so conspicuous presence in those scattered territories, and bring the people there in line with the larger struggle going on outside. They needed to be informed also of the developmental initiatives proposed to be taken by the provincial ministries headed by the Congress.

Division of a more vicious type, i.e. the communal divide increasingly assuming menacing proportions demanded serious attention of the Congress as well as non-Congress political formations. As a permanent antidote the President took the unusual liberty at

Haripura of proclaiming a comprehensive Bill of Rights that would guarantee equality of status and opportunities for every ethnic group so that “no class, no group, nor any communal body could ever exploit others or advance its interest at their cost.”

Next he raised the question of who was going to be the custodian of as well as under write the wide-ranging reforms that were being proposed. Bose rubbished as idle speculation the idea that post independence the Congress ought to dismantle itself. To him, this would be absurd and betrayal of trust. His position was loud and clear :

“Whichever political party achieves freedom for the nation shall be duty bound on every task of national reconstruction that remained unfinished...”.

Lest this should raise an apprehension that the only leading party, the Congress, might turn into a totalitarian instrument of power, Bose's unequivocal assurance was :

“There is no reason to follow the precedent of other countries like Russia, Germany or Italy.”

Instead what was necessary was “single minded pursuit of the national well being,” and that could be done even with many parties competing in the same political arena. Bose only insisted that all political parties must scrupulously maintain internal democracy – something the existing practices of the Congress did not quite permit.

The greater part of the Haripura address was devoted to social and economic advancement. Core developmental proposals read like a scientific repertoire – prosaic but precise, progressive and yet pragmatic. The central mechanism of guiding those activities would be a National planning Commission. Well-versed in economics and professionally qualified in public administration, the Congress President categorised the action programmes under two heads - immediate and urgent, to start with and taking off from that several longterm and far-reaching schemes of modernisation. The immediate

tasks would comprise eradication of negativities – poverty, illiteracy and ill-health. Side by side, work should start on creating basic infrastructures including energy supply, transport and communication network. In education he would always stress on a common policy and use of one link language as facilitator of the much needed sense of commonalities that bind the people together despite the given diversities.

A striking part of the address is where the President takes up the demographic issue and advocates, ‘zero tolerance’ of unchecked population explosion – a matter which we have just noted in the scientific paper Bose had submitted for the journal *Science and Culture*. One could not agree more when he asserts ‘a starving nation just cannot afford it and a civilised nation just cannot allow it.’ The incremental add-up to national economic wealth was not for a teeming million to eat it up.

The compulsive goal of growth strategy was eradication of poverty which demanded radical land reforms on the heels of zamindari abolition, cooperative farming to neutralise the ills of fragmented holdings, access to easy agricultural credit and a massive reliance on scientific farming.

On the industrial front the President’s approach was a no nonsense one. He categorically put forward his view as against anachronistic adherence to non-diversified, purely agro-driven economy. Whatever the bogey some people raised against largescale industrialisation, the President stood firm in his position “there is no going back to the pre-industrial era”. While there was no gainsaying that industry and agriculture both needed each other as support-base, the small and medium industries, called ‘cottage industries’ those days, should get greater state patronage.

The newly elected President also made a remarkable departure from the localised outlook of previous leadership. He opened a new chapter by making the Congress a non-state actor in the sphere of

external relations of India. The Haripura address dwells at length on the achievable tasks to be taken up in this context, regardless of the inaccessibility of the conventional channels of diplomacy. In brief, these tasks included:

- i) nurturing of people-to-people contact through private friendship societies;
- ii) involvement of 'desi' business houses in opening trade channels in collaboration with foreign consulates something which Bose himself had successfully done in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria, Germany and Italy during his exile in Europe from 1931 to 1936.
- iii) Countries to be brought under special focus was those in Europe and Asia, which were interested to enter the Indian market and had expressed sympathy for India's national movement.

Having regard to this multi-layered programme of action as enunciated at Haripura we can see that the President was not building castles in the air. Though achievement of freedom was still a few miles away, Bose's idea was that an embryonic state must grow here and now — thus conjuring up the scenario of '*a state within state*' no matter whether the latter was under an alien rule. For the incumbent colonialist that would certainly be an anathema. And for the entrenched interests within the Congress that would sound the death-knell of the fast growing nexus between the establishment Congress and the landed aristocracy working hand in hand with the emerging industrial bureaucracy. The Haripura Vision, if it materialised, would have shattered the project of a comprador class to act as proxy of the colonial metropolis. Subsequent efforts of independent India's ruling classes to not go by the Haripura spirit but use pick-and-choose items from it came at best as saving grace. It will need no pain-staking research to show how much the development efforts of India till date owed to the seminal ideas of Subhas Chandra Bose.⁹

One last point before I conclude. At the outset of this presentation, a certain 'connect' was presupposed between stated and unstated

aspirations of Renaissance enlightenment on the one hand and the later-day articulation of those aspirations by nationalist patriotism (as distinguished from politics of nationalism). A question that cannot but arise in this context: was Subhas's political and social ideology as it developed in the course of time compatible with the homegrown ideas of progress originating in the early musings of Bengal and then Indian renaissance?

For an answer, the 'action hero image' of Subhas must not be allowed to overshadow the thought process in his mind seized continually with myriad issues embedded in social reality. An avid reader of nearly every strand of thought, from the classical to the modern, the critical philosopher that Subhas was by training would not form any credo without being adequately satisfied of its validity in disparate contexts and its overall capacity to better the fate of humanity. Above all, the real well being of his own countrymen was the decisive acid test for any doctrinal posture to occupy his mind. Renaissance in Bengal and thence in India was not a product of external origin. It grew out of critical interface of the East and the West. Nurtured in that sort of intellectual environment, Subhas's mind could not possibly lend itself to dogmas or doctrines of society and politics that did not gel with the time-tested values running in India's veins. Between modernity and tradition, therefore, he was under no compulsion to opt for one to the exclusion of the other. He had the necessary critical faculty to come up with an ideal mix-and-match, best suited to the needs of the hour and the objective social reality – no predisposition, no stereo-typing either. That way Subhas may not have been the direct child of Renaissance but certainly grew to be its heir apparent, working his mental faculty through thick and thin.

Greek philosophers talked about directing one's thought to some justifiable end. They termed it 'teleology'. In Subhas there was this drive of teleology whenever he was to test the acceptability of any ideology. A keen student of philosophy, he would not stop at just interpreting the world using a particular tool of thought but must

satisfy himself how far that tool can be of help in radically altering what the French philosophers would call '*condition de l' home*'- the human condition. Unless Renaissance results in change of that condition, it would be just about half and not full awakening. Being a patriot to the core, not by indoctrination, the main focus of all his reflections was on one thing – his Mother Land, a holy land where even gods craved to descend on time and again (as young Subhas wrote in a letter to his biological mother).

Therefore we may safely conclude that even though Subhas was drawn towards militant politics, even though he was generally convinced that “the salvation of India, as of the world, depends on socialism”¹⁰, and however much he differed from the mystified version of ‘Satyagraha’ concocted by Gandhi to religionise his art of politics, Subhas was steadfast and un-wavering in being on the side of ‘enlightened rationality’ (not rationality of profit maximisation) — which the present writer takes as an imperishable legacy of Renaissance wherever that be.

Notes

¹ রঞ্জিত কুমার সেন, ভূমিকা, *র্যাডিক্যাল চিন্তাধারা ও বিকল্প জাগরণ*, রূপালী, কোলকাতা, ২০১৪।

² See Peter Ward Fay, *The Forgotten Army*, Rupa Publications, 1994.

³ Towards early 1936 Subhas Chandra Bose made up his mind to return to India, in disregard of his forced exile in Europe. In March, he received a stern note from J.W. Taylor, His Majesty's Consul in Austria, communicating this order of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs:

“The Government of India have seen in the press statements that you propose to return to India this month and the Government desire to make it clear to you that should you do so *you cannot expect to remain at liberty*”.

Bose forwarded this to Jawaharlal Nehru, then in India as the second time President of the Congress, seeking his advice [cited in *Netaji Collected Works* Vol. 8, Letters, Articles, Speeches and Statements 1933-37, p. 156] Netaji Research Bureau, OUP, New Delhi, 1994.

⁴ Sumit Sarkar, 'The Complexities of Young Bengal', in *Critique of Colonial India*, 1985).

⁵ From Tagore's poem 'ন্যায়দণ্ড' in collection of poems *নৈবেদ্য* - first published in *বঙ্গদর্শন*, বৈশাখ, ১৩০৮ (CE 1901)

- ⁶ An overwhelming 1588 votes for Subhas as against 1377 for Sitaramaiya.
- ⁷ *Science and Culture* 1935, vol 1, pp 258-59 (reproduced in University of Calcutta, Golden Jubilee number, 1985).
- ⁸ pointed out *infra*.
- ⁹ Lamentably, the Planning Commission of India set up after independence and chaired by Prime Minister did not give due publicity to the fact that the newly elected Congress President Bose had nominated Jawaharlal Nehru to be the Chairman of the planning commission of Hariपुरa origin.
- ¹⁰ Speech of Subhas Chandra as President of *All India Trade Union Congress*, 26 January, 1931 (seven years before Hariपुरa).
Clear and loud was his proclamation, read in absentia at the 3rd *India Political Conference*, London, 10 June 1933. "Free India will not be a land of capitalism, landlords and castes. Free India will be a social political democracy", *Netaji Collected Works*, op.cit, p. 261.

*Economic Policy in the Time of Covid**

Asis Kumar Banerjee

1. Introduction

It is hardly necessary for me to describe how privileged I feel on being invited to give the S. N. Sen Memorial Lecture at The Asiatic Society, Kolkata for the year 2020. Professor Satyendranath Sen was a distinguished economist and educationist. I had the opportunity of being a student of his in the M.A. first year class in Economics at Calcutta University back in the late 1960s albeit for a short period of one year. By the time we were in the M. A. second year, Professor Sen became the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University. However, although administrative responsibilities prevented him from teaching regular courses, he continued to give occasional lectures. Even after his retirement from the university, Professor Sen was always curious to know about new research in Economics both within Calcutta University and outside. He always emphasised that we should never forget that the primary responsibility of an Indian economist lay in devising plans and policies aimed at ameliorating the economic conditions of the downtrodden people of our country. His Ph.D. thesis at the London School of Economics, *Central Banking in Undeveloped Money Markets*, was written from this viewpoint and remains, to this day, a model of how an economist from an underdeveloped country should approach the task of formulating optimal policies.

So far as today's lecture is concerned, therefore, I have chosen to speak on economic policy in India at the present time when, together

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with the rest of the world, we are facing a crisis of unprecedented proportions. The widespread destruction caused by the Covid19 pandemic has not been limited to the health sector. The economic consequence of the pandemic has been no less devastating.

As per the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) at the end of May, 2021, the growth rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in *real* terms in the fiscal year 2020-21 was -7.3 per cent. Actually, the last fiscal year witnessed our poorest economic performance ever since GDP data started being collected in India in the early 1950s.

We shall be failing in our duties, however, if we put the blame for this pathetic economic scenario entirely on the pandemic. The pandemic, after all, has hit the whole world. Yet, of the 194 countries of the world for which the growth rate has so far been calculated for the calendar year 2020 or the fiscal year 2020-21, India occupies the 142-nd place in the *decreasing* order of growth rates.¹ No wonder people are asking (a) why we fared so badly in 2020-21 in comparison to other nations and (b) what economic policy actions, if any, can be taken to ensure a better future for our economy. These are the questions that this lecture is concerned with.

One of my basic submissions in this context is that while the pandemic itself was a bolt from the blue, the root of our failure to minimise its economic impact is to be found in our failure to adopt appropriate economic policies *over a period of several years in the past*. In order to understand the nature of these policy failures, in turn, I will start with a brief look at how the policy perspective in economics has evolved over time.

2. Evolution of the policy perspective

Historically, the first time that the need for policy actions at times of economic crises was brought to public attention by the force of circumstances was the time of the Great Depression in the U.S.A. from 1929 to the early years of the 1930s. The U.S. economy of the time was demand-constrained rather than supply-constrained. The

mix of policy actions taken by President Franklin Roosevelt's administration in order to fight these contractionary forces came to be known as the New Deal. The New Deal was a package of policy measures. The common objective of all these measures was to increase demand by increasing government expenditure and cutting tax rates (or doling out subsidies). Essentially, these were what are now called *Keynesian* fiscal policies because these were the types of policies recommended by the legendary British economist, John Maynard Keynes, for a demand-deficient economy.

It was soon realised, however, that, if necessary, economic policy can be made to work in the reverse gear also. If an economy is under excessively inflationary pressures (i.e. if demand is far in *excess* of supply), the government can take steps to reduce demand and increase supply. The notion of anti-cyclical economic policy (or *stabilization* policy) was born.

On the other hand, an example of *stagflation* (i.e. output stagnation accompanied by *inflation* of the price level) induced by a *supply-side* shock was the sudden steep increase in the price of oil in 1973 enforced by OPEC, a cartel of oil-producing countries. Since oil was a crucial input in the production process, the costs of production of all commodities went up dramatically. The U.S.A. was hit the hardest because it was the most important importer of oil.

Since the oil crisis of 1973 until the global financial crisis of 2007 stagflation was a recurring problem in the Western economies, especially, the U.S.A. Clearly, policies aimed at increasing aggregate demand would not solve the problem. In fact, it would make the inflation problem even worse. It was this that led to the unpopularity of Keynesian economics among economists and policy planners and to the rise of what was called *supply-side economics*.

From here to the rise of the so-called *neo-liberal economics* was but a short step. It was argued that the only useful role that the government can play would consist of encouraging production by *cutting* the rates of taxes on *corporate* entities (because a large part of GDP came from them), scrapping minimum-wage laws etc. The

general idea was that the best way to increase production was to leave the producers to their own devices. Ideally, there should be no taxes at all and, therefore, no government expenditure either. In fact, ideally, there should be no government! As Ronald Reagan famously said, "Government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem." Since around 1980 until the Global Financial Crisis of 2007 neo-liberal economics with its emphasis on privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation was the foundation of economic policy planning in most of the countries of the world.

The years following the crisis of 2007, however, saw a backtracking. For a year or so there was, again, a situation reminiscent of the Great Depression of 1929. There was, however, quick recovery. The credit goes to the fact that, learning from experience, governments, especially those of the advanced countries, went all-out for Keynesian economic policies similar to those followed under the New Deal of the 1930s.

In 2011, however, as soon as the expansionary policies were withdrawn, the global growth rate fell again (to 2.7 per cent) and remained in the vicinity of that figure till 2019. At the level of policy planning the advocates of supply-side economics were powerful enough to prevent a return to Keynesian policies. However, the 2007 crisis had laid bare some fundamental weaknesses of the neo-liberal economic philosophy. The effects of these shortcomings have lingered in one form or another since then. As a result, most of the countries of the world have been experiencing demand-deficiency problems over the last decade. The Covid-19 pandemic only took the matter to the extreme.

3. The Indian economy in the pre-Covid years: A case of persistent deceleration

Against this global perspective we now take a closer look at the Indian economic scenario in the pre-Covid years. It is necessary to do so since the experience of these years contains important lessons for policy formulation for the post-Covid19 era. As we have remarked above, the global economy has been in stagnation in the decade of the

2010s. In this phase, however, there has been greater than usual *variation* in the performances of the different countries. That is what makes it important to take note of the *particularities* of the Indian experience.

In the five fiscal years from 2003-04 to 2007-08 the real GDP growth rate in India had been 8.9 per cent on the average.² The global financial crisis brought it down abruptly to 4.15 per cent in 2008-09. In the following two years 2009-10 and 2010-11, however, there was remarkable recovery. The success was attributed to the economic reforms undertaken over the preceding two decades.³ The dream run, however, came to an end in 2011-12 when the growth rate fell to 6.9 per cent from the 8.7 per cent rate achieved in the preceding year. In 2012-13 it fell further to 5.1 per cent.

It is difficult to compare the *official* data about the growth rates in these years with those in 2013-14 and the following years because of a shift in the base year used in the calculations. The base year that is used now is 2010-11. In terms of the new base year prices, the GDP growth rates in the seven years from 2013-14 to the last pre-Covid year 2019-20 were as follows: 6.9, 7.3, 7.9, 8.2, 7.2, 6.1 and 4.0 per cent. On the basis of these figures it would seem that in the first four of these seven years there was an upward trend in the growth rate while in the last three the trend was, again, downward.

Many economists, however, are of the opinion that even the upward trend in the first four of these seven years starting from 2013-14 was more apparent than real.⁴ For example, it has been shown that if the 2013-14 growth rate had been calculated with the older base year of 2004-05, the figure would have turned out to be 4.7 (rather than 6.9) per cent. To be sure, periodic revisions of the base year is standard statistical practice in GDP calculations. It is, however, difficult to believe that estimates of GDP growth in a given economy between two *given* years would change so dramatically when the base year is shifted by a few years.

Thus, we reach the conclusion that India has been experiencing *persistent* economic deceleration since 2017-18, if not since 2013-14.

The drop in the growth rate to a negative figure in this year was only the culmination of a fairly long process of deterioration.

The persistent nature of the deceleration in India has baffled many observers because this has *not* been the experience of any other South Asian country. In Bangladesh, for instance, the growth rate figures for the seven years starting with 2013-14 were as follows: 6.0, 6.1, 6.6, 7.1, 7.3, 7.9, and 8.2. Clearly, this is a case of a persistent *acceleration* of the growth rate. In *all* of the other countries of the region there were *cyclical fluctuations* in the growth rather than a prolonged period of continuous fall in the growth rate.

4. The deadly combination of inequality, supply-side economics and global depression

At this point I introduce my hypothesis regarding the causes behind economic deceleration in India. In my opinion the explanation lies in a combination of three factors: (a) the problems of *poverty* and of *inequality* in the distribution of income in India, (b) the depressed state of the global economy and (c) the supply-side orientation of our domestic economic policies.

Deceleration, by definition, is a slackening of the growth rate. The growth rate of GDP is essentially driven by the rate of investment i.e. investment as percentage of GDP. A quick look at the figures of this percentage reveals a consistent downward trend. Excepting for a slight increase between 2016-17 and 2018-19, gross fixed capital formation as percentage of GDP fell almost continuously from 34.02 in 2013-14 to 28.42 in 2020-21. We may distinguish here between public and private investments. It was not surprising that over this period, when *privatisation* was the buzzword, public investment fell to a paltry 3 per cent of GDP in 2020-21 from a somewhat higher figure in 2013-14. Why privatisation failed to stimulate *private* investment, however, is a question that has baffled many an economist. In my opinion two factors were behind the apparent mystery. Partly the explanation lay in the well-known complementarity between public and private investments that has been observed in India over a long time. When

public investment (especially, in physical and social infrastructure) falls, so does private investment. The more important reason behind the sluggish behaviour of private investment, however, is to be sought in the role of *demand*, especially the demand for *consumer goods*, in the economy in inducing private investment. Investment adds to productive capacity: current investment enables producers to produce more in the future. Private producers, however, invest only if they expect to be able to sell the extra output that would flow in the *future* from the *current* investment. Demand for investment is, thus, a *derived* demand. It is derived from the demand for the goods and services that would be produced with the help of the additional productive capacity.

Economists look upon aggregate demand in an economy as the sum of *four* parts: investment, consumption, government expenditure and net exports. Investment and consumption here mean *private* investment and private consumption respectively while *public* investment and the government's consumption are lumped together under the heading 'government expenditure'. Net exports is exports minus imports. Investment here is treated as a part of demand since in order to invest an economy has to set apart a portion of the *current* period's output. Thus, investment has *dual* character. It is a part of *current* demand while also being a source of *future* supply. As explained above, however, demand for current investment is a derived demand. Thus, the reason for low current investment is to be sought in the low levels of the other *three* sources of demand: consumption, government expenditure and net exports.

In the years under consideration the constraint on the growth of *consumption* in India originated from inequality and poverty. Even when total income or GDP remains fixed (or rises very slowly), consumption demand in an economy can be boosted considerably by transferring income from the rich to the poor and the lower middle classes i.e. by *reducing* the inequality of income distribution. Similarly, *poverty reduction* would have a salutary effect on consumer demand. Most economists, however, are of the opinion that what has happened in

India in the pre-Covid decade is exactly the *opposite*: inequality has increased and so has poverty.

One reason why this is a matter of *opinion* is that there are no official data on the distribution of income in India. What we have (at least for the years upto 2011-12) are data on the distribution of inequality of *consumption expenditure*. We may, however, follow the usual practice of treating inequality of consumption expenditure as a *proxy* for inequality of income. So far as inequality of a distribution is concerned, the usual measure is the so-called Gini coefficient. It is a number computed by applying a statistical formula. The number lies between 0 and 1. The closer it is to 1, the greater is the inequality of the distribution. According to one estimate the value of the coefficient in India was 0.357 in 2011.⁵ It may seem that by international standards this was not too high a degree of inequality. The catch, however, is that most other countries report the Gini value of the distribution of *income* while the Indian Gini is that of consumer expenditure. Only a part of household income is spent on consumption. The other part is saving and since the distribution of saving is expected to be more unequal than that of consumption, commonsense tells us that the income Gini would be higher than the consumption Gini. As per one estimate, the income Gini for India in 2011-12 would be about 0.50.⁶

This was already the situation in 2011-12. For the years after 2011-12 there are no official data even for consumer expenditure! The standard sources of data on consumer expenditure in India are the 5-yearly large sample surveys conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) (previously called the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO)). *After* 2011-12 the next survey was scheduled for 2016-17. It was delayed by a year and carried out in 2017-18. For some reason, however, the government has not yet made the report of this survey public. An *unofficial* version leaked in the media alleges that, compared to the 2011-12 estimate, there has been a *rise* in the percentage of families living below the poverty line. In fact, as per this unofficial report, compared to the year 2011-12, in 2017-18 there

was been a *fall* in the *aggregate consumer expenditure* in the economy. A fall in aggregate consumption between two successive surveys of NSO (or NSSO) is something that had never happened in India over a very long period. As noted before, in 2020-21 the growth rate of the Indian economy was negative. Although we are now talking of *aggregate consumption* (rather than aggregate income or output which is measured by GDP), what we now see is a pointer toward the *possibility* that *contraction* in the Indian economy might have started as early as 2017-18. At least, this strengthens the suspicion of overestimation in the official figures for the growth rate of India in the years following 2013-14 that we have already discussed before.

While no estimate of the Gini coefficient is available even in the unofficial version of the report, there is enough circumstantial evidence to make the informal inference that over the period of time under discussion, inequality, too, increased. For instance, there are some estimates of the distribution of *household wealth* in India. The wealth of a household here is defined to be the net worth (i.e. assets minus liabilities) of the household. From the data for the years 2011 and 2017 it is seen that between these years there was a rise in the inequality of the household wealth distribution.⁷

Thus, even in the absence of official confirmation, it seems reasonable to infer that both poverty and inequality have increased in India over the past decade or so. This has constrained the growth of consumer demand. Moreover, in the Indian economy it is consumer demand that is the *major* source of demand. It accounts for more than 60 per cent of aggregate demand. Government expenditure and net exports account for the other 40 per cent.

We have already commented upon the decline in *investment* by the government under the influence of the neo-liberal philosophy. The same explanation applies to government *consumption*. Thus, the stagnation in government expenditure as a whole is also easily explained.

With all the other components of domestic demand in a state of stagnation, producers turned increasingly toward *external demand*.

They sought to increase exports. However, because of the sluggish state of global demand and stiff competition from other emerging economies (notably China), this source of demand was unable to compensate for the downward pressures coming from within the economy.

Now, it was on this pre-existing scenario of persistent deceleration of the *pre-pandemic* years that the economic effects of the pandemic were super-imposed. The factors that had so far been responsible for economic stagnation gathered even greater strength in 2020-21 and continues to do so in the current year, 2021-22. Inequality and poverty increased even further. In 2020 the middle class in India shrunk by 3.2 crore while the number of poor individuals (i.e. individuals earning US\$2 or less per day) increased by 7.5 crore.⁸ On the other hand, the state of the global economy also went from bad to worse, The growth rate of global real GDP in 2020-21 was *negative*, further limiting India's export prospects. Our policy planners, however, continued to rely exclusively on supply-side policies. It was but natural that an economy that had already been grappling with economic recession for a prolonged period of time in the pre-Covid years would find itself in the midst of a grave economic crisis in the time of Covid.

5. Taming the recession:

Scenario 1: Stagnation without inflation

The tenor of our discussion makes it clear that the general orientation of the policy package that we recommend would be toward a reduction of the intensities of the problems of inequality and poverty. The details of the policy package, however, would depend crucially on which of two alternative economic scenarios would unfold in the coming months and years. Upto the end of the year 2020-21 the rate of *inflation* in the country was under control. One possible economic scenario for the future is that this will continue to be the case. It may seem that under this scenario any of the standard methods of demand management should work. However, one of the lessons of the Indian experience of the past decade is that monetary policy actions such as

decreasing the repo rate would not by themselves suffice for the purpose. The RBI's G-SAP programme under which the central bank purchases government securities from the open market is likely to meet the same fate for the same reasons.

Past experience, however, does permit us to be more optimistic about the effects of increase in government expenditure. Way back in 2003 when the economy was on the upswing, the Indian Parliament had enacted the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act with a view to limiting the fiscal deficit by keeping government expenditure under tight control. In 2008-09 and 2009-10, however, when the ripples of the global financial crisis of 2007 reached the Indian shores, the government of the day, quite rightly, deliberately flouted the FRBM Act and undertook a massive expansion of public expenditure. One suspects that it was this, rather than the repo rate cuts that were also carried on during this time, that was responsible for the surprisingly quick recovery of the growth rate at this time. The suspicion is strengthened by the fact, noted before, that the growth rate started nose diving again from 2011-12 when public expenditure cutbacks began (while the repo rate cuts continued).

We may also mention here that *international* experience in this regard points in the same direction. Historically, there is hardly *any* instance of a successful battle against demand recession fought exclusively on the basis of interest rate policy. It is government expenditure policy that has always proved to be more potent. In fact, during the Great Depression of the 1930s in the U.S.A., while the New Deal ushered a massive *expansion* of government expenditure, monetary policy (which was controlled by the Federal Reserve System which, in turn, was *independent* of the government) of the day was *contractionary* in nature: there was actually an *increase* in interest rates. It is now acknowledged that this was a mistake on the part of the monetary policy planners and various hypotheses have been posited for explaining why or how the policy mistake was made.⁹ A detailed discussion of these hypotheses would be irrelevant for our purposes here. What I wish to emphasise here is that the positive effects of the

New Deal dominated the negative effects of the monetary policy mistakes.

We conclude that in the Indian case the appropriate economic policy under the current circumstances would be to lay more stress on fiscal actions such as an increase public expenditure. This may take the form of public investment in physical and social infrastructure, income subsidies to the poorer sections of the society or cuts in direct taxes on the middle classes.

Scenario 2: Stagflation

So much for the case in which the problem is one of stagnation rather than that of *stagflation*. Consider now the scenario where we have stagnation in the levels (or growth rates) of output and employment and, at the same time, inflation in the price level (or acceleration in the rate of inflation). In May, 2021, the inflation rate of the Consumer Goods Prices Index (CPI) was 6.2 percent which exceeded not only the targeted rate of 4 per cent but also the “upper tolerance limit” of 6 per cent. Whether accelerating CPI inflation is going to be the trend in the coming months and years is not clear at this stage. If that happens to be the case, policies appropriate to stagflation will have to be devised. In advanced economies stagflation is often caused by supply side constraints. Because of supply-side bottlenecks, output stagnates and because of the same reason supply tends to fall short of demand and there is inflation. In such a scenario demand-boosting measures will obviously make the inflation problem even worse without solving the output stagnation problem. That is why in an advanced economy *short-run* solutions to the problem of stagflation are difficult to find. The real solution is to remove the constraints on production and supply and that usually takes time. In India, however, output stagnation is, at the moment, a demand-side problem and its solution lies in boosting demand. Policies aimed at increasing demand, however, would, again, make the inflation problem worse. It seems that, as in the advanced economies, there is, again, no short run solution to stagflation. A closer look at the *pattern* of the latest bout of inflation in India, however, tells us that this inflation is

structural in character. It is mainly due to steep rises in the prices of two groups of commodities: petroleum products and food items.

In the Indian context, therefore, *microeconomic* policies addressed to specific sectors can be fruitfully added to the macroeconomic policy package. Food price inflation is due to the disruption in the supply lines caused by the lockdowns (rather than to a fall in the total output of food-grains and other food items) while petroleum product prices have been hiked under the system of administered prices. Lockdowns can be withdrawn only when the spread of the pandemic is controlled.

There is, however, a crying need for an immediate rollback of the administered prices of petroleum products. Petroleum product prices in India depend on four factors: the import cost of crude oil, the domestic cost of refining crude into the finished products, the mark-ups over cost charged by the petroleum companies in India (most of which are government-owned) and indirect taxes imposed by the central and the state governments. For price rise in the most recent months accusing fingers have been pointed at the import cost part since global crude oil prices have lately been rising. It should be noted, however, that for quite a few months since the pandemic struck the world, these global prices were actually *falling* because of the depressed demand situation in the global market. Even in that phase, however, petroleum product prices in India were rising. There does not seem to be any reason for believing that over this time period there was any significant rise in the cost of *refining* the crude. Clearly, the main factor here was the series of hikes in the rates of indirect taxes over the period from 2013-14 to 2020-21. There may also have been an increase in mark-ups. Cuts in the mark-ups and the rates of indirect taxes would, therefore, be warranted.

In the second scenario, therefore, the recommended policy package would be to combine the sector-specific inflation control measures with an overall expansion of public expenditure.

6. Taming the pandemic

Microeconomic (i.e. sector-specific) policies become even more vital when we recognise that, while the Indian economy has been in

recession for a long period even before the pandemic, it is the pandemic that has brought this lingering problem to the point of a full-blown crisis. Therefore, it is important to consider the most immediate question of these Covid times viz. how the pandemic itself can be brought under control. Apparently, the question lies outside the economist's domain. On a closer look, however, it is seen to have an economic aspect as well. Since curative medicines for the disease are not available, the only hope lies in preventing the spread of the disease. Vaccines constitute one of the main weapons in this war. Issues relating to the design and development of Covid vaccines and to their production and distribution are, therefore, vitally important.

Some of the most important issues involved here are *global* in nature. As the medical experts have been telling us all along, nobody is safe from the disease until everybody (or at least a high percentage of the world's population) has been vaccinated. Until that goal is reached, the global economy will continue to be depressed. This will limit India's growth prospects in important ways (for instance, by limiting the global demand for India's exports).

A major stumbling block on the way to achieving the desired vaccination rates at the global level is the oligopolistic power of the major producers in the world market for vaccines. There are only a handful of producers who control the lion's share of the aggregate supply of vaccines. Almost all of them are headquartered in the advanced countries. Taking advantage of their capacity to invest enormous sums in research and development, they have developed most of the vaccines that are so far available in the market. They hold *intellectual property rights* (IPR) over the vaccines. This has enabled them to do what all oligopolists do: keep supplies in the market low so that artificially high prices can be charged. Their usual defence is that this is only fair in view of their heavy financial investments in the first place. What is not mentioned is that even in countries like the U.S.A. much of these funds came either from direct government subsidies or from advance payments made by the governments for future purchases.

No less important is the question of *pricing* of the vaccines. To see the discriminatory nature of the pricing practices of the big producers of the West it suffices to cite the example of Astra Zeneca which sells for \$3.50 per dose in the European Union but is priced at \$4 per dose for Bangladesh and \$5.25 for South Africa. In India the burden of providing the vaccine to the public free of charge has fallen on the state governments. In May, 2021, the states procured Covishield, the Indian version of Astra Zeneca which is produced by the Serum Institute of India (SII) under a licensing arrangement, at the rate of Rs. 400 per dose. At the exchange rate prevailing on 1 May, 2021, this came to approximately \$5.4 per dose. Mark the irony of the situation. For a commodity produced by Indian workers on Indian soil the states in India have to pay a price that is by far higher than the price charged for the same commodity in the European Union. In the global Covid vaccine market as a whole the range of variation in prices is even more staggering. On 1 March, 2021, the per dose price ranged from \$2.19 to \$44. Clearly, the big multinationals and their local licensees set prices according to the principle of “whatever the market will bear”.¹⁰

All this has resulted in an extreme inequality in the vaccination rates achieved in the different countries. On the one hand, as a safeguard against possible *future* outbreaks of the disease, several advanced countries have stockpiled enough vaccine doses to administer *both* of the required doses to their *entire* populations *several times over*. On the other hand, there are as many as 170 low-income countries where the percentage of people who have so far received at least *one* dose of a Covid vaccine is below 1. In India the percentage is less than 25 at the moment (end-July, 2021).

One way out of this global problem would be self-reliance on the part of the vaccine have-nots. While no single vaccine-starved country in isolation can be self-reliant in this respect under the present circumstances, the scenario can change dramatically if these countries join hands. What is needed is a framework of *international cooperation*. It is often the case that a country has the intellectual resources to

develop a vaccine but lacks the relevant manufacturing capacity. (Cuba and Russia are examples.) Each country can, however, help the others in the particular *part* of the process of development, production and distribution of the vaccine in which it possesses the relevant capability. IPRs on covid vaccines should be abolished. Suggestions for such international cooperative arrangements have started coming up from a number of NGOs. Formalising such an international arrangement would, however, involve inter-governmental agreements and little progress in this direction can be discerned at the moment. Neither has such philanthropic initiatives as COVAX made much headway towards an egalitarian international distribution of covid vaccines.

It seems, therefore, that for quite some time to come, as in many other areas of policy-making, it will be a case of each country for itself in the matter of covid vaccines. From this perspective one cannot help remarking that *within* the country the vaccination rate could have, by now, been taken to a by far more satisfactory level, had there been a suitable microeconomic policy package in place. We do not lack either the intellectual resources for *developing the* vaccines or the trained manpower needed for *manufacturing them*. After all, India is known to be the “vaccine manufacturing capital;” of the world, producing, as it does, about 60 per cent of the world output of vaccines.

There have been policy failures in several respects. On the one hand, there is the question of *timing* of the policy initiatives. The steps towards encouraging vaccine development in India were taken too late in the day. Development of a safe and effective vaccine is a long process. More importantly, investment in this line is risky since at the end of the day it may turn out that the money and the time have been wasted. Yet a vaccine is a social good i.e. if a vaccine can be developed, its social benefit would exceed by far the profits of private producers. Obviously, the government should have come forward to bear a major part of the risk by subsidising the development process right from the time when the pandemic started. In fact, for a long time, in India we were content with permitting the Serum Institute of India to produce Covishield in India under licence from

AstraZeneca. AstraZeneca retained its IPR rights on the vaccine, thus preventing widespread use of the technology. Moreover, the licensing arrangement should have been looked into carefully. It was too late when it was discovered that the licence contained clauses requiring the local producer to supply a major part of the output to AstraZeneca to meet the demand in other countries.

On the other hand, *after* waking up to the exigency of the situation, we have had to speed up the regulatory process of vaccine approval. The circumstances forced us to approve the indigenously developed vaccine called Covaxin *before* the usually mandatory clinical trials were completed. That the vaccine has worked well in practice is fortuitous. However, the hasty approval has cost us dear in terms of *export* possibilities. A recent survey reveals that in a large number of countries people have reported that they would not agree to being administered Covid vaccines manufactured in some specified countries including India.

While there are now more than 70 vaccines in the world at various stages of development and regulatory approval, Covishield and Covaxin are the only two that are actually available to the public in India at the moment (July, 2021). Another indigenous vaccine, ZycovD, is likely to hit the market later this year (2021). A Russian vaccine, Sputnik V is also currently under the production process. (The Russian inventor has voluntarily abolished its IPR rights on the vaccine.) Vaccines manufactured by the U.S. multinationals, Pfizer and Moderna, are also likely to be available in India in the near future. A few other Covid vaccines also are in various stages of development in India. However, with the exceptions of the indigenous ZycovD and the Russian SputnikV, all of these other vaccines on the horizon will be subject to conditions imposed by the holders of the IPRs, thus limiting supply to the Indian market.

Clearly, a much more liberal policy of subsidisation of development and manufacture of covid vaccines by indigenous producers is the need of the hour. It is rather disappointing to note that even at this late stage the financial allocations made by the central government

on these heads are woefully inadequate. The sum of Rs. 900 crore earmarked for the purpose of vaccine development in November, 2020, seems to be a paltry sum. Moreover, as late as in April, 2021, out of this allocation, only about Rs. 500 crore was described as having been “committed”. Much greater budgetary allocation on this particular head and more active utilisation of the allocated funds is called for. The process of *manufacturing* also need to be subsidised so that prices can be kept at least at par with (and preferably lower than) those of vaccines imported from abroad or produced locally under licensing arrangements with the multinationals. As things are, indigenously developed Covaxin is by far costlier than the licensed Covishield.

