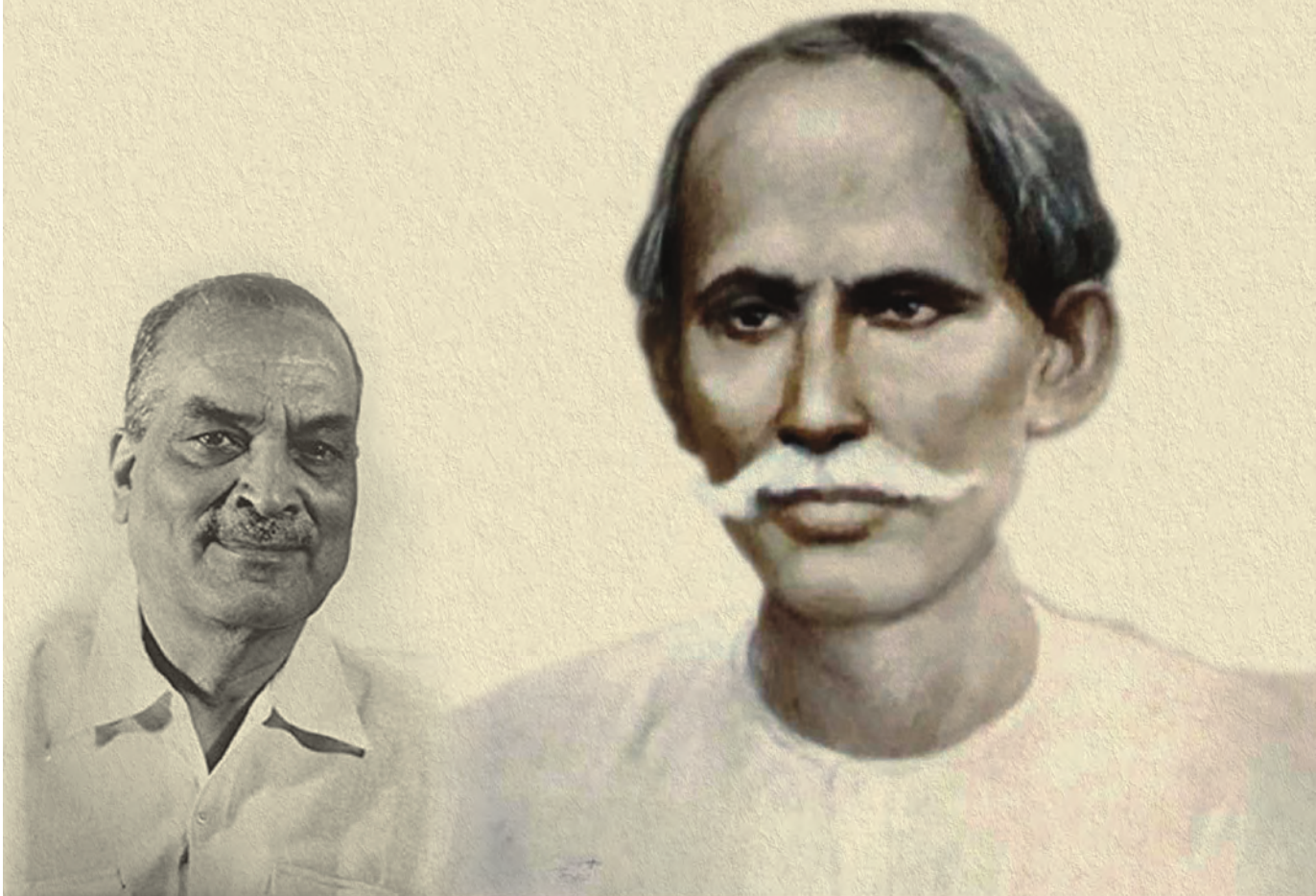




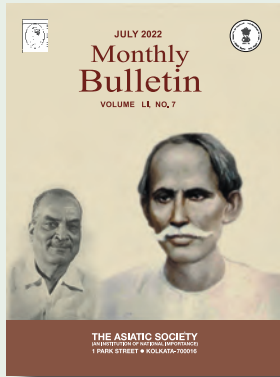
JULY 2022

# Monthly Bulletin

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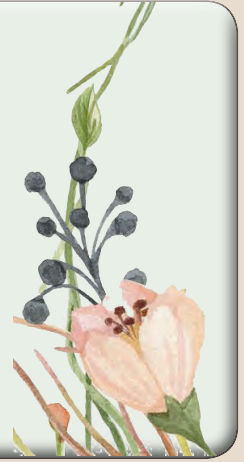
**THE ASIATIC SOCIETY**  
(AN INSTITUTION OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE)  
1 PARK STREET • KOLKATA-700016



### Cover description

Left : Bidhan Chandra Roy  
(1882-1962)

Right : Akshay Kumar Datta  
(1820-1886)



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## From the Desk of the General Secretary

**Dear Members and Well-wishers,**

The new Council of The Asiatic Society as well as various committees constituted by the Council for the year 2022-24 have started their respective activities. We observed the International Day of Biological Diversity on 24th May, 2022 which was also streamed through various media network. Some eminent scholars delivered valuable lectures and number of college students, apart from others, also took part in this important programme (a detailed report will be found in the Bulletin). Indra Gandhi Memorial Lecture for the year 2021 to be delivered by Professor Kalpana Kannabiran, distinguished Professor, Council for Social Development, New Delhi is scheduled to be held on 20<sup>th</sup> July, 2022.

From a cursory glance it appears that the month of July is unique by a combination of many memorable events. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy, the eminent Physician as well as the Chief Minister of West Bengal was born on 1st of July, 1882 while Shri Akshay Kumar Dutta, a noted litterateur of the 19th century was born on 15th July, 1820. A number of leading institutions were founded in the month of July, such as Calcutta High Court (01. 07.1862), Fort William College, Calcutta (09. 07. 1800), Ramakrishna Mission (24.07.1902), Indian Association (26. 07.1876) and the Indian Association for Cultivation of Science (29. 07.1876). Needless to mention, all these institutions made their prominent presence in building up the history and culture of our country.

The month of July is equally important for projecting a number of memorable incidences related to India's social and cultural movements. For example, Bill for Independence in India was placed in the British Parliament on 05. 07.1947; Lord Curzon proclaimed the Partition of Bengal (19. 07.1905); British Parliament dismissed the appeal against the order of stopping 'sati' immolation on 11. 07.1832; The call for boycott movement of the British commodities was started on 16.07.1905; Hindu Widow Marriage was legalised on 16. 07. 1856; The law of India's independence received the Royal Assent on 18.07.1947. Interestingly, the important communication network in the field of Culture was also initiated in the month of July. For example, the first public theatre hall i. e. the Star Theatre was inaugurated on 21.07.1883, while the first Radio Centre in India was inaugurated in Bombay on 23. 07.1927. It is also worth-recording that Rev. James Long was jailed on 24. 07.1861 for translating in English the Bengali drama of Dinabandhu Mitra's *Nil Darpan*.

The First Five Year Plan of India (1951-56) was published on 09. 07. 1951. This was the beginning of India's journey towards various phases of planned socio-economic development which has already reached upto



Calcutta High Court



Fort William College,  
Calcutta



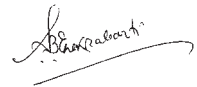
Indian Association  
for the Cultivation of  
Science

the document of 12<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan (2012-17). The event of July may be closed with a note that 30<sup>th</sup> July is considered to be the World Friendship Day declared by the United Nation, though India and a few other countries observe it on the first Sunday in the month of August.

I feel happy to share with you that the Recreation Club of the Asiatic Society organised a cultural programme on 30<sup>th</sup> July, 2022 at Vidyasagar Hall to observe the birthdays of Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam on the occasion of observance of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' (75 years of Indian Independence).

Friends, since we have made the beginning of our otherwise committed journey towards the all round development of the Society, I on behalf of the Council would like to express good wishes to you all and I would also request you to extend your kind cooperation and help as before.

Please keep well and safe.



(S. B. Chakrabarti)  
General Secretary



Rev. James Long



Dinabandhu Mitra

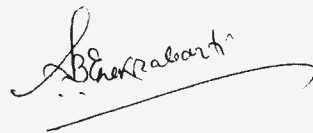
AN ORDINARY MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING OF  
THE ASIATIC SOCIETY WILL BE HELD ON  
MONDAY, 4<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2022 AT 5.00 P.M. AT THE  
VIDYASAGAR HALL OF THE SOCIETY

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

**AGENDA**

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the last Ordinary Monthly General Meeting held on 6th June, 2022.
2. Exhibition of presents made to the Society in June, 2022
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). :  
The names of the candidates for Ordinary Membership as recommended by the Council in its meeting held on 24th June 2022 for election under Regulation 5 (The details are given separately as an Annexure to the Notice)
6. The following paper will be read by Dr. Dipak Chandra Poddar :  
"Betar Natak Prayojana : Itihaser Aloke"

1 Park Street, Kolkata-700016  
Dated : 23. 06. 2022



(S B Chakrabarti)  
General Secretary

## বেতার নাটক প্রযোজনা : ইতিহাসের আলোকে

দীপকচন্দ্র পোদ্দার

বেতার নাট্য প্রযোজক, আকাশবাণী



বিংশ শতাব্দীর প্রারম্ভে বিজ্ঞানের নবতম আবিষ্কার রূপে আত্মপ্রকাশ করে বেতার সম্প্রচার। অচিরেই এই বেতার সম্প্রচার মাধ্যমটির অন্যতম প্রধান জনপ্রিয় অনুষ্ঠান হিসেবে স্থান পায় বেতার নাটক। ঐতিহাসিক Bill Jaker-এর মতে ১৯২১ সালে প্রথম বেতার নাটক 'A Rural Line on Education' Pittsburgh-এর KDKA বেতার কেন্দ্র থেকে সম্প্রচারিত হয়।

ইংল্যান্ডে ১৯২২ সালে British Broadcasting Company (BBC) প্রতিষ্ঠিত হওয়ার পর থেকে নিয়মিত বেতার সম্প্রচার শুরু হয়। ১৯২৩ সালে ১৬ ফেব্রুয়ারি BBC প্রথম নাটক সম্প্রচার করে William Shakespeare-এর *Julius Caesar* নাটকের অংশ। তবে একান্ত ভাবে বেতার সম্প্রচারের জন্যই লেখা প্রথম বেতার নাটকটিও BBC থেকেই ১৯২৪ সালের ১৪ ফেব্রুয়ারি সম্প্রচারিত হয়। Richard Hughes-এর লেখা *A Comedy of Danger*। Welsh-এর কয়লা খনিতে কাজ করতে গিয়ে একদল মানুষের ভয়াবহ অন্ধকার খাদে আটকে পড়ার ঘটনা।

ভারতীয় উপমহাদেশে  
বেতার নাটক সম্প্রচারের  
পথিকৃৎ কলকাতা  
বেতার কেন্দ্র।

২৬ অগস্ট ১৯২৭ প্রথম বেতার সম্প্রচার শুরুর পর নবম দিনেই ৩ সেপ্টেম্বর রাত ৯-৪৫ মিনিটে Calcutta Amateur Theatrical Society (CATS)-র পরিবেশনায় সম্প্রচারিত হয় নাট্যধর্মী অনুষ্ঠান—'Micro-drama'। তবে প্রথম নাট্যধর্মী বাংলা অনুষ্ঠান 'বসন্তলীলা' গীতিনাট্য ৫ ডিসেম্বর ১৯২৭ শিশির কুমার ভাদুড়ির উপস্থাপনায় সম্প্রচারিত হয়। অল্পদিনের মধ্যেই কলকাতা বেতার কেন্দ্রে নাটকের সম্প্রচার জনপ্রিয় করে তুলতে গঠিত হয় 'বেতার নাটুকে দল'। এই দলের উপস্থাপনায় ১৯২৮ সালে ১৭ জানুয়ারি অসমঞ্জ মুখোপাধ্যায়ের লেখা 'জমা খরচ' গল্পের নাট্যরূপ সম্প্রচারের মাধ্যমেই প্রথম বাংলা বেতার নাটকের পথ চলা শুরু হয়।

বেতার নাটকের প্রাথমিক পর্যায়ে কলকাতা বেতার কেন্দ্রের স্টুডিও থেকে LIVE নাটকের উপস্থাপনার পাশাপাশি পেশাদার থিয়েটারের মঞ্চ থেকেও সরাসরি রিলে করে নাটক অভিনয় সম্প্রচারিত হয়, যা ছিল মঞ্চনাটকের বেতার সম্প্রচার। অচিরেই শ্রোতাদের কাছে রিলে করা নাটকের অভিনয় পীড়াদায়ক হয়ে ওঠে। শ্রোতাদের অভিযোগের ভিত্তিতে রিলে করা বন্ধ হয়। বেতার উপযোগী নাটক সম্প্রচারের প্রচেষ্টা আরম্ভ হয়। বেতার কর্তৃপক্ষের অভিনয় ও প্রযোজনার পূর্ব অভিজ্ঞতা না থাকায় বেতার নাটক এক পরীক্ষার মধ্য দিয়ে এগিয়ে চলে। এই সময় বেতার কর্তৃপক্ষের কাছে প্রধান সমস্যা ছিল প্রযোজনের তুলনায় সম্প্রচারযোগ্য বেতার নাটকের অভাব। কারণ বেতার

নাটক লেখার মতো নাট্যকার নেই। বীরেন্দ্রকৃষ্ণ ভদ্রের কথায় “বেতার নাট্যকারকে সাধারণ প্রচলিত নাটকের রচনা-কৌশল ভুলে যেতে হবে এবং শব্দের ওপর দিয়ে মানুষের বা প্রকৃতির ভাব সবটাই ফুটিয়ে তুলতে হবে।” অগত্যা বেতার কৰ্তৃপক্ষের আগ্রহে গল্প-উপন্যাসের নাট্যরূপ দিয়ে বেতার নাটক সম্প্রচার চলতে থাকে। অন্যদিকে বেতার কেন্দ্রের স্টুডিওতে এসে অভিনয়শিল্পীরা চোখের সামনে দর্শকদের দেখতে না পেয়ে বাচিক অভিনয়ের ভঙ্গি পাল্টান। বেতার শিল্পীরা ভাবতে শুরু করেন, তার প্রতিটি অভিব্যক্তির প্রকাশে শ্রোতার কান থেকে মনের মাঝে কী ভাবে শব্দচিত্রগুলিকে অনুভব করানো যায়।

বেতার নাটকের জন্য নতুন পরিস্থিতি অনুযায়ী নামি দামি অভিনয়শিল্পীরাও নতুন স্বর-কৌশল আয়ত্ত করেন। বেতার নাটকের উন্নতি কল্পে All India Radio কৰ্তৃপক্ষ ১৯৩৬ সালে আয়োজিত করে ‘বেতার নাটক প্রতিযোগিতা’। এই প্রতিযোগিতার মাধ্যমে অনেক নতুন নতুন নাট্যকার কলম ধরেন, কেউ কেউ বেতার নাট্যকার রূপে প্রতিষ্ঠাও পান। এছাড়া সারা ভারতে বেতার নাটক সম্প্রচারকে একসূত্রে বাঁধার চেষ্টায় ১৯৫৬ সালে শুরু হয় National Programme of Plays। একটি নাটক একই দিনে একই সময়ে সারা ভারতে বিভিন্ন

ভাষায় ভিন্ন ভিন্ন বেতার কেন্দ্র থেকে প্রচারিত হয়। অপর দিকে ১৯৭৪ সালে শুরু হয় জাতীয় স্তরের এক বার্ষিক বেতার অনুষ্ঠান প্রযোজনা প্রতিযোগিতা—Akashvani Annual Awards। এই প্রতিযোগিতায় রয়েছে বেতার নাটকসহ বেশ কয়েকটি বিভাগ। উল্লেখ্য, বেতার নাটক প্রযোজনা বিভাগে কলকাতা বেতার কেন্দ্র দশ বার শ্রেষ্ঠত্বের শিরোপা অর্জন করে।

ভারতীয় বেতার নাটক সম্প্রচারে রবীন্দ্রনাথের নাম বিশেষ উল্লেখযোগ্য। তাঁর সৃষ্ট নাটক-উপন্যাস-গল্প-কবিতা সাহিত্যভিত্তিক বেতার নাটক সম্প্রচারের ভিত্তি ভূমি প্রতিষ্ঠায় সহায়তা করে। তাঁর রচিত ১৪৩টি সাহিত্যকর্ম অবলম্বনে মোট ৫৫৭টি নাটক বেতারে সম্প্রচারিত হয়।

বিংশ শতাব্দীর তিনের দশক থেকে চারের দশকেই বেতার নাটক আন্তর্জাতিক স্তরে সবচেয়ে বেশি জনপ্রিয় বিনোদন হয়ে ওঠে। অপর দিকে ভারতীয় উপমহাদেশে চারের দশক থেকে আটের দশক পর্যন্ত বেতার নাটকের ‘সুবর্ণ যুগ’ হিসেবে চিহ্নিত। কিন্তু একবিংশ শতাব্দীর তিনের দশকের শুরুতে এসে দেখা যায় প্রযুক্তিগতভাবে অতি আধুনিকতার স্পর্শ পেয়েও নানাবিধ কারণে বেশির ভাগ নাটকের প্রযোজনার মান তুলনামূলকভাবে অনেকটাই নিম্নগামী।





## President's Column

### 250th Birth Anniversary - Yet a Harbinger of Modernity

Yes, we are talking about Rammohun Roy whose 250th Birth Anniversary is being observed throughout India. Raja Rammohun Roy was in a true sense a modernist and a forebearer of Indian Renaissance. He was a moderniser in the real sense of the term as reason, rationality and a life-long concern for human rights were the three pillars of his activities throughout his life.

Alex Inkeles, the famous sociologist, had identified the syndromes of modernity in this way:

- Openness to new experience, both with people and new ways of doing things;
- The assertion of increasing independence from the authority of traditional figures like parents and priests;
- Belief in the efficiency of Science and Medicine;
- General abandonment of passivity and fatalism in the face of life's difficulties;
- Showing of strong interest in and taking active part in civic and community affairs;
- To strive energetically to keep abreast of whatever is happening around - nationally and internationally.

Judged from each of this index, Rammohun Roy was the first modern man in India.

Rammohun's sense of rationality did not lead him to attack religion as such but he tried to show that deviation from the classical religious concept of monotheism and the origin of various pseudo-religious puranic cults and dogmas were at the root of the contemporary social evils and that the only way to fight it out was through a process of mass-awakening through education and through an awareness of civil, social and economic rights. In order to popularise the true message of Hinduism, Rammohun was the first to translate the classics of Hindu religion into Bengali and English. In order to give the message that the essence of all the religions are the same, Rammohun gave original and unconventional interpretation of Hinduism, Islam, Christianity—this originality of interpretation alienated and antagonised the conservative, dogmatic proponents of all the existing religions. Rammohun had to fight against all of them throughout his life.

Operating and remaining active in the first half of the Nineteenth Century, Rammohun was a true rationalist, a modernist, a champion of women rights and a life-long crusader against social oppression of any type. Calling Rammohun as the 'representative man', Amiya Kumar Sen observes "In the Raja, the spirit of self emancipation is clearly discernible. In all matters to which he applied his discriminating intellect, keen social sense and encyclopaedic



knowledge. And he applied these qualities to all aspects of life. This is because, life for him, was an integrated whole" (Sen 1990:9(i)).

### **Rationality and Freedom of Mind as Cardinal Values**

Rammohun, with his creative, enlightened and free mind was active on many fronts. Whatever he has analysed, his analysis has been rational and objective. The question is, is there a common thread which runs through all the different writings of Rammohun? Rammohun had a world-view and this view was to look at the external world with a free mind, free from any superstitions. This rational mind and objective, unprejudiced analysis had alienated many of his contemporaries. He antagonised all existing religious establishments. While talking about and laying the foundation of a universal religion, he antagonised the hard core Hindu Fundamentalists by relentlessly fighting against 'Suttee', he alienated many by speaking out against injustice, inequality, and immorality, by working for an impartial judiciary, fair taxation, free up to date public schools and freedom of the press. (Robertson 1995: 172). As Rammohun wrote, nothing more impedes the cause of truth than prejudice instilled into minds blank to receive impressions. He appeals to common notions of justice as the basis for rejecting unreasonable doctrines. Rammohun's critical and scintillating mind even would not accept 'reason' as the final arbiter. While talking about the 'Synthesis' of faith as a foundation of universal religion, Rammohun says, "I have often lamented that in our general researches into theological truth, we are subjected to the conflict of many obstacles. When we look to the traditions of ancient nations, we often find them at variance with each other, and when discouraged by this circumstance, we appeal to reason as a surer guide, we soon find how incompetent it is, alone to conduct us to the object of the pursuit. We often find that, instead of facilitating our

endeavours for clearing up our perplexities, it only serves to generate a universal doubt. . . The best method perhaps is neither to give ourselves up exclusively to the guidance of the one or the other; but by a proper use of the light furnished by both endeavour to improve our intellectual and moral faculties. (Sen 1990:281).

