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Government of India

APRIL 2024

# Monthly Bulletin

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Earth  
Day  
2024



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

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## From the Desk of the General Secretary

Dear Members and Well-wishers,

The month of April has a popular joke known as 'April Fool', but otherwise this month is really 'full' of events and memorable days. One of the most important components of economic administration is the Income Tax Department. This Department was introduced on 1st of April, 1869. The other important base of regulation of modern life is the Information Technology. The computer system was introduced in India on 3rd April, 1966, only a history of about 58 years and the human mind is now face to face with a question of a leveller between man and machine. Time will tell us many more things in future. The whole world saw a new kind of war alliance in the form of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) which came into being on April 4, 1949. Over the next 75 years the world has witnessed so many pacts of different countries in various compositions and dimensions. We have seen in the last year one such composition of the nation known as G-20 which had its session in India (9-10 September, 2023) under the Chairmanship of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Sri Narendra Modi. The global concern on the question of health prompted the formation of World Health Organization (WHO) on April 7, 1948, which had made its existence felt world over during the last few decades. In the field of education during the colonial rule, the contributions of William Carey is well known for the propagation of Bengali Language and its grammatical expositions. He was appointed as a Bengali Teacher in Fort William College on 12th April, 1801. As a corollary to the movement for spreading education, Calcutta University recognised the rights of education for the women on 27th April, 1878. The ill fate of some statesmen and Human Rights activists also fall in the month of April. While Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated on 4th April, 1968, Benito Mussolini, the fascist dictator was executed on 28th April, 1945. The other dictator Adolf Hitler committed suicide on 30th April, 1945. I will close this part by mentioning the birthdays of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar(14.04.1891), the father of the Indian Constitution and Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (18.04.1809), the intellectual pioneer of the movement of 'New Bengal'.

During the last month we had observed International Mother Language Day (21.02.2024) and National Science Day (28.02.2024). The 9th K. K. Handiqui Memorial Lecture was delivered by Professor N. K. Sundareswaran, Professor of Sanskrit, University of Calicut on 'What Mimāmsā has got to do in Mathematics?: Readings into the Āryabhaṭiyabhāṣya' on 29.02.2024. A special lecture was organised on 'A New Testament:



Henry Louis Vivian Derozio  
(b. 18.04.1809)



Dr. B.R. Ambedkar  
(b. 14.04.1891)



Visit of a Delegation from the British Library, London.

Scandinavian Missionaries and Santal Chiefs from Company and British Crown Rule to Independence'. The lecture was delivered by Professor Tone Bleie, Professor in Public Planning & Cultural Understanding, Political Science and Local Planning, University of Tromsø–The Arctic University of Norway on 5th March, 2024. International Women's Day was organised in the Society on 8th March, 2024. A delegation from British Library, London, visited the Society on 12.03.2024. Raja Rajendralala Mitra Memorial Lecture 2022 was organised on 18.03.2024 and Professor Vashishtha Narayan Jha, former Director, Centre of Advanced Study in Sanskrit, University of Pune, delivered the lecture on 'Language and

Reality: Reflections of Jayanatabhatta, the 9th Century Kashmiri Logician'. A collaborative programme was organised with Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational Research Institute on 21st March 2024 at Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Golpark on 'Science of Suryanamaskar'. A seminar on 'Challenges on Vector-borne Diseases in the Changing Dynamics of Environment and Climate' was organised on 27.03.2024 in collaboration with the Society of Medical Arthropodology.

We are going ahead with all committed academic activities and hope to complete them on time.

Please keep well and safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. B. Chakrabarti', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

(S. B. Chakrabarti)  
General Secretary



Ministry of Culture  
Government of India

AN ORDINARY MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING OF  
THE ASIATIC SOCIETY WILL BE HELD ON  
MONDAY, 1ST APRIL 2024 AT 5 P. M. AT THE  
VIDYASAGAR HALL OF THE SOCIETY

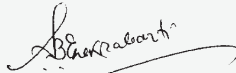
**MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO KINDLY ATTEND THE MEETING**

**AGENDA**

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the last Ordinary Monthly General Meeting held on 4th March, 2024.
2. Exhibition of presents made to the Society in March 2024.
3. Notice of Intended Motion, if any, under Regulation 49(d).
4. Matters of current business and routine matters for disposal under Regulation 49(f).
5. Consideration of reports and communications from the Council as per Regulation 49(g).
6. The following paper will be read by Dr. Musaraf Hossain :  
"Doctrine of Soul in Indian Philosophy"

1 Park Street, Kolkata-700016

Dated : 18.03.2024

  
(S B Chakrabarti)  
General Secretary

Ref. No.: TASK/Elec-2024/2023-24/10

Date: 21.03.2024

**NOTICE**

**Election of the Office Bearers & Other Members of the Council of the Asiatic Society,  
Kolkata for 2024-26.**

In pursuance of Letter No 20-10/2013-A&A, dated 20<sup>th</sup> March 2024 of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, it is hereby informed that Election of the Office Bearers & Other Members of the Council of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata for 2024-26 scheduled on 23.03.2024 has been postponed until further orders. Till such time, the present Council will continue to function in terms of Regulation 39 of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata.

This is issued with the approval of the Competent Authority.

Published by the Election Committee  
The Asiatic Society, Kolkata

## Doctrine of Soul in Indian Philosophy

**Musaraf Hossain**

Life Member, The Asiatic Society

### ABSTRACT

There are four main views of Soul in Indian Philosophy. According to the Cārvākas, the self is the living body with the attribute of consciousness. This is the materialistic view of soul. The Buddhists reduce the soul to a stream of consciousness. This may be called the empirical view of soul. The Advaita Vedānta take the soul as an unchanging and self-shining consciousness. Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta holds that soul is not pure consciousness but a conscious subject called the 'I'. These are idealistic views of Soul.

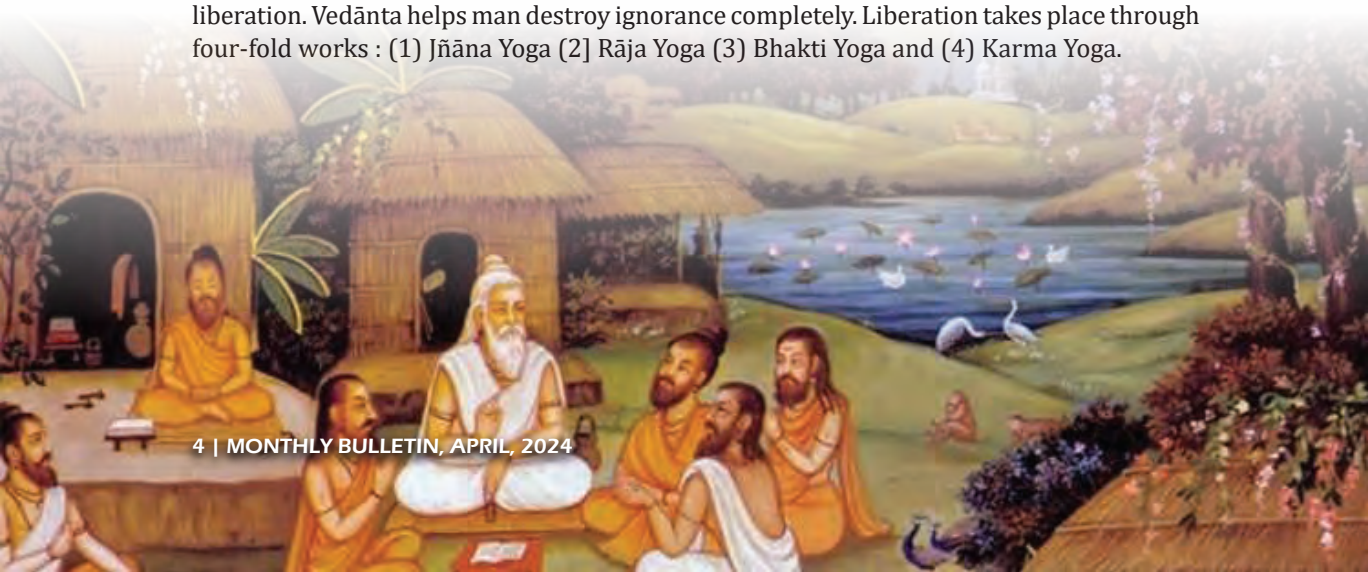
There are some other views of some other systems of Indian Philosophy. The Jaina Philosophy holds that every living individual has consciousness and this consciousness is called by them soul or substance. It is originally pure and perfect. But it gets polluted in course of living. But through pure knowledge and meditation the soul gets back its perfection. The fully liberated person is the symbol of highest perfection. He is like a Tīrthaṅkar.

The Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika Philosophy holds that soul is a substance to which all cognitions and conscious activities belong. There are different souls as there are different individual bodies. The soul is eternal and indestructible.

For the Sāṅkhya-Yoga Philosophy the soul is itself a reality. It has existence of its own. It does not depend upon anything. There are plurality of souls. Self is eternal.

The Mīmāṃsā Philosophy believes that soul is an eternal and infinite substance which has the capacity for consciousness. There are as many souls as there are individuals.

In Vedānta Philosophy the soul is completely identical with Brahman. The soul is in bondage due to its association with the body through ignorance. The soul becomes ego when engaged in bodily activities. Māyā or avidyā is the Principle of limitation and multiplication of one Brahman into many selves. But the soul can restore itself from the bondage by attaining liberation. Vedānta helps man destroy ignorance completely. Liberation takes place through four-fold works : (1) Jñāna Yoga (2) Rāja Yoga (3) Bhakti Yoga and (4) Karma Yoga.





## President's Column

### Issues of Gender Sensitization

Gender Sensitization means how society and men look towards women. It also implies how women look at themselves and also women's views about women. It has a cognitive aspect in the sense that it involves the process of teaching of gender sensitivity and encouragement of behaviour modification with an ultimate aim of making people aware of gender equality and elimination of gender discrimination. Looking at one's own society, one finds that there are many socially predetermined gender roles, gender stereotypes and gender biases. The ultimate aim is to create a more equal and just society, a society based on equality for men and women.

There are theories which put emphasis on the issue of gender sensitization. We can give example of the Feminist theories in the realm of Sociology. Feminist theories are a generic name of a wide range of theories which have been formulated in order to explain the subordinated position of women in human society. The perspectives are women-centered – how do women live in society, what are their conditions and what are their positions vis-a-vis men. The focus of attention in feminist theories is to analyze the situation and experience of women in society. But most of the feminist theories are not limited to just an abstract analysis of the condition of women. The approaches are critical and active in the sense that these theories are oriented to the establishment of a just and humane society where in spite of biological

differences between men and women, they will enjoy equal position and status within society. It is their contention that most of the practices, beliefs and orientations which are in existence in human society have visible or invisible patriarchal orientation wherein male dominance is accepted as a natural and normal thing. These theories question these 'normal' and 'natural' assumptions and brand them as norms of patriarchy.

The basic theoretical questions which the feminist theories are engaged with are of three types.

First, they want to explore the objective conditions of women's existence in our society. In spite of adherence to the norms of equality, are women equal to men? What is the life experience of women and how are they dealt with? If men are visible and women are invisible in the public gaze, what contributes to their invisibility? These are the issues concerned with the factual and objective analysis of the actual condition of women. These are centered round the basic question of 'what'.

Secondly, there are issues connected with the question of 'why'. Feminist theories have tried to go at the root of the issue asking why this is so. Why are women having a subjugated existence? Is it because they are deficient in merit, intelligence and capacity which is what most of the male-dominated theories presume? Are the differences inherently biological having reference to 'gene' characteristics? Feminist theories

have shown that these differences are not biological, but social. Society has constructed some myths centering around the 'superiority' of men. Feminist theories have exploded this myth and have shown that it is not 'sex' but 'gender' which explains the subjugation of women to men in society.

The third sociological issue of importance to feminist theories is that do women constitute a single social category? What about the differences among women based on their social location? Are we to ignore the differences among women based on class, religion, race, age, marital status etc. and treat them as homogeneous? Have women belonging to lower classes things more in common with women belonging to higher classes than with men belonging to lower classes? As it is apparent, these issues are not merely of theoretical importance. They have vital implications for the nature of women's movements to be initiated in order to reach the goals of a just society. There are deep divisions within women's movements to be initiated based on their stand on these issues.

Gender sensitivity plays a large role in Indian society. Words like the 'boy is a boy' or 'don't behave like a girl' imply some gender sensitivity on the part of a man or woman. Some behavioural traits of man which are stereotyped are that he should have a strong personality, that he is intelligent, straightforward, more efficient and is fit for taking up the more challenging jobs outside. Contrariwise, women are regarded as having a weak personality, that they are less intelligent and less capable of taking up the challenging outside jobs. The tender qualities of women make them more fit as homemakers, as wives and mothers. Men, on the other hand, are meant for the outside world. There are some culturally-defined and culturally-prescribed indicators of masculinity which shape the activities and preference pattern of men. Girls, on the other hand, are more inclined to have household jobs, playing with dolls or other in-house engagements.

Such stereotypical ideas about men and women are inculcated in the minds of them through a process of socialization which starts right from the beginning. Because of this process of socialization, gender identity and gender roles begin to develop in children at the age of 2-3 years old. They not only learn about their own roles but develop a sense of negativity in taking the role of the other sex. The term 'boyish' is derogatory for girls as the term girl-like or 'meyeli' is derogatory for boys.

This socially defined 'role differentiation' gives birth to a wide range of institutions, practices and behaviour patterns which are gender-specific and mostly unrelated to realities. Since men have been instrumental in creating such values and orientations, the resultant society which has been created is advantageous for men and unjust, disadvantageous, and derogatory for women. Establishing gender sensitization means challenging this unjust and unequal social order where individuals are not discriminated against based on their gender. It is also aimed at challenging those gender stereotypes and biases and create an environment where all individuals have equal opportunities to succeed.

The task is a challenging one as ideas about gender-specific roles are deeply ingrained in the minds of the people and continue in one form or another in spite of changes in society. Examining one's personal attitude and beliefs and creating empathy for others is the most difficult proposition. That is the reason why a gender-based society continues, albeit in a changed form, in spite of radical changes occurring in our life and environment.

This is not to argue that women's position in society is not changing or that institutions and practices and behaviour patterns which were derogatory or disadvantageous for women are continuing in the same old form through ages. In fact, looking at changes occurring in the sphere of laws, institutions



and practices, one can as well argue that women have been 'liberated' from the yoke of traditionalism.

A good number of institutional and legal measures have been adopted in our country to improve the status of women and ensure equality and equity for them. Constitutional provisions are there banning any form of discrimination based on, among other things, sex. In the sphere of marriage, there has been the banning of polygamy, increasing the age at marriage through the Special Marriage Act, 1954 and prohibition of dowry. Divorce rights have been granted. The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 ensures equal right of inheritance. There is the uniform civil code. As far as literacy and education levels are concerned, there is a remarkable improvement in such rates among women both in rural and urban areas. Available Census data show that in the health and nutrition section, life expectancy for women is increasing, infant and child mortality rate is decreasing, total fertility rate for women is decreasing, maternal mortality rate is decreasing, sex ratio is improving, more children are born in medical institutions instead of in the hands of quacks, political participation and reservation for women have been ensured through the 73rd and 74th Amendment of the Constitution. All these and many other socio-economic indicators can be presented in order to show that women's condition in our society is vastly improving.

But there is a flip side of the above indicators which can be mentioned in order to show that though women's position is improving, it is not improving to the extent desirable and that discriminatory treatment of women continues. Regarding intra-household allocation of nutrition and calories expenditure, Devaki Jain and Nirmala Banerjee in the book, *Tyranny of Household, Investigative essays in Women's Work* have shown that women agricultural labourer's calorie intake falls short of requirement by 20 p.c. on working days and 50 p.c. on

unemployed days, whereas for men, it is 11 p.c. and 16 p.c. respectively. Regarding Infant and child mortality, this has improved over time no doubt but there is a sex bias in IMR (Infant Mortality Rate). Mortality rate for female infants have been consistently higher than male infants. Sex detection test during pregnancy has been outlawed but it is widely prevalent in many cases, adversely affecting the sex ratio. Sex ratio is a prominent marker of disadvantaged status for women and the all-India average for sex ratio continues to be well below 950. Literacy rate, though improved, remains low as per the declared objective of universal literacy. As per National Family Health Survey Data [NFHS-5], it is highly skewed in favour of males. The overall literacy rate is 77.70%, with literate males at 84.70% and literate females at 70.30%. In this respect, there is a wide inter-regional difference and rural urban differentiation, as well as differentiation in respect of OBCs, SCs and STs. Female literacy rate among them continues to be at a low level. Female literacy rate has a cascading effect as it is a predictor of birth rate and infant mortality rate in India.

Let us now see the gendered bias in the labour force participation rate. The labour force participation rate is the estimate of an economy's active workforce. The formula is the number of people aged 16 and above who are employed or actively seeking employment, divided by the total number of working age population. At the all-India level, this rate has increased from 49.8 percent in 2017-18 to 57.9 percent in 2022-23. Much of this increase has occurred in rural areas and also, in respect of females. The female participation rate has risen from 24.6 p.c in 2017-18 to 41.5 p.c in 2022-23. This is still a lower percentage as compared to those of men. Also, we should mention here three points of importance — Firstly, the survey also documents a decline in the share of regular wage/salaried employment and a rise in self-employment, the average output of which is very low and unsteady. Secondly,

this rise in participation rate is indicative of economic distress in rural areas, which is pushing women to work in order to augment their family incomes. Thirdly, much of this rise is due to work under MGNREGA, where wages are lower than in other non-farm occupations. Women person days under the programme have been steadily rising which means these women are working at a lower wage which is equivalent to their subsistence level. Women are now exposed to multiple pressures initiated through the so-called Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) adopted here as well as in other countries of the world. High food prices, deteriorating amenities in the wake of cuts in public expenditure on social sectors and insecure livelihoods consequent upon privatization and deregulation of industry have put the position of women belonging to the lower classes to an all-time low level. Women are now forced to increase their paid and unpaid labour time to compensate for declining family income. Low income households have become the prime victims. This whole situation has been aptly described as the Feminization of Poverty.

## **Patriarchy**

Sylvia Walby, in the book on 'Theorizing Patriarchy', has talked about two forms of patriarchy, 'private patriarchy' where, within the household, there is patrilocality, a gendered power relation within the family. On the other hand, there is 'public patriarchy' wherein women are segregated in wealth, power and status, being underprivileged in all these sectors vis-a-vis men, when they operate in the public domain. Patriarchy is defined as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women. We find that there are several structures comprising patriarchy.

### **1. Production relations in the household**

Women are the victims of unpaid domestic work. But even as far as working

women are concerned, it has been argued that they are engaged in two full time jobs—one, the paid job outside, and the other, the unpaid job within the family. For working women, there is exploitation not merely inside the family but also outside. Women workers are found concentrated in those types of jobs which are routine, offer little scope of variation and initiative. In the higher levels of the occupational structure, men are concentrated as well as in the management, engineering and technological sector. Technology is man-friendly. The more there is technological sophistication, the more there is loss of job for women. This phenomenon of the concentration of white collar jobs for women at the lower levels of jobs, jobs which are routine, offer little scope for initiative, is known to be phenomenon of 'glass ceiling'. This is an invisible barrier for women, they are hardly to be found at the higher levels of jobs. This is happening in the agricultural sector also. Application of technology in the agricultural field is resulting in the loss of job for women labourers who mostly work as unskilled workers.

### **2. Patriarchal relations in sexuality**

There is a sexual double standard in sexuality. Allegiance and chastity are regarded as the supreme values for women while in case of men, there is indulgence and acceptance. Since the woman has the primary responsibility as a homemaker, she is forced to overlook the male 'adventurism'. There is also the compulsory heterosexuality backed by the state in the name of moral standards. Family relations are backed up by male violence which is again backed up by physical power on the part of males.

### **3. Patriarchal cultural institutions**

There is also the prevalence of patriarchal cultured institutions. Media, religion and education produce representation of women within a patriarchal gaze. Naomi Wolf in her book on *The Beauty Myth* (1990)

while recognizing the economic, social and political advances that women have made, argues that concerns for beauty dominate their behaviour pattern now. Women are made to feel concerned about such things as body shape, hair and other aspects of their physical appearance. She calls this as a violent backlash against feminism. Ideas about what constitute female beauty are used as political weapons to covertly control women reinforcing the glass ceiling. This has the effect of excluding women from power, preventing them from exercising their hard won rights and generating low self esteem. Long gone are the days, when in the sixties of the last century, feminist movement resulted in 'Burning the Bra' as a symbol of women inferiority.

Patriarchal values and institutions are emerging even in societies which had developed another set of institutional complexes. A book by Lekha N.B., and Antony Palackal entitled *Dynamics of Power, Sexuality and Property* in Kerala show that the matriarchal traditions of Nāyar community women are now being changed and they are now furthering the patriarchal norms. Instead of the large amount of power which Nāyar women enjoyed previously, women are valued more now as good wives and mothers. We can also mention here the instances of

'Hinduization' of tribes whereby, the tribal women, who enjoyed more freedom earlier, are increasingly adopting patriarchal norms, values and institutions.

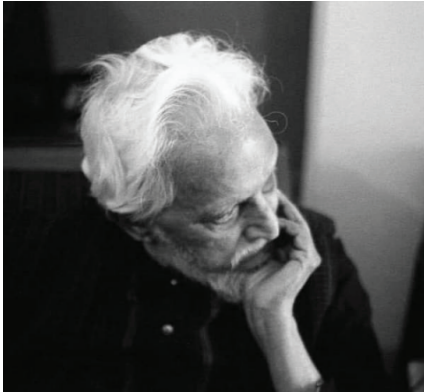
### Conclusion

As far as the theoretical orientations are concerned, theories which are emerging today are built more on the recognition of differences among women rather than treating them as a holistic category. It recognizes that gender identification is one of the many ways of identity formation. Among these many identities, one can think of class, race, ethnicity, age, global location and the like. There are significant differences among women based on these identities. These different levels of identity among women interact with each other - the many vectors of subordination and privilege interact and intersect with each other to create various dimensions of oppression and inequality. Analysis of the position of women belonging to these various social and economic categories in different countries of the world has opened up new and flourishing areas of research on the question of women empowerment today.

*Swapan Kumar Pramanick*  
Swapan Kumar Pramanick  
President



Audience at the Women's Day Celebration in The Asiatic Society



## Ranen Ayan Dutt (1927-2024): The Unfortunate Genius of Indian Art World

**Mrityunjoy Chatterjee**

Advertising Professional & Communication Specialist

Yes. This is my extremely painful reaction whenever I think of him or talk about him.

He was a true genius as an artist who mesmerised art connoisseurs with his many facets of art activities. Though I know and follow him from mid-sixties as a student of Government Art College, Kolkata, which was his Alma mater, I never came close to him other than a few exclusive occasions. But I used to follow him as a learner for his unmatched quality as a powerful painter, as an outstanding illustrator, with a unique sense of architectural design which have been manifested through his several award-winning pavilion designs for Indian corporate giants and museum designs of national importance.