7. Where will the money come from?

It remains to consider the most obvious question that I have so far swept under the rug. In most cases our recommended policies would involve increases in government expenditure. How is the resulting deficit in the government’s budget to be financed? Taxing the rich at higher rates would be the most obvious way of doing so. Given the government’s steadfast refusal to budge from the practice of supply-side economics, however, it is difficult to imagine that such a proposal would be implemented. Indeed, the only significant modification in the structure of income taxes in India in recent times has been a *cut* in the rate of *corporate* income tax. So far, this change has failed to induce the increase in investment that was hoped for. On the contrary, indirectly this has been counterproductive since this has increased the post-tax profits of the corporate houses. Since new investment is not an attractive proposition at the moment, the companies have spent this windfall income by increasing dividend payments. (It is this that explains, at least partly, why company shares have become so attractive and has led to a booming share market in an otherwise-depressed economic scenario.) Since dividend income is free of *personal* income tax and since the distribution of ownership of company shares is highly unequal, this has actually increased the *overall* equality of

the distribution of personal income in India.

In this connection I wish to comment on two of the other methods of deficit financing: printing currency and disinvestment in public sector enterprises. Advocates of the so-called “modern monetary theory” (MMT) are of the opinion that actually there is no limit on any type of government expenditure (including cash handouts) because the government (or the central bank) can always print currency.¹¹ It can take the advantage of *seigniorage* which is the government’s profit from printing currency i.e. the difference between the face value of the currency notes and their production cost. Consider, for instance, the printing of a currency note of the denomination of Rs. 500. If its cost of production (i.e. the cost of the paper, ink, printing etc.) is Rs. 5, seigniorage is Rs. 495. By incurring a cost of Rs. 5, the government can buy goods and services worth Rs. 500 from the market (or it can dole out the currency note to an individual who, in turn, can do so). MMT, thus, argues that the government has practically limitless powers to increase demand in the market.

Making use of seigniorage in this way can certainly work as an emergency measure. It should be kept in mind, however, that, allured by the possibility of ending demand recession in this painless way, the government can go too far in this matter. Even Keynesian economists such as Paul Krugman warn us against the possibility of hyperinflation in such cases.¹² My own remark on this issue is that there is a policy dilemma here. If the government declares that the cash handouts will continue indefinitely, it may soon face a hyper inflationary situation. On the other hand, if there is no such assurance, then people may practise precautionary currency hoarding. In order to deal with the uncertainty regarding the future, they may hold on to the cash rather than spending it. At least, they may try to minimise spending, thereby minimising the effects of the cash dole-outs on consumer demand.

We must also be careful in implementing proposals for *disinvestment*. Outright sale of the public sector production units does

not seem to be a good idea at the moment. In the present depressed state of the economy such sales are unlikely to be lucrative. A somewhat better course of action would be to sell small portions (say, 10 per cent) of the ownership of the public units. In practice, however, the scope of such action may also be limited. It is only the *profit-making* public enterprises whose shares are in demand. The government's long run loss from foregoing the *future* profits on this ownership share must be set off against the short run inflow of funds from the share sales. It is not clear whether, on balance, there will be a net gain.

It turns out that there *is* a course of action that may be a little less unpalatable to the policy makers. The required increase in public expenditure can be financed by resorting to *public borrowing*. In particular, the idea of floating Covid bonds i.e. bonds issued for the specific purpose of finding resources for fighting the pandemic, has good grounding in economic theory. *Prima facie*, the proposal may seem to be counterintuitive since this will take money from the hands of the buyers of the government bonds and, therefore, may *reduce* demand for commodities in the market. However, at the moment in India it is the rich and the upper middle classes that have the money to spare for the purchase of government bonds (*after* meeting their consumption expenses) and, as discussed before, at the moment they are not enthusiastic about investing it for the purposes of production. They would rather use the money for investing in the share market. It is also true that interest rates on government bonds are not nearly as high as the rates of return that people sometimes dream of earning in the share market. In practice, however, it is seen that most people do not use up *all* of their resources in buying high-return shares since very often these also involve high *risk*. They set aside a sizable part of their spareable money for the purpose of buying assets that involve low risk and, at the same time, yield rates of return that are reasonably high, at least in comparison to those on bank deposits. In this respect purchasing government bonds is an attractive proposition.

The government, however, has so far been unresponsive to the idea of expanding its borrowing programme, arguing that the level of public debt in India has already reached a high level (about 90 per cent of one year's GDP). Note, however, what we have recommended is *domestic* (rather than external) borrowing. Running up a high level of debt owed to *other* countries has its obvious risks. Why the present level of *domestic* public debt in India should be a cause for worry is, however, not clear. In fact, post-2007, many countries of the world fought the global financial crisis by letting the public debt to GDP ratio rise to high levels without facing repayment problems.

8. Summary and conclusion

In this lecture I have argued that the root of the present economic crisis in India lies as much in the economic trends of the *pre-Covid* years as in the lockdowns necessitated by the pandemic. Previous experience, both in India and in other countries, indicates that such monetary policy measures as repo rate cuts are unlikely to be of much use in fighting the crisis. What is warranted is a policy mix of economy-wide and sector-specific *fiscal* actions. The policies recommended here would involve substantial increases in government expenditure. It is shown that public borrowing would be a better way of financing the resulting deficit in the government's budget than either printing currency or disinvesting in public sector enterprises.

While in this lecture I have confined myself to the matter of *economic* policy, it goes without saying that the overall war against the pandemic must be fought on a much wider front. For instance, achieving a high vaccination rate is *necessary* but not *sufficient* for the purpose of containing the spread of the disease. Adherence to all other provisions of the Covid protocol is also a definite imperative. Similarly, if we have to be on guard against *future* outbreaks of *zoonotic* diseases such as Covid19, the tasks of maintaining ecological balance and minimising environmental pollution would come to the forefront. These are matters relating to the social will in a broader sense. A comprehensive discussion of these issues, however, would be outside the scope of this lecture.

Notes

- ¹ Countries that have posted positive growth rates in 2020 include not only China but several of our other neighbours (including Bangladesh). For the growth rates of real GDP in various countries of the world in 2020, see, for instance, *Global Economic Prospects, June 2021*, World Bank, 2021.
- ² A standard source of data for GDP and other macroeconomic variables in India for various years is the annual publication of the Reserve Bank of India, *Handbook of Statistics for Indian Economy*.
- ³ In fact, it was touted as a vindication of the merits of the policies of liberalisation and globalisation initiated in 1991.
- ⁴ See A. Subramanian, *India's GDP Mis-estimation: Likelihood, Magnitudes, Mechanisms and Implications*, CID Faculty Working Paper No. 354, Center for International Development, Harvard University, 2019.
- ⁵ For the values of the Gini coefficient in India for various years see, for instance, the World Bank website www.worldbank.org
- ⁶ See L. Chancel and T. Piketty, "India's Income Inequality, 1922 – 2015: From British Raj to Billionaire Raj?", *Review of Income and Wealth*, Vol. 65, 2019, S33 – S62.
- ⁷ See Credit Suisse, *Global Wealth Data Book 2017*, Credit Suisse Research Institute, 2017.
- ⁸ These figures are taken from a report of Pew Research Center, Washington. See www.pewresearchcenter.org. As per another report, about 23 crore Indians were pushed below the national minimum daily wage line of Rs. 375 during the first wave of Covid in 2020. Between March and December in 2020 the poverty rate in rural areas increased by as much as 20 percentage points while that in urban areas rose by 15 per cent. See Centre for Sustainable Employment, *State of Working India Report 2021*, Azim Premji University, 2021.
- ⁹ See, for instance, Milton Friedman and Anna J. Schwartz, *A Monetary History of the United States, 1867 – 1960*, Princeton University Press, 1963.
- ¹⁰ See J. Ghosh, *The Political Economy of Covid19 Vaccines*, www.TheIndiaForum.in.
- ¹¹ For a recent presentation of the MMT view, see Stephanie Kelton, *The Deficit Myth: Modern Monetary Theory and the Birth of the People's Economy*, Public Affairs, 2021.
- ¹² The MMT theorist's reply to this criticism is that the government can always control inflation by *raising* tax rates. This may, however, bring back the problem of recession that we started with. The debate is going on.

*Archaeology and Public Culture : Glimpses from Early
Twentieth Century Bengal*

Madhuparna Roychowdhury

In 1967, when A. L. Basham chose *The Wonder that was India* as the name for one of his more well-known and popular books, the great historian of ancient India, perhaps, had in his mind the wonderful spectacles that archaeological excavations in India had created since the middle of the nineteenth century.¹ Apart from enabling scholars of ancient India to seek out the more reliable foundations for the history of Indian antiquity, archaeology certainly created wonders in the mind of the ordinary public. The history of Indian archaeology, especially the work of professional archaeologists in the Archaeological Survey of India, has been the subject matter of several well-known institutional histories of archaeological research. These works reveal, among other things, how the development of the discursive field of modern archaeology since the middle of the nineteenth century has contributed substantially to the scientific reading of ancient Indian history. On the strength of the works of scholars like Dilip Chakrabarty, Upinder Singh and Nayanjot Lahiri, our knowledge about the contribution of archaeologists like Cunningham, Marshall and others to a more precise understanding of ancient Indian history has been substantially enriched.²

But archaeology as a cultural preoccupation steps out of the well-marked boundaries of scientific history. Its impact on public culture can be measured in terms of the reception of this knowledge by amateur historians, museum makers and the ordinary people. Significant differences exist between the intentions of professional

scholars and the reception of that knowledge by the ordinary public. The interaction of these two levels frequently created an element of hybridity in perceptions surrounding an archaeological site. In a whole range of works on local history in Bengal at the turn of the twentieth century, archaeological knowledge was often blended with legendary valourisation of an archaeological site, deriving images from the Puranic history.³ At this level, archaeological knowledge enters into a much larger territory of varied configurations of heritage in which archaeological imagination worked in conjunction with deep-rooted cultural assumptions. Strong emotions rooted in conflicting understanding of the heritage of a place created the context for public contestations over archaeological sites with a profusion of rival, political and cultural beliefs.

The ramification of archaeological knowledge, understood as an important foundation of cultural heritage claimed by diverse communities, also creates what Pierre Nora in his multi-volume entitled 'Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past', describes as the 'sites of memory.'⁴ Frequently archaeological legacies are surrounded by different kinds of memories, which people associate with a structure or an image. Appropriation of such sites by political communities to serve the ideological needs of their politics is also very common. The manner in which they create acrimonious and explosive situations is demonstrated by controversies surrounding the Babri mosque at Ayodhya and Bodhgaya temple at Gaya. The Ayodhya controversy has been more extensively discussed in the recent historical literature indicating the two different memories that became sources of much discord. The case of Bodhgaya also demonstrates how there can be diversities of memories associated with a monument and such diversity is capable of generating a wide range of meanings. At Bodhgaya, what was undoubtedly a Buddhist shrine and was legitimately claimed as such by different Buddhist groups, including the Mahabodhi Society, the Saivite Mahanta made out a case for their sectarian control over the temple on grounds of religious syncretism in Indian culture that had made the Buddha an avatar of Vishnu, a

perfectly nationalist argument to bolster an essentially sectarian demand.⁵ These are of course more remarkable examples of how history and heritage can be suitably deployed to serve the demands of sectarian or nationalist politics. Yet such forms of appropriation remained an endemic feature in varied local contexts. The reports of the Archaeological Survey of India carry a large variety of information about how archaeological artifacts became bones of contention between different communities on the one hand and between archaeologists and museum makers and local communities on the other. Sculptures, discovered in the forests or from under the water in a reservoir were often claimed by the local people as a part of their religious heritage, contrary to attempts by archaeologists to retrieve them as important works of art; there were numerous instances of how a local community in an attempt to establish their custodial control over local archaeological legacy resisted attempts by collectors to take them away to a distant museum. Objects quarried from one province were claimed as the property of the place in which they were found and resistance to their transfer to a distant central museum was inevitable. When the Patna Museum was set up in 1916 after the creation of the new province of Bihar and Orissa in 1912, officials of the Patna Museum started complaining about the transfer of distinguished specimens of the archaeological legacy of Bihar to the distant Indian Museum in Calcutta.⁶ External mediation, whether that of the state or of professional scholars are capable of imparting new meanings to archaeological artifacts. In a seminal essay on the Didarganj Yakshi, Tapati Guha Thakurta has suggested how a sculpture before finding a place in the museum frequently remained a part of the local religious heritage and once an expert decided on the historical value of that sculpture, the meaning of that particular artifact changes. As long as the Yakshi image from Didarganj lay under a tree and was worshipped by the local people, it existed as a deity, it was, however, transformed into a memorable object of Sunga art, once it came to the Patna museum.⁷

What is, however, important is to recognize the need for historically analyzing the creation of such sites of memory. They are often created by the state to strengthen the national spirit; they are also linked with the identity of varied communities living within a nation. In 2007 when the Indian government was celebrating the 150th year of the Revolt of 1857 as one of the early examples of anti-colonial struggle, traveling companies in England invited English tourists to visit a series of 'sites of memory' in different cities of northern India, which saw during 1857 revolt English resistance against what the English historians described as 'the marauding band of sepoys.' The difference in perception is too clear to require any further elaboration. On the other hand, a series of local histories that were written in 2007 dug up the names of unknown local heroes who never found a place in the standard historical accounts of the revolt.⁸ All this has a history of its own which underlines the connection that exists between different layers of memories and diverse forms of heritage. Awareness of these connections enables us to appreciate how archaeological sites are capable of speaking in many voices. An official standpoint runs counter to community perspectives; professional archaeology likewise is deployed by communities in such a way that public archaeology does not necessarily conform to the disciplinary canons of scientific archaeology. This is all the more so when such endeavours at the two different levels of archaeological research create ingredients for the politics of identity, whether at the national or at the local level. Writing about heritage therefore demands an awareness about the multiplicity of visions and sentiments which are not always subject to the disciplinary bindings of scientific history. Heritage, on the contrary, promises to be a much larger territory without strictly demarcated boundaries, inevitably creating an interest in what is often celebrated as the 'freedom of memory.' We would like to address in this paper some of these issues with special reference to archaeological research in Bengal in the early part of the twentieth century.

II

Travel writings, featuring in the periodical literature of Bengal of the early twentieth century can be used as a literary site in which the connection between archaeology, heritage and creative historical imagination frequently made their appearance. Archaeological explorations unraveled in concrete terms the sites of antiquity, the travel writings took them to a wider reading public inviting curious men to engage with the past in ways that often defied the standard disciplinary canons of history writing.⁹

There are copious examples in the periodical literature in which the antiquity and the greatness of a place were underlined by a free use of both archaeology and legends. Jnanendramohan Das, to cite one example, was a fairly well-known author of early twentieth century Bengal and wrote extensively on the ancient sites of northern India. Well-informed in archaeological knowledge, he wrote an extremely interesting notice on Sarnath to unravel the ancient history of the region around Varanasi. Sarnath, a pre-eminent center of Buddhism so close to Varanasi, could easily join the epic history of the region with the archaeologically tenable knowledge of an ancient urban cluster. The account unfolded the details of how Sarnath was donated to the Buddhists by the ruler of Kasi. The importance of Sarnath as a site was recognized as early as 1794 by Jonathan Duncan, the great orientalist official of the East India Company. Duncan retrieved some sculptures when the Raja of Benaras, Chait Singh's officials were rebuilding the place. After the Archaeological Survey had begun its excavations, the knowledge about the place was enriched by the discovery of a series of Buddhist sculptures. Das wanted his readers to become familiar with the great heritage of India that archaeology was exposing. In another essay, however, the same author made forays into the world of legends as well as he wrote on a religious site called Bateswar near Sikobabad in present day Uttarpradesh falling halfway between Ettawah and Tundla on the then Eastern Indian railway. There were a number of Siva temples and the main shrine of Bateswar was a lingam made of black stone that carried with it the face of the

meditating Buddha. Das of course presented it as an example of medieval syncretic iconography underlining the synthesis between Buddhism and Hinduism. The story of the place however took a different turn when the local history of Rajput lineages was invoked to account for the rise of the local principality of Bhadwar by the subjugation of the Bhil population. The Rajput local rulers subsequently appropriated the Bhil deity of Bankhandeswar to turn it into Bateswar Mahadev. All this was solid history that the author backed up with suitable citations from the archaeological reports. Yet in order to establish the pedigree of the place, he also strayed into the legend of how the blessings of Bateswar Mahadev transformed the daughter of a prince into a male heir by making possible her sexual transformation.¹⁰

Writings of such kinds, only a few examples of which have been cited, are suggestive of a particular genre of literature that contributed in a big way to the creation of a series of historical visions about the past that contributed to definitions of cultural heritage. The caves of Ajanta provide us with another noteworthy example. As archaeological exploration exposed the treasures of Ajanta, an art historian like Ordhendra Ganguly (O. C. Ganguly), visited the caves of Ajanta and on his return wrote a travel-piece 'Ajanta Guhay Dui Din' (Two days at the Ajanta caves) for *Pravasi*. Ganguly's piece was somewhat different from an ordinary travelogue. When Ganguly introduced the Ajanta caves to his readers, the narrative emerged as a reflective account of the religious and artistic history of the place, with adequate explanations how the caves, built in different stages, enable us to understand the history of the rise and fall of Buddhism in India. He felt that a proper appreciation of the paintings required adequate knowledge of texts in which the principles of Buddhism and Buddhist iconography had been spelt out. Besides emphasizing the need to establish some kind of correspondence between the textual and the archaeological, Ganguly was keen to use the frescoes as lessons for Indian artists as well, maintaining that the cave-paintings created the feeling of how the artistic achievements of the ancient painters had

established the greatness of Indian art, no less remarkable than the art of ancient Greece.¹¹

Ganguly's essay on Ajanta was certainly one of the many such travel writings on Ajanta. Its narrative style was certainly distinct from several other pieces, published around the same time, which concentrated more on the artistic heritage without offering however the travellers menu that Ganguly's essay carried.¹² Together, these accounts promoted sites like Ajanta as centers of cultural pilgrimage. The way O. C. Ganguly wrote his impressions about Ajanta, revealed how with the development of archaeological knowledge, apparently innocuous travel literature became a part of historical discourses. With regard to Ajanta, the different series of albums on Ajanta frescoes, invariably drawing on archaeological discourses over the place's antiquity and cultural significance, certainly contributed to a more acute awareness about the place. In a sense, the archaeological reconstruction of the site remained a fitting prelude to a more widespread exploration of the place by travellers and connoisseurs and in turn became connected with the way scholars like James Fergusson and Rajendra Lal Mitra fought bitterly over the antiquity of the place, or indeed with the manner in which a man like Golam Yazdani, who had been trained by Sir John Marshall, managed to impart into his popular multi-volume photographic album on Ajanta frescoes, knowledge based on a more aesthetic understanding of Indian paintings.¹³ All this underlines the argument that heritage has many layers, subject to the manifold choices made by the people in defining it. It is therefore worthwhile to explore how our knowledge about archaeological heritage has been shaped by varied dimensions of its making, including popularization of the site through travelogues and albums.¹⁴ There is indeed a point where scientific archaeology and culturally structured notions of heritage converged to produce images with which we associate the heritage of the place.

III

Archaeological imagination, however, did not remain limited to a handful of professional and literate men; excavation of archaeological

sites created a wide-spread interest among the larger public. The reports of the Archaeological Survey carry extensive information about how members of the local intelligentsia took initiatives in setting up local museums or accumulating artifacts in their households. All this is suggestive of a kind of public archaeology which does not have any necessary conflict with the disciplinary parameters of scientific archaeology. The Varendra Research Society is an appropriate example of how local public initiatives resulted in scientifically organized archeological research. Some of the books that the Society published became important foundations for the knowledge of Bengal's ancient history. These initiatives gradually came to fruition in subsequent decades to create a corpus of knowledge, which during the early part of the twentieth century became harnessed with the historical configurations of Bengal's regional identity.¹⁵

Professional history writing that used archaeological data, sought to situate Bengal as a region in the larger map of ancient Indian polity and culture. This required in the first instance clarifying the dynastic history of the region with the local monarchy emerging as a political symbol of some importance. *Gaur-Rajamala*, written by Ramaprasad Chanda on the basis of the newly acquired copper plates implicitly tried to identify the kingdom of Gaur as the primary nucleus of a political system that covered a wider region.¹⁶ Such concerns were also manifest in an earlier publication by Rakhai Das Banerjee, whose book *Banglar Itihash*, published in 1914 apart from the author's commitment to writing a factually correct history, was also a cultural statement in which the anxiety of the scholar to integrate the history of Bengal with the history of Aryavarta was manifestly clear. Within a few decades after Rakhai Das Banerjee's seminal work, archaeological knowledge created a greater understanding of the politics and culture of Bengal as a region, which developed its distinctiveness despite being a part of the overarching north Indian political and cultural hemisphere. The copper plates enabled historians to define the boundary of the region and much of this early twentieth century research was assembled in the massive collection of essays, published

by the Dacca University in 1943. H. C. Raychaudhuri's piece on historical geography in the volume, edited by R. C. Majumdar used varied nomenclatures from the copper plates to show how the territorial identity of Bengal was gradually formed in the course of the early-medieval period. Defining the political geography of ancient Bengal in an attempt to show how the regional identity of Bengal had evolved through historical times acquired an additional urgency once the attempt to partition Bengal threatened to fracture the politically scared boundary of the province. Epigraphic information, especially a limestone Brahmi inscription found at Mahasthan tried to figure out the region's relationship with an imperial centre in northern India. The epigraphic information collated in Majumdar's massive volume called attention to a second phase of political evolution between the end of the sixth century and the early part of the ninth century, when the region experienced the collapse of the Gupta hegemony and the rise of the regional political formations. The region lying west of the Bhagirathi channel were dominated by geo-political divisions between Gauda and Radha, while Vanga came to denote wide areas of eastern Bengal, especially in the inscriptions of the Sena period. In addition, the term Vangala found mention in several epigraphic records. The terms Upa-Vanga and Anuttara-Vanga, implying the regions around Barisal and Jessore are suggestive of the rise of Gauda-Vanga as a distinct regional category, covering roughly the area that eventually fixed the territorial boundary of the Bengal sultanate.¹⁷ At a time when the territorial identity was threatened, history provided intellectuals with the necessary information to uphold it. This was not the only way that history served the politics of regional identity. The cultural statements made in Niharranjan Ray's *Bangalir Itihas: Adi Parba* also drew attention to the distinctiveness of regional culture, especially in the field of religion and sculptural art.¹⁸ The discussion on Greater India in the Asiatic Society during the 1930s was as much inspired by the keenness to establish the glorious history of the region in ancient times. At a time when the intelligentsia of the province was seized with a feeling of predicament, especially after the transfer

of capital of British India to Delhi, the search for the glorious history of the Bengali people acquired a distinctively political meaning. The journal of the Greater India Society carried essays which tried to explore how Sanskrit texts, inscriptions written in Sanskrit language, temples and sculptures of gods and goddesses found in different regions of South-East Asia underlined the civilizing mission of the colonizing Indians. The deep-rooted nationalist undertone is clearly audible. Bengali scholars like Akshay Maitreya wished to see a creative role of the maritime Bengalis, in what was proclaimed as a civilizing mission. He claimed that a prince from Bengal sailed to Bali and established a Hindu kingdom. The Hindu ruler of Java was also from Bengal. The imprint of identity politics on such kinds of history writing made high academic research as much a part of weaving political rhetoric as the works of untrained scholars were.¹⁹ In the latter case the link was less obscured by statements and assertions, which did not require any sophisticated use of evidence. This is the moment when we turn to a different kind of public archaeology which lay scattered in a whole range of popular texts.

IV

Archaeological notices in popular periodicals, which carried information about important archaeological sites, were frequently written by trained scholars as well. Some of them also took pains to travel around their home districts, wrote brief travelogues seeking to bring unknown sites to public notice, and prepare a list of sculptures and artifacts which deserved retrieval by the Archaeological Survey. One can cite the examples of scholars like Akshay Kumar Maitreya or Rajani Kanta Chakrabarti, to name only a few among many others in Bengal who dwelt upon such themes, to call attention to the ancient relics of Bengal. Rajani Kanta Chakrabarti was a local historian. A teacher in the Government school at Maldah in North Bengal, he was also associated with the Varendra Research Society at Rajshahi in Eastern Bengal. The Society was responsible for local initiatives towards the archaeological explorations of the ancient settlements of

Northern Bengal, known as Varendra with Pundravardhana demanding historical attention as one of the most ancient cities of the region. Chakrabarti, apart from writing a history of Gauda in the vernacular, also contributed regularly to the periodicals, which had a wide reach among the Bengali reading public. In a small notice that he wrote for *Pravasi*, the well known Bengali periodical of the early twentieth century, about his trip to Pandua, in Maldah district, he sought to bring before public view the historical relics of the place.²⁰ His more illustrious contemporary and the major figure in the society, Akshay Kumar Maitreya wrote a similar piece on the ancient history of Maldah district in which he tried to establish its antiquity by linking it with ancient Pundravardhana. He was regretting the fact that the attention of the visitors was entirely monopolized by the relics of the Sultanate whereas the place was strewn with numerous ancient relics calling for the attention of the Archaeological Survey.²¹

This was certainly public archaeology with a good deal of difference from what we had identified as cohabitation between legend and history. Frequently many such writers prepared long list of archaeological sites demanding government's intervention in retrieving the ancient history of the land. Dipesh Chakraborty has recently written a kind of intellectual biography of Sir Jadunath Sarkar in which he has introduced a distinction between what he called 'public scientific' and 'cloister academic.'²² The idea obviously enough suggest the presence in the public domain of authors and history men, who were not professional historians but who made a significant contribution to the dissemination of the new scientific approach towards history. Consider a man like Akshay Kumar Maitrya who was lawyer by profession but who at the same time was a major exponent of scientific archaeology and scientific history during the 1890s, sometime before Sarkar's generation took over the mantle of writing scientific history. Maitreya's scienticism embroiled him in a series of controversies on the literary use of history. His two main vernacular historical pieces, *Siraj-ud-daulah* and *Mir Qasim*, which he wished to publish as a nationalist corrective to the misrepresentation

of their characters by English authors, joined issues with Nabin Chandra Sen and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee for maligning the character of Siraj and Mir Qasim, who for Maitreya deserved the status of nation's heroes.²³

This was also the time when almost all over India archaeological knowledge was creating a more accurate sense about India's antiquity. In order to appreciate the popular dimension of archaeological knowledge as it was imprinted in the literary culture of the time, it is also necessary to consider a series of local histories in which archaeological relics and monuments were often associated with Puranic legends and epic-stories. It is usual to find among the local population the practice of identifying old structures with stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. In several places, as we go by the archaeological reports, ancient ruins were described as a place of Raja Virat, where the Pandavas found refuge during their exile. This point can be more elaborately stated by referring to the history of one of the leading archaeological sites of undivided Bengal in the early part of the twentieth century. Mahasthan, the modern name of ancient Pundravardhana, derived its greatness from both archaeological documentation and local legends. By examining how the archaeological reading of the place eventually marginalized the legendary aspects of that ancient settlement, it is easy to locate the encounter between scientific archaeology and public archaeology.²⁴ It is easy to surmise that in view of the local ruins the local population in the Bogra district developed the habit of describing the ruins as 'Mahasthan' or 'Great Place'. The place came under the scanner of modern archaeology, when Alexander Cunningham during his explorations in eastern India was bent on discovering the ancient city of Pundranagara in these ruins. Cunningham at that time was moving from one Buddhist site to another, taking instructions from Hi-uen Tsang's travels. During 1879-80, he prepared a long report of a tour in Bihar and Bengal, covering the region between Patna and Sonargaon in eastern Bengal. He entered Bengal through the medieval sites of Gaur and Pandua on which the report had much to say but one of his

main objectives was to seek for the site of the ancient capital of Pundravardhana. Described by Hi-uen Tsang, 'of the name I could find no trace but I was fortunate enough to discover the site of the ancient city of Mahasthan on the Karotoya river.' The proof of the identification rests partly on the agreement of the distance and bearing from the neighbourhood of Rajmahal and partly on the immediate vicinity of Bhasu vihar, which corresponds exactly with Hi-uen Tsang's account of the Buddhist monastery of po-shi-po. (i.e. Bhasu or Bhaswa), four miles to the west of the capital.²⁵

Of course the great monastery by then had been completely ravaged by brick hunters. Yet the name Mahasthangarh conjured up the ancient memory of a fortified capital as Cunningham recorded the manner in which the ramparts and the gates suggested its status as a principal city of the region. The actual excavation of Mahasthan had to wait till 1921 when K.N.Dikshit's leadership as the superintendent of the eastern circle provided a new impetus to Bengal archaeology. In 1920 Dikshit surveyed a closely proximate ruin known as 'Behular Basha', where there were traces of walls constructed of bricks measuring ten and fifteen inches and thus of manifest antiquity.²⁶ The excavation was subsequently undertaken by the middle of the decade by which time there was an increasingly public demand, especially from the Varendra Research Society for a proper archaeological mapping of Bengal and predictably the attention of the Survey once again became focused on some of the ancient cities in Varendra or northern Bengal. The consequence, of course, was two major undertakings which consequently unraveled the two ancient cities of Pundravardhana and kotibarsha or Bangarh. The explorations also revealed the existence of two ancient commercial highways which connected northern Bengal with Vikrampur in eastern Bengal. Dikshit's inference was that one of these ancient roads connected the still undiscovered city of Pundravardhana, probably hidden under the ruins of Mahasthan with other ancient towns of Varendrabhumi. Some of the old sites in Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Bagura, which suggested the possibility of a linkage with Pundravardhana, had already been explored by

Cunningham. With a growing history movement under the auspices of several local historical societies, there was an urgency to document archaeologically some of the most ancient settlements in northern Bengal, including Devikot in Bangarh that engaged the attention of Bengal archaeologists since the early exploration by Cunningham. It represented the ancient city of Kotivarsha, the seat of the district or vishaya under Pundravardhanabhukti in the Gupta empire.²⁷ At the time when the ancient archaeology of northern Bengal was systematically explored, a major impetus, of course, came from the local literati and historical societies, which, to use Dipesh Chakroborty's characterization, qualified for, what is labeled as 'public scientific' and thanks to such initiatives, we have from the reports of the Archaeological Survey extensive information about the collaboration between the Survey's officials and the educated public. Once systematic excavations of these ancient settlements had begun from the decade of the 1920s, the local intelligentsia was fed with scientific information about these ancient cities. In 1930 archaeologists became certain about the ruins of the ancient city of Pundravardhana at Mahasthangarh from a Brahmi inscription of the Maurya period.²⁸ The Mahasthan excavation revealed the existence of a fortified town covering a radius of about five miles. The main site, surrounded as it was by a number of smaller ones within that radius, yielded significant sculptural remains. Such expansion of archaeological knowledge came to confirm the description of Mahasthan as a holy city on the bank of the river Karotoya. *Karotoya Mahatmya*, a twelfth century Sanskrit text described the city as Paundrakhetra, where God Vishnu had his permanent abode, which indicates that this was a flourishing center of Brahmanical culture, which was rebuilt periodically by the local Gupta rulers and the Pala kings.

All this was certainly the important archaeological history of a cultural site but public archaeology, which seeks to go beyond the limited parameters of scientific archaeology, has to come to terms with the Puranic story linked with these settlements. The relationship between these two different trajectories of archaeological knowledge

where scientifically acquired information comes face to face with legends and myths, can be grasped from the history of Mahasthan as a site. The archaeological history, of course, began with Cunningham, but before it all began in, we have an entirely different account of Mahasthan in a book entitled *Setihash Bagurar Brittanta* by a local school teacher, Kalikamal Sarvabhauma in 1861. Sarvabhauma's local history draws attention to the divergent meanings that archaeological sites are capable of creating and when a site goes through the transition from the Puranic to the scientific, meanings also undergo changes. For Sarvabhauma, Mahasthan was a mound that represented Paundrakhetra of the ancient Hindu tradition that was established by Parashuram, the sixth incarnation of Vishnu. It had evolved through stages to reach a point when the city came under the control of the asuras. It is possible as W.W. Hunter interprets it, that the story was alluding to the ascendancy of the Buddhist rulers in the region.²⁹ This Puranic memory, as far as Mahasthan was concerned, cohabited with an equally unfathomable epic memory that the place was once the seat of King Virata of the *Mahabharata* and the memory was perpetuated through the identification of certain walls and ramparts, known as *Bhimer Jangal*, meaning structures constructed by the second Panadava. The Parashuram story came once again in a new format when Sarvabhauma referred to a kind of legendary historical memory about the Kshatriya ruler Parashuram being vanquished by an emissary of the Prophet Muhammad. This Hindu ruler was defeated and destroyed by Shah Sutan, a Turkish Prince, who in a bloody battle killed Parashuram and his daughter Shila Devi. It is easy to find similar imagery by way of such peculiar interpretation of the ruins not just in Mahasthan but in many other part of India. This is not unusual to find Virata's cowshed or Bhima's water reservoir (Bhima Kunda) in a variety of places. This was the kind of Puranic history that Cunningham was willing enough to record. He mentioned the battle between Parashurama and Shah Sultan in which Shah Sultan was killed and ultimately Parashurama was also killed. Eventually the place became depopulated, covered with jungles, and people left,

purportedly tyrannized by the Yavanas. There certainly was a degree of depopulation in north Bengal and people started moving away, as Eaton has shown, to the more alluvial and fertile areas of eastern Bengal, where a great deal of land reclamation was taking place under the leadership of these Sufi saints.³⁰ It is a truism that such sentiments are suggestive of how Islam became a dominant religion in the region to a point, where even Lord Siva advised a Brahmin to become a Yavana in order to get his child.

Frequently, such fabulous stories surrounded an edifice or an archaeological site to create an important basis of popular historical imagination, something akin to certain aspects of public archaeology. It is indeed possible to interpret such stories as articulation of the extension of the Brahmanical cultural frontier or alternatively as the gradual conquest of Islam in Bengal. Once scientific archaeology began to receive priority over such stories, such popular histories became marginal entities. It is in this changed intellectual environment in which the canons of 'new history writing' were circulating among the literate public that a site like Mahasthan began to acquire meanings which did not have any link with the old history. For example, in the gazetteer of the Bagura district by J. N. Gupta, the Puranic story had completely disappeared. Gupta's project was to establish Mahasthan as a Buddhist site. Using an unpublished report of an archaeologically minded District Collector, namely Umesh Chandra Batabyal, Gupta succeeded in establishing Mahasthan as an important seat of power in the region under the Palas, whose allegiance to Buddhism made the region studded with Buddhist relics.³¹ The rest of the story is well known. We know that from 1920s explorations and excavations in Mahasthan took place on a much larger scale. The entire Varendra area, which had by then stolen the limelight in Bengal archaeology, began to be explored more extensively by the Archaeological Survey. But this was accompanied by a good deal of public interest in private archaeological mapping and exploration by local historical societies. Varendra Research Society was the most distinguished of these outfits but there were others too that operated from the district towns, which

constituted a kind of history movement in the small towns of Bengal. These societies, along with a few archaeology-minded individuals conducted excavations and assembled images and inscriptions in make-shift local museums. In 1921 the Pradyumnasayar excavations by the Varendra Research Society yielded some very significant images, which still feature as major items of display in the Varendra Research Society museum at Rajshahi. From South Bengal, we have the example of Kalidas Datta, who was active during the 1930s and created a very large collection of antiquities, which he donated to the Calcutta University Museum.³² D. B. Spooner, who was then the head of the Eastern Circle of ASI, in a note in 1910, which is also reproduced in the Survey report of 1910, wrote that he had become sensitive to the greater public demand for greater excavations and explorations in Northern Bengal. He made a list of the sites that deserved the Survey's attention, although during the decade, the Survey became far more interested in excavating Pataliputra and Nalanda. The golden age of Bengal archaeology had to wait till the 1920s, when K.N.Diskshit took over the charge of the eastern circle.

Then what happens to this public culture of history, which has only a thin line of demarcation with wild imagination? Do they entirely leave the stage or do they remain, to bother us in the pages of local histories written by local antiquarians? Local historians, however, as twentieth century unfolded, were required to engage with the new canons of history writing with the result that there are two different kinds of local histories. Jogendranath Gupta's *History of Vikrampur* shows evidence of professional skill in interpreting archaeological data and in collating them in his book. By contrast, a book on Subarnagram by Swarup Chandra Roy or on Bakhargunj by Rohini Sen carried a greater amount of hybridity in the sense of blending myths and legends in the historical narrative. Such hybrid histories survived in a series of local narratives, that remained an important facet of public culture.