With such a free mind and rational outlook, Rammohun wrote on various problems afflicting the humanity in general and the nation in particular. We intend to present here a few aspects of Rammohun's thought to show his essential humanism.

### **Nationalism and Internationalism in Rammohun**

Rammohun's Nationalism is of a unique character. On the one hand, he swears in the name of British rule and of the benefits it has bestowed upon the native. But it is apparent that behind this mask of loyalty and reverence, there are the underlying notions of expectations and criticisms which are very serious in nature. To a question regarding the natives' opinion about the existing form of government, Rammohun says "men of aspiring character and members of such ancient families as are very much reduced by the present system consider it derogatory to accept of the trifling public situations which natives are allowed to hold under the British government, and are decidedly disaffected by it" (Quoted in Robertson, 1999:95).

Regarding the oppression of the zamindars on the ryots in charging excessive amount of rent, Rammohun laments that while the 1793 Settlement had provided for a fixed amount of rent for zamindars, the same benefit has not been extended to the ryots. "I am at a loss to conceive why this indulgence was not extended to their tenants by requiring proprietors to follow the example of the government in fixing a definite rent to be received from each cultivator. . ." (Robertson. 1999:185)

When the Press Censorship Bill was introduced In India, Rammohun, an ardent

advocate of freedom of the press, made a blistering, though veiled, attack on the British Government by appealing to the king against this measure which, as Ramchandra Guha said, may be the first communication ever addressed to a British Monarch by an Indian. As Rammohun says, "it is well known that despotic governments naturally desire suppression of any freedom of expression which might tend to expose their acts to the obloquy which ever attends exercise of tyranny or oppression. . . they (Indians) must humbly enter their protest against the injustice of robbing them of their longstanding privileges, by the introduction of numerous arbitrary restrictions, totally uncalled for by the circumstances of the country. . . calculated to suppress truth, protect abuses and encourage oppression" (Guha 2010:38-39). Can there be a stronger indictment of colonial rulers? When in spite of these appeals, Press Censorship Bill remained, Rammohun stopped the publication of his *Sambad Kaumudi* as a matter of protest.

Though Rammohun's approach was introducing 'constitutional reforms' within the British empire and ensuring civil and political rights for natives as much as the Englishmen enjoyed (he was disillusioned regarding this), it would be wrong to claim that Rammohun believed that British rule in India would continue indefinitely. As his English biographer observed, "The prospect of an educated India, of an India approximating to European standards of culture, seems to have never been long absent from Rammohun's mind; he did, however vaguely, claim in advance for his countrymen the political rights which progress in civilization inevitably involves." Collet further claims, "Rammohun believed the Indian nation to be capable of improvement and progress just like any other civilized nation of the world. . . His great admiration for the western civilization was never blind or uncritical; it did not for a moment destroy his faith in the potentialities of his countrymen or the legitimate pride

he took in the great heritage of India's past." (Collet, 1988:246).

As Rammohun was a unique type of Nationalist his special interest in the international arena also set him apart from others. C. A. Bayly has recently pointed out, Roy "was the first Indian to represent the growth of freedom in India as an essential part of a wider transnational quest of humanity for self realization". (Bayly, 2007). His standard of evaluating any International event was whether the people were granted enough voice and freedom. The people of Naples forced a constitution from the reluctant hands of the rulers. They could not sustain it for long in view of the opposition of neighbouring autocratic rulers. But Rammohun did not lose his optimism as he commented, "Enemies to liberty and friends of despotism have never been and never will be ultimately successful." Rammohun had cosmopolitan sympathies for contemporary popular struggles all over the world. He welcomed the news of the liberation of the Spanish ties of South America from the tyranny of Spain. As it has been told, he celebrated the occasion by entertaining a number of his European friends at a dinner party at his Calcutta residence. He greatly admired the ideals of the French Revolution, supported the cause of the Greek War of Independence against autocratic Turkish rule and was all along an enthusiastic supporter of the Reform Agitation in England (Collet, 1988:164-66). He used to contextualise international events for India. The American Revolution, to him, was an example of what can happen when people's voices are not heard. Canada provided a different example—it stayed within the British dominion as its voice was heard. Robertson has beautifully summarised this situation, "The North American lesson was not lost on India. Canada was the model for Indians. Rammohun issued a prescient warning. His Britannic Majesty had a clear choice. He could rule his Indian subjects justly and enjoy their undying loyalty and

admiration like the Canadians or he could have another revolution on his hands. A generation later India revolted." (Robertson, 1999:xxxv). Rammohun's counseling had no impact on British rule.

Commenting on this aspect of Rammohun's interest, Duttagupta writes "with his thoroughbred international outlook, Rammohun anticipated much of what in modern sociological parlance is known as the sociology of International Relations. Liberty, peace and conflict resolution were the keynote of Rammohun's world view (Duttgupta, 1972:60).

### **Championing the Cause of Women and Propagating Gender Equity.**

Rammohun Roy has been rightly remembered as a life-long crusader against the brutal and inhuman widow burning system of the Hindus. While this is absolutely true, Rammohun, in course of his polemical writings against the supporters of the system, advanced a number of reasons for women's subjugated status in our society. The logic forwarded by him and the tone and tenor of his argument hardly distinguishes him from a hard core Feminist of today. In that sense, Rammohun was the first champion of women's rights in our country. Widow burning was the cause and effect of a number of other social evils which was the result of a wrong interpretation of Hinduism. So Rammohun's larger objective was to ponder over how best their lot can be improved and how to ameliorate their condition.

In a pamphlet entitled, 'Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females according to the Hindu Law of Inheritance', Rammohun had shown how the practice of debarring women from inheriting a part of their father's property was the result of deliberate distortion of traditional Hindu law. The objective of this writing, Rammohun mentions, is to show 'the interest and care' which our ancient legislators took in the promotion of the comfort of

the female part of the community and to compare the laws of female inheritance which they enacted and which afforded that sex the opportunity of enjoyment of life with that which moderns and our contemporaries have gradually introduced and established . . ." (Robertson 1999:147). In ancient Hindu law, "the mother had an equal share with her son in the property left by her deceased husband, in order that she may spend her remaining days independently of her children." From this right of inheritance, the modern Dayabhaga System of Law, deprives women from property inheritance and leaves her entirely dependent on her sons and other male members. By contrast, in areas where Mitakshara is prevalent, where widows have only limited inheritance rights, widow-burning is 'comparatively very rare.' He declares that the polygamy among Brahmins is 'directly contrary to the law given by the ancient authors.' No wonder, S N Tagore, while commenting on this aspect of Rammohun, says, "It will also appear from a study of this tract that he was opposed to polygamy, Kulinism and the practice of selling girls in marriage" (Tagore 2001:95).

Rammohun has eloquently discussed the domestic drudgeries to which women are subjected to—unilaterally by men. Women are recognised as a half of her husband—sometimes, a 'better half' but 'they are treated worse than inferior animals.' "For the woman is employed to do the work of a slave in the house, such as, in her turn, to clean the place very early in the morning, whether cold or wet, to scour the dishes, to wash the floor, to cook night and day, to prepare and serve food for her husband, father, and mother-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law and friends and connections. . . . If in the preparation or serving up of the rituals they commit the smallest fault, what insult do they receive from their husband, their mother-in-law and the younger brother of their husband." (Robertson, 1999:145). Rammohun laments that even after women are subjected to

so much misery and deprivation, there is no compassion for them among men and that, even after that, after the death of their husband, they are tied down and burnt to death. He believed that a society is to be judged not by percepts but by practices—by the way it treats its most vulnerable members. In protecting the rights of women, a just society protects everyone.

### **The Banning of Satidaha System and Asiatic Society Publication by R. C. Majumdar**

If, for a single reason, Rammohun will ever be remembered by Indians for his role as "a moderniser, it is his active role in putting an end to the cruel system of Satidaha. It caused a flutter in the academic circle, when, R. C. Majumdar, the famous historian, stated that the chief credit for the abolition of cruel Sati rite must be given to Lord William Bentinck and not to Rammohun Roy." (Majumdar 1977:51). Majumdar cites two reasons for this conclusion.

One was a letter written by Bentinck on 12 June, 1829 to Astell, Chairman of the Board of Directors, East India Company before he became the Governor General of India. He wrote, "There can not be a man more anxious for the abolition of that horrible rite than myself. I do not believe that among the most anxious advocates of that measure any one of them could feel more deeply than I do, the dreadful responsibility hanging over my happiness in this world and the next, if, as the Governor-general of India, I was to consent to the continuance of that practice for one minute longer. I determined therefore, before I came to India that I would virtually take up that matter and that I would come to an early determination upon it." Majumdar says that this letter shows that anyway Bentinck would have put an end to it. But while this letter is true, objectively Rammohun's role could never be denied. Referring to this controversy, the *Bengal Harkara*, in an editorial stated, "Let us not, therefore, offer our exclusive praise and gratitude either to

Rammohun Roy or to Lord William Bentinck. The former would never have succeeded in his patriotic and enlightened labours without the cooperation of the latter nor would Lord Bentinck have ventured on so desirable a measure, if the minds of the natives had not been prepared to abandon the worst of superstitions by the unwearied labours of their distinguished countrymen" (Tagore 2001: 93). While the premises of Majumdar are true, his conclusions are wrong. It has been rightly mentioned that before Lord Bentinck finally enacted the law, he carefully considered the likely reaction of the native soldiers (the Sepoy Mutiny was only 30 years away), the attitude of the Judiciary and the attitude of the native population.

The second point, mentioned by Majumdar, deserves more serious consideration. Majumdar writes, "it was revelation to many when I pointed out that Rammohun Roy, when consulted by Bentinck, opposed the idea of legislation prohibiting the sati rites." It is true that Rammohun opposed the idea of legislation initially. But it is also true that when, after this legislation, the conservatives led by Radhakanta Deb appealed to the House of Commons for banning of this law, Rammohun, in an anti-suttee petition to the House of Commons said, "that this barbarous and inhuman practice has been happily abolished by the Government of the Right Honourable Lord William Cavendish Bentinck, who has thus conferred inestimable benefit on the native population of India." When the same petition was being heard by the Privy Council and when Rammohun came to know that Lord Marquis of Lansdowne was going to support the petition, Rammohun wrote in an inimitable satire, "R. R. (Rammohun Roy) will not fail to be present there to witness personally the scene in which an English Gentleman of highly liberal education professing Christianity, is to pray for the reestablishment of suicide and in many instances, actual murder" (Robertson 1999:271).

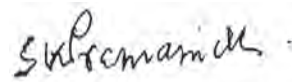
The three tracts which Rammohun wrote for 'conscientizing' the people about the evils of *satidaha* deserves mention here. The first one 'Translation of a Conference between an Advocate for and an Opponent of the Practice of Burning Widows Alive' was translated in English in 1818. The second on 'A second Conference between an Advocate for and an Opponent of the Practice of Burning Widows Alive' was written in 1820. The third one, 'Brief Remarks Regarding Modern Encroachments of the Ancient Rights of Female' was written in 1922. In all these tracts, Rammohun advocated for the abolition of this cruel institution taking extensive help from religious literature with the point of view that this murderous system was a later day deviation and that there is no support for this in the classical religious texts. Rammohun was also instrumental in publishing *Sambad Kaumudi*, a Bengali weekly in which also there was a crusade against *satidaha*. All these tracts and pamphlets were written originally in Bengali. This came out of Rammohun's firm belief that the real root of the abolition of a system lies in the mind of the people. He wanted to awaken the people against the system.

This was the reason why Rammohun was initially hesitant about the success of a coercive legal measure to put an end to the system. As it has been said "Roy fought against the practice of sati on three fronts. The first and the most important was that of public opinion. Roy, through writings, speeches, agitation and discussion prepared the minds of the people in the form of the abolition of sati and explained how the practice had no support in any of the religious texts and hence governmental action in the matter could not be an interference in religious affairs". The second front was influencing the

government to take some initiative in the matter and the third was an enquiry into the causes that provoke women to commit *sati*. It was, as a result of the cumulative effort of all these endeavours that the Bill against *satidaha* was passed. It is also noteworthy to mention that when Rammohun submitted an anti-suttee petition before the House of Commons against the initiative taken by Radhakanta Deb and others to ban the Act, he mentioned, among other arguments, that "the regulation prohibiting the practice has been received with gratitude by many, while the majority of the native population have remained passive and acquiescent although nearly a twelve month has elapsed since the abolition took place" (Robertson 1999:167). Rammohun's credit lies in the fact that he prepared the native mind against such cruel rites and this was done with the help of religion itself.

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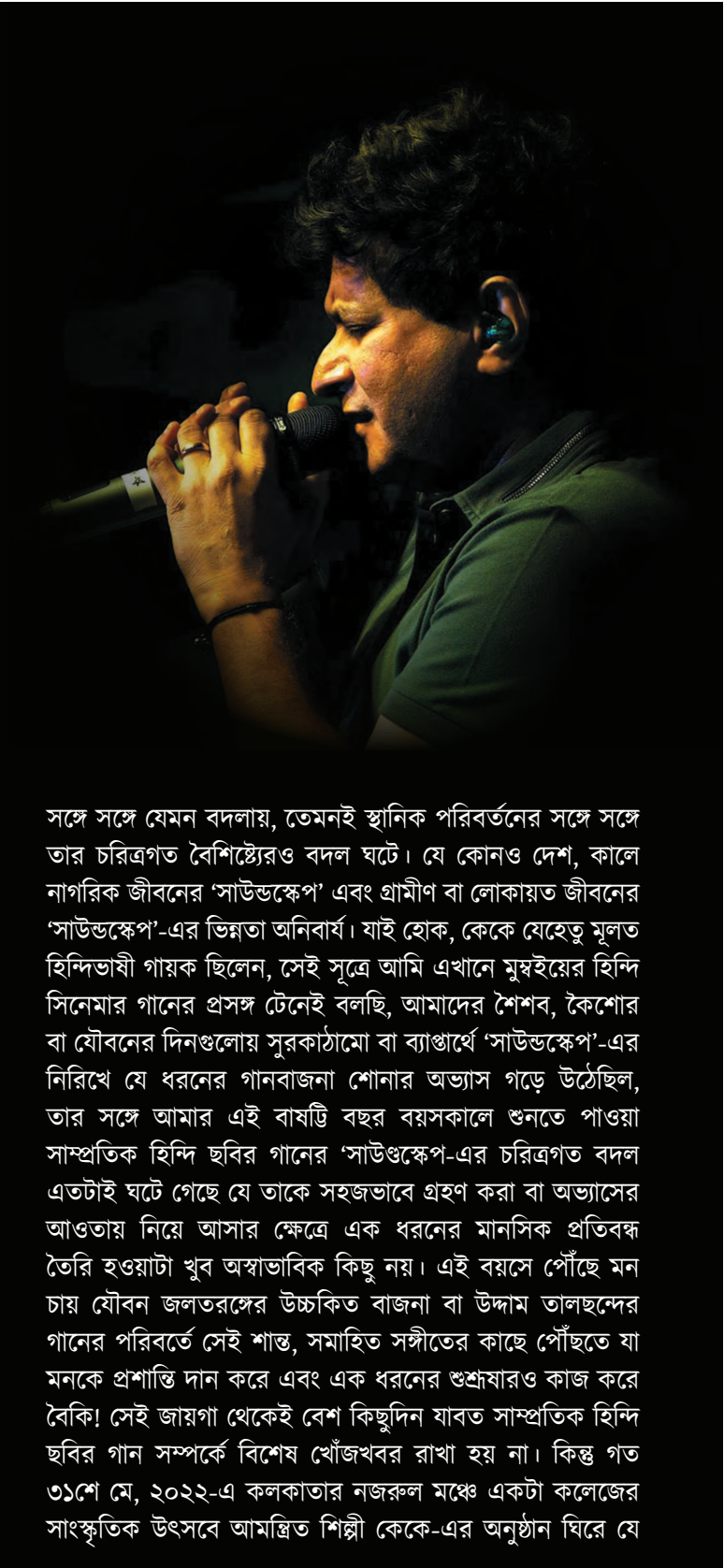


Swapan Kumar Pramanick  
President

## কেকে -- অসময়ে থেমে যাওয়া এক সুরের অভিযাত্রী

কাজী কামাল নাসের  
সঙ্গীতশিল্পী

জীবনে নানা সময়ে নানা ঘটনায়  
বহুবার ঠকেছি। কিন্তু অতি সম্প্রতি  
যে ঘটনায় আরও একবার বিশ্রীভাবে  
ঠকে গেলাম, তার জন্য নিজের  
কাছেই নিজে লজ্জিত বোধ করছি।  
হ্যাঁ, আমি ভারতের অন্যতম জনপ্রিয়  
গায়ক ও নেপথ্য কণ্ঠশিল্পী সদ্যপ্রয়াত  
কেকে-এর প্রসঙ্গেই এই কথাগুলো  
বলছি। লজ্জিত বোধ করার কারণ,  
আমি তাঁর নাম অবশ্যই জানতাম  
কিন্তু তাঁর গান এবং নবীন প্রজন্মের  
ছেলেমেয়েদের মধ্যে তাঁর এই বিপুল  
চাহিদা ও জনপ্রিয়তা সম্পর্কে সত্যিই  
সেভাবে কিছু জানতাম না। এ অজ্ঞতার  
দায় সম্পূর্ণই আমার। অবশ্য এজন্য  
আমাকে খুব একটা দোষও বোধ হয়  
দেওয়া যায় না। কারণ প্রজন্ম-ব্যবধান  
বিষয়টাকে তো মান্যতা দিতেই হয়!  
আশৈশব গানবাজনার সঙ্গে নিবিড়ভাবে  
সম্পৃক্ত একজন মানুষ হিসেবেই বলছি,  
ছেলেবেলা থেকে যে ধরণের শ্রবণ-  
অভিজ্ঞতার মধ্য দিয়ে বড় হয়েছি, তার  
সঙ্গে আজকের শ্রবণ-অভিজ্ঞতার দুস্তর  
ব্যবধান। ইংরেজিতে ‘সাঁউন্ডস্কেপ’  
(soundscape) বলে একটা কথা  
আছে। এই ‘সাঁউন্ডস্কেপ’ সময়ের



সঙ্গে সঙ্গে যেমন বদলায়, তেমনই স্থানিক পরিবর্তনের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে  
তার চরিত্রগত বৈশিষ্ট্যেরও বদল ঘটে। যে কোনও দেশ, কালে  
নাগরিক জীবনের ‘সাঁউন্ডস্কেপ’ এবং গ্রামীণ বা লোকায়ত জীবনের  
‘সাঁউন্ডস্কেপ’-এর ভিন্নতা অনিবার্য। যাই হোক, কেকে যেহেতু মূলত  
হিন্দিভাষী গায়ক ছিলেন, সেই সূত্রে আমি এখানে মুম্বইয়ের হিন্দি  
সিনেমার গানের প্রসঙ্গ টেনেই বলছি, আমাদের শৈশব, কৈশোর  
বা যৌবনের দিনগুলোয় সুরকাঠামো বা ব্যাণ্ডার্থে ‘সাঁউন্ডস্কেপ’-এর  
নিরিখে যে ধরনের গানবাজনা শোনার অভ্যাস গড়ে উঠেছিল,  
তার সঙ্গে আমার এই বাষট্টি বছর বয়সকালে শুনতে পাওয়া  
সাম্প্রতিক হিন্দি ছবির গানের ‘সাঁউন্ডস্কেপ’-এর চরিত্রগত বদল  
এতটাই ঘটে গেছে যে তাকে সহজভাবে গ্রহণ করা বা অভ্যাসের  
আওতায় নিয়ে আসার ক্ষেত্রে এক ধরনের মানসিক প্রতিবন্ধ  
তৈরি হওয়াটা খুব অস্বাভাবিক কিছু নয়। এই বয়সে পোঁছে মন  
চায় যৌবন জলতরঙ্গের উচ্চকিত বাজনা বা উদ্দাম তালছন্দের  
গানের পরিবর্তে সেই শান্ত, সমাহিত সঙ্গীতের কাছে পোঁছতে যা  
মনকে প্রশান্তি দান করে এবং এক ধরনের শুশ্রূষারও কাজ করে  
বৈকি! সেই জায়গা থেকেই বেশ কিছুদিন যাবত সাম্প্রতিক হিন্দি  
ছবির গান সম্পর্কে বিশেষ খোঁজখবর রাখা হয় না। কিন্তু গত  
৩১শে মে, ২০২২-এ কলকাতার নজরুল মঞ্চে একটা কলেজের  
সাংস্কৃতিক উৎসবে আমন্ত্রিত শিল্পী কেকে-এর অনুষ্ঠান ঘিরে যে