Born in Bangladesh in 1927, he came to Kolkata to pursue his art education inspired by his father. Under the tutelage of very famous teachers of Government Art College Ranen Ayan completed his Art Education with a first class first rank in western style of painting.

After a few professional assignments he joined India's most celebrated advertising agency J. Walter Thompson as Chief Art Director and the next twenty years he created numerous graphic designs, art works, illustrations required for promotional work of various brands.

Probably this 20 golden years of his professional and commercial activities defocused his in-born talent of a



## IN MEMORIAM

classical painter and turned him towards commercially viable Applied Art. In 1974 he started his own design workshop named RAD Associates and got thoroughly involved in designing work including 3D designs. His several creative designs for book covers of celebrated writers, posters for notable films, illustrations for many prestigious calendars, murals for reputed corporate houses and finally, 3D designs for numerous national & international pavilions defined him as a notable illustrator and pavilion designer with unique sense of architecture. Barring many prestigious awards he received D.Litt from Rabindra Bharati University in the year 1999.

All the above-mentioned activities of Ranen Ayan Dutt could only be compared with a multi-faceted glittering diamond. Yet he is known in the art world as an illustrator and pavilion designer which in my opinion is very unfortunate. It is a mystery that why he did not take interest, even after his retirement from Applied Art activities, to get involved in painting which could have been placed this genius as one of the most celebrated painters in Indian Art World.

On 3rd March, 2024, Ranen Ayan Dutt (96) left his magical world of art & design forever.



## Professor Anjalika Mukhopadhyay (1948-2024)

**Mridula Saha**

Life Member, The Asiatic Society

Professor Anjalika Mukhopadhyay, an erudite scholar of Sanskrit, passed away at 08.30 p.m. on 7th March 2024 at the age of 75 years. She is survived by her husband, daughter, grand daughter and son-in-law. She was born on 31st July 1948 in Kolkata in a respectable family. Her father was a renowned advocate. Being deeply influenced by her father she never compromised with unfair activities.

Professor Mukhopadhyay started her formal education at the United Missionary Girls' High School, Kolkata. From her school life she was a very brilliant student. After completing her school education she enrolled to Presidency College and passed B.A. (Hons.) Examination in 1968 with First Class. For the outstanding result she received the Vidyasagar Medal. After that she obtained an M.A. degree in Sanskrit in the year 1970 from the University of Calcutta with First Class securing First position and was the recipient of Gold and Silver Medals. She did her M.Phil. from the University of Calcutta in 1987. In the mean time being interested in Āyurveda, she was engaged with extensive study in this field. Finally she did her research on Āyurveda and was awarded the Ph.D. degree in the topic entitled 'Āyurveda in Classical Sanskrit



Literature' in the year 2001 under the supervision of Late Professor Brahmananda Gupta from Rabindra Bharati University.

Professor Mukhopadhyay began her professional career as a Lecturer in Bethune College, Kolkata. She served there for a short period. Then she joined the Sanskrit Department of Muralidhar Girls' College as Lecturer and retired from this institution as Reader and Head of the Department in the year 2008. After retirement she was attached to the Sanskrit College and the University of Calcutta as a Guest Faculty Member for a long time. In 2017 she joined Seacom Skills University as a Professor and Ph.D. supervisor in Sanskrit.

During the tenure 5 students were awarded the Ph.D. degree under her able supervision. At present 4 students were working for the Ph.D. degree. Unfortunately they could not complete their research under her supervision. Her sudden demise is a great loss for them and all of us.

She was also associated with the Sanskrit Department of Jadavpur University as a member of the Ph.D. Committee. She was the teacher and course developer in the Centre for Distance and Online Education (Previously known as Directorate of Distance

Education) of Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata. She also worked as teacher in the CDOE of Vidyasagar University, Medinipur. Professor Mukhopadhyay was closely attached to The Asiatic Society in the Research Project—History of Medicine for editing of the manuscripts, translating the Ayurvedic texts and many other scholarly activities.

She attended many National and International Seminars and presented papers, sharing her experience and observation with scholars. Several research papers have been published in the different journals. She also contributed articles for Bangladesh *Viśvakoṣa*.

Professor Mukhopadhyay was a profound scholar. Her vast knowledge base in her field of study is incomparable. Her style of teaching inspired the students. Though she was quite strict by nature, she was very caring and had motherly affection towards all her students. In her span of teaching, she became one of the most beloved and popular teachers. She always showered love and blessings on students and near-and-dear ones.

Professor Mukhopadhyay was a prolific writer. She wrote and edited 11 books which are as follows :

1. *Laghuchandomañjarī*, Nabapatra Prakasana.
2. *Āyurveda in Classical Sanskrit Literature*, Papyrus.
3. *Vakroktijīvitam* (1st), Sanskrit Pustak

Bhandar.

4. *Saṁskṛta Kāvyaacarcāy Bāṅgāli :Sekāl o Ekāl*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.
5. *Kāvyaajijñāsā Granthe Dhvani o Rasa Prasāṅga*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.
6. *Nāṭyaśāstram* (1st & 6th chapters), Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.
7. *Nāṭyaśāstram* (2nd chapter), Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.
8. *Deśe Videśe Saṁskṛta Carcā*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar.
9. *Nalacampū* (1st), Sanskrit Book Depot.
10. *Dhvanyāloka* (1st and 2nd), Sanskrit Book Depot.
11. *Sāhitya Tattva Samikṣā*, Sanskrit Book Depot.

Her latest work is an invaluable book on Āyurveda, which is in press. She has also contributed in writing and editing many books and manuscripts. But a lot remains unfinished due to her sudden demise.

Besides her academic career Professor Mukhopadhyay was dutiful, disciplined, sincere and punctual. She could proficiently handle any tough situation and worked through problems efficiently.

She is no more physically with us, but she always will remain in the hearts of her students, friends, followers and beloved. Her sudden demise left a significant void in the academic world which will be hard to fill up. I pay my heartfelt homage and respect to this divine soul.

May her soul rest in peace.

## ডিরোজিও ও এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটি

শক্তিসাধন মুখোপাধ্যায়

প্রাক্তন সচিব, বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য পরিষৎ

‘ওল্ড বেঙ্গল’ যাঁর প্রণোদনায় উনিশ শতকে ‘ইয়ং বেঙ্গল’ হয়েছিল সেই তরণ বঙ্গের স্রষ্টা হেনরি লুই ভিভিয়ান ডিরোজিওর (১৮০৯-১৮৩১) জন্ম দ্বিশতবর্ষ পালিত হয়েছে ২০০৮ সালে। ২০২৪ সালের ১৮ই এপ্রিল তাঁর ২১৬তম জন্মদিন। বাংলার সাংস্কৃতিক ইতিহাসে যে মর্যাদা তাঁর পাওয়া উচিত ছিল দুর্ভাগ্যক্রমে তাতে খামতি থেকে গেছে। মাত্র ২২ বছর ৮ মাস ৮ দিনের একটি সংক্ষিপ্ত আয়ুষ্কাল তিনি পেয়েছিলেন। হিন্দু কলেজে তাঁর শিক্ষকতা মাত্র বছর পাঁচেকের। দুটি কাব্য মাত্র রচনা করেছিলেন। এবং বিভিন্ন সংবাদপত্রে নেপথ্য ও প্রত্যক্ষ সম্পাদনার কাজ করলেও নিজের সম্পাদনায় তিনি ইষ্ট ইন্ডিয়ান নামে একটি পত্রিকা চালিয়েছিলেন কয়েক মাস মাত্র। অকরণ জীবন দেবতা অকস্মাৎ তাঁর কলমটি কেড়ে নিয়েছিল। তথাপি তাঁকে নিয়ে যোগ্যজনেরা গবেষণা করেছেন, বইপত্রও লিখেছেন। ফলে দীর্ঘদিন উপেক্ষিত থাকলেও তাঁর সম্পর্কে এখন আমরা অনেক কিছু জানি। তাঁকে নিয়ে লিখেছেন যোগেশচন্দ্র বাগল, বিনয় ঘোষ, অমর দত্ত, পল্লব সেনগুপ্ত, সুরেশচন্দ্র মৈত্র, সুবীর রায়চৌধুরী প্রমুখ বিদ্বানরা। কেউ তাঁর কবিসত্তাকে তুলে ধরেছেন, কেউ আলোচনা করেছেন তাঁর শিক্ষক সত্তাকে নিয়ে। কেউ বা তাঁকে সমাজ-বিপ্লবী বা ভাবনা-বিপ্লবী হিসেবে তুলে ধরেছেন। যুক্তিবাদী ও মানবতাবাদী



শিক্ষক নেতা হিসাবে তাঁর বৈপ্লবিক ভূমিকার কথা আমরা এখন অনেকেই জানি। তাঁর জীবনের ও ভূমিকার অনেক ছোট ছোট প্রসঙ্গে আলোকপাত করার কাজও হয়েছে। আমরা এখানে একটি প্রায় অনালোচিত প্রসঙ্গের দিকে আপনাদের মনোযোগ আকর্ষণ করব। সেটা হচ্ছে এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটির সঙ্গে তাঁর কোনো সম্পর্ক সূত্র ছিল কিনা? এত বড় যে একটা বিদ্বৎ প্রতিষ্ঠান এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটি তার কোনো আলোককণা ডিরোজিওর উপর পড়েছিল কিনা জানতে ইচ্ছে করে।

প্রথমেই বলে নেওয়া ভালো এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটি যে ধরনের হোমরা-চোমরা উচ্চমার্গের সাহেবী প্রতিষ্ঠান ছিল এবং যে উদ্দেশ্যে এটি স্থাপিত হয়েছিল ২০/২২ বছরের এক অ্যাংলো-ইন্ডিয়ান ছোকরার সঙ্গে তার কোনো সম্পর্ক থাকারই কথা নয়। ১৮০৯ সালে এন্টালিতে যার জন্ম ১৮১৫ থেকে

১৮২৩/২৪ পর্যন্ত ড্রামন্ডের ধর্মতলা একাডেমিতে যে পড়াশুনা করেছে, সামান্য কিছু দিন ডোমস স্কট অ্যান্ড কোম্পানিতে কেরানিগিরি করে ভাগলপুর চলে গিয়েছিল মামার নীলকুঠিতে কাজ করতে। ১৮২৬ সালে সে কলকাতা ফিরে আসে ইন্ডিয়া গেজেট পত্রিকায় অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট এডিটরের কাজ করতে। তারপর হিন্দু কলেজে নিযুক্ত হয় চতুর্থ শিক্ষকের পদে। বছর পাঁচেক শিক্ষকতা করার পর ছাত্রদের খারাপ করে দিচ্ছে এই অভিযোগে তাকে বরখাস্ত



করা হয়। তখন একটি পত্রিকা বের করে সে। তারপর কলেরায় আক্রান্ত হয়ে তার অকাল মৃত্যু ঘটে। এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটিতে তার আসার কোনো কারণ ছিল না। কেননা এখানে বিদ্বান সাহেবরা ছিলেন প্রধানত ‘ওরিয়েন্টালিস্ট’, প্রাচ্যবিদ্যা সংগ্রহ, প্রাচ্য বিদ্যাচর্চা ও ইংরেজিতে তা অনুবাদ করে বিলেতের সাহেবদের জ্ঞানবৃদ্ধিই ছিল তাঁদের কাজ। ডিরোজিও খাঁটি সাহেব নন, বয়স কম, প্রাচ্য বিদ্যাচর্চার প্রকল্প তাঁর নয়। তিনি ড্রামন্ডের স্কুলে প্রগতিশীল পাশ্চাত্য দর্শন ও সাহিত্য শিক্ষা করেছেন—তার মন জুড়ে আছে ওয়েস্টার্ন লার্নিং। হিন্দু কলেজে শিক্ষক হয়ে তিনি ভারতীয় তরুণ ছাত্রদের মননে পাশ্চাত্য বিদ্যার সৌরভ পৌঁছে দেওয়ার কাজ করতে নিজেই ব্যাপ্ত করেছিলেন। এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটির প্রকল্প আর ডিরোজিওর প্রকল্প সম্পূর্ণ আলাদা। সুতরাং কথায় আর বুদ্ধিতে মিল না হওয়ারই কথা। তথাপি উল্লেখ করার মতো কিছু কথা আছে সেটা একটু বলি—

এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটির তিন পদাধিকারী ও বিদ্বান ডিরোজিওর প্রতি আকৃষ্ট হয়েছিলেন। ডিরোজিও এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটিতে না এলেও তাঁরা গিয়েছিলেন ডিরোজিওর এলাকায় বা ডিরোজিওকে দিয়েছিলেন তাঁদের ঔদার্যপূর্ণ স্নেহস্পর্শ। এটা ডিরোজিওর দরকার ছিল। অনিশ্চয়তা ও উপেক্ষায় ভরা একটা পরিবেশে অন্ধকারের দাঁত যখন তাকে রক্তাক্ত করে ফেলতে পারলে বাঁচে সে সময় এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটির সঙ্গে যুক্ত অন্তত তিনজন বিদ্বান তাঁকে সাংস্কৃতিক ভাবে লালন করেছিলেন বা মদত দিয়েছিলেন। কারা তাঁরা? ডা: জন গ্রান্ট (১৭৯৪-১৮৬২), এডোয়ার্ড রায়ান (১৭৯৩-১৮৭৫), হোরেস হেম্যান উইলসন (১৭৮৬-১৮৬০)।

ডিরোজিওর জীবনে দু’জন প্রধান পৃষ্ঠপোষকের নাম করতে হলে ডেভিড ড্রামন্ডের পর যাঁর নাম করতে হয় তিনি ডা: জন গ্রান্ট। বলা হয়েছে গ্রান্ট হচ্ছেন সেই ব্যক্তি যিনি ডিরোজিওর শৈশব প্রতিভার

দোলনা দুলিয়েছেন ও তাঁর কবরে মাটি দিয়েছেন। বিকাশ থেকে অবসান সর্বক্ষণ তাঁর পাশে ছিলেন গ্রান্ট। মেডিক্যাল সার্ভিসে যোগ দিতে এসেছিলেন কলকাতায়। *ইন্ডিয়া গেজেট* পত্রিকার সম্পাদক হন। শৈশবে ড্রামন্ডের স্কুলে ডিরোজিওকে দেখে মুগ্ধ হয়েছিলেন। তাঁর আহ্বানে কিশোর বয়স থেকেই ডিরোজিও গ্রান্টের কাছে যেতেন। ভাগলপুর থেকে গ্রান্টই তাঁকে ডেকে *ইন্ডিয়া গেজেট*-এর সহ-সম্পাদক করেন। তিনিই প্রথম তাঁর পত্রিকায় ‘জুভেনিস’ ছদ্মনামে লেখা ডিরোজিওর কবিতা ছাপেন। কলেরায় আক্রান্ত হলে তিনি তাঁর শয্যাপার্শ্বে গিয়ে ক্যাম্পবেলের লেখা ‘প্লেজার্স অব হোপ’ কাব্য পাঠ করে শোনাতে। ডিরোজিও তাঁর প্রথম কাব্য *পোয়েমস্* (১৮২৭) উৎসর্গ করেছেন জন গ্রান্টকেই। এই গ্রান্ট ছিলেন এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটির মেডিক্যাল শাখার অন্যতম কার্যকর্তা।

এডোয়ার্ড রায়ান ছিলেন ব্যারিস্টার। তিনি কলকাতার সুপ্রিম কোর্টের প্রধান বিচারপতির দায়িত্ব পালন করেন ১৮৩৩ থেকে ১৮৪৩। কলকাতায় আসেন ১৮২৭ সালে। পাশ্চাত্য জ্ঞান ও বিজ্ঞানের প্রসার ঘটুক এদেশে এটা তাঁর মিশন ছিল বলা যায়। বলতেন 'India should be improved by wide spread teaching of English'। খবর পাওয়া যাচ্ছে শ্রীকৃষ্ণ সিংহের বাগানবাড়িতে ডিরোজিও তার ছাত্রদের নিয়ে অ্যাকাডেমি অ্যাসোসিয়েশন নামে যে তর্কসভা বসাতেন তাতে অনেক গণ্যমান্য রাশভারি বিদ্বান উপস্থিত হয়ে শুনতেন 'olive complexioned and bronze coloured' ছেলেরা কি রকম বুদ্ধির তরবারি খেলছে। সেখানে ডেভিড হেয়ার, আলেকজান্ডার ডাফ, লাট সাহেবের এডি কোং-দের সঙ্গে এডোয়ার্ড রায়ান সাহেব হাজির হতেন ডিরোজিও ও তার ছাত্রদের জ্ঞানচর্চায় মদত দিতে। এই এডোয়ার্ড রায়ান এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটির গুরুত্বপূর্ণ পদাধিকারী ছিলেন—সকলেই জানেন। বিলেতে রয়্যাল এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটির প্রসিডিংসে (১৮৭৬) গভীর শোক প্রকাশ করা হয়েছিল স্যার

এডোয়ার্ড রায়ানের মৃত্যুতে তা নথিবদ্ধ আছে। আর একজনের কথা বলতেই হবে তিনি বিখ্যাত প্রাচ্যবিদ হোরেস হেম্যান উইলসন। ডিরোজিও যখন হিন্দু কলেজে শিক্ষকতায় প্রবেশ করেন তখন সরকারের শিক্ষা বিভাগের ডিজিটর হিসাবে তিনি হিন্দু কলেজের কার্য নির্বাহক সমিতিতে এসে গেছেন। পরিচালন সমিতির প্রেসিডেন্টের পদে অধিষ্ঠিত। তিনি হিন্দু কলেজের পঠন-পাঠন-পরীক্ষাদি খুঁটিয়ে দেখতেন। আমাদের মনে পড়তে পারে ডিরোজিও তাঁর দ্বিতীয় কাব্যগ্রন্থ *দি ফকির অব জঙ্ঘীরা* (১৮২৮) উৎসর্গ করেছিলেন ডা: এইচ. এইচ. উইলসনকে। উইলসন মনে করতেন ডিরোজিও দুর্লভ মানের শিক্ষক। তিনি তাকে খুবই স্নেহ করতেন। তিনি লিখেছেন, 'ডিরোজিও তাঁর পড়ানোর যে কোনও বিষয়ের চার পাশে আগ্রহের জাল বুনতে পারতেন—এটা একটা দুর্লভ ক্ষমতা।' দুর্ভাগ্যক্রমে ডিরোজিওকে হিন্দু কলেজ থেকে ছাঁটাই করার মিটিং-এ উপস্থিত থাকলেও ডিরোজিওকে তিনি রক্ষা করতে পারেন নি। কেননা পরিচালন সমিতির দেশীয় কর্তারা যখন সরকারের সঙ্গে সাহায্য সহযোগিতার চুক্তি করে তখন বলা ছিল হিন্দুধর্ম বা জাতি বিষয়ক কোনো আবেগের প্রশ্ন উঠলে সাহেব মেশরদের কথা চলবে না। কেননা এটা হিন্দু কলেজ। তাই ডিরোজিওর প্রতি ভয়ঙ্কর অবিচার হচ্ছে জেনেও তিনি নির্বাক ছিলেন বাধ্য হয়ে। ডিরোজিওর পদত্যাগ বিষয়ে চিঠিপত্র উইলসনকেই লিখতে হয়েছিল। ডিরোজিও তার উত্তর উইলসনকেই দিয়েছিলেন। সেই পত্র বিনিময় ইতিহাসের দলিল হয়ে আছে। পদত্যাগ পত্রে ডিরোজিও তিনজনকে ধন্যবাদ জানিয়েছিলেন—শ্রী কিষেন সিং, ডেভিড হেয়ার ও উইলসন। সেই চিঠিতে ডিরোজিও উইলসনকে লিখেছিলেন—

ভাগ্যের তরী আমার জীবনকে কোথায় নিয়ে যাবে তা তো বলা যায় না। হয়তো কদাচিৎ আপনার সংস্পর্শে আসার সুযোগ ঘটবে। সেই কারণে আপনার সঙ্গে পরিচিত হবার সম্মান ও

আনন্দ লাভের পর থেকে আপনি আমার প্রতি যে সহৃদয়তা দেখিয়েছেন তা কৃতজ্ঞচিত্তে স্বীকার করার এই সুযোগ আমি ছেড়ে দিতে পারি না।...

সম্মান ও শ্রদ্ধারঞ্জিত অনুভূতি সহ  
আপনার বিশ্বস্ত  
এইচ. এল.ভি. ডিরোজিও  
২৫শে এপ্রিল ১৮৩১

খেয়াল করলে দেখা যাবে ডিরোজিওকে সংবাদপত্রসেবী ও কবি হতে সাহায্য করেছিলেন ডা: জন গ্রান্ট; ডিরোজিওর বিতর্কসভায় উপস্থিত হয়ে ছাত্রদের বুদ্ধির তরবারি খেলায় ডিরোজিওকে অনুপ্রাণিত করেছিলেন এডওয়ার্ড রায়ান; আর শিক্ষক ডিরোজিওকে সযত্নে লালন করেছেন হোরেস হেম্যান উইলসন। গ্রান্ট ডিরোজিওকে ভাগলপুর থেকে ডেকে কলকাতায় সংবাদপত্রের চাকরিতে পুনর্বাসিত না করলে নীলকুঠির চাকরি করতে করতে তিনি কোথায় হারিয়ে যেতেন কে জানে? ডিরোজিওর পৃষ্ঠপোষক হিসাবে এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটির তিন কার্যকর্তা যে ইতিবাচক ভূমিকা পালন করেছেন তা একেবারে উড়িয়ে দেবার নয়। এমনকি হিন্দু কলেজে শিক্ষক হিসাবে ডিরোজিওর চাকরি হওয়ার পিছনে যে দুজনের নেপথ্য ভূমিকা কার্যকরী ছিল তাঁরা হলেন ডা: জন গ্রান্ট ও ডা: হোরেস হেম্যান উইলসন। ১৮২৩ খ্রিস্টাব্দের মার্চ মাসে এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটিতে খোলা হয় ক্যালকাটা মেডিক্যাল অ্যান্ড ফিজিক্যাল সোসাইটি 'for promotion of Medical enduring and research in the East'। প্রতিমাসের প্রথম শনিবার বসত তার সভা। এই সোসাইটির প্রেসিডেন্ট ছিলেন এইচ. এইচ. উইলসন, সম্পাদক জে. এডাম। ডা: গ্রান্ট ছিলেন পরিচালন সমিতির সদস্য। অনুমান করতে অসুবিধা নেই ডিরোজিওর দুই অকৃত্রিম পৃষ্ঠপোষক এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটির মিটিং-এ বসে তাঁর নিয়োগ সংক্রান্ত সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়ে থাকতেন। এটা অবশ্য লেখা নেই কোথাও। সব কি আর লেখা থাকে?