V

The discussion of public culture of history cannot ignore its visual representations in the museums; indeed, the public celebration of archaeological heritage always finds its most useful place in museums. Museums of course, celebrate different things in different contexts. For example, the purpose of the National Science Museum movement in India was to foreground the achievements of modern India in the fields of science and technology. Very different, however, was the museum movement in the early twentieth century, when a plethora of archaeological museums wished to establish credentials of India's ancient heritage. Needless to point out that the question of India's cultural identity was entangled with the conception of Indian heritage. In the early twentieth century in India the museum world was dominated by archaeological museums, some of which, especially the site museums were directly managed by the archaeological survey but there were during this period a series of initiatives by private individuals, historical societies and local communities to set up local and provincial museums as a part of their commitment to historically narrate the great cultural feats of Indian nations in ancient times.³³

The story of the impact of such cultural politics on the museum world in India has to begin with the establishment of the archaeological section in the Indian Museum. Designed by Alexander Cunningham, the archaeological gallery in the early days during the last quarter of the nineteenth century was dominated entirely by Buddhist specimens, which included the famous Bharhut railings and a large number of Gandhara Buddha images. These kinds of images which had so much of accent on retrieving the Buddhist history of India, something which we may call Cunningham's Buddha mania, was a consequence of the overwhelming emphasis that Cunningham as the first Director-General of the Archaeological Survey of India placed on exploring and excavating the Buddhist sites. Cunningham's choice was however not purely academic. He was at the same time keen to find out in the pages of history the Buddhist challenges that the powerful brahmanical

culture in India had faced in the past.³⁴ In the early twentieth century however, once the upkeep of the archaeological section became the responsibility of Indian archaeologists, a very substantial portion of the archaeological gallery began to wear the look of a mansion of gods. As we recount the history of R. P. Chanda's drive for replenishing the archaeological collection, we see a very subtle and silent shift towards an equal amount of priority being given to collection and display of brahmanical sculptures. What is more important is that such collections of brahmanical sculptures and images, whether in Calcutta's Indian Museum or elsewhere, became the foundation for the writing of India's art history.³⁵

This brings us to the question of how regional identity and political loyalty in a multi-cultural society like India added certain distinctive features to museum making in the regional context. One of the major examples of this association between regional cultural identity and musealisation of archaeological specimens is the so-called Rajputana museum at Ajmer. Once described as a National Museum of Rajputana, the museum was set up by one great historian of Rajput history. Gauri Shankar Hirachand Ojha, who wrote the famous *Rajputane Ki Itihas*, along with a number of local histories of regions that constituted the political configuration of Rajasthan, was a deeply nationalist scholar, who wrote almost all his works in the Hindi language. Early in his career, he made a programmatic statement about the need for rewriting Rajput history on the basis of archaeological evidence and purging it off the literary extravagance of the Rajput ballads that had been used by a man like James Tod as the main source materials for his famous *Annals and Antiquities of Rajputana*. Yet, Ojha's search for an authentic history of Rajputana was contaminated by the so-called nationalist search for the ancient kshatriyas. This mix of motives, blending the academic with the national, took him to distant places and accumulates a collection at Udaipur during the early part of his career. Finding that the Rana of Udaipur had little interest in the clan's ancient pedigree, he shifted

to Ajmer and with some support from the Archaeological Survey, established the Ajmer Museum. Ojha represented the prevailing nationalist assumptions about Rajput history in describing them as the descendants of the ancient Khatriyas. It is however easy to locate a battle of ideas in the formation of the Ajmer museum between those who wished to search for the ancient pedigree of the Rajputs and others for whom the Rajputs represented the loyal feudatories of the Mughal Empire and the British Raj. Ojha's arduous travels in the interior region of Rajputana to assemble inscriptions and images in the museum are easy to explain. To project the ancient glory of the Rajput clans was his main objective, which in a way was an attempt to remind the Indians of their martial prowess against a background in which the imperial ideologues consistently pointed towards their lack of military acumen. There was however an alternative mission articulated by Vogel, the Director-General of Archaeology in 1911, which visualized the museum primarily as a collection of artifacts that would underline the Rajput Princes' Mughal connection and their incorporation in the British Imperial order. Competing identities about the Rajputs made for conflicting historical visions and their visualization in the Ajmer Museum.³⁶

There were a number of other archaeological museums, usually described as provincial museums in different regions each of which has a similar story to tell about its making. The Mathura Museum, which was a collection of sculptures of the Mathura school of sculptural art, had been an essentially private initiative of a man called Pandit Radhakrishna in the course of the early twentieth century, which was seen as a provincial museum of the United Province but a more interesting story about how regional identity directly impinged on the establishment and management of the museum comes from Patna. The establishment of the Patna Museum synchronized with the creation of the province of Bihar and Orissa. The inception of the Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society also celebrated Bihar's freedom from the control of Bengal to the extent that some of the

historians from Bihar started describing the Palas, generally the heroes of the Bengal historians as rulers from Bihar, unmindful of the fact that such territorial boundaries did not exist in ancient times. Moreover this was also the period when D. B. Spooner on behalf of the Archaeological Survey of India started the excavation at Kumrhar in search of the ancient city of Pataliputra. Liberally funded by the Ratan Tata Foundation, which was anxious to see Persian influence in the architecture at Pataliputra, the Kumrhar excavation promised for the Patna Museum a whole crop of local artifacts. Patna Museum in a way became a cultural symbol of Bihar's distinct identity. Such preoccupation was writ large in the correspondence that the functionaries of the Patna Museum with the officials of the Archaeological Survey. In the first place, they asserted the custodial rights of all archaeological materials that had been excavated in Bihar and had earlier been transferred to the Imperial museum in Calcutta. Regarding the new archaeological finds, the Patna Museum functionaries wished to make sure that they are not transferred to any other part of India, especially Calcutta. By then, of course, the imperial status of the Indian Museum in Calcutta was to some extent weakened by the transfer of capital to Delhi and in the course of the 1920s we come across heated exchanges in letters between the Curator of the Patna Museum and Ramaprasad Chanda about the preemptive claim that the Imperial museum always had over the archaeological specimens from every part of India.³⁷

The next momentous event in this history was the foundation of the National Museum in the immediate aftermath of independence. The background story however gives us a more nuanced picture of cultural politics in the museum world in late colonial India. In fact the origin of the National museum can be traced to the initiative by British Imperial officials to set up a central imperial collection in the new capital in Delhi. This was originally a proposal made by Sir John Marshall in 1912 which sought to undermine the special status of Calcutta's Indian Museum. The establishment of an Imperial museum

in Delhi with archaeological specimens pouring into it from all the diverse sites in the subcontinent was defended on the ground that the new capital in Delhi needed an institution of this kind. Marshall's idea however remained essentially a paper project in view of the war situation from 1916 and although the plan was revived during the 1930s in the form of a Federal Museum project by Kashinath Dikshit, such initiatives actually came to fruition only during the prelude to independence. This was the time when a series of academic and cultural bodies came up with the proposal for a National Museum in the capital of independent India, which was to match the greatness of the new nation. Proposals came from anthropologists from Bombay and from Kalidas Nag, the Secretary of the Asiatic Society of Calcutta. Nag's elaborate proposal included the idea of a National Museum alongside a national park and a national gallery of modern art. Finally, just before independence, the Survey under Mortimer Wheeler started seriously working on it placing great emphasis on archaeology, history and anthropology.³⁸

VI

As we try to wind up this discussion, it is time to return to the question that we wished to address in this essay. Proceeding from the assumption that history generates larger cultural concerns that are not subject to the disciplinary canons of history writing, this essay tried to figure out, on the basis of information from archaeology, the perennial tension between historical accuracy on one side and historical imagination on the other. This tension, however, does not remain confined to intellectual culture alone; it permeates many other spheres of visual and performative culture, implying obviously literature, painting, theater or films. As far as this essay is concerned, an attempt has been made to situate archaeology as a modern form of knowledge in the domain of what may be labeled as a 'public intellectual culture'. Much of the relationship between the two dimensions of history writing came to be shaped by the rise of, what at the turn of the twentieth century, was frequently described as a

'new history'. How the relationship between the old history and the new history evolved, this seems to be an important question to figure out the nature of the historical discipline. It is also in this context that memory studies acquired some relevance. We have already indicated how different kinds of interventions create varied sites of memory. Such intellectual creation itself demands appropriate historical analysis. It is common knowledge that an event encapsulates different kinds of memories but it is difficult to spell out clearly which one of these will receive priority at which point of time. The fuzzy character of memory, therefore, poses a major problem for historians. Since they are connected with competing imaginations about the past in different cultural fields and whenever such imaginations completely disregard the importance of facticity, the only repose that is left for historians is the authenticity of evidence. This is a problem which can never be resolved but it poses a challenge to the historian for him to analyze the relationship between these two forms of activities. If you are looking for a concluding statement in this essay, this is what it is. Certainly it is falling short of a statement but it is opening new passageways for cultural historians to study the public ramifications of historical knowledge.

Notes

¹ Basham, A.L, *Wonder That was India*, 1967, reprint,1999.

² Chakrabarty, Dilip. K, 1988, *A History of Indian Archaeology from the beginning to 1947*, Delhi, pp. 24-27; Singh, Upinder,2004, *The Discovery of Ancient India: Early Archaeologists and the Beginning of Archaeology*, Delhi; Lahiri, Nayanjot, 2012, *Marshalling the Past: Ancient India and its Modern Histories*, Delhi.

³ Roychowdhury, Madhuparna, 2015. *Displaying India's Heritage: Archaeology and the Museum Movement in Colonial India*, New Delhi.(Chapters 3 and 5).

⁴ Pierre Norah's views are summarized in the introduction, 'Between Memory and History.' See also the review essay by Hie-tam Ho Tai, entitled 'Remembered Realms: Pierre Norah and French National Memory', *The American Historical Review*, Vol.106. No.3, (June, 2001), pp. 906-922

⁵ Lahiri, Nayanjot, 'Bodhgaya: An Ancient Buddhist Shrine and Its Modern History', pp. 75-99, *Marshalling the Past: Ancient India and its Modern Histories*, Delhi,2012; in addition, Tapati Guha Thakurta's work, *Monuments, Objects, Histories: Institutions of Art in Colonial and Post-Colonial India*, Delhi, 2004,

also deals with this controversy in chapter 3 and 9 of the book.

- ⁶ Roychowdhury, op.cit. 2015, pp. 120-184
- ⁷ Tapati Guha Thakurta, 'The Endangered Yakshi: Careers of an Ancient Art Object in Modern India', in *History and the Present*, edited by Partha Chatterjee and Anjan Ghosh, 71-107, Delhi, 2002.
- ⁸ A sampling of new commemorative writings, some of which like the easy by Badri Narayan suggested new lines of enquiry, is available in *Rethinking 1857*, edited by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, New Delhi, Orient Longman, 2007
- ⁹ Roychowdhury, op.cit. 2015, pp. 235-322.
- ¹⁰ Das, Jnanendramohan, 1906-1907, B.S 1313. 'Sarnath', *Pravasi*; see also 1910-1911, B.S. 1317. 'Bateshwar and Bankhandeswar' in *Pravasi*.
- ¹¹ Ganguly, Ordhendra Coomer, 'Ajanta Guhai Dui Din' (Two days in the Ajanta Caves), *Pravasi* 4, (1904-05 [B.S.1311]: 453-57.
- ¹² Gupta, Samarendra Nath, 1915, B.S.1322, 'Ajanta Guhar Chitraboli' (The Paintings of Ajanta), *Pravasi*.
- ¹³ Yazdani, Golam, *Ajanta*, Part I to IV, Hyderabad, 1932-1952.
- ¹⁴ Roychowdhury, Madhuparna, 2010-11, 'Interpreting Heritage: Ajanta in Historical Imagination', in the Journal of Ancient Indian History, Calcutta University, Vol. XXVII, PP. 262-280; See also Roychowdhury, 2012, 'Ajanta: The Making of a Site', in *Aspects of Indian Culture*, in Sudipa Ray Bandyopadhyay (et.al.), Kaveri Books, New Delhi, pp.115-124.
- ¹⁵ Roychowdhury, 2015, op.cit, has extensively discussed the kind of public interest in ancient sites that archaeological explorations had created in early twentieth century Bengal.
- ¹⁶ Chanda, Ramaprasad, *Gaur Rajamala 1912*, published by Varendra Research Society.
- ¹⁷ Majumdar, R.C. (ed.), *History of Bengal*, Vol. 1, (Dacca University, 1943); the work for the volume had begun in 1935 and was completed I 943, a period when Bengal's regional identity was seriously undermined by the demand for inclusion in Pakistan of the Muslim majority districts of Eastern Bengal with the result that a historian like Morrison, Barrie. M. who wrote his book *Political Centers and Cultural Regions in Early Bengal* in 1970, places a greater emphasis on sub-regional identity, instead of the overarching regional identity that the nationalist historians of Bengal were so eloquent about.
- ¹⁸ Ray, Niharranjan *Bangalir Itihas*, 1942.
- ¹⁹ For a discussion of the Greater India idea, see Susan Bayly, 'Imagining 'Greater India': French and Indian Visions of Colonialism in the Indic mode' in *Modern Asian Studies* 38, 3 (2004) pp. 703-744; and Kwa Chong-Guan's introductory essay, 'Visions of Early Southeast Asia as Greater India' in Kwa Chong-Guan (ed.), *Early Southeast Asia viewed from India: An Anthology of Articles from the Journal of the Greater India Society*; Sugata Bose, *Hundred Horizons; The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*, (Permanent Black,

New Delhi, 2006), carries a detailed treatment of Tagore's visit to South-East Asia and the context in which the poet, inspired by the sight of ancient architecture of the region was persuaded to think about the footprints of his ancient ancestors; Niharranjan Ray, *Brahmanical Gods in Burma* was originally published by Calcutta University in 192 and was later reprinted from Leiden in 2001.

- ²⁰ Chakrabarti, Rajani Kanta, 1903-1904, B.S. 1310. 'Pandua Bhraman' (Travels in Pandua) in *Pravasi*.
- ²¹ Maitreya, Akshay Kumar 'Puratan Maldaha' (Old Maldah), 1907-1908, B.S 1314 in *Pravasi*.
- ²² Chakraborti, Dipesh *The Calling of History: Jadu Nath Sarkar and His Empire of Truth*, Delhi, 2015, pp. 6-9.
- ²³ See Chowdhuri, Rosinka 'History in Poetry: Nabin Chandra Sen's *Palashir Yuddha* (Battle of Palashi) (1875) and the Question of Truth' in Razi-uddin Aqil and Partha Chatterjee, *History in the Vernacular*, Delhi, 2010. Akshay Kumar Maitreya's vituperative against Bankim was first expressed in a small piece of essay, which was published in *Bharati* in 1897. For a reprint of the essay, see Patra, Samir and Chakraborty, Arindam (eds.) *Itihas o Sahitya: Prosongo Rabindranth O Akshay Kumar*, (Kolkata, 2012).
- ²⁴ Our attention to this problem was first drawn in the Professor Sushobhon Sarkar Memorial Lecture of 2019 by Professor Bhaskar Chakraborty in the lecture entitled 'Itihas, Smriti O Sanskriti: Bingso Satabdir Prarombhe Banglai Itihas Charcha' [History, Memory and Culture: History writing in Bengal in the Early Twentieth Century], Paschim Banga Itihas Samsad.
- ²⁵ Cunningham, Alexander *Archaeological Survey of India: Report of a Tour in Bihar and Bengal in 1879-80, From Patna to Sonargaon*, Vol. XV. See particularly the preface to the volume for a statement of Cunningham's overall objectives
- ²⁶ Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1920-21.
- ²⁷ Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1928-29 for an extensive reportage on the main archaeological sites that the Survey under Kashinath Dikshit's leadership was then excavating.
- ²⁸ Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India for the year 1930-31.
- ²⁹ Hunter, W.W *Statistical Account of Bengal*, Vol.8: *Statistical Account of Bogra District*, p.192-195, Calcutta, 1875.
- ³⁰ See the Introduction of Eaton, Ric.
- ³¹ District Gazetteer of Eastern Bengal and Assam—Bogra, Allahabad, 1910.
- ³² Basak, Bishnupriya 'In Pursuit of the Past: The Development of an 'Official' and 'Academic' Archaeology in Bengal', *Studies in History*, 23, 2, (2007) pp.328-331 writes about the great spurt in archeological excavations in Bihar in the second decade of the twentieth century.
- ³³ Roychowdhury, 2015, op.cit, see Chapter 3 entitled, "Archaeology and Museum Making in Colonial India."

- ³⁴ Abu Imam, 'Alexander Cunningham (1814-1893): First Phase of Indian Archaeology', in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, No. 3/4 (October, 1963), pp. 194-207.
- ³⁵ Roychowdhury, Madhuparna 'The Mansion of the Gods: Ramaprasad Chanda and Archaeology in the Indian Museum', *Journal of the Asiatic Society*, Vol.L11, No.4,2010
- ³⁶ Roychowdhury, Madhuparna 'The Museum Makers', *Journal of the Ancient Indian History*, Vol. XXVI—2009-10.
- ³⁷ Roychowdhury, Madhuparna 2015, op.cit, pp. 161-178.
- ³⁸ Roychowdhury, Madhuparna 'Locality, Province and the Nation': The Museum Story in India, *The Calcutta Historical Journal*, Vol. XXIX, No 1-2, January-December, 2009.

Rediscovering Indian History : The Inter-Relationship of Archaeology and the Notion of Cultural Heritage, 1831-1926

Shreya Roy

In histories of European Archaeology, the term *antiquarianism* usually refers to the discovery, collection and description of antiquities, or to the amateur study of artefacts or monuments. In early nineteenth-century India, however the word 'antiquarianism' had broader and more scholarly connotations. It was a time when strict disciplinary boundaries had not yet been drawn, allowing 'antiquarian' and 'antiquary' to be used as umbrella terms sheltering scholars who ranged over diverse areas – such as the study of ancient texts, languages, inscriptions, coins, antiquities, monuments, chronologies and history. It was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that the term *archaeology* came to the fore and began to assume a distinct identity within Orientalist discourse, denoting a branch of study concerned with the material remains of the past, with artefacts, sites and monuments.¹ The formative phase in the history of antiquarian and archaeological research in India more or less coincided with the century of 'Company Raj', the hundred years which stretched from the conquest of Bengal in the 1750s and 1760s to the Revolt of 1857. Changes in the nature and structure of colonial rule over this time there were visible shifts in the ideology of empire, in the many, complex intellectual strands that sought to justify and legitimize British rule in India.² This process of legitimization rested as much on interpretations of India's past as of its present.

Like all branches of knowledge, archaeology was grounded and continues to be grounded, in its specific historical contexts. Bruce Trigger has identified three distinctive types of archaeologies, each

produced by and corresponding to different social-political contexts – nationalist, colonialist and imperialist.³ He describes colonialist archaeology as that which developed in countries where large scale displacement of native populations by Europeans took place or where Europeans exercised political and economic dominance for a considerable period of time. The reconstruction of the pasts of colonized people emphasized their primitiveness and lack of innovation or change and served to justify their displacement or subjugation by European colonizers. While highlighting the fact that archaeology is rooted in its specific historical contexts, Trigger points out that the archaeological interpretation of the past is shaped by a number of other factors as well. These include the ideas that archaeologist – individually and collectively – have about the past, the techniques they have at their disposal and the steadily increasing body of physical evidence of the past.⁴ India, with its evidence of an ancient classical literature and civilization, required far more complex negotiations. Further, the British attitude towards India's past, her texts and traditions changed with the waxing and waning of the British Indian Empire. Archaeology in nineteenth century India was thus embedded in a colonial context and part of a larger Orientalist universe.⁵

Archaeology also created accurate sensibility about cultural heritage and there was always a possibility of the intrusion of legendary history in the perception of heritage. In northern India, the 'men of the pen', known as munshis, produced a form of history that was decidedly vernacular rather than classical in style and sensibility.⁶ Further, in the Maratha territories of western India, a distinct genre called the 'bakhar' emerged, which recorded the history of a lineage or of a family of property or political distinction or of a significant event. Extensively described and analyzed by Prachi Deshpande, these Marathi prose texts are indubitably historical in their aspirations to factuality, secular causation and political rationality.⁷ Western educated intelligentsia like Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, Vishnushastri Chiplunkar, Vishwanath Kashinath Rajwade and Jotirao Phule engaged

with questions of truth and positivism, philosophy and source criticism and debated the relationship between history and literature and the importance of creativity, evocation and polemic in re-creating the past.⁸ The immediate pre-colonial period in Western India emerged by the late nineteenth century as a coherent historical era and the prime resource for a nationalist historiography.

Rajwade's search for a pure and uncontaminated Marathi points to another abiding tension in all vernacular histories of South Asia. This concerns the place of 'the people', a key concept in every project of nationalist modernity.⁹ For the new cultural nationalists, the state centred histories seemed utterly inadequate in describing the historically formed identity of 'the people'. Kumkum Chatterjee, in her essay¹⁰ discusses in detail the debates in Bengal between the protagonists of scientific academic history and those who insisted that the true history of the nation must be found among the living memories and practices of ordinary people. Rabindranath Tagore, in particular made a sophisticated plea to look for Bengal's true history not in the history of kings and conquerors but in the living history of 'samaj'.¹¹ Taken as a corpus, vernacular histories have been and continue to act as, vehicles for a range of critiques of modern academic history. Dipesh Chakrabarty has pointed out the resultant difficulties of history as practiced by the academic historian retaining an authoritative 'public' voice in the face of the increasingly noisy politics of recognition that has come to dominate forms of democratic debate.¹² We may say, pushing his point a bit further, that what has emerged is no longer a single unified public domain regulated by agreed rules of discourse, but rather a heterogeneous formation of several publics.

The cult of "scientific history" began in India in the 1880s and more seriously in the early years of the 1900s— particularly in Bengal and Maharashtra. The expression "enthusiasm for history" was used by the poet Rabindranath Tagore in an essay which he wrote in 1899 in the Bengali literary magazine *Bharati*, welcoming the decision of Akshay kumar Maitreya (a pioneering amateur historian) to bring out a journal called '*Oitihashik Chitra*' (1899) (Historical vignettes)

from Rajshahi in northern Bengal (now in Bangladesh). Tagore wrote, "The enthusiasm for history that has arisen recently in Bengali literature bodes well for everybody. . . . This hunger for history is only a natural consequence of the way the vital forces of education [all]...movements are working their way through Bharatbarsha [India]." Tagore was correctly describing his own times. A host of young Bengali scholars had begun to take an interest in the past and in debating ways of gaining access to it: Rajendralal Mitra (1822–1891), Akshay kumar Maitreya (1861– 1930), Dineshchandra Sen (1866– 1939), Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyay (1885– 1930), Jadunath Sarkar (1870–1958) and others come to mind. The English word *research* was actually translated into Bengali and Marathi in the first decade of the twentieth century and incorporated into names of organizations such as the '*Varendra Anusandhan Samiti*' (Varendra Research Society), established in Rajshahi in 1910, and the '*Bharat Itihas Samshodhak Mandal*' (Association of Researchers in Indian History), founded in Poona the same year.¹³ Heritage is created by the diverse and often contradictory modes of remembering the past, frequently outgrowing the bindings of historical evidence. It is in this context that the function of history as a constituent of heritage creates an interest in what is often celebrated as the 'freedom of memory'.¹⁴ If archaeological explorations created heritage sites by giving them an aura of antiquity, the travel writings disseminated information about them to the wider reading public, allowing curious men to engage with the past in ways that often defied the standard disciplinary conventions of history writing. The archaeological description of a place was blended with legends and myths which the local people considered to be an inescapable feature of '*Sthanmahatmya*' implying a greatness derived quite substantially from legendary history. Legends which the residents of a town or a locality associated with the historical relics surrounding them constituted aspects of 'alternative histories', something which is difficult to comprehend within the limited domain of scientific history.¹⁵ Authors who had a far more scholarly engagement with history and archaeology wrote some travelogues, juxtaposing the

historical and the archaeological dimensions of a place with the natural and cultural ambience in which different sites were located. In the process they created at one level the foundation of an important facet of tourism culture, which became linked with competing visions about heritage. Akshay Kumar Maitreya wrote a small piece on the antiquity of Maldah district ('Puratan Maldaha' in *Prabasi*) in Northern Bengal, in which he tried to establish its antiquity by linking it with ancient Pundravardhana. We may also mention Rajani Kanta Chakrabarti's *Pandua Bhraman* (1903-1904), Satish Chandra Mitra's *Jessore-Khulnar Itihas* (1914), Jogendranath Gupta's *Bikrampur Itihas* (1909), Radharaman Saha's *Pabna Jelar Itihas* (1923) and so on. When heritage is defined in a more scholarly fashion, history, iconography and archaeology emerge as its important foundations coexisting with other facets of cultural life.

When the British began to focus on Indian art and culture, during their progress toward ruling the subcontinent, they disciplined to bear, art history and archaeology. The shaping of Indian archaeology and art history as modern disciplines, articulated from institutions such as museums, which determine their relationships between past and present, subject and object and individual memory and collective history, is situated within the ever-growing discussion on 'the nation'. The specific aspect of modernity is the loss of authority faced by archaeology as a discipline in contemporary India, largely due to the assaults of the Hindu Right, but also because of the apparent obsolescence of such disciplinary practices. From this point, Tapati Guha-Thakurta has asked what were the conditions for the possibility (and authority) of these disciplines in the colonial or nationalist period and how were they transformed over the last century?¹⁶ It is argued and strongly written account of the rise and now faltering career of the 'scientificity' which marked archaeology in its founding moments in the subcontinent. The building up of colonial scholarship is studied through the works of two pioneers – *James Ferguson* and *Alexander Cunningham*. It was Ferguson who gave India its first comprehensive history of architectural forms and styles, while it was Cunningham

who opened up its ancient sites to the specialized investigations of field archaeology. Fergusson attempted a survey of Indian architecture, putting for the first time India's vast architectural heritage into an order of time and a sequencing of worth. He ultimately wrote a history of world architecture, in which Indian architecture was placed. His tools were surveys, drawings, and a new technology, photography. Cunningham, on the other hand, was an archaeologist, whose tools were excavations, but also the collection of artifacts, including sculptures, coins, and inscriptions. Only an institutional survey, he felt, could make for a more scientific pattern of archaeological investigation.

Obtaining his first commission as second lieutenant in the Bengal Engineers in 1831, Cunningham's initial appointments were as aide-de-camp to the governor general in 1836, then as executive engineer to the Nawab of Awadh in 1840. As early as 1834, during a transfer to Benaras, Cunningham followed the lead of the Franco-Italian general in Ranjit Singh's army, M. le Chevalier Ventura, in opening up the 'Dhamek stupa' at Sarnath. Described as Cunningham's first experiment in field archaeology, the act opened up not just the stupa but a whole area of investigative technique that became his special forte. In 1843, while working with the native state of Awadh, he presents us with his first major archaeological "discovery": the ruins of the ancient Buddhist site of Sankisa in the United Provinces. Cunningham had the opportunity of a close study of one of the earliest, best-preserved and most spectacular of ancient monuments, the Buddhist stupa of Sanchi. This survey culminated in the first of Cunningham's large scholarly monographs on Buddhist sites, *The Bhilsa Topes*. It brought together the substantive details of his field observations of all the stupas in the region with an analysis of the data, a careful and complete description of the monuments and elaborate drawings of the ground plans and sculptured reliefs.¹⁷ Cunningham's 'Bhilsa Topes' epitomizes both the confusion of the pre-1850s phase of the European understanding of Buddhism as well as the resolution of certain basic issues.¹⁸ 'The Bhilsa Topes' touched

on a large number of important issues – the life of the Buddha, a synopsis of the Buddha's doctrines, the social impact of his teachings, the Buddhist councils, the meaning of Buddhist symbols.

In the 1830s, Cunningham presented the Asiatic Society in Calcutta with his finds of Buddha images, coins, and inscriptions from his Sarnath excavations. Far more important was his initiation in the same year in the intricate expertise of deciphering ancient Indian scripts under the guidance of the great Indologist James Prinsep. Cunningham moreover, anchored the knowledge of Indian architecture in texts and this textualised knowledge became the basis for the establishment of systematized modes of viewing an entire Indian architectural or sculptural past and indeed Indian history, as it was materialized in the space of the museum.¹⁹ As with Fergusson, Cunningham's career stands at the forefront of the period's new obsession with scientific, institutionalized knowledge.²⁰ The history of the study of Indian antiquities that Cunningham presents has two interwoven strands: the rich legacy of linguistic and textual scholarship running from Charles Wilkins and William Jones to Henry Colebrooke and H. H. Wilson and the parallel trend of field surveys and explorations that began with the likes of Francis Buchanan and Colin Mackenzie. This signaled a major epistemic shift in orientalist strategies for unlocking the secrets of India's ancient past: the shift from philology to archaeology as the new authenticating ground for Indian history. It is from this period—the 1840s and 1850s—that the search for India's ancient history would transfer its priorities from scriptural and canonical texts to coins, epigraphs, and archaeological sites. As Cunningham put it, the age of the first "Closet or Scholastic Archaeologists" – of the textual researches of men such as William Jones, H. T. Colebrooke and H. H. Wilson – now gave way to that of "travelling antiquarians" and "field archaeologists" like himself.²¹ James Fergusson's detailed listing of all the architectural objects (full structures, partial remains, and ornamental details) to be copied was paralleled by Alexander Cunningham's broader grouping of all the archaeological remains of India to be covered, which he grouped under

the four heads of architecture, sculpture, coins, and inscriptions, providing in each case a detailed breakdown and dating under categories such as 'early Buddhist', 'later Buddhist', 'Indo-Scythian', 'Jain', 'early Brahmanical', 'later Brahmanical' and 'early and later Muhamaddan'.²²

The beginning of Cunningham's extensive surveys in India coincided with a distinct recasting of the image of Buddhism in orientalist discourse. As the figure of Buddha moved from myth to history, from the status of a retrograde heathen god to the most humane and compassionate of religious reformers, Western Buddhist scholarship similarly celebrated its move from theological speculation to new textual and historical expertise. The textual past of Buddhism would find a new materialized presence in the rock-cut 'viharas' and 'chaityas' that Fergusson first placed on India's architectural map, in the series of stupas that Cunningham proceeded to excavate. Cunningham had at his disposal all the new Western manuals on Buddhism when he produced his first detailed account of the Sanchi stupa in the 1850s and even more so when he took up the study of the stupa of Bharhut in the 1870s. There would be a specific Hellenic twist to this new identity of Buddhism in colonial India. Out of a pantheon of 'monstrous' and 'barbaric' Hindu gods, some of the Buddha images alone invited a sense of analogy with classical Greek art. This mounting interest in Indo-Greek antiquities had its high point in the discovery of the Gandhara school of Buddhist sculpture, with its marked Greco-Roman influences.²³ All three of his major monographs would center around early Buddhist sites – around the stupas of Sanchi, Bharhut and Bodh Gaya—each actively contributing to the reification of India's ancient Buddhist past. As Dilip Chakrabarti underlines in his *History of Indian Archaeology*, it is the sheer intensity and scale of these surveys—alongside the scale of Cunningham's reporting—'which sets [these] apart from anything else in Indian archaeology for all times to come.'²⁴ Cunningham's style of reporting has become legendary in the discipline of Indian archaeology. Though he is best remembered primarily as a field archaeologist, the reports

and other writings indicate an increasing interest in and attempts to take further his analysis of architectural style.²⁵

On the other hand, Tapati Guha-Thakurta tried to explore the ambivalences in and encounters with the master discourse that gave birth to the indigenous scholar in the works of Rajendralala Mitra (1822-91) and Rakhaldas Banerjee (1885-1930). While Mitra, based at the Asiatic Society of Bengal, straddled modern and traditional knowledge to establish himself as an amateur native scholar, Rakhaldas working in the early-twentieth century was a formally trained archaeologist.²⁶

Nineteenth century archaeology in India had a voracious range of interests and concerns which included anything and everything to do with India's past, sometimes spilling out into the present. While archaeology gradually added a new and important dimension to the discourse on India's past, it was, after all, a part of a larger discourse. The frequent forays of archaeologists into racial ethnography and the prejudices they reveal, reflect the larger frameworks within which Europeans of the time understood the cultures they encountered. In this backdrop, it is to be understood how an archaeological site comes to acquire an important status in the history of Nation. This article will focus on the discussions of three major archaeological sites: *Mahasthan*, *Bodh Gaya* and *Ajanta* and the inter-relationship of archaeology and cultural heritage; heritage and conservation have become important themes in current discussions on place, cultural identity, and the preservation of the past.

The ruins of the ancient city site of Mahasthangarh (Mahasthan) were noted as early as 1808 by Buchanan-Hamilton but were not identified with the ancient city of Pundranagar until about 1879 when Cunningham associated his finds at Bhasu-Bihar.²⁷ Cunningham's conclusions were later verified by the discovery in 1931 of an inscription written in the Ashokan Brahmi Script. Although excavations at Mahasthangarh and the nearby villages of Bihar and Bhasu-Bihar had revealed several monuments of the Gupta and Pala periods. In addition, an image of a standing Buddha was found at

Bhasu-Bihar, giving further evidence of pre-Pala period stone carving activity. It is difficult to know how to interpret the paucity of stone sculptures which has been unearthed during the rather extensive excavations which have been carried out at Mahasthangarh, especially the light of a remarkable image of a standing six armed *Avalokitesvara* which was recently discovered in the vicinity of the site.²⁸ We also find the name of Mahasthan in the writing of Kali Kamal Sarvabhauma (*Bagurar Shetihās*) and this book is unique in being an attempt by a literary man to describe the history of his own times.²⁹ Through the discussion of Mahasthan, we may get an idea of the Puranic vision of Heritage.

In this course of discussion, we may turn now to the end of the nineteenth century, to the example of the hotly disputed site of Bodh Gaya in Bihar, where a prolonged battle for the custody of the central monument of the Mahabodhi temple would escalate over this period and the colonial government would be put to one of its most arduous tests as a mediator and as a contending authority for the care and conservation of the temple. As Curzon pushed for the passing of the Ancient Monuments Preservation Bill in 1903, he grappled with a dilemma that would spill over from India's colonial to postcolonial history.³⁰ The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya represented to in the nineteenth century, a conveniently ruined Indian past which could be protected, recovered and restored as both a duty and validation of legitimacy.³¹ However, for the temple's Hindu proprietors, the shrine - aside from being a valuable estate in purely financial terms - functioned as a symbol of the triumph of 'orthodox' Hinduism over 'heterodox' Buddhism. Finally, for the Burmese Buddhists who undertook their own 'restoration' mission in 1874 the Mahabodhi Temple marked the site where, according to Buddhist tradition, Gautama Buddha first achieved enlightenment and thereby began the career of the religion that bears his name. In the 1880s and 1890s the battle lines were being drawn between the sect of Hindu 'mahants' (priests), the Shaivite Girīs, who had constructed a monastery at Bodh Gaya and had held possession of the main shrine for several centuries,

and a new group of Sinhalese Buddhist monks, led by the visionary monk *Anagarika Dharmapala* and backed by a camp of European orientalist who were determined to wrest from the Hindus and restore to the world of Buddhism this holiest of its holy sites. For the government and the Archaeological Survey, though, what was equally at issue was their own rights of intervention and the urgent need to restore the temple, which had been reduced to a pile of ruins.³² Early archaeological scholarship has ascertained that this was also where the Mauryan emperor Ashoka erected the first commemorative shrine around the tree (the *Bodhi-ghara*) along with a stone railing and a polished throne (referred to as the *Vajrasana*) in the third century B.C. The larger Mahabodhi temple was presumably erected sometime in the early Gupta period. A few centuries after Ashoka, 'gifts to the king's temple', inscribed on the old stone railing were added by more ordinary donors. Along with various scenes from the life of the Buddha, this railing was adorned with figures of popular Hindu Divinities including one of Siva, represented with a snake hanging down from his wrist and the trident on his left side.³³ In explaining this, Beni Madhab Barua suggested that 'the general motive behind these iconic representations was to add to the sanctity, charm and grandeur of the erection in the eyes of the people'.³⁴

It is thus possible to describe a Bodh Gaya that became over the late medieval period more effectively Hindu than Buddhist. The direct ancestors of the Giri sect are said to have received in the eighteenth century a "Royal Firman" from Emperor Shah Alam granting them rent-free four villages, including the one where the Mahabodhi temple stood.³⁵ An inscription of the 9th century also recorded, among other things, the setting up of a 'Chaumukha Mahadeva' within the boundaries of the temple complex. These details imply, as also does the site's sculptural wealth encompassing Buddhist images and Hindu ones that there are multiple lineages which inform Bodh Gaya's cultural history. This is a cultural history involving patrons and pilgrims of several types and faiths.³⁶ Secondly, Mahabodhi in the 19th century was just one of the many places enjoying the worship of

people of various faiths. Thirdly, the proprietorship of a Saiva mahant at Bodh Gaya did not create any problems for the conduct of Buddhist worship. And the theory of a pervasive “Hindu mode of encompassment” of Buddhist icons and practices at Bodh Gaya has found its most sophisticated propagation in a cultural anthropologist’s thesis on the multiple movers and actors who made for the modern history of the place.³⁷ In fact, Anagarika Dharmapala himself, the man who was central to the Bodh Gaya dispute had worshipped many times before the large medieval image of the Buddha in the main shrine and on his own admission without opposition.³⁸

What was, however, new and unprecedented in the British Government’s initiative was their view that by repairing Mahabodhi, they also acquired certain rights over it. Curzon said that the acts of restoration at Mahabodhi ‘seem to involve the gradual assertion of a co-ordinate authority’. Thus the architectural conservation of Mahabodhi was permeated with the same ideological rationale as imperial rule – ‘reconstitute the native as someone to be ruled and managed’. Why the multi-religious character of Mahabodhi, with its ancient antecedents, came to be regarded as evidence of the shrine’s desecration? In order to answer this question it is necessary to draw attention to the fact that the dispute was born in the midst of a general Buddhist revival in Asia.³⁹ While the first event instigated the beginnings of a direct governmental bid for control of the site, the second saw the forming of the Mahabodhi Society as the representative of world Buddhism and the launch of a concerted international campaign for the restoration of the temple at Bodh Gaya to its rightful Buddhist owners.