উন্মাদনার ছবি সংবাদ মাধ্যমে প্রত্যক্ষ করলাম, তাতে আমার দিব্যচক্ষু খুলে গেল বললেও অত্যাঙ্কি হবে না। এই শহরে সাম্প্রতিককালে খুব কম শিল্পীর অনুষ্ঠানেই নবীন প্রজন্মের শ্রোতা-দর্শকের এমন বাঁধভাঙা উচ্ছ্বাস নজরে এসেছে। ছেলেমেয়েদের এই সীমাহীন ভালবাসা, আগ্নেয়গিরির ভিতর থেকে বেরিয়ে আসা আবেগের এই লাভাস্রোত আমাকে শিল্পী কেকে-এর কাছে পৌঁছতে এক প্রকার বাধ্য করল; আগ্রহী করে তুলল তাঁর গাওয়া গানগুলো আবিষ্কার করতে, পাশাপাশি মানুষ কেকে-কে জানতে, বুঝতে এবং তাঁর নক্ষত্র হয়ে ওঠার সংগ্রামী পথটাকে চিনে নিতে। এই অনুসন্ধান করতে গিয়ে একদিকে যেমন আমার অজানা বহু তথ্য আবিষ্কার করেছি তেমনই অবাধ বিস্ময়ে এও আবিষ্কার করেছি যে কেকে-এর গাওয়া বেশ কিছু গান তো আমি রেডিও, টি ভি বা অন্যান্য মাধ্যমে অবশ্যই শুনেছি। শুধু তাই নয়, মনে রেশ রেখে যাওয়া সে সব গানের দু'এক কলি কখনও আনমনে গুনগুন করে গেয়েও উঠিনি কি? কিন্তু এ বোধহয় আমার বয়সেরই দোষ যে একটু কষ্ট করে জেনে নেওয়া হয়নি যে এই গানগুলির কণ্ঠশিল্পীর নাম কেকে। এই সংস্কারোক্তিকটুকু সহৃদয় পাঠকদের সামনে রাখলাম।

কৃষ্ণকুমার কুম্মাথ ওরফে কেকে-এর জন্ম ভারতবর্ষের রাজধানী দিল্লির এক মালয়ালি পরিবারে ১৯৬৮ সালের ২৩শে আগস্ট তারিখে। তাঁর পড়াশোনা ও বেড়ে ওঠা সবটাই দিল্লিতে। কিরোড়ীমল কলেজ থেকে বাণিজ্য শাখার স্নাতক পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হওয়ার পর কোনও এক কোম্পানিতে মাস ছয়েকের জন্য মার্কেটিং এল্লিকিউটিভের কাজও করেন। কিন্তু সঙ্গীতের প্রতি তাঁর দীর্ঘদিন লালিত অনুরাগ থেকেই একদিন তিনি মনে মনে সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়ে নেন যে গায়ক তাঁকে হতেই হবে। কিন্তু ভারতবর্ষে গায়ক হিসেবে নিজেকে প্রতিষ্ঠিত ও খ্যাতিমান দেখতে হলে মুম্বইয়ের হিন্দি ছবির জগতে নেপথ্য কণ্ঠশিল্পী হিসেবে পা রাখতেই হবে। কিন্তু সে যে বড় কঠিন

পথ! তার আগে খেয়ে-পরে বাঁচতে হলে কিছু একটা জীবিকা তো চাই! সেই তাগিদ থেকেই তিনি লড়াইয়ের প্রাথমিক পর্বে দিল্লির বিভিন্ন হোটেলে গান গাওয়ার কাজ শুরু করেন। ১৯৯১ সালে তিনি বিবাহসূত্রে আবদ্ধ হন এবং ১৯৯৪ সালে ভাগ্যান্বেষণে মুম্বই পাড়ি দেন।

মনে রাখতে হবে, সঙ্গীতে কেকে-এর কোনও প্রথাগত শিক্ষা ছিল না কিন্তু তাঁর কণ্ঠে মানব হৃদয়ের সব রকমের আবেগ খুব সহজেই অনূদিত হতো শুধু নয়, সে অনুবাদ শ্রোতার মনে অনিবার্যভাবে এক অদ্ভুত স্নিগ্ধ, মায়াবী আলোর সঞ্চার ঘটাতো সক্ষম হতো। তিনি বিশ্বাস করতেন, শিল্পীর মুখ দেখানোটা গানবাজনার ক্ষেত্রে খুব একটা জরুরি বিষয় নয়। সে কারণেই ২০১৯-এ দেওয়া এক সাক্ষাৎকারে তিনি বলেছিলেন, “আমি মাইক্রোফোনের সামনে যতোটা স্বচ্ছন্দ বোধ করি, ঠিক ততোটাই বিব্রত বোধ করি ক্যামেরার সামনে।” ১৯৯৪-এ মুম্বইয়ে পা রাখার পর সেখানকার সঙ্গীতজগতে একটা সুযোগ পাওয়ার লক্ষ্যে তিনি সেখানকার খ্যাতনামা সঙ্গীত ব্যক্তিত্ব লুই বাক্সস, রঞ্জিত বারোট এবং লেসলি লিউইসকে তাঁর গাওয়া কিছু গানের ডেমো টেপ জমা দেন। অতঃপর ইউ টি ভি-র একটি বিজ্ঞাপনী গান বা ‘জিঙ্গল’-এ কণ্ঠদানের মধ্য দিয়ে শুরু হয় তাঁর মুম্বইয়ের সঙ্গীত সফর। চার বছরের মধ্যেই তিনি ভারতবর্ষের এগারোটি ভাষায় মোট সাড়ে তিন হাজারেরও বেশি জিঙ্গল-এ কণ্ঠ দেন। মুম্বইয়ের মতো জায়গায় তাঁকে প্রথম জিঙ্গল গাওয়ার সুযোগ করে দেওয়ার জন্য তিনি লেসলি লিউইসকে তাঁর অন্যতম পরামর্শদাতা বা গুরু হিসাবে মান্যতা দিতেন।

এরপর এল ১৯৯৯ সাল। সে বছরই তিনি হিন্দি ছায়াছবির নেপথ্য কণ্ঠশিল্পী হিসাবে প্রথম গান গাইবার সুযোগ পেলেন। বিশিষ্ট সঙ্গীত পরিচালক ইসমাইল দরবারের সঙ্গীত পরিচালনায় চলচ্চিত্র পরিচালক সঞ্জয় লীলা বনশালীর ছবি ‘হম দিল দে চুকে সনম’-এ ‘তড়প তড়পকে ইস দিল সে’, গানটির মাধ্যমেই হিন্দি ছবির গানের

জগতে কেকে-এর আত্মপ্রকাশ ঘটল। আর এই একটিমাত্র গানের মধ্য দিয়েই আপামর ভারতবাসী সঙ্গীতাকাশে এক নতুন নক্ষত্রের জন্ম প্রত্যক্ষ করল। যদিও এর আগে ১৯৯৬ সালে গুলজারের ছবি ‘মাচিস’-এর একটি বিখ্যাত গান ‘ছোড় আয়ে হম’-এর অংশবিশেষে কণ্ঠ দিয়েছিলেন, তবু ‘তড়প তড়পকে ইস দিল সে’ গানটিকেই কেকে তাঁর জীবনের অন্যতম প্রধান বাঁক বলে মনে করতেন। এরপর একের পর এক ছবিতে নেপথ্য কণ্ঠশিল্পী হিসাবে তিনি ডাক পেতে থাকলেন। কেকে চাইতেন না, তাঁর কণ্ঠ কোনও বিশেষ একজন অভিনেতার জন্যই ব্যবহৃত হোক। বিভিন্ন অভিনেতার নানাবিধ চরিত্রে কণ্ঠদান করা তাঁর কাছে এক ধরনের চ্যালেঞ্জ ছিল। ভারতের বিভিন্ন আঞ্চলিক ভাষায় তিনি গান গেয়েছেন। তার মধ্যে সংখ্যার নিরিখে তামিল ভাষায় তাঁর গানের সংখ্যা অনেক বেশি। বিশেষ করে এই শতাব্দীর প্রথম দশকের তামিল ছবিকে কেকে-এর যুগের সঙ্গে সমীকৃত করা হয়ে থাকে।

তাঁর গাওয়া বিভিন্ন ছবির জনপ্রিয়তম গানগুলি হল — ‘তড়প তড়পকে ইস দিল সে’ (হম দিল দে চুকে সনম, ১৯৯৯), ‘আপ্লাড়ি পড়ু’ (তামিল ছবির গান), ‘ডোলা রে, ডোলা রে’ (দেবদাস, ২০০২), ‘ক্যা মুঝে প্যার হ্যায়’ (ও লমহে, ২০০৬), ‘আঁখো মে তেরি’ (ওম শান্তি ওম, ২০০৭), ‘খুদা জানে’ (বচনা অ্যায় হসিনো, ২০০৮), ‘পিয়া আয়ে না’ (আশিকী ২, ২০১৩), ‘মত আজমা রে’ (মার্ভার ৩, ২০১৩), ‘ইন্ডিয়া ওয়ালে’ (হ্যাপি নিউ ইয়ার, ২০১৪), ‘তু যো মিলা’ (বজরঙ্গী ভাইজান, ২০১৫)। এ ছাড়াও তামিল ছবিতে তাঁর গাওয়া জনপ্রিয় গানের সংখ্যাও অনেক। তবে তাঁর পূর্বসূরীরা কেরলের ত্রিচুরের বাসিন্দা হলেও এবং তাঁর জন্ম একটি মালয়ালি পরিবারে হওয়া সত্ত্বেও পঁচিশ বছরের সাঙ্গীতিক জীবনে তাঁর গাওয়া মালয়ালি গানের সংখ্যা মাত্র একটি যার শিরোনাম ‘রহস্যময়’ (পুথিয়া মুখম, ২০০৯)। দুঃখের হলেও এটা সত্যি যে ছ’ বার তাঁর নাম ‘ফিল্মফেয়ার অ্যাওয়ার্ড’-এর জন্য

মনোনীত হলেও তাঁর ভাগ্যে এই পুরস্কার একবারও জোটেনি। ‘বচনা অ্যায় হসিনো’ ছবির ‘খুদা জানে’ গানটির জন্য তিনি ‘শ্রেষ্ঠ নেপথ্য কণ্ঠশিল্পী - পুরুষ’ বিভাগে ২০০৯ সালের ‘স্ক্রীন অ্যাওয়ার্ডস’ সম্মানে ভূষিত হন। এই ২০২২-এই তিনি পরিচালক সৃজিত মুখোপাধ্যায়ের নতুন ছবি ‘শেরদিল দ্য পিলিভিট সাগা’-এর জন্য প্রবীণ গীতিকার গুলজারের কথায় এবং শান্তনু মৈত্রের সঙ্গীত পরিচালনায় তাঁর জীবনের শেষ গানটি গাইলেন। সেই ‘ধূপ পানি বহনে দে’ গানটি ইতোমধ্যেই ইউটিউব সহ অন্যান্য বহু ডিজিটাল মাধ্যমে প্রকাশিত হওয়ার সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই বিপুলভাবে জনাদৃত হয়েছে। সম্প্রতি ইংরেজি দৈনিক *দ্য ইন্ডিয়ান এক্সপ্রেস*-এ প্রকাশিত এক সাক্ষাৎকারে এ ছবির গীতিকার গুলজার অত্যন্ত আক্ষেপের সুরে জানিয়েছেন — “সৃজিত (মুখোপাধ্যায়, ছবির পরিচালক) শেরদিল-এ আমার একটা উপকার করেছে। আমি শুধু এমন একটা সুন্দর ছবির জন্য গান লিখতে পেরেছি তাই নয়, এই ছবি দীর্ঘদিন বাদে কেকে-এর সঙ্গে আমার আবার দেখা করার একটা সুযোগ করে দিয়েছে। কেকে আমারই ছবি ‘মাচিস’-এর ‘ছোড় আয়ে হম ওহ গলিয়াঁ’-তেই প্রথম কণ্ঠ দিয়েছিল। সে যখন ‘শেরদিল’-এর গানটা গাইতে এল, আমার মন আনন্দে ভরে উঠেছিল। এটা অত্যন্ত লজ্জার যে এটাই তার শেষ গান হিসেবে চিহ্নিত হল! মনে হলো সে যেন বিদায় বলতেই এসেছিল!”

এবার আসা যাক তাঁর ব্যক্তিগত অ্যালবাম প্রসঙ্গে। ১৯৯৯-এ সোনি মিউজিক ভারতে বাণিজ্য করার লক্ষ্যে সবেমাত্র পা রেখেছে এবং তারা প্রচার দেওয়ার লক্ষ্যে একটি তরতাজা নতুন কণ্ঠের সন্ধানে রত। কেকে-কে তাঁরা নির্বাচিত করলেন এবং লেসলি লিউইস-এর সঙ্গীত পরিচালনায় কেকে-এর প্রথম একক অ্যালবাম ‘পল’-এর প্রকাশ ঘটালেন। সুরেলা পপ, রক ধ্বনির আধারে নির্মিত এই অ্যালবামের গান ‘আপ কি দুয়া’, ‘ইয়ারোঁ’ এবং অবশ্যই শীর্ষ সঙ্গীত ‘পল’ মুহূর্তে জনপ্রিয়তার শীর্ষ স্পর্শ করলো। এই অ্যালবামের ‘পল’ এবং



‘ইয়ারোঁ’ গান দুটি স্কুল-কলেজের ফেয়ারওয়েল পার্টির অনিবার্য অনুষ্ঠে পরিণত হয়েছে। এই ‘পল’ অ্যালবামটির জন্য ‘শ্রেষ্ঠ কণ্ঠশিল্পী’ হিসাবে ‘স্ক্রীন অ্যাওয়ার্ড’ পান। এরপর দীর্ঘ আট বছরের ব্যবধানে ২০০৮ সালে তিনি তাঁর দ্বিতীয় অ্যালবাম ‘হমসফর’ প্রকাশ করেন। এই সংকলনের গানগুলিও যথেষ্ট জনপ্রিয়তা পায়। উল্লেখ্য, এই সংকলনের আটটি গানের সঙ্গীত রচনা করেছিলেন কেকে নিজেই। এছাড়াও তিনি বহু জনপ্রিয় টেলিভিশন ধারাবাহিকের জন্য গান গেয়েছেন। এই সিরিয়ালগুলির মধ্যে উল্লেখযোগ্য কয়েকটি নাম ‘জাস্ট মোহব্বত’, ‘শাকা লাকা বুম বুম’, ‘কুছ বুকি সি পলকেঁ’, ‘হিপ হিপ হুররে’, ‘কাব্যাজলি’ এবং ‘জাস্ট ডান্স’। টেলিভিশনের জনপ্রিয় প্রতিভা অন্বেষণমূলক অনুষ্ঠান ‘ফেম গুরুকুল’-এ তাঁকে বিচারকের আসন অলঙ্কৃত করতেও দেখা গেছে। তিনি একটি পাকিস্তানি টি ভি শো-তেও গান গেয়েছেন। তা ছাড়াও এম টি ভি এবং সোনি মিক্স টি ভি চ্যানেলের বিভিন্ন সঙ্গীতানুষ্ঠানে তিনি নিয়মিত অংশগ্রহণ করেছেন। দীর্ঘ দশ বছর পর ২০১৫-তে টেলিভিশনের রিয়্যালিটি শো ‘ইন্ডিয়ান আইডল জুনিয়র-সিজন ২’-এ আবার তাঁকে জুরির ভূমিকায় দেখা যায়।

২০১৯ সালে *হিন্দুস্তান টাইমস*-কে দেওয়া এক সাক্ষাৎকারে কেকে জানিয়েছিলেন যে তাঁর সঙ্গীতজীবনের যাবতীয় সক্রিয়তা ছিল ‘লাইভ পারফরম্যান্স’ বা মঞ্চানুষ্ঠান এবং সিনেমার নেপথ্য গায়নকেন্দ্রিক। মঞ্চানুষ্ঠানেই তিনি সর্বাধিক আনন্দ পেতেন এবং দর্শকদের প্রতি তাঁর দায়বদ্ধতাকে

তিনি কখনোই উপেক্ষা করতে পারতেন না। ২০০৮-এ প্রকাশিত তাঁর দ্বিতীয় অ্যালবামের অসাধারণ সাফল্যের পর পরবর্তী অ্যালবাম প্রকাশের ব্যাপারে তাঁর উন্মুক্ততার কথাও তিনি জানাতে ভোলেননি।

নিয়তির এমনই পরিহাস, গত ৩১ মে, ২০২২ তারিখে কলকাতার নজরুল মঞ্চে আয়োজিত একটি কলেজের বার্ষিক সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠানে সঙ্গীত পরিবেশন করতে করতেই তিনি অসুস্থ বোধ করেন। কিন্তু তাঁর গানের চৌম্বক আকর্ষণে মোহিত শ্রোতা-দর্শকদের ওই চূড়ান্ত উন্মাদনা ও ভালবাসা উপেক্ষা করে তিনি গান থামাতে চাননি। শ্রোতাদের চাহিদা মেনে তিনি পরের পর গান গেয়ে গেছেন। অনুষ্ঠান শেষ হতেই তাঁকে হোটেলে ফিরিয়ে আনা হয় এবং ঘরে ঢোকান অব্যবহিত পরেই তিনি পড়ে যান। সঙ্গে সঙ্গে তাঁকে সি এম আর আই হাসপাতালে নিয়ে যাওয়া হয়। সেখানে চিকিৎসকেরা তাঁকে ‘মৃত’ বলে ঘোষণা করেন। তাঁর দেহের ময়নাতদন্তের রিপোর্টে হৃদরোগে আক্রান্ত হওয়ার কারণেই তাঁর মৃত্যু ঘটেছে বলে জানানো হয়।

এই লেখাটা লিখতে লিখতেই ইউটিউবে তাঁর সদ্য প্রকাশিত ‘শেরদিল’-এর ‘ধূপ পানি বহনে দে’ গানটি শুনছিলাম। লেখার শুরুতেই শিল্পী কেকে-এর গানের সঙ্গে আমার দীর্ঘ অপরিচয়জনিত লজ্জার কথা উল্লেখ করেছিলাম। সেই লজ্জা আরও একবার আমাকে বিদ্ধ করলো। যন্ত্রণাক্রান্ত হৃদয়ে প্রয়াত শিল্পী কেকে-এর প্রতি আমার অন্তরের শ্রদ্ধা জানালাম এবং তাঁর কাছে ক্ষমাও চেয়ে রাখলাম।

## Dr. B. C. Roy : A Great Teacher

**Dr. Sankar Kumar Nath**

Medical Science Secretary, The Asiatic Society



It was 1912. The place was Campbell Medical School. Recently a young physician, having come back from England with two degrees like MRCP(London) and FRCS (England), joined this school as a teacher of Anatomy and was getting a little over Rs. 330 a month as salary. Dr. Col. Anderson was the Superintendent then. Later on Dr. Major Rait, an IMS joined as Superintendent. On that very day, Rait called upon our young physician to his office. Now let us hear the dialogues between these two persons :

Major Rait : What are the works you are doing here?

Young physician : I have to take some didactic lectures for the students and supervise the dissection of the dead body to the students as a demonstrator.

Major Rait : I am afraid, you are being paid too much for the work.

Of course, our young physician did not keep quiet to this insulting remark from an English.

Young physician replied : I really fail to understand why a person who obtained MRCP (Lond.), FRCS (Eng) and MD(Cal) should get only Rs. 330 a month, while another (i. e. Dr. Rait) who even failed in the Edinburgh Fellowship, will get Rs. 1500 a month!

I do not see why such differentiation is made in the profession. Perhaps the only reason is the difference in the colour of the skin.

With this pinching words from a young

physician, Dr. Rait became annoyed and said: I am sending a note to you soon.<sup>1</sup>

That was the end of the dialogue and Dr. Rait bade goodbye.

This young doctor having esteemed self-respect and patriotism was none other than the Great Physician-Teacher Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy.

### Calcutta Medical College

After coming back to Calcutta from England in 1911, Dr. Roy wanted to be a teacher at Calcutta Medical College and for that matter he met Dr. Harris, his old teacher at Medical College and prayed for any teaching post there. Dr. Harris "bluntly told him that he had nothing to offer him at Calcutta".

However, after a course of discussion, Dr. Roy was given a supernumerary job at Calcutta Medical College. He worked here over 6 months. The gazette notification of this appointment was as below :

"No. 9435, dated Calcutta, the 25th July, 1911, —Third grade Civil Assistant Surgeon Bidhan Chandra Roy, on return from leave, is placed on supernumerary duty at the Medical College Hospital, Calcutta, until further orders, with effect from the 6th July, 1911."<sup>2</sup>

This appointment letter was signed by Col. Harris.

By this appointment, Dr. Roy was to teach the constables of Calcutta Police in First Aid

and the ambulance work. Simultaneously he started 'a small tutorial class in Surgery', because he really loved teaching.

After about six months' job here, Dr. Roy got the opportunity to join at Campbell Medical School in 1912.

### Campbell Medical School

Dr. B. C. Roy, as already said, worked as a teacher of Anatomy at Campbell Medical School from 1912 to 1919; the appointment notification was as below :

"No. 878 dated Calcutta, the 16th January, 1912— Third grade Civil Assistant Surgeon Bidhan Chandra Roy is appointed to be teacher of Anatomy, Campbell Medical School, Calcutta, vice first grade Civil Assistant Surgeon Jyotish Chandra Mustafi transferred."<sup>3</sup>

This appointment letter was signed by Col. G. F. A. Harris, MD, IMS, Inspector-General of Civil Hospitals, Bengal.