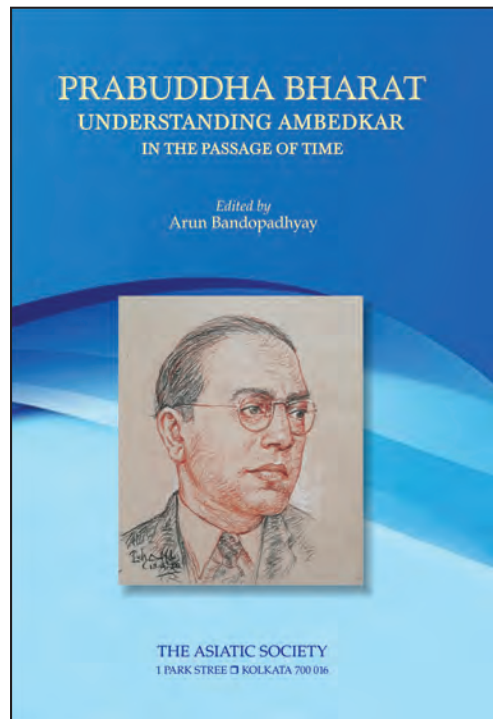
## B. R. Ambedkar's Counter-Discourse of Radicalism : A Brief Note\*

**Sabyasachi Bhattacharya**

Formerly Professor of History, Jawaharlal Nehru University

This conference takes place exactly a hundred years after young Bhimrao Ambedkar returned to India in the summer of 1917 after his long sojourn in the USA and England. From the summer of 1917, in the next two years, Ambedkar established himself as a public intellectual. On the one hand, his first research paper, on caste in India, was published in *The Indian Antiquary* (1917) and he was appointed as a lecturer in Economics in Sydenham College in Bombay (1918); on the other hand, he entered the public sphere with the publication of his first Marathi journal *Mooknayak* (Leader of the Voiceless) and his deposition as a spokesman of the Mahar community's interests before the Southborough Committee on Franchise (1919). Thus, from 1917 begins Ambedkar's evolution as a public intellectual.

I will try to address only a few aspects of the multifaceted life of Ambedkar as a public intellectual. I will focus on the radical spirit in Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. His radicalism was manifested in his position *vis-à-vis* Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress – an aspect that has attracted many scholars, but there are other areas where I think more research is needed. We often do not remember that he was the



first Labour Minister (or Labour Member of Viceroy's Council), from 1942 to 1946, and that was the period when he put forward an approach to the problems of the working class which was radically different from that of both the Indian National Congress and

\* Address delivered by the Late Professor Sabyasachi Bhattacharya at the National Seminar on the occasion of 125th Birth Anniversary of Dr. Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar organised by The Asiatic Society held during 26-27 August 2016. Reprinted from the book *Prabuddha Bharat: Understanding Ambedkar in the Passage of Time* edited by Professor Arun Bandopadhyay and published by The Asiatic Society in July 2020. Cover of the book was designed by the Late Professor Isha Mahammad, former President of The Asiatic Society.

the Communist Party of India. In proposing at that time state socialism, he anticipated Nehru. Another conspicuously radical moment came in 1947-48 when he differed from the mainstream political leaders on issues such as village self-government or *panchayet* form of governance which he opposed, or the issue of *go-rakshan* or cow protection which he denounced in public. (He was, however, compelled to accept compromise in the Constituent Assembly as the Chairman of its Drafting Committee for the Constitution). Thus, we see, broadly speaking, three sites of contestation where Ambedkar's radicalism developed: *identity politics* vis-à-vis the Congress, *economic issues* particularly concerning labour, and his *cultural concerns* in his critique of tradition or interpretation of what is supposed to be traditional culture. Since much has been said about the first of these, given the limited time at my disposal, I will focus on the other ones.

One can observe three characteristics of Ambedkarian radicalism in the ideological contra-positions. First, Ambedkar's intellectual brilliance elevated the discourse from trivial political conflicts to a high ideological level. Often this involved well-researched expositions on his part, such as tracts on *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) or *What Gandhi and the Congress has done to the Untouchables* (1946) or 'The Untouchables and beef eating' (1948). His was usually an *adversarial* role and hence I have described it as a counter-discourse.

Second, Ambedkar often had to assume not only an *adversarial* but also an *advocatory* role, defending the interests of

disprivileged communities and minorities. However, there were also moments when he looked beyond particular interests to the Indian polity as a whole, flawed as it was with discrimination created by Brahmanism. In his first published paper, cited earlier, he wrote in 1917 that India had a 'fundamental unity, an indubitable cultural unity' and towards the end of his life he addressed the Scheduled Caste Federation (1950) to urge the audience to place the country above the community to avoid India's independence being put into jeopardy. However, the continual attack of his opponents often pushed him into an adversarial role.

Thirdly, we must reflect on the fact that counter-discourses sometimes allow the opponents to frame the problematic. Gail Omvedt (1994) in her work, on *Dalits and the Democratic Revolution: Dr. Ambedkar and the Dalit Movement in Colonial India* observes that on the Marxist approach to caste and class Ambedkar's critique was not only a reaction against but also a simple reversal of the framework of the opponent. Her point seems to be that an existing discourse and a new counter-discourse may be cohabitants of the same pattern of thought, except that the conclusions are reversed, in this instance primacy of caste or class. This opinion is debatable but questions such as these open up new areas of enquiry and re-thinking. That is what makes the study of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's brilliant counter-discourse extremely worthwhile. The purpose of my introductory remarks will have been served if new questions arise at the present conference, leading to a fuller appreciation of the contribution of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar.

## Climate Change: An Emergent Global Issue

**Asok Kanti Sanyal**

Biological Science Secretary, The Asiatic Society

It is known that our mother earth has evolved slowly. Our planet began as part of a cloud of fire, ice, dust and gas. Earth has evolved slowly into a perfect self-regulating complex system involving Biosphere, Hydrosphere and Atmosphere tightly coupled together as an evolving natural earth ecosystem. The ecological systems of earth are in a state of equilibrium. Even a small change is corrected to bring it back to the original "point of balance" with the rest of the system. The interaction of living forms by bacteria, viruses and other wild animals establishes a global control system that regulates earth's surface temperature, atmospheric composition and oceanic salinity powered by the thermodynamic equilibrium state of the earth ecosystem.

The matter of great concern is the rise of temperature by 1.1 degree Celsius if we do not phase out excess fossil fuels, if we do not move out of our age-old die-hard habit of emission of greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere. It is becoming extremely difficult to stay below 2 degree Celsius

The clearest evidence for surface warming comes from white spread thermometer records in some places. This records extend back to the late 19th century. Today temperature is monitored at many thousands of locations over both the land and ocean surface. Indirect estimates of temperature changes from such sources as readings and high scores help to place recent temperature changes in the context of the

past in terms of the average temperature. This indirect estimate shows that 1983-2012 is the warmest 30 year period in more than 800 years.

A wide range of other observations provides a more comprehensive picture of warming throughout the climate system. For example, the lower atmosphere and the upper layers of the ocean have also warmed, snow and ice cover are decreasing in the Northern Hemisphere, the Greenland ice sheet is shrinking and sea level is rising. These measurements are made with a variety of monitoring systems which give added confidence in the reality that earth's climate is warming.

Scientists know that recent climate change is largely caused by human activities from an understanding of basic physics comparing observations with models and fingerprinting the detailed patterns of climate change caused by different human and natural influences.

Since the mid-1800s, scientists have known that CO<sub>2</sub> is one of the main greenhouse gasses that are important to earth's energy balance. Direct measurements of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere and in air trapped in ice show that atmospheric carbon dioxide increased by about 40% from 1800 - 2012. Measurements of different forms of carbon isotopes reveal that this increase is due to human activities. Methane and nitrous oxide are also increasing as a consequence of human activities. The observed global

surface temperature since 1900 is consistent with detailed calculations of the impacts of the observed increase in atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> on earth's energy balance.

Different influences on climate have different signatures in climate records. These unique fingerprints are easier to see by probing beyond the single number, and looking instead at the geographical and seasonal patterns of climate change. The expected changes in climate are based on our understanding of how greenhouse gasses trap heat. Both these fundamental understandings of the physics of greenhouse gasses and fingerprint studies so that natural causes alone are inadequate to explain the recent observed changes in climate. Natural causes include variations in the Sun's output and in earth's orbit around the Sun, volcanic eruptions, and internal fluctuations in the climate system, such as El Nino and La Nina.

CO<sub>2</sub> is already in the atmosphere naturally, so why are emissions from human activities significant? Human activities have significantly disturbed the natural carbon cycle by extracting long buried fossil fuels and burning them for energy, thus releasing CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere.

In nature, CO<sub>2</sub> is exchanged continuously between the atmosphere, plants and animals through photosynthesis, respiration, and decomposition, and between the atmosphere and ocean through gas exchange. A very small amount of CO<sub>2</sub> (roughly one per cent of the emission from fossil fuel combustion) is also emitted in volcanic eruptions.

This level in 2012 was about 40% higher than it was in the 19th century. Most of this CO<sub>2</sub> increase has taken place since 1970, about the time when global energy consumption accelerated. It is said that the rise in CO<sub>2</sub> is largely from combustion of fossil fuels and also as a result of deforestation and other land use changes. Additional CO<sub>2</sub> from fossil fuel burning and deforestation has disturbed the balance of the carbon cycle. Finally, a substantial fraction of the CO<sub>2</sub>

accumulates in the atmosphere, but some of it will remain not just for decades or centuries, but for thousands of years.

The role played by the sun in climate change is of great importance. The sun provides the primary source of energy driving earth's climate system, but its variations have played very little role in the climate changes observed in recent decades. Evidence that the 11-year old cycle during which the sun's energy output varies by 0.1% can influence Ozone concentrations, temperatures and winds in the stratosphere. These stratospheric changes may have a small effect on surface climate over the 11- year-cycle. However, the available evidence does not indicate profound pronounced long-term changes in the sun's output over the past century, during which time human induced increases in CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations have been the dominant influence on the long term global surface temperature increase.

Climate is always changing, but the question comes: why is climate change of concern now? All major climate changes, including natural ones, are disruptive. Past climate changes led to extinction of many species, population migrations, and pronounced changes in the land surface and ocean circulation. The speed of the current climate change is faster than most of the past events, making it more difficult for human societies and the natural world to adapt. Recent estimates of the increase in global average temperature since the end of the last ice age are 4 to 5 degree Celsius. The change occurred over a period of about 7,000 years, starting 18,000 years ago. If the rise in CO<sub>2</sub> continues unchecked, warming of the same magnitude as the increase out of the ice age can be expected by the end of the century or soon after.

The present level of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> concentration is almost certainly unprecedented in the past million years, during which time modern humans evolved and societies developed. The atmospheric

CO<sub>2</sub> concentration was however higher in Earth's more distant past (many millions of years ago), at which time paleoclimatic and geological data indicate that temperatures and sea levels were also higher than they are today. Adding more CO<sub>2</sub> to the atmosphere will cause surface temperatures to continue to increase. As the atmospheric concentrations of CO<sub>2</sub> increase, the addition of extra CO<sub>2</sub> becomes progressively less effective at trapping Earth's energy, but surface temperature will still rise.

Long term measurements of tide gauges and recent satellite data show that global sea level is rising, with best estimates of the global-average rise over the last two decades centered on 3.2 mm per year. The overall observed rise since 1901 is about 20 cm.

Direct observations of ocean chemistry have shown that the chemical balance of seawater has shifted to a more acidic state. Increased CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere is forming carbonic acid, altering the pH value of the ocean surface causing acidification of oceans. Oceans alkaline having 8.4 pH during pre-industrial era before 1870, for almost more than 10,000 years of Holocene epoch, but in 2023, due to acidification of sea aquatic food web is disturbed. Oceans have become 24% more acidic than earlier. As a result of this, the likelihood of almost 1 billion people of the world who depend on fishing, tourism and coastal ecosystem services has become worst affected. Some marine organisms have shells composed of calcium carbonate which dissolves more readily in acid.

There are two numbers you need to know about climate change. The first is 52 billion and the other is zero. 52 billion is how many tons of greenhouse gasses the world typically add to the atmosphere every year. Zero is what we need to aim for. To stop the warming and avoid the worst effects of climate change and these effects will be very bad, humans need to stop adding greenhouse gasses to the atmosphere.

The stark reality is that the world can

emit only 18.2 GT CO<sub>2</sub> in 2030 if the world wants to remain under the 1.5 degree Celsius. Surprisingly the world will emit 37.7 GT CO<sub>2</sub> in 2030 even if all Nations meet their NDC targets.

India has set a target of achieving net zero emissions by 2070. To achieve the target the country has planned several initiatives and measures. India has set a target achieving 450 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030. This includes 280 GW of solar power, 140 GW wind power and 10 GW of biomass power. The country has also launched several initiatives to promote green energy. The government has set a target of reducing the energy intensity of the economy by 30 to 35% by 2030. India has launched many initiatives of Carbon Capture, Utilization and Storage (CCUS) .

The reason who wants to get zero is simple GHGs trap heat, causing the average surface temperature of the earth to go up. The more gasses there are, the more the temperature rises. And once greenhouse gasses are in the atmosphere, they stay there for a long time; something like one 5th of the carbon dioxide today will still be there in 10,000 years. In other words, getting to zero does not actually be zero, it means near net zero.

With the extra heat and carbon dioxide, plants and animals are being affected. According to IPCC, a rise of 2 degree Celsius would cut the Geographic range of t vertebrates by 8%, plants by 16% and insects by 18%.

Even though an increase of a few degrees in global average temperature does not sound like much, global average temperature during the last ice age was only about 4 to 5 degree Celsius colder than now. Global warming of just a few degrees will be associated with widespread changes in regional and local temperature and precipitation as well as with increases in some types of extreme weather events. This and other changes such as sea level rise and storm surge, will have serious

impacts on human societies and the natural world.

Global warming is a long-term trend, but that does not mean that every year will be warmer than the previous one. Day to day and year to year changes in weather patterns will continue to produce some usually cold days and nights, and winters and summers, even as the climate warms.

Climate change is bringing about shifts in the natural life cycle of plants, animals, insects and microorganisms in the tropical forests of India that need to be observed. Rise in average temperature of earth is driving trees and plants to produce fruits, flowers either earlier or later in this season. This is changing the lifestyle of wild animals for supply of food, fodder, habitat and shelter. Bees, butterflies and sunbirds that feed on nectar, fruits and seeds are at risk including macaques, squirrels and parakeets that depend on it.

Blooming seasons of trees have shifted slightly in advance. General flowering is considered to be one of the most spectacular and mysterious events that occur in tropical rainforests. Dipterocarpus is seen to be flowering more frequently. Frequent droughts and El Nino are affecting flowering.

Hot summer makes the tropical trees fall victim to serious attacks by large numbers of insects. Wasp and Beetles start eating bark and begin to dwell in stem cavities of a number of tree species. This is a breakdown of natural settings on account of excess heat.

Climate change is now one of the greatest driver of hunger with 45 million people worldwide, this includes almost 21 million children, about one billion children across the globe now living in countries at extremely high risk of climate change and environmental hazards.

It is estimated that 3.2 billion people affected by land degradation, 160 million children and living in areas of high-level draught.

Between 2010 and 2021, 225.3 million people in Asia and the Pacific OD were

displaced by weather related hazards. Women are particularly affected by this issue often lacking access to little property across Asian the Pacific.

Every country is doing many things to prevent climate change with specific goals and taking small tiny steps to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gasses.

The World Climate Act calls for 49% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, compared to 1990 labels and 95% reduction by 2050. Targeted carbon levy starting at 30 Euro per ton in 2021 and rising to 150 Euro per ton in 2030 is being introduced.

The climate change and global warming are the two sides of the same coin. Since 1972, the International Body, the United Nations paid serious thoughts on the environmental crisis. With the initiative of UN, the first Convention on "The United Nations Conference on the Human Environment" was held in Stockholm, Sweden in June 1972. The then Prime Minister of India chaired a session and spoke about Indian traditions in protection of environment and conservation of nature and natural resources. After 20 years in June, 1992 the Second Conference, "The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development" famous as the "Earth Summit" was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In this Convention, a treaty, "The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)", was signed by 193 countries. Later under the aegis of the UN the major international meet to discuss the global environmental crisis were held in the Conference of Parties viz., CoP 21 (Paris Agreement), Cop 26, CoP 27 and Cop 28. In 1977 the Kyoto Protocol relating to limit of temperature increase was signed. The other International Fora are IPCC, G7 & G20, MEF - Forum on Energy & Climate, OECD - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Hon'ble PM Sri Narendra Modi at the CoP 28 was the President of the session on "Transforming Climate Finance" and he

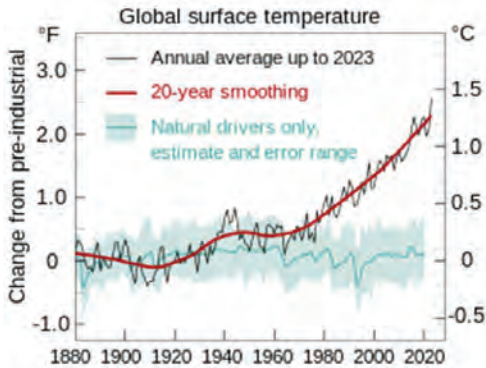


strongly advocated for creation of Climate Investment Fund.

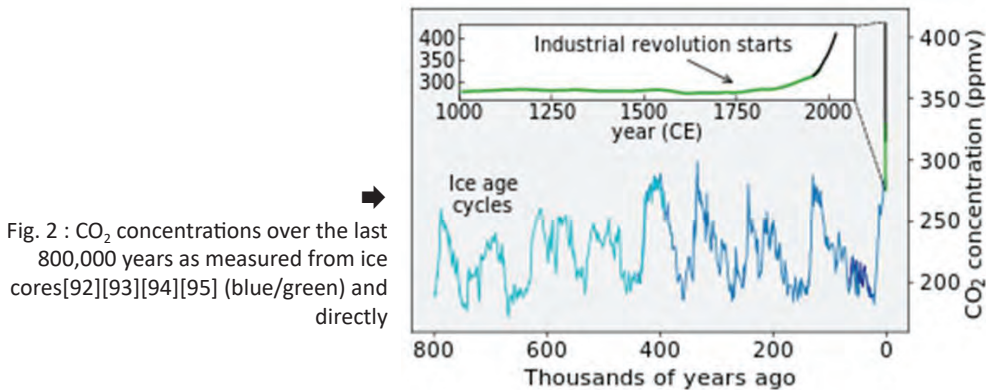
IPCC warns, saying, "There is no time for delay and no room for excuses. Limiting global warming to 1.5 degree Celsius would require rapid and far-reaching transitions in energy, land, urban transport and

building infrastructure including industrial establishments".

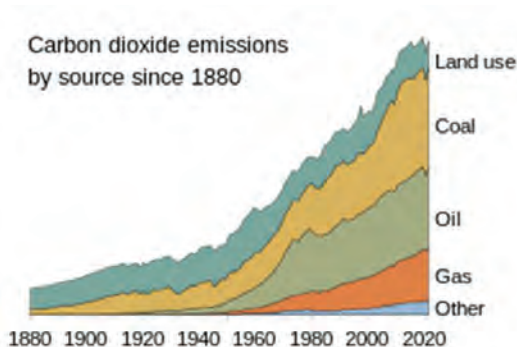
Our goal is to create a driving environment for children in the future generations to come by restoring the natural environment and working for climate justice.



◀ Fig. 1 : Earth’s average surface air temperature has increased almost 1.5°C (about 2.5°F) since the Industrial Revolution. Natural forces cause some variability, but the 20-year average shows the progressive influence of human activity.



➔ Fig. 2 : CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations over the last 800,000 years as measured from ice cores[92][93][94][95] (blue/green) and directly



◀ Fig. 3 : Carbon dioxide emissions by source since 1880



# World Health Day



## This Year's (2024) Theme of the World Health Day (7 April): My Health, My Right

**Dr. Sankar Kumar Nath**

Medical Science Secretary, The Asiatic Society

Every year 7 April has been denoted as the World Health Day by the World Health Organization (WHO). No doubt, this day is a special day to celebrate and promote the physical, mental, emotional and of course social well-being of all the people at large throughout the world. Since 1950, WHO earmarked every year a theme of the World Health Day. This year (2024) the theme is 'My Health, My Right'.

First of all, let us know the establishment of WHO. In the year 1945, December, officials of China and Brazil suggested to form such an organization which would cover and deal with all the aspects on health of the people of the world and would be an independent organization. The next year, in July, 1946, the constitution of the WHO was framed and officially it started functioning on 7th April, 1948. At least 61 countries in the world became the members of WHO during that period. For that matter, WHO started celebrating the first World Health Day in 1949, 22nd July, which later on was changed to 7th April, the foundation date of WHO.

The aim of the World Health Day celebration is manifold, principally to protect the people globally from the disease, wars, accidents, disasters and so on to ensure their good health. The following factors in the perspective of the World Health Day are considered for the matter: 1) To build the state-of-art of the public health system throughout the world and to minimize the inequality gap amongst the people irrespective of their cast, creed, religion and the country they live, 2)

No poverty, 3) Zero hunger, 4) Everybody should get healthy nutritious foods and for that matter to stop consumption of processed, contaminated and adulterated foods, 5) To encourage for physical activity like regular walking, jogging, swimming, cycling, skipping, dancing etc., 6) Quality of education for all, 7) Gender equality to be established, 8) To stop all types of probabilities of war crisis, terrorism and conflicts, for that matter all the health professionals must raise their voices against these anti-people measures, because these are really the threats to the health of the human being as a whole, 9) Climate action, like need to enjoy fresh air in the context of right to have sufficient oxygen consumption from the air, for which the environmental pollution must be controlled, 10) Safe drinking water, 11) To control pandemics and to epidemics, 12) Peace and justice for everyone, 13) Necessary sanitation and housing to be assured, and other healthcare measures to be adopted.

In this context, throughout the world at least 140 countries now have recognized health as a human right, more countries should come forward in the purview of 'My Health, My Right', for the sake of the humanity.

We are to accept the above challenges to honour and establish the theme of the World Health Day, 2024, i.e., 'My Health, My Right', which, no doubt, recognizes that "Health is not only the absence of diseases, but also to maintain the physical, mental and social well-being." This must be the demand of the World Health Day every year, to protect civilization in general and human race in particular.

## A Tribute to Radhakanta Deb

**Suswagata Bandhyapadhyay**

Member, The Asiatic Society

A man of orthodox-modern Bengali intelligentsia used the title 'Raja' before his name Radhakanta Deb (10th March 1784-19th April 1867). On a long journey he proved himself as a conservative Hindu. Radhakanta had cultural nationalism with ardent feelings for heritage of India. Critical narrative recognised Raja as a colonial patronised aristocrat.

Radhakanta wanted to conserve social and religious status quo of orthodox tradition and opposed social reforms of nineteenth century Bengal. Although Deb was a loyal supporter of British colonial Government, he never liked governmental interference in the social and religious practice of Hindu traditional life. He strongly criticised anti-*sati* legislation. Bishop H. Hebar wrote, "The allusion was obviously to the policy of non-interference which the Government had been following with regard to the Hindu Custom. Since local officers were required to be present at every case of sati in order to see that the widow was not forced to burn herself, it was erroneously believed as many that sati was practiced under Government protection". (Narrative

of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India, vol-1,pg:93)

The abolishing of *sati* law was passed in December 1828, Deb filed a petition to the Governor General Lord Bentinck as a representative of orthodox Hindu

Community. Even he wrote for the continuity of *sati* practice. Radhakanta's article 'Sati and Hindu Law' was published in 1860. This article was a counter narrative of W.W. Wilson's 'On the Supposed Vedantic Authority for the Burning of Hindu Widow and on the Funeral Ceremonies of the Hindu', published in the Journal of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, vol-XVI, 1860. Representative of



Dharma Sabha, Deb filed a petition in the Privy Council of London to withdraw anti-*sati* legislation.