Anagarika Dharmapala was no ordinary devotee worshipping at the shrine; rather he came as a religious crusader in the mould that had become emblematic of Buddhist revivalism. Bodh Gaya emerges as a space of religious harmony and coexistence, unmarked by any overt signs of strife between Hindu and Buddhist worshipers, until the intrusion of a reinvented modern-day form of the competing religion of Buddhism. The publication in 1879 of Edwin Arnold’s

famous poetic rendering of the life of Buddha, *The Light of Asia*, has been seen as the cataclysmic event: this “Victorian Buddhist epic” catapulted this forgotten site in eastern Bihar onto an international map, making Arnold himself one of the most vocal of its new Buddhist claimants.⁴⁰ Arnold came to acquire a worldwide reputation as “a kind of patron-saint of Buddhism”. He visited for the first time the holy site of Bodh Gaya, which he saw to be in a sadly dilapidated state, fully in the charge of a Brahman doing ‘*puja*’ to Shiva, visited only by Hindu pilgrims. In order to end such ‘defiling’ practices make Mahabodhi ‘a living and learned centre of purified Buddhism’, Arnold was the first to suggest to Sinhalese Buddhists and to the British authorities that the temple might be, through the intervention of the state, placed in the hands of a representative committee of the Buddhist Nations.⁴¹ Right from the beginning, Dharmapala’s aim was to ensure the transfer of the custody of the main shrine of Mahabodhi from an Indian legal proprietor to Buddhists. Dharmapala became an international figure with his arrival at Bodh Gaya in 1891, with the forming of the Mahabodhi Society that same year. While Mahabodhi had been in the possession of mahants since 1727, it had never been converted into a Hindu temple. Buddhist pilgrims had free access and liberty to worship in it. So at least one fact appears to be certain: the question was not of worship, it was of legal control. Initially, Dharmapala hoped to acquire the custody of Mahabodhi through a dialogue with Hem Narayan Giri, the mahant of Bodh Gaya. But Krishna Dayal Giri, successor of Hem Narayan, however, refused to either sell or give a lease. Since these attempts failed, Dharmapala decided to enshrine an image of the Buddha in the upper-floor chamber of the temple.

In 1904, Dharmapala had approached Curzon and King Edward VII with a proposal for perpetuating the memory of Queen Victoria through material additions to Mahabodhi. Curzon believed that the conservation of India’s monuments was an elementary obligation of the British Government and Mahabodhi was one of the oldest structural temples of India to have survived. Curzon regarded the

Bodh Gaya temple complex as only a Buddhist shrine. In being thrust from a local onto a global map of demands and devotions, Bodh Gaya also found itself at the center of a new national configuration. The Mahabodhi temple was “for the British not simply either a Hindu or a Buddhist shrine; it was also, in a perfect imperial world, a *British Indian* monument.”⁴² Burmese repairs and improvements, entirely acceptable to the temple *mahant*, caused great alarm in the Indian archaeologist Rajendralal Mitra, who saw them resulting only in the destruction of critical primary evidence. It was its methodological and investigative tools that came to Rajendralal’s aid as he sought to recover Bodh Gaya’s ancient past. It would be left to the expertise of Alexander Cunningham, when he became director of the Archaeological Survey of India, and his assistant, J. D. Beglar, to restore and remake what Rajendralal Mitra had invoked in text.⁴³ At Bodh Gaya, Cunningham found that ‘the celebrated Bodhi tree still exists, but is very much decayed.’ He also noted that, inside the main temple, there was a lingam, the emblem of Mahadeva, or Siva, which possibly dated from the time of the Hindu King Sasanka, a sixth-century ruler who had attempted to convert the shrine to Saivite worship.⁴⁴ The importance of the Mahabodhi temple was said to be unique not just for the history of Buddhism in ancient India but equally for “the history of Indian art” for which “it gives us the oldest remains of both sculpture and architecture.”⁴⁵ It is ironic that Cunningham’s authoritative account of Bodh Gaya—Mahabodhi; or the Great temple Under the Bodhi Tree at Buddha-Gaya—appeared the very year (1892) that saw the launch of the most heated battle over the religious rights and identity of the place. As the government moved in 1902–3 to set up its own Bodh Gaya Commission, it found its ideal figure for the commission in Pandit Haraprasad Shastri, a person held up as ‘a strict and orthodox Hindu and, in addition, a good Archaeologist and scholar’ of Buddhism who more than adequately fulfilled the role that was expected of him. Presenting Curzon with a copy of his book, *Discovery of Living Buddhism in Bengal*, Haraprasad Shastri was unstinting in his recommendation of the

transfer of the temple to the Buddhists as “a very important work, in which the whole of Asia is interested and which may lead to India being made again a place of pilgrimage of the whole of Asia, and the wealth of other countries pouring into India. Haraprasad Shastri’s vision of Bodh Gaya as a Mecca of world Buddhism could be seen today as almost prophetic.”⁴⁶

From the 1890s through the first decades of the twentieth century, the mahant’s claims and interests came to be translated into a cross regional Hindu nationalist cause. The example of Bodh Gaya underlines the impossibility of wresting for history and archaeology a shrine that remained the cultural property of contending communities and that is now the desired object of world Buddhism. In conclusion, one may acknowledge that whereas Bodh Gaya could have been a living example of shared religious tolerance and worship, which is what its archaeological history also pointed to, its distinctive character was destroyed because of the larger politics of the parties involved – a group committed to a programme of Buddhist revival, a viceroy obsessed with an imperial agenda and the retaliatory tactics of a Saiva priest. This also shows that disputes around religious monuments in the Indian Subcontinent have a long history and consequently these have to be understood in terms of their own particular contexts.

On the other hand, Ajanta went through a creational experience, shaped as it was by the archaeological discovery of the site. As Indian archaeology in the late nineteenth century was laying bare the archaeological treasures of Ajanta, an art Historian like Ordhendra Coomer Ganguly had reasons to feel tempted to visit the site. On his return the piece ‘Ajanta Guhay Dui Din’ was a tourism piece laced adequately with scholarly judgements on the importance of the Ajanta paintings in the history of the Indian art.⁴⁷ When Ganguly introduced the Ajanta caves to his readers the narrative ceased to be a pure travel description and emerged as a reflective account of the religious and artistic history of the place. He went on explaining how the caves were built in different stages and how they help us to understand the

history of the rise and fall of Buddhism in India. Besides emphasizing the need to establish some kind of correspondence between the textual and the archaeological, Ganguly was keen to use the frescoes as lessons for Indian artists as well. Ganguly's objective behind writing this piece was to establish the site of Ajanta as a new pilgrimage centre for educated Indians.

Ajanta, in the words of James Burgess, the amateur archaeologist, made one of the initial explorations in the site had 'the perfect seclusion of the wild ravine with its lofty walls of rocks to attract the devotees of Buddhism.'⁴⁸ In Walter M. Spink's opinion, Ajanta caves reached their height of glory during the heyday of the Vakataka Empire, to be plunged into darkness by the early sixth century when the empire had collapsed. Over time, however, researches drew attention away from the artistic dimension to the way Ajanta as a Buddhist site received the patronage of the local rulers and wealthy and powerful men. For historians to reflect on such complex issues associated with buildings, temples and other pieces of architecture, the archaeological discovery of the site always remained the crucial foundational work. M.K. Dhavalikar's essay on the inscriptions of Ajanta mentions an unusually modern inscription in cave I, which recorded the name of one of the earliest visitors to the caves that had remained hidden behind the forests for more than a thousand years.⁴⁹ In the following decades, the awareness about the Ajanta caves as an important archaeological site among the British officials came as a consequence of the prevailing nineteenth century orientalist interest in ancient Indian culture and religion.

The man who actually made a seminal contribution to the reemergence of the Ajanta caves as a cultural site was James Burgess. Acquiring a taste for Indian art, Burgess was keen to explore Ajanta's art treasures despite the reluctance of the Indian Government to allow excavation of a site belonging to the Nizam's territory by the Archaeological Survey.⁵⁰ Burgess's almost photographic description of the caves formed an important part of his attempt to connect Ajanta with equally important historical sites in Aurangabad and at

Ellora. It was in the fitness of things that Burgess, as if to anticipate the conservationism of later archaeologists like John Marshall, insisted on the adoption of appropriate methods for the conservation of the caves.⁵¹ Burgess was perhaps one of the earliest narrators to call attention to the connection of the Ajanta paintings and sculptures with the evolution of Buddhist theology. The stylistic evolution of the caves grafting into the columns, the porches and the sanctum, the figures of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, demonstrated the gradual triumph of Mahayana Buddhism.

The transformation of Ajanta from a marvelous site worthy of elaborate descriptions to the one suffused with deeper historical structures and meanings, was celebrated in a major debate on Ajanta between James Fergusson and Rajendra Lal Mitra. If Fergusson locating the differences in the painting and architectural styles used in the caves of Ajanta, identified a difference of nearly a thousand years between the earliest and the latest ones, Rajendra Lal Mitra, using his skills in paleography, relied on the inscriptions to make out a case for a much shorter distance of time between the earliest and the latest caves.⁵²

The use of the images of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas in the viharas and the chaityas in the Ajanta caves suggest a stage in the development of Buddhism in India associated with the triumph of Mahayana beliefs. Sheila Weiner tried to establish the connection between iconographic changes and structural alterations in the architectural plans of the caves from around the third century A.D. Weiner argues that Ajanta appeared to be 'on the very threshold of Mahayana expression and may be the first major site of India proper where the threshold was visually crossed.'⁵³ Obviously enough, historical reflection on Ajanta's status as a heritage site can not be seen in isolation from the early archaeological initiatives in India. By the time A. Foucher, the famous French art historian and specialist in Indian iconography, came back to the site in 1919 the concern for the preservation of Ajanta had already motivated the Nizam's state to adopt a policy of conservation of the site. The result of this initiative

was Golam Yazdani's volumes on Ajanta which provided a distinctly nationalist interpretation on Ajanta not merely as a sanctuary of the monks but also as a cultural centre of international eminence in the fifth century A.D. long before modern scholarship came to project it as one of the great centres of Indian Heritage.⁵⁴ The comparison that he makes with Italian paintings of the renaissance or with the work of the famous Dutch painter Rembrandt brings out clearly his nationalist sentiment. Madhuparna Roychowdhury has tried to examine the complicated relationship between 'history' and 'heritage'. The issue of heritage remained an important dimension in the discussion of the archaeological site. Nonetheless, the development of the archaeological knowledge about Ajanta which inevitably spawned a wide range of debates on its chronology and stylistic evolution certainly made a major contribution to the making of this site emerging as a defining element in India's cultural heritage. The historical discovery of the place which itself can be located on the time scale of development of knowledge, came to provide the core substance for varied understandings about heritage to flourish.

It is to be said that heritage was capable of generating a large variety of cultural vision, so it requires the discussion Greater India Society which was inaugurated on 10 October, 1926 in Calcutta and continued to function till the 1950s. The Greater India Society's vision of Indian nationhood was nourished by its members' readings of the writings of twentieth century French Indologists and, in addition, key works by early 20th century anthropological culture theorists. What the group conceived from these intellectual encounters was an idea of India as the source of a great pan-Asian mission of overseas cultural diffusion in ancient times.⁵⁶ Their thinking about this era of 'benevolent Imperialism' was summed up in 1927 with the adoption of the triumphalist phrase 'Greater India' as the name of their new movement. The network of Calcutta-based scholars who propounded and institutionalized the idea of Greater India included some of the most eminent figures in twentieth century Indian intellectual life. The movement's early leaders were all Bengalis. Among them were

R.C. Majumdar, one of India's most influential historians of the pre and post-Independence periods; the philologists Suniti Kumar Chatterjee and P.C. Bagchi and the historian Kalidas Nag. Nag was a close associate of the Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, and Tagore in turn was a sympathetic observer of the Society's activities. Indeed Tagore was listed in the Greater India Society's publications as its honorary 'Purodha', an invented neo-archaism drawn from Sanskritic religious terminology, with the implied meaning of primate or spiritual head.⁵⁷ Tagore's crusade against a narrow patriotic nationalism for a broader and more inclusive humanism was developed in controversial lectures he delivered in Japan and America in 1916 and 1917.⁵⁸ Nag and Bagchi had both pursued their doctoral studies in Paris under the celebrated Indologists Sylvain Levi and Jean Przyluski. In addition to these and other scholars from Calcutta University and Tagore's newly founded establishment at Santiniketan, Visva Bharati University, the project's participants also included local journalists and curatorial staff from Calcutta's Indian Museum. While Greater India was thus an explicitly Orientalist project, it was neither generated nor pursued under British sponsorship. Its formulations were far from being mere recyclings of established Anglophone Orientalist ideas. On the contrary, its adherents sought to formulate their own distinctive interpretations of works by predominantly non-Anglophone scholars whose meta-historical visions were significantly at odds with those hitherto defining both British and Indian accounts of the 'Indic' past.⁵⁹

In the different statements of the Greater India vision, those involved in the project indicated that their key aim was to rewrite the history of India, displacing existing narratives of the Indian past which focused solely on the making and unmaking of policies within the territorial limits of the subcontinent. Above all, through their exaltation of new scholarly discoveries by French and other South East Asia specialists, they sought to redefine 'India' as an ever-expanding cultural space prefiguring the forms of translocality which they knew

in their own day, that is the presence of South-Asian migrants in other Eastern and also Western lands. This was an India to be recognized as dynamic and expansive, a giver rather than a taker, and a noble civilizer of other people. The terrain of this ancient Greater India was to be understood as comprising all the Asian lands including Burma, Java, Cambodia, Bali, and the former Champa and Funan polities of present-day Vietnam, in which Indians (or Indic influences) had supposedly left their imprint in the form of monuments, inscriptions and other traces of the historic 'Indianising' process. What was crucial to this was that the findings of French Indologists in their work on great Hindu or Hindu-Buddhist monuments like Borabadur and Angkor and on Sanskrit and Pali texts and inscriptions such as newly translated Champa material, pointed to a definition of things Indian or Indic which focused on qualities of universal, expansive dynamism.⁶⁰ This proposed reconstruction of an Indian mission civilisatrice to create a Greater India was however part of a larger historiography project to rewrite Indian colonial history into a more nationalist history in parallel with India's struggle for independence.⁶¹ Ramesh Chandra Majumdar led the writing of a nationalist history of India which incorporated Southeast Asia as Hindu colonies. This was a theory of cultural contact or 'cultural colonization' which was amenable to many divergent interpretations. Indeed while readings of the sort propounded by Bagchi were of great importance to Greater India thinkers of the pre-Independence period, so too were Hindu nationalist understandings of these works. The moral argument of the Greater India Society scholars was that in contrast to the violence of European colonialism to subjugate the colonized Indian colonization of the far East was peaceful, humane, benign and welcomed by the pre literate natives. The Sanskrit cosmopolis, as Pollock points out was again transformed in a 'second vernacular revolution' and continued to define the forms of knowledge in early modern Asia.⁶²

Kalidas Nag's writings present a vision of Southeast Asia's history as a ceaseless 'onward march' by Indian explorers and adventurers,

'rearing up' the great monumental masterpiece of Borobudur then subduing and civilizing Sumatra, where they supposedly founded the 'great... empire of Srivijaya which for nearly a thousand years, maintained its proud title as the sentinel of the southern seas sweeping those waters of pirates and enforcing peace and fair play'. All these were themes and issues which also intersected with the concerns of pre-Independence Hindu nationalists. The writings of French Orientalists, especially Levi, on both Hindu and Buddhist 'missionising' were welcome to many Greater India polemicists because they challenged the widely shared idea that fear of ritual pollution had made ancient Indians averse to the crossing of the 'kala pani' (the black water), thus preventing them from acquiring the venturesome spirit of the colonizer and mission builder.⁶³ K. M. Panikkar has drawn freely on these social memories of a first millennium Indian maritime domination of the India Ocean to argue for a post-Independence naval strategy of reasserting Indian naval control over the Indian Ocean.⁶⁴ Niharranjan Ray's magnum opus in Bengali, *Bangalir Itihas: Adiparba* was initially published in 1949. He also wrote *Brahmanical Gods of Burma*, *Sanskrit Buddhism in Burma* and so on.

Indeed, even though much of what the Greater India commentators said and wrote about colonialism and the will to civilize will strike a contemporary reader as problematic and unsettling, the case of this movement should be recognized as an instructive instance of intellectually active life and thought in a colonial setting. The Greater India thinkers' visions of expansive Indian nationhood were expressed in a distinctively translocal idiom. They were also strongly infused with ideas of the national essence as an unbounded and expansive force. The story of a nation is commonly told as a narrative of action in history: the version of such action which inspired Greater India scholars was a vision of India's eternal and glorious mission to civilise. The extra territorial and translocal representations of Nationhood explored in this discussion were a mirror image of these territorial

imaginings which have so signally engaged the interest of Anthropologists and historians in recent years.

All history writing, we are frequently reminded of, is premised on the present. Pasts become meaningful and usable only when they are activated by the contemporary desires of individuals and communities, and, most powerfully, by the will of nations. And disciplinary fields such as history, archaeology, and art history, with their changing conceptual tools and methodologies, stand over time as the chief sites of authorization of ancient pasts that come into being in an avowedly modern era. While it is important to focus on the development of official policy in relation to sites and monuments in India, there was always a gap between legislation and enactment between official pronouncement and actual practice. Many of the custodians of India's archaeological heritage themselves saw nothing wrong in collecting, removing and exporting large and extremely valuable personal collections of antiquities. The history of Indian archaeology provides finally a basis for questioning the frequent assertion that orientalist discourse perceived and invented the Orient through its texts. It is true that textual traditions were an important part of the 19th century understanding of India's past. However throughout this period there was a parallel track of inquiry, one admittedly influenced – often even governed – by textual research, but which frequently broke away from it. What is equally significant is that, after 1871, although occasional support was given to the publication of ancient texts, it was the archaeological track of inquiry that was given from organizational basis and sustained financial support by the colonial state. This support was no doubt inadequate in the task of investigating, documenting and protecting India's vast archaeological heritage and there were even times when it seemed to be on the verge of being entirely withdrawn. In spite of such constraints, ancient India was ultimately discovered as much through its artifacts, coins, inscriptions, monuments and sites, as through its texts.

Notes

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- ⁴ Upinder Singh, *op.cit.*, p. 337.
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- ⁶ Partha Chatterjee, 'Introduction: History in the Vernacular', in Raziuddin Aquil and Partha Chatterjee (eds.) *History in the Vernacular*, Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2010, p. 4.
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- ²² *Ibid*, p. 34.
- ²³ *Ibid*, p. 36.
- ²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 42.
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- ³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 84.
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Kālī's Mount: Śiva/Śava
Śiva's Position in the Bengal Iconography of Kālī

Arghya Dipta Kar

Introduction

A predominant figure in the religious culture of Bengal is Dakṣiṇakālīkā¹, one of the pivotal deities of Tantric Śāktism. Popular legends attribute the revelation of this form to the sixteenth century Tantric saint Kṛṣṇānanda Āgamavāgīśa², though recent studies have rendered this account debatable.³ This form of the goddess Kālī has a terrible face, dishevelled hair, four arms and is without clothes. She has three eyes and a protruding tongue. In her four hands she brandishes a sword, a severed head and gestures of bliss and assurance.⁴ The aspect of her icon, which our present discussion centres round, is the featuring of Śiva as a corpse under her feet. A great number of scholarly works⁵ have explored this icon from various perspectives; as to how this image opens up a complex nexus of religious, cultural and aesthetic dynamics. However, as per source materials, most studies⁶ focus primarily on its associate popular mythologies and what yet remains to be furnished is a complete understanding of the Kālī icon in terms of archaeological evidences, textual representations and most importantly the esoteric rituals and philosophy of the Tantras, the last category being totally ignored in most academic researches on Kālī. The present article attempts towards a systematic reading of this icon in terms of its multifaceted religio-cultural nuances.

Corpses in Tantric Rituals

Since our discussion concerns the depiction of Śiva as a corpse in the iconography of Kālī, we might begin with one of the most

controversial yet intriguing aspects of the esoteric rituals of Tantra consisting of the use of corpses. Operative within a multilayered structure of meanings, the socio-cultural-ethical and soteriological positioning of *śavasāadhanā* relates to a varied history of heterodox practices ranging from folk magic rituals⁷ to the more complex issue of the nexus between *vāmācāra* Tantras and the Brahminical status quo. Here we come to Sanderson's categorisation of the Tantric way as the path of Power as opposed to that of Purity characterising the Brahminical tradition. Sanderson observes how contact with pollutant objects implies a cultivation of power that lies harboured beyond the margins set by the latter's puristic ethics.⁸ Hence, corpses and cremation grounds constitute ingredients of Tantric rituals that explore the grand reservoir of power embodied in all what is forbidden and all what is dangerous.⁹

On the one hand, *śavasāadhanā* might be performed by householders without any spiritual interest and primarily concerned with the acquisition of material power; power over one's enemies, kingly authority, success and well-being in the world.¹⁰ On the other, the unfolding of occult power demands a great amount of self-control and spiritual discipline. Available textual and oral accounts of *śavasāadhanā* warn against the possible dangers involved in this practice, and speak of the tremendous amount of courage and fortitude required on the part of the practitioner to achieve success in this undertaking.¹¹ With the later philosophic sophistication of Tantric rituals, these challenging undertakings came to be treated as symbolic of the various difficulties in one's Yogic journey in quest of liberation. A handful of accounts on *śavasāadhanā* from nineteenth century Bengal¹² are particularly emphatic about a spiritually defined goal of the ritual (as aiming at the attainment of Śivahood); with all its ingredients loaded with soteriological meanings. In other words, *śavasāadhanā* is made into a metaphoric performance or rather an enactment of the very process of an aspirant's spiritual struggle. As regards these multidimensional significances of the ritual, June McDaniel observes,

From a folk or magical perspective, *śava sādhanā* might wield power over death, bringing supernatural power over life. From a yogic

perspective, burning ground rituals can help lead to detachment from the physical world and union with a transcendental ground, understood to be either the god Śiva or Brahman.¹³

Since the area of our study concerns the iconographic association of corpses with the Tantric deity Kālī, her status as a cremation ground goddess¹⁴ lays forth enough reason for such associations. Herself embodying the infinite reservoir of cosmic power, she has the corpse as her seat, which is best suited to play the vehicle for her unfolding. In this context, Thomas Eugene Donaldson's extensive study on the depiction of corpses in the iconography of goddesses deserves attention as a great number of available icons have cremation ground settings with *ṛṣis* or yogins involved in *śava sādhanā*.¹⁵ Significantly, the gradual spiritualisation of the cremation ground ritual might be a point of observation in the context of our present study that aims at tracing the metamorphosis of the corpse under Kālī's feet into Śiva.

Archaeological Evidences of the Corpse Metamorphosing into Śiva

We might now turn to a handful of archaeological evidences to trace the evolution of the goddess riding on *śava* /Śiva. The earliest available icons of Kālī depict her in her fierce form Cāmuṇḍā.¹⁶ Originating from beyond the margins of Brahminism, Cāmuṇḍā is estimated to have been assimilated into the team of the Mātṛkā goddesses during the Gupta period.¹⁷ In her earliest iconographic representations, she features as an skeletal figure mounted upon a corpse.¹⁸ Bratindranath Mukhopadhyay¹⁹ studies how with the absorption of this goddess into the larger canon of pan-Indian Śāktism, she underwent iconographic modifications from a wild emaciated ghoulish form to a sophisticated goddess sharing significant features with Durgā. He refers to a Pāla Age sculpture in the Indian Museum, Kolkata (No. 3943 [now changed into 3942]) where she gracefully sits in the *lalitāsana* posture upon a lotus with her right foot resting upon a naked male body. Interestingly, though technically featuring in the role of the Goddess's corpse-seat, this male figure seems noticeably

alive (Image-1); so that Mukhopadhyay is prompted to put forth the question;



Image 1 : Cāmuṇḍā sitting on a corpse, Pala Age, Bihar, Indian Museum, Kolkata, No. 3942.

Can we trace here an entrance of the Śiva concept into the corpse that is the seat of Cāmuṇḍā?²⁰

Mukhopadhyay refers to another icon (No. 3941) from Bihar in the Indian Museum. Sculpted around the 10th century C.E., in the Pāla style, the Goddess has put on a more sophisticated and polished appearance with a smiling face, delicate countenance and a graceful *lalitāsana* posture. Here, her right foot is perched upon a half-reclining male body, which is far from being a corpse. Mukhopadhyay enquires into the possibility of this male figure's being a prototype of the present day reclining Śiva.²¹ Noteworthy, a Kālī sculpture (Image-2) from Medinipur district (10th century C.E.) comes closer to her present day form, at least in terms of her standing posture, and here too she places her feet on a reclining male body. It might be drawn from the



Image 2 : Kālī standing on corpse ;
Image References : Pranab Ray,
Medinipur Jelar Pratna-sampad (in Bengali), Directorate of Archaeology,
Government of West Bengal, Kolkata
1986, p. 192; B. N. Mukherjee and Pranab Ray, "Madhavpur Fragmentary
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Bulletin, vol. XXVI, 1991, pp. 42-45.

above observations that the metamorphosis of the corpse into a living male figure was a parallel process alongside the sophistication of the Kālī cult through her acceptance into the mainstream religion; or in Donaldson's terms;

The identification of the corpse beneath the *Mahāvidyā* Kālī in later art is obviously a culmination of this gradual transformation as Kālī herself, in many respects, evolves from Cāmuṇḍā.²²

Textual Accounts of the Philosophy and Iconography of Kālī

While looking for the earliest available textual materials on the concerned aspect of the Kālī iconography, it is at the foremost to be noted that though this icon is originally a Tantric one, it is difficult to trace the accurate historical dates of the Tantras, whose discourses flowed through oral traditions much before they got encoded in the form of written texts.²³ Bengal produced Tantric texts pertaining to both Buddhist and Hindu schools. The earliest Buddhist Tantras date back to the first half of the 7th century A.D., whereas as S.C. Banerji argues, the earliest Hindu Tantric text, the *Kāmyayantroddhāra Tantra*, by Mahāmahopādhyāya Parivrājakācārya was composed around Śaka 1297=1375 A.D.²⁴ Unlike the Kashmirian Tantric tradition, the texts²⁵ of Bengal Kālikula are primarily ritual-centric with hardly any detailed philosophical content. Yet, fragmented accounts of the philosophy of Kālī can be traced in texts that venerate her specific forms such as Dakṣiṇakālīkā or Ādyākālī. One might refer here to sections from texts like the *Śakti-Saṅgama Tantra*²⁶, the *Nirvāṇa Tantra*²⁷, the *Niruttara Tantra*²⁸, the *Yoginī Tantra*²⁹ or the *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*³⁰ (exact time of composition not known) or compilations like the *Sarvollāsa*³¹ for instance. However, next to rituals, these texts from late mediaeval Bengal seem to be more interested in establishing the theological supremacy of Kālī rather than exploring the nuances of her esoteric philosophy. Referring to the possible cause of the predominance of practical rituals rather than argumentative theoretical discussions in the Śākta texts of Bengal, Upendrakumar Das states,

In these Āgamas and Tantras, matters, pertaining to Śakti have been discussed; but it seems that the Śāktas had never attempted to articulate such matters in the form of discursive philosophy. It might be asked, why? The answer provided is that the subtle esoteric subjects revealed in the Śākta Tantras have been achieved through rigorous *sādhana* and are never to be understood by incompetent ones despite all philosophical discussions. That is why the Śākta *sādhakas* found it futile to subject these to philosophical speculations.³²

The iconography of Kālī, intertwined with the esoteric elements associated with her cult, enjoys tremendous popularity in Bengal and with the composition of Śākta Purāṇic texts³³ (11th to 14th Century A.D) like the *Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa*³⁴, this motif entered into the otherwise mainstream *smārta* canon as well. The overt Tantric inclination of Bengal's Purāṇas like the *Kālikā*³⁵ is of course to be related to the centrality of Tantra in the religious life of this region. These texts, as it will be studied in course of this article, sought to provide a narrative context to this icon.

It was not before late in the nineteenth-twentieth centuries that the need was felt to discursively articulate the esoteric philosophy embodied in the Goddess's iconography. This was triggered by challenges owing to the rise of colonial education as well as the reform movements that involved an attack on idol worship as well as the tendency to cry down Tantra as a bundle of 'irrational' mediaeval superstitions.³⁶ To defend Tantra in the face of all criticisms, it was required to 'rationally' expose its philosophical contents through sophisticated discourses. In the last section of this article I choose to focus on a select number of such philosophical articulations on Kālī, beginning with the nineteenth-twentieth Century scholars from Bengal and then turning to my own Guru Kulavadhuta Srimat Shyamananda Tirthanatha.

Mythological Renderings of Kālī's Relation with the Corpse

Before considering the core esoteric understanding of Kālī's iconography, it would be convenient to begin with the readings offered by the Purāṇas of Mediaeval Bengal whose dates are comparatively transparent. The motif of the Devī's standing or sitting on a corpse features in the *Kālikā Purāṇa*,³⁷ (10th-11th century C.E.).³⁸ Interestingly, though this text derives its name from Kālikā (Kālī), the concerned aspect of the Kālī icon here relates more to the goddess Kāmākhyā. The latter goddess is depicted as having three mounts, a corpse, a lion and a lotus; symbolically representing Śiva, Viṣṇu and Brahmā.³⁹ It is noteworthy indeed that she at times is to be meditated upon as copulating

with Śiva's corpse, setting a prototype for her later depictions as involved in a reverse sexual union (*viparītarati*)⁴⁰ with him.

During sexual union, she plays on the red lotus spread over the corpse of Śiva, again when she abandons sex, she sits on the white corpse.⁴¹

One of the earliest full fledged narrative accounts of Kālī's literally standing on Śiva is to be found in the *Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa* (a 10th-11th Century text).⁴² The historical evolution of the devotional cult of Dakṣiṇakālīkā is patently traceable in this text, and it inscribes into her iconography as well.⁴³ As this Purāṇa narrates, the Supreme Goddess born as Śiva's wife Satī, quits her body and re-incarnates as Pārvatī, the daughter of the king Himālaya. When in this form, she seeks to unite with Śiva with the aid of Kāmadeva, the latter is reduced to ashes by Śiva's wrath. The Goddess then reveals to Śiva her true identity and he ardently expresses his desire to see her true form,⁴⁴ she then manifests herself as Kālī. Overwhelmed with devotion, Śiva lies supine on the ground, and holding her feet to his bosom, eulogises her with one thousand names.⁴⁵ At last he prays to her;

O Great Creatrix, grant me the boon that wherever will be revealed this Kālī form of Yours, You will be standing on my bosom, myself being in the form of a corpse. Owing to this, You will be known in the worlds as Mahākālī who rides on a corpse. O Universal Mother, be pleased with me. ⁴⁶

According to an almost similar narrative in the *Yoginī Tantra*⁴⁷, in course of her battle with an Asura called Ghora, the Goddess reveals her supreme form as Kālī, who makes Śiva pass through all the energy centres in her body wherein he beholds millions of universes and the essence of all knowledge. Overwhelmed with awe and wonder, he prays to be allowed a permanent place under her feet. The Goddess replies;

O Great God, ...now stay under my feet as a corpse which will be my seat.⁴⁸

In both these narratives, Śiva's identification with the corpse under the Goddess's feet relates to the sentiment of *bhakti*, illustrating thereby the process of Kālī's transformation into a tender mother through a

sophistication of her cult that ran parallel to her acceptance in the mainstream society. Besides, an undercurrent of cultic urgency to establish the supremacy of the Goddess over Śiva is patently visible in both the narratives, for Śiva's placement under her feet carries a bold statement of the Goddess's triumph and Śiva's subjugation, subverting all patriarchal hierarchies.

Unfortunately, though the Purāṇic and the Tantric texts of mediaeval Bengal display such a bold gynocentric gesture in discursively appropriating the gradually emerging icon of Kālī standing on Śiva's corpse, the associate myth that has gained wider currency is an extremely patriarchal one. Circulated mainly through oral accounts, this narrative begins with a frenzied Kālī wrecking havoc on all the worlds after annihilating her enemies in the battlefield. The gods in heaven are terrified and they all approach Śiva for help who in order to check her, lies on the ground. The moment Kālī steps on him, she looks down and comes to her senses. Ashamed of the mistake of placing her foot on her husband's bosom, an extreme act of transgression on the part of a Hindu woman, she bites her tongue.⁴⁹ The ethics that operates here is that of wifely submission, inscribing into the Kālī icon the androcentric motif of 'the taming of the shrew'⁵⁰. The Goddess's power in a way deserves to be tamed, her omnipotence demands to be controlled and contained through the enforcement of wifely values.⁵¹

Very interestingly, in a handful of Sanskritised appropriations of this otherwise oral myth, only the motif of her stepping upon Śiva has been retained with absolutely no reference to that of her shame or tongue biting. One is to be found in the *Bṛhaddharma Purāṇa*⁵², dating around the later half of the 13th Century C.E.⁵³

Earlier, when once in order to destroy the Asuras.....the space-clad goddess Kālī manifested on the earth; unable to bear her weight, the earth began to tremble. Then Śiva in the form of a corpse (*śava*), supported the Goddess possessed of three eyes. With this, Kūrma, Śeṣa and the earth attained stability.⁵⁴

The other textual appropriation of this myth is in the *Adbhuta Rāmāyaṇa*.⁵⁵, a Sanskrit text dating from the late sixteenth century.⁵⁶ Here, Kālī makes a dramatic entry into the myth of Rāma and Sītā. The text narrates Rāma's encounter with a thousand headed Rāvaṇa after he gains victory over the ten headed one. However, the new enemy proves powerful enough to smite Rāma down with his arrows when all of a sudden, Sītā assumes the dreadful form of Kālī and in a moment severs the thousand heads of Rāvaṇa. This is followed by a terrible dance of destruction by the Goddess which torments all the worlds. At the gods' prayer, Śiva intervenes and lying on the battleground, holds her feet on his bosom. Yet the Goddess does not quit her anger and threatens to devour the entire universe. Only after Brahmā restores Rāma back to life that she is finally pacified. Curiously, in this version of the narrative, Kālī's identity with Sītā associates her with Rāma and not Śiva as a wife. Consequently, the very question of biting her tongue out of shame is irrelevant here.

It can be assumed from the above two accounts that in these Sanskrit appropriations of the battlefield narrative, the patriarchal content, as relates to wifely values, is glaringly missing. Particularly the *Bṛhaddharma* makes no reference even to her frenzied dance or losing of senses. Rather, its mentioning of her as possessed of the third eye, might be a deliberate attempt to hint at her unwavering self-knowledge and via implication her self-control. Possibly, it was an intentional move on the part of the Śākta authors to retain the Goddess's status as the supreme deity by skilfully eliminating the 'wifely modesty' related element from it.⁵⁷ Or it also might have been the case that the popular myth in its original version did not have the section where the Goddess plays the submissive wife; and it was only in its later improvisations that she was thus domesticated. As to the tongue-biting part of the narrative, textual depictions of Kālī have been associating a protruding tongue with her iconography since the very first account of her Sanskritised version, which is in the *Durgāsaptasatī*⁵⁸ (5h or 6th century C.E.)⁵⁹, long before she came to be represented as standing on Śiva. She is launched into the narrative of the above text as having a terrible form with 'a lolling tongue'.⁶⁰ The tongue-association thickens

when she is called upon to drink the blood of Raktabīja.⁶¹ In other words, the lolling tongue of the goddess Kālī does not necessarily relate to the account of her wifely modesty, and does not seem to be connected with the process of her domestication.