### Carmichael Medical College

This is the first non-official (non-government) Medical College in India. At the onset it was started with the name as 'Belgachia Medical College' and was opened by Lord Carmichael on 5 July 1916. This college was entirely manned and managed by Indians, with the thoughts of patriotism behind. Initially it was affiliated with the Calcutta University upto first MB examination in 1914.<sup>4</sup>

Now let us see the postings of Dr. B. C. Roy chronologically in the service before joining the Carmichael Medical College as Professor of Medicine.

1. 21 November, 1906—Asstt. Surgeon, 3rd grade on Supy. duty, Medical College Hospital.
2. 11 December, 1906—Asstt. Surgeon, 3rd grade, House Physician, Medical College Hospital.
3. 16 December, 1908—Ditto, on Supy. duty, ditto.

4. Extraordinary leave for 2 years 1 month and 27 days, from 9 May 1909 [Dr. Roy left for England]
5. 6 July, 1911—Asstt. Surgeon Supy. duty, Medical College Hospital.
6. 27 September, 1911—Ditto, Instructor to the Calcutta Police in first aid to the injured and ambulance work.
7. 13 December, 1911—Ditto, on Supy. duty, Medical College Hospital.
8. 18 January, 1912—Ditto, and Teacher of Anatomy, Campbell Medical School.<sup>5</sup>

Here I must mention that almost all the biographers of Dr. B. C. Roy wrote that after returning from England Dr. Roy had been attached with Medical College for nine months and then joined Campbell Medical School. But you can well see from his postings mentioned above, it is not correct, rather the duration was 6 months 12 days.

It was in 1919, the question of affiliation of the Final MB of Carmichael Medical College to Calcutta University was raised automatically, for which College faculty needed Dr. B. C. Roy to join.

What happened next, is from K. P. Thomas' book 'Dr. B. C. Roy': :

"Bidhan remained in the Campbell Medical School till 1919 and then suddenly resigned his post to join Carmichael Medical College, the present R. G. Kar Medical College. It was an instantaneous decision and was taken in the greater interest of the nation.

One day while driving in his car to College Street through Bow Bazar, Dr. Roy was stopped on the way by Dr. Mrigendra Lal Mitra who came from the opposite direction. He told Dr. Roy that the question of the affiliation of the Carmichael Medical College was to be decided within a few hours and the Syndicate had refused to accept their selection of a Professor of Medicine but would be willing to sanction the affiliation if Dr. B. C. Roy became the Professor of Medicine. Without a second's thought Dr. Roy agreed, turned his car back to

the Campbell Medical School and submitted his resignation to the Superintendent, Col. Leventon. The Superintendent hesitated to accept it and suggested that Dr. Roy could, instead, take nine months' leave which was due to him and go to the Carmichael Medical College. 'If after nine months, the College did not progress, you could come back here', he added. But Bidhan refused to take leave and insisted on the acceptance of his resignation. In an hour's time it was made known to the Syndicate that Dr. B. C. Roy had agreed to be the Professor of Medicine and the University sanctioned the affiliation of the Carmichael Medical College.<sup>6</sup>

It is noteworthy that since then Dr. B. C. Roy had been the Professor of Medicine there till his death.

"Here it must be mentioned that Carmichael Medical College sprang out of the patriotic enthusiasm of nationalist-minded doctors of Bengal."<sup>7</sup>

So final MB affiliation was sanctioned in 1919. Simultaneously in the same year (1919), the name of the College was changed from Belgachia Medical College to Carmichael Medical College. The Faculty of this College was as below in 1920 :

Principal : Dr. M. N. Banerjee (B. A., M. R. C. S. (Lond.))

Prof. of Medicine : Dr. B. C. Roy (M. D., M. R. C. P., F. R. C. S.)

Prof. Surgery : Dr. S. P. Sarbadhikari (B. A., M. D.)

Prof. Surgery : Dr. Mrigendralal Mitra (M. D., F. R. C. S. (Edin))

Prof. Ophthalmic Surgery : Dr. M. N. Chatterjee (M. B.)

Prof. Obstetrics and Gynecology : Dr. Kedarnath Das (M. D.)

Prof. Zoology : Dr. Ekendranath Ghosh (M. Sc., M. D.)

Total number of teachers in the Faculty was Thirty-five.<sup>8</sup>

What Dr. Roy did at Carmichael Medical College from the beginning, is being quoted

here from Thomas' book :

"One of the very first things that Dr. Roy did on taking up the post of Professor of Medicine in the Carmichael Medical College was to put up a notice on the big board as a motto for his students. It read :

'A heart that never hardens,  
A temper that never tires,  
A touch that never hurts.

From the outset Bidhan became very popular with the students who were always eager to attend his classes. One of his students, who in later life became an eminent doctor, confessed to me that it was always a pleasure for him and his fellow students to attend Bidhan's classes and the most difficult problems in Medicine were always explained to them in his characteristic lucidity of language with an extraordinary grasp on the subject."<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy was the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University from 1942 to 1944.

### A Few More Words

After independence, the Campbell Medical School became Campbell Medical College in 1948 and in 1950, the college was renamed a Nilratan Sarkar Medical College.

In 1948, 12 May, Carmichael Medical College was renamed as R. G. Kar Medical College and Government of West Bengal took over it on 12 January, 1958.

### References

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2. *The Calcutta Gazette*, July 26, 1911, p. 1113.
3. *The Calcutta Gazette*, January 7, 1912, p. 65.
4. 'Calcutta University Commission, 1917-19, Report', Vol. III, Part I, 1919, pp. 71-73.
5. 'History of Services of Gazetted and other officers serving under Government of Bengal', Part II, Calcutta, 1916, p. 122.
6. *Dr. B. C. Roy* by K. P. Thomas, 1955, p. 84.
7. *ibid.*
8. *Thacker's Indian Directory*, 1920, p. 52.
9. *Dr. B. C. Roy* by K. P. Thomas, 1955, p. 86.

## Sir Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar (1837-1925)

**Shyam Sundar Bhattacharya**

Philological Secretary, The Asiatic Society

Sir R. G. Bhandarkar was a doyen of Oriental Research and Sanskrit Scholarship. Besides a teacher and author, Bhandarkar was a social reformer and an active member of the 'Prarthana Samaj'. In fact, he was known in India more as a social and religious reformer than a scholar. Through his researches he advocated widow marriage and castigated the evils of the caste system and child marriage.

Bhandarkar along with noted social reformers Vaman Abaji Modak and Justice Ranade established the Maharashtra Girls Education Society In 1885. It is worth-mentioning that this society was the

parent-body of the first native-run girls' high school in Poona. Subjects such as English Literature, Arithmetic and Science were included in the school curriculum right from its inception.

Bhandarkar was born in a Saraswat Brahmin family in Ratnagiri District on 6th July, 1837 and completed his education from the Elphinstone Institution at Bombay. Mathematics was his favorite subject. He started the serious study of the Sanskrit language and literature when he was appointed as Senior Fellow at Poona. Bhandarkar was subsequently appointed



as Assistant Professor of Sanskrit at the Elphinstone College, Bombay (1868 - 81). He was the first Indian to be appointed as Professor of Sanskrit in the Deccan College, Poona (1882). The Honorary Ph. D. Degree was conferred on him by the Gottingen University in 1885 and LLD by the University of Bombay. He was appointed as Vice Chancellor of the University of Bombay (1893-95).

As educationist he was a member of Viceroy's Legislative Council in 1903 and represented the University in the Bombay Legislative Council during 1904-08. He was made a C. I. E. in 1889. Bhandarkar was knighted in 1911 (KCIE). He was elected as Honorary Member of the Asiatic Society and Oriental Society of Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy, America and Russia.

He was involved in research and writing throughout his life. Six volumes of his Catalogues of Sanskrit Manuscripts will ever remain a monument of his scholarly work. His Wilson Philological Lectures (1877) and Early History of the Deccan (1884) are still regarded as authoritative. His 'Reports on the search of Sanskrit Manuscripts'; constitute significant contribution to the history of Sanskrit and Jain literature and philosophy. 'Vaisnavism,

Saivism and Minor Religious Systems' is his last major publication.

Bhandarkar wrote an article on Haug's translation of the 'Aitareya Brahmana' and it attracted the attention of Weber who republished it in the 'Indische Studien'. He was a pioneer in applying western methods to the study of Sanskrit and Indian Antiquities, and his works present the unique combination of the Orient and the Occident. He participated in the International Conference on Oriental Studies held in London (1874) and Vienna (1886) making invaluable contributions.

The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona was formally inaugurated on 6th July, 1917 in Poona and named after Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar, long regarded as the founder of Indology in India on the completion of his 80th year of birth. The Institute is well known for its collection of old Sanskrit and Prakrit manuscripts. He presided over the First Oriental Conference held at Poona in 1919.

In 1986 the Government of Bombay started a Pan Indian manuscripts collection Project. Scholars like George Bühler, R. G. Bhandarkar, Kathavate and Ghate collected more than 17,000 important manuscripts under the project. Finally, these were transferred to Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute. The most prized collection includes a paper-manuscript of the *Cikitsasarasangraha* dated 1320.

Another long term project under the auspices of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute which started in April, 1919, was the preparation of a Critical Edition of the Mahabharata. V. S. Sukhthankar was

appointed as the general editor. The Critical Edition was collected from 1259 manuscripts. This edition in 19 volumes comprised the critically constituted text of the 18 parvas of the *Mahabharata*. An elaborate Critical Apparatus and a Prolegomena on the materials and methodology was written by V. S. Sukhthankar.

It may be pertinent to mention here that Devadatta Ramakrishna Bhandarkar (1875-1950), worthy son of Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar was an officer in the Archaeological Survey of India and joint editor of the Indian Antiquary. Being convinced with his scholarship, Sir Asutosh Mukherjee persuaded him to join the University of Calcutta and he joined the University in 1917 as Carmichael Professor of Ancient Indian History and Culture. He made invaluable contributions to epigraphy, numismatics, ethnography and so on.

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#### Colophon

I am indebted to Dr. Sujata Mishra, Assistant Librarian and Dr. Saheli Sarkar, Post-Doctoral Fellow for their kind help.

## অক্ষয়কুমার দত্ত -- আজও যাঁর প্রয়োজন ফুরোয়নি

রামপ্রণয় গঙ্গোপাধ্যায়

অবসরপ্রাপ্ত প্রকৌশলী, এন.আই.টি. (দুর্গাপুর)

১২ই জুন ২০২২ তারিখে পশ্চিমবঙ্গে তিন পুণ্যার্থীর মৃত্যু হয়। ১৩ই জুন সমস্ত সংবাদ পত্রের প্রথম পৃষ্ঠায় ভীড়ের চাপে মৃত্যুর কারণসহ সচিত্র রঙীন প্রতিবেদন ছাপা হয়। উঃ ২৪ পরগণার পানিহাটীর মহোৎসবতলার মেলা ৫০৬ বছরের পুরনো যা প্রাতিষ্ঠানিক ভাবে বিশ্বে বিজ্ঞান চর্চার শুরুর প্রায় সমসাময়িক। ধর্ম নির্বিশেষে পুণ্যার্জনের উন্মত্ততায় এ' ধরনের মৃত্যু অপ্রত্যাশিত ও দুঃখজনক হলেও অস্বাভাবিক নয়, পৃথিবীময় খুঁজলে তালিকা হবে সুদীর্ঘ। অক্ষয়কুমার দত্তের ২০৩তম জন্মদিনের ৩৩ দিন আগের এই দুর্ঘটনা এখানে প্রাসঙ্গিক হলো কেন? মৃত তিনজনের নিবাস অক্ষয়কুমার দত্তের জন্মস্থান পূর্ব বর্ধমানের পূর্ববঙ্গলী ব্লকের চুপি গ্রাম থেকে মাত্র ১৫ কিমি. দূরের যজ্ঞেশ্বরপুর গ্রামে। দয়াময়ী-পীতাম্বর পুত্র অক্ষয়কুমার জগদীশ্বরে বিশ্বাসী হলেও পরবর্তীকালে নিজে অন্ধবিশ্বাসের অন্ধকার থেকে মুক্ত করে পরাধীন দেশ ও সমাজকে যুক্তির আলো দেখিয়েছেন। প্রমাণ দিয়েছেন সহজ সমীকরণ দিয়ে :

পরিশ্রম = শস্য

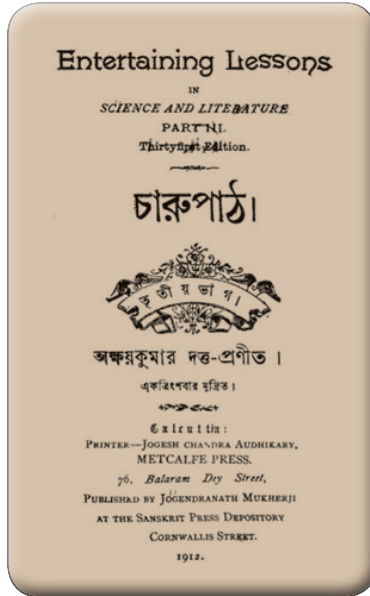
পরিশ্রম + প্রার্থনা = শস্য

অতএব, প্রার্থনা = ০ (শূন্য)

তিনি তৎকালীন রাজধানী কলকাতার হিন্দু হোস্টেলের কিছু ছাত্রের প্রশ্নের সম্মুখীন হন—প্রার্থনা করে কী হয়? তিনি তাদের জিজ্ঞাসা করেন—কৃষকরা পরিশ্রম করে কী পায়? তারা উত্তর দেয়—ফসল (শস্য)। তিনি প্রশ্ন করেন শ্রমদানের সঙ্গে যদি

প্রার্থনাও করেন, কৃষকরা তার জন্য বাড়তি কিছু পাবেন? ছাত্রদের সমস্বরে উত্তর—না। তাহলে প্রার্থনার মূল্য দাঁড়ালো শূন্য (০)। তাহলে পরাধীন ভারতে প্রমাণিত এই সত্য স্বাধীনতার ৭৫ বছর পরেও উপেক্ষিত না থাকলে শুধুমাত্র তাঁর জন্মস্থানের প্রতিবেশী তিনি গ্রামবাসীরই প্রাণ বাঁচতো না, একবিংশ শতকে এসে আমাদের মনে এ প্রশ্ন স্থান পেতো না যে আমরা কি প্রতি পলে 'পিছনের দিকে এগনো'র আশ্ফালনে সন্তুষ্ট হয়ে উঠছি? তার উত্তর খুঁজব পরবর্তী অংশে। আপাতত

বোঝা গেল যে বয়সে ৪১ বছরের ছোট রবীন্দ্রনাথের মতোই কলকাতার ওরিয়েন্টাল সেমিনারির প্রাক্তনী, কোনো প্রথাগত পরীক্ষা পাশের তকমাহীন মেডিকেল অতিরিক্ত ছাত্র আরেক মানুষ অক্ষয়কুমার দত্তের বিস্ময়কর সমীকরণ তৎকালীন শিক্ষিত সমাজে সমীহ আদায়ে সক্ষম হলেও নিজ গ্রাম এলাকার জীবন ও সংস্কৃতিতে তা তেমন দাগ কাটেনি।



অক্ষয়কুমারের জন্ম দ্বিশতবর্ষের ঠিক ১ মাস পরে (১৫/৭/১৮২০-২৮/৫/১৮৮৬) ২০১৯ সালের ১৬ই অগস্ট পৌছে গেছিলাম বর্তমানে পূর্ব বর্ধমান জেলাস্থ কালনা মহকুমার 'চুপি' গ্রামে তাঁর নামাঙ্কিত 'চুপি অকিঞ্চন কুটির ও অক্ষয় গ্রন্থাগার' (স্থানঃ ১৯২৮) ও পূর্বস্থলী কৃষ্ণনাথ পুস্তকাগারে (স্থানঃ ১৯১৩)। চুপি থেকে পূর্বস্থলী, গ্রন্থাগার কর্তৃপক্ষ, পুস্তক প্রেমী, পড়ুয়া, দোকানদার, পথচারী, বাস ও ট্রেনের প্যাসেঞ্জার, গৃহবধু ও শ্রমজীবী অংশ, একটা দিনে সমাজের সব অংশের কাছে একটিই প্রশ্ন ছিল—অক্ষয়কুমারের ভিটে মাটি গঙ্গাগর্ভে বিলীন হয়ে গেলেও তাঁর নামে গ্রন্থাগার রয়েছে, দেশের মধ্যে সর্বপ্রথম দাদু-নাতির মূর্তি (অক্ষয়কুমার ও ছন্দের জাদুকর সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ) স্থাপন করেছেন, তাঁর জন্মের দ্বিশতবর্ষের কোনও অনুষ্ঠান হবে না? তাঁরা আশ্বস্ত করেছিলেন, হবে বলেছিলেন কিন্তু শেষ পর্যন্ত তা হয়নি। দু'জন কর্মচারীর অবসরগ্রহণের পর লাইব্রেরী আজও বন্ধ।

বিদ্যাসাগরের পরিচিতি ও প্রাসঙ্গিকতা তুলনায় অধিক হওয়ায় তাঁর অবদান সম্পর্কিত অনেক বই মানুষের হাতের নাগালে, যা অক্ষয়কুমার দত্তের ক্ষেত্রে বিরল। এমনকি চুপি বা পূর্বস্থলী গ্রন্থাগারেও তাঁর কোন রচনার কপি পর্যন্ত পাওয়া যায়নি। তার পূর্বে *তত্ত্ববোধিনী পত্রিকা* এবং অক্ষয়কুমার দত্তের লেখা বা তার উপর লেখা পুস্তকের খোঁজে উপস্থিত হয়েছিলাম উত্তরপাড়ার জয়কৃষ্ণ লাইব্রেরীতে, ২০১৯ সালের ২রা ও ৩রা অগস্ট। গ্রন্থাগারিক মহোদয় ও সহকর্মীবৃন্দের আন্তরিক সহযোগিতায় *তত্ত্ববোধিনী পত্রিকা* প্রথম দেখা ও পরশলাভে পুলক জাগার তুলনায় শিরণ জেগেছিল অনেক বেশি। কিন্তু সেখানেও অক্ষয়কুমার দত্তের দ্বিশতবর্ষের কর্মসূচী বিষয়ে প্রশ্নের উত্তরদানে তাঁদের সীমাবদ্ধতার কথা শুনেছিলাম। পরবর্তীকালে কিছুদিন যোগাযোগ রক্ষা করে জিজ্ঞাসা করেছিলাম।

অক্ষয়কুমার দত্তের পৈত্রিক বাসস্থান গঙ্গাগর্ভে বিলীন হলেও তাঁর নিজের তৈরী ২০০৬ সাল থেকে রাজ্যসরকার কর্তৃক হেরিটেজ হিসাবে

চিহ্নিত 'শোভনোদ্যান' তো গঙ্গাতীরেই, উত্তরপাড়ার খুবই নিকটে; সেখানেও কোনো অনুষ্ঠানের খবর তাঁরা নিশ্চিত করতে পারেন নি। পাওয়া যায়নি অক্ষয়কুমার দত্তের লেখা কোনো বই। পরবর্তীকালে হাওড়া ও হুগলী জেলার জনবিজ্ঞান সংগঠকদের উদ্যোগে সে কাজ সাধ্যমত সম্পাদিত হয়েছিল।

স্যার উইলিয়াম জোশ প্রাচ্য সম্বন্ধে গবেষণার উদ্দেশ্যে ভারতের তদানীন্তন গভর্নর জেনারেল ওয়ারেন হেস্টিংসের প্রধান পৃষ্ঠপোষকতাসহ ১৭৮৪ সালের ১৫ই জানুয়ারি অখণ্ডিত বিশাল ভারতবর্ষের রাজধানী কলকাতার ফোর্ট উইলিয়ামে 'দি এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটি'-র প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন। ১৮০৮ সালে ১নং পার্ক স্ট্রিটের ভবনে সংস্থাটি স্থানান্তরিত হয়, ১৯৬৫ সালে সোসাইটির ২য় ভবনটির দ্বারোদ্ঘাটন করা হয়। অর্থাৎ বিদ্যাসাগর ও অক্ষয়কুমার দত্তের জন্মের ৩৬ বছর পূর্বেই সংস্থাটি প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়। ২০১৯ সালের ২৫শে সেপ্টেম্বর সেখানে সাড়ম্বরে ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগরের দ্বিশতজন্মবর্ষে তাঁর একটি আবক্ষ মূর্তির আবরণ উন্মোচিত হয় এবং সংস্থার নভেম্বর মাসের (২০১৯) ২৪ পাতার বিশেষ মাসিক বুলেটিনটি তাঁর নামে উৎসর্গ করা হয়। এটি আন্তর্জালে খুঁজলেই আগ্রহীরা পেতে পারেন; কিন্তু একইভাবে অক্ষয়কুমার দত্তের সঙ্গে এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটির সম্পর্ক খুঁজলে আজও কিছু পাওয়া দুশ্চাপ্য হলেও সোসাইটি কর্তৃপক্ষ ২০২০ সালের ১৪ই ফেব্রুয়ারী একদিনের একটি আলোচনা সভার আয়োজন করেন—"One day Seminar on "Akshay Kumar Datta and Contemporary Bengali Culture" সোসাইটির বিদ্যাসাগরের নামাঙ্কিত হলে। ভারত-বাংলাদেশের প্রথিতযশা আলোচকদের কথা শোনার সুযোগ সেই আলোচনাচক্রে বর্তমান লেখকের হয়েছে। এতক্ষণ ঊনবিংশ শতকের পথিকৃৎদের একবিংশ শতকের বাস্তবতায় তাঁদের প্রাসঙ্গিকতায় কিছুটা ভিন্নতা ধরা পড়লেও স্বয়ং বিদ্যাসাগর মশায়ের কথায় কিঞ্চিৎ কান দেওয়া যাক—"তত্ত্ববোধিনী পত্রিকা প্রচারিত হওয়াতে, এতদ্দেশীয় লোকদিগের যে নানা গুরুতর উপকার হইয়াছে, ইহা বোধ-বিশিষ্ট