To resist anti-*sati* law Deb established a platform of orthodox Hindu community named Dharma Sabha. The main objective of this organisation was to combat Rammohun Roy's social reforms. Sabha also defended traditional religious custom of

*Sanatan Dharma*. At the meeting of Dharma Sabha held on February 1830, members made a resolution to institute social boycott against the liberal supporters of anti-*sati* law and proclaimed crusade of holy alliance against heretic. (Anglo Indian social, moral and political, a collection of papers from the Asiatic Journal, London 1838) Representative of Dharma Sabha, he appealed in the Privy Council to reject anti-*sati* law. After two years hearing Privy Council rejected Dharma Sabha's plea in 1832.

Radhakanta was against widow remarriage law initiated by Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. He submitted counter petition with 36,764 signature to the Bengal Legislative Council on 17 March 1856 not to give consent for widow remarriage bill. Even he invited Vidyasagar for debate on widow remarriage according to Hindu religious scriptures. Radhakanta and his Pandit Dal was defeated.

Radhakanta Deb was a son of the richest Calcuttan in the nineteenth century. His father Gopikamohan Deb was a pioneer of astronomical study of Bengal in the eighteenth century. Like his father he was a erudite scholar of Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic language and literature. Deb had enough control in vernacular Hindi-Urdu-Bengali. He included numerous astronomical words of Sanskrit origins in his eight volumes compilation of Sanskrit literary encyclopaedia or lexicon *Sabdakalpadruma*. In this lexicon he quoted slokas or hymns from several Hindu texts. Radhakanta claimed that the Greek division of 24 hours through the specification of time in the sexagesimal scale had been originated from Puranic verse. Certainly *Agni Purana's* hymns refer that the day and night are divided into 24 hours. He translated astronomy and other science text from English to Bengali associated with School Book Society in 1820's.

An orthodox follower of old Hindu religion and social customs, Deb was

surprisingly a staunch supporter of women's education even before Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. He advocated Christian missionaries initiative for the foundation of female schools in Kolkata sponsored by Baptist church. Encouraging for women's education he gathered several documents from ancient Sanskrit Literature, he wrote 'Stri-Siksha Vidyaka' guided by Gourmohan Vidyalkar accompanied by David Hare and School Book Society in July 1817. Calcutta School Society in September 1818 was established for the opening of primary school education— Bengali, Urdu and English textbooks were published separately.

Module syllabus for compulsory primary education included English Literature and Arithmetic. Becoming a Secretary of Calcutta School Society in 1824 he introduced quarterly an annual examination system at his residence of Sovabazar garden house before the presence of Bengali and English examiners. Successful students had been awarded.

Radhakanta Deb was a founder of Hindu College. He played active role for promotion of educational excellence to be a Director of this deemed institution. The Asiatic Society conferred him the post of Honourable Member in 1855.

Orthodox Radhakanta turns his mind into progressive appearance for the advancement of medical education and vaccination of smallpox in the nineteenth century Bengal. His supportive argument was expressed by two letters, published in the journal—*Transaction of the Medical and Physical Society of Calcutta* (1831, pg : 416-18). He wrote, inoculation treatment of smallpox just not merely slight touches but as "thrusting or puncturing arms with a pointed iron instrument and infusing the push". In his second letter he shared textual narrative about elimination therapies, drugs and medicine (Account of the tikadars).

Contemporary history of Bengal yet outcasted him for his social conservatism.

After his death The Asiatic Society had taken condolence resolution at the monthly meeting of 1st May 1867, Wednesday at 9.00 p.m. President Dr. J. Fyrrer read out the resolution, "on the 19th of last month, Raja Radhakanta Deva Bahadur a night of star of the star of India, an oriental scholar of the highest attainments and a leader of all that was enlightened and distinguished in native Society in Bengal died at the advanced age

of 85 years, at the ancient city of Brindabana where (as I am informed) he had retired, to pass some portion of the close of his long and useful life in repose and meditation. The blossom this distinguished man, who was so highly revered throughout Bengal is lamented not only by his relatives and countrymen generally, but by the society and by many European friends". This resolution was seconded by Babu Rajendralala Mitra.

## 9th K.K. Handiqui Memorial Lecture

The Asiatic Society organised the 9th K.K. Handiqui Memorial Lecture on 29th February 2024 at 03:00 p.m. at the Humayun Kabir Hall of the Society. Professor N. K. Sundareswaran, Department of Sanskrit, University of Calicut delivered his lecture on the topic 'What Mīmāṃsā has Got to Do in Mathematics?: Readings into the Āryabhaṭīyabhāṣya'. The inauguration of the programme began with the offering of a flower bouquet to Professor N. K. Sundareswaran by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society. Welcome Address was delivered by Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Society. Professor Nabanarayan Bandyopadhyay, Retired Professor and Director, School of Vedic Studies, Rabindra Bharati University gave an introductory brief about the theme of the programme and introduced Professor Sundareswaran to the audience. Professor Sundareswaran delivered an elucidating lecture-cum-presentation delving the audience into an enlightening and unexplored domain of Mīmāṃsā. Presidential Address was delivered by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society. The programme concluded with the Vote of Thanks given by Dr. Sujit Kumar Das, Treasurer of the Society.



L to R : Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, Professor N. K. Sundareswaran and Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick

## Pablo Neruda: A Literary Titan

**Arun Kumar Chakraborty**

Principal, Rekha Chitram

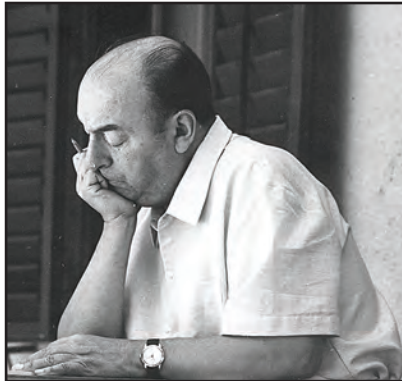
Pablo Neruda, born Neftalí Ricardo Reyes Basoalto on July 12, 1904, in Parral, Chile, is a name that resonates with the world as one of the most influential and celebrated poets of the 20th century. His remarkable life and prolific body of work have left an indelible mark in the world of literature, politics, and the human spirit. He is often referred to as the 'People's Poet.'

Neruda's early life was marked by poverty and adversity, which would go on to influence his poetry. His father worked as a railway employee, and his mother died shortly after his birth. Young Neftalí grew up in the small town of Temuco, Chile, and displayed an early penchant for literature and writing. At the age of thirteen, he began publishing his first poems under the pseudonym Pablo Neruda, a name he would later legally adopt.

Neruda's formative years were marked by a deep connection to the natural world. The landscapes of southern Chile, with their vast forests and lakes, made a profound impression on him and are a recurring theme in his poetry. His education also played a significant role in shaping his literary sensibilities. He attended the prestigious Liceo de Hombres in Temuco and, later, the

University of Chile, where he was exposed to a rich literary tradition.

Neruda's early work, influenced by modernist and romantic styles, was well received. He began to establish himself as a poet of promise, but it was his move to Santiago and his association with a group of avant-garde poets known as the 'Generation of 1927' that truly propelled his career. His 1924 collection *Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair* brought him fame and acclaim at a young age. These poems, filled with sensuality and emotional depth, remain some of his most celebrated works.



Neruda's early poetry explored themes of love, desire, and the human experience. His verses were marked by a passionate and vivid language, which set him apart from his contemporaries. However, as his life and worldview evolved, so did his poetry.

Neruda's transformation into a political poet was catalysed by his diplomatic career, which took him to various countries in Asia, Europe, and Latin America. His experience as a diplomat exposed him to the harsh realities of the world, from the Spanish Civil War to the suffering of the poor in various nations. It was during this time that he began to

engage deeply with politics, and his poetry underwent a profound change.

In the 1930s, he spent time in Spain, where he witnessed the horrors of the Spanish Civil War. His collection *Spain in Our Hearts* (1938) stands as a testament to the emotional impact of this experience. He wrote passionately in support of the Spanish Republic and against the fascism of Francisco Franco, reflecting a broader leftist political awakening.

Neruda's political journey continued with his growing commitment to communism. He joined the Communist Party of Chile in 1945 and was later elected as a Senator. This political engagement was a natural outgrowth of his belief in social justice and his disdain for oppression and inequality.

During this period, his poetry became more explicitly political. *Canto General* (1950), perhaps his magnum opus, is a sweeping epic that celebrates the history and culture of Latin America. It is a monumental work that incorporates historical and mythological elements while emphasising the struggles of the oppressed and the importance of social change. It was in the verses of *Canto General* that Neruda's role as the 'People's Poet' became cemented.

Neruda's political involvement led to periods of exile and persecution. In 1948, he was forced to go into hiding when his party was banned, and a warrant was issued for his arrest. He spent several years living abroad, including in Mexico and the Soviet Union, and his poetry during this time reflected his exile and the political turmoil in Chile.

He returned to Chile in 1952 after his political party was once again legalised. In 1970, Neruda was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature for his powerful and deeply human poetry. His works had already achieved international acclaim, and the Nobel Prize further elevated his status as a global literary icon.

Neruda's poetry has been translated into numerous languages, and his impact on the international literary scene is immeasurable. His ability to convey complex emotions and ideas with striking simplicity made his work accessible to a wide range of readers.

Pablo Neruda's legacy is multi-faceted and profound. He was not only a poet but a diplomat, politician, and a symbol of resistance and hope for many. His work, spanning over five decades, evolved from sensual and romantic themes to political and historical subjects, reflecting the tumultuous times he lived in.

Neruda's poetry was characterised by its accessibility and emotional resonance. He had the rare gift of expressing complex ideas in a way that spoke directly to the hearts of his readers. His verses could be sensual and tender, or they could be searing and politically charged, but they were always imbued with a deep humanity.

He remains a revered figure in Latin American Literature, with his influence extending beyond the realm of poetry. His commitment to social justice, his dedication to the communist cause, and his relentless advocacy for the oppressed have made him a symbol of hope and resilience. His poetry continues to inspire activists, poets, and all those who seek a better world.

Pablo Neruda's life and work are a testament to the power of poetry which captures the human experience in all its facets. From the intimate to the political, from the sensual to the revolutionary, Neruda's verses resonate with a timeless quality that continues to touch the hearts of readers around the world. He was a literary giant, a political force, and a champion of the people, leaving behind a lasting legacy that will forever shape the world of literature and inspire those who dare to dream of a more just and compassionate world.

## Nehru vs Bose? Search for a Fresh Evaluation of India's Freedom Struggle

**Arun Bandopadhyay**

Historical and Archaeological Secretary, The Asiatic Society

When Collingwood, the redoubtable philosopher of history, stated that all history is contemporary, he meant it in a very special sense. It is the subtle hand of the present in the interpretation of the events of the past. However, in no way it is a reflection of the pronounced political views of the present in our understanding of the past. History of India's freedom struggle has become such a theme where rival contentions of political legacy have set distinct claims for our understanding of history. Nowhere are these claims so apparent as in our reevaluation of Jawaharlal Nehru and Subhas Chandra Bose, the two most distinguished leaders of freedom struggle, and their legacies in modern India. The intellectual atmosphere is so much vitiated in 2022 that we are not going to discuss 'Nehru and Bose' but 'Nehru vs Bose' in the journey of India's freedom struggle.

There is no denying the fact that contrasting the two great political leaders of modern India is not all that recent, and that it was more or less in vogue, particularly in Bengal, ever since the attainment of our Independence. Since Nehru and Bose were near contemporaries (the former was eight years senior), they worked together within the rubric of the Indian National Congress (INC) for about two decades, and even after their pronounced political differences in the early 1940s, their mutual respect did not all



that disappear, the fact remains that one became the first Prime Minister of India, and the other sacrificed his life with the Indian National Army (INA) for the liberation of the country. For more than a decade and a half after 1947, Nehru and his Congress Party ruled the country whereas Bose, now Netaji for all, only had an afterlife in the political and social scenario of India. The contrast was, if not strictly historical, very much apparent in more than one sense.

However, there were similarities and differences in the story of growing up of the Panditji and Netaji of the future. Both Nehru and Bose were born in upper middle class Hindu families headed by renowned lawyers, respectively Motilal and Janakinath by name, though Motilal's family was far more affluent in Allahabad than Janakinath's in Cuttack. The early education of Nehru till the age of 15 was given at home by English teachers, followed by his schooling at Harrow, University education at Cambridge, and



Bar-at-Law from London. By all standards, Jawahar was a student just above the average, and though he studied Science, he had an intensely literary bent of mind. When Nehru came back to India, he was far more westernised. By contrast, Subhas's education began at the Protestant European School in Cuttock at the age of five, then he was admitted to Ravenshaw Collegiate School at the age of twelve. The Headmaster of the latter school was Beni Madhav Das under whose influence Subhas became familiar with the writings of Bankimchandra and Vivekananda, the two cult figures of Bengal, and was also influenced by the religious ideas of Ramakrishna Paramahansa. Subhas had definitely a more spiritual bent of mind than Jawaharlal whose hobnobbing with Theosophical Society in his early life was even ridiculed by Motilal. At the age of seventeen, Subhas even left home with his friend Hemanta Kumar Sarkar in search of a religious guru in various places of India. Subhas was also a brilliant student (ranked second in Calcutta University's Matriculation Examination, got a First Class degree in CU's Honours Examination, a Tripos from Cambridge University in Mental and Moral Sciences and over and above all the attainment of rank fourth in ICS Examination which he refused by not joining the service). It seems that Subhas was more anti-imperialistic (cf. the notorious Oaten incident in Presidency College), nationalistic and traditionalist in his early life than before he came in touch with Mahatma Gandhi.

Both Jawahar and Subhas came into contact with Gandhi, the former in 1916 and the latter in 1921, with different kind of responses. Gandhi advised Jawahar to go to the rural areas, and be in touch with the peasants, and asked Subhas to work with C. R. Das, the most respected political leader of Bengal. By this time, however, Subhas had already fixed his political line as he wrote to his elder brother Sarat (1920): "But for a man of my temperament who has been feeding

on ideas that might be called eccentric – *the line of least resistance is not the best line to follow*....The uncertainties of life are not appalling to one who has not, at heart, worldly ambitions." (italics mine)

It was in the late 1920s that both Nehru and Bose came together as the face of Young Guard against the Old Guard in the INC. They were increasingly becoming socialist in their approach and activities. It was because of their joint effort that Nehru could initiate the Purna Swaraj resolution in Lahore Session (1929), the official declaration of which was made on 26 January 1930. Rudrangshu Mukherjee calls this a personal friendship enmeshed in political ideologies, and then extends his argument about its breakdown in the late 1930s and early 1940s also on ideological grounds. As early as 1933, Bose was talking of a combination of socialist and fascist ideas for the regeneration of India, much to the dislike of Nehru. In Subhas's own words (March 1933): "Where I have taken my stand today, I am alone, friendless." But even when Bose became the President of the INC at Haripura in 1938, his coordination, particularly on national planning, with Nehru did not break up, and when he had to resign even after his re-election at Tripuri Congress next year, much against the wish of Gandhi, Nehru wrote several letters to the Mahatma not to antagonise Subhas. He even responded to Subhas's call by meeting him for a night in early February 1939, though we do not know what was discussed between them.

The rest of the story is well known. Subhas resigned from the Congress, formed the Forward Bloc, left India to join hands with the Axis Powers, finally came to south-east Asia, formed the INA, and launched his military offensive against British rule with Japanese collaboration to liberate India. In April 1942, it seemed that Nehru's rift with Bose was complete when he wrote: "Hitler and Japan must go to hell. I shall fight them to the end and this is my policy.

I shall fight Mr. Subhas Bose and his party along with Japan if he comes to India. Mr Bose acted wrongly though in good faith." But still the rift was more apparent than real. The Quit India Movement in India started in August 1942, and Bose had an idea that the INA would join hands with the popular movement in India once it entered the country, hence he called its divisions with such names as Gandhi Brigade, Nehru Brigade and Azad Brigade. Nehru also changed his views after Netaji's death or disappearance in August 1945, during the INA trial that was taking place in India after its surrender in 1946. He was in favour of the release of the INA prisoners and said, "Subhas Bose and I were co-workers in the struggle for freedom for twenty-five years... Our relations with each other were marked by great affection. I used to treat him as my younger brother. It is an open secret that at times there were differences between us on political questions. But I never for a moment doubted that he was a brave soldier in the struggle for freedom."

Historians have particularly drawn our attention on one aspect of the friendship and rift in the relations between Nehru and Bose: Role of Gandhiji. We are familiar with Bose's differences with Gandhi but Nehru was more critical of Gandhi at different occasions than Bose. Yet their relations could continue, and even flourished over the years. Rudrangshu Mukherjee explains this in terms of the semblance of a father-son relation developed between them. But the irony of the relations is that Bose was more akin to Gandhi from the spiritual point of view. Netaji was absolutely secular while dealing with different religious and caste groups within the INA; he was even gender friendly as evident from his formation of Rani Jhansi Brigade. But this did not forbid him to have a copy of Bhagavad Gita in his pocket even during the crucial hours of his struggle. In this view of life, he was closer to

Gandhi than Nehru, a fact largely ignored by analysts including Mukherjee.

There are two other aspects which have to be noted. One was the occurrence of the Second World War, without which many of the historical conflicts and ideological disputes engaging the protagonists – Gandhi, Nehru and Bose in this case – and some of the convergences, cannot be explained. What was going to finally happen in this War may be now known to us by hindsight, but it was not clear at all till the late years of the War to the contemporaries for various reasons. Hence there were so many positions, expectations and rifts in the relations.

The second event is a non-event: the after-life of Netaji in the real presence of Nehru as the Prime Minister of India after Independence. Here the classical Indian philosophical notion of *abhava* -- real absence of something – may be useful in determining the development of a real state of mind regarding things around us. Thus it is not the presence of Netaji, but his absence, in post-independent India that multiplied the dimensions of the rift between Nehru and Bose in very many ways in years to come. Nirad C. Chaudhuri, a few months junior to Bose with personal acquaintance of him, noted it long ago in an article in 1953, but the meaning of the absence is open-ended. In the latter sense, absence is both imagined and questioned. Its subtle explanation is always welcome in Collingwood-like analogy in History, where the present influences our understanding of the past in very many ways, but this should in no way lead to a 'minimisation' of history where the 'whole picture', the full story, would be virtually lost. History should, therefore, always open to the story and analogy of both 'Nehru vs Bose' and 'Nehru and Bose' in the trajectory of India's freedom struggle in the fateful years before Independence.

## A brief note on the history of the influence of India and Ayurveda on the Tibetan Medicine

**Bandana Mukherjee**

Life Member, The Asiatic Society

Through all the ages Tibet has held a paramount position amongst those regions of the world which have been popularly invested with a veil of mystery because they are inaccessible and unknown. The early history of Tibet, otherwise known as the land of snow [gañs yul/ གངས་ལུང] was shrouded with legends, myths and anecdotes also some facts as it is true in case of other countries of the world. But the fact cannot be ignored that till today Tibetans are indebted to the Indians for the expression of their history, culture, education and even the science of medicine.

Sroñ-btsan-sgam-Po/ སྲོང་བཙན་སྐུ་པོ་ [c.629-650 A.D.], the 33rd Tibetan king and the founder of the Tibetan empire in traditionally credited with the introduction of Buddhism, Buddhist art and culture. Prior to that Shamanism was practised by the earliest inhabitants of Tibet. It was known as 'Bon' religion and the followers of that tradition were named as *Bon-Pa*. He is also regarded as responsible for the creation of Tibetan alphabet. Thoñ-mi-Sambhota, chief minister of Sroñ-btsan-sgam-po, along with some other intelligent young

men were sent to India. China and other neighbouring countries of Tibet by the order of the king for the introduction of a script for the language spoken there and also for the translation of Buddhist scripture. Because till then Tibetans had no script for the expression of their culture. Thus those scholars came to India, learnt the then Indian script, studied at the Nalanda University in the various subjects both arts and science. After the completion of their study, Thoñ-mi-Sambhota returned to Tibet and invented Tibetan script as per their necessity for the classical Tibetan language spoken at that time. From India they took with them some Buddhist scriptures and started to translate them in Tibetan language. Those scriptures were later on compiled as Kanjur [Bka'-'gyur/ བཀའ་རྒྱུང་] and Tanjur [bstan 'gyur/ བསྟན་འགྱུར་]. Similar to Buddhist tradition, the medical tradition of Tibet was also influenced and imported from India in 7th century A.D. Medicine was one of the important subject which was included in the curriculum of the then Universities of Takkhasila, and Nalanda. Five major subjects were mainly taught during that period viz.

No.	English	Sanskrit	Tibetan
I.	Language	Śabda Vidyā	Sgra-rig
2.	Logic	Hetu Vidyā	Tshad-ma
3.	Crafts & Design	Śilpa-Śāstra	Bzo-rig
4.	Science of Medicine & Therapy	Bhaiṣajya Vidyā	gso-rig
5.	Spiritual Knowledge	Adhyātma Vidyā	bka. ma/Nam -da-rig-pa

From the Pali literature it reveals that the knowledge of science of medicine had primary importance in respect of monastic education, since the establishment of Buddhist Sangha.

Therefore, from the above discussion the fact reveals that, along with the Introduction of Buddhist religion and culture, Tibet also received the art of medical knowledge and medicinal texts from India. Although the Chinese wife of Sroñ-btsan-sgam-Po brought with her a medical text entitled *sman-dpyad-chen-mo* from China which was the first medical text of Tibet. This text was later on translated by Ha-shan Mahādeva and Dharmakoṣa.<sup>1</sup>

Tibetans medicinal system is primarily based on the traditional medical system of India—'Āyurveda'—a holistic system aimed at managing life in such a way as to prevent disease and prolonging it. It is unique for its blend of spiritual, "magical" and rational healing practices. In this context, it seems necessary to mention here that, like the other countries of the world, in the early period the inhabitants of Tibet also cured their physical suffering by the utterances of magical spells, different tantric rites and also by using varieties of herbal drugs. The publication of Bon-medical texts [in 1972] composed by *khyuñ-sprul-'jigs-med-Nam-kha 'i-rdo-Rje* [བྱུང་སྤྲུལ་འཇིགས་མེད་ནམ་ཁ་འི་རོ་རྗེ] proves the fact. Similarly in the Pali literature too we find a good number of Suttas like *Āṭanaṭṭiya Sūta* of the *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Ratana Sūta*, *Mahāmaṅgala Sūta* etc. were recited for the protection of people from the epidemics, snake-bites etc.