Tantric Readings of the Corpse-Mounted Goddess

1) In Terms of Theology and Rituals

From popular mythology we now turn to the understanding of the Kālī icon within the core Tantric culture of Bengal. As the central deity of Bengal Kālīkula, the Goddess is primarily worshipped as Dakṣiṇakālīkā whose iconography involves Śiva in two different ways.⁶² First, he is depicted in his usual corpse-form as 'Śavarūpa Mahādeva'⁶³ under her feet. The other form is Mahākāla with whom she is to be imagined as engaged in reverse copulation (*viparītarati*)⁶⁴, which means a sexual union where the female is dominant. Grossly, three variations of Kālī images (as regarding the above featurings of Śiva) can be traced. First, there is Kālī standing on the corpse-Śiva. Secondly, Kālī sitting on Mahākāla (sometimes iconographically distinguishable from the corpse-Śiva) and engaged in reverse sexual union with him. Thirdly, Mahākāla is shown as reclining upon the corpse-Śiva and the Goddess sitting upon the former, enjoying sexual union. (Image-3)

Notably, in traditions which maintain the distinction between the two male figures, it is Mahākāla and not the corpse-Śiva who is associated with the Goddess as her Bhairava or consort. Some variations in the iconographic form of Mahākāla worshipped in the still-surviving *paramparās*⁶⁵ of Bengal Kālīkula, are as follows:

1. On the right side of the Goddess, smoke-coloured Mahākāla is to be worshipped. He holds a rod, and a skull-topped weapon (*khaṭvāṅga*). His large teeth are terrible and he is of the form of a child. His waist is covered with a tiger skin and he is pot bellied. He is decked in red garments. Possessed of three eyes and standing hair, he wears a garland of heads. The crescent moon adorns his matted hair. He is fierce and full of lustre.⁶⁶



Image 3 : Kālī on Mahākāla and Śavaśiva, Sarvamangala temple associated with Siva Chandra Vidyarnava, Baksara, West Bengal, 20th century CE., collected from the temple authority.

2. After the Goddess, Mahākāla is to be worshipped; (his worship is to be performed) after she has enjoyed reverse sexual union with him. His hair is dishevelled, his garments fallen off, he is space-clad and has a smiling face.⁶⁷
3. Mahārudra Mahākāla resides in the cremation ground. He is space-clad. In his two left hands he holds a skull-cup and a knife; and in the right a trident and a scull-topped weapon (*khaṭvāṅga*). His body is adorned with serpents and is smeared with ashes. He wears a garland of bones and rests on a couch of ashes in the midst of burning fire. He is engaged in reverse copulation with Śakti, as Kālikā sits on his bosom.⁶⁸
4. *Om* Mahākāla, who is of the colour of smoke and has matted hair on his head, is to be worshipped. He has three eyes and is Śiva

united with Śakti. He is beyond all changes, space-clad, terrible looking and has the lustre of blue collybrium. He is without the *guṇas* as well as the support of the *guṇas*. Kālī is stationed on him, thus is he to be repeatedly worshipped.⁶⁹

5. *Om* I worship Mahākāla Śiva whose lustre is like that of the death-fire of dissolution. He has four arms and has Kālī sitting upon him. He holds a trident, a sword, a skull-topped weapon and a skull-cup.⁷⁰

Significantly, after worshipping Mahākāla, separate worship is to be offered to the corpse-Śiva.⁷¹ The latter too has a distinct iconographic form.

Om His lustre is that of pure crystal. He is Mahākāla⁷² with three eyes, is space-clad and has two arms. The Great God rests under the feet of Kālī, his penis is raised upward and he wears the moon over his head. Sadāśiva, who is the supreme Bliss and the Goddess's best vehicle (*devyāvāhanamuttamam*), is thus to be meditated upon.⁷³

The adjective 'the Goddess's best vehicle' deserves special attention as concerns his relation with Kālī. His status as a vehicle (*vāhana*) or a seat (since he is the *mahāpreta padmāsana*)⁷⁴ for her, distinguishes him sharply from the controlling husband figure in the popular mythology studied in the previous section. As per Mahākāla Bhairava's status as the Goddess's consort, the theology of Kālī is particular about positing a hierarchy between the two with the Goddess vested with absolute supremacy over him. As the ultimate source of all creation, it is she who gives birth to Mahākāla and devours him at the time of dissolution. The *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*⁷⁵ articulates the concept in following terms.

Mahākāla, the Destroyer of the Universe, is Your form. At the dissolution of things, it is Kāla who will devour all, and by reason of this he is called Mahākāla, and since You devour Mahākāla himself, it is You who are the Supreme Primordial Kālikā. Because You devour Kāla, You are Kālī, the original form of all things, and because You are the origin of and devour all things You are called

Ādyā Kālī. Resuming after dissolution Your own form, dark and formless, You alone remain as One, ineffable and inconceivable.⁷⁶

In other words, if the corpse-Śiva is merely a vehicle for the Goddess; Mahākāla features with Kālī as a consort figure whose subordinate status is spelt out in two ways. First, he is a derivative of the Goddess, who creates and dissolves him at her will. Secondly, in course of his union with her, she remains in the dominant position.

Besides, since the iconography of a Tantric deity primarily constitutes a significant element of *pūjā* rituals, the study of its position in a cult must take into account some aspects of these rituals as well. It must be remembered that in course of Tantric worship (particularly in the Śākta Tantras), the central goddess is always visualised as surrounded by a huge band of associate deities called *āvaraṇadevatā* and *aṅgadevatā*.⁷⁷ The *pūjā* ritual involves individual worship of each of these deities as an emanation of the central goddess, and at the end of the worship they all are to be thought of as merging back into her, who herself then is to be meditated upon as one with the worshipper's own Self which is pure consciousness.⁷⁸ Significantly, the status of the Bhairava of a Mahāvidyā goddess is fairly akin to that of her *āvaraṇadevatā* team and therefore in the ritual context he is nothing but an emanation of hers. This gynocentric theological structure governs Kālī's relation with Mahākāla Bhairava and well as with the corpse-Śiva.

2) In Extensive Philosophical Terms

As the Tantric cult of Kālī went on gaining sophistication across ages,⁷⁹ her icon came to be vested with rich philosophical meanings. Alongside all other aspects of her form, such as her black complexion, naked body and dishevelled hair;⁸⁰ the featuring of Mahākāla and the corpse-Śiva in her iconography also emerged as a meaning-loaded symbol.

In this context, the corpse (*śava*) assumes a specific ontological significance as to its identity as well as distinction from its parallel concept 'Śiva'. It is a core doctrine of the Śāktas that Śiva without

Śakti is nothing but an inert *śava* or corpse. He is pure Consciousness who is bereft of all cognitive and active functions without his dynamic energy which is Śakti. Even lexically the term 'Śiva' is broken to effect this meaning, since the letter 'i' which defines this distinction between Śivahood and *śava*-hood represents Śakti.⁸¹ Since the Tantras assert the centrality of the female principle as the source of all dynamism; the agency behind the acts of creation, preservation and dissolution that are otherwise attributed to Śiva, are transferred to Śakti alone.⁸² Another term equally applied to Śiva without Śakti as well as to the corpse over which she sits is '*preta*'⁸³. The term literally means, 'departed, deceased, dead, a dead person...the spirit of a dead person, a ghost..⁸⁴. '*Preta*' as an adjective technically applies to the corpse like state of Sadāśiva, as in the *mantras* of the deities presiding over the Goddess's station or *pīṭha* (*pīṭhadēvatā*), he is designated as 'Sadāśiva, the great *preta* as the lotus seat' (*sadāśiva mahāpretapadmāsana*).⁸⁵ Though not pertaining to the school of Kālī, the *Jñānārṇava Tantra*⁸⁶, a Śrīvidyā text, makes an extensive reference to the *preta* imagery in the context of Śiva's (in his various aspects) relation with Śakti as it repeatedly argues that Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Īśvara and Sadāśiva (Śiva's aspects presiding over creation, preservation, dissolution, veiling and grace) are all *pretas* without the power of the Goddess. Apparently, *śava* and *preta*, as metaphors applied to Śiva seem to imply two opposite meanings that contradict each other. While the former means a body without a spirit, the latter is a spirit without a body. Yet, in either case, what is common is the idea of inertness, the incapability to perform any action and this inactivity specifically characterises the reclining Śiva in Kālī's icon.

However, more nuanced interpretations of Śiva's inactivity and Kālī's dynamism in the esoteric context yet remain to be explored and here we need to consider more profound philosophical accounts available on this subject. We now turn to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the Tantric traditions of Bengal underwent a phase of existential crisis owing to the massive spread of English education

and the huge tide of 'reform' movements. Consequently, a significant number of Tantra scholars and practitioners were driven to bring out in publicly available written discourses, the esoteric philosophy that otherwise lay encoded in rituals and was only orally transmitted by the *gurus*.⁸⁷ It was then that scholars from a great number of traditions or *paramparās* within Bengal Kālikula, came up with interpretations of Kālī worship and almost all of them put a great emphasis on their understanding of her iconography. Considering the scope of this article, I choose to mention a select number of such nineteenth-twentieth century scholars and summarize their interpretations.

We might begin with Shivachandra Vidyarnava(1860-1913), a charismatic saint of nineteenth century Bengal, zealously committed to the propagation of Śakti worship and the Śākta philosophy. His famous book *Tantratattva* (1910)⁸⁸ articulates his views on Śakti which also include an elaborate interpretation of the Kālī icon. Summing up his ideas, Śakti is Prakṛti, who is Being-Consciousness-Bliss and Puruṣa is an evolute (*vikṛti*) of hers meant for creation.⁸⁹ In other words, the latter is symbolic of the creative phenomenon. When the aspirant is about to attain liberation, she subjugates this Puruṣa aspect of hers. However, she does not dissolve him completely, since being the eternally dynamic energy, she never ends her creative activity and even at the stage of liberation, this act continues and hence Puruṣa, who is her instrument of creation, is allowed to remain. But at the time of liberation, creative activity is experienced only as a joyful play of hers, and not as a bondage causing factor. In other words, Shivachandra's notion of liberation follows a Śākta line where the phenomenal world is not negated or rejected but is embraced as a playful manifestation of Śakti. In the icon, this doctrine gets reflected in the Goddess's treatment with the Puruṣa Mahākāla, whom she allows to remain even at the time of liberation but keeps him subdued under her feet.⁹⁰ Shivachandra ends his argument with a wonderful explanation of a related Sanskrit verse.⁹¹

Puruṣa is called *dakṣiṇa* (since He occupies the right side), Śakti is *vāmā* (since She is the left side). As long as these Left and Right,

Female and Male are established in equal-footing, there is bondage or the world flow. When owing to the powerful influence of *sāghanā*, the *vāmā*-Śakti is awakened, She conquers Puruṣa, the *dakṣiṇa*-Śakti, and stands on Him intoxicated with the bliss of the *dakṣiṇa* half. Thus, when both the *dakṣiṇa* and the *vāmā* halves get filled with Her influence; then She Who is *kaivalya* incarnate, grants liberation to the *jīva*. That is why the Mother Who grants liberation to the triple world is called Dakṣiṇā Kālī.⁹²

Another explanation is provided by Vimalananda Swami (1862-1925), writer of the illustrious commentary *Vimalānandādāyini-Svarūpa-Vyākhyā* on the *Karpūrādi Stotra*⁹³, published by Arthur Avalon in 1922. Vimalananda's explanation of a verse⁹⁴ from the above hymn involves an interpretation of the Kālī iconography. The concerned verse refers to the Kālī *yantra*⁹⁵ at whose central *bindu*, the Goddess is to be meditated upon as seated upon the corpse's bosom and copulating with Mahākāla. This has been interpreted thus;

There (at the *bindu*) You are stationed on the breast of Śiva who is inactive like a corpse.⁹⁶ This means that remaining established in Your own state as the Brahman beyond attributes, You have divided Yourself into Śiva and Śakti, like the two halves of a gram⁹⁷ by virtue of your *māyā* embodying the powers of Will, Action and Knowledge. You are engaged with Mahākāla in enjoying the vibrant bliss of sexual union which means that You are eternally united in reverse copulation with Paramaśiva who is Brahman with attributes.⁹⁸

Here the inactivity of the corpse equates it with the transcendental Absolute. The Goddess's sitting on it in course of all her play symbolises her remaining eternally stationed in this state despite all her creative activities. Significantly, the corpse represents the Goddess's own aspect of transcendence and changelessness. Again, this same Goddess, though eternally transcendent, splits herself into two: Śiva and Śakti/ Mahākāla and Mahākālī. As Mahākālī, she engages in reverse copulation with Mahākāla. This too is a secret symbol. As Vimalananda Swami quotes;

When the Supreme Śakti of her own accord evolves as the universe, She puts the Puruṣa (Śiva) down and becomes desirous of sexual union. Then becoming Herself active, She stands upon Bhairava and enhances her own Bliss with the waves of natural pleasure.⁹⁹

Śakti being the dynamic principle of creation dominates Śiva, her static counterpart, who is only a receptor of her energising influence.

Summing up Vimalananda Swami's understanding of the icon, the Goddess's association with the corpse-Śiva relates to her transcendence and that with Mahākāla Śiva, to her immanence, where she plays the dominant dynamic principle.¹⁰⁰ Here, the Kālī icon becomes a symbol of cosmic totality, in which both the immanent phenomenal world and the transcendental Absolute get integrated into the single image of the Goddess.¹⁰¹

We next turn to Sir John Woodroffe (1865-1936), a High Court Judge, known to be a disciple of Shivachandra Vidyarnava.¹⁰² Under the pseudonym 'Arthur Avalon' and with the help of learned collaborators,¹⁰³ he attempted to bring about a positive approach to Tantra in Orientalist studies. His understanding of the Kālī iconography is best articulated in his *Mahāmāyā: The World As Power: Power As Consciousness*¹⁰⁴ (1929), in course of a discussion on the nature of the Absolute. As he argues, in the Tantric understanding of the Absolute, transcendence and immanence are not apart from each other, since the static and the dynamic aspects of Reality are essentially co-extensive. Unlike as in the case of Brahman in Śaṅkara's monistic system¹⁰⁵, where 'Being' is understood as pure stasis with no activity; 'Being' in the Tantras implies the very 'activity' of being, or the 'Power to Be' whose other aspect is the 'Power to Become' or to manifest as the phenomenal world. This all-inclusive 'Reality Whole' which is the Power to Be and to Become is Mahākālī who transcends all categories, yet involves them fully. Since the phenomenal world is subject to Time or Kāla, Kālī plays with Mahākāla as he is none but herself. Yet she keeps him under her feet, as she simultaneously transcends him.¹⁰⁶

Another important figure in the religious history of nineteenth-twentieth century Bengal, who offered a deeply esoteric reading of

the Kālī icon was Sri Bijoykrishna Chattopadhyay (1875-1947).¹⁰⁷ His book *Rahasyavidyā*¹⁰⁸ (1950=1357 *Sāl*) provides a Yogic explanation of every aspect of the Kālī iconography.

In Bijoykrishna's reading, Kālī represents the ultimate state of transcendence characterized by the experience of pure bliss (*ānanda*) which is indeterminable (*anirvacanīya*). It is a state of absolute ecstasy, where remains no trace of self awareness.¹⁰⁹ Śiva on the other hand has been called the *akṣarātman*, meaning the imperishable Self. As the author states, the *akṣarātman* is the primal form of determinate self awareness which first evolves out from the state of pure Bliss.¹¹⁰ Śiva as the *akṣarātman* has been identified as Mahākāla who is verily Kālī's manifestation and hence is controlled by her.

Her manifestation as the *akṣarātman* is none other than Her manifestation as Mahākāla. *Akṣara* is verily self-awareness. As regards Her indeterminate state, She is pure Selfhood and when it comes to her manifestation and action, this very Śakti is Mahākāla.....It is 'ama' or 'amā'¹¹¹ who makes Herself into the *akṣarātman* as the omniscient *tejas* and driven by the modes of Her relish (*rasa*) of Herself, functions as Mahākāla or in other words addresses Herself in this way. That is why *amāśakti* is called Kālī for in reality *amā* is the progenitrix of Kāla, the destroyer of Kāla as well as the controller of Kāla, Herself being of the nature of self-illumination.¹¹²

As relates to her iconography, Kālī's standing upon the corpse of Śiva refers to a state of Yogic experience where this determinate self awareness, represented by Śiva, is transcended and the aspirant enters into the indeterminate state of pure bliss. The Self, though remaining even then, is no better than dead, since it has no awareness of its existence. The author welds his interpretation of the icon into a rhetoric of the Self's 'not being' inspite of 'being'.

Where She makes Herself into the nature of Bliss, there She manifests Her-self as 'is not', there remains no trace of selfhood even. It is as if *ānandamayī* bursts forth trampling down Śivahood-

crushing it down. Herself She bursts forth, trampling Her-*self* down and bringing out Bliss. So you get such a state called Bliss, where the self can exist as 'is not'...then, putting down the blissful self-awareness like a dead (corpse) under Her feet and standing on it; there rises Mahāśakti as Bliss. Dead means- as if 'is not', as if the self-awareness 'is not' there- it is a feeling of this type.¹¹³

The above interpretation unfolds an interesting reception of the Kālī iconography. Śiva's position here is paradoxical. In one sense he exists, yet in another he does not, since he is dead. In this context, Kālī, who otherwise is the progenitrix of Śiva, becomes the one 'who devours Śiva' (*śivagrāsini*)¹¹⁴, as 'She has made Śiva dead — has absorbed the Self and the existence of Selfhood into Herself.'¹¹⁵ The icon thereby becomes a symbol for an inarticulate state of ecstasy, 'self-killing' indeed, as the experient looses him/herself in a gesture of embracing death, implicit in his/her wilful suspension of existence itself.

As regards the Goddess's sexual engagement with Mahākāla in a reverse position, Sri Bijoy Krishna refers to Śakti's status as the Power which having created Mahākāla or the *akṣarātman*, engages herself in the play of dividing him into innumerable fragments, thereby producing the universe of diversity and again withdrawing this diversity back into Mahākāla. Since 'Mahākāla' also means 'the Great Time', her play of reverse sexual union with him consists of subjecting this undivided principle of Time to diversification and producing innumerable time-fragments (*khaṇḍakala*) and then again re-constituting him into his unified self.¹¹⁶

To the views of all these nineteenth-twentieth century scholars, I would like to add what my own *gurudeva* Kulavadhut Srimat Shyamananda Tirthanatha (Uttarpara, Hooghly district, West Bengal) has to say as to why Kālī is depicted in this manner. He is specifically particular about insisting that the one lying beneath the Goddess's feet is a *śava* and not Śiva. Here I make an attempt to sum up all what he has to say about it.

The *dhyānas* of the Devī refers to her as *śavārūḍā* (standing on a corpse) and not as *śivārūḍā* (standing on Śiva). Śiva has been made into a *śava* here, since the Devī has absorbed all his powers, all that constitute his Śivahood, back into Herself. Whatever power resides in Śiva, comes from Her. It is this Mahāśakti who energises the *śava* and vests Śivahood into it, and at the end devours this Śivahood or re-absorbs it into Herself. In other words, Mahākālī devours Mahākāla, hence She is known to be the one who transcends Kāla (*kālātītā*). Having thus absorbed Śiva's Śivahood, She alone exists, Herself combining both Śiva and Śakti. In this state She is the perfect eternal Absolute or Pūrṇabrahmasanātānī.¹¹⁷

He further adds,

Though externally it seems that She produces forth Śiva and re-absorbs Him, She and He are basically non-dual. She brings forth the one who has been already existing in Her as one with Herself and after She has devoured Him, He remains within Her as non-distinct from Her.¹¹⁸

From all these above philosophical understandings of the Kālī icon, certain observations are to be made. First, Mahākāla and the corpse- Śiva are not two distinct entities but twin aspects of one Śiva.

The second observation concerns the specific symbolic implication of Mahākāla. In some interpretations (e.g. those of Shivachandra and John Woodroffe), he refers to the creative phenomenon or more specifically to 'Time' as an evolute of Śakti put forth to carry out her cosmic play. However, in some readings (e.g. those of Sri Bijoykrishna and my *gurudeva*) Mahākāla, an epithet of Śiva, also signifies the 'Self' vested with cognitive and active powers by virtue of his association with Śakti, bereft of which he is reduced to a corpse.¹¹⁹ His 'being' or 'not being' is solely dependent on the will of the Goddess.

Thirdly, in the symbolism above, the corpse exemplifies a deathlike negation (or suspension) of selfhood amounting to an ecstatic sublimation into the selfless 'void' like state of Nirvāṇa that Kālī verily is. It is tempting to draw here a comparison with the Buddhist

doctrine of '*śūnya*'¹²⁰ and scholars like Dr. Haraprasad Shastri have emphatically asserted that Tantrics who associate Kālī with the ultimate sixth state of *śūnya* are literally Buddhists, since Hindus never were, and will never be, followers of the doctrine of *śūnya*.¹²¹ Now, what exactly does this selfhood-less 'Void' imply? Is it absolute nihilism, or is it void only in the sense that it transcends all forms of categorisation and spacio-temporal limitations? All these relate to a different question beyond the scope of this article. However, it of course remains to be said that being a strongly founded theological system, with the Goddess playing an active godhead, the cult of Kālī is anything but nihilist.

Fourthly, though the Tantric doctrine of static Śiva and dynamic Śakti draws from the ontology of the Sāṃkhya system based on the theory of *puruṣa-prakṛti*,¹²² the ontological and soteriological implications of these categories have undergone great changes. Unlike the active nature of Sāṃkhya *prakṛti*, which is bondage inducing and therefore is something to be got rid of, Śakti's dynamism not only has a positive implication, but constitutes (e.g. in Shivachandra's understanding) the very bliss of liberation. Besides, here ultimacy and liberation are located not in a static Self (*puruṣa*), cleansed of the world producing material principle (*prakṛti*); but in the energy principle itself which has been verily established as the ultimate Absolute with its static counterpart fully absorbed into it. The absolute ontological position attributed to Śakti, very much like that of Brahman in non dualistic Vedānta, however is not at the cost of her dynamic nature, or in other words her dynamism is not to be reduced to mere immanence. Kālī is verily the Absolute who is transcendently dynamic or dynamically transcendent.

The discussion invites a comparison with another important Tantric tradition, the Śakti oriented Krama school of Kashmir, which like the Tantras of Bengal, is also centred round the cult of Kālī; yet unlike Bengal Tantra, has a rich and sophisticated textual canon of philosophy.¹²³ Though not much is known about any historical

connection between the two Kālī traditions, a striking similarity can be traced as to their treatment of the male and the female poles of divinity. The doctrine of Devīnaya, associated with the Krama system, holds the female divinity (Śakti or Kālī) as the ultimate principle.

The term Devatānaya is more palatable to those who subscribe to the theory of the absolute ultimacy of the female aspect and relegate the male aspect of reality (i.e., Śiva) to a slightly inferior position... To them, therefore, the Parameśvara (or the Lord Absolute) marks the end of the traffic of time (Kāla), whereas the Devī (the Lady-Absolute) is the repository or the culminating point of that end itself.¹²⁴

This ultimacy of Devī, like as in the Kālī tradition of Bengal, significantly involves the devouring (*kalana*) of Mahākāla by Kālī¹²⁵, which prods the reader to enquire into any possible historical connection between the two systems, which however, is not the subject of this article.

Finally, it is to be noted that even though the icon apparently projects forth a polarised rendering of a passive Śiva and an active Śakti, the underlying philosophy is non-dualistic and here the ontology of Tantra departs from the dualistic Sāṃkhya doctrine. However, in the Kālī icon, even the non-dual state of Śiva-Śakti is more Śakti-oriented for ultimately it is Kālī in whom this polarity dissolves as she combines both Śiva and Śakti.¹²⁶ In other words, the Kālī icon emerges into a Śākta or rather a gynocentric version of Ardhanārīśvara.¹²⁷

However, alongside these philosophical readings of the Kālī icon which specifically pivot on the centrality of Śakti and build up their soteriology upon the absorption of the male pole of divinity into the female, there are parallel interpretations which locate in this icon a Sāṃkhya based hierarchical model of *puruṣa* transcending *prakṛti*. Though otherwise non-dualistic, these readings revolve round the treatment of the corpse like Śiva as the ultimate substratum of consciousness which is the fundamental underlying principle, upon which is founded the relative phenomenal universe represented by Kālī, who is not only dependent on Śiva for her existence but is also

a derivative of his creative potential, whom he in a way transcends by playing the unchanging principle beneath the veil of change which a dancing Kālī verily signifies.¹²⁸ Interestingly, with this 'base-superstructure' model of Śiva and Śakti, the patent gynocentricism of the visual icon is forcefully subdued and the hierarchy is reversed as the inert Śiva from a subdued corpse emerges as the very foundation of Kālī's existence. Unfortunately, owing to the absence of any textual canon of the Bengal Kālīkula philosophy and the unfixed and fluid nature of oral accounts, patriarchal readings of the Goddess's icon have penetrated into a large number of otherwise Śākta lineages.

Conclusion

Considering the multilayered signification of the Kālī icon, it might now be asked, why at all was the patriarchal appropriation of the image which originally related to a gynocentric theology? The answer is to be traced in the layered structure of negotiations governing the relation between the heterodox Tantric communities and the dominant Brahminical orthodoxy. The former's strategy of social safeguard entailed a tremendous esoterisation of what constituted the 'inner' core of Kaula¹²⁹ rituals and philosophy that consequently had to be shrouded under profound secrecy.¹³⁰ The symbolism of Tantric icons, often involving elements potentially menacing to the religio-moral pre-suppositions of the status-quo, remained unexposed outside the boundaries of esoteric circles. As a result, Brahminical readings of these icons gained more currency through popular mythologies, whereby Kālī from an omnipotent matriarch got reduced to a submissive wife, with *lajjā* her prime adornment.

Notes

¹ One of the multiple forms of the goddess Kālī featuring in the Tantric tradition of eastern India. For a list the various forms of this goddess see Chakreshvar Bhattacharya, *Śākta-darśanam* (in Sanskrit), Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 1930, p. 203. For details on the Tantric understanding of the various forms of Kālī and the rituals associated with her, see Upendra Kumar Das, *Śāstramūlaka Bhāratiya Śaktisādhana*, (vol. 1) (in Bengali), Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, 1391 *Baṅgābda*, Kolkata, pp. 463-491. For studies

on Kālī, also see Madhu Khanna, 'Introduction' in *Śāktapramodaḥ of Deva Nandan Singh*, Tantra Foundation, Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan & D.K. Printworld Private Limited, New Delhi, 2013, pp. 22-28; Sarveshvar Satpathy, *Śakti Iconography in Tāntric Mahāvīdyās*, Punthi Pustak, 1992, Calcutta, pp. 118-123.

- ² See for instance Shankarnath Roy, *Bhārater Sādhanā*, (vol. 3) (in Bengali), Karuna Prakashani, 1357 *Baṅgābda*, Calcutta, p. 94-95.
- ³ See for instance, Bratindranath Mukhopadhyay, *Śaktir Rūpa Bhārate O Madhya Asia-y*, Kolkata: Ananda Publications, 1990, p. 47.
- ⁴ For the complete *dhyāna* of Dakṣiṇakālīkā, see *Kālī Tantra*, ed. Srimat Paramatmanandanath Bhairav, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata, 1409 *Baṅgābda*, *paṭala* I, verses 27-36, pp. 4-5.
- ⁵ See for instance, *Encountering Kālī : In the Margins, at the Center, in the West*, eds., Rachel Fell McDermott & Jeffrey J. Kripal, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 2005.
- ⁶ For example, Usha Menon and Richard A. Shweder 'Dominating Kālī: Hindu Family Values and Tantric Power', in *Ibid.*, pp. 80-99.
- ⁷ See June McDaniel, 'Sitting on the Corpse's Chest: The Tantric Ritual of Śava sādhanā and its Variations in Modern Bengal' in *Breaking Boundaries with the Goddess: New Directions in the Study of Śāktism*, eds., Cynthia Ann Humes & Rachel Fell McDermott, Manohar, New Delhi, 2009, pp. 103-135.
- ⁸ Alexis Sanderson, 'Purity and Power among the Brahmans of Kashmir' http://www.alexissanderson.com/uploads/6/2/7/6/6276908/sanderson_1985.pdf, last accessed on 3rd March, 2015.
- ⁹ See *Ibid.* Also see Huge B. Urban, *The Power of Tantra: Religion, Sexuality and the Politics of South Asian Studies*, I.B. Tauris, New York, 2011.
- ¹⁰ David R. Kinsley, 'Corpses, Severed Heads, and Sex: Reflections on the Daśamahāvīdyās' in *Breaking Boundaries with the Goddess: New Directions in the Study of Śāktism*, op.cit., pp. 145-146.
- ¹¹ The aspirant undergoes extreme tests of courage and fortitude. The corpse might move, terrible apparitions might be seen and also worldly temptations might be encountered. The goddess herself might come under the disguise of some relative of the aspirant in order to dissuade her/him from *sādhanā*. See Upendra Kumar Das, op.cit., Vol 2, p. 673.
- ¹² See for instance, Bijoy Krishna Chattopadhyay, 'Śavasādhanā Rahasya' in *Rahasyavidyā*, (2 vols) (in Bengali), Upanishad Rahasya Karyalaya, Howrah, 1412 *Sāl* (2nd edn.), pp. 333-340.
- ¹³ June McDaniel, op.cit., p. 105.
- ¹⁴ Since the Goddess is 'the one dwelling in cremation grounds' (*Śmaśānālaya-vāsinīm*) (.....*Kālī Tantra*, op.cit., *paṭala* 1, verse 32, p. 5); As per the rituals of Kālīkula Tantra, a common backdrop is the cremation ground which is believed to be one of the most favourable places for her worship. (see for instance, *Ibid.*, *paṭala* 4, verse 19, p. 17).

- ¹⁵ Donaldson, Thomas Eugene, 'The Śava-Vāhana as Puruṣa in Orissan Images: Cāmuṇḍā to Kālī/Tārā' in *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 51, No. 1/2 (1991), pp 107-141, Published by: Artibus Asiae Publishers, DOI: 10.2307/3249679 Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3249679>, pp. 123-124.
- ¹⁶ Originally a non-Sanskritic goddess whose first prominent appearance is in the *Durgāsaptasatī* where she is synonymous with Kālī. (see *Durgāsaptasatī*, [with seven commentaries in Sanskrit, viz., *Pradīpa*, *Guptavati*, *Caturdharī*, *Śāntanavī*, *Nāgojībhāṭṭa*, *Jagaccandrikā* and *Damśoddhāra*] ed., Kshemaraj Srikrishnadas, Sri Venkateshvar Press, Bombay, 1989, *adhyāya* VII, verse 24, p 181). For studies on Cāmuṇḍā's assimilation into the cult of the great Goddess, see Coburn, T.B., *Devī Māhātmya: The Crystallization of the Goddess Tradition*, Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, 1984 (repr.), pp. 134-136.
- ¹⁷ Mukhopadhyay, Bratindranath, op.cit., p. 49.
- ¹⁸ See for instance, Srivastava, Balram & Krishnaraia Wodeyar III (Maharaja of Mysore), *Iconography of Śakti*, Chaukhamba Orientalia, Delhi, 1978, p 85. For studies on her association with corpses see Thomas Eugene Donaldson, op.cit., p. 122-125.
- ¹⁹ Mukhopadhyay, Bratindranath, op.cit., p. 49.
- ²⁰ Ibid., p. 50.
- ²¹ Ibid., p. 50.
- ²² Donaldson, Thomas Eugene, op.cit., p. 139.
- ²³ Notably, when S.C. Banerjee makes a list of Tantric texts, he seldom mentions the dates except for those of a few. See S.C. Banerji, 'Tantra Śāstra' in *Sanskrit Culture of Bengal*, Sharada Publishing House, Delhi, 2004, pp. 87-121.
- ²⁴ Ibid., p. 84.
- ²⁵ For Tantric texts of Bengal, see *A Descriptive Catalogue of The Sanskrit Manuscripts*, eds. Dr. Jatindra Mohan Bhattacharjee, The National Council of Education, Bengal, Calcutta, 1993 & 'Tantra' in *A Descriptive Catalogue of Sanskrit Manuscripts*, (vol. 1) eds. Dr. Heramba Chatterjee, Sanskrit Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta, 1984. Also see S.C. Banerji *Tantra in Bengal: A Study in Its Origin, Development and Influence* op.cit., pp. 76-135, 255-272, 277-290; S.C. Banerji, *A Companion to Tantra*, Abhinav Publication, New Delhi, 1999, pp. 117-245 (though not exclusively, this list of Tantras largely covers texts from Bengal); *Sanskrit Culture of Bengal*, op.cit., pp. 87-124. Considering the lists available, notably a great number of these texts is still unpublished. For texts available in print, see catalogues of Nababharat Publishers, Kolkata; Chowkhamba Publishers, Varanasi; and Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi.
- ²⁶ *Śakti-Saṅgama Tantra (Kālī-khaṇḍa)* ed. and tr. 'Kula-Bhushan' Pandit Ramdatta Shukla, Prayag : Kalyan Mandir Prakashan. Saṁvat 2013, Paṭala - 1 and 2, pp. 1-23.
- ²⁷ *Nirvāṇa Tantra*, in *Tantrasaṅgraha*, ed. Saumyananda Nath, Nababharat Publishers, Calcutta, 1408 *Baṅgābda*, paṭala 1, verse 14-16, p. 2-3.
- ²⁸ *Niruttara Tantra*, ed., Pandit Sri Dinanath Tripathi, Nababharat Publishers, Calcutta, 1385 *Baṅgābda*, paṭala 2, verses 8-11, p. 10.

- ²⁹ *Yoginītantram*, ed., Swami Sarveshvarananda Sarasvati, Nababharat Publishers, Calcutta, 1385 *Baṅgābda*, *paṭala* 8-10, pp. 81-111.
- ³⁰ *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, ed., Arthur Avalon, Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, 1989, *ullāsa* IV, 30-33, p. 61.
- ³¹ *Sarvollāsatāntram* of Sarvānandanātha, ed., S.N. Khandelval, Chowkhamba Surabharati Prakashan, Varanasi, 2003.
- ³² *ei sab āgamatanrādite śakti sambandhīya tattva pracārīta hayechhe | kintu mane hay śāktarā ei sab tattva-ke vicāravitarkamūlaka dārśanika ākār-e prakāśa karār ceṣṭā karenni | praśna habe, kena karenni? uttar-e balā hay, karenni tār kāraṇa śākta tanrādite yesab gūḍha tattva uđghāṭita hayechhe, seguli sādhanalabdha; dārśanika vicār-er dvārāo sei sab tattva anadhikārī mānuṣ-er bodhagamya hay nā | sei janya śākta sādhak-erā sesab tattva-ke dārśanika vicār-er viṣayibhūta karā nirarthaka mane karechhen |Upendrakumar Das, Śāstramūlaka Bhāratīya Śaktisādhana, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, 2010, p. 359.*
- ³³ For details on the composition of the Śākta Purāṇas, see Kunal Chakrabarti, *Religious Process: The Purāṇas and the Making of a Religious Tradition*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2001.
- ³⁴ *Srīmahābhāgavatam*, ed. and tr., Panchanan Tarkaratna, Nababharat Publishers, Kolkata, 1995.
- ³⁵ *Kālikāpurāṇa*, ed. Panchanan Tarkaratna, Nababharat Publishers, Kolkata, 1384 *Baṅgābda*, *adhyāya* 63, verse 164, p. 639;
- ³⁶ See Arghya Dipta Kar, *Śākta Discourses in Nineteenth-Twentieth Century Bengal: A Critical Narration*, PhD. Thesis, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, 2016.
- ³⁷ *Kālikāpurāṇa*, op.cit., *adhyāya* 64, verse 26, p. 645.
- ³⁸ R.C. Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, Vol. II, Sanskrit College, Calcutta, 1963, p. 245.
- ³⁹ *Kālikāpurāṇam*, op.cit., *adhyāya* 58, verses 58-70, pp. 564-565.
- ⁴⁰ *Kālī Tantra*, op.cit., *paṭala* 1, verses -35, p 5.
- ⁴¹ *kāmakāle śivaprete nyastalohitapankaje | ramate tyaktakāmā tu sitapretopari sthitā | |Kālikāpurāṇam*, op.cit., *adhyāya* 58, verse 58, pp. 564.
- ⁴² R.C. Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 282.
- ⁴³ For studies on the relation between the *Mahābhāgavata* and the cult of Dakṣiṇakālikā, see Patricia Dold, 'Kālī the Terrific and Her Tests: The Śākta Devotionalism of the Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa' in *Encountering Kālī: In the Margins, at the Center, in the West*, op.cit., 2005, pp. 39-59.
- ⁴⁴ The Supreme Goddess, who alone exists prior to all creation, is formless and attributeless. The first form that she assumes for the sake of creation is very much like that of Kālī- collybrium- black, four armed, red eyed, with dishevelled hair and no clothes. It is in this form that she creates the trinity gods and assigns to them their respective tasks. When later she is born as Śiva's wife Satī, she once reveals to him her Kālī form who then splits into the ten Mahāvidyās. See *Srīmahābhāgavatam*, op.cit., *adhyāya* 3-8, pp. 10-45. For more discussion see, Arghya Dipta Kar, "Satī 'Reborn' : Metamorphosis of the Goddess in the Mahābhāgavata Purāṇa", in *Pratibhā* (Year-6, Volume-3, Part 24), Pratibha Prakashan, Allahabad, 2014, pp. 122-132.