ব্যক্তিমাট্রেই স্বীকার করিয়া থাকেন। আদ্যোপান্ত অনুধাবন করিয়া দেখিলে, শ্রীযুক্তবাবু অক্ষয়কুমার দত্ত এই তত্ত্ববোধিনী পত্রিকা সৃষ্টির এক প্রধান উদযোগী এবং এই মহোপকারিণী পত্রিকার অসাধারণ শ্রীবৃদ্ধি লাভের অদ্বিতীয় কারণ বলিয়া বোধ হইবে। তাঁহার যত্নে ও পরিশ্রমে তত্ত্ববোধিনী পত্রিকা সর্বত্র এরূপ আদর-ভাজন ও সর্বসাধারণের এরূপ উপকার-সাধন হইয়া উঠিয়াছে। বস্তুত তিনি অনন্যমনা ও অনন্যকর্মা হইয়া কেবল তত্ত্ববোধিনী পত্রিকার শ্রীবৃদ্ধিসাধনে কৃতসংকল্প হইয়া, অবিশ্রান্ত অত্যুৎকট পরিশ্রম দ্বারা শরীরপাত করিয়াছেন বলিলে অত্যুক্তি-দোষে দূষিত হইতে হয় না। তিনি যে অতিবিষম শিরোরোগে আক্রান্ত হইয়া দীর্ঘকাল অশেষ ক্লেশভোগ করিতেছেন, তাহা কেবল ঐ অত্যুৎকট মানসিক পরিশ্রমের পরিণাম, তাহাতে সন্দেহ নাই। অতএব যিনি তত্ত্ববোধিনী পত্রিকার নিমিত্ত শরীরপাত করিয়াছেন, সেই মহোদয়কে সহস্র সাধুবাদ প্রদান করা ও তাঁহার প্রতি যথোচিত কৃতজ্ঞতা প্রদর্শন করা অত্যাবশ্যিক; না করিলে, ‘তত্ত্ববোধিনী সভা’র সভ্যদিগের কর্তব্যানুষ্ঠানের ব্যতিক্রম হয়।”

১৮৪৩ সালের ১৬ই অগস্ট বিদ্যাদর্শনের প্রাক্তন সম্পাদক মাত্র ২৩ বছর এক মাস বয়সী অক্ষয়কুমারের সম্পাদনায় সর্বপ্রথম আত্মপ্রকাশ করে আট পৃষ্ঠার *তত্ত্ববোধিনী পত্রিকা*। ছাপা বিষয়বস্তুতে চোখ বোলালে বোঝা যায় যে ১ম সংখ্যার মত শুধুমাত্র ‘ধর্মতত্ত্ব’ প্রচারই এই কাগজের উদ্দেশ্য ছিল না। অধ্যাপক শ্যামল চক্রবর্তীর লেখা থেকে জানা যায় যে *তত্ত্ববোধিনী পত্রিকা* কেবল অক্ষয়কুমারের ১২ বছরের (১৮৪৩-১৮৫৫) সম্পাদনার মধ্যেই সীমাবদ্ধ ছিল না। কাগজটি চলেছে ১ দশক কম ১ শতাব্দী কাল (১৮৪৩-১৯৩৩), মোট ১১ জন সম্পাদকের দায়িত্বে শতাধিক রবীন্দ্রসঙ্গীতসহ মোট ১০৭৬টি রচনা প্রকাশিত হয়েছে। অক্ষয়কুমারের সম্পাদনা কালে তত্ত্ববোধিনীতে স্বাভাবিকভাবেই তার বৈজ্ঞানিক মননশীলতার ছাপ পড়তে শুরু করে—“ঈশ্বরের মন অনুধাবন করতে হলে পদার্থবিদ্যা ও প্রকৃতিবিজ্ঞানের দিকে তাকালেই হবে। সব ধর্মগ্রন্থই ‘কাল্পনিক’ (পৃঃ

২৫, বাহ্যবস্তুর সহিত মানব প্রকৃতির সম্বন্ধ বিচার ‘উপক্রমণিকা’, কলকাতা ১৭৩৩ শক, ১ম খণ্ড ১৮৫১, ২য় খণ্ড ১৮৫৩ খ্রীঃ)। চার্বাক দর্শনে অনুরক্ত অক্ষয়কুমার ছিলেন প্রথম মানুষ যিনি ব্রাহ্মসমাজের সম্মুখে ঘোষণা করেন যে বেদ অপ্রাস্ত নয়। স্বভাবতই অক্ষয়কুমার ও বয়সে মাত্র ৩ বছরের বড় দেবেন্দ্রনাথের ব্যবধান বাড়তে থাকে। তাঁর কথায়, “...আমি কোথায় আর তিনি কোথায়। আমি খুঁজিতেছি, ঈশ্বরের সহিত আমার কি সম্বন্ধ; আর তিনি খুঁজিতেছেন, বাহ্য বস্তুর সহিত মানব প্রকৃতির সম্বন্ধ—আকাশপাতাল প্রভেদ (আত্মজীবনী, পৃঃ ৩৭)।” সুতরাং দুই ঈশ্বরের (বিদ্যাসাগর ও সংবাদ প্রভাকর সম্পাদক ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র গুপ্ত) সুপারিশে অক্ষয়কুমারের চাকরিতে ছেদ পড়ে। কিশোর অক্ষয়কুমারের মাত্র ১৪ বছর বয়সে লেখা একমাত্র কাব্যগ্রন্থ *অনঙ্গ মোহন* (১৮৩৪-এ প্রকাশিত) সহ ১৯০১ সালে তাঁর মরণোত্তর কালে একমাত্র প্রকাশিত (পুত্র রজনীনাথ দত্ত কর্তৃক) প্রবন্ধ (প্রাচীন হিন্দুদিগের সমুদ্রযাত্রা ও বাণিজ্য বিস্তার) সহ মোট ১৫টি পুস্তক ৫২ বছরে রচিত হয়েছিল। তাঁর ৪র্থ ও ৫ম পুস্তক ছিল এক বস্তুবাদী উকিল, স্কটিস নাস্তিক George Combe (1788-1858)-র “The Constitution of MAN Considered in Relation to External Objects” (১৮২৮ সালে প্রকাশিত বইটি ইংল্যান্ড-আমেরিকায় ৩-৫ লক্ষ কপি বিক্রি হয়) অনুসারে ১ম ও ২য় ভাগে লেখা “বাহ্য বস্তুর সহিত মানবপ্রকৃতির সম্বন্ধ বিচার”—থেকে স্পষ্ট হয় তাঁর বিশ্বজনীন উদার ও মুক্তমনা, বস্তুবাদী দৃষ্টিভঙ্গীর সঙ্গে মেধা ও অধ্যবসায়ের সন্মিলন। এবং তাঁর জীবৎকালের মধ্যগগনে সমাজ ও বিজ্ঞান মনস্কতার বিচ্ছুরণ (অবশ্যই নিরামিষ ভোজনের প্রতি পক্ষপাতিত্ব প্রদর্শন ব্যতিরেকে) যা তৎকালীন তরুণ সমাজকে আন্দোলিত করে। যে *চারুপাঠ* (১ম ভাগ ১৮৫৩, ২য় ভাগ ১৮৫৪ ও ৩য় ভাগ ১৮৫৯ সালে প্রকাশিত)-এর রসাস্বাদন করেছেন কিশোর রবীন্দ্রনাথ কিংবা যা প্রকৃতি বিজ্ঞানী গোপালচন্দ্র ভট্টাচার্যের বিজ্ঞান পাঠে কৌতূহল ও আগ্রহের উদ্রেক করে,

যাতে তৎকালীন বাঙালি সন্তানদের বিজ্ঞান শিক্ষায় শিক্ষিত করার প্রয়োজন স্মৃতির হয়, সেটির সামান্য অংশ হল—“গগন মণ্ডলে মধ্যে মধ্যে যে সকল ভিন্ন ভিন্ন ধূমকেতু দৃষ্ট হইয়া থাকে, তাহাও এক অদ্ভুত জড়ময় বস্তু, অন্তরীক্ষে অতি দ্রুতবেগে নিয়ত পরিভ্রমণ করিতেছে, যখন আমাদের নিকটবর্তী হয়, তখনই আমরা দেখিতে পাই। এই সমস্ত আশ্চর্য্য বিষয় অধ্যয়ন করিতে করিতে অন্তঃকরণ প্রফুল্ল হইতে থাকে।” মহাকাশ বিজ্ঞানে সবার দেশ আমাদের দেশের বিজ্ঞানীগণ বর্তমানে বিশ্বের বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তিতে এগিয়ে থাকা দেশগুলোর সঙ্গে পালা দেওয়াতে দেশপ্রেমিক অক্ষয়কুমারের ভাবনা সেই সময়ের তুলনায় কত আধুনিক ও বিজ্ঞানভিত্তিক ছিল তা বলার জন্য দু’টি বাক্য ব্যবহৃত হলেও ১৩৪ বার ছাপা চারুপাঠের ১ম, ২য় ও ৩য় ভাগে অন্তর্ভুক্ত বিষয়গুলি সম্পর্কে সামান্য জানলে তা আজও কতখানি প্রাসঙ্গিক তা দেখে নেওয়া যেতে পারে :

১ম ভাগ (১ম পরিচ্ছেদ) (১) বিদ্যাশিক্ষা (৫ পৃষ্ঠা) (২) সচিত্র আগ্নেয়গিরি (৬-১১ পৃঃ) (৩) দয়া (১১-১২ পৃঃ) (৪) সচিত্র সিন্ধু ঘোটক (১৩-১৫ পৃঃ) (৫) সচিত্র ধীবর (১৬-২০ পৃঃ) (৬) তরুণ বয়স্ক ব্যক্তিগণের প্রতি উপদেশ (২০-২১ পৃঃ); ২য় পরিচ্ছেদে রয়েছে— (১) সচিত্র জলপ্রপাত (২২-২৫ পৃঃ) (২) সন্তোষ (২৬-২৭ পৃঃ) (৩) সচিত্র পৃথিবীর আকার (২৭-২৯ পৃঃ) (৪) কুসংসর্গ (২৯-৩১ পৃঃ) (৫) পুরুভূজ (৩২-৩৬ পৃঃ) (৬) পৃথিবীর পরিমাণ (৩৬-৩৯ পৃঃ) (৭) সচিত্র বৃক্ষ-লতাদির উৎপত্তির নিয়ম (৩৯-৪৩ পৃঃ); ৩য় পরিচ্ছেদে— (১) সচিত্র উষঃ প্রস্রবণ (৪৩-৪৮ পৃঃ) (২) আত্মপ্রসাদ (৪৯-৫০ পৃঃ) (৩) সচিত্র দীপমক্ষিকা (৫০-৫২ পৃঃ) (৪) স্বদেশের শ্রীবৃদ্ধি সাধন (৫৩-৫৫ পৃঃ) (৫) পৃথিবীর গতি (৫৫-৫৬ পৃঃ) (৬) সচিত্র বনমানুষ (৫৭-৬১ পৃঃ) (৭) শারীরিক স্বাস্থ্য বিধান (৬২-৭০ পৃঃ) (৮) সচিত্র জলস্তম্ভ (৭১-৭৪ পৃঃ) (৯) পরমাণু (৭৪-৭৭ পৃঃ) (১০) আত্মগ্লানি (৭৮-৮০ পৃঃ)। মোট ২৩ বিষয়ের শেষে শব্দার্থও দেওয়া আছে। “বিদ্যাশিক্ষা”র প্রথম দু’টি বাক্য পাঠ

করলেই বোঝা যায় অক্ষয়কুমারের অবদান আজও কেন অক্ষত এবং নিত্যদিক নির্দেশক—“বিদ্যা অমূল্য ধন। বিদ্যা শিখিলে হিতাহিত বিবেচনা করিয়া আপনার ও অন্যের দুঃখ হ্রাস ও সুখ বৃদ্ধি করিতে পারা যায়।” জানা যায় যে উড়িয়া ও আসামেও চারুপাঠের অনুবাদ পড়ানো হতো। তাই বোধ করি এদেশে লোকায়ত দর্শনের অন্যতম পথিকৃৎ বলেছিলেন, “...বিজ্ঞানী না হয়েও কেউ কেউ বিজ্ঞানের স্বপক্ষে দাঁড়াতে পারেন। চালাতে পারেন জোর লড়াই। বোধহয় তার সবচেয়ে উল্লেখযোগ্য উদাহরণ ফ্রান্সিস বেকন (আধুনিক বৈজ্ঞানিক পদ্ধতির জনক)।.....এখানে আমি বাংলার চারজন মনীষীর কথা বলতে চাই....তাদের মধ্যে তিনজন ছিলেন বৃত্তিতেই বিজ্ঞানী আচার্য প্রফুল্লচন্দ্র রায়, মেঘনাদ সাহা ও সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ বসু। কিন্তু প্রথম যিনি বিজ্ঞান চেতনার স্বপক্ষে লড়াই করেছিলেন—কারোর চেয়ে কম জোরদার ভাবে নয়—তিনি নিজে বিজ্ঞানী ছিলেন না।.....বিজ্ঞান চেতনার সমর্থনে তিনি যদি প্রবলভাবে উঠে না দাঁড়াতে তাহলে ভারতে বিজ্ঞানের জমি তৈরী হত কিনা সন্দেহ।....এই মানুষটা ছিলেন অক্ষয়কুমার দত্ত। নিজের ভবিষ্যৎ, এমনকি রুজি রোজগারের নিরাপত্তারও তিনি পরোয়া করেন নি। বেকনের ক্ষেত্রে যা হয়নি অক্ষয়কুমারের ক্ষেত্রে তাই হয়েছিল। বিজ্ঞানে উৎসাহ থেকে শেষ পর্যন্ত তিনি হয়ে উঠেছিলেন পাকা নিরীশ্বরবাদী...।” যা ছিল অগস্ত কৌতের ধ্রুববাদের অন্যতম আকর্ষণ। প্রাবন্ধিক দীপক সাহার মতে—“ঈশ্বরচন্দ্র বিদ্যাসাগর যে সকল কারণে আমাদের হৃদয় জুড়ে আছেন ঠিক একই কারণে বা তার চেয়েও বেশি কারণে অক্ষয়কুমার দত্ত প্রাতঃস্মরণীয় হওয়ার কথা কিন্তু এই মহান মনীষীর আদর্শ, চিন্তাধারা, অক্ষয় কাজ কোন কিছুই আমরা সঠিক মূল্যায়ন করিনি। আজও করছি না।” হরপ্রসাদ শাস্ত্রীর মতে, “তিনিই বাংলার সর্বপ্রথম নীতি শিক্ষক। মৌলিক বিজ্ঞান গবেষণার কেন্দ্র রূপে তাঁর অকুত্রিম দানেই কলিকাতার ভারতবর্ষীয় বিজ্ঞান সভা থেকে গড়ে উঠেছিল আজকের ইণ্ডিয়ান অ্যাসোসিয়েশন ফর দ্য কালটিভেশন অফ সায়েন্স।”

ছাত্র বৎসল পণ্ডিত, বহুভাষাবিদ জেফুয়ের ছাত্র বহুভাষাজ্ঞানীর শেষ জীবনের আবাসস্থল বিঘা খানেক আয়তনের ‘শোভনোদ্যানে’ দেশী-বিদেশী গাছ-লতা-গুল্মের গায়ে তাদের ল্যাটিনে বৈজ্ঞানিক নামসহ সংগ্রহশালার বিরল সামুদ্রিক প্রাণীর খোলক, শঙ্খ, শামুক, প্রাণীদেহ ও জীবকঙ্কালের সঙ্গে দেওয়ালে শোভিত হত রামমোহন রায়, আইজ্যাক নিউটন, চার্লস ডারউইন, টি.এইচ. হাক্সলি এবং জন স্টুয়ার্ট মিলের ছবি যদিও তিনি তৎকালীন কৃষক, কৃষি, সামাজিক উন্নয়ন ও দেশীয় শিল্পবিকাশ বিরোধী। বৃটিশ শাসকদের নীলচাষের বিরুদ্ধে তাঁর লেখনী ছিল বিদ্যুৎঝলকানো। তাঁর জীবনের শেষ ১৩ বছর ধরে (১৮৭০-১৮৮৩ ১ম ও ২য় ভাগ) ১৮২ প্রকার উপাসক সম্প্রদায়ের কথা লেখা ‘ভারতবর্ষীয় উপাসক সম্প্রদায়’ সম্পর্কে জানা যায় যে এইচ. এইচ. উইলসন দ্বারা রচিত, ১৮২৮ ও ১৮৩২ সালে এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটির জার্নালে প্রকাশিত 'A Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus' গ্রন্থ অবলম্বনে খণ্ড দু’টি রচনার মাধ্যমে তাঁর সঙ্গে এশিয়াটিক সোসাইটির একটি সেতুবন্ধন হয়। বিখ্যাত জার্মান ভারতবিদ ম্যাক্সমুলার গ্রন্থটি পড়ে অক্ষয়কুমারকে চিঠি লেখেন। তবে বৈষ্ণব/রামানুজ/রামানন্দী/কবীরপন্থী/বল্লভচারী/মীরাবাই/বৈরাগী সন্ন্যাসী/সৎনামী/বীজমার্গী/পল্টুদাসী/আপাপন্থী প্রভৃতিদের সম্পর্কে কোনো সাম্প্রদায়িক ধর্মমত আর সেই সম্প্রদায়ের ধারণা মতো সৃষ্টি-কর্তায় তাঁর বোধহয় কোনোদিনই আস্থা ছিল না। তিনি বলতেন, “....এতদেশীয় লোকে সংস্কৃত বচন শুনিলেই তাহাতে শ্রদ্ধা ও বিশ্বাস করেন এবং

তদ্বিরুদ্ধ বাক্য প্রত্যক্ষসিদ্ধ হইলেও অন্ধবিশ্বাস করিয়া থাকেন। আমরাদিগের এই বিষম কুসংস্কার (মহামারী থেকে বাঁচতে গোরুর মলমূত্র লেপন/সেবনের নিধান দানের মত) মহানর্থের মূল হইয়াছে। বিবাহ ও নারীপুরুষ সম্পর্ক বিষয়ে এখন আইনসম্মত অধিকারও আক্রান্ত হচ্ছে, অথচ সে যুগে অক্ষয়কুমারের এ বিষয়ে ১২ দফা প্রস্তাব তো এককথায় বৈপ্লবিক; যে কারণে এই প্রশ্ন কি আজ বড় অস্বাভাবিক যে পরাধীন, অখণ্ড, নানা ভাষা, নানা মত, নানা পরিধানের, ভারতবর্ষে ঔপনিবেশিক শাসন মুক্তির সাড়ে সাত দশক পর জাত ধর্ম নির্বিশেষে সমস্ত শহীদের রক্তের বিনিময়ে অর্জিত ও সাংবিধানিকভাবে অঙ্গীকারবদ্ধ সার্বভৌম, সমাজতান্ত্রিক, ধর্মনিরপেক্ষ গণতান্ত্রিক সাধারণতন্ত্র কেন নবজাগরণ পর্বের ‘পেছনের দিকে এগনোর’ চেষ্টা হচ্ছে? কে. এন. পানিকরের মতে, “নবজাগরণের পথিকৃতরা একটি মানবিক সমাজের জন্য সংগ্রাম করেছিলেন, কিন্তু নিজেদেরকে এমন শক্তির কাছে পরাজিত করেছিলেন যার উপর তাদের নিয়ন্ত্রণ ছিল না।” হিন্দু আর্কাইভস্ তাই আজ বিজ্ঞান সংস্কৃতির নির্মাতা অক্ষয়কুমার দত্ত আজও বেঁচে আছেন, বাকি কাজ তাঁর ভাবীকালের।

ঋণস্বীকার :

১। দ্বিশতবর্ষে অক্ষয়কুমার দত্ত (পশ্চিমবঙ্গ বিজ্ঞান মঞ্চ) জানুয়ারি ২০২০।

২। জ্ঞান বিচিত্রা, ৪৪ বর্ষ সংখ্যা। সেপ্টেম্বর-অক্টোবর ২০১৯, আগরতলা, ত্রিপুরা।

## Rabindranath Tagore's Legacy and Emergence of Independent Bangladesh

**Indranil Sanyal**

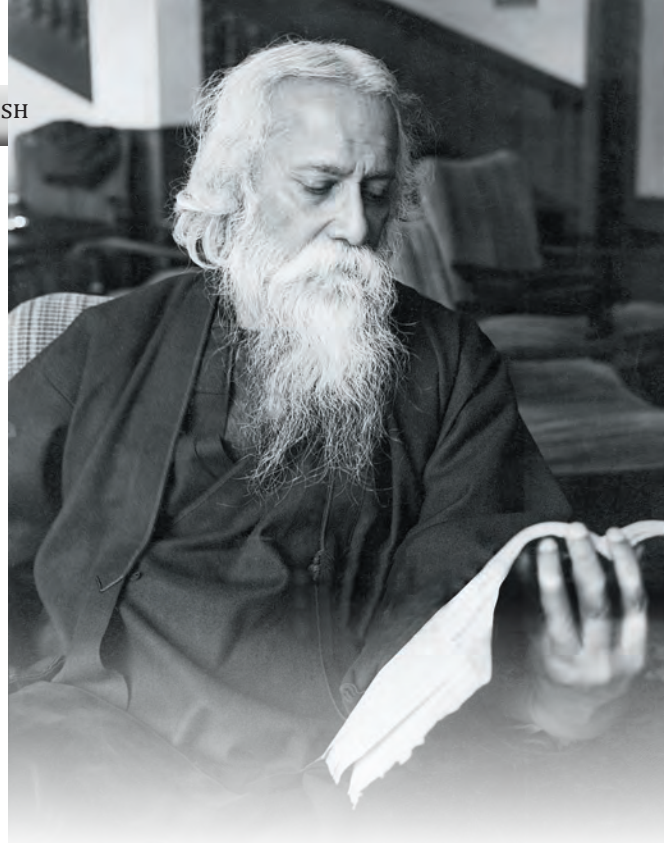
Director, North East Zone at National Council  
of Science Museums (NCSM)

### Tagore and the First Partition of Bengal (1905)

Rabindranath Tagore was not only a poet and a writer, he was also an intellectual leader of India during his lifetime. During the turbulent days of freedom struggle and communal conflict, Tagore stood firm in favour of secular and inclusive polity. There were many secular leaders in India among the nationalists, but Tagore was perhaps the only national figure (and probably Subhash Bose too) who was trusted by Hindus and Muslims alike. Throughout his life, Tagore tried to forge Hindu-Muslim unity in India.