Tibetan chronicles recorded that Sroñ-btsan-sgam-Po invited doctors from India, China and Persia for the translation of medical texts of their own. After translation they jointly prepared a medical text entitled *Mi 'jigs-pa'i-Mtson cha* consisting of seven

chapters and presented to the king. In the like manner, the next Tibetan king Khri-lde-gtsug-btan. [705-755 A.D]<sup>2</sup> also instructed his subjects for the composition of the medical text. Bran-ti [བློ་ཉི] was his court physician. Many medical texts were composed later on by the disciples of Bran ti. In this manner about seventeen (17) Sanskrit medical texts were translated and they cover six huge tomes of medicine. These were included in Tanjur.

The earliest Indian medical text rendered into Tibetan was possibly *Gzu-zhi/Rgyud-bzhi* or *Four Tantras* by Candranandana (8th cent. A.D). According to Tibetan chronicle Padmasambhava's disciple Vairocana came to India and learned Ayurveda and had taken medical training from twenty-five scholar physicians. From Chandranandana he learned *Amṛtaḥṛdaya-aṣṭāṅga-guhyopadeśa tantra* and translated it into Tibetan which was popularly known as *Rgyud-bzhi(gyu bzhi)*<sup>3</sup>. As per Tibetan traditional system, Vairocana presented this translated work to the king in presence of his teacher Padmasambhava and renowned Tibetan Doctor Gyu-thog yon-tan Mgon-Po.

Tibetans ascribed the authorship of this original text to Medicine Buddha (*Bhaiṣajya Buddha*) himself, which was brought to Tibet from India in the 8th cent. A.D. The entire Tibetan text has not yet been translated into English. Parts of the second and fourth Tantras were translated into English by Rechung Rin po Che in his book *Tibetan Medicine*.<sup>4</sup> Apart from this, the only other work in English on the *gyu-zhi* was done by pioneering Hungarian scholar Alexander-Csoma de körös, which was published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* in 1835.<sup>5</sup>

The Regent of the fifth Dalai Lama Sangye-gyatso also wrote an extensive commentary on this text in the 17th century A.D which was more impressive than the

previous work in its comprehensiveness and clarity of understanding.

Another most renowned translator of indic texts on medicine was Rin-chen-bzang-Po [958-1055 A.D]. He came to India and studied Buddhist scriptures and medicine. Rin-chen-bzang-Po in collaboration with Kashmiri physician Jalandhara translated *Aṣṭāṅgaḥṛdaya saṃhita* of Vāgbhaṭa, who was probably Buddhist and its commentary *Padārtha Candrikā nāma aṣṭāṅgaḥṛdaya Vṛtti* by Candranandana. This text of Rin-chen-bzang-Po was also included in Tanjur.<sup>6</sup> Moreover Rin-Chen-bzang-Po was also responsible for the Tibetan translation of an Encyclopaedia of Veterinary Science: The Principles of Horse medicine.

The ancient alchemical tradition of India prospered simultaneously with Tantra as well as with medicine in Tibet. During 13th century *Ratnaśrī* [1228-1308 A.D] translated Sanskrit texts on alchemy into Tibetan with the help of Tibetan scholars. The original Sanskrit texts of these alchemical texts were lost, and their Tibetan versions are "unique works on tonic elixirs of broad spectrum used to restore the organism to health."<sup>7</sup>

It has already been mentioned that Buddhism influenced enormously both Indian Ayurveda and Tibetan medicine. Nagarjuna, propounder of Mādhyamika Doctrine also called an incarnation of Mañjuśrī, was a master of traditional and alchemical medicine (Rasāyana). He wrote "Yoga-śataka" (100 prescriptions) which was translated in Tibetan *SByor-ba-brgya-pa, Jīva Sūtra* and many other medicinal texts including *The Precious Garlands (Ratnāvalī)*<sup>8</sup>. Dharmapāla [1441-1528 A.D], the great translator of Zhalu monastery of Tibet translated Nagarjuna's famous compendium ground remedies *Treasury of Roots* in Tibetan. It is a precious work on psychosomatic treatment.

The fifth Dalai Lama Lobsang gyatso [1617-1682 A.D] renewed the tradition of inviting Indian scholars to Tibet and he established a medical school of *Dga-ldan-pho-bran* in Depung ["Bras-spun] monastery, which is still continuing.

Even in the 11th century Atish Dipankara, on his way to Tibet from Bengal, took with him his important medical work the *Heart of Life*.

Therefore, the transfer of medical science along with Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna (Tantric Buddhism) from India to Tibet was a continuous tradition. It started in the 7th cent. A.D. and continued upto 17th century. These translations were done jointly by the Indian scholars with the Tibetan *lotsaba*. Moreover, as during the time of Buddha, till today, the four-fold formula of *Āryasacca i.e. Dukkha, Dukkha samudaya, Dukkha nirodha* and *dukkha Nirodhagāmani paṭipadā* of Buddhism, was adopted in the four medical principle of Tibet namely disease, diagnosis, remedy and cure.

So the influence of Indian Buddhism and Āyurveda to the development of medical system and medicine in Tibet cannot be ignored.

### End notes

1. Vaidya Bhagwan Dash- *Tibetan Medicine*. p. 1.
2. *The Blue Annals*. p. XIX.
3. Like the most Tibetan xylograph, the "Gyuzhi" consisted of long-narrow, unbounded folios, which were printed from hand carved blocks and illustrations of Shakyamuni Buddha and the Medicine Buddha on its opening page.
4. Terry Clifford, *Tibetan Buddhist Medicine and Psychiatry: The Diamond Healing* [Delhi, MLBD 1994]. pp. 10-11.
5. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1835 "Alexander Csoma-de-Körös : Analysis of a Tibetan Medical work". pp. 1-20.
6. *Journal of the Dept. of Pali*. University of Calcutta, 2000, Bandana Mukherjee, "Lotsaba

Rin-chen-bzañ-Po and the Indian Sutra Texts." pp. 71-85.

7. Terry Clifford, *op cit.*, pp. xvi-xvii.
8. Tibetan name-rin-chen-phren-pa. His works on alchemy are a) Rasaratnākara, b) Kakṣhapata tantra c) Ārogya Cintāmaṇi.

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Roerich, George N. *The Blue Annals*, part II. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited, 1949.

*Journal of the Asiatic Society Bengal*, 1835.

*Journal of the Dept. of Pali*. University of Calcutta, 2000.

## Celebration of the International Women's Day

The Asiatic Society celebrated the International Women's Day on 8th March, 2024 at the Vidyasagar Hall of the Society. The whole programme was arranged by the Academic Section of the Society.

The programme was started with the inaugural song by Shri Amit Ghosh. A debate was organized among the young staff-members, research scholars and members of the Society on the theme 'Arthanaitik Swadhinatai Nari Muktir Ekmatra Path'. Two teams were formed for participation in the debate for and against the theme. The team in support of theme comprised Ms. Tithi Paul, Ms. Soumili Pramanick, Dr. Debasree Chowdhury and Ms. Sohini Das and the team against the theme comprised Shri Ashim Krishna Roy, Shri Bhagyajoy Satpathi, Ms. Anuja Bose and Ms. Jyoti Sharma.

Dr. Shakti Mukherjee, Smt. Amita Bhattacharya, Dr. Keka Adhikari Banerjee and



Women's Day Celebration at The Asiatic Society

Ms. Sagarika Sur delivered their speech on the women personalities of the ancient and modern India which was held after the debate. The programme ended with a Shrutu Natak titled 'Sudhu Tomari Janya' which was written by Dr. Asok Kanti Sanyal, Biological Science Secretary of the Society. Smt. Mala Chatterjee and Shri Soumyakanti Maitra participated in the play.

Each of the women staff members was offered a chocolate and a rose on behalf of the Society. The programme ended with a Vote of Thanks by Dr. Asok Kanti Sanyal.

## The Contributions of 'Bai-ji's or Courtesans towards the Musical Scenario in 19th Century Calcutta

**Anindya Banerjee**

Music Critic

Kindly note that for the purpose of this talk, the words 'bai', 'tawaif' and 'courtesan' are used interchangeably.

Bari bari bai bai bherua nachay bai  
 Monogoto rag sur dhore  
 Mridu tan chhere gan bijan neche jan  
 Babuder lobekan kore.<sup>1</sup>

This might be roughly translated as -

The bai goes dancing from this door to that,  
 Her menfolk keep tagging along.  
 She tugs at the strings of gentlemen's hearts  
 With her wonderful dance and song.

So wrote the early 19th century Bengali poet Ishwar Gupta (1812-1859), when he wanted to catch the essence of the bai-culture that was practised in mid-19th century Calcutta. Arranging a dance or a 'nautch', as it was known to the English, was one of the ways in which the babus of Calcutta showed off their extravagance. It was nothing new, though. Nautches were quite common in the city since the 18th century. Any occasion would spark off a 'mujra' or a song-and-dance recital - any festival, religious or otherwise, a wedding or a birthday, anything. It had almost become a custom. The babus would compete amongst themselves trying to hire the most expensive, most skilled, or most beautiful dancers and showing them off.

The custom of keeping a personal troupe of courtesans probably spread from the court of the

Mughal emperors of Delhi. All nawabs and sultans, rajas and maharajas emulated the rules, manners and richesses of the Delhi darbar as much as they could. In this way, music and dance came to be regularly practised at the courts.

The Mughal emperors came and went, but the custom lived on, though it transformed itself to suit the changing times. Even during the rule of the East India Company, the rajas and nawabs continued with the old court traditions. The system gradually spread to the immigrant European society as well. Hiring bais and giving nautches quickly became a symbol of social status, especially among the Bengali babus of Calcutta.

It was not only festivals that called for a nautch. The bais would hold song-and-dance recitals at their own lodgings too. The music that the tawaifs performed (what we now call Hindustani Classical Music) was not at all what the Europeans came for, but the beauty and the excitement of the mildly erotic dance moves. The Europeans came when the babus invited them, but they also arranged for nautches of their own accord. As Pran Nevile mentions in his *Nautch Girls of India*:

\*Knlynn Maitra Memorial Lecture, 2015

The post-Plassey British nabobs who had made quick fortunes emulated the ostentatious lifestyles of native princes and omrahs. They even maintained their own troupes of nautch girls and musicians for the entertainment of their guests.<sup>2</sup>

In the Indian states of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, the word 'bai' denoted a noble-born lady. It was not unknown for them to learn music and dance. Later, if they took it up as their profession, others in the same profession came to be addressed by the same honorific. 'Bai' was also a form of respectful address, as was the word 'ji'.

Professionally, bais and tawaifs were classified differently according to the different tasks they performed. She who entertained by song alone was a 'bai'; she who danced and sang was a 'jan'. The one who served wine to the guests was a 'kaneez', and the one who sold her body was a 'khanagi'.

From the mid-19th century onwards the babu culture in Calcutta suffered a setback when many of their financial ventures began to capsize. At that unfortunate time, Wajid Ali Shah (1822-1887), the ousted nawab of Oudh, came to Calcutta. In 1856, he turned up with a thousand-strong retinue, and settled in Metiabruz in what is now the Garden Reach area of the city. He brought with him all his begums and harem-maids, and about three hundred beautiful tawaifs skilled in song and dance. It seemed that the city received a spectacular shower of stars for a while.

After the nawab's death in 1887, many of the begums and courtesans flitted away in search of better prospects. But until then, Metiabruz received its share of skilled courtesans as well as accomplished ustads or male singers from all over India. It made the cultural heritage of the city all the more rich. The practice of *khayals* and *thumris* i.e. classical and semi-classical music, truly and properly began in Calcutta with the

patronage of Nawab Wajid Ali Shah. He himself was a composer, and many of these tawaifs were also excellent poets who often sang their own compositions. Thus the Metiabruz court played a very significant role in the history of Calcutta music. The curse of Oudh became a boon to Calcutta.

Many well-known Bengalis became patrons of the bais. They were Radharaman Ray, Rupchand Ray, Gopimohan Deb, Raja Rammohun Ray, Raja Rajkrishna, Raja Navakrishna Deb et al. The eminent bais of those days were Nikkibai, Hingunbai, Begumjan, Supanbai, Husnabai, Ashrunbai, Heera Bulbul and others. Later, Calcutta also saw the likes of Badi Malkajan, the legendary Gauharjan, Agrewali Malkajan, Jankibai, and Chulbulleewali Malkajan, among others. There were also some very celebrated Bengali bais like Harimati, Jadumani, Manadasundari, Krisnabhamini, Ashcharjamayi, Pannamayi, Angurbala and Indubala.

In his book *Beshyasangeet Baijisangeet*, Devajit Bandyopadhyay writes:

The everyday lives of bais and prostitutes were like the marriage of life and death. Music was their ultimate relief, their only joy of freedom, their only expression of pain. Genteel society rendered them untouchable, but the gentlemen did utilise their crafts and skills. Whenever the stage or the film industry needed music, these bais were called in with utmost respect. Their popularity and their talent had been used to salvage many a fallen enterprise. Yet, the very word 'bai' made people look askance at them. The mind would cry, 'Shame!' and 'Filth!' But there was no shame in it. Entertaining through song and dance was a profession like any other, in need of a dedicated professionalism.<sup>3</sup>

The famed theatre actress Nati Binodini (1862-1941) says how she began her lessons in music:

When I was about eight or nine, a woman came to live in our house... She was a singer, and she was called Gangabai. Later she



became a famous singer at the Star Theatre. She and I became friends...My maternal grandmother arranged for me to begin my music lessons with Gangabai. There was no other way for me to learn.<sup>4</sup>

The system was still in place in the 20th century, as seen in the autobiography of Manadasundari, the 'educated courtesan':

I could sing rather well. My voice was sweet too...This is a very useful talent to have in the professional life of a bai. Ranimasi employed an ustad for my music lessons. He told me, "Your spiritual and patriotic songs are of no use here. It is the custom for bais sing ghazals, khayals and thumris. At the most, you can pick up a few keertans."<sup>5</sup>

The first report of a nautch in Calcutta is found in the *Asiatic Journal*, August 1816:

We had no opportunity on Monday evening of discovering in what particular house the attraction of any novelty may be found, but from a cursory view we fear that the chief singers Nickee and Ashroom, who are engaged by Neel Munnee Mullik and Raja Ram Chunder, are still without rivals in melody and grace. A woman named Zeenut, who belongs to Benares, performs at the house of Budr Nath Baboo, in Joro Sanko.<sup>6</sup>

In her travelogue, *Wanderings of A Pilgrim in Search of the Picturesque*, Fanny Parkes (1794-1875) writes:

1823, May - The other evening we went to a party given by Ram Mohun Roy, a rich Bengallee Baboo; the grounds, which are extensive, were well illuminated, and excellent fireworks displayed. In various rooms of the house nach girls were dancing and singing...The style of singing was curious; at times the tunes proceeded finely from their noses; some of the airs were very pretty; one of the women was Nickee, the Catalani of the East.<sup>7</sup>

Nickee was also a good singer; Charles D'Oyly (1781-1845) wrote about her:

But hark, at Nickee's voice - such, one ne'er hears

From squalling nautchnees, straining their shrill throats

In natural warbling, how she greets our ears,  
And brilliant jingling of delicious notes,  
Like nightingale's that through the forest floats.<sup>8</sup>

The Bengali newspaper *Samachar Darpan* reports on 29 February 1840:

Last Wednesday, Babu Dwarakanath Tagore arranged for a luncheon at his Belgachhia villa and invited many Europeans here...Last Sunday, the Babu invited his own people and entertained them in the same place. There was a nautch, where the most famous dancer in Calcutta and the best musicians were brought in. Apart from this, there were fireworks as well.<sup>9</sup>

It is said that Swami Vivekananda underwent a change of heart, thanks to one such bai and her music. According to Girishchandra Ghosh:

Vivekananda was in the court of the Raja of Khetri, when, after the classical music recital, the performance of a bai was announced. Vivekananda never liked to hear women singing, especially such women. But the Raja requested him to sit through just one song. The bai sang:

'Prabhu more avaguna chita na dharo  
Samadarshi hai nam tiharo  
Ab mohe par karo.'

Which roughly translates as:

Lord, do not judge me by my flaws  
All are equal in your eyes  
So grant me too your grace

Beautifully sung and filled with emotion, the song brought tears to Vivekananda's eyes. He thought, "Shame on my pretence of self-discipline. I am yet to shed my inhibitions about respectability." Thereafter he addressed the bai as 'mother', and

whenever he went to Khetri, he requested the king to ask his 'mother' to come and sing for him. The bai would sing for him with utmost reverence, and Vivekananda would be charmed.<sup>10</sup>

The bais entertained many men, so people considered them immoral. But this was their profession, their means of living and earning their daily bread. Reba Muhuri, well-known thumri singer and daughter of musicologist Amijanath Sanyal, writes in her book *Thumri O Baiji*:

Listening to the music of the bais, or holding a conversation with them was a highly immoral affair in the eyes of respectable folk. They could not easily accept this. Father faced a lot of disapproval as well. He used to collect songs from the bais. Any discussion about the bais would invariably disrespect their life and doings. Father would be saddened at that, and irritated as well. He himself had deep respect for such women. He often used to say, 'People think bais are prostitutes, because they entertain many men. But this is their profession - that is all that is there to it. They have to live, and so they sing for many people. The reasons behind what they do are financial. Is there any logic behind disrespecting them just because of their profession?' Father also used to say, "These great bais, who the people detest, are akin to demi-goddesses in disguise. It is our great misfortune that we are not capable of according them their proper respect."<sup>11</sup>

Some people as well as some institutions have disregarded the misgivings of the society and taken great measures to publish the songs sung by these bais and courtesans. On 16 July 1894, Trailokyanath Dutta published *Kalikatar Beshyasangeet* (Songs of the Courtesans of Calcutta) from Battala area of north Calcutta. The songs were collected by Haricharan Pramanik. Though the Bengal Library Catalogue says '[t]he songs collected

in this work are obscene and vulgar', there were three more such collections after this. In 1897, another collection called *Theatre Sangeet O Beshyasangeet* (Theatre Songs and Courtesans' Songs) collected by Akshaykumar De, was published by Jogendranath De. 32 years after this, another book called *Baiji Sangeet* (Songs by Courtesans) came out. This book had at its very beginning a song by Rabindranath Tagore set in the raag Kafi.

Bhalobese jadi sukh nahi, tobe keno  
Tobe kano michhe bhalobasa.  
Mon diye mon pete chahi.  
Ogo, kano  
Ogo, kano michhe e durasha.

(If there is no fulfilment in love, then why do I crave to win someone by losing myself in her/him. So, why, what for is this baseless hope.)

Many bais recorded Tagore songs but in their own melody and style

Singer Ramkumar Chattopadhyay has mentioned in his autobiography *Jalsaghar* (Tales from the Concert Hall):

A bai was a fallen woman. Nonetheless, their sense of honour and dignity was firmly in place. Not a step went askew. They preferred to earn their livelihood through their artistry rather by using their bodies. Many gentlemen who visited their kothas regularly never even glanced at their bodies, but remained enchanted by the bai's music.<sup>12</sup>

Reba Muhuri also writes in her *Thumri O Baiji* (Thumri and Bais):

People derided them, but the bais always treated everybody with courtesy. This was, of course, part of the special training that the bais received. They had to learn well how to behave with people, how to walk, how to sit, how to stand, when to smile, when to look grave. It is no big deal that they did not learn to read and write - I consider this training quite an education in itself. The 'courtesy of courtesans' was a well-known matter. The nawabs and rajas and maharajas used to have the bais over to their mansions to teach this courtesy to their children. There

are songs about their courtesy as well, say, the dadra 'Kankar mohe lag jayi hai lal' by Rasoolanbai.<sup>13</sup>

In his book *Smritir Atale* (Memories Sounded) Amiyanath Sanyal writes:

Malka started off the concert with some intensity, balancing the tanpura atop her knee. Two sarangi-players flanked her on either side and the tabla-player crouched behind her. Ah, the way they play the sarangi in Agra and Delhi, and the way the tabla is sounded in Lucknow! I have seen no match for these. Malka began with a dhamar. I interrupted his flow, 'Really? Malka sang with a tanpura and that too a dhamar?'

Tannulaji said, 'Haan ji haan, oh yes, sir. The finest bais of the olden days always learnt such heavyweight songs. In a concert, they would sing a dhruwad or a dhamar at first, something like preserving in name the honour of the king who is no longer, you know? Why, have you forgotten already? How Chaudhuranbai danced to a dhamar - you saw that!'

...Malka sang two dhamars one after another and set the mood of the concert. Her music was in place; then she started on a slow-paced vilambit set in Gara.

...Later she sang a couple of thumris; vibrant but lightweight...Malka had no choice; she was a tawaif after all. Anyway, she went back to her intense mood by singing a brace of insightful ghazals.

...Gauhar pulled a sharp trick in the very beginning - up she stood, and twirled to a tarana that she sang in Darbari. Her taans flew fast and furious like bursting fireworks.

...And then, Gauhar seized whatever was left of the reeling mind of the audience, with a thumri of Bhaiya Sahib's gharana, framing it with her unparalleled play of expressions.

...After the thumri, when she finished it off with a ghazal and a dadra, well, it was merely flogging a dead horse.<sup>14</sup>

In a private conversation, the musicologist Kumarprasad Mukhopadhyay mentioned three kinds of *talim* or training, that was provided by ustads, especially great ustads like Alladia Khan sahib. The first of

these was the talim given to sons, sons-in-law and other male relatives; secondly, the talim given to tawaif and bais; and thirdly, the talim given to non-relative male students (after 1940, female students as well). What the ustads sought to teach most was application of the note-perfect, and the full-throated projection of the notes. However, in the first kind of talim, the students were taught more dhruwads and dhamars, and the special bandishes that came as part and parcel of the singular knowledge of the gharana. The bais on the other hand would be taught only that which they needed to pursue their livelihood. It was thought that bais learnt music only out of need, and not out of any respect towards art.

Interestingly, the memoirs of Alauddin Khan sahib talk about his 'nara' ceremony in the following manner:

Gurudev tied the thread on the nawab's wrist first...then on mine. I took a pledge - I will not teach an undeserving person; nor keep the company of such people; nor beg using my learning; nor teach bais and tawaifs.<sup>15</sup>

As Kumarprasad said, 'The ustads taught as much as the bais could pay...Wahid Khan sahib had a student called Munnabai. Once Alladiya Khan sahib heard her sing the alap of Bilaskhani Todi for one and a half hours. He protested at once, "What have you done? Why teach a tawaif more than what is necessary? Why do you need to teach her how to sing alap for so long?"'

It is clear from such stories how male ustads who already had a fairly high social standing became obstacles in the way of the bais who wanted to learn Classical Music. The patriarchal setup of the *gharana* was afraid of having its particular means of livelihood usurped by the matriarchal setup of the Bai System.

Bais also picked up certain things from their sarangi-players. In the internal caste system of Hindustani Classical Music, sarangi-players are placed lowest. They

accompanied the male ustads, yet had to depend on the tawaifs' kotha for their daily bread and lodgings. But they helped the bais, say, reminding her if she forgot the second half of a composition. They bridged the gap between the ustads and the bais.

Many ustads like Faiyaz Khan sahib and Amiir Khan sahib valued the unparalleled expertise in Semi-classical Music that the bais had, and did not hesitate to learn from them. The bais often made the ustads welcome in their kothas. Sometimes the relationship became symbiotic.