- ⁴⁵ *Srīmahābhāgavatam*, op.cit., *adhyāya* 3-23, pp. 10-121.
- ⁴⁶ *yatra yatra tavedaṃ hi kālirūpaṃ maheśvari | āvirbhavati tatraiva śavarūpasya me hṛdi | | sarīsthātavyaṃ tvayā loke khyātā śavavāhanā | bhaviṣyasi mahākālī prasīda jagadambike | | Ibid., adhyāya 23, verses 194-195, p. 121.*
- ⁴⁷ *Yoginītantram*, ed., Swami Sarveshvarananda Sarasvati, op.cit., *paṭala* 8-10, pp. 81-111.
- ⁴⁸ *idānīm ca mahādeva mama padatale sadā | tiṣṭha tvam śavarūpeṇa mama mānasatārī (āsanatām?) braja | |Ibid., paṭala 9, verse 73, p. 101.*
- ⁴⁹ Critical studies on this myth have exposed the patriarchal nuances in it that operate through the ideology of *lajjā*. Usha Menon and Richard A. Shweder turn to an Oriya version of it to explore how the otherwise Tantric icon of Kālī is made to uphold Hindu family values, especially those encouraging female self-control and self-restrain.See Usha Menon and Richard A. Shweder, op.cit.
- ⁵⁰ The phrase has been taken from the title of a play by William Shakespeare. See William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew: The 1594 Quarto*, University Press, Cambridge, 1998.
- ⁵¹ This myth of Kālī's 'mistake' has been a patent subject in a great number of celluloid depictions of the Goddess, one of the most popular one being that in the television soap 'Devon ke Dev Mahadev', (Season 5 | Episode 214, 215) where Kālī's 'mistake' or rather 'fatal sin' is followed by an entire episode dedicated to her shedding seas of tears out of repentance and self-reproach for violating her 'wifely decorum'.
<http://www.hotstar.com/tv/devon-ke-dev-mahadev/12/parvati-insults-mahadev/1000000428>.
<http://www.hotstar.com/tv/mahadev/12/mahadev-invents-a-game/1000000429> (last accessed on 7.2.16). This is followed by a similar depiction of her 'mistake' and remorse in "Mahakaali" (E03/29th July 17).
<https://voot.app.link/yvtYeLAm4X>.
- ⁵² *Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa*, ed., Panchanan Tarkaratna, Nababharat Publishers, Calcutta, 1396 *Baṅgābda*.
- ⁵³ R.C. Hazra, *Studies in the Upapurāṇas*, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 461.
- ⁵⁴ *pṛthvītalāṃ samāyātā kālī dīgvasanāmbikā | | asurāṇām vadhārthāyayadā cakampe pṛthivī tadbhārāsahanena hi | | tadā śivaḥ śavo bhūtvā tāṃ dadhāra trilocanām | tadā sarve sthīribhūtāḥ kūrmasēṣadharādayaḥ | | Bṛhaddharmapurāṇa, ed., Panchanan Tarkaratna, Nababharat Publishers, Calcutta, 1396 *Baṅgābda*, *pūrvakhaṇḍa*, *adhyāya* 23, verses 6-8, pp. 93-94.*
- ⁵⁵ *Adbhuta-Rāmāyaṇam*, ed. Ashok Kumar Bandopadhyay, Sadesh, Kolkata, 2004, *sarga* 17-26, pp. 116-204. For critical studies on the *Adbhuta-Rāmāyaṇa*, see for instance, T.B. Coburn 'Sītā Fights while Rāma Swoons: A Śākta Perspective on the Rāmāyaṇa' in *Breaking Boundaries with the Goddess: New Directions in the Study of Śāktism*, op.cit., pp. 35-59.
- ⁵⁶ Significantly, in some variants of this popular myth, with the goddess stepping upon him, Śiva inserts his penis into her vagina and it is by serving her

sexually that he pacifies her. see *Śrī Śrī Kālī Kaivalyadāyini* of Nandakumar Kaviratna, Tara Library, Kolkata, 1421 *san*, p. 102

⁵⁷ Coburn, T.B., 'Sītā Fights while Rāma Swoons: A Śakta Perspective on the Rāmāyaṇa', op.cit., p. 36.

⁵⁸ See note 15.

⁵⁹ Coburn, T.B., *Devī Māhātmya: The Crystallization of the Goddess Tradition*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1984 (repr.), p. 1.

⁶⁰ *jihvālanabhīṣaṇā.....Durgāsaptasatī* , op.cit., *adhyāya* 7, verse 7, p. 175.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, *adhyāya* 8, verses 56-61, pp. 202-203.

⁶² For more discussion on the two-fold featuring of Śiva in the icon of the goddess, see Thomas Eugene Donaldson, op.cit., pp. 134-136.

⁶³ *śavarūpa-mahādeva-hṛdayopari saṁsthitām* |*Kālī Tantra*, op.cit., *paṭala* I, verses -34, p. 5.

⁶⁴ *mahākālena ca samam viparita-ratāturām* |*Ibid.*, *paṭala* I, verses -35, p. 5.

⁶⁵ The most widespread of which is the Tīrthanātha Paramparā, established by Srimat Jaganmohan Tarkalamkar, which has its branches all across Bengal.

⁶⁶ *mahākālam yajeddevyā dakṣiṇe dhūmra varṇakam* | *vibhratam daṇḍa-khaṭṭaṅgau(-khaṭṭvaṅgau?) daṁṣṭrābhīmamukham śīsum* | | *vyāghracarmmāvṛtakāṭiṁ tundiḷam raktavāsasam* | | *trinetrāmūrdhakeśaṅca muṇḍamālā-vibhūṣitam* | *jaṭābhārāla-saccandra-khaṇḍamugram jalammibham* | | 'Dakṣiṇakālikāpūjā' in *Tantroktā Nityapūjā Paddhati* of Kulavadhut Srimat Jaganmohan Tarkalamkar, Nababharat Publishers, Calcutta, 1418 *Baṅgābda*, p. 139.

⁶⁷ *mahākālam yajet paścāt viparitaratāntare* | *muktakeśam srastaveśam digambarahasammukham* | |*Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁶⁸ *śmaśānastho mahārudro mahākāla digambaraḥ kapālam kartṛkāmivāme śūla khaṭṭaṅga (khaṭṭvaṅga?) dakṣiṇe* | *bhujāṅge bhūṣitāṅgopi bhasmāsthimāla maṇḍitaḥ jvalat pāvako madhyastho bhasmaśayyā vyavasthitaḥ* | *viparita ratāśaktyā kālikā hṛdayopari* |*Kālyārcana Ratnākara*, Bhairav Srimat Hutashanananda Nath, Published by Dipali Chatterjee, Kolkata, 2008, p. 89.

⁶⁹ *om dhūmravarṇam mahākālam jaṭābhārānvitam yajet* | *trinetrām śivarūpaṅca śaktiyuktam nirāmayam* | | *digambaraḥ ghorarūpaḥ nīlāñjanasamaprabham* | *nirguṇaṅca guṇādhāram kālīsthānam punaḥ punaḥ* | |*Śrī Śrī Kālīkālpāmṛtam*, ed. Bhairavananda, Kalikashram, Belur, 1352 *Baṅgābda*, p. 42.

⁷⁰ *om kalpāntakālāgnisamānabhāsam caturbhujam kālikayopaviṣṭham* | *śūlāsikhaṭṭvaṅgakapālahastam śivam mahākālamanantamīde* |*Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁷¹ See for instance, *Kālyārcana Ratnākara*, op.cit, pp. 109-110.

⁷² The corpse Śiva too has been called Mahākāla, owing to the essential non-duality of the two.

⁷³ *om suddhasphaṭika sankāsam mahākālam trilocanam digambaraḥ dvibhujam kālipādavavasthitam (-vyavasthitam?) ūrdhaliṅgam mahādevam candracūḍam sadāśivam dhyāyecca paramānandam devyāvāhanamuttamam* | |*Kālyārcana Ratnākara*, op.cit, p. 109.

- ⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 110. This is to be set parallel to the iconography of Tripurasundarī, who in a similar gesture is served by the corpses of five male deities: Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Īśvara and Sadāśiva; who together constitute her couch. The symbolism of the icon is laid explicit in the Tantras which proclaim that since these cosmic gods are incapable of performing their respective functions without her power, they are all corpses. (see *Jñānārṇava Tantra*, ed., Dandisvami Damodar Ashram, Nababharat Publishers, Calcutta, 1389 *Baṅgābda*, *paṭala* VI, verses 14-29, pp. 31-33.) For more discussion see, Khanna, Madhu, 'The Representation of Goddess Tripurasundari In Bengal In the Context of The Formation of Vaishnava and Bengal Identity' in *Journal of Bengal Art*, ed. Enamul Haque, (Dhaka: ICSBA), 2012. pp. 135-151.
- ⁷⁵ *Mahānirvāṇa Tantra*, ed., Arthur Avalon, op.cit., *ullāsa* IV, 30-33, p. 61.
- ⁷⁶ *tava rūpam mahākālo jagatsamhāarakārah | mahāsamhārasamaye kālah sarvām grasiṣyati | | kalanāt sarvabhūtānām mahākālah prakīrtitaḥ | mahākālasya kalanāt tvamādyā kālīkā parā | | kālasamgrasanāt kālī sarveṣāmādirūpiṇī | kālatvādādhūtātōādādyā kālīti gīyate | | punaḥ svarūpamāsādyā tamorūpam nirākṛtiḥ | vācātitaṁ manogamyam tvamekaivā'vaśicyase | |Ibid., ullāsa 4, 30-33, p. 61.*
- ⁷⁷ *Āvaraṇa devatās* are minor deities who remain surrounding the central goddess, concealing her subtle *mantra*-form. However according to some sources, they constitute her body parts. When the central deity whose nature is that of infinite light manifests in the form of a *cakra*, then her body parts assume the form of the *āvaraṇa devatās*..... see Upendra Kumar Das, op.cit., vol.1, p. 916. However, this varies according to living traditions, some of which maintain a distinction between *āvaraṇa devatās* and *aṅgadevatās*, the latter specifically referring to deities embodying body parts.
- ⁷⁸ *Kālyārcana Ratnākara*, op.cit., p. 147. Also see *Śrī Śrī Kālīkālpāmṛtam*, op.cit., p. 56.
- ⁷⁹ For details on the sophistication of the Kālī cult, See Madhu Khanna, op.cit.
- ⁸⁰ See for instance, the interpretation of every detail of the icon in Vimalananda Swami, 'Introduction' to *Vimalānandadāyini-Svarūpa-Vyākhyā* in *Karpūrādistotra*, ed., Arthur Avalon, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 2004.
- ⁸¹ See Upendra Kumar Das, op.cit., vol 1., p. 343. For the symbolism in Kālī Iconography, see 'Toḍatalantram' in *Tantrasaṅgraha*, ed. Saumananda Nath, Navabharat Publishers, Calcutta, 1408 Sāl, Paṭala 1, Verses 19-24, pp. 5-6.
- ⁸² See 'Kubjikā Tantra', in *Tantrasaṅgraha*, ed. Saumyananda Nath, Navabharat Publishers, Calcutta, 1408 sāl, pp. 6-7.
- ⁸³ See *Jñānārṇavatāntram*, op.cit., *paṭala* IV, verses 13-29, pp. 31-33.
- ⁸⁴ Monier Williams, A Sanskrit-English Dictionary, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1899, p. 711.
- ⁸⁵ *Tantroktā Nityapūjā Paddhati O Rahasya Pūjā Paddhati*, op.cit., p. 119.
- ⁸⁶ See note 83.
- ⁸⁷ See note 36.

⁸⁸ Vidyarnava, Shivachandra, *Tantratattva*, (in Bengali) Nababharat Publishers, Calcutta, 1389 *Baṅgābda*.

⁸⁹ Here is to be traced a great departure from the Sāṅkhya doctrine, where *puruṣa* or consciousness transcends *prakṛti* and her evolutes (*vikṛtis*). For the opposites of Prakṛti, see Knut A. Jacobsen, *Prakṛti in Sāṅkhya-Yoga*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 2002, p. 31. Rendered in theological terms Prakṛti and Puruṣa get identified as the male and female poles of divinity. For details, see by the same author, 'The Female Pole of the Godhead in Tantrism and the Prakṛti of Sāṅkhya', *Numen* 43 (1996), pp. 56-81, For the Śākta tendency of reducing the male aspect of the Absolute to a modification of the female who is the original self of the Absolute :

The one Śakti becoming dual comes to be known as Puruṣa. Again after dissolution, She withdraws her male form and the duality is reduced to oneness. When the one Self becomes dual as the eternal and the non-eternal, on this duality is grounded Puruṣahood. Again when the eternal and the non-eternal become one Self, then there is the One Brahman form.....*Sarvollāsantram* of Sarvānandanātha, ed., S.N. Khandelval, Chowkhamba Surabharati Prakashan, Varanasi, 2003.

Ullāsa VI, verses 24-25, p. 35.

(*ekā śaktirdvidhā bhūtoā madhye puruṣabhāṣitam | punaḥ pralinakāle'pi dvidhaikam pumsagopitam | | nityānityādvidhaikātmā dvidhābhāvāśritaḥ puman | | nityānityam yadaikātmā tadaikam brahmavigraham | |*).

⁹⁰ Vidyarnava, Shivachandra, p. 245.

⁹¹ *puruṣo dakṣiṇaḥ prokto vāmā śaktirniḡadyate | vāmā sā dakṣiṇam jivā mahāmokṣa-pradāyini | | ataḥ sā dakṣiṇā kālī triṣu lokeṣu gīyate | |Ibid., 245.*

⁹² *puruṣ-er nāma dakṣiṇa (dakṣiṇāṅga-svarūpa baliyā), śakti-r nāma vāmā (vāmāṅga-svarūpa baliyā) yatadin ei vāma o dakṣiṇa, strī o puruṣa samabal-e avasthita tatadin-i saṁsāra bandhana | sādhanā-r prakhara prabhāv-e vāmāśakti jāgaritā haile tini yakhan dakṣiṇa-śakti puruṣa-ke jaya kariyā tadupari svayam dakṣiṇānand-e nimagnā hayen arthāt ki vāma, ki dakṣiṇa ubhaya aṁśai yakhan tñāhār prabhāv-e pūrṇa haiyā yāy, takhan-i sei kevalānandarūpiṇi jiv-er mahāmokṣa pradāna karen | tñi trailokyamokṣadā māyer nāma- dakṣiṇā kālī |Ibid., p. 245.*

⁹³ Vimalananda Swami, *Vimalānandadāyini-Svarūpa-Vyākhyā* in *Karpūrādistotra*, op.cit.

⁹⁴ He who at night, in union with his *śakti*, meditates with his mind centred on You, O Mother with a gently smiling face, as seated on the breast of the corpse-like Śiva, perched on the *Tripaṅcāra* and deeply engaged in sweet amorous play with Mahākālā; himself becomes the destroyer of Kāmadeva. | |*Karpūrādistotra*, op.cit., op.cit., verse 18, p. 26.

(*tripaṅcāre pīṭhe śavaśivahṛdi smeravadanām mahākālenocairmmadanarasalāvanyaniratām | samāsakto naktam svayamapi ratānandanirato jano yo dhyāyettvāmāyī janani sa syāt smarahaḥ*).

⁹⁵ For discussions on the Kālī Yantra, see Madhu Khanna, 'The Kālī Yantra: The Changing Iconography of Goddess Dakshina Kālī in Bengal' in *Art, Icon and Architecture in South Asia: Essays in Honour of Dr. Devangana Desai*, ed., Anila Verghese/ Anna L. Dallapiccola, vol-I, Aryan Books International, New Delhi, 2015, pp. 250-262.

⁹⁶ Compare, 'The term *śava*, refers to Brahman as a dead body' (*śava ityakṣare brahmavācakaḥ pretanirṇayaḥ*)*Gāyātrītantram*, (with the 'Tattvadīpikā' Hindi Commentary by Pt. Śivadatta Mīśra, Śāstri), ed., Pt. Tārakanātha Bhaṭṭācārya, Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, 2003, verse 153, p. 22.

⁹⁷ Compare for instance,

In the Supreme Abode, resides She who is without forms and is of the nature of great light. Covering Herself with *māyā*, She exists in the form of a gram. Devoid of hands or feet, She is the Sun, the Moon and Fire combined. When casting off Her sheath of *māyā*, She splits Herself into two, with the division of Śiva and Śakti, rises the creative ideation.*Nirvāṇa Tantra*, in *Tantrasaṃgraha*, op.cit., *paṭala* 1, verse 14-16, p. 2-3.

satyaloke nirākārā mahājyotiḥ-svarūpiṇī |
māyāyācchādītātmanāṃ caṇakākārarūpiṇī | |
hastapādādirahitā candrasūryāgnirūpiṇī |
māyāvālkālasantajyā dvidhā bhinnā yadonmukī | |
śivaśaktivibhāgena jāyate sṛṣṭikalpanā |

⁹⁸ *śavaśivohṛdi śavaavat niṣkriyasya śivasya hṛdaye, svakīyanirguṇabrahmapade sthitā satī icchā-kriyā-jñānāyuktayā māyāyā śivaśaktivibhāgena caṇakākāravat dvidhā bhūtvā ityarthāḥ | mahākālenocairmmadanarasalāvaṇyaniratām saṅuṇabrahmaparamaśivoena saha viparītabhāvena niyatayuktām |*Vimalananda Swami, *Vimalānandadāyini–Svarūpa-Vyākhyā*, op.cit., p. 27.

⁹⁹ *yadā sā paramā śaktiḥ svecchayā viśvarūpiṇī | adhaḥkṛtvā tu puruṣam saṅgamecchā'bhavattadā | | tadākramya svayam devī bhairavo'pari samsthitā | saḥajānandasandohaim nijānandapravardhinī | |* Footnote 2 in *Vimalānandadāyini–Svarūpa-Vyākhyā*, op.cit., p. 27. This reminds of a parallel counterpart of this concept in the Southern Śrīvidyā tradition where Lalitā or Tripurasundarī too keeps her consort Kāmeśvara subordinate to herself. In the *Lalitāsahasranāma*, the Goddess bears the epithet '*svādhīnavallabhā*' which has been interpreted by Bhāskararāya in the following terms,

Despite Her being qualities (*dharma*) like *icchā* and other *śaktis*, She is not subsumed by or subordinate to the quality-holder (*dharmin*) and hence has been called independent (*svādhīna*). It is She who has brought under her own dominion her husband Kāmeśvara. Since Śiva recognizes Himself as subordinate to Śakti, the quality-holder is subordinate to the quality.....*Saubhāgyabhāskara* commentary in *Śrīlalitāsahasranāmastotram* (with *Saubhāgyabhāskara* by Bhāskararāya), *Bhāskara-Granthāvalī*, part I, ed. Acharyavatukanath Shastri Khiste, Sampurnanand Sanskrit Vishvavidyalaya, Varanasi, 2003;verse 72, p. 56.

(*evamicchhādidharmarūpāpi na dharmiṇāṃprati guṇabhūtetyāha-svādhīneti | svasyātmano'dhīna āyatto vallabho bhartā kāmeśvaro yasyāḥ | śivasya śaktyadhīnātmalābhakatvāddharmyeva dharmādhīna ityarthāḥ |*)

¹⁰⁰ Also see 'Śrī Śrī Kālikār Dhyāna O Rahasya', that describes her as 'seated on the śava and Śiva' (*śavaśivārūḍām*) to which Svami Bhairavananda (son of SvamiVimalananda) furnishes the following interpretation.

The śava-hood is *nirguṇa* and Śiva-hood is *saguṇa*. She is established in both these states. In reality, despite being *nirguṇā*, She displays Her unparallel play in Her *saguṇa* aspect.'Śrī Śrī Kālikār Dhyāna O Rahasya' (in Bengali) in *Śrī Śrī Devītattoāmṛtam*, ed. Sri Bhairavanandanath, Kalikashrama, Belur, 1349 *Baṅgābda.*, p.13.

(*śavabhāva nirguṇa o śivabhāva saguṇa, ei dvoividha bhāv-ei virājamānā | tini vastutaḥ nirguṇā haileo saguṇabhāv-e svīya apūrvalilānaipuṇya prakāśita karen |*)

¹⁰¹ Though primarily based on rituals, Tantric texts of Bengal Kālikula occasionally feature passages which establish Kālī as the totality of being, combining both transcendence and immanence. See for instance, Śiva-Śakti is two fold: *nirguṇā* and *saguṇā*. She who is *nirguṇā* is of the form of clustered light and is the supreme-eternal Brahman (*paraṃ brahma sanātani*)..... Dakṣiṇākālī, who is of the form of light, brings forth the universe, herself remaining far from it (i.e. transcending it). Kālī, who engages in reverse copulation (with Mahākāla) is both *nirguṇā* and *saguṇā*..... o the Progenetrix of gods, her *saguṇā* aspect determines the nature of Mahākāla..... *Niruttara Tantra*, ed., Pandit Sri Dinanath Tripathi, op.cit., *pamala* 2, verses 8-11, p. 10. (*śivaśaktirdividhā devi nirguṇā saguṇāpi ca | | nirguṇā jyotiṣāṃ vṛndam paraṃ brahma sanātani | ...jyotiśa dakṣiṇā kālī dūrasthā syāt prapañcasūḥ | viparītaratā kālī nirguṇā saguṇāpi ca | | saguṇā suragarbhe ca mahākālanirūpiṇī | |*)

¹⁰² Though this view is disputed. See Kathleen Taylor, *Sir John Woodroffe, Tantra and Bengal: 'An Indian Soul in a European Body?'*, Routledge Curzon, Surrey, 2001, pp. 99-114.

¹⁰³ This primarily included Atal Bihari Ghose, (1864-1936), Woodroffe's friend who remains as an unseen presence behind all his achievements as Arthur Avalon.....see Taylor, pp. 203-234.

¹⁰⁴ John Woodroffe and Pramatha Nath Mukhopadhyay, *Mahāmāyā: The World As Power: Power As Consciousness*, Ganesh & Co., Madras, 1961.

¹⁰⁵ Brahman in Śankara's monistic system is devoid of any activity. As a result, when taken in the absolute sense, it is unrelated to the phenomenal world which is nothing more than an illusive appearance projected on Brahman. The world's having no real existence corresponds to Brahman's being without any creative function. For discussions on Śankara's monism, see Surendranath Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1975 Vol. 1., pp. 406-494.

¹⁰⁶ John Woodroffe, op.cit., pp. 80-83, 171-172.

¹⁰⁷ A great debate rages over his spiritual life. Hagiographical accounts associated with him go to the extent of claiming about his being a *janmasiddha* (born-

- enlightened). See Manmath Sengupta, *Śrīmadguru Bijoykr̥ṣṇa* (in Bengali), Upanishad Rahasya Karyalaya, Howrah, 1372 *Baṅgābda* (2nd edn.), pp. 76-78.
- ¹⁰⁸ Bijoy Krishna Chattopadhyay, *Rahasyavidyā* (in Bengali), (2 vols), Upanishad Rahasya Karyalaya, Howrah, 1412 *Sāl* (2nd edn).
- ¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 292-293.
- ¹¹⁰ Chattopadhyay, Bijoy Krishna, *Cidambarā* (in Bengali), by Saratcandra Roy, Kolkata, 1415 *Baṅgābda* (repr.), pp. 102, 104-106.
- ¹¹¹ Meaning 'the immeasurable', a term Bijoy Krishna uses for the transcendental aspect of Śakti. See Bijoy Krishna Chattopadhyay, *Rahasyavidyā*, (vol. 2), op.cit., p. 193-194. In Tantric Yoga, the term refers to a portion (*kalā*) of Śakti residing in the *sahasrāra* lotus above the head. It contains the nectar of perfect bliss emanating from the union of Śiva and Śakti. See Upendra Kumar Das, op.cit. (vol.II), p 186.
- ¹¹² *akṣara ātmārūp-e prakāśa haowāi tnār mahākālarūp-e prakāśa | akṣara nijabodhasvarūp-i | anirovacanīyatv-er dike tini mātra śuddha ātmasvarūpa evaṃ prakāś-er dik-e, kriyā-r dik-e, tini-i mahākāla | ...oi 'ama' vā amā-i niजेке akṣarātmārūp-e, sarvajñārūp-e tejomaya ka're āpni-i āpnār rasabhangimā-r tāḍaṇā-y mahākālarūp-e kriyāmaya han vā āpnāke sambuddha karen | ei janya amāśaktike-i bale kālī | kena nā, prakṛtapakṣ-e amā-i kālāprasavinī, kālasamhāriṇī, svayamprakāśasvarūpiṇī kālaniyantraṇī | Ibid., (vol. 2) p. 197.*
- ¹¹³ *yekhāne niजेке ānandamaya kare tullo, sekhāne niजे 'nei' rūp-e phuṭe uṭhla, nijatv-ero ār sādā nei | śivatva-ke cāpā diye – dalita ka're yena ānandamayī phuṭe uṭhlen, - niजेке dalita ka're ānanda bār ka're niजे phuṭe uṭhlen | tā hale 'ānanda' bale eman ekṭā bhūmi pele, yekhāntāy niजे 'nei' hayeo thākā yāy | ...tā hale ānandamaya nijabodhṭike pāyer talāy marār mata phele rekhe tār upara dnāḍiye uṭhechhe mahāśakti 'ānanda' | 'maḍā' māne- yena 'nei', okhāne nijabodha-ṭi yena nei –ei rakam ekṭā bhāva | Ibid., (vol. 2), p. 221.*
- ¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, (vol. 2), p. 232.
- ¹¹⁵ *tini śiva-ke maḍā karechhen- ātmā o ātmatver astitva-ke ekasā ka're niजेchhenIbid., (vol. 2), p. 232.*
- ¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 179.
- ¹¹⁷ Orally transmitted.
- ¹¹⁸ Orally transmitted.
- ¹¹⁹ Compare for instance,
United with Śakti, Śiva is endowed with the power to create the universe. Otherwise he is incapable even of movement..... *Saundaryalaharī*, ed., A. Kuppaswami, Naga Publishers, Delhi, 2006, verse 1, p. 1.
śivaśśaktyā yukto yadi bhavati śaktaḥ prabhavitum na cedevan deva na khalu kuśalaḥ spanditumapi |'
- ¹²⁰ For more discussion on the concept of the 'Void', see *Void and Fullness in the Buddhist, Hindu and Christian Traditions* ed. Bettina Baumer and John R. Dupuche, D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd, New Delhi, 2005.
- ¹²¹ Shastri, Haraprasad, *Bauddhadharma*, Purbasha Limited, Kolkata, 1355 *Baṅgābda* 1355, Preface.

- ¹²² For details on the Sāṃkhya system, see Surendranath Dasgupta, op.cit., Vol. 1, pp. 208-261. For historical study on the gradual intertwining of the Sāṃkhya notion of *prakṛti-puruṣa* into the iconography of the goddess, see Thomas Eugene Donaldson, op.cit., p. 124-125.
- ¹²³ See for instance, Navjivan Rastogi, *The Krama Tantrism of Kashmir*, Vol. 1, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1979.
- ¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 29.
- ¹²⁵ *Tantraloka* by Abhinavagupta, Vol 2, Chowkhamba Vidyabhavana, Varanasi, 2002, *āhnikā* IV, pp. 132-133.
- ¹²⁶ See note 74. Also see
At the time of the great dissolution, She who rules over crores of universes eternally exists with her body combining Śiva and Śakti in oneness. As the pervasive *bindu*, she assumes her highest form. At that time she beholds her own image and with this, that image transforms into *māyā* through mental ideation and becomes Śiva. For the sake of creation, she imagines the form of her consort.....*Rudrayāmala*, as quoted in *Karpūrastavaḥ* (with 'Dīpikā' and 'Parimala' commentaries in Sanskrit and 'Saurabha' commentary in Hindi), ed. Dr. Sudhakar Malviya, Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, Varanasi, 1988, p. 2.
(*mahāpralayamāsādyā koṭibrahmāṇḍanāyikā | śivaśaktimayam dehamekikṛtyasadā sthitā | | binduvyāpakarūpeṇa svarūpaṃ vibhratī param | etasminneva kāle tu svabimbaṃ paśyati śivā | | tadbimbaṃ tu bhavenmāyā tatra mānasikaṃ śivam | sṛṣṭerutpādanārtham tu bharttṛrūpamakalpayat | |*)
A parallel concept to this in the Southern tradition of Śrīvidya is the epithet 'Śivaśaktyaikyarūpiṇī' pertaining to the goddess Tripurasundarī, where she alone is the ultimate non-dual state of Śiva and Śakti. See *Śrīlālītāsahasranāmastotram*, (with *Saubhāgyabhāskara* by Bhāskaraṛāya), op.cit., verse 234, p. 316.
- ¹²⁷ For discussions on the patriarchal inclinations in the Ardhanārīśvara icon, see Gold berg Ellen, *The Lord Who is Half Woman*, State University of New York Press, New York, 2002.
- ¹²⁸ See for instance, Srimat Narendra Nath Brahmachary, *Navadurgā Ke o Daśamahāvīdyā Ke?*, Devsangha Seva Pratishthan, Deogarh, 1991, p 34.
- ¹²⁹ The term 'kaula' derives from 'kula'. The latter has been defined variously in the Tantras. For instance,
O beloved, *akula* is Śiva and *kula* is means Śakti. Those who are adept in seeking *kula* and *akula* are designated as the *kaulikas* ... *Kulārṇava Tantra*, ed., Upendrakumar Das, Nababharat Publishers, Calcutta, 1383 *Baṅgābda*, ullāsa 17, verse 27, p. 436.
(*akulaṃ śiva ityuktaṃ kulaṃ śaktiḥ prakīrttitā | kulākulānusandhānānīpūṇaḥ kaulikāḥ priye | |*)
The worshippers of Śakti are grossly classified into the *samayas* and the *kaulas*. However a great debate persists as per the exact definition of the two and the line of difference between them. See Upendrakumar Das, *Śāstramūlaka Bhāratīya Śaktisādhanā*, op.cit., Vol. 1, pp. 578-599.

- ¹³⁰ The most patent example of which is the following verse prescribing the conducts of a Kaula worshipper.
Inwardly a *kaula*, outwardly a Śaiva and in gatherings a Vaiṣṇava.
.....*Kulāṇava Tantra*, op.cit., *ullāsa* 11, verse 83, p. 279.
(*antaḥ kaulo bahiḥ śaivo janamadhye tu vaiṣṇavaḥ*)
For detailed studies for this 'inner/outer' nexus, see Alexis Sanderson, op.cit.

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Images

Image 1: Cāmuṇḍā sitting on a Corpse, Pala Age, Bihar, Indian Museum, Kolkata, No. 3942.

Image 2: Kālī standing on corpse; Image References: Pranab Ray, *Medinipur Jelar Pratna-sampad* (in Bengali), Directorate of Archaeology, Govt. Of West Bengal, Kolkata 1986, p. 192; B.N. Mukherjee and Pranab Ray, "Madhavpur Fragmentary Inscription of the Year 368", *Indian Museum Bulletin*, Vol. XXVI, 1991, pp. 42-45.

Images 3: Kālī on Mahākāla and Śavaśiva, Sarvamangala temple associated with Shiva Chandra Vidyarnava, Baksara, West Bengal, 20th century CE., collected from the temple authority.

On the Ruins of Buddha Gayá.—By *Bábu RÁJENDRALÁLA MITRA.*

Having had lately an opportunity of devoting a short time to the examination of the Buddhist remains at Buddha Gayá, I believe a brief account of the excavations now being carried on at that place will not be unacceptable to the Society. Accordingly I do myself the pleasure of submitting to the meeting this note along with a drawing (done from memory) of the ground plan of the ruins, as also a sketch of the railing round the great temple at that place. They have been worked out from notes taken while on my travels, and may be relied upon as generally correct. I had no instrument with me for taking accurate measurements, and as Capt. Mead, the able officer who is now superintending the excavations, will, ere long, submit to Government a detailed report of his proceedings and discoveries illustrated by carefully prepared drawings, and as my object was simply to see what was in progress, I did not think it necessary or proper to take any measurement or anticipate the work of that gentleman.

Buddha Gayá is one of the most celebrated places in the annals of Buddhism. There it was that S'ákya devoted six long years in deep meditation to purify his mind from the dross of carnality, by abstaining altogether from food, and subjecting his body to the most unheard-

of hardships ; there he repeatedly overcame the genius of sensuality—*Māra*, who assailed him with his invincible host of pleasures and enjoyments to lead him astray from his great resolve ; and at that place he attained to that perfection which enabled him to assume the rank of a Buddha, the teacher of man and gods and dispenser of salvation. The exact spot where these protracted meditations and austerities were carried on, is said to have been the foot of a pipul tree, and hence that spot is held in the highest veneration by the followers of the Saugata reformer. It was believed to be the holiest place on earth ; temples and monasteries were erected round it even during the life time of S'ākya, and as long as Buddhism flourished in India, it was the resort of innumerable hosts of pilgrims from all parts of the Buddhist world. With the downfall of Buddhism the place lost its grandeur, and at the end of the tenth century was, according to an inscription published in the *Asiatic Researches*, (Vol. I. p. 284) by Wilkins, “ a wild and dreadful forest,” “ flourishing with trees of sweet scented flowers,” and abounding in “ fruits and roots,” but “ infested with lions and tigers, and destitute of human society.” A magnificent temple, however, still stands, and around it vestiges abound to attest to its former greatness. General Cunningham has even recognised the identical flag of stone upon which on one occasion Buddha, while a roving mendicant, sat and ate some rice presented to him by two maidens.

The tree, however, under which Buddha sat, and which was the greatest object of veneration, has long since disappeared, and its place is now occupied by one which, though decayed and dying, is scarce two hundred years old. It stands on a masonry basement of two steps about six feet high, and built on a large terrace of concrete and stucco. Its immediate predecessor probably stood on a level with the first step which seems to have been raised long before the second. The third predecessor, according to this idea, was on a level with the terrace, and as that terrace stands about five and twenty feet above the level of the surrounding country, and as Capt. Mead, in course of his excavations, has found traces of two terraces, one very distinct, at intermediate depths, it is to be presumed that several trees must have from time to time occupied the spot where stood the original *Boddhidruma*, or “ Tree of Knowledge,” under which Buddha attained to perfection. It is no doubt possible that as earth and rubbish accumulated round

1864.]

On the Ruins of Buddha Gayá.

175

the original tree, people from time to time built raised terraces and covered up its roots, so that the tree in a manner rose with the rise of the ground-level, and that every new terrace or step was not necessarily an evidence in favour of a new tree ; but the fact of the tree that now exists being a modern one, warrants the presumption of its having had several predecessors at different times. Moreover, as the plan of renewing the tree was evidently not by cutting down the old and planting a new one in its place, but by dropping a seedling in the axilla or a decayed spot of the old tree, so as to lead to the supposition that it was only a new shoot of the parent stem and not a stranger brought from a distance, it was found necessary to cover up the root of the new comer under guise of putting fresh mould on the root of the old one, to prevent the imposition being discovered. Hence it is that the present terrace is much higher than the tops of the surrounding heaps of rubbish.