Born in a Hindu-Brahmo family, Tagore was not a typical Hindu, rather he felt in him the confluence of several cultures, which shaped his approach towards the communal problem in India. Tagore himself described his family as the product of "a confluence of three cultures : Hindu, Mohammedan, and British". (Tagore 1961: pp 105).

According to Amartya Sen (Sen: nobelprize.org), "Rabindranath's grandfather, Dwarkanath, was well known for his command of Arabic and Persian, and Rabindranath grew up in a family atmosphere in which a deep



knowledge of Sanskrit and ancient Hindu texts was combined with an understanding of Islamic traditions as well as Persian literature. It is not so much that Rabindranath tried to produce – or had an interest in producing – a "synthesis" of the different religions (as the great Moghul emperor Akbar tried hard to achieve) as that his outlook was persistently non-sectarian, and his writings – some two hundred books – show the influence of different parts of the Indian cultural background as well as of the rest of the world."

Tagore, not an ultra-nationalist, rather a humanist and an internationalist, was nevertheless in the forefront of the movement against the Partition of Bengal in 1905. But he gradually distanced himself from the movement as it was hijacked by the revolutionary outfits like Anushilan Samiti and Jugantar Dal. Many poor Muslims of East Bengal supported the partition. The agitators portrayed Muslims as traitors and in places targeted them. "Tagore saw the movement turning violent with the

nationalists agitating against innocent civilians who were indifferent to their cause, and especially the Muslims who were in favour of the partition for practical as well as political reasons...". (Quayum 2006: pp.33-52).

The mounting tension between Hindus and Muslims resulted into violent communal riots in eastern Bengal. According to historian Sumit Sarkar, the early signs of Hindu-Muslim tension was noticed in Birbhum, Nadia and Jessore during 1906, but a conflict was averted. The first riots broke out in Mymensingh district in April-May 1906, followed next year by more serious disturbances at Comilla (March 1907) and other areas of Mymensingh (April-May 1907). Sarkar further comments that the movement began as a boycott of British goods, but soon took a communal turn, fuelling extremism and fanaticism in both the Hindu and Muslim communities (Sarkar 1973: pp. 444-464).

Tagore protested vehemently and could foresee the failure of the movement as it alienated the majority population (Muslims). Tagore wrote patriotic poems ("*Banglar Mati, Banglar Jal*" . . .) and called for Hindu-Muslim unity ("*Bangaleer Ghare Jato Bhai-Bon*" . . .). "*Amar Sonar Bangla*" was also composed during this period. Tagore influenced other prominent intellectuals like Bipin Chandra Pal, playwright Girish Chandra Ghosh and a few newspapers who tried to build a narrative of Hindu-Muslim combined nationalism, but the opposition from the extremists, suspicion among the Muslims about Swadeshi and Boycott movement, communal propaganda by Moulavis and the Divide & Rule Policy of the British were among the factors for the failure of such effort. (Sarkar 1973: pp. 418-444).

Tagore criticised the attitude of the high caste Hindus towards Muslims whom they considered as untouchables and blamed Hindu zealots for alienation of Muslims from the movements. But he hoped for a change in heart among them. He portrayed the character of an educated yet Hindu-nationalist

as the protagonist Gora (who was born of Irish parents killed during the revolt of 1857 and was brought up in a Bengali Brahmin family) in his famous novel *Gora* (1909). Gora was initially a fanatic Hindu who considered anybody who was not a Hindu as unpatriotic. But some dramatic incidents opened up his eyes and he realised and appreciated the true meaning of nationalism, when towards the end of the novel he discovered that his claim of a Brahmin descent is rather incorrect, he has actually an Irish ancestry, and being of European origin, he is an outcast in the Hindu society. Thus he realises, at the end of the novel that "Today I am Bharatiya. Within me there is no conflict between communities, whether Hindu or Muslim or Christian. Today all the castes of Bharat are my castes". (Tagore 1909). Krishna Kripalani appreciates the novel with the comments, "Gora is more than a mere novel; ..... No other book gives so masterly an analysis of the complex of Indian social life with its teeming contradictions, or of the character of Indian nationalism which draws its roots from renaissance Hinduism and stretches out its arms towards universal humanism." (Kripalani: 1971).

Tagore tried to repair the damage done by the propaganda and activities of the revolutionary groups and the anti-Muslim rhetoric in the writings of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay, equating Indian Nationalism with Hindu Revivalism, that created a deep suspicion in the minds of the Bengali Muslims about the real intention of the revolutionaries and permanently fractured the unity between Bengali Hindus and Muslims. Tagore was only partly successful in repairing the damage during his lifetime. (Khan 2017).

### **Tagore's Association with Muslims and Bangladesh**

Tagore spent a considerable period of his life in three estates of his family in the North-Bengal: Shelaidaha (Kushtia), Patisar (Natore) and Shahzadpur (Pabna), (Islam 1967: pp 258-69). Located on the bank of

the river Padma (or its tributaries) and situated in the bountiful nature, the best of Tagore's creative writings were composed while Tagore spent his days on the boats on the River Padma in these three estates. Tagore first came to Shelaidaha in 1888, to Patisar in 1892 and to Shahzadpur four years later. In between he visited Rajshahi and Natore, both in North Bengal, on many occasions. Here he came across many Muslim tenant families whose life-stories gave him enough ingredient for thought.

Tagore visited the towns in the Muslim majority East Bengal on number of occasions and those visits brought him closer to Muslim gentlemen, and gradually the attitude of the Muslims towards Tagore underwent a positive change. Tagore first visited East Bengal in 1898, when he travelled to Dhaka to Chair the Bengal Provincial Convention. In 1909, he again attended the Bengal Provincial Convention in Chittagong, the port city in the South East coast of Bengal and a prominent centre of literature and culture since medieval era. Ten years later, he travelled to Sylhet, then a part of Assam, another important centre of Bengali culture from as early as 14th century CE, where he was accorded a civic reception in the Town Hall by Khanbahadur Syed Abdul Majid (later on, a Minister of Assam). In 1926, on the invitation of the University of Dhaka, Tagore visited Dhaka for the second time. He spent a considerable period on the Burge on the river as a guest of the Nawab of Dhaka. The students of the Sir Salimullah Muslim Hall felicitated Tagore. The welcome address was written by Professor Abul Hussain and was read out by Sultan Uddin Ahmed, a leader of the students' union. He was also accorded many public receptions during this visit, which includes one at Sadarghat Coronation Park by Hindu-Mussalman Sevak Samiti. Tagore's visit to Dhaka brought him closer to Muslim students and intellectuals, and their contact with Tagore lasted till his death. From Dhaka, Tagore travelled to Mymensingh and Comilla, before his return to Santiniketan. Tagore's last

visit to Eastern Bengal was in 1937. During that time, the size of the educated Muslim community in the East Bengal was small. Nevertheless, they exchanged ideas and Muslim gentlemen found in him an ideal icon of Bengali nationalism and Hindu-Muslim unity and as a result, Muslim middle class started sending their children to Santiniketan (for example, Syed Mujtaba Ali, the famous writer, graduated from Santiniketan in 1920s and later became an authority on Tagore), (Islam 1967: pp 258-69).

The attitude of the Muslims towards Tagore was generally mixed, some accusing him of idolatry, communalism and of being totally indifferent in depicting the pictures of a neighbouring society, i. e. Bengali Muslims, (Iqbal 2010). On his being awarded Nobel Prize, the monthly magazine *Mohammadi* (a hard-core Islamist one) commented that the poems of *Gitanjali* were inferior to even the poems of second grade poets in Persian or Arabic. This was, however, countered by Kazi Abdul Wadud (renowned writer and literary critique), Abul Fazal (noted scholar and writer) and Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, the biographer of Tagore. Abul Fazal thought that no Muslim poet could have written poems like *Shahjahan* and *Tajmahal*, as Tagore has written, (Fazal 2013: pp. 49-55). As early as in 1914, Ekramuddin wrote "Rabindra Pratibha". In 1922, poet Golam Mostafa became the first Muslim poet to dedicate a poetry book to Tagore, (Iqbal 2010). It is interesting to know that Golam Mostafa, a school teacher by profession, wrote some of the finest poems for children in Bengali. A line from his poem titled *Kishore* (*Ghumiye achhe shishur pitaa sab shishuri antare*: Every child is a potential father of a child) has become a proverb in Bengali. Politically, he was a hard-line Muslim Leaguer and opposed the Language Movement of 1952 for which he was strongly condemned by nationalist intellectuals of East Pakistan. Despite his political belief, such a poet had no hesitation in expressing his respect for Tagore. Golam Mostafa wrote

a very valuable article titled 'Islam and Rabindranath' where he commented that it is through *Gitanjali* only the Prophet's message of love has been correctly expressed. Tagore himself appreciated the article. Golam Mostafa also wrote another article on Tagore, namely 'Mysticism of Rabindranath' in Bengali, (Iqbal 2010).

Contrary to the claim by Dutta & Robinson (Dutta and Robinson 2001) that "Tagore had little intellectual contact with Islam and educated Muslims", there were many ardent followers of Rabindranath among Muslim intellectuals of that period. They were in constant touch with Tagore through correspondences. Prominent among them were Kazi Abdul Wadud, Humayun Kabir (an academician and later, a cabinet minister in Nehru cabinet), Jasimuddin (famous poet), Muhammad Shahidullah (internationally renowned linguist), Abul Fazal, Rezaul Karim (journalist), M A Azam, Altaf Chowdhury, Bande Ali Mian (journalist), Shamsunnahar (Editor of the magazine *Bulbul*), Abdul Kadir (poet), Sufia Hossain (later Sufia Kamal, the renowned social worker and freedom fighter), Jebunnesa and many more. Professor Bhuiyan Iqbal has compiled an exhaustive list of correspondences between Tagore and Muslim intellectuals. From his compilation (Iqbal 2010), we find that though most of these letters were about the literary works, either by Tagore himself or by the Muslim writers who wrote to Tagore, the largest numbers being between Tagore and Kazi Abdul Wadud, Tagore wrote several letters to Mainuddin, Abul Fazal, Muhammad Shahidullah, MA Azam and Altaf Chowdhury regarding indiscriminate use of Arabic and Persian loanwords in Bengali, to Shamsunnahar, Kazi Abdul Wadud, Abul Mansur Elahi Bux, Kazi Ahmad, Lokman Khan Shirwani and Altaf Chowdhury regarding communal conflict and Hindu-Muslim unity, to Sir Azizul Haque (Education Minister of Bengal) regarding the education system in Bengal, to Bande Ali Mian regarding use of regional dialects in Bengali

literature and so on. Among the politicians, A K Fazlul Haque (Premier of Bengal) and Khwaja Nazimuddin (Home Minister and later, Premier of Bengal) were in touch with Tagore. Tagore wrote literary criticisms and forewords of many books written by Muslim authors and even sent message to the Prophet issue of the magazine *Peshwa* published by the Jama Masjid of Delhi in February 1936, (Iqbal 2010).

Tagore also influenced the secular poet Sheikh Fazlul Karim (1882-1936) of Rangpur, who wrote proverbial "*Kothay swarga, kothay narak, ke bale ta bohudur....*" (Where is the Heaven, where is the Hell? Who says they are far off? ...), Ahmed 2014).

Not only the Bengali Muslims, Muslim gentlemen from other provinces as well as from the Muslim countries like Iran, Iraq or Egypt - wherever Tagore visited, were overwhelmed by his humanism and his great respect for Sufism. In 1927 Tagore introduced a Chair of Islamic Studies at the Visva-Bharati with a donation of one lakh rupees from the Nizam of Hyderabad. Osmania University later conferred honorary doctorate to Tagore. M A Jinnah, another admirer of Tagore, read out Tagore's message to the first anniversary of Jallianwalla Bagh massacre organised by Congress in Mumbai. In 1933, Shah of Iran sent renowned Persian Scholar Aga Dawood to Santiniketan as a professor of Persian Language and Culture. In 1926, when Tagore visited Egypt, he was felicitated with Royal reception. Subsequently, Ahmed Fuad Pasha (Fuad I), King of Egypt, sent large numbers of Arabic books to Santiniketan, (Fazal 2013: pp. 49-55).

Tagore's affectionate mentoring of Bengal's "Rebel Poet" Kazi Nazrul Islam is well known, despite their differences of opinion on many issues. In 1920s, Kazi Nazrul Islam ushered in a new literary style in poetry outside the influence of Tagore and inspired a large number of young poets who initiated the literary movements centred on little magazines like *Pragati*, *Kallol* or *Kali-Kalam*. Tagore, however, welcomed such

revolution. He had particular affection for Nazrul whom he dedicated his play 'Basanta', appreciated Nazrul's *Dhumketu* and sent telegram to Nazrul when Nazrul's health deteriorated while he was in jail. One of the major characteristics of Nazrul's writings is the use of unusually high numbers of Arabic and Persian loanwords, often unknown to common Bengali readers, but sometimes used by Bengali Muslims in their intra-family or intra-community communications. Many liked this style, but Tagore disapproved this, but allowed use of commonly understood loanwords. For example, Nazrul used 'Khoon' in the sense of blood (as in Hindi), but in Bengali 'Khoon-Kharabi' is used in the sense of murder and mayhem. Nazrul had his own logic of using such words as he felt that in places they enhanced the poetic quality of his language, but was unhappy and sad with Tagore's criticism and there was a temporary misunderstanding, but he remained an admirer of Tagore till the end. Why did Tagore oppose excessive use of Arabic-Persian loanwords in Bengali? Anisuzzaman thought (Iqbal 2010) that probably a suspicion was growing in Tagore's mind that with the increasing communal divide between Hindus and Muslims, there might be a division in the language too on communal line. This would have been unbearable for the greatest writer in the Bengali language, who throughout his life tried to dispel animosity between Hindus and Muslims. Fortunately, the partition of the language never took place, at least in the formal use of the Bengali language. Today, even in Bangladesh, the formal language is the same as that is used in West Bengal. (Talib 1984, Iqbal 2010).

Philosophically, Tagore was attracted towards the mystic Sufism of Islam. Islam propagated in Bengal not through forcible conversion, but through the preaching of Sufi saints. Sufism in Bengal borrowed many ideals from Buddhist Sahajiya Cult and Gaudiya Vaishnavism; as a result, in the medieval Bengal, Sufism developed into a

syncretic culture. Many Muslim poets like Ali Reza, Kamar Ali or Syed Martuja wrote quality Vaishnava Padavalis and preached a syncretic religion. The most famous of them was Lalon Fakir (1774-1890) of Kushtia. Lalon lived a very long life and Tagore was able to meet him personally. It was Tagore who brought Lalon in the limelight and popularised his songs. Another mystic poet and Tagore's contemporary was Hason Raja (1854-1922) of Sylhet, whose philosophy attracted Tagore. During a lecture at Oxford in 1930, Tagore described Hason Raja as 'The man of my heart', and drew the global attention towards the secular, syncretic culture of medieval Bengal.

Politically, Tagore was very sensitive to the feelings of Muslims in India. When in 1937, Nehru, as the Congress President, sought his opinion on whether *Vande Mataram* could be India's national anthem, Tagore replied in negative as it contained some lines which might hurt the Muslims. Tagore expressed unequivocally that Muslims in India should be treated on equal footing by the Hindus for the unity and prosperity of India. He expressed his own opinion through the words of Nikhil, the hero of the novel *Ghare-Baire (The Home and the World, 1916)*, "If the idea of a united India is a true one, Mussulmans are a necessary part of it," (Tagore 1916).

### Language Movement in East Bengal

After 1947, when the Language Movement, for the recognition of Bengali as one of the state languages of Pakistan, intensified in East Pakistan, the Muslims in Bengal found in Tagore a rallying point against Punjabi/Urdu domination in Bengal.

Immediately after the formation of Pakistan, as proposed by Sir Ziauddin Ahmed, the Vice-Chancellor of Aligarh Muslim University and an ideologue of the Muslim League, the central leaders of Pakistan declared that Urdu, a language of north-India, would be the state language of Pakistan. The students and intellectuals



of East Pakistan, however, demanded that Bangla be made one of the state languages. A series of protests erupted in East Bengal. The first movement on this issue was mobilised by Tamaddun Majlish. Gradually many other non-communal and progressive organisations joined the movement. (Manjur 1996: pp. 17-80).

As the education minister of Pakistan, Fazlur Rahman was adamant in making Urdu the only state language, agitated students in East Pakistan held a meeting in Dhaka University on 6 December 1947, demanding that Bangla be made one of the state languages of Pakistan. Towards the end of December, the first Rastrabhasa Sangram Parishad (State-Language Action Committee) was formed.

Leading Bengali scholars argued why Urdu should not be the only state language. The writer Abul Mansur Ahmed said if Urdu became the only state language, the educated society of East Bengal would become 'illiterate' and 'ineligible' for government jobs. In the ongoing session of the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan in the early 1948 at Karachi, Dhirendranath Datta, of Pakistan National Congress, proposed legislation in the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan to allow members to speak in Bengali and authorise its use for official purposes. It was argued by Datta that out of 69 million people of Pakistan, 44 million spoke Bengali. Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan and the Muslim League denounced the proposal as an attempt to divide the Pakistani people, thus the legislation was defeated. Chief Minister of East Bengal Khwaja Nazimuddin also opposed the move to make Bengali a state language. (Manjur 1996: pp. 17-80).

On receiving the news that the motion had been rejected, students, intellectuals and politicians of East Pakistan became agitated. Newspapers such as the *Azad* also criticised the decision. A new committee to fight for Bangla as the state language was formed with Shamsul Huq as convener. On March 11, 1948

a general strike was observed in East Pakistan in protest against the omission of Bangla from the languages of the Constituent Assembly and the use of only Urdu in recruitment tests for central government jobs. (Manjur 1996: pp. 17-80)

Amid all these tensions, Muhammed Ali Jinnah, the Governor General of Pakistan, came to visit East Pakistan on 19 March. He addressed two meetings in Dhaka, in both of which he ignored the popular demand for Bangla. He reiterated that Urdu would be the only state language of Pakistan, (Al-Helal 2015).

This provided further fuel to the fire that already engulfed the East Pakistan. The language movement continued to gain momentum for next four years or so. Muslim league became extremely unpopular and suffered a split and in 1949, Awami Muslim League was formed under the leadership of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, a much respected mass leader. Subsequently, the word Muslim was dropped and the party came to be known as Awami League. The leadership of the movement was still in the hands of the students, but political parties and social organisations also joined hands, (Manjur 1996: pp. 17-80).