Shankarlal Bhattacharya writes in his book *Shes Baiji* (The Last Courtesan):

I asked Shantibai of Bowbazar, 'Was it here that the Bollywood film hero Dharmendra used to come?'

Shantibai smiled a wide, paan-stained smile, 'Who hasn't, my dear? Heroes from all the film industries, Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta. But I won't name names. I'd rather tell you about the great artists who have always visited my place. Amir Khan sahib, Nazakat and Salamat Ali from Pakistan, the ghazal singer Ghulam Ali. They have come here, sung here, and even sung for us. We have learnt a lot from them.'

I asked again, 'Did Amir Khan sahib come here?'

'Where else?' replied Shantibai. 'I have seen him married to Munnibai in this very room.'

The room next to Shantibai's was the mujra hall. As I entered the hall, an old gentleman said, 'I'm Shanti's ustad, her teacher, Reza sahib.'

'Who was your guru, sir?'

'I have learnt from many maestros. It was mostly the Lucknow gharana that I sang. But Amir Khan sahib and Bade Ghulam Ali Khan sahib used to come here. I know their art too. But my age forbids me to sing now. All I can do is teach.'

'How do you live?'

'I told you. Shanti treats me as her own. How else?'<sup>16</sup>

Raichand Boral, eminent tabla player and composer, once brought Mustaribai to Calcutta for a *mehfil* or recital which was to become the first OB or Outside Broadcasting

Programme from Akashvani Calcutta. The event was attended by the revolutionary Bengali poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. Rabindranath Tagore heard it on his radio and called up Raichand to say, 'What heavenly music have you treated me to, Rai? When may I see this goddess face-to-face?' Mustaribai did sing at Jorasanko, and Tagore was in tears after listening to her.

At that time, most of the Bengali bais lived in Sonagachhi in north Calcutta, keeping a respectful distance from the residential areas nearby. Non-Bengali bais lived in Bowbazar, Indian Mirror Street and the Wellesley areas, and often in groups in the same house. The kothas of the latter would be together in one place so that the area often had the air of a marketplace. Compared to that, the Bengali bais led simple and indistinguishable lives. Only their patrons kept track of them. Many spent a major part of their lives as kept women of these patron *babus*. Some got the opportunity to sing or act in the theatre. Those who sang keertan would be regularly invited to sing the funerals or religious events.

Bengali bais could be divided into two groups: firstly, the daughters of the courtesans, and secondly, women from respectable families who had to leave their homes due to the misfortune of being labelled 'fallen women'. These women would then be trained in the ways of the profession. Also, there were some who were the daughters of prostitutes, and who wished to elevate themselves somewhat by becoming professional courtesans. Many of such women were sired by rich and well-respected gentlemen, who remained unknown to them throughout their lives.

Most of the Bengali bais were only one or two generations into the profession, unlike the non-Bengali courtesans who came from Lucknow, Benares, and even lived in Bowbazar in Calcutta, and had been practising their craft for over three or more

generations. Bengali bais did not have the long tradition of musical practice like them.

Till the middle of the 20th century, a woman singer automatically meant a professional courtesan. Nobody but a tawaif came forth to be recorded on gramophone. Among the respectable Bengali families, Amala Dash, sister of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Dash, was the first to record her song as Miss Dash (Amateur). Later, the records of Angurbala and Indubala created quite an uproar in Calcutta. Among the Bengali bais who had made a name for themselves, like Jadumani, Ashcharyami, Krisnabhamini, Manadasundari, Bedanadasi, Shwetangini, Kiranmayi, Surama etc. a few also sang in the theatres.

As the zamindari structure was being torn down by degrees, the nawabs and talukdars suffered a great financial setback from it. The radio as a form of entertainment was turning popular. The Christian Missionaries too were responsible for the denouncing of the bais. As Pran Nevile says:

[T]he missionaries in their efforts to propagate the virtues of the Christian civilization denounced Indian...social customs, and manners. The nautch institution in particular came under heavy attack as it was taken up as a moral issue.<sup>17</sup>

Several powerful Bengali social reformers, influenced by such ideologies, also took a firm stand against the bai system. Later, after the Partition in 1947, many tawaifs left the country to go to Pakistan. All these factors led to a decline in the tawaif-culture.

Gradually the middle class began to be aware of their cultural wealth. They too were influenced by the British education system, which led them to express disapproval of the courtesans, but commended their music, so that they began to undergo musical training from ustads.

Unfortunately, the Bai systems changed both its form and content. A part

of the wealth of Hindustani Classical Music seemingly lost its way. The bais too spread all over the country in search of livelihood. The demand of the patrons changed, and the profession began to depend on the market. Nowadays they have to learn everything - semi-classical songs, ghazals, qawwalis, Hindi film songs, and some particular folk songs. Similar kinds of changes are also noticed in the case of dance.

During the rule of the East India Company, professional women dancers and singers meant only bais and tawaifs. They practically commanded a monopoly on the entertainment industry. The present times have seen a burst of popular media. Television, records and cassettes, and the radio, all are easily available almost everywhere. Beside the traditional arts of the bais, there are innumerable other professional singers who are also higher in social status than the bais. All these factors have led to an increase in the uncertainty as well as the competition of the bais' profession. Their attires have lost their sparkle and glamour. Historically the mujras used to take place in the patrons' houses. Now they rarely get a call to perform outside; rather, people come to their establishments to listen to them. Despite these problems the bais are still managing to practise their art.

Compared to the rest of Northern India, in Bengal, the social prohibitions that surrounded music and dance lessons for women had already become lax. Women from respectable and conservative families were taking up music or dancing as their professions. The fact that Calcutta was a centre of moviemaking also helped in creating such a tolerant atmosphere. Women could become music or dance professionals yet not become a bai; gradually, that only added to their social status. Of course, the typical Bengali middle-class point of view took a long time to change.

Yet, one feels that Bengali women never really were interested in this profession. Only in the second half of the last century did the

city see a few truly well-known Bengali bais. Most of them were victims of circumstance. One or two, children of prostitutes, thought to elevate their social status by becoming a courtesan. The next generation of Bengali women chose to act and sing in public theatres rather than be called a 'bai'.

Currently, the bais in Calcutta have almost no Bengali woman in their midst. Their helping hands and instrumentalists are also not from Bengal, and neither are their patrons. The kothas of the bais, too, have nothing to do with Bengali culture. Tawaifs have professionally associated themselves with this city for over three hundred years, but now they do not bother with the language or the music of the land. The metropolis provides them with a safe shelter, so, like people from other professions, bais from other parts of the country still travel to Calcutta to seek their fortunes.

The elderly Madhuribai had said to me, 'You'll see, the tradition of the bai will not die down so easily. Our profession has changed a lot - but it is still there in Calcutta, like an underground stream of water, out of sight, but very much in existence.'

### Notes

- 1 Somnath Chakraborty, *Kolkatar Baiji Silas*, Bookland, Kolkata: 1991, p. 26
- 2 Pran Nevile, 1996. *Nautch Girls of India: Dancers Singers Playmates*. Ravi Kumar Publisher, New Delhi, p. 37.
- 3 Devajit Bandyopadhyay, *Beshyasangeet Baijisangeet*, Suvarnarekha, Kolkata : 2001, p.53.
- 4 Binodini Dasi, *Amar Katha O Anyanya Rachana*, Suvarnarekha, Kolkata: 1394 BE, p.17.
- 5 Manada Devi, *Skhiksita Patitar Atmacharit*,

- Aruna Prakashani, Kolkata: 2010, p.52.
- 6 Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay ed. *Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha Vol. 1*, Bangiya Sahitva Parishad Mandir, Kolkata: 1339 BE, p.93.
- 7 Devajit Bandyopadhyay, *Beshyasangeet Baijisangeet*, Suvarnarekha, Kolkata : 2001, p.29-30.
- 8 Pran Nevile, 1996. *Nautch Girls of India: Dancers Singers Playmates*. Ravi Kumar Publisher. New Delhi, p. 129.
- 9 Brajendranath Bandyopadhyay ed. *Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha Vol. 2*, Bangiya Sahitya Parishad- Mandir, Kolkata: 1340 BE, p.319.
- 10 Devajit Bandyopadhyay, *Beshyasangeet Baijisangeet*, Suvarnarekha, Kolkata: 2001, p. 59.
- 11 Reba Muhuri, *Thumri O Baiji*, Pratibhas, Kolkata: 1986, p. 14-15.
- 12 Ramkumar Chattopadhyay, *Jalsaghar*, Ranjan Prakashan, Kolkata: 1406 BE, p. 17.
- 13 Reba Muhuri, *Thumri O Baiji*, Pratibhas, Kolkata: 1986, p. 29.
- 14 Amiyanath Sanyal, *Smritir Atale*, Jigyasa, Kolkata: 1405 BE, pp. 73-77.
- 15 Alauddin Khan, *Amar Katha*, transcribed by Shubhamay Ghosh, Ananda. Kolkata: 1387 BE, p.40.
- 16 Shankarlal Bhattacharya, *Shes Baiji*, Rupsa Prakashani, Kolkata: 1391 BE, pp. 17-18, 50.
- 17 Pran Nevile, 1996. *Nautch Girls of India: Dancers Singers Playmates*. Ravi Kumar Publisher. New Delhi, p. 45.

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## A Comprehensive Catalogue of Books under Bibliotheca Indica Series

In 1784, on 15th January, 240 years ago from this day, at 1 Park Street which institution is there holding its head high? What are their assets? There are a large part of it a Library, a Museum of manuscripts-paintings-coins, and a treasure trove of Publications — mainly these three. From these three the most important one is Publication which department has been continuing its publication since its first publication of *Asiatic Researches* in 1788, just after four years of inception of the Institution. Which is the oldest institution in the country still continuing its glory through their publications — the answer may be the same. Any person may not aware of the total activities of that institution, but at least knows the name – it is the most prestigious institution of orientalism, The Asiatic Society. How much can be said by a single essay on The Asiatic Society? However, here we shall discuss about the publications of this institution. If we take into account all the trifles and niceties of publication not a booklet is sufficient, a book be made. We shall now discuss about a particular category of their publications within a short span of space.

The Asiatic Society has been publishing a series of learned books under the *Bibliotheca Indica*, a series of books belonging to or treating of Oriental literatures which was launched in 1849 in the Asiatic Society. It is a collection of works on oriental literature, grammar, dictionaries and studies covering different disciplines. There are approximately 340 different titles in this series, some of them consist of different number of fascicules — from the lowest to the highest 72 fascicules. These works relate to different languages, i.e., Sanskrit, Prakrit, Pali, Rajasthani, Kashmiri, Hindi, Bengali, Tibetan, Kui, Arabic, Urdu and Persian, etc. The Series is still continuing. Preparation of the list is a troublesome work. It may not be possible without the help of my colleagues at the Society in general and the colleagues of my department in particular and of course respected Members of the Society. I obviously owe debts to some publications of the Society. The up-to-date list of publications under *Bibliotheca Indica* Series will be available in three issues. First instalment of 120 titles is given below :

Work No.	Date of publication	Name of the book	Writer/Editor/Translator
1	1848	<i>Ṛgveda Samhitā*</i>	ed. & tr. by E. Röer
2	1849-56	<i>Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad</i> , with the commentary of Śaṅkara Ācārya and the gloss of Ānanda Giri	ed. & tr. by E. Röer

\* abandoned

PUBLICATION

Work No.	Date of publication	Name of the book	Writer/Editor/Translator
3	1849-50	<i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i> , with the commentary of Śaṅkara Ācārya and the gloss of Ānanda Giri	ed. by E. Röer
4	1849-84	<i>Niti-Sāra</i> of Kāmandaka	ed. by Rāmanārāyaṇa Vidyāratna
5	1849	Two Works on Arabic Bibliography (1. <i>Hudū-du'n-naḥw</i> by 'Abdullah al-Fākihi; 2. <i>Irshādu'l qāṣid ilā asnāl maqāṣid</i> by Shamsu'd-Dīn Muḥammad b Ibrāhim b Sā'id al-Anṣārī al-Akfānī as-Sakhāwi)	ed. by A. Sprenger
6	1849-50	<i>Taittirīya and Aitareya Upaniṣads</i> , with the commentary of Śaṅkara Ācārya and the gloss of Ānanda Giri, and <i>Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad</i>	ed. by E. Röer
7	1849-50	<i>Īśa, Kena, Katha, Praśna, Muṇḍa, Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣads</i> , with the commentary of Śaṅkara Ācārya and the gloss of Ānanda Giri	ed. by E. Röer
8	1850	<i>Bhāṣā-Pariccheda</i> of Viśvanātha Tarkapañcānana	ed. by E. Röer
9	1850-75	<i>Sāhitya Darpaṇa</i> of Viśvanātha Kavirāja	tr. & ed. by E. Röer, J. R. Ballantyne and Pramadādāsa Mitra
10	1851-55	<i>Naiṣadhā Carita</i> of Harṣadeva	ed. by E. Röer
11	1851-55	<i>Taittirīya, Aitareya, Śvetāsvatara, Kena, Īśa, Katha, Praśna, Muṇḍa</i> and <i>Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣads</i>	tr. by E. Röer
12	1852-69	<i>Sikandar-Nāma-I-Baḥrī</i> of Nizāmī	ed. by A. Sprenger, Muḥammad Shūshtarī and Aḥmad 'Alī
13	1852-57	<i>Al-Itqān Fi 'Ulūm'l-Qur'ān</i> of Jalālu'd-Dīn as-Suyūṭī	ed. by A. Sprenger and others
14	1853-54	<i>Caitanya Candrodāya</i> of Kavikarṇapūra	ed. by Rājendralālā Mitra
15	1853-77	<i>Lalita Vistara</i>	ed. by Rājendralālā Mitra



PUBLICATION

Work No.	Date of publication	Name of the book	Writer/Editor/Translator
16	1853-54	<i>Futūhu'sh-Shām</i> of Abū Isma'il al-Baṣrī ( <i>The Fotooh al-Sham</i> of Aboo Isma'ail Moḥammad Bin 'Abd Allah Al-Azdī Al-Baṣrī)	ed. by W. Nassau Lees
17	1853-62	<i>Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāti-l Funūn</i> of Muḥammad A'lā b 'Alī at-Tahānawī	ed. by M. Wajīh, 'Abdu'l-Ḥaqq and Ghulām Qādir
18	1853-62	<i>Futūhu'sh-Shām</i> of Wāqidi	ed. by W. Nassau Lees
19	1853-55	<i>Tusi's List of Shī'ah Books and 'Alam Al-hodā's Notes on Shī'ah</i>	ed. by A. Sprenger, 'Abdu'l-Ḥaqq, and others
20	1853-73	<i>Al-Iṣāba</i> of Ibn Ḥajar-al-'Asqalānī	ed. by A. Sprenger and others
21	1853-58	<i>Sarva Darśana Saṁgraha</i> of Sāyaṇa Mādhavācārya	ed. by Īśvar Candra Vidyāsāgara
22	1854-63	<i>Brahma-Sūtra</i> of Bādarāyaṇa, with the commentary of Śaṅkara Ācārya and the gloss of Govinda Ānanda	ed. by Rāmanārāyaṇa Vidyāratna (commenced by E. Röer)
23	1854	<i>Ar-Risālatu'sh-Shamsiyya</i> of Najmu'd-Dīn al-Kātibī	ed. & tr. by A. Sprenger
24	1854-62	<i>Chāndogya Upaniṣad</i>	tr. by Rājendralālā Mitra
25	1854-58	<i>Sūrya Siddhānta</i>	ed. by Fitz-Edward Hall and Bāpūdeva Śāstrī
26	1854-99	<i>Taittiriya Saṁhitā of the Black Yajur-Veda</i> , with the commentary of Mādhava Ācārya	ed. by E. Röer, E.B. Cowell, Maheśa Candra Nyāyaratna & Satyabrata Sāmaśramī
27	1854-56	<i>Sāṁkhya Pravacana Bhāṣya</i> of Vijñāna Bhikṣu	ed. by Fitz-Edward Hall
28	1855-56	<i>Kitābu'l Maghāzī</i> of Wāqidi	ed. by A. von Kremer
29	1855-62	<i>Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa</i>	ed. by K. M. Banerjea
30	1855-59	<i>Vāsava Dattā</i> of Subandhu	ed. by F. E. Hall
31	1855-90	<i>Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa of the Black Yajur-Veda</i> , with the commentary of Sāyaṇa Ācārya	ed. by Rājendralālā Mitra
32	1860-62	<i>Sūrya Siddhānta and Siddhānta Śīromaṇi</i>	tr. by Bāpūdeva Śāstrī and Lancelot Wilkinson
33	1860-62	<i>Ta'rikh-i-Firūzshāhī</i> of Ḍiya'u'd-Dīn Baranī	ed. by W. Nassau Lees, S. Aḥmad Khān and Kabīru'd-Dīn

PUBLICATION

Work No.	Date of publication	Name of the book	Writer/Editor/Translator
34	1860-61	<i>Vaiśeṣika Sūtra</i> by Kaṇāda with the Upaskāra commentary by Śaṅkara Miśra of Mithilā	ed. by Jayanārāyaṇa Tarkapañcānana
35	1861	<i>Bhakti-Sūtra</i> (or the Aphorisms of Sāṅḍilya), with the commentary of Svapneśvara	ed. by J. R. Ballantyne
36	1861-65	<i>Daśa-Rūpa</i> of Dhanañjaya, with the commentary of Dhanika	ed. by F. E. Hall
37	1861-62	<i>Ta'rikh-i-Bayhaqī</i> of Abū'l Faḍl Bayhaqī	ed. by W. H. Morley
38	1861-65	<i>Nārada Pañca Rātra</i>	ed. by K. M. Banerjea
39	1861	<i>Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa Upaniṣad</i>	ed. and tr. by E. B. Cowell
40	1862-63	<i>Kāvyādarśa</i> of Daṇḍin	ed. by Premcāḍ Tarkavāgīśa
41	1862-65	<i>Sāṅkhyā Pravacana Sūtra</i> (or The Sāṅkhyā Aphorisms of Kalpika)	ed. and tr. by J. R. Ballantyne
41a	1862-63	<i>Maitri</i> or <i>Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad</i>	ed. and tr. by E. B. Cowell
42		- do -	Second Edition, Revised by Satīśa Candra Vidyābhūṣaṇa, 1913-19
43	1862	<i>Nukhbatu'l Fikar</i> of Ibn Ḥajar 'Asqalānī	ed. by W. Nassau Lees
44	1863-64	<i>Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāṣirī</i> of Abū 'Umar 'Uṣmān (Minhāj-i-Sirāj Jūzjānī)	ed. by W. N. Lees, Mawlawis Khadim Husain and Abdu'l-Ḥayy
45	1863-87	<i>Mīmāṃsā Darśana</i> of Jaiminī, with Savarasvāmin's commentary	ed. by Maheśacandra Nyāyaratna
46	1864-68	<i>Śaṅkara Vijaya</i> of Ānanda Giri	ed. by Jayanārāyaṇa Tarkapañcānana
47	1864-65	<i>Wis Wa Rāmīn</i> of Fakhru'd-Dīn As'ad Jurjānī	ed. by W. Nassau Lees
48	1864-65	<i>Bṛhat Samhitā</i> of Varāha-Mihira	ed. by H. Kern
49	1864-74	<i>Āśvalāyana-Śrauta-Sūtra</i> , with the commentary of Gārgya Nārāyaṇa	ed. by Rāmanārāyaṇa Vidyāratna
50	1864-65	<i>Nyāya Sūtra</i> of Gautama	ed. by Jayanārāyaṇa Tarkapañcānana
51	1864-69	<i>Muntakhabu't Tawārikh</i> of 'Abdu'l-Qādir Badāūnī	ed. by W. Nassau Lees, Kabīru'd-Dīn Aḥmad and Aḥmad 'Alī

PUBLICATION

Work No.	Date of publication	Name of the book	Writer/Editor/Translator
52	1864-72	<i>Taittiriya Āraṇyaka</i> , with the commentary of Sāyaṇa Ācārya	ed. by Rājendralālā Mitra
53	1865	<i>Iqbāl-Nāma-i-Jahāngīri</i> of Mu'tamad Khān	ed. by 'Abdu'l-Ḥayy and Aḥmad 'Alī
54	1865	<i>Sāṃkhya Sāra</i> of Vijñāna Bhikṣu	ed. by Fitz-Edward Hall
55	1865-73	' <i>Ālamgīr-Nāma</i> of Muḥammad Kāzīm b Muḥammad Amīn Munshī	ed. by W.N. Lees, Khādim Ḥusayn and 'Abdu'l-Ḥayy
56	1866-72	<i>Pādshāh-Nāma</i> (Also called <i>Bādshāh-Nāma</i> ) of 'Abdu'l-Ḥamīd Lāhūrī	ed. by W.N. Lees, Kabīru'd-Dīn Aḥmad and 'Abdu'r-Raḥīm
57	1866-69	<i>Āśvalāyana Gṛhya-Sūtra</i> , with the commentary of Gārgya Nārāyaṇa	ed. by Rāmanārāyaṇa Vidyāratna and Ānanda-candra Vedāntavāgīśa
58	1867-77	<i>Āin-i-Akbarī</i> of Abū'l-Faḍl 'Allāmī	ed. by H. Blochmann
59	1867-68	<i>Prakarāṇa</i> of Kaccāyana	tr. by Francis Mason
60	1868-1925	<i>Muntakhabu'l-Lubāb</i> of Khāfi Khān	ed. by Kabīru'd-Dīn Aḥmad and Ghulām Qādir and T.W. Haig
61	1868-94	<i>Āin-i-Akbarī</i> of Abū'l-Faḍl 'Allāmī	tr. by H. Blochmann (Vol. 1) and H. S. Jarrett (Vols. 2-3)
62	1869-74	<i>Tāṇḍyamahābrāhmaṇa</i> , with the commentary of Sāyaṇa Ācārya	ed. by Ānandacandra Vedāntavāgīśa
63	1870-72	<i>Lātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra</i> , with the commentary of Agnisvāmin	ed. by Ānandacandra Vedāntavāgīśa
64	1870	<i>Gopāla Tāpanīya Upaniṣad</i> , with the commentary of Viśveśvara	ed. by Haracandra Vidyābhūṣaṇa and Viśvanātha Śāstrī
65	1870-79	<i>Agni-Purāṇa</i>	ed. by Rājendralālā Mitra
66	1870-73	<i>Ma'āthir-i-'Ālamgīri</i> of Muḥammad Sāqī Musta'id Khān	ed. by Aḥmad 'Alī
67	1870-75	<i>Farhang-i-Rashīdi</i> of 'Abdu'r-Rashīd Tatawi	ed. by Dhū'l-Fiqār 'Alī
68	1870	<i>Brahma-Sūtra</i> of Bādarāyaṇa	tr. by K. M. Banerjea
69	1870-72	<i>Gopātha Brāhmaṇa</i> of Atharva Veda	ed. by Rājendralālā Mitra and Haracandra Vidyābhūṣaṇa
70	1870-71	<i>Nṛsimha Tāpanīya Upaniṣad</i> , with the commentary of Śaṅkara Ācārya	ed. by Rāmamay Tarkaratna