Close by the tree, on the north side, is placed the Burmese inscription noticed by Col. Burney in the last volume of the *Asiatic Researches*. And immediately to the east of it stands the great temple of the place, a monument rising to the height of 160 feet from the level of the plain. Its pinnacle is broken ; when entire it must have added at least twenty feet to the altitude of this cyclopæan structure. General Cunningham, in his Archæological Survey Report for 1861-62,* has given a full description of this edifice ; but there is one point of importance in it which escaped his notice, and to it, therefore, I wish to draw particular attention : I allude to the existence of three complete arches on the eastern face of the building. The doorway is wide but low, and is formed of granite side-posts with a hyperthyron of the same material. That was, however, supposed to be unequal to the weight of the great mass of masonry rising to the height of near 150 feet, which rested on it, and three Saracenic or pointed arches were accordingly thrown across to remove the weight from the hyperthyron to the side abutments. Two of these arches have fallen in, breaking exactly where an over-weighted arch would break, namely, at the points where the line of resistance cuts the intrados. The third is entire. It is pointed at the top, but is formed, exactly as an arch would be in the present day, of voussoirs or arch-stones placed wedgewise, the first and last of which are sustained on the abutments, while the intermediate

* Ante Vol. XXXII. p. vii.

ones are held together in their position by their mutual pressure, by the adhesion of the cement interposed between their surfaces ; and by the resistance of the keystone. Such a structure in an Indian building more than two thousand years old, struck me as a remarkable proof of the Hindus having had a knowledge of the principle of the arch at a very early period, though the credit of it has been denied them by all our Anglo-Indian antiquaries. Fergusson, in his *Hand Book of Architecture*, concedes to the Jains a knowledge of the horizontal or projecting arch, but adverting to the radiating or true arch, says, (Vol. I. p. 78) "In the first place no *tope* shows internally the smallest trace of a chamber so constructed (*i. e.* with a true dome)—nor do any of the adjacent buildings incline to such a mode of construction which must have ere now been detected had it ever existed." Elsewhere he observes (p. 254) "The Indian architects have fallen into the other extreme, refusing to use the arch under any circumstances, and preferring the smallest dimensions and the most crowded interiors, rather than adopt what they considered so destructive an expedient." Adverting to the *Kotub*, he says, "all the openings possess pointed arches which the Hindus never used" p. 418). Again, "the Hindus however up to this time (*i. e.* of the Pathans) had never built arches, nor indeed did they for centuries afterwards" (p. 424). These remarks do not, it is true, directly mean that the Indians had no knowledge of the arch, but they imply it. Elphinstone is more positive. In his remarks on Hindu bridges, he says, "Nor does it appear that the early Hindús knew the arch, or could construct vaults or domes, otherwise than by layers of stone, projecting beyond those beneath, as in the *Treasury of Atreus in Mycenæ*." (*Hist. of India*, p. 163.) Depending on the testimony of these distinguished antiquarians one may very reasonably assign to the Buddha Gayá temple a much later age than it claims, but the fact of its having been visited by Fa Hian and subsequently by Hiouen Thsang long before the advent of the Mahomedans in this country, inevitably leads to the inference of its having existed at a pre-mahomedan era, while the position the arches occupy, is so natural and integral that it leaves no room for the hypothesis that they were subsequent additions. I brought the fact to the notice of Capt. Mead, who had kindly undertaken to shew the ruins to me, and he readily acknowledged that the builders of the temple, whoever

1864.]

On the Ruins of Buddha Gayá.

177

they were, certainly knew the art of constructing an arch, and the one before us was a very good specimen of it. The entrance gate to the courtyard of the temple has a similar arch over it, though there it has no superstructure to sustain, and seems to have been built more as an ornament than otherwise. It may not be amiss here to observe that by the selection of the pointed, instead of the semicircular, arch, the builder has displayed a correct appreciation of the superiority of the former in regard to its weight-bearing capabilities.

In a line with the gate, and to its north, there formerly stood a range of small temples, which have since fallen in, and been entirely buried under rubbish. Capt. Mead has laid bare five of these, and in one of them I saw a colossal figure of Buddha seated on a lotus throne, with the hands resting one upon the other on the lap. This position is called the *Dhyána Mudrá* or the "meditative position," and it was thus that S'ákya passed his years of mental abstraction under the great pipul tree. There is an inscription on the throne which records the dedication of the figure by one Boddhikhsana of the village of Dattagalla, the writer being Upavyáyapurva an inhabitant of Masavágra. The character of the writing is the Gupta of the 4th century. The letters have been carefully cut and well preserved.*

Beyond these temples Capt. Mead has excavated a trench from east to west, laying bare a line of stone railing which formerly enclosed the courtyard of the great temple, running close along the base of the terrace around the sacred tree. It was formed of square granite pillars,

* The inscription comprises three slokas in the fascile octosyllabic anushtup, and runs as follows.

दमनिऋयरचित्ता सर्वसत्त्वानुकम्पिने ।
 सर्वनन्तरमदार स्थितमारायपतये ॥
 शुद्धात्माकारयामास बोधिमार्गरेतेयतः ॥
 बोधिचक्षेति विख्यातो दत्तगल्लनिवासिकः ॥
 सर्वदन्वविमुक्त्यर्थुं पित्रोर्बन्धुजनस्यच
 तयोपन्यायपूर्व्वेण मासवायनिवासिन ॥ लि ॥

Translation. "Salutation to (Buddha) whose mind is ever directed towards the control of his passions, and who is kind to all created objects, and this with a view to overcome the resources of Mára lodged in blissful gardens of unlimited expanse. (?)"

Boddhikahana, the pure-hearted, of the village of Dattagalla having his mind devoted to the dispensation of Buddha, dedicated this (statue) for the removal of all kinds of bondage from his parents and relatives. Upavyayapurva of the village of Masavágra wrote this." The author could not condense in the verse the word "wrote," so he has given it in initial after it. The third and fourth feet of the first verse are not intelligible.

each having three medallions on the front and three mortises on each side for the tenons of as many cross bars. On the top was a coping stone rounded above, but flat beneath. The pillars were seated on a square base with mouldings on each side. The falling in of the monastery which stood immediately to the north of it, broke and buried the railing, and the only parts now found *in situ*, are the stumps of the pillars and the basement. Fragments of bars and pillars are met with in plenty within the rubbish, but a great number of the bars had, evidently, been removed before the rest were buried.

To the west of the terrace a deep trench, cut through the rubbish, has brought to light the continuation of the railing on that side, but in a comparatively better state of preservation. In the middle of the line right opposite to the sacred tree there was a gate having the side pillars highly ornamented. Probably similar gates originally existed at the four cardinal points, but their traces are no longer visible.

In style, ornament, and material the railing bears a close resemblance to those of Buddhist remains in other parts of India. General Cunningham, adverting to those at Bhilsa, observes, "the style is evidently characteristic and conventional, as it is found wherever the Buddha religion prevails. It is in fact so peculiar to Buddhists that I have ventured to name it the 'Buddhist railing.' This peculiar railing is still standing around the principal topes of Sanchi and Andher, and some pillars and other fragments are still lying around the great topes at Sonari and Sâtdhará. The same railing was placed around the holy Bodhi trees and the pillars dedicated to Buddha. The balconies of the city gates and the king's palace were enclosed by it. It formed the bulwarks of the state barge. It was used as an ornament for the capitals of columns as on the northern pillar at Sanchi, and generally for every plain band of architectural moulding. At Sanchi it is found in many places as an ornament on the horizontal bars which separate the bas-reliefs from each other, *Bhilsa Topes*, (p. 187)."

The trench opened on the south of the great temple, has been run close to its base with a view to expose the basement mouldings and the tiers of niches holding figures of Buddha, which were the prevailing ornament of the temple. Capt. Mead has in contemplation to run another trench parallel to the last, but at the same distance from the temple as the trench on the north is. This will most probably bring to light the third side of the railing.

1864.]

On the Ruins of Buddha Gayá.

179

Two or three trenches have been run through the extensive mass of rubbish to the north of the great temple, leading to the discovery of nothing beyond a few cells for resident monks, a great number of whom must have found their living in the neighbourhood of this once sacred spot.

Within the courtyard and opposite to the entrance, stands a small open temple formed of four granite pillars covered over by a heavy stone roofing. In the middle of this there is a large block of basalt, the material so largely used by Buddhist sculptors in the manufacture of their statuary, bearing on its upper surface the carving of two human feet, and a Sanskrit inscription on one side. On the centre of each foot are engraved, within a circle, the figures of a conch, a flag, a lotus, a *swastika* or magic figure of prosperity, a fish, and a few other objects which I could not well recognise.

The name by which this stone is commonly known is *Buddhapad*, or "Buddha's feet." It is remarkable, however, that the inscription on it does not at all allude to Buddha. It begins with the usual Brahminic invocation of "Om," gives the date in S'aka 1230, and records the names of Rávataji and Baladevaji as the dedicators of a temple. The letters are rather smudgy, and the facsimile prepared by me is peculiarly so, it is possible therefore that my interpretation of the monument may be questioned, but the great test of the creed of an oriental document is the salutation at the beginning, and that salutation in the record under notice, being the mystic "Om," which is common both to the Hindu and the Buddhist, it is impossible to determine to which of the two rival creeds the stone is to be assigned. Nor are the emblems engraved on the feet favourable to an easy solution of the question. They conform to no known canons of palmistry Hindu or Buddhist, regarding auspicious marks on the sole of the feet.

The Lalita Vistura, (Chapter 7) in giving an account of the peculiar marks on, and the character of, S'ákya's feet, says "He has expanded hands and feet, soft fresh hands and feet, swift and agile hands and feet (like those of a snake-catcher), with long and slender fingers and toes. On the soles of the feet of the great king and prince (Mahárájá Kumára) Sarvârtha-siddha are two white wheels, beautifully coloured, bright and refulgent, and having a thousand spokes, a nave, and an axle-hole. His feet sit evenly on the ground." Such a wheel we look for in vain on the foot-marks at Buddha Gayá. Again in the Museum of the Society there is a large flag of white marble bearing

180

On the Ruins of Buddha Gayá.

[No. 2,

the figure of a human foot surrounded by two dragons. It was brought from a temple in Burmah where it used to be worshipped as a representation of Buddha's foot. It is $7\frac{1}{2}$ ft. long by 3 ft. 6 inches in breadth, and has on it a great number of mystical marks. On the centre of each toe there is a figure of a conch-shell and a concentric line under it. A conch occurs also at the heel. On the centre of the sole, there is a circular figure with innumerable radii, standing evidently for the wheel with a thousand spokes described above. Around this wheel are arranged, in three tiers, one hundred and eight compartments bearing representations of temples, houses, forests, rivers, men in different attitudes, birds and beasts of various kinds—mostly imaginary, leaves and flowers, magical figures and other objects unintelligible to me. But I do not find the counterparts of these objects in the foot-marks at Buddha Gayá. There the figures are, it is true, included within a circle, but it has no wheel of a thousand spokes. Its prevailing emblems are more Hindu than Buddhistical. The lotus, the *swastika*, the fish and the discus are identically what has been assigned to Vishṇu's feet in the Brahminical shástras. Thus in the Skanda Purāṇa I find the marks on Vishṇu's feet are enumerated at 19, including, 1 a crescent, 2 a water jar, 3 a triangle, 4 a bow, 5 the sky, 6 the foot-mark of cattle, 7 a fish, 8 a conch, 9 an octagon, 10 a *swastika*, 11 an umbrella, 12 a discus, 13 a grain of barley, 14 an elephant goad (ankus,) 15 a flag, 16 a thunderbolt, 17 a jambu fruit, 18 an upright line, and 19 a lotus, of which the first eight belong to the left and the rest to the right foot.* Biswanátha Chakravartí, in his gloss on the Bhágavat Pnrāṇa (10th book), has given the marks appropriate to the foot of Rádhá which include, 1 an umbrella, 2 a wheel, 3 a flag, 4 a creeper, 5 a flower, 6 a bracelet, 7 a lotus, 8 an upright line, 9 an elephant goad, (ankus) 10 a crescent, 11 a grain of barley, 12 a javelin, 13 a club, 14 a car, 15 an altar, 16 an earring, 17 a fish, 18 a hill, and 19 a conch.† The first eleven of these belong to the

* चन्द्रार्द्धं कलसं चिकोणधनुषी खं गोष्यदं पोष्टिकां ।
 शङ्खं सव्यपदेऽथ दक्षिणपदे कोणायकं खलिकं ।
 ह्रस्वं चक्रं यवाङ्कुशध्वजपविं जम्बूद्वारेखाम्बुजं ।
 विधाणं चरिमूनं विंशतिमहालक्ष्मार्चिताङ्घ्रिं भजे ॥
 † ह्रस्वारिध्वजवस्त्रिपुष्पवलयान् पद्मार्द्धरेखाङ्कुशं
 चर्द्धन्दुश्च यवञ्च वामचरणे शक्तिं गदास्यन्दनं ॥
 वेदोक्तुण्डलमत्स्यपर्वतदरं धत्तेलसव्ये पदे ।
 तां राधां चरिमूनविंशतिमहालक्ष्मार्चिताङ्घ्रिं भजे ॥

1864.]

On the Ruins of Buddha Gayá.

181

left, and the rest to the right foot. The scholiast has pointed out at length the different places which these marks should occupy and the objects they subserve at those places. His opinion has been questioned, and Vaisṇava writers of eminence have distributed these marks in very different ways. None has, however, to my knowledge, brought them together within a circle on the centre of the sole, as we find them at Buddha Gayá.

The date of the inscription on the Buddhapaḍ is S'aka 1230 = A. D. 1308, and the characters are the nearest remove from the modern Devanāgarī. The inscription must have been engraved immediately after the completion of the sculpture of the feet, for it is not likely that the profane hands of an engraver would be allowed to touch a stone, which had been, for any length of time, sanctified by the adoration of thousands, while the Hindu character of the emblems does not permit the supposition of the stone having existed at Buddha Gayá during the supremacy of the Buddhists. They suggest the idea that the foot-marks in question are of Hindu origin, and were put up by Hindus to reduce the place and its old associations to the service of their creed. Such adoption, whether insidious or avowed, of the holy places as well as the rites and ceremonial observances of one sect by another, has been common enough in the history of religion. We meet with it everywhere, and no where more prominently than in India among the Hindus and the Buddhists. There is scarcely one Hindu temple in ten of any great age in which is not to be seen some relic of Buddhism borrowed by the Brahminists. The great temple of Poori, which every year draws together pilgrims by hundreds of thousands from all parts of India, most of whom are prepared to lay down their lives for the truth and sanctity of the holy idol Jagannátha, is a Buddhist edifice built on the plan, and very much in the style, of the sacred monument at Buddha Gayá,* and the idol itself is no other than an emblem of *Dharma*, the second member of the Buddhist triad, represented by the old Pali letters *y. r. v. l. s.*; while tradition still preserves the memory of its Buddhist origin and calls Jagannátha the incarnation of Buddha, (*Buddhāvátára*).† It is not too much

* A closer parallel is met with in the temple of Barroli near the fall of the Chambul. The domical structure on its top and that of the Poori monument is not however met with at Buddha Gayá.

† Cunningham's *Bhilsa Topes*, p. 358 and Laidlay's *Fa Hian*, p. 21—261. There is an inscription on the temple of Jagannátha which assigns, the temple to Ananga

then to assume that on the suppression of Buddhism in the 10th and 11th centuries, attempts were made and successfully carried out, of converting Buddhist temples to Hindu usage, and that the foot-marks at Buddha Gayá are the result of one of those attempts.

We have, however, more than *a priori* arguments to establish the fact. In an inscription of the 10th century to which reference has already been made above, it is distinctly stated that a *Buddhapad* or Buddha's foot was set up at Buddha Gayá expressly for the purpose of performing thereon the Hindu rite of *sráddha*. Now as the liturgy of the Buddhists does not recognise that ritual, it must follow as a matter of course that the inscription is a Hindu one, and since its date is posterior to the downfall of Buddhism, it must be taken for granted that those who put it up, desired to reduce Buddha Gayá to the service of Hinduism by, what is commonly called, "a pious fraud."

The inscription itself is no longer traceable at Buddha Gayá. But its translation in the 1st volume of the *Asiatic Researches*, coming from the pen of Sir Charles Wilkins, may be taken as its exact counterpart. It starts by saying that "in the midst of a wild forest resided Buddha the author of happiness and a portion of Náráyana. He was an incarnation of the deity Hari, and worthy of every adoration." The illustrious Amara Deva accidentally coming to the forest discovered the place of Buddha and with a view to make the divinity propitious, performed acts of severe mortification for the space of twelve years. The deity pleased with this devotion appeared to Amara in a vision and offered him any boon that he wanted, and on Amara's insisting upon a visitation, recommended him to satisfy vicariously his desire for a sight of the deity by an image. An image was accordingly made, and Amara eulogised it by calling it Brahmá, Vishṇu, Mahes'a, Dámodara, and by attributing to it all the great deeds performed by Vishṇu in his various incarnations. "Having thus worshipped the guardian of mankind, he became like one of the just. He joyfully caused a holy temple to be built of a wonderful construction, and there were set up the divine foot of Vishṇu for ever purifier of the sins of mankind, the images of the Pándoos, and of the descents of Vishṇu, in like manner of Brahmá and the rest of the divinities.

Bhima Dèva of the Gangá Vansa Dynasty (A. D. 1196,) but he is said to have only rebuilt or repaired what had existed for many centuries before his time and been subjected to many vicissitudes.

1864.]

On the Ruins of Buddha Gayá.

183

This place is renowned ; and it is celebrated by the name of Buddha-Gayá. The forefathers of him who shall perform the ceremony of the *Srúddha* at this place shall obtain salvation. The great virtue of the *Srúddha* performed here is to be found in the book called *Váyu purána* ; an epitome of which hath by me been engraved upon stone." The inscription writer then goes on to say that Vikramáditya was certainly a renowned king ; that there lived in his court nine learned men who were celebrated as the " nine jewels ;" that one of them was Amara Deva, and it certainly was he who built the holy temple. The concluding paragraph states that " in order that it may be known to learned men that he (Amara) verily erected the house of Buddha," the writer " recorded upon stone the authority of the place as a self-evident testimony," on Friday the 14th of the wane in the month of Chaitra in the year 1005 of Vikramáditya=A. D. 948.

The writer leaves his readers entirely in the dark as to who he was ; he does not even deign to give his name, and he talks of things which happened a thousand years before him. Such testimony can have no claim to any confidence. The value of an inscription depends upon its authenticity and contemporaneousness—upon being a record of circumstances that happened in the time of the writer, who must be a trustworthy person. But here we have none of those conditions fulfilled. We have a tradition a thousand years old, if any such tradition then existed, served up by an anonymous writer on the testimony of so unvaracious a witness as the *Váyu Purána*. The tradition itself bears the stamp of fabrication on its very face. Buddha Gayá, whatever it was in the time of the writer, could not have been " a dreadful forest" " infested by tigers and destitute of human society" in the first century before Christ, when Buddhism in India was in the zenith of its splendour, and when the place of Buddha's apotheosis was held the most sacred spot on earth. Nor could Amara Siñha of the Court of Vikrama who was known to have been a staunch Buddhist* and a clever scholar, be so far

* General Cunningham calls Amara a bráhmaṇa. But in the invocation at the beginning of his Dictionary the great lexicographer has given no reason to his readers to describe him as such. The invocation itself is as follows :

यस्य ज्ञानदयासिन्धोरगाधस्यानघागुणाः ।

सेव्यतामक्षयो धीराः सन्निधेचास्यताय च ॥

"To him who is an ocean of wisdom and mercy, who is unfathomable, and whose attributes are viceless, even to him, O intelligent men, offer ye your adorations for the sake of prosperity and immortality."

forgetful of his religion as to glorify his god by calling him Hari, Vishṇu, Brahmá, the destroyer of the demon Keshi, the deceitful Vamána who cheated the giant Bali of his dominion, or a little shepherd tied to a post with a rope round his waist for stealing butter from the house of his neighbours. Such stories belong exclusively to the Puráṇas and can never be expected in a Buddhist writing. Then the Amara of Vikramádivya's court and author of the Dictionary was a Káestha, and his surname was Síṅha.* I have nowhere seen him addressed as a Deva, which title formerly belonged exclusively to Brahmans and kings, though of late years the rule has been considerably relaxed. The story of the dream is of course a fiction, and the state-

Here the deity invoked is not named; and the commentators having tried to the utmost their ingenuity to apply the verse to most of the leading Hindu divinities, but finding it inapplicable, have one and all taken it to imply Buddha.

Mallinátha, the most distinguished among the scholiasts and the author of at least twenty different commentaries, explains the verse thus. "O intelligent men, for the sake of "prosperity," i. e. wealth, of "immortality," i. e. salvation, adore Buddha, whose virtues, whose charities, whose forbearance, &c. &c.

(हे धीरा अथै च्छुद्धये चाम्बताय मोक्षाय च स बुद्धः सेवतां यस्यबुद्धस्य गुणा दा नशीलसमाद्य इत्यादि। MS. As. Soc. Lib : No. 188, p. 5).

Raghunátha, another commentator of some eminence, says : "O intelligent men, Let that Buddha be adored, that is by you. Here, though Buddha is not openly named still it is evident from the epithets used that he is meant. This is called the rhetoric of *prasáda*. Thereof it has been said by Kanhábharaṇa, where the object is evident from the meaning such a figure of speech is called *prasáda*, thus (the verse) "here rises the breaker of the sleep of the lotus," without alluding to the dispersion of darkness or the assuaging of the sorrow of the brahmīni goose, evidently means the sun." अथवा हे धीराः स बुद्धः सेवतां अर्थात् भवद्भिः इहानुक्तोपि बुद्धो विशेषेण प्राप्तं प्रतीयते इति प्रसादनामायमलङ्कारः। तदुक्तं कण्ठाभरणेन। यत्र प्राक्यमर्थस्य प्रसादः सोभिधीयते इति। यथा, अथमुद्यति निद्राभङ्गनः पद्मिनीनामित्यत्र तमोविध्वंसनकोकाशोककरणादिभिरनुक्तोपि सूर्यः प्रकारादुपलक्ष्यते।

(As. Soc. MS. No. 443, p. 2). Náráyana, another commentator, in the Padártha Kaumudi has reproduced the words quoted above without a remark. (As. Soc. MS. No. 438, p. 1). Ramánátha Chakravarti, after explaining the verse as applicable to Buddha, accounts for the name of Buddha not being openly given in the invocation notwithstanding the epithets used being peculiarly his, by saying "that to conciliate those who are not Buddhists the name of Buddha has not been used." बुद्धविद्वेषिणामेवेति बुद्धशब्दोपादानं न कृतं। (As. Soc. MS. No. 443, p. 1, second series of pagination). This remark has been quoted verbatim by Raghunátha Chakravarti in his commentary on the Amarakosha. (As. Soc. MS. No. 173, p. 1).

* I have no better authority for saying this than the author of the *Káyastha Kaustubha*.

1864.]

On the Ruins of Buddha Gayá.

185

ment of a temple built for Buddha having for its chief penates the image of Vishṇu's feet, those of the five Pandu brothers and of the several incarnations of Vishṇu, is equally so.

It was not expected that a distinguished scholar like General Cunningham with his thorough knowledge of Indian antiquities, should accept the figments of this inscription as true. He has however taken for granted that the great temple was built by Amara Siñha, and, as that individual was a contemporary of Varáha Mihira and Kálidása who, according to Bentley and others, lived in the 5th century, inferred that the temple must have been built in A. D. 500. His arguments are, first the non-existence of any temple in A. D. 400 when Fa Hian visited the place; second, the recorded erection of a large one by Amara Deva about A. D. 500; and third the exact agreement in size as well as in material and ornamentation between the existing temple and that described by Hiouen Thsang between A. D. 629 and 642.

Of these, the most important argument is the first, in which it is said that there was no large temple in existence at Buddha Gayá when Fa Hian visited the place between A. D. 399 and 414. It would at once establish the fact of the great temple of Buddha Gayá being subsequent to the date of Fa Hian's pilgrimage. But on referring to the itinerary of that traveller, I find that instead of his saying that there was no temple, he reiterates the fact that there were several temples in Buddha Gayá at his time, and that the temple near the Bodhi tree was one of them. The account of his travels is unfortunately very meagre. It is a simple recital of names of places and their distances, with a superabundance of legends, but with no topographical details. Still it is very precise as to the existence of temples near the Bodhi tree. Thus in the 31st Chapter (p. 277) we find it stated that at the place where Foe obtained the law *i. e.* near the holy peepul tree, "there are three *Sang kia lan*, and hard by are establishments for the clergy who are there very numerous. The people supply them with abundance, so that they lack nothing." In another place in the same chapter, Fa Hian, describing the approach and residence of S'ákya at Buddha Gayá, says: "The *Phousa* rose, and when he was at the distance of thirty paces from the tree, a god gave him the *grass of happy omen*: the *Phousa* took it and advanced fifteen paces farther. Five hundred blue birds came and fluttered three

times around him, and then flew away. The *Phousa* advanced towards the tree *Puto*, held out the grass of happy omen towards the east, and sat down. Then the *king of the demons* sent three beautiful girls who came from the north to tempt him, and himself came with the same purpose. The *Phousa* then struck the ground with his toes, and the bands of the demon recoiled and dispersed themselves; the three girls were transformed into old women. During six years he imposed upon himself the greatest mortifications. In all these places people of subsequent times have built towers and prepared images which exist to this day." Lest this be supposed too general, Fa Hian again observes "The four great towers erected in commemoration of all the holy acts that Foe performed while in the world, are preserved to this moment since the *ni houan* of Foe. These four great towers are (1st) at the place where Foe was born, (2nd) at the place where he obtained the law, (3rd) at that where he turned the wheel of the law, and (4th) at that where he entered into *ni houan*." Here we have the positive testimony of the very traveller whom General Cunningham has quoted that a great tower, one of the four largest, existed in his time at Buddha Gayá at the end of the 4th century. But had this evidence been wanting the fact of one of the minor temples at that place having a statue inscribed with the Gupta character of the 4th century, would fully warrant the assumption of the main temple, whose reflected sanctity the little ones sought to imbibe, being considerably older. If we add to this the Buddhist belief reported by Hiouen Thsang and the Ceylonese chronicles, of Asoka having raised a lofty temple at Buddha Gayá, we have ample grounds to assign to the existing temple an age dating from the third century before Christ, and under any circumstance one considerably anterior to the 4th century A. D. of the Christian era.

The second argument of General Cunningham is founded upon the authenticity of the inscription translated by Sir Charles Wilkins, and the deduction of Kálidása, Varáha Mihira and Amara Siñha having been contemporaries in the 6th century. But as I have, I hope, satisfactorily shewn that that inscription is "not historically true," "the claims of reason," to quote the language of Niebuhr, "must be asserted, and we must not take anything as historical which cannot be historical."

1864.]

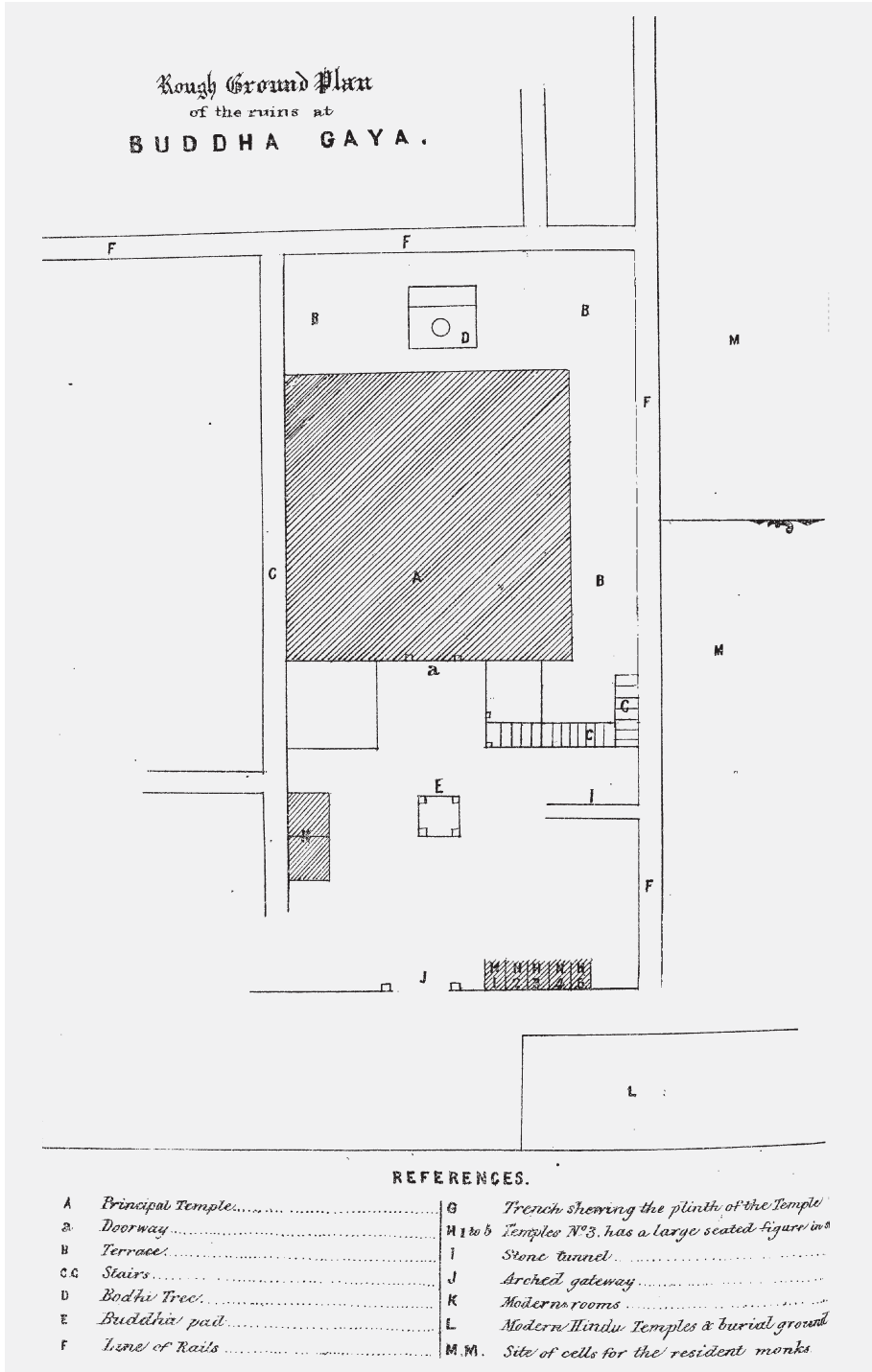
On the Ruins of Buddha Gayá.

187

As regards the argument founded on the exact agreement in size as well as in material and ornamentation between the existing temple and that described by Hiouen Thsang, it establishes only the fact of the present temple having existed in the beginning of the 7th century, but does not bar the probability of its also having existed many centuries before the advent of that traveller.

Both Hiouen Thsang and the writer of the Burmese inscription of Col. Burney, state that the temple was originally built by As'oka, and we see no reason to doubt their assertion. Bearing in mind how lavish As'oka was in his expenditure for the erection of towers and monuments in all parts of India, it is but natural to suppose that he had selected the spot where the founder of his religion attained to perfection as the most appropriate place for the largest and loftiest of his monuments. That such a monument should have lasted for six hundred years when Buddhism was still on the ascendant, so as to be visible in the time of Fa Hian, is not in the least improbable. No doubt the structure had had several repairs, and it is to these probably that the Burmese inscription, and Hiouen Thsang refer when they allude to the legend of the dream and the consequent "rebuilding" of the monument, but they do not controvert the position of its having been in the first instance erected by As'oka.

P. S. Since writing the above I have read Montgomery Martin's notice of the temple at Buddha Gayá (*Eastern India*, I. p. 23) and Buchanan Hamilton's description of the ruins at that place (*Transact. Rl. As. Soc.* II. p. 41). Both allude to the tradition about Asoka's having erected the temple, and express doubts regarding the authenticity of Amara's inscription. Hamilton describes a two-storied room near the temple which I did not see.



A Prelude to the Making of 'the Great Buddhist Temple' at Bodhgaya

Gautam Sengupta and Rajat Sanyal

The year 2021 marks the bicentenary of the birth of Rajendralala Mitra (16th February 1822-26th July 1891), the first Indian to be elected the President of the Asiatic Society in 1885.¹ Rajendralala Mitra (RLM hereinafter) was elected to the august chair of the Asiatic Society not only as a distinguished member of colonial Calcutta's elite, but also as one of the first Indians to be recognised as an erudite scholar, an articulated spokesman of India's past reaching out to scholars within and beyond India.

Thus, in the context of his seminal role in the academic activities of the Asiatic Society, Partha Chatterjee has rightly detected that² :
[i]n the first hundred years of its existence, only five Indians figured in the list of officeholders of the society, and of these only Rajendralal Mitra could be said to be a leading scholar. In the same period, among nearly a thousand contributors to the journals and proceedings of the society, there were only forty-eight Indians; of these, only the polymath Rajendralal was a regular contributor.

Born and nurtured in a staunch Viashnavite family, RLM had his initial career in Medicine, but it was his essentially multidimensional bent of mind and the spirit of spontaneously switching between disciplines that soon drove him into the domain of Indological studies. His special interest in 'archaeology', that encompassed in the mid-nineteenth century connotation of the term, fields like architecture, iconography, epigraphy, sculpture and painting within its fold, attracted RLM from a very early stage, as reflected in the inclusion

of the phrase 'purāvṛttetiḥāsa' in the subtitle of his first edited Bangla periodical called *Vividhārthasaṅgraha*. His areas of interest also included the two widely distant fields of manuscriptology and cartography-geography, of which the latter remained throughout his academic life a major area of exploration, including the production of a Bangla book early in 1854.³

Apart from his identity as the first Indian to ascend the chair of the President of the Asiatic Society, RLM has been recognised, in the historiography of early India, as a doyen of Indological studies. He moved with equal felicity across the disciplines of Vedic studies, Buddhist textual tradition, classical texts on polity, antiquarian remains, epigraphy and numismatics. He also remained active in Bengali journalism, setting new standards of presentation of scientific data. His journey as an author started with *Lalita Vistara, or Memoirs of the Early Life of Śākya Siṅha* [sic] (*Translated from Original Sanskrit*), published in 1853, followed by as many as thirty-three more major works in English, apart from numerous articles in English and Bangla, culminating in *The Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal*, in 1882.⁴ It is relevant to note here that in the long trajectory of his scholarship spanning over more than three decades, one major pivot was the publication of his *Buddha Gayá, the Great Buddhist Temple, the Hermitage of Sakya Muni*, published under the order of the Government of Bengal in 1878. This was the first major work focusing on the architecture of the Mahabodhi temple (Plate 1), with a detailed account of associated epigraphic and sculptural material. This work is specifically significant in the present context, for reasons we will have occasion to illustrate later.

RLM's recognition was not just as an important scholar on matters relating to India's past; his views were sought on important archaeological initiatives like documentation, excavation and conservation. His scholarship had a sense of immediacy to the discerning readers and colonial ruler. The essay under consideration, viz., 'On the Ruins of Buddha Gayá', published in 1865 in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, vol. XXXIII, 1864, pp. 173-187 (with one



Plate 1. The Mahabodhi temple at Bodhgaya, view from East
(Photograph by Rajat Sanyal)

line drawing), originated out of such a concern. But in order to situate RLM's 'archaeological' interests in Bodhgaya, it is important to take a note of the researches on the site prior to the publication of this essay. Apart from the late eighteenth century and early twentieth century drawings of the monuments of the site by the Daniells and Charles D'oily,⁵ the first narrative of the site was prepared by Francis Buchanan-Hamilton in 1811. In 1847 Markham Kittoe conducted preliminary excavation at the site of the temple, yielding several

artefacts, but due to fatal illness he could not publish his report.⁶ Interest on the site was renewed after Alexander Cunningham made a visit in 1861 and recommended excavation. The excavation started in 1863 under the direction of one Captain/ Major Mead.⁷ It is at this juncture that the contribution of RLM finds relevance.

As he begins (p. 173):

Having had lately an opportunity of devoting a short time to the examination of the Buddhist remains at Buddha Gayā, I believe a brief account of the excavations now being carried out at that place will not be unacceptable to the Society. Accordingly I do myself the pleasure of submitting to the meeting this note along with a drawing (done from memory) of the ground plan of the ruins, as also a sketch of the railing round the great temple at that place [...] I had no instrument with me for taking accurate measurements, and as Capt. Mead, the able officer who is now superintending the excavations, will, ere long, submit to the Government a detailed report of his proceedings and discoveries illustrated by carefully prepared drawings [...].

Unfortunately, his expectation did not materialise, as no report of this excavation conducted by Mead ever came out, though Cunningham must have included materials from Mead's excavation in his later reports on the site.⁸ Although the 'sketch of the railing' RLM refers to did not surprisingly accompany his note, the piece, nevertheless, represents the sole evidence of a first-hand report of Mead's excavation at the site.