On January 27, 1952, Khwaja Nazimuddin, then Prime Minister of Pakistan, declared that the people of East Pakistan could decide what would be the provincial language, but only Urdu would be the state language of Pakistan. Obviously, the proposal was rejected by the students and the intellectuals alike.

A strike was observed at Dhaka University on 30 January. The representatives of various political and cultural organisations held a meeting on 31 January and the All party Central Language Action Committee decided to call a state-wide *Hartal* (general strike) and organise demonstrations and processions on February 21. On the morning of February 21, thousands of students gathered at Dhaka University defying Section-144 that had been imposed from

the previous day, and marched towards the Assembly House. Police tried to stop them and when the students started throwing stones to the police and the situation went out of control, fired upon them. Three youths namely Rafique, Jabbar and Barkat died on the spot. Salam and Ohidul (a nine-year-old boy) died in the hospital. On 22 February, public assembled to perform the last rites of the dead and brought out a mourning procession, which was attacked by the police and the army. Many were injured and arrested. On February 23, at the spot where students had been killed, a temporary memorial was erected by the public. (Manjur 1996: pp. 17-80)

The language movement continued till 1956, when it was able to force the Pakistan Government in adopting Bangla as an official language of Pakistan. The movement finally achieved its goal, but the struggle continued.

In 1953, Awami League was reorganised with Moulana Bhashani as the President and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as the General Secretary. In 1954, the first General Election was held in Pakistan in which a United Front consisting of Awami League, Krishak Praja Party (of A K Fazlul Huq) and two smaller parties won the provincial election of East Bengal and formed the government with A K Fazlul Huq as the Chief Minister. However, the rulers of Pakistan failed to honour this democratic verdict and within months of assuming power, the newly elected government was dismissed by Governor General Ghulam Muhammad, upon accusations against A K Fazlul Huq of attempting secession. (Manjur 1996: pp. 17-80)

By this time, the people of East Pakistan started realising that they had made a terrible mistake by agreeing to form Pakistan with Punjabis and others, which turned out to be an undemocratic state dominated by Army, Bureaucracy and Landlords from West Pakistan. The Bengali people were not only ethnically and politically subjugated but were also economically exploited. In the 1960s, economic disparities between

East and West increased substantially. Jute, grown in East Pakistan, was the main foreign exchange earner, but the earning was spent for the development of West Pakistan. In the 1960s, while Pakistan was constructing its new capital at Islamabad and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman first visited the site, he remarked, "I smell the jute fields of Chittagong", referring to the fact that while development in East Pakistan was limited, extravagant amounts were being spent on the new capital, (*The Express Tribune*, Karachi, June 5, 2012). The honeymoon between the East and West Pakistan was over.

### **From Tagore Centenary (1961) to the Final Showdown (1971)**

The real achievement of the Language Movement was much more than its immediate one: The Muslim Bengalis of East Bengal, who were at the forefront of Pakistan movement a few years ago, discovered a new identity for themselves. More than being Muslims, they were ethnic Bengalis, just like Bengali Hindus, and they have nothing in common with the people of West Pakistan. The noted scholar Muhammad Shahidullah puts it like this in 1948: "It may be true that we are either Hindus or Muslims, but it is also equally true that we are all Bengalis. It is not an ideological statement, but based on reality. Nature has imprinted the characteristic Bengali features in our physical appearance, language and culture in such a way that they cannot be hidden behind Hindu or Muslim attires", (Manjur 1996: pp. 17-80).

Moreover, when the leadership of the movement gradually passed on from orthodox Tamaddun Majlish to the left leaning educated middle class, they and their political backers like Awami League, Pakistan National Congress and the Communist Party felt a need to rediscover a national identity for Bengali speaking people of East Bengal, particularly, the Bengali Muslims of the East Bengal. And here came the importance of Rabindranath Tagore. The Bengali Muslims

needed a rallying point, an embodiment of secular Bengali culture who was intimately connected to East Bengal, which they conveniently found in Rabindranath Tagore. Tagore, however, was not an unknown figure in East Bengal and its Muslim population. The old guards, who came close to Tagore, were still strongly under his cultural influence. Poems, short stories and novels by Tagore continued to dominate the textbooks from school to university level and singing Tagore song was a popular pastime for both Bengali Hindus and Muslims. Therefore, the leftist intellectuals of East Bengal built a powerful narrative of cultural nationalism around the legacy of Tagore with their ultimate goal of establishing a socialist, secular state of the Bengali people.

The leadership of East Bengal, particularly Huq, Bhashani and Mujib, who were primarily leaders of Muslim peasants, found this new narrative attractive and useful for their political goal and decided to patronise it. However, the politics in East Bengal (and in Pakistan in general) during the post-1954 dismissal of Huq ministry was a chaotic one and Awami League suffered splits. Bhashani, with his pro-China comrades, left Awami League and formed NAP (National Awami Party) in 1958. Huq died in 1962, followed by Suhrawardy in 1963. It was, therefore, left to Mujib and the leftists within Awami League to carry forward Tagore's legacy. In 1964, the massive anti-Hindu riot prompted Mujib to distance himself from other opposition parties with doubtful secular credentials and reorganise Awami League, (Mitra 1996: pp 103-17).

The celebration of the Birth Centenary of Tagore in 1961 brought the Bengali intellectuals in face to face confrontation with the government of Pakistan. Pakistan government, whose policies centred on anti-India and anti-Hindu rhetoric, considered Tagore's legacy as un-Islamic and discouraged celebration of Tagore centenary. The government was also planning to ban Tagore

song in radio and television. A systematic attack on Tagore's legacy was launched by the pro-government intellectuals and some communal newspapers like *Azad*, calling Tagore a Hindu, anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan poet. Many Bengali intellectuals, who had earlier joined pro-government Pakistan Writers Guild, could not get along with the government on Tagore issue. In 1961 Chhayanaut was established in Dhaka to practise and preserve the cultural heritage of the Bengalis, especially the culture of music and dance. Almost all top intellectuals were associated with it. Chhayanaut encountered many obstacles from government of the time, because music and dance, especially of secular genre, were considered un-Islamic by the Pakistani regime. Government particularly discouraged Rabindra Sangeet. Under this circumstances, Chhayanaut resolved to celebrate Tagore centenary in a big way despite stiff official obstacles, and it was indeed celebrated, (Mitra 1996: pp 103-17), (Hye 2014).

It was the difficult time of military regime of Field Marshall Md. Ayub Khan in Pakistan. The Ayub government considered all these to be a part of the conspiracy by "Hindus, Communists and Tagorists". On June 23, 1967, a news broke out that on June 22, 1967, Khawaja Shahabuddin, the Information & Broadcasting Minister of Pakistan, issued a statement in the Parliament about government's decision to gradually eliminate Tagore songs from government media. Next day, nineteen prominent intellectuals of East Pakistan issued a strong statement urging the government to refrain from such mindless action. The statement (both in Bengali and English) has been reproduced in the book titled *Rabindranath*, 1967 (Edited by Anisuzzaman). The text reads like this:

"Our attention has been drawn towards a news item published in a local daily of June 23, 1967. It discloses an official decision of gradual elimination of Tagore songs from Broadcasting. This we consider as very

unfortunate. The enrichment Tagore brought to the Bengali language by his literary creations, the refinement his songs brought to our sensibility, make him an integral part of the cultural existence of the Bengali-speaking Pakistanis. In framing of our Broadcasting policy the significance of this fact should be respected," (Anisuzzaman 1967), (Mitra 1996: pp 103-17).

In the same year, a commemorative volume titled *Rabindranath* was published by the leading intellectuals. The volume was formally released next year. It was edited by Anisuzzaman and contained valuable articles from thirty scholars, many of whom were subsequently killed by the Pak invaders or their associates in 1971.

Meanwhile, after the defeat of Pakistan in 1965 war against India, Mujib was worried about the security of East Pakistan against a possible attack by India. At the opposition parties' meet at Lahore in early 1966, Mujib put forward his famous Six-point Programme which proposed much greater autonomy for East Pakistan. The opposition leaders of West Pakistan considered Mujib's Six-point Programme as a strategy to break Pakistan and rejected it outright. The Ayub government also labelled Sheikh Mujib as a separatist and instituting Agartala Conspiracy Case, arrested him, (Halim 1996: pp 151-176).

When Mujib was in jail, a new militant movement under the leadership of leftists built up. New slogans like "*Bangali Jago—Awake Bengalis!*", "*Bir Bangali Astra Dharo, Bangladesh Swadhin Karo—Brave Bengalis, take up arms and liberate Bangladesh!*", "*Tomar Desh, Amar Desh, Bangladesh, Bangladesh Your Desh (Motherland), My Desh, Bangladesh, Bangladesh*" and "*Jai Bangla—Victory to Bangla!*" were coined. In 1968, Left politicians and students published a "Programme for Independent Republic of Purba Bangla". Towards the end of 1968, the situation became explosive and in the beginning of 1969, it took the shape of a mass upsurge. Under tremendous public pressure, Mujib was

released in February 1969. In the next month, Ayub Khan resigned and handed over power to Gen. Yahya Khan, who imposed Martial Law and promised general election by the subsequent year (Halim 1996: pp 151-176).

The Awami League sought public mandate in favour of the Six-point Programme in the general elections of 1970. On November 12, 1970, a huge cyclone devastated East Pakistan's coastal districts, and victims received little help from the government. Mujib lashed out the Pakistan Government for their indifference to the cyclone victims. Mujib, however, was not an extremist and did not favour immediate secession from Pakistan. But he was upset with the Pak government's response to cyclone victims. On his return from cyclone-hit areas, Mujib declared, "East Pakistan must achieve self-rule by ballot if possible, and by bullet, if necessary", (Luden 2003), (Gupta 1996: pp 177-205).

General elections were held in Pakistan on December 7, 1970 to elect members of the National Assembly. It was the first election held on the basis of a joint electorate. Voting took place in 300 constituencies, of which 162 were in East Pakistan and 138 in West Pakistan. In the provincial election, Awami League won 288 seats out of 300. In East Pakistan, the followers of Bhashani boycotted the election with the slogans like "*Voter aage bhat chai, Voter baxe lathi maro—We want food before the election, Kick the ballot box*". Despite the boycott, Sheikh Mujib-led Awami League won the majority with 160 seats out of 300 in the national election, and received the absolute mandate in favour of his Six-point. In East Pakistan, Awami League received 73% popular vote. Z A Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party came second with 81 seats. But Bhutto refused to join the session of the National Assembly scheduled to be held on March 3, 1971 at Dhaka unless a settlement was reached between the two leaders beforehand regarding the withdrawal of Six-point Programme.

On March 7, Mujib delivered the historic speech at the Race Course Maidan, Dhaka. His speech is often quoted as just short of a Unilateral Declaration of Independence ("*Ebarer sangram muktir sangram, ebarer sangram swadhinatar sangram*")—This time the struggle is for Liberation, this time the struggle is for Independence). When all subsequent dialogue failed to produce any positive result, Mujib was arrested and the army crackdown (Operation Searchlight) began on March 25 that finally sealed the fate of Pakistan (Gupta 1996: pp 177-205).

### Tagore in Independent Bangladesh

After a nine-month of the bloodiest struggle and with a sacrifice of three million lives, Bangladesh was finally able to break the Pakistani shackle on December 16, 1971. Sheikh Mujib was released from the jail in Pakistan to return to Dhaka via London. When on February 6, 1972, Mujib addressed a million people at Kolkata's Brigade Parade Ground, he concluded the address with quotations from Tagore. It is true that Tagore's legacy did not provide a revolutionary impetus to the liberation movement of Bangladesh, but surely gave Bengalis a cultural pride and helped secular consolidation in Awami League. Awami League, despite the presence of the towering personality of Sheikh Mujib, was a divided house. One leftist group, led by Tajuddin Ahmed and supported by CPI, was the true Tagorists in Awami League. The other leftist group led by Sirajul Alam Khan was closer to Mujib and his constituency of Muslim peasants, rather than to the leftist intellectuals. Mujib himself stood somewhere in between. He knew that the East Bengal of Mujib was very different from the East Bengal of Tagore, but he could not ignore the contributions of Tagorists to the liberation movement. The new constitution of Bangladesh, based on the principles of Nationalism, Democracy, Secularism and Socialism and which adopted "*Amar Sonar*

*Bangla*" as its national anthem, largely reflects the Tagorian ideology.

The situation changed after the brutal killing of Sheikh Mujib in 1975. The new dispensation, led by General Zia-Ur Rahman tried to construct an alternative narrative of Bangladeshi Nationalism, as opposed to Bengali Nationalism of the liberation movement. The justification of choosing "*Amar Sonar Bangla*" as the national anthem was questioned, but even this pro-Pakistan regime could not garner much support to dump Tagore.

During the rule of General H M Ershad, the constitution of Bangladesh suffered a setback, when Islam was made the state religion. The celebration of 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay in 1988 at Dhaka University was criticised by the government.

From 1988, the Chhayanaut started celebrating Pahela Baishakh every year and takes out a large procession. In 2015, Government of India honoured Chhayanaut with Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony. Tagore was rehabilitated in a big way by the Bangladesh Government after Sheikh Hasina's Awami League returned to power in 2008. Tagore's memorials (like Kuthibari at Shelaidaha) have been maintained well and in 2017, Rabindra Viswavidyalay was set up in Shahzadpur.

It is pertinent here to say a few words about "*Amar Sonar Bangla*". Originally proposed by Chhayanaut in 1969 as a symbol of Bengali cultural nationalism and a potential candidate for the national anthem of the "would be" independent nation, its sentimental appeal and popularity continued to increase among the intelligentsia and the political parties as the Pakistani oppression became severe and more severe. Initially, Chhayanaut also considered a few other songs (two songs by D L Roy), but finally zeroed in on "*Amar Sonar Bangla*". "*Amar Sonar Bangla*" had essentially its origin in rural East Bengal. The original score was written by Gagan Harkara,

a disciple of Lalon Fakir of Kushthia. Tagore set it to music with his own lyrics in 1906 and it became very popular. But with the decline of regional nationalism from the 1920s, this song went out of currency until its revival on the eve of Bangladesh war of liberation. By 1971, political and students' meetings of Awami League used to open with the singing of this song. The 7th March address of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at the Racecourse Maidan in Dhaka was preceded by this song. "*Amar Sonar Bangla*" became an informal anthem long before the independence of Bangladesh. Less than a month after the war started, the Bangladesh government in exile adopted the song as the national anthem and it was frequently aired through Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra. The formal decision to adopt Rabindranath's composition as the national anthem in 1972 was very natural and uncontested, (Farooq 2014). The Constitution of Bangladesh (Article 4. 1) adopted the first ten lines of the song as the national anthem of Bangladesh.

In May 2018, Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, along with Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh, inaugurated the Bangladesh Bhavan at Visva Bharati University. The Bangladesh Bhavan is a symbol of the cultural ties between the two countries. It features a museum that showcases Rabindranath Tagore's association with Bangladesh, the liberation war of Bangladesh and Indo-Bangla relations. It was fully funded by the Bangladesh government.

Tagore still dominates the cultural sphere of the educated middle class of Bangladesh despite occasional furore from the fundamentalists (Khan 2017). "Repeated governmental attempts to undermine Rabindranath Tagore's influence in East Pakistan (eastern Bengal) met with vigorous resistance by those who respected him as the supreme exponent of Bengali language and culture. During the Bangladesh liberation struggle of 1971, the songs of Tagore inspired Bengalis, regardless of religio-communal

diversity. Since then, those in Bangladesh committed to a secular approach to culture and politics continue to revere Tagore (though some have reservations on ideological grounds). Responses to him by those committed to a more Islamist approach to culture and politics range from cautious respect to renewed efforts to undermine his influence in the face of his continuing popularity," (Anisuzzaman 2008: pp. 1058-1069).

Despite this, the controversy on Tagore continues in independent Bangladesh. Recently, under pressure from a right-wing Islamist outfit Hefazat-e-Islam, Shaikh Hasina government was forced to remove Tagore's writings from school text books. The future of Tagore's legacy in Bangladesh appears to be uncertain!

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## Making the Past Talk

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I think many of us remember a childhood riddle. A lotus (or any other flower) is growing in a pot. Everyday it grows to double its size the previous day. It takes ten days to fill up the pot. How many days did it take to fill half the pot? We have the natural tendency of saying five days, since a uniform growth is something that is always preferred at the back of our minds. But that is not correct; the correct answer is of course, nine days. Similarly, it grows to one-fourth of the pot in eight days, one-eighth in seven days, one-sixteenth in six days, and only one-thirty-second in five days. It is a different kind of growth with a fanciful name of *exponential growth*.

As we can have exponential growths we can have exponential *decays*, too. Let us think of a colony of bacteria filling up a Petri dish in some medical lab, and antibiotic is added to the dish. Let the drug kill half the bacteria in one hour, half of the remaining colony (making up one-fourth of the colony) in the next hour, and so on. The first thing to notice is that the entire behaviour of the colony with time is decided by the time it takes to halve any population, called the *half-life* of the population. The second funny thing is that though it reduces very rapidly at first yet this reduction becomes slow very soon and the population never turns to zero. Mathematically, it becomes zero at infinite time!

There is something more interesting and definitely more useful about this behaviour. If we know the initial amount or count of

bacteria (the whole Petri dish here) and the amount remaining any time later, then we can find out the fraction remaining, say one-sixty-fourths, and if we know the half-life (one hour) then we can say that the dish was full six hours ago. The colony at any instant carries with it the date-stamp of its origin provided we know the original amount and the half-life.

Any living thing carries in its body such a date-stamp that gets switched on when its life comes to an end and the smallest remains of that living thing can tell us about the time of its death. Everything that we perceive by our senses, and even those that we cannot but can detect by our instruments like colourless, odourless, tasteless gases, are made up of combinations of very tiny bits of matter called *atoms*. Atoms can be grouped into ninety-two types that are found in nature, each group being called an *element*, like oxygen, gold, iron, carbon, sodium, and so forth. They differ in having separate numbers of a particle carrying the smallest positive electricity that can exist freely – the *proton*. Each atom of an element has a fixed number of protons, called the *atomic number*, and that decides what element it is. If this number is one, we call the element hydrogen, if it is six we call it carbon, if seven then it is nitrogen, if nineteen it is potassium and the inert gas argon, if the atomic number is eighteen.

The positive electricity of protons is balanced in each atom by an exactly equal number of negative electricity-carrying particles, the *electrons*. It is the electrons



that work like an extremely powerful glue to hold atoms together and make *molecules*, combinations of atoms starting from simple ones like water and carbon dioxide to very complex huge ones like proteins and DNA. These make up the whole world including our bodies and brains. Hence the atomic number of an element decides all its properties – except one, and that is where the date-stamp operates.

Other than the positive protons and negative electrons, the atom of any element carries a number of another particle having no electricity. These are the electrically neutral *neutrons*. For any element, though the number of protons is fixed, the number of neutrons can vary giving different varieties or *isotopes* of the elements. Hydrogen, with only one proton (atomic number one) has two other isotope sisters, deuterium with one proton and one neutron, and tritium with one proton and two neutrons. These sisters are identical in all their behaviour regarding combining with other elements and other properties like whether they will remain gases at room temperature, and so on. However, the presence of neutrons makes them do a strange thing that was the dream of alchemists through history. They change from one element to another giving out any one of three things – a particle with two protons and two neutrons called an *alpha* particle, an electron moving with almost the speed of light called a *beta* particle, or rays with at least ten times the penetrating power of x-rays called *gamma* rays. This *transmutation* from one element to another with this radiation is known as *radioactivity* and the isotope for which this happens is called the *radioactive* isotope of the element. The most important thing about this phenomenon is that it is totally independent of the state of the element, whether it is in the form of a solid, liquid, or a gas and whether combined with any other element or not.

Living things, ourselves included, are made up of mainly carbon, hydrogen,

nitrogen, oxygen, phosphorus, sulphur, small amounts of other elements such as iron in the blood of vertebrates and copper in that of some invertebrates, and sodium and potassium in our nerves, and finally, traces of other elements that also play very important roles. However, the overwhelming majority is that of carbon and hydrogen. Carbon, like hydrogen, also has three isotopes, the 'normal' carbon with six protons and six neutrons in each atom, the 'rare' carbon with six protons and seven neutrons, and the 'radioactive' carbon or *radiocarbon* with six protons and eight neutrons. The sum of the proton number and the neutron number is called the *mass number* because both the proton and the neutron are about two thousand times more massive than the electron and they carry almost the entire mass of the atom. So the mass numbers of the isotopes of carbon are twelve, thirteen and fourteen, and according to the convention of naming isotopes by their mass numbers, they are called carbon twelve, carbon thirteen and carbon fourteen or C12, C13 and C14 in short.

For any isotope of an element there is a fixed percentage of all the isotopes of that element, like that of C12, among the total of C12, C13 and C14, which occurs in nature. This is known as the *natural abundance* of that isotope. The natural abundances of these isotopes are 98.93%, 1.109% and 1 part in a trillion, respectively. It is obvious that C12 is, for all practical purposes, the 'natural' form of carbon, and that it takes a lot of effort to 'create' C14!