PUBLICATION

Work No.	Date of publication	Name of the book	Writer/Editor/Translator
71	1871-78	<i>Sāma Veda Samhitā</i> , with the commentary of Sāyaṇa Ācārya	ed. by Satyabrata Sāmaśramī
72	1871-1911	<i>Caturvarga-Cintāmaṇi</i> of Hemādri	ed. by Bharata Candra Śiromaṇi, Yogeśvara Bhaṭṭācārya Smṛtiratna, Kāmākhyānātha Tarkaratna and Pramathanātha Tarkabhūṣaṇa
73	1871-80	<i>Gobhīlīya Gṛhya-Sūtra</i>	ed. by Candrakānta Tarkālaṅkāra
74	1871-74	Piṅgala's <i>Chandaḥ Sūtra</i> , with the commentary of Halāyudha	ed. by Viśvanātha Śāstrī
75	1871-72	<i>Taittirīya-Prātiśākhya</i> , with the commentary, Tribhāṣyaratna	ed. by Rājendralālā Mitra
76	1872-74	<i>Atharvaṇa Upaniṣads</i> , with the commentary of Nārāyaṇa	ed. by Rāmamaya Tarkaratna
77	1873-86	<i>Ṙṥthvirāj Rāsau</i> of Cānd Bardai	ed. and tr. by John Beams and A.F.R. Hoernle
78	1873-97	<i>Ṭabaqāt-i-Nāṣiri</i> of Abū 'Umar 'Uṣmān	tr. by H. G. Raverty
79	1873-86	<i>Ākbar-Nāma</i> of Abū'l-Faḍl 'Allāmī	ed. by Aḥmad 'Alī and 'Abdu'r-Raḥīm
80	1873	<i>Haft Āsmān</i> of Aḥmad 'Alī	ed. by H. Blochmann
81	1874-78	<i>Kātantra</i> , with the commentary of Durgāsimha	ed. by Julius Eggeling
82	1875-76	<i>Aitareya-Āraṇyaka of the Ṛg-Veda</i> , with the commentary of Sāyaṇa Ācārya	ed. by Rājendralālā Mitra
83	1876-80	<i>Bhāmatī</i> of Vācaspati Miśra	ed. by Bāla Śāstrī
84	1878	<i>Bhakti-Sūtra</i>	tr. by E. B. Cowell
85	1879-88	<i>Vāyu Purāṇa</i>	ed. by Rājendralālā Mitra
86	1880-87	<i>Kathā-Sarit-Sāgara</i>	tr. by C. H. Tawney
87	1880-81	<i>Ta'rikhu'l-Khulafa</i> of Jalālu'd-Dīn As-Suyūṭī	tr. by H. S. Jarrett
88	1880	<i>Prākṛta Lakṣaṇa</i> of Caṇḍa	ed. by A. F. R. Hoernle
89	1880-91	<i>Nirukta</i> of Yāska	ed. by Satyabrata Sāmaśramī, Second Edition, Revised by Hitavrata Sāmaśramī, 1911-12

PUBLICATION

Work No.	Date of publication	Name of the book	Writer/Editor/Translator
90	1881-86	<i>Lalita Vistara</i>	tr. by Rājendralālā Mitra
91	1881	<i>Viṣṇu Smṛti</i>	ed. by Julius Jolly
92	1881-1903	<i>Āpastamba Śrauta-Sūtra</i> , with the commentary of Rudradatta	ed. by Richard Garbe
93	1881-83	<i>Yoga Sūtra</i> of Patañjali	ed. and tr. by Rājendralālā Mitra
94	1883-99	<i>Parāśara Smṛti</i> , with the commentary of Mādhavācārya	ed. by Candrakānta Tarkālaṅkāra
95	1883-91	<i>Suśruta Samhitā</i>	tr. by Uday Chand Dutta and Aghore Chunder Chattopadhyay
96	1883-91	<i>Sthavirāvalī Carita</i> (or <i>Pariśiṣṭa Parvaṅ</i> ) of Hemacandra	ed. by H. Jacobi
97	1884-1925	<i>Muntakhabu't Tawārikh</i> of 'Adbu'l-Qādir Badāūnī	tr. by G.S.A. Ranking (Vol.1), W. H. Lowe (Vol.2), and T.W. Haig (Vol.3)
98	1884-1910	<i>Tattva Cintāmaṇi</i> of Gaṅgeśa Upādhyāya	ed. by Kāmākhyanātha Tarkavāgīśa
99	1885-99	<i>Sāṁkhāyana Śrauta-Sūtra</i> , with the commentaries of Varadatta-Suta Ānartīya and Govinda	ed. by A. Hillebrandt
100	1885-88	<i>Zafar Nāma</i> of Sharafu'd-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī	ed. by M. Ilāhdād
101	1885-88	<i>Kāla-Nirṇaya</i> (or <i>Kāla-Mādhaviya</i> , or <i>Kāla-Mādhava</i> ) of Mādhava Ācārya	ed. by Candrakānta Tarkālaṅkāra
102	1885-86	<i>Nārada Smṛti</i> , with extracts from the commentary of Asahāya and others	ed. by Julius Jolly
103	1885-87	<i>Vivāda Ratnākara</i> of Caṇḍeśvara Ṭhakkura	ed. by Dīnanātha Vidyālaṅkāra
104	1885-89	<i>Manu Ṭikā Saṁgraha</i> (being extracts from the commentaries of Medhātithi, Gobindarāja, Nārāyaṇa, Rāghavananda, Nandana and a Kashmirian author)	ed. by Julius Jolly
105	1885-90	<i>Uvāsagadasāo</i>	ed. and tr. by A.F.R. Hoernle
106	1886-90	<i>Kūrma Purāṇa</i>	ed. by Nilmaṇi Mukhopādhyāya
107	1886-91	<i>Bṛhan-Nāradya-Purāṇa</i>	ed. by Hṛṣikeśa Śāstrī

PUBLICATION

Work No.	Date of publication	Name of the book	Writer/Editor/Translator
108	1886	<i>Aśva-Vaidyaka</i> , compiled by Jayadatta Sūri	ed. by Umeśa Candra Gupta Kaviratna
109	1887-93	<i>Varāha Purāṇa</i>	ed. by Hṛṣikeśa Śāstrī
110	1887-88	<i>Aṣṭa-Sāhasrikā-Prajñāpāramitā</i>	ed. by Rājendralālā Mitra
111	1887	<i>Parāśara Smṛti</i>	tr. by Kṛṣṇakamala Bhaṭṭācārya
112	1887-95	<i>Ma'āsiru'l-Umarā</i> of Shāh-Nawāz <u>Khān</u> and 'Abdul Ḥayy	ed. by 'Abdu'r-Raḥīm and Ashraf 'Alī
113	1887-1914	<i>Nyāya Vārttika</i> of Uddyotakara Bharadvāja	ed. by Vindhyeśvarī Prasāda Dvivedin
114	1887-93	<i>Madana Pārijāta</i> of Madana Pāla	ed. by Madhusūdana Smṛtiratna
115	1888-1900	<i>Śer Phyin</i>	ed. by Pratāpa Candra Ghoṣa
116	1888-97	<i>Aṇubhāṣya</i> of Vallabha Ācārya	ed. by Hemcandra Vidyāratna
117	1888-91	<i>Śrī Bhāṣya</i> of Rāmānuja Yatirāja	ed. by Rāmanātha Tarkaratna
118	1888-90	<i>Advaita Brahma Siddhi</i> of Sadānanda Yati	ed. by Vāmana Śāstrī Upādhyāya
119	1888-91	<i>Ta'rikh-i-Firūzshāhī</i> of Shams-i-Sirāj 'Afif	ed. by Wilāyat Ḥusayn
120	1888-97	<i>Bṛhad-Dharma-Purāṇa</i>	ed. by Haraprasāda Śāstrī

[To be continued]

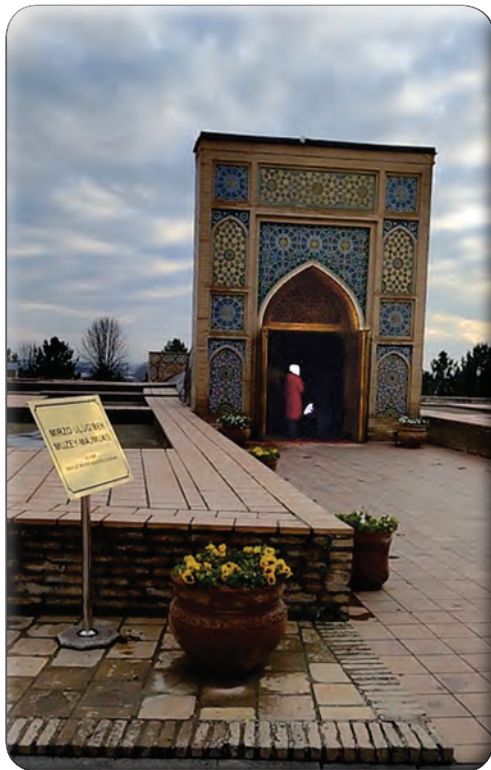
Compiled by **Sukhendu Bikash Pal**  
 Publication Officer-in-Charge  
 The Asiatic Society

## Astronomical Text Journey from Samarkand to The Asiatic Society

**Farhin Saba**

Cataloguer (Museum), The Asiatic Society

I went to numerous places when I recently travelled to Samarkand, Uzbekistan in January 2024. Documentation of anything that catches my attention is one of my hobbies. In between my visit, I was astounded to witness the Ulughbeg Observatory in Samarkand, a high-value World Heritage Site. With my writing and my photos, I am imparting my experience to you.



Entrance of Observatory

The Samarkand Observatory, erected by Ulughbeg in 1428-1429 atop a hill near Chupanata, occupies a prominent position among historical monuments. Its architectural significance is underscored by contemporary accounts notably that of Babur, who described it as a three-storied, circular edifice adorned with exquisite glazed tiles. Spanning 46 metres in diameter and towering 30 metres high, the observatory featured a main hall housing a substantial instrument tailored for scrutinising celestial bodies such as the Moon, Sun, and other stars.

Of paramount importance was the observatory's pioneering design, which distinguished it as a singular construction for its era. Central to its functionality was a colossal goniometer, or vertical circle, boasting a radius of 40,212 meters and an arc length of 63 metres. This goniometer formed the cornerstone of the observatory's observational capabilities, facilitating precise measurements crucial for astronomical inquiries. Moreover, the primary instrument, a sextant, was meticulously aligned along the meridian axis from south to north, demonstrating an unparalleled degree of precision in orientation.

### **Ulughbeg Contribution in the World of Astronomy**

In sum, the Samarkand Observatory stands as a testament to the scientific acumen and architectural prowess of Ulughbeg's era,

representing a milestone in the pursuit of astronomical knowledge during the 15th century. Its innovative design and meticulous execution underscore its enduring significance within the annals of both scientific inquiry and architectural heritage.

The pioneering efforts of modern astronomers Kastalsk and Sheglov serve as compelling testimony to the enduring legacy of Ulughbeg's astronomical achievements. Their respective establishments bear witness to the enduring influence and relevance of Ulughbeg's contributions to the field.

Central to the remarkable precision achieved by Ulughbeg and his contemporaries was the fortunate combination of meticulous construction, profound scientific knowledge, and unwavering dedication to observational accuracy. Ulughbeg's profound understanding of astronomy, coupled with the collaborative efforts of his companions, facilitated the remarkable precision of their astronomical observations.

Ulughbeg's meticulous record-keeping and comprehensive cataloguing of celestial bodies attest to the systematic approach undertaken by the Samarkand astronomers. Notably, their achievements were realised without the aid of modern optical instruments, relying solely on the naked eye for observations. The inclusion of coordinates for 1018 stars within their astronomical tables underscores the depth and breadth of their observational data, a testament to their dedication and precision.

Of particular significance is Ulughbeg's calculation of the length of the stellar year, which remarkably approximated the modern value with exceptional accuracy. His determination that the duration of a stellar year equalled 365 days, 6 hours, 10 minutes, and 8 seconds, compared favourably with the contemporary calculation of 365 days, 6 hours, 9 minutes, and 9.6 seconds, revealing a discrepancy of less than one minute. This remarkable degree of accuracy underscores the precision and foresight inherent in Ulughbeg's astronomical endeavours, affirming the enduring relevance and value of his contributions to the field.



Mirzo Ulughbeg



Observatory



## Ulughbeg Astronomy Manuscripts in the Collection of The Asiatic Society (Museum)

### PSC-1485

#### Zij-i-Jadid-i-Sultani

The well edition of the astronomical tables of *Ulughbeg*, the grandson of Timur(852-853/1448-1449). It is the second, or revised version of his original work, and was compiled by him with the assistance of Salahu'd-Din Musa, surnamed Qadi-zada Rumi, Ghiyathu'd-Din Jamshid, and 'Ali b. Muhammad Qushchi(d. 879/1474-1475). The present edition is divided into four maqalas, translated into French by the same, Paris, 1853. There are also several older printed editions, such as those by J.Greaves, London, 1650:T. Hyde, Oxford ,1665: etc.The present copy is incomplete at the end, and rather badly written, transcribed in the 12th A.H.

### PSC-1486

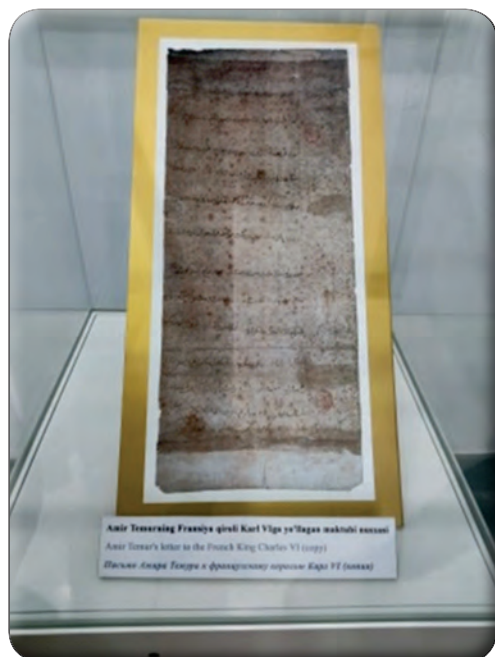
#### The Same

A revised edition of the same work, here called in the heading, *sharh-i-Zij-i-amir-i-kabir Ulughbeg*. The editor, Mazhar b. Muhammad Qari'b. Bahai'd-Din 'Ali, mentions in the preface that he revised the work of Ulughbeg at Shiraz, in 961-968/1554-1561(f-2v). Copied in the beg of the 11c. A.H. Beg.

### PSC-1487

#### Sharh-i-Zij-i-Jadid-i-Sultani

A commentary on Ulughbeg's tables, composed in 929 A.H/1523A.D by. (Nizamu'd-Din) 'Abdu'l-Ali b. Muhammad b. Husayn al-Birjandi (not Barjandi, and not Birjindi, as spelt in various catalogues). It contains a commentary on the whole text of the Zij(but not on its tables). See EIO 2237-2239, EB 1520, R 457 etc, Cf. St.No. 4 on p. 103.Cf. also Melanges Asiatiques, v. V, p.252. Copied towards the end of the 11th. or the beg. of the 12th A.H. Beg



Museum Objects of Ulughbeg Mirzo Observatory

## Bhikkhunipācittiyapāḷitonissaya – A Bilingual Codex in the collection of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata

**Saheli Das (Sarkar)**

Post-Doctoral Research Fellow (Pali and Prakrit Studies), The Asiatic Society

The history of the collection of Burmese codices of the then The Royal Asiatic Society, Bengal, at present The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, goes back to two hundred years ago. In fact, the museum of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata is enriched with codices of various Asian languages.

The period between 1825 and 1827 is the golden period when the Society receiving the major portion of its collection of Burmese manuscripts from various sources. The First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826) was disastrous in one hand, and in other, it directed to open a new era of exploring India's Eastern Frontier and Burma. Several members of the Society in the Civil, Military and Medical services of the company, who were in charge of the First Burmese War, had contributed a lot in the amassment of Burmese manuscripts of the Society along with other curiosities. P. T. Nair had adduced all the information while compiling *Proceedings of the Asiatic Society*, vol. III, 1817-1832, Book I. Captain W. Bunce was the pioneer in this activity presenting a Volume of Burmese manuscript in early of the month of September, 1825. The whole bunch was recovered from Shwe Dagon Pagoda, Rangoon. Captain Wilson added to the collection through Dr. F. P. Strong by

sending a good number of manuscripts on the month of November of the same year, but there is no details record of it. Proceedings of the 3rd January, 1827 recorded that Dr. Robert Tytler enriched the collection with "Burmese MSS. in five volumes complete", but unfortunately no descriptive catalogue was entered in the Society's records. Captain Burlton gifted three Burman books procured at Prome on the early of the month of July of the same year. Besides these, the government also took initiatives in the assemblage of the Burmese manuscripts for the Society. From the letter of S. Fraser written to Dr. Wilson on 29th July, 1820, it is known that Fraser sent some Burmese books along with Burmese Moonshee of the office who can give an idea about the content. It is interesting to mention here that these books were received as a part of gifts from the Kings of Ava which Crawford brought round.

However, there are two types of Burmese codices in the collection of the Museum of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata written in Burmese script – the language of one category is also Burmese, but another category is bilingual – both Pali and Burmese. 'Bhikkhunipācittiyapāḷitonissaya' is one of the treasures of bilingual collections.



The history of Buddhist Order reveals that with the conversion of five monks the Buddha started his missionary career and framed rules and regulations for them and for the development of his Dhamma or Saddhamma. But, after a long time, specifically, in the 5th year of his ministry, women were allowed to adopt the life of recluse with the imposition of eight cardinal rules (Aṭṭhagarudhammā). It must be mentioned here that there are a good number of rules for nuns beside these eight rules. All these rules are under the purview of Vinaya. In its most accepted sense, Vinaya is Vinaya Piṭaka, the first book of the Pali Tipiṭaka literature. The general consideration regarding the word 'vinaya' is the rules of discipline. According to the Lord Buddha, actions are of three types – mental, vocal and physical. The observance of these rules shapes a person humble (vinīta) through all sorts of action. The Vinaya Piṭaka consists mainly of three books – Suttavibhaṅga, Khandhaka and Parivāra or Parivārapāṭha. Suttavibhaṅga is again divided into two parts – Bhikkhuvibhaṅga or Mahāvibhaṅga and Bhikkhunīvibhaṅga. Khandhaka has also two divisions – Mahāvagga and Cullavagga. Parivāra is the concluding text of the Vinaya Piṭaka. It was written much later than the Suttavibhaṅga and Khandhaka. It has no division. It is basically a digest of other parts of the Vinaya. The Pātimokkha is mentioned as the nucleus of the Vinaya Piṭaka, around which the other parts have grown. It is the rules of transgressions against the rules of discipline of the Saṅgha as well as discusses the corresponding atonements. Therefore, it is a collection of liturgical formalities. It governs the conduct of the monks (bhikkhus) and nuns (bhikkhunīs). The Pātimokkhasutta has two parts – Bhikkhu Pātimokkha and Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha.

The Bhikkhu Pātimokkha comprises

eight sections only and they are Pārājika, Saṅghādisesa, Aniyata, Nissaggiya Pācittiya, Pācittiya, Pāṭidesanīya, Sekhiya and Adhikaraṇasamatha. It has 227 rules of conduct. But, Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha contains 311 offences distributing into seven sections (Aniyata rules are absent). It is to be noted here that the offence which may be committed by monks and nuns have been arranged according to their gravity, i.e., from graver to the lighter. Mention may be made in this regard that Pācittiya rules for the nuns, is the 4th section of the Bhikkhunī Pātimokkha and it contains 166 rules. The word 'Pācittiya' means requiring confession and absolution.

The manuscript on the subject named 'Bhikkhunīpācittiyapālītonissaya' is kept in The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, West Bengal. The manuscript deals not only the Pācittiya section particularly, but all the sections framed for the nuns.

The title 'Bhikkhunīpācittiyapālītonissaya' is comprised of four words — bhikkhunī, pācittiya, pālīto and nissaya – 'bhikkhunī' means 'nun', 'pācittiya' signifies 'rules and regulations', 'pālīto' here means 'from the Pali literature or canon' (the term pālī does not mean the particular language here) and 'nissaya' means 'on which anything depends' or 'foundation', so meaning of the title of the said manuscript is 'rules and regulations for the nuns derived from the Pali canonical literature'. It contains forty-eight (48) leaves (both side 95 folios, as 1a is blank). It is a Palmyra-leaf codex, written in Burmese script. It is bilingual – both Pali and Burmese, whatever written in Pali, that is then translated into Burmese. The Burmese monks who were not efficient in Pali language, it was for their sake. Generally it is observed that 'Nissaya' type of literature is written adopting this style. From that perspective it is no doubt a mark of acculturation. Each single folio of this



manuscript bears 9 lines and 70 to 76 letters in each line. The style of pagination is also unique – it is not numerical like 1,2,3 etc. or simple alphabetical a, ā, ka, kha etc., but consonant with vowel sign in alphabetical order – ka, kā, ki, kī ...in this way. There is a word in Pali .. ‘peyyāla’ means repetition. As ‘pe’ is the first syllable of ‘peyyāla’, so ‘la’ is the last and is used in the same sense, the variance is according to predilection of certain codices. So ‘pe’ and ‘la’ are the sign of abridgment which signifying a phrase to be repeated over and over again. These are found in the manuscripts written in any

scripts like Ceylonese, Burmese, Thai or Siamese. But ‘pa’ is also used in the same purpose in Burmese codices particularly, or it can be said that only in Burmese codices. The use of ‘pa’, ‘pe’ and ‘la’ ...all are found in the said codex as because it is a saṅgaha, i.e., collection type of literature.

The study of Vinaya doubtlessly contributes to social study or society, though the lay devotees are completely excluded from its sphere of action. But, in the Jātakas, the word ‘Vinaya’ is used in the general sense of code of conduct for common mass, i.e., common folk.

## Happy Retirement



Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary, handing over the memento to Smt. Dipa Ghatak, Senior Assistant on the occasion of her superannuation from service on 29 February 2024 at the Humayun Kabir Hall.