The concerns of RLM in this essay can be precisely divided into four segments: (a) a brief but systematic description of the trenches taken by Mead with an insightful observation on the implications of architectural remains unearthed therefrom (as summarized in Table 1), (b) an argument on the Indian authorship and antiquity of true arch, based on the architectural elements of the Mahabodhi temple, (c) notes on some of the dated inscriptional records from the site, with a critique of Cunningham in accepting the historicity of one of the inscriptions supposedly found from the site, (c) an argument for

an early chronology of the Mahabodhi temple, based on textual and architectural evidences and (d) a note on the mutual reciprocity of 'Hindu' and 'Buddhical' architectural and ritual practices based on a comparative study of the architecture of the Mahabodhi temple and the temple of Jagannātha at Puri. It has to be noted that his terms of reference, for his arguments in favour of the Hindu supremacy of architectural and artistic knowledge, were almost always borrowed from phraseologies of western architecture, as reflected in his selection of terms such as 'hyperthyron' (i.e., a lintel) and 'abutment' (i.e., a structure supporting the lateral pressure of an arch), in describing the doorway of the Mahabodhi temple.

Table 1. Classified account of RLM's report of excavation by Captain Mead.

Trench No.	Location	Material Yielded
1	Outside the periphery of the 5 small shrines	'[L]ine of stone railing which formerly enclosed the courtyard of the great temple, running close along the base of the terrace around the sacred tree. It was formed of square granite pillars, each having three medallions on the front and three mortises on each side for tenons of as many cross bars. On the top was a coping stone rounded above, but flat beneath.' Five of these small shrines were also exposed by Mead, one of them yielding an inscribed image of Buddha, but the exact location or the number of the trenches in that area is not specifically mentioned by RLM.
2	To the west of the terrace	'[C]ontinuation of the railing [...] in a better state of preservation',

Trench No.	Location	Material Yielded
		exposed through the clearance of rubbish. 'In the middle of the [trench] line right opposite to the sacred tree was a gate having the side pillars highly ornamented. Probably similar gates originally existed at the four cardinal points, but their traces are no longer visible.'
3	To the north of the Mahabodhi temple	This trench exposed 'the basement mouldings and the tiers of niches holding figures of Buddha, which were the prevailing ornament of the temple. Capt. Mead has in contemplation to run another trench parallel to the last [...] This will most probably bring to light the third side of the railing.
4-5/6	Through the 'rubbish' to the north of the Mahabodhi	These two/ three trenches led to the 'discovery of nothing beyond a few cells for resident monks, a great number of whom must have found their living in the neighbourhood of this once sacred spot.' This was evidently the first exposure of the monastic complex to the north of the main temple.

As observed elsewhere, his central concern in his volume on Bodhgaya were: (1) the probable chronology of the Mahabodhi temple, (2) the antiquity of the use of the true arch in Indian architecture and (3) foreign influence in Indian sculpture.⁹ Now, if one juxtaposes the points of concern in the present essay against the agenda of his book, it would be evident that it was from the time of writing this article that he was internalizing and consolidating his views on the site of

Bodhgaya. It is also interesting to note here that in *Bodh Gayā*, he published a photograph (viz., plate XVI) of the façade of the Mahabodhi temple, in favour of his argument for the use of arches. The caption of the photo suggests that it was taken in 1863 (Plate 2), evidently during his first visit to the site, of which the present essay was the result. Equally important was his statement, in the context of a broken inscribed sculpture, that it was 'a large block of basalt, the material so largely used by Buddhist sculptors in the manufacture of their statuary' (p. 179). He was possibly the first scholar, to show interest on the choice of rock type by early Indian artisans, a genre



Plate 2. Photograph of the facade of the Mahabodhi temple published by RLM in 1878, captioned 'ARCHES OF THE GREAT TEMPLE IN 1863', evidently taken in course of his visit during Mead's excavation (after Mitra 1878).

of research that would regain footage much later in the late twentieth century interdisciplinary studies by art historians of ancient India. This preoccupation of RLM with the selection and use of rock type is also noted in his volume on Odisha titled *Antiquities of Orissa* that came out in 1875.

One lengthy paragraph written in his monumental *Buddha Gayá*, in connection with his observation on a sculptural specimen from an unspecified site in Myanmar (pp. 125-126),¹⁰ is taken verbatim from the essay under consideration (pp. 179-180). This would reveal RLM's sustained interest in Bodhgaya; he would unhesitatingly reproduce the argument presented in an article of 1865 in his book published in 1878. What is further noticeable is RLM's mindful modification of the preservation information of the piece in his book. While in the article the specimen is stated to be preserved in the 'Museum of the Society', in the book he precisely notes the piece to be located 'in the Indian Museum at Calcutta', underlining the fact that the sculptural piece was transported from the Asiatic Society to the Indian Museum between 1864 and 1878.

In the extant art historical and archaeological literature on Bodhgaya,¹¹ RLM rightfully enjoys the position of a pioneer who wrote the first comprehensively researched book on this celebrated seat of Buddhism in South Asia. What is curious is, however, that none of the later works on Bodhgaya, excepting the two still unpublished Doctoral dissertations of Warren Martin Gunderson and Janice Leoshko,¹² ever made any reference to this crucially significant essay that marks the point of his initiation with the antiquarian remains of Bodhgaya. What would come out, after thirteen years, as one of the monumental contributions of RLM in the domains of early Indian art-epigraphy-architecture-material culture of a Buddhist site, based on what is considered in modern parlance an exercise in 'archaeology of Buddhism', had its germination in this article.

Notes

- ¹ For a fairly detailed biographical account of RLM, Alok Roy, *Rajendralala Mitra* (in Bangla), Bagartha, Calcutta, 1969 (BS 1376), pp. 29-103.
- ² Partha Chatterjee, 'The Disciplines in Colonial Bengal', *Texts of Power: Emerging Disciplines in Colonial Bengal* (Ed. Partha Chatterjee), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1995, p. 12.
- ³ Rajendralala Mitra, *Prākṛta Bhūgol Arthāt Bhūmaṇḍler Naisargikāvasthā-Varṇan-Viṣayak Grantha* (i.e., *Physical Geography or a Treatise on the Physical Features of the Earth*, in Bangla), Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta, 1854 (ŚE 1776).
- ⁴ For a complete bibliography of RLM's works, again, Alok Roy, *Rajendralala Mitra*, pp. 35-52 ('Granthapanji', i.e., 'List of publications').
- ⁵ Janice Leoshko, 'Introduction', *Mahabodhi the Site of Enlightenment* (Ed. Janice Leoshko), Marg Publications, Bombay, 1988, pp. 1-8.
- ⁶ Nikhil Joshi, *The Mahābodhi Temple at Bodhgayā: Constructing Sacred Placeness, Deconstructing the 'Great Case' of 1895*, Manohar, New Delhi, p. 44.
- ⁷ The full name of this gentleman is not recorded in later works on Bodhgaya. While RLM refers to him as 'Capt.' Mead, Allan Trevithick, 'British Archaeologists, Hindu Abbots, and Burmese Buddhists: The Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya, 1811-1877', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 33, no. 3, 1999, pp. 635-656, refers to him as 'Major' Mead (p. 646), presumably following Alexander Cunningham's address, evidently because to the rank of a Major sometime after 1863 (see infra-4). That the report of Mead was never published is also noted by modern scholars like Geri H. Malandra, 'The Mahabodhi Temple', *Mahabodhi the Site of Enlightenment* (Ed. Janice Leoshko), Marg Publications, Bombay, 1988, pp. 9-28 (see p. 10) and Nikhil Joshi, *The Mahābodhi Temple at Bodhgayā*, p. 45.
- ⁸ Alexander Cunningham, *Archaeological Survey of India Report for the Year 1871-72*, Office of the Superintendent of the Government Press, Calcutta, 1873, pp. 79-107.
- ⁹ Gautam Sengupta, 'Raja Rajendralala Mitra and the Formative Years of Indian Art History', *Indian Art History: Changing Perspectives*, (Ed. Parul Pandya Dhar), D.K. Printworld and National Museum Institute, New Delhi, 2011, pp. 59-67.
- ¹⁰ Rajendralala Mitra, *Buddha Gayā, the Great Buddhist Temple, the Hermitage of Sakya Muni*, Government of Bengal, Calcutta. 1878 (rep. Indological Book House Delhi, 1972), pp. 125-126.
- ¹¹ Even a brief list of works on various aspects of this well-known site is beyond the purview of this note. Two major recent works on the site are, Nikhil Joshi, *The Mahābodhi Temple at Bodhgayā* and Sam van Schaik, Daniela De Simone,

Gergely Hidas and Michael Willis (Eds.) *Precious Treasure from the Diamond Throne: Finds from the Site of Buddha's Enlightenment*, British Museum, London, 2021.

- ¹² Warren Martin Gunderson, *The Worlds of the Babu Rajendralala Mitra and Social and Cultural Change in Nineteenth Century Calcutta*, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Division of the Social Sciences, Department of History, University of Chicago, 1969 (December), p 250. We are indebted to Abhishek S. Amar for kindly making a softcopy of the work available for us. See also, Janice Leoshko, *The Iconography of Buddhist Sculptures of the Pāla and Sena Periods from Bodhgaya*, Volume I, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis submitted to the Graduate School, The Ohio State University, 1987, p. 20, f.n. 19 (http://rave.ohiolink.edu/etdc/view?acc_num=osu1392309418).

BOOK REVIEW

Klaus Mylius, *Vergleichende Grammatik der literarischen Prākṛt-Sprachen*, Beiträge zur Kenntnis südasiatischer Sprachen und Literaturen, 34, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2020. 139 pages.

Lassen published his *Institutiones linguae Prakriticae* (Bonn, 1837) at a time when the Prākṛt literature was almost unknown in Europe. *Grammatik der Prakrit-Sprachen* by Richard Pischel (Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde, 1. 8, Strassburg: Trübner, 1900; rpt. Hildesheim/New York, 1973) was a great step in the study of the Prākṛt languages; “he has laid a solid foundation, and inaugurated a truly scientific Prakrit philology,” observed Sten Konow in his review of the book (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Apr., 1901, p. 331). But this book was in German, and therefore not accessible to many. In 1957, Pischel’s book was translated into English by Subhadra Jha under the title, *Comparative Grammar of the Prākṛit Languages* (Delhi: MLBD). This was followed by Sukumar Sen’s *A Comparative Grammar of Middle Indo-Aryan* (Poona, 1960).

In the recent past, Professor Klaus Mylius has contributed several valuable works for promoting studies of the Pāli and Prākṛt languages by compiling several dictionaries, namely, *Wörterbuch Pāli - Deutsch* (Wichtrach, 1997), *Wörterbuch Deutsch-Pāli* (Wiesbaden, 2008), *Wörterbuch Ardhamāgadhī-Deutsch* (Wichtrach, 2003), and, specially for the study of Jainism, *Wörterbuch des kanonischen Jainismus* (Wiesbaden, 2005) and contributing five volumes in the series *Beiträge zur Kenntnis südasiatischer Sprachen und Literaturen*, 23-25, 27, 29 (2013-2019). His latest contribution in this area is the book under review, *Vergleichende Grammatik der literarischen Prākṛt-Sprachen*, i.e. *Comparative Grammar of the Literary Prākṛt Languages*. Comparative grammar, as in the present context, means the branch of linguistics primarily concerned with the analysis and comparison of the grammatical structures of a closely related group of languages or dialects, the literary Prākṛts in the present case.

Indian grammarians, even the Prākṛt grammarians, regard the Prākṛt as derived from *prakṛti* ‘source’ which is Sanskrit; *prakṛtiḥ*

saṃskṛtam, tatra bhavaṃ tata āgatam vā prākṛtam (Hemacandra). Grammarians also speak of threefold source of the vocabulary of Prākṛt along three different lines: *tatsama* (words equivalent to Sanskrit), *tadbhava* (words derived from Sanskrit), and *deśi* (provincial word). Modern scholars think that Prākṛt means 'natural', or 'ordinary', 'contrasted' with *saṃskṛta*, 'refined,' or 'constructed' and thus is expected to have been simply vernaculars, not dependent on or following from Sanskrit.

Probably the languages spoken by *prākṛtajana* 'common people' were also called *prākṛta*. Prākṛt features as the language of low-class men and most women in the Sanskrit dramas. In Kālidāsa's *Kumārasambhava* (7.90) Sarasvatī, the goddess of speech, praises Śiva in Sanskrit (*saṃskārapūta*) and Pārvatī, his consort, in Prākṛt (which must have been meant by *sukhagrāhyānibandhana*), which attests the distribution of different languages and dialects for the use of different people in different layers of the society. Kalhan (11th century AD) however claimed that women of his province, Kashmir, could appreciate Sanskrit, Prākṛt and their mother tongue (*janmabhāṣā*). Prākṛt is sometimes equated with and sometimes distinguished from vernaculars (*bhāṣā*).

It's not easy to trace the evolution of this language of the common people to the status of a literary language. But the fact remains that there exist multitudes of works in Prākṛt in several genres, namely, lyrical songs, epic poetry, narrative literature, dramas and doctrinal teachings. It probably took long to reach the literary standard of Hāla's *Gāthā Saptaśatī*, that won praise even from fastidious Bāṇabhaṭṭa as *agrāmya* and *avināśin*.

The authors of Sanskrit Poetics appreciated the literary value of the Prākṛt compositions and included many such verses in their works (see V. M. Kulkarni, *Prakrit Verses In Sanskrit Works On Poetics*, 2 vols., Delhi: Bhogilal Leherchand Institute of Indology, 1994; Jagdish Ch. Jain, *History and Development of Prakrit Literature*, Manohar Publishers and Distributors, 2004; Andrew Ollett, "The Prakrit Mirror of Ornaments and Bhāmaha's Ornament of Literature", *Cāruśrī: Essays*

in *Honour of Svastīśrī Cārukīrti Bhaṭṭāraka Paṭṭācārya*, 2019). Hāla's anthology of single verse poems was acclaimed by Bāṇabhaṭṭa and a great favourite of ancient Indian rhetoricians.

Several modern scholars, however, have asserted that the literary Prākṛt does not represent the actual languages spoken by the common people of ancient India.

It is said, *iṣṭam hi viduṣām loke samāsavyāsadhāraṇam* (*Mahābhārata*, *Ādiparvan*, 1.49; *Kāmasūtra*, 1.1., vl. *bhāṣaṇam* for *dhāraṇam*). In his book *Zur Didaktik mittelindischer Sprachen* (2013) Mylius enunciated the general principles that may be profitably followed for teaching four Middle Indian languages, namely, Pāli, Ardhamāgadhī, Śaurasenī, and Māhārāṣṭrī. Thereafter he published separate books on Ardhamāgadhī (2014), Māhārāṣṭrī (2016), Śaurasenī (2018) and Māgadhī (2019), thus completing the most important Prākṛt languages.¹ Now his latest publication, *Vergleichende Grammatik der literarischen Prākṛt-Sprachen* is concerned, as the title itself suggests, with a comparative study of grammar of these languages.

Guṇādhyā's *Bṛhatkathā* is known to have been composed in Paisācā (lit. the language of the *piśācas* 'ghouls', *bhūtabhāṣāmayī*, says Daṇḍin), and reputed authors such as Daṇḍin, Ruyyaka and Bāṇabhaṭṭa recognized the artistic merit of this work. This great work is lost,² and this language has no surviving literary evidence. Pāli, the language in which the old Buddhist texts (of Theravāda) were composed, differs from real Prākṛts. Apabhraṁśa is also excluded from the Prākṛts. They are therefore not reckoned among literary Prākṛt languages.

The Introduction deals with the linguistic position and significance of the literary Prākṛts in cultural history. The author has mentioned the literary species and the individual texts where the different Prākṛts are used eg. *Abhijñānaśakuntala*, *Mṛcchakaṭika*, *Mudrārāksasa* and *Ratnāvalī*. Śaurasenī, Māhārāṣṭrī and Māgadhī came to be regarded as Dramatic Prākṛts owing to their extensive use in dramas. Māhārāṣṭrī was largely used in poetry, whereas Śaurasenī in prose. Śaurasenī is greatly influenced by Sanskrit and more archaic than Māhārāṣṭrī. Characters in Sanskrit dramas spoke a different Prākṛt based on their

role. Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra* (2nd century AD ?) contains many instructions about which language is to be spoken by whom under which circumstances in a drama. Bharata favours Śaurasenī in general and prescribes it to be spoken by the heroine and her friends in particular in a Sanskrit drama. Women resorted to the use of Māhārāṣṭrī for poetry.

Māhārāṣṭrī, regarded in Indian tradition, after Daṇḍin, as the best Prākṛt, is not mentioned by Bharata in his *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Most probably this Prākṛt rose to prominence after Kālidāsa had used it in his dramas. It is the language of the majority of Prākṛt poems. *Gaha Sattasāi*, (1st or 2nd century AD), i.e. Hāla's *Gāthā Saptasāti*, an anthology of Prākṛt love poetry composed or compiled by King Hāla of the Sātavāhana dynasty (1st century AD), was written in Māhārāṣṭrī, which was also the court language of the Sātavāhanas, who ruled over large parts of the Deccan. Pravarasena's *Setubandha* (early 5th century AD), an epic composed in this language, is mentioned by Bāṇabhaṭṭa in his *Harṣacarita* as a celebrated contribution. Vākpatirāja's epic *Gauḍavaḥo* (c. 8th century AD) is also celebrated. Mylius has remembered also Haribhadra's *Samarāiccakahā* (Skt. *Samarādityakathā*), and the Jaina epic, *Paūmacariya* (Skt. *Padmacarita*), both composed in Jaina- Māhārāṣṭrī.

In comparison, Māgadhī is less important, found only in some of the Ashokan inscriptions and dramas. Māgadhī is prescribed by Bharata for a king's harem (*māgadhī tu narendrāṇām antaḥpurāsamāśrayā*, verse 50). Gautama Buddha is said to have preached his views in this language. But its literary usage has been restricted to Sanskrit dramas where it is spoken by characters belonging to the lowest stratum of the society, as attested in Kālidāsa's *Abhijñānaśakuntala* and Śūdraka's *Mṛchhakaṭika*.

The main body of the book contains the comparative treatment of the languages presented under five sections : (i) phonology (ii) declension (iii) conjugation (iv) word-building and (v) syntax. Under phonology (pp.6-22) the various sound changes from Sanskrit, in vowels and consonants, not always following a regular pattern, omission or addition of vowels, shortening and lengthening of vowels,

samprasāraṇa, euphonic combination of vowels and consonants, etc. have been shown. Morphology is discussed in three parts: declensional paradigms of nouns, adjectives, pronouns, adverbs, numerals and cardinals, etc. form the theme of the first part (pp. 23-52); similarly, various conjugational patterns, that of the second (pp.53-96); the third part deals with formation of compound stems (pp.97-100), very important in Sanskrit but sparingly used in the Prākṛts. Then follows Syntax (101-105). Readers will find a fairly long list of cognate words in Sanskrit, Māhārāṣṭrī, Śaurasenī and German in pp.82-91. An appendix (pp.106-107) gives a brief note on the history of researches in Prākṛt languages in India and abroad (as in his *Māgadhi*, pp.56-57). This is followed by a list of secondary literature used by the author (pp.108-109), and Index of subjects (pp.110-114), persons (pp.114-115), and words (pp.115-139), greatly enhancing utility of the work.

In his book *Zur Didaktik...*, Prof. Mylius stressed on the task of a teacher to encourage and inspire the students and not to confuse them with the enormous variety of forms and rules. It is important to tell the students what is essentially necessary for them at their level. As in his book *Zur Didaktik...*, the principle of separating the important aspects of a language from the relatively unimportant ones ("Die Trennung des Wichtigen von weniger Wichtigem," xi, cf. "Die Trennung von Wichtigem und Unwichtigem," *Zur Didaktik*, 5) has been followed in the subsequent contributions, also in the present work. In fact, this guiding principle makes his works more helpful for the learners than the monumental works of his predecessors.

The subjects were treated by Mylius in respect of the four Prākṛt languages separately in his books mentioned above. Now he has presented a consolidated and comparative picture of them in this book containing the quintessence of his long years of research and teaching the subject, in a *sukhagrāhya* 'easy to be comprehended' way within 139 pages, reminding me of the saying *mahīyāmsaḥ prakṛtyā mitabhāṣiṇaḥ* 'Great men, by nature, speak measuredly' (Māgha, *Śīsupālavadhā*, 2.13). Pundit Isvar Chandra Vidyasagar once made a

similar attempt for teaching Sanskrit grammar to students in Bengal in his *Vyākaraṇa-Kaumudī*.

We will at last not omit to observe that the printing is almost always correct, and the production, fine. May the useful book have many readers! The work is no doubt an important contribution to the studies of the Prākṛts. This will certainly facilitate and promote further studies in this relatively neglected area. I shall like to conclude this review with admiration and thanks to the author for his latest contribution. Written in German as it is, the book will not be accessible to many; but if it is translated into English, a much larger number of teachers and students will benefit from the present work.

Samiran Chandra Chakrabarti

Notes

¹ All these five were reviewed by the present reviewer in *Vedic Studies*, Rabindra Bharati University, Vol. VI (2014), Vol. VII (2019), *Journal of the Asiatic Society* (Kolkata), Vol. LXII. No. 2 (2020).

² Attested by its remnants in *Kathāsaritsāgara* by Somadeva, *Bṛhatkathāmañjarī* by Kṣemendra and *Bṛhatkathāślokaśaṅgraha* by Buddhasvāmin.

BOOK REVIEW

Vijay Gokhale, *The Long game : How the Chinese negotiate with India*, Penguin Random House, 2021, 200 Pages, Price 699.00.

The very title of the book *The long Game : How the Chinese negotiate with India* is captivating as no such attempt to assess how the Chinese conduct their diplomacy has ever been made; and Vijay Gokhale, who retired from the post of India's Foreign Secretary in 2020 is eminently qualified for this task as he had served as our envoy to China and played a key role in negotiations with the Chinese even earlier in his career. Of course one would recall *In Two Chinas* by Sardar K M Panikkar who as our Ambassador to China witnessed the transition from Koumintang China of Chiang Kai Shek to the Peoples Republic of China led by Mao Tse Tung in 1950. There is however a huge difference : The Panikkar's is a narrative of his experience right upto the Korean war while Gokhale has penned down a Manual for Indian diplomats in negotiations with the Chinese state highlighting the Chinese mindset, cultural traits and subtle use of languages, Chinese and English unencumbered by European influence as China never experienced direct foreign rule like India. His facile pen laid bare all these Chinese characteristics of conduct of diplomacy as he gave a precise account of how since the beginning of the PRC in all their dealings with India the Chinese managed to get away with substantial gains especially in the 1950's. And quite significantly the author dedicated it to the officers of the Indian Foreign Service, the first gesture of this nature which bears stamp of the author's commitment to professionalism in Indian diplomacy. Therefore the central purpose of the book is, in Author's words "to identify the strategy, tactics and tools the China employs in its diplomatic negotiations with India and the learnings for India from its past dealings with China that may prove helpful in future negotiations with the country."

The Book has seven chapters beginning with the recognition of the People's Republic of China followed by chapters on Tibet, Pokhran, Sikkim, 123 Nuclear deal with the US, declaration of Masood Azhar as a terrorist by the UN and finally on lessons for India from these

diplomatic encounters with China.

The decision to recognise the People's Republic of China on 30 December 1949 after the Communists led by Mao Tse Tung overthrew the legitimate government under Chiang Kai Shek and to establish diplomatic relations with the new regime on April 1, 1950 was the first major strategic decision of Free India after the decision to send troops to Kashmir in 1948. And it was a tough decision as China was already in the high table as a Permanent member of the UN Security council as a member of the victorious allied powers along with USA, USSR, UK and France. Second, the issue of Tibet was involved as India as the successor state of British India inherited certain privileges in Tibet such as its Mission at Lhasa, offices of Trade Agents at Gartok and elsewhere, movement of military escorts at Gyantse and Yadong and reciprocal rights enjoyed by Tibet in India. Third, implicit in all these is the unsettled issues of Tibet's border with India. There was no dearth of advice on these loaded issues as the author quoted Sir GS Bajpai's advice on retention of India's Special relationship with Tibet and the fact that the new Chinese leaders made their intentions on Tibet very clear from the moment they captured power, and yet Pandit Nehru, the PM had decided on Nov 17, 1949 to recognise China so soon after the establishment of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949 without taking into account its implications for Indian interests in Tibet. The Chinese military take over of Tibet in October 1950 and the extinction of all privileges that India enjoyed as mentioned above were extinguished, the author pointed out in details due to lack of strategic appreciation of Chinese moves, "poverty of tactics and reflected internal weakness in the governance of Indian foreign policy" and most significantly lack of experience in international negotiation. "It seemed that India was in a hurry to recognise the PRC to demonstrate that she was not with the West on this issue. It turned out to be a self imposed constraint as after the Chinese take over of Tibet discussion with the Chinese on the "special privileges" it enjoyed in Tibet under 1908 Trade Agreement with Tibet proved infructuous as the Agreement contained a provision "to return the same to Tibet

when it was ready to assume the responsibility of governing itself” as the author points out. The Chinese strategy of dealing with India in a “piecemeal fashion rather than in a comprehensive way” worked and India ended up by recognising Tibet as a “region” of China, giving up “special privileges”. Thus the “unresolved” border issue with Tibet became a Sino Indian border issue as Tibet ceased to exist as a separate entity.

The next two chapters on successful handling of 5 nuclear tests at Pokhran and integration of Sikkim into India show that appropriate lessons were not only learnt but we have acquired the capacity to deal with the Chinese. Of course the experience of the 1962 Border War helped. The apt use of the Chinese proverb, he who ties a knot in the tigers neck must untie the same, came in very handy to the author to explain in details how the Chinese attempt to isolate India was effectively foiled by Vajpayee government, and especially by the astute moves by the Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh and Naresh Chandra, Indian Ambassador to the US who could convince Clinton administration that in the geopolitical context India's nuclear tests were good for the US. The Chinese perception of India as “a country with a hobbled economy and a divided society” proved wrong as it did not quite understand the productive forces the 1991 economic reforms unleashed and its impact on Indo US economic relations. The author’s conclusion that restoration of normal relations with China within a year of India's conduct of the nuclear tests was an achievement of India’s foreign policy is thus unexceptionable as China had to change the course.

The title of chapter 4- ‘Sikkim: Half a linguistic Pirouette’ compelled me to consult Oxford Dictionary to find out that the word is of French origin meaning an act of spinning on foot in ballet typically with the raised feet touching the knee which is much like the stand the Chinese took on Sikkim the author noted. India was on a strong position because in terms of the 1890 Convention negotiated and signed between the British and the Chinese empires, the latter accepted Sikkim as within the British sphere of influence. India was thus well within its rights

to enter into a new Treaty in 1950 with Sikkim to formalise the relationship between the two under which Sikkim became a Protectorate over ruling the objection of the Tibetan government. After Tibet was overrun by PLA in 1950, the Chinese refused to accord de jure recognition of India's right even after 1975 integration of Sikkim into India and that implicit in the 1954 Trade Agreement between India and the Tibetan region which allowed movement through 6 border passes for trade between India and Tibet was recognition that India enjoyed a special relationship with Sikkim. The author has recorded the step by step approach to the issue adopted by India taking advantage of the post Pokhran tests developments in minute details to highlight how even describing the location of trade marts on both sides of Sikkim border mattered in the negotiations as it would define the border. India's diplomacy paid though it took time as the changing geopolitical situation arising from China's admission into WTO, prospects of India-China trade created a need to elevate the relationship into a "Partnership for Peace and Prosperity" between India and China. This enabled India to extract in 2005 formal Chinese recognition of Sikkim as a part of India with a small price of averring in the joint statement after the PM Vajpayee's 2003 visit to China that "Tibet Autonomous Region is part of the territory of the People's Republic of China." However the author has cautioned a deeper Chinese game of using the recognition of Sikkim as a step to advance her claim to access Calcutta Port located at just 725 km from border with Sikkim and even ports of Bangladesh and thereby overcome her "Malacca dilemma" meaning her dependence on the straits of Malacca for moving oil and Gas imports from West Asia. However one must note that after commissioning of Oil and Gas pipelines in 2015 from the sea port near Sitwee port of Myanmar along the Bay of Bengal coast to Yunan province of China under China Myanmar Economic Corridor initiative, China has now access to the Indian Ocean which has enhanced enormously the geopolitical importance of Bay of Bengal. Nevertheless there is strength in the author's argument that giving Chinese access to the Sea through Sikkim might mean that "China

will have no compelling reason to seek a boundary settlement." The continuing "stand off" in Eastern Ladakh proves that the author's argument is right.

The next two chapters covering Indo US nuclear deal and listing of Masood Azhar as a terrorist under the relevant provisions of the UN establish the author's assessment of Chinese one upmanship, that is in Author's words "preservation of strategic asymmetry vis-à-vis India and sustaining the perception that she was the only legitimate nuclear power" and therefore should have a say in all regional security issues and even declaration of a terrorist though it might have been left entirely to the UN system. First, the Chinese put every possible obstacle either through the Nuclear Suppliers Group, US non proliferation lobby and even the anti US Left in India to obstruct the Indo US Nuclear deal for peaceful use of N power only to demonstrate her power as a hegemon of Asia. However all these did not work in the face of the US decision to give up a part of its "interest in non- proliferation" in order to realise its strategic objective of partnership with India in the Asia Pacific which would obstruct Chinese dominance. Once the Chinese found that the US had her way even in the Nuclear Suppliers Group on the Indo US Nuclear deal and China found herself isolated despite all her efforts, China had no option but to abstain from the Nuclear Suppliers Group meeting which allowed the consensus in the NSG to grant India an unconventional waiver to move forward with the Nuclear deal with the US. This is no doubt a big achievement of Indian diplomacy.

The author's decision to cover under chapter 6, the decade long efforts of India from March 2009 to May 2019 which met with success in listing of Masood Azhar, the founder of Jaish-e Muhammad, a notorious terror group of Pakistan under the relevant provision of the UN is insightful. It merits a study by all and especially the Indian Left who still have some illusion of China's socialist credentials. The author documented in details the cynical Chinese moves in stalling "listing" only to please the Pakistan and its military because right from 1960's China had been steadily building "a strategic alliance with Pakistan

with India as the target"; and for this reason China provided nuclear and missile technology support to Pakistan. China had thus used US policy towards Pakistan after 9/11 to her advantage as US allowed Pakistan China relationship to take a definite shape. It is only later and after a decade of successful "blocking", China realised that the terror unleashed by JEM under Masood Azhar with Pak support had reached a stage in April 2019 when the matter would be decided by the Security council and US and the West were serious about the matter, the Chinese yielded under pressure and agreed to the listing of Azhar as a terrorist by the UN. This is a success of the Indian diplomacy as in this very decade India worked with China and Russia to build up multilateral forums like the BRICS — Brazil Russia India China and South Africa, BRICS Bank which is New Development Bank now and Shanghai Cooperation Organization to create Asia specific development finance institutions to reduce dependence on the west dominated World Bank and the IMF. The author has unmasked the Chinese policy to have a role in South Asian security by assisting Pakistan and to use Pakistan against India which was clear in the way China "blocked" the listing of Azhar Masood and it is unlikely to change even after Taliban take over of Afghanistan on August 15 last.

Chapter 7, the last is most insightful as the author has analysed based on his own and the institutional memory of India's foreign office the techniques the Chinese adopt in negotiating any matter, bilateral or multilateral to realise their goals and objectives by outwitting the other party . In other words SOP, the Standard Operating Practice of People's Republic of China in conducting negotiations with other foreign countries which the author found bears the stamp of the Chinese state that was never under any direct foreign rule. And this has made an important difference enabling China to develop its distinctive diplomatic practices and hence "inscrutable" to diplomats trained solely in western practices. The author's analysis is fascinating and begins with how the Chinese carry out "due diligence" of the issues making good use of their "Think tanks" to set the agenda, and even before negotiations insist on unilateral commitments by exerting

pressure through media. And it worked just as China extracted from India well before India recognised the People's Republic of China that it would not have any relationship with Nationalist China based in Taiwan. China hosts several organisations to expand its "soft power" such as Chinese Buddhist Association or United Front Work department - UFWD to reach cross section of people of other countries and especially those with the left or the communist leaning as for instance the Chinese use of its influence with the Indian Left to scuttle the Indo US Nuclear deal. Infact the ILD - The International Department of the Chinese Communist party has a huge outreach to many countries and make good use of these connections to influence public opinion. Next is careful selection of the venue for negotiation to suit their interest and to deny the other party the locational advantage and to build a personal rapport. Second, every effort is made by the Chinese to turn a bilateral issue into a multilateral one to delay as seen in the case of Masood Azhar by raising procedural issues and asking India to talk to Pakistan as the first step knowing fully that India would not agree. The object is to put the other party in a weaker position. Third, deft use of Chinese proverbs in negotiations to create a feeling in the other party that it is up against a state endowed with ancient wisdom and knowledge. The Chinese, the author noted have an internal code and always use the interpreters to "think through" even when they are fluent in English or any other language used in negotiating with other countries. The Chinese, the author noted are "excellent drafters" and have perfected the "art of introducing" where ambiguities, double meaning which they use often especially in issuing a joint statement. And the fact that in China the Communist party and the state is virtually the same entity as every diplomat involved in negotiations is also a member of the party adds to the strength of the Chinese negotiators "bargaining strength". This chapter is therefore a set of guidelines for the Indian diplomats in negotiations with the Chinese, probably the first of its kind penned down by an Indian Foreign Service officer which explains why Mr.

Gokhale has dedicated this short and brilliant narrative to the officers of the Indian Foreign Service.

In the end one cannot but note the innate humility and culture of the author when at the very end he states that this book was only made possible because of my good fortune in passing the UPSC's Civil Service Examination in 1981 and thereby earned a place in the hearts of every Civil service officers — serving, superannuated and the civil service aspirants as he did everyone of them proud by penning down a remarkable Manual for conducting negotiations with the Chinese. This is a "must read" book for everyone now when our relationships with China have become extremely complex especially after withdrawal of US from Afghanistan.

Rangan Dutta

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5. Concise Oxford Dictionary or Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (latest edn.) should be followed in spelling, punctuation and hyphenation. Where two spellings exist, use the British style not the American; for example, 'programme', not 'program' and 'colour', not 'color'.
6. Diacritical marks should be used wherever necessary. Where diacritical marks are not used, the word should be spelt phonetically, e.g., *bhut* and *bhoot* (unless in a quotation, where the original spelling should be used).
7. a. Quotation is expected to be identical *verbatim et litteratum* with the original; b. To indicate ellipsis three single space dots are to be used; c. Long quotations consisting of five or more lines do not need inverted commas but are to be indicated by indenting the extract three spaces from the left margin; d. Shorter quotations should be

within double inverted commas, while quotations within quotations should be within single inverted commas.

8. For all copyright materials the writer should seek and have the permission from appropriate authorities.
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Books :

Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, London, 1933, 7.

Articles in Books :

H.V. Trivedi, "The Geography of Kautilya", *Indian Culture*, Vol. 1, 202ff.

Edited Volumes :

C.W. Troll, ed. *Muslim Shrines in India : Their Character, History and Significance*, Delhi, 1989.

Articles in Journals :

G. Hambly, "A Note on the Trade in Eunuchs in Mughal Bengal", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* (hereafter *JAOS*), Vol. 94(1), 1974, 125-29.

Articles in Edited Volumes

P. Gaeffke, "Alexander and the Bengal Sufis", in Alan W. Entwistle and Francoise Mallison, eds, *Studies in South Asian Devotional Literature, Research Papers, 1988-1991*, New Delhi/Paris, 1994, 278-84.

10. Book Reviews must contain name of the author/editor and the book reviewed, place of publication and publisher, year of publication, number of pages and price.

SYSTEM OF TRANSLITERATION

SANSKRIT

आ = ā	ई = ī
ऊ = ū	ऋ = ṛ
ऌ = ṝ	च = ca
छ = cha	ज = ja
ट = ṭa	ठ = ṭha
ड = ḍa	ढ = ḍha
ण = ṇa	श = śa
ष = ṣa	' = ṁ

TIBETAN

ཀ = ka	ཁ = kha	ག = ga	ང = ṅa/nga
ཅ = ca	ཆ = cha	ཇ = ja	ཉ = ṅa/nya
ཏ = ta	ཐ = tha	ད = da	ན = na
པ = pa	ཕ = pha	བ = ba	མ = ma
ཚ = tsa	ཛ = tsha	ང = dza	ལ = wa
ཞ = zha	ཟ = za	འ = 'a	ཡ = ya
ར = ra	ལ = la	ཤ = śa/sha	ས = sa
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It will flourish, if naturalists, chemists, antiquaries, philologers and men of science, in different parts of Asia, will commit their observations to writing, and send them to the Asiatick Society at Calcutta; it will languish, if such communications shall be long intermitted; and it will die away, if they shall entirely cease.

Sir William Jones
on the publication of the Asiatic Society