## 200th Birth Anniversary of Michael Madhusudan Dutt

The Asiatic Society has organised a half-day Seminar entitled "'Rekho Ma Dasere Mane'– Contribution of Madhusudan Dutta to the 19th Century's Bengal Renaissance and the Bengali Language and Literature" on 23rd February 2024 at 02:30 p.m. at the Vidyasagar Hall of the Society to observe the 200th Birth Anniversary of Michael Madhusudan Dutt, an eminent Bengali poet, gifted linguist, polyglot, playwright who is widely regarded as one of the pioneers of Bengali Literature and a staunch exponent of the Bengal Renaissance Literary Movement. The inauguration of the programme commenced with Dr. Shakti Mukherji, Research Officer-in-charge, Academic Section of the Society performing a recitation of the poem 'বঙ্গভূমির প্রতি' with the line 'রেখো মা দাসেরে মনে, এ মিনতি করি পদে' as the very title of the seminar followed by garlanding of the bust of Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society. Eminent dignitaries, invitees and officials of the Society offered flowers to the portrait of Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Shri Amit Ghosh, an official of the Society sang a Rabindra Sangeet 'O amar desher mati, tomar pare thekai matha' as it set the tone for the rest of the programme. Welcome Address was delivered by Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Society. Professor Mahidas Bhattacharya, Member of the Council spoke eloquently on the theme of the programme. Professor Satyabati Giri, Professor Shaktisadhan Mukherjee and Professor Biswajit Roy shared their respective thoughts on the revered poet. To mark the occasion, Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society



L to R : Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, Professor Satyabati Giri, Professor Biswajit Roy, Professor Shaktisadhan Mukherjee and Dr. Sujit Kumar Das

released a book on Michael Madhusudan Dutt entitled *দ্বিশতবর্ষে মাইকেল : স্মরণে ও বিশ্লেষণে* which was edited by Shri Debajyoti Narayan Ray who also spoke about the book. Professor Khosru Parvez, Director of Madhusudan Academy, Sagardari, Bangladesh, spoke eloquently on the life and works of Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Dr. Keka Banerjee (Adhikari), Curator, Museum Section of the Society paid homage to Michael Madhusudan Dutt as she performed recitation of the poem entitled 'বঙ্গভাষা' written by the veteran poet himself. Presidential Address was delivered by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society. The programme concluded with a Vote of Thanks given by Dr. Sujit Kumar Das, Treasurer of the Society.

## National Science Day 2024

The Asiatic Society, Kolkata has observed National Science Day for the year 2024 on 28th February, 2024 at 02:30 p.m. at the Vidyasagar Hall of the Society to commemorate the discovery of Raman Effect by Sir C.V. Raman, Bharat Ratna awardee and the second Indian to be awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize for his remarkable achievement in the field of Physics. The theme of the programme was entitled as 'Indigenous technologies for Viksit Bharat'. The inaugural session of the



L to R : Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, Professor Amit Ghosh, Professor Asok Kanti Sanyal and Professor Basudeb Barman

programme began with the garlanding of the bust of Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, honourable President of the Society. Welcome Address was delivered by Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, honourable General Secretary of the Society following the key-note address delivered by Professor Amit Ghosh, NICED (ICMR). Professor Asok Kanti Sanyal, Biological

Science Secretary of the Society gave an introductory brief about the theme of the programme. The inaugural session ended with a Vote of Thanks by Professor Basudeb Barman, Vice-President of the Society.

The Technical Session began with the delivery of an elucidating lecture cum presentation by Professor Suprakash Chandra Ray, former Editor-in-Chief of *Science and Culture* & Member of National Commission of History of Science, INSA (Indian National Science Academy). Professor Syamal Chakrabarti, former Professor of the University of Calcutta & Publication Secretary of the Society and Dr. Jagatpati Sarkar, former Research Officer (Officiating) of the Society spoke some words on the theme of the programme. The later half of the Technical Session was dedicated to an interactive panel discussion on the theme of the programme which took place among the officials of the Society moderated by Professor Arun Bandopadhyay, Historical & Archaeological Secretary of the Society. Professor Basudeb Barman presented the mementos to the participants as a gesture of appreciation. The programme concluded with a Vote of Thanks given by Professor Asok Kanti Sanyal.

## Special Lecture by Professor Tone Bleie



L to R : Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, Professor Tone Bleie and Professor Ranjana Ray

The Asiatic Society organised Special Lecture on 5th March 2024 at 03:00 p.m. at the Humayun Kabir Hall of the Society. Professor Tone Bleie, Professor in Public Planning and Cultural Understanding, Department of Sociology, Political Sciences and Local Planning, University of Tromsø - The Arctic University of Norway delivered her lecture on the topic 'Theorizing Scandinavian Mission Station Christianity in Bihar and Bengal during British Crown Rule'. The inauguration of the programme began with the offering of a flower bouquet to Professor Tone Bleie by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society. Welcome Address was delivered by Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Society. Professor Ranjana Ray, Anthropological Secretary of the Society introduced Professor Bleie to the audience following which the latter delivered an elucidating lecture cum presentation laying emphasis on various related aspects such as the Imperial ideological and juridical justifications; periods of Dano-Norwegian Protestant missions etc. To mark the momentous occasion, Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society graced a digital book launch programme of the Book *A New Testament* written by Professor Tone Bleie. Dr. Mita Chakraborty, Retired Deputy Keeper, Anthropology Section, The Indian Museum gave an introductory brief to the audience about the book. Presidential Address was delivered by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society. The Vote of Thanks was given by Professor Ranjana Ray, Anthropological Secretary of the Society. The programme concluded with an enlightening address delivered by Professor Ratnabali Chatterjee, Retired Professor of the Department of Islamic History and Culture, University of Calcutta.



## মল্ল-মাধুরী

শান্তা মুখোপাধ্যায়

অভিযান পাবলিশার্স, প্রথম প্রকাশ ২০২৩

মূল্য ৫০০ টাকা

ইতিহাসের সংগ্রহে উপন্যাসে একটা বিশেষ রস সঞ্চয় করে, ইতিহাসের সেই রসটুকুর প্রতি উপন্যাসিকের লোভ, তাহার সত্ত্বের প্রতি তাঁহার কোনো খাতির নাই। কেহ যদি উপন্যাসে কেবল ইতিহাসের সেই বিশেষ গন্ধটুকু এবং স্বাদটুকুতে সন্তুষ্ট না হইয়া তাহা হইতে অখণ্ড ইতিহাস-উদ্ধারে প্রবৃত্ত হন তবে তিনি ব্যঙ্গনের মধ্যে আস্ত জিরে-ধনে-হলুদ-সর্ষে সন্ধান করেন; মসলা আস্ত রাখিয়া যিনি ব্যঙ্গনে স্বাদ দিতে পারেন তিনি দিন, যিনি বাঁটিয়া ঘাঁটিয়া একাকার করিয়া থাকেন তাঁহার সঙ্গেও আমার কোনো বিবাদ নাই; কারণ, স্বাদই এ স্থলে লক্ষ্য, মসলা উপলক্ষমাত্র।

...অর্থাৎ লেখক ইতিহাসকে অখণ্ড রাখিয়াই চলুন আর খণ্ড করিয়াই রাখুন, সেই ঐতিহাসিক রসের অবতারণায় সফল হইলেই হইল।...কাব্যে যদি ভুল শিখি ইতিহাসে তাহা সংশোধন করিয়া লইব। কিন্তু যে ব্যক্তি ইতিহাস পড়িবার সুযোগ পাইবে না, কাব্যই পড়িবে সে হতভাগ্য। কিন্তু যে ব্যক্তি কাব্য পড়িবার অবসর পাইবে না, ইতিহাস পড়িবে, সম্ভবত তাহার ভাগ্য আরো মন্দ।

(‘ঐতিহাসিক উপন্যাস’, রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর)

বাঙালি পাঠকের ভাগ্য মন্দ নয়, কারণ তার শরদিন্দু আছে। তাঁর ঐতিহাসিক উপন্যাসে আমরা রস খুঁজি, তথ্যের কূটকচালি খুঁজি না। সেদিনও একটি দেশভাগের ওপর সেমিনার শুনতে গেছি সংস্কৃত কলেজ ও বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে, অধ্যাপক অনিন্দ্য রায়চৌধুরী প্রায় এরকমই কথা বললেন দিন ক্ষণ তথ্য মিলিয়ে দেখার জন্য কেউ উপন্যাস পড়তে বসে না। উপন্যাসের কাছে মানুষের প্রত্যাশা তা

একটা নতুন পথ দেখাবে, প্রশ্ন তুলবে, ভ্যালু সিস্টেমকে রিডিফাইন করবে। তবুও ঐতিহাসিক উপন্যাস কেউ লিখলেই এক দল রে রে করে উঠে বলেন ইতিহাসের বিকৃতি ঘটেছে।

আধুনিক ইংরাজ ঐতিহাসিকদের মধ্যে ফ্রীম্যান সাহেবের নাম সুবিখ্যাত। উপন্যাসে ইতিহাসের যে বিকার ঘটে সেটার উপরে তিনি আক্রোশ প্রকাশ করিয়াছেন। তিনি বলেন, যাঁহারা যুরোপের ধর্মযুদ্ধযাত্রা-যুগ (The Age of the Crusades) সম্বন্ধে কিছু জানিতে ইচ্ছা করেন তাঁহারা যেন স্কটের আইভ্যানহো পড়িতে বিরত থাকেন।

অবশ্য, যুরোপের ধর্মযুদ্ধযাত্রা-যুগ সম্বন্ধে প্রকৃত তথ্য জানা আবশ্যিক সন্দেহ নাই, কিন্তু স্কটের আইভ্যানহোর মধ্যে চিরন্তন মানব-ইতিহাসের যে নিত্যসত্য আছে তাহাও আমাদের জানা আবশ্যিক। এমন-কি, তাহা জানিবার আকাঙ্ক্ষা আমাদের এত বেশি যে, ক্রুজেড-যুগ সম্বন্ধে ভুল সংবাদ পাইবার আশঙ্কাসত্ত্বেও ছাত্রগণ অধ্যাপক ফ্রীম্যানকে লুকাইয়া আইভ্যানহো পাঠ করিবার প্রলোভন সম্বরণ করিতে পারিবে না।

তবু ঐতিহাসিক উপন্যাসের প্রতি পাঠকের আগ্রহ এতটুকুও কমেনি। বাড়ছেই হয়তো। কারণ ফেসবুকে বিভিন্ন বইয়ের গ্রুপে অপরিচিত লেখকের ঐতিহাসিক উপন্যাস নিয়ে বেশ মাতামাতি চোখে পড়ে, কোন কোন পত্রিকা একাধিক ঐতিহাসিক উপন্যাস ছাপে। ঐতিহাসিক উপন্যাসের প্রতি মানুষের এই যে আকর্ষণ তার কারণ খুঁজতে গিয়ে রবীন্দ্রনাথ বলেছেন—



এই-যে মানুষের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে কালের গতি ইহা আমাদের প্রতিদিনের প্রত্যক্ষগোচর নহে। যদি বা তেমন কোনো জাতীয় ইতিহাসস্রষ্টা মহাপুরুষ আমাদের সম্মুখে উপস্থিত থাকেন তথাপি কোনো খণ্ড ক্ষুদ্র বর্তমান কালে তিনি এবং সেই বৃহৎ ইতিহাস একসঙ্গে আমাদের দৃষ্টিগোচর হইতে পারে না। অতএব সুযোগ হইলেও এমন-সকল ব্যক্তিকে আমরা কখনো ঠিকমত তাঁহাদের যথার্থ প্রতিষ্ঠাভূমিতে উপযুক্তভাবে দেখিতে পাই না। তাঁহাদিগকে কেবল ব্যক্তিবিশেষ বলিয়া নহে, পরন্তু মহাকালের অঙ্গস্বরূপ দেখিতে হইলে, দূরে দাঁড়াইতে হয়, অতীতের মধ্যে তাঁহাদিগকে স্থাপন করিতে হয়, তাঁহারা যে সুবৃহৎ রঙ্গভূমিতে নায়কস্বরূপ ছিলেন সেটা-সুদূর তাঁহাদিগকে এক করিয়া দেখিতে হয়।

এই-যে আমাদের প্রতিদিনের সাধারণ সুখদুঃখ হইতে দূরত্ব, আমরা যখন চাকরি করিয়া কাঁদিয়া-কাটিয়া খাইয়া-দাইয়া কাল কাটাইতেছি তখন যে জগতের রাজপথ দিয়া বড়ো বড়ো সারথিরা কালরথ চালনা করিয়া লইয়া চলিতেছেন, ইহাই অকস্মাৎ ক্ষণকালের জন্য উপলব্ধি করিয়া ক্ষুদ্র পরিধি হইতে মুক্তিলাভ-- ইহাই ইতিহাসের প্রকৃত রসস্বাদ।

এখন ঐতিহাসিক উপন্যাস অনেক লেখা হচ্ছে বটে, কিন্তু অধিকাংশের মান খুব ভালো নয়। তার কারণ ঐ যে শুধু তথ্য কতটা নির্ভুল দেওয়া যায়, শুকনো সাল তারিখের দিকে লেখকের দৃষ্টি নিবদ্ধ থাকে, কিন্তু ইতিহাসের অভিপ্রায় কী ছিল, সময়ের চিহ্নমালা কী— এইসব খননের দিকে ধ্যান থাকে না। ভাষার চলন বা ভঙ্গিমা নিয়েও বিশেষ চিন্তাভাবনা দেখা যায় না।

আলোচ্য উপন্যাস *মল্ল-মাধুরী* পড়তে গিয়ে পাঠক ষোড়শ শতকের মল্লভূমির জীবনযাপন, সংস্কৃতি শিল্পের স্বাদ তো পাবেনই, আরও তাঁর কাছে স্পষ্ট হয়ে উঠবে প্রান্তিক জীবনের গতিধারা। ‘হাড়ি জাতির প্রসব বিদ্যায় পারদর্শিতা, ডোম জাতির সঙ্গীত পারদর্শিতা, এমনকি তার সাহায্যে হাতি বশ করার বিদ্যা আয়ত্ত করা, ময়রাদের দেলোচিনি তৈরির কৌশল, তাঁতিদের প্রথম তাঁত চালানোর লৌকিক কাহিনি’ পরতে পরতে লৌকিক কৃষ্টির সৌন্দর্য উন্মোচন করে। ডোম, বাউরি, কাহার, পদ, তিলি, তামলি, কৈবর্ত,

মাহিষ্য সদেপোপ বণিক, মোদক ইত্যাদি জনজাতির সাংস্কৃতিক সত্ত্বার নিষ্ঠ দলিল বলাই যায় মল্ল-মাধুরীকে।

রাজ অভিষেকের ব্যাপারটিতে কত যে জাতের যোগদান থাকত। এই যে অল ইনক্লুসিভ সমাজ ব্যবস্থা— তার একটা চমৎকার ছবি এঁকেছেন শান্তা—

বাগদি লাঠিয়ালরা রণ-পা চেপে অনায়াসে দেড়দিনের পথ তিন ঘণ্টায় চলে যায়। তাদেরকেই দিতে হবে নিমন্ত্রণের ভার। সুবর্ণের পান সুপারি বানাতে স্বর্ণ বণিকরা, এই পান সুপারি থাকবে কাঁসা বা পেতলের রেকাবে, তা বানাতে অষ্ট লই কামার নিত্য রানা। ঘড়ার তেল দেবে মানিক কুণ্ডু তিলি। চিঠি নকল করবে লিপিকররা। চিঠির আফসানি কাগজ দেবে কাহিতি পাড়ার লোকে। সুতি বস্ত্রের বরাত পাবে গুঁহারা। মোদকরা মিঠাই বানাতে। মতিচূড় বানাবার জন্য চাই পিয়াল বীজের বেসন। ধবনী, গামারবনি, বাসুদেবপুরের পিয়ারডোবা গ্রামগুলি পিয়ালবীজের যোগান দেবে।

এ যেন বিভিন্ন পেশার মানুষ দিয়ে তৈরি এক জৈব শৃঙ্খল। এখানে কোন হায়ারার্কি নেই, ছোট বড় নেই। একে অন্যের ওপর নির্ভরশীল।

কালু ডোমের হাতি খেদানোর এক অবিস্মরণীয় ছবি এঁকেছেন শান্তা।

‘আস্তে আস্তে আলো মুছে গেল চরাচর থেকে। কুয়াশার মায়ায় চাঁদ আটকা পড়ে গেছে। শীতের হাওয়া মাঝে মাঝে নিষ্পত্র গাছের ডালে জানান দিচ্ছে নিজের অস্তিত্ব। হাতিদুটো এতক্ষণে বসে পড়েছে। কালু ডোম এবার গাইতে শুরু করল। অদ্ভুত সে সুর বনের প্রতিপ্রান্তে কি যেন বিষাদ গাথা গেয়ে চলল। বেশ কিছুক্ষণ পর মন্দা হাতিটার কান খাড়া হল। কান নাড়াল। তারপর ডেকে উঠল। খ্যাপা হাতির ডাক নয়, যেন গানের সুরে সুর মেলাচ্ছে। তখন কালু ডোম মল্ল পড়তে লাগল,

আলি কালই বেনী সারই সুণিআ

গঅবর সমরস সাকি গুনিআ

রাজা আপ্তুত হয়ে গলার মণিহার খুলে দেন কালু ডোমকে। বলেন ‘শুনেছিলাম রাগরাগিণীর অসীম ক্ষমতা। প্রাচীন থেকে সুরে হাতি বশ করায় পারদর্শী আমাদের শবর, ডোমরা। মন্ত্রের শক্তিও স্বচক্ষে দেখলাম। ধন্য আমি। ধন্য আমার মল্লভূম’

রয়েছে 'দশাবতার তাস' বানাবার পদ্ধতিও—

কার্তিক ফৌজদার দক্ষ পট শিল্পী। অচিরেই পুরনো কাপড়ে তেঁতুল বিচির আঠা মাখিয়ে শক্ত করে অস খাইয়ে পাথর ঘসে নরম করে গোল করে কেটে ধারগুলিতে শিরিসের আঠা মাখিয়ে নিল। পিঠের দিকে দেওয়া হল হিঙ্গুলের প্রলেপ। তারপর একে একে তৈরি হতে থাকল মৎস্য কূর্ম বরাহ নৃসিংহ বামন পরশুরাম রাম বলরাম জগন্নাথ আর কঙ্কি। তাদের সামনের দিকে দাগা দিয়ে রঙ করে নিল কার্তিক ফৌজদার।

এইভাবে বিভিন্ন জীবিকা, লোকগান লোকসংস্কৃতি, মেয়োলি ছড়া, ব্রতপার্বণ, লোক বিশ্বাস, রীতি রেওয়াজের একটা চলন্ত কার্নিভাল গড়ে তুলেছেন শান্তা। তাঁর কথনে উঠে এসেছে কত হারিয়ে যাওয়া শাড়ি, শাঁখা, খাদ্যবস্তুর নাম, এমনকি সে খাবার বানাবার পদ্ধতিও। আবারওয়া, বুনা, গঙ্গাজলি, ভোমরাপেড়ে, কলকাপেড়ে— শাড়ির কত নাম। শাঁখার বিচিত্র রূপ— গোখরি, লিচুচোট পলকাটা। দুধলুচি, খালাপোড়া মাছ, কুমড়োছকা ডাল— বাঙালির হেঁসেল থেকেই শুধু হারিয়েই যায়নি, শব্দ ভাঙারকেও দরিদ্র করে গেছে। সেসব কথা তুলে এনে মস্ত একটা কাজ করলেন লেখক।

বাড়ির কর্তারা শিকারে গেলেও মেয়েরা ব্রত করতেন, সে ব্রতের খানিকটা নিশ্চয় ভালবেসে, খানিকটা হয়তো পিতৃতন্ত্রের অঙ্গুলি হেলনে। তবু তার মধ্যে আনন্দ ছিল বৈকি। ওর্য ঋষি আর দুর্বা ঋষি গোত্রের কুলীন গন্ধবণিকদের এই ব্রতে কলার খোল দিয়ে ডিঙ্গি বানিয়ে প্রতি ডিঙ্গিতে একটি করে পোরো, একজোড়া সুপুরি, একজোড়া কলা, একজোড়া কুল, বেতশাক, মুলো, লাউফুল, দুটো ক্ষীরের পুতুল, দুটো ঘিয়ের প্রদীপ দিতে হয়। আর একজোড়া সিম আর কিছু গাঁদা ফুল।

এখানে একটি জিজ্ঞাসা - গাঁদাফুল কি সেই সময়ের বস্বে ছিল?

যাই হোক এইসব ব্রতের মধ্যে একটা দেশ কালের সীমা ছাড়ানো মঙ্গলেচ্ছা থাকে। এই সেদিন চাঁদিপুরে গিয়ে দেখি বালিযাত্রার ব্রত করছেন রমণীরা, সমুদ্রের তীরে শোলার নৌকায়

নানা মঙ্গল উপকরণ ভরে ভাসাচ্ছেন সমুদ্রে। প্রতি কার্তিক পূর্ণিমায় তাঁরা এই ব্রত করেন কয়েক শতক আগে বালি দ্বীপের উদ্দেশে ওড়িয়া বণিকদের সমুদ্র যাত্রার স্মরণে। পৃথিবী জুড়ে একটিই জাতি আছে, সে জাতির নাম মানব জাতি— এই বিশ্বাস আরও দৃঢ় হয় এ সব দেখে।

শান্তার তথ্যনিষ্ঠ গবেষণার প্রমাণ বহন করছে তাঁর সহায়ক পুস্তকের তালিকাটি। কিন্তু তথ্যই একটি উপন্যাসের মুখ্য নয়। তার একটি উদ্দিষ্ট লক্ষ্য থাকে। বিশেষ করে ঐতিহাসিক উপন্যাসে ইতিহাসের অভিপ্রায় বোঝা বা বোঝার চেষ্টা খুব জরুরি। তাছাড়া রাজার চরিত্র বা রানি সুদেষ্ণার চরিত্র— কোন চরিত্রই তত জোরালো নয়।

অবিনশ্বর উপন্যাসে তামিল মহাকাব্যের প্রেক্ষাপটে সাধারণ মানুষের কথায় বাঁকড়ি ভাষা ব্যবহার করেছিলেন লেখক, তাতে একটা কালৌচিত্য দোষ লেগেছিল। এই উপন্যাসে খুব স্বাভাবিক ভাবেই এসেছে বাঁকড়ি ভাষা, তা বেশ দক্ষতার সঙ্গেই এসেছে। কিন্তু 'দুগা ভাত খেয়ে যা', এই দুগা শব্দটি যতদূর জানি পূর্ববঙ্গের।

শান্তা নজর দিয়েছেন অন্তপুরের রাজনীতির দিকেও, কারণ তাঁর অভিমুখ ছিল নারী সশক্তিকরণের দিকে। যখন রাজকন্যা নিজের নির্বাচিত পাত্রের সঙ্গে পালিয়ে যায়, তাকে সাহায্য করেন রানি।

কিন্তু একটি ঐতিহাসিক উপন্যাসে পাঠক যেমন ইতিহাসের নিখুঁত তথ্য খুঁজবে না, বরং খুঁজবে কালের অভীক্ষা, যুগলক্ষণ, সেরকম, লোকজ জীবনের অনুপুঞ্জ বর্ণনাতেই একজন উপন্যাসিকের কাজ শেষ হয়ে যায় না। তাঁকে ধরতে হয় ইতিহাসের যুগ লক্ষণ, কালের হৃৎস্পন্দন। মাধুরীর প্রেমের পরিণতি পাঠককে ইচ্ছা পূরণের আনন্দ দিতে পারে, দিয়েওছে, কিন্তু এত গবেষণা ও পরিশ্রমে লেখা উপন্যাসের কাছে আরও কিছু প্রত্যাশা থাকে যে!

তৃষ্ণা বসাক  
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**JUST PUBLISHED**



**CENTENARY  
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OF  
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1784-1883

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5.	<i>Numismatic Supplements, Vol. II, Supplements XVII-XXX</i>
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