C14, in fact, requires something downright 'unearthly' to form. These are streams of neutrons, protons, and their clusters generated inside stars, including our Sun, and other places in the cosmos where stars are being formed, and travelling through space with humongous energies. They are called *cosmic rays*. They would have hit our blue planet and would have caused severe damage to all of us if they were not caught by the Earth's magnetic field and made to go

in circles around it, forming the ionosphere. Here they encounter the 'normal' nitrogen isotopes N14 with seven protons and seven neutrons and dislodge a proton to turn them into C14 isotopes. This, along with all other carbon in the upper atmosphere, reacts with oxygen to form carbon dioxide. Plants use the carbon dioxide, water and sunlight to prepare carbohydrates, plant-eating animals eat them, meat eaters eat these animals, we eat both plants and animals, and finally scavengers eat all of us. That is how C14 spreads to all life.

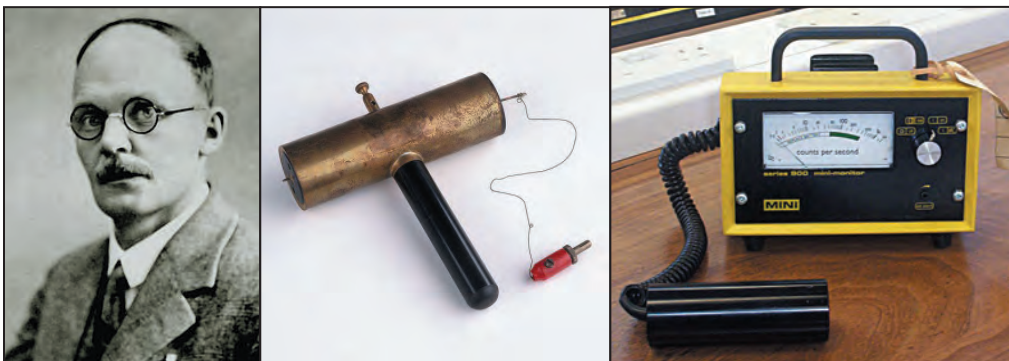
C14 reconverts to N14 giving off a beta particle. This transmutation is therefore radioactive, hence the name *radiocarbon* for C14. However, the half-life of this decay of C14 is 5700 years. In our lifetimes in the hundred years scale, about 99% of the C14 in our bodies remain intact. After death, as the remains get buried, the radioactive decay continues at exactly the same rate, in the carbon-containing parts such as bones, branches and ashes, the latter when the body was burnt. After thousands of years, when these remains are discovered, the first question coming to the mind of the archaeologist concerns the date of the finds.

In 1908, Hans Geiger, a German physicist invented a device to detect and count

the different particles emitted during transmutation and radioactive decay. This was originally called the *Geiger Tube* and then a more developed version fabricated by his student Walther Müller was called the *Geiger-Müller* or *GM Tube* or *GM Counter*. It can differentiate among alpha, beta and gamma radiations and can measure the amounts or counts of each. The rate of emission gives the decay rate, from which the amount of radioactive isotope present in the sample can be measured quite accurately.

When the archaeologists study a piece of bone they have excavated out, they can measure its mass and, using the natural abundance of C14, calculate out the original amount of the isotope in the living being. Then, from the amount left in the sample as obtained by the GM Counter, they can ascertain the fraction left. After that, it is comparatively easy to find out how many years ago that thing was alive using the half-life value of 5700 years. The date-stamp is deciphered.

The C14 atoms did not start to decay together to reach the half of the original. Radioactive decay is a random event in that it is impossible to predict exactly which atom is going to radiate but possible to talk only in terms of probabilities and averages.



Hans Geiger, his designed Geiger Tube and a modern Geiger-Müller Tube

Ref: <http://wal.nbed.nb.ca/sciencesettechnologies/pierrebrideau/geiger.jpg>, Science Museum London, Free Medium under Creative Commons

The half-life of 5700 years is also an average and the value can vary from 5660 years to 5740 years and that is the primary error in fixing the date. Of course there will be inherent errors in measuring the masses and arriving at the fraction of C14 remaining. It will be prudent to say that the error will be about a hundred years, which is small when times in the five thousand years scales are of concern.

Date ascertaining or dating with C14 gives excellent results for the historical era, where the oldest relics are less than fifteen thousand years old as more than one-fourth of the original C14 is left in them. They have been consistently used for that purpose. However, for human and animal remains older than fifty thousand years only a thousandth part is left to study and for one lakh year old specimens a mere millionth part is all there is. Not only is this too small but smaller the quantities larger are the errors and in fifty thousand years old

samples already the error is considerable. Again, C14 will work only with remains of living things or at least organic materials and does not cover any other materials like stone tools or minerals.

There are a number of radioactive isotopes but the one which would fill up the lacunae of C14 must have a much bigger half-life and also must be present in the relevant materials. Radiopotassium K40, with 19 protons and 21 neutrons making up the mass number 40, decays to Ar40, the argon isotope with 18 protons and 22 neutrons with a half-life of 1.3 billion years, enough to cover the history of life on Earth! Potassium is also present in both organic remains and inorganic matter of interest to archaeologists, palaeontologists and geologists, and everybody keen on finding out the age of a piece of material. The same techniques are used here as in C14 dating. It is easy to make the past talk if we hear closely enough.

## Reading (Listening!) between the Buzz of the Bees

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Bees flying from one flower to another sucking nectar and gathering pollen grains is a common scene once you step out into a meadow with wildflowers, or into the garden in your backyard or verandah, or a crop field in bloom. What are all these buzzes about? Do they mean something? Are they all alike? Do lend an ear and you will be surprised to hear the variety of buzzing sounds that the bees can produce on different occasions. While most bees produce 'flight buzz' by flapping their wings, some can also create low buzzing noises while compacting nests in the soil or as a warning signal (Buchmann 1983), and some others are capable of producing a prominent 'sonication buzz' during pollen collection from specially structured flowers. Let's dig a little deeper and try reading between the buzzes now.

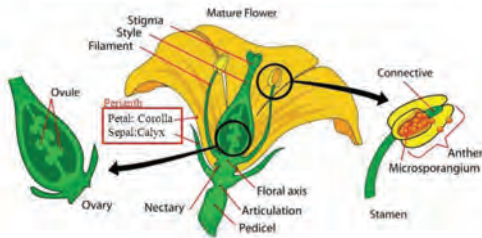
Bees collect pollen and nectar resources from the flowers and in the process transport pollen from one flower to another flower of the same plant or of a different plant of the same species, thereby leading to self or cross-pollination events, respectively. Such a process of cross-pollination is simpler in the case of the

open type of flowers with simple structured anthers that easily open up exposing the pollen grains on their surface for the bees to avail. However, some plants have structurally complex anthers with pollens well hidden inside and it requires a specialized effort for the bees to access the pollen resource. One such example is the poricidal anther structure in flowers of families Bignoniaceae, Solanaceae, and Fabaceae where pollen grains are trapped inside the anthers and can only be released through a minute opening at the far end of the anther cone. The pore can open up only in response to vibration (Amala,



Buzz pollinators (from top left clockwise *Xylocopa* sp., *Amegilla* sp., *Lasioglossum* sp., *Nomia* sp. )

### The Reproductive Structure of Flowering Plants:



2017; De Luca and Vallejo-Marin 2013; Harder and Thomson 1989). Only a specific group of bees belonging to the families Apidae and Halictidae are capable of creating such vibratory motions commonly known as the 'sonication buzz'. This process of accessing pollens using buzzes and transferring them to a flower's female part is known as buzz pollination. These bees curl up their bodies, grasp the anthers and vibrate their thoracic muscles causing a buzzing sound (King and Buchmann, 2003). These are the 'buzz pollinators'. This vibration bursts open the specialized anthers of some groups of flowers whose pollen release otherwise remains limited due to stamen and other floral part modifications (King and Buchmann, 2003; De Luca and Vallejo-Marin, 2013; Michener, 1962; Vallejo-Marin, 2019).

From the perspective of a bee, its obvious strategy would be to spend the least amount of energy for gaining maximum reward and hence will adopt an optimal foraging strategy to do so. A plant, on the other hand, would benefit most if the pollinators would visit flowers of the same species as they forage along, thus increasing the chances of cross-pollination. One evolutionary strategy would be to dispense a little amount of pollen at a time for the bee to avail in one bout and hence make it come back for more visits to ensure sufficient quantity of pollen collection (Switzer, 2015). Poricidal anthers serve this purpose by restricting the number of pollen grains that a bee may collect on a

single visit. Additionally, the shower of pollen grains caused by the sonication buzz messily scatters the pollen grains all over the bee body including less groomed areas thereby increasing chances of cross-pollination. The energy expenditure for buzz sonication by bees is presumably less than that of the energy spent for moving muscles during flight thus balancing the cost-benefit ratio (King and Buchmann, 1996).

Interestingly, the sonication frequencies not only show interspecific variations but also exhibit differences between individuals of same species with their flight buzzes. When a bee lands on a flower to buzz the anthers, it disengages its wings and rapidly contracts its thoracic muscles. The resulting vibration of the ventral side of the bee's abdomen is transmitted to the floral anthers via the head and the mandibles of the bee, thrusting out the pollen grains through the apical pores (DeLuca, 2013). The asynchronous flight muscles and the wings together with the thorax of a bee body form a resonating system. Since the wings are decoupled during a sonication buzz, it reduces the driving mass of the vibrating system, thus raising the natural frequency of the thorax (King, 1996). The resulting sonication frequency is thus significantly higher than the flight frequency.

In the case of a 'defensive buzz', used by the bees to warn a predator, the amplitude only gets comparatively higher, the frequency probably remaining in a similar range to the flight buzz of that individual species. The fundamental or peak frequency typically has the greatest energy and is determined by the contraction rate of the thoracic flight muscles. Studies on bumblebees have shown that the duration of buzzes varies within and among species, and even the number of pulses within a single buzzing sequence range from 1 to 17 in some *Bumblebee* species. Studies suggest that bumblebees can remove the majority of available pollen (almost 60%) in the first two pulses in a buzzing sequence, followed by a much lesser amount (around 10%)



Poricidal anthers in brinjal flower. The left picture shows a virgin flower and the right picture shows the anthers have been burst open

in the subsequent buzzes (DeLuca, 2013). Generally, bees with large body sizes like *Bombus sp.*, or the Carpenter bee (*Xylocopa sp.*) are considered effective pollinators of flowers with poricidal anthers since they touch the stigma while buzzing the anthers, thus causing a prominent pollen shower on the stigma, also remove quite good amounts of pollen per visit and can fly strongly between conspecific flowers (Buchmann & Hurley, 1978; Burkart et al., 2014; Mesquita-Neto et al., 2017; Renner and Feil, 1993). Other small-bodied buzz pollinators that are seen to cause pollen

shower effectively include *Amegilla sp.*, *Nomia sp.*, *Ceratina sp.*, *Lasioglossum sp.*, *Pseudapis sp.* and each has its characteristic behaviours while sonicating a flower. While a *Xylocopa* can grasp the whole anther cone at a time, a *Nomia* having a smaller body size moves circularly and transversally along the anther cone and produces multiple pulses in every buzzing sequence. Studies on *Bombus* state that bees adjust their behaviour to maximize pollen collection per flower while minimizing buzzing effort and hence exhibit variation in the number of pulses (Buchmann and Cane, 1989). Experiments have shown that a bee

typically produces a greater number of buzzes while visiting a non-visited virgin flower rather than a pollen-deprived experimental flower. Furthermore, bees can adjust their behaviour in response to availability of pollen resources and thus have been noted to spend less amount of time while buzzing



Non-buzz pollinators (*Apis dorsata* on the left and *Apis cerana* on the right) grasping and scratching anthers of the brinjal flowers at the tips in order to collect pollen



Buzz pollinators (top row: *Nomia sp.*, and *Lasioglossum sp.* in brinjal flowers; lower row: *Amegilla sp.*, *Ceratina sp.* in tomato flowers )

a flower that has been previously visited many times (DeLuca, 2013). Blue-banded bees (*Amegilla sp.*) have a very fast pace and show a typical behaviour of not resting on the flower during buzzing the anthers. High-speed videos reveals a very interesting feature of *Amegilla* buzz as it was seen to tap the anther with its head during each buzz to generate a pollen shower from the anther, rather than grasping the anther cone and shaking it (Switzer, 2015). The high buzzing frequency of its flight muscles along with this

characteristic behaviour of pollen collection and the reduced duration of visitation in a flower make the blue banded bees stand out as unique buzz pollinators. However, whether such characteristics of quicker pollen extraction render *Amegilla* as a more efficient member of the buzz pollinator community or not still needs to be studied in regard to the pollination effectiveness of the different species. Other small-bodied buzz pollinators such as *Ceratina* and *Lasioglossum* show their own characteristic features while visiting a

buzz pollinated flower. Alongside buzzing near the tip of the anther, these bees also grasp the anther and scratch at the tip of the pores to collect the pollen grains in their hind legs. They are often seen to insert their tongues through the pore of the stamens as they collect pollen from a previously buzzed flower. However, bees that are not capable of buzzing, are also noted to be frequent visitors of flowers with poricidal anthers and can be observed to effectively gather pollen from such specialized flowers. Their access to the pollen resources of such specialized flowers signify that the anthers had already been opened, either naturally or due to earlier visits by buzz pollinators in those flowers. Such non-buzzing bee species individuals can also be seen grasping the tips of the exploded anthers and digging or milking the anther structure to avail the pollen resource within. But such action yields them pollen only when the anthers have been burst open, possibly after visits by the buzz pollinator species. Hence, probably the buzzing bees, in a way, help the non-buzzing bees to acquire pollen grains from poricidal anthers, that are otherwise unavailable to them. However, such interdependent behavioural complexities need to be studied at large. Hence, proper knowledge of the specific buzz pollinator fauna, their resource collection behaviours and the external factors affecting them are still lacking.

Some important cash crops from different countries worldwide, including brinjal, tomato, potato, capsicum (pepper) etc have floral morphology suited for buzz pollination. Although some of them may undergo self-pollination, yet cross-pollination has been reported to increase their seed set significantly (Jayasinghe et al., 2017). This makes this specialized community of buzz pollinators a unique group of importance in the field of agriculture. Yet incessant pesticide application threatens this 'non-targeted' community of buzz pollinators. Systemic insecticides, such as neonicotinoids,

commonly used for seed treatments are retained in the plant body flowers. Ingestion of the contaminated pollen and nectar causes various levels of toxicity—lethal to sublethal (Boyle et al., 2019, Nauen and Jeschke, 2011). The neonicotinoids do not degrade immediately and directly cause damage to the nervous system of the bees. Thiamethoxam is a neonicotinoid insecticide often used in cultivation of crops like citrus, coffee, tomato, sweet pepper etc. Thiamethoxam boosts up the nicotinic acetylcholine receptors thus allowing uncontrolled and continuous nerve impulse transmission. This ultimately leads to the death of the insect due to hyperexcitation of the central nervous system (Maienfisch et al., 2001; El Hassani et al., 2008; Bass and Field, 2018). Other harmful effects of exposure to sublethal concentrations of neonicotinoids include compromised ability of feeding and foraging, loss of homing ability, orientation, learning and other motor activities (Whitehorn et al., 2012; Fischer et al., 2014). Although most of the chemical experiments have been tried upon honeybees as an insect model, the whole beneficial insect community including all the pollinators and the natural enemies are being threatened with similar toxic effects. Experiments on bumblebees in fact show similar results with honeybees, reporting a 40% decline in number of adults upon exposure to imidacloprid in food resources of bees (Tasei et al., 2000). Such experiments have marked both thiamethoxam and imidacloprid to be highly hazardous for bee health, while suggesting thiacloprid to be safer (Mommaerts et al., 2010).

We need much stricter pesticide regulatory regime backed by comprehensive risk assessment framework. Most countries do not have pesticide risk assessment framework that consider pollinators for end point assessment. Where they do, the model is often the European Honeybee. We need to evolve a process where these important wild pollinating insects like the buzz pollinators



are also included in the assessment.

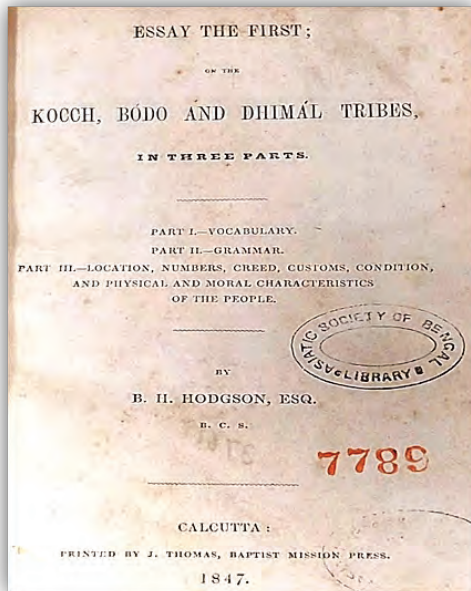
The ideal way to escape this pesticide laden vicious cycle is to embrace ecological intensification of agricultural landscapes. A landscape free of lethal chemical pesticides where pollinators and other beneficial organisms lie happily and deliver key ecosystem services to sustain and boost agricultural production. Let us shout out and say, "if you want to thrive then let the bees live an unharmed busy buzzy life".

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## From the Rare Collection of The Asiatic Society Library



<i>Title:</i>	<b>Essay the First; On the Kocch, Bódo and Dhimál tribes, in three parts</b>
<i>Author:</i>	Hodgson, B. H. (Brian Houghton), 1800-1894
<i>Year of Publication:</i>	1847
<i>Place:</i>	Calcutta
<i>Publisher:</i>	Baptist Mission Press
<i>Printed by:</i>	J. Thomas
<i>Collection Type:</i>	Rare
<i>Language:</i>	English
<i>Description:</i>	x, ix, [11]-200p., [3] 2 plates
<i>Size:</i>	21 cm
<i>Subject:</i>	Ethnology, Koch dialects, Bodo language, Dhimal language, Dhimal dialect

The book is one of the rare collections of the Asiatic Society. This book was first published in 1847. Its main focus has been given to Ethnology, specifically on the Kocch, Bodo and Dhimal tribes. The book has three parts. Part I contains vocabulary, Part II contains Grammar and Part III contains Location, Numbers, Creed, Customs, Condition and Physical and Moral characteristics of the people.

The main objective of the book was to ascertain when and under what circumstances the dispersion of the ancient owners took place by means of careful

comparison of the languages, physical attributes, creeds and customs. Another objective was to exhibit the positive condition, morals and material of each of these societies (the Kocch, Bodo and Dhimal Tribes) to understand the instructive pictures of the course of human progression.

The vocabulary part is not alphabetic but copious and systematic which shows the point of advancement which the aborigines have reached in thought and actions. Emphasis was given to their language as there was strong conviction of the author that their (the Kocch, Bodo and Dhimal

VOCABULARY.				37
<i>English.</i>	<i>Kocch.</i>	<i>Bodo.</i>	<i>Dhimál.</i>	
Barb of ear,	Súngá,	Khisláng,	Súngá.	
Stalk,	Gáteh,	Bipháng,	Sing ?	
Rind,	Chilka,	Bigúr,	Chónchá.	
Pulp,	Másó,	Modom,	Béhá.	
Core,	Sáns,			
Seed or stone,	Bichí,	Bigot, "	Bichj. "	
Flower bud,	Kórhá,	Tropidong,	Kórhá.	
Flower,	Phúl,	Bibár,	Lhép.	
Pollen,	Bhúsóng,	Shúmú,	Dhúlá.	
Fruit,	Phal,	Bithái,	Sihá.	
Root,	Sikor,	Ródá,	Shikár.	
Bole or stem,	Solsol,	Gádúí,	Górá.	
Bark,	Chál,	Bigor,	Chám.	

tribes) physical and mental conditions could be exactly portrayed through their speech. The vocabulary is from English to the Kocch, Bodo and Dhimál language translations.

The grammar part is rudimentary and concise. Kocch Grammar was not explained by the author as according to him Kocch language is 'wholly corrupt Bengali'. Therefore, the grammar of only Bodo and Dhimál languages was considered. The author gave physical delineations of the Bodo only because as opined by him, the distinctly marked type of the Mongolian family is similar in all three of them (Bodo, Kocch and Dhimál) but best expressed in Bodo.

The third part of the book highlighted on origin, location, numbers, creed, customs, character and condition of the Kocch, Bodo and Dhimál Tribes with a general description of the climate they dwell in.

Overall, the book contains very important information about the Kocch, Bodo and Dhimál Tribes and their advancement. The book is a result of research of the author for more than six months and the author explored every opportunity to communicate with the respondents of the Kocch, Bodo and Dhimál Tribes to find out the exact information for his research.

Pritam Gurey  
Librarian, The Asiatic Society

## A Note on the Manuscripts on *Samgītaśāstra* preserved in the Museum Section of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata

**Keka Adhikari Banerjee**  
Curator, The Asiatic Society

The Asiatic Society, Kolkata possesses valuable treasures of manuscripts which contain various fields of arts and science and a good repository of knowledge about the age-old Indian culture. Though the numbers are few but some of the unique collection of manuscripts on Music and dance are in the collection of the Museum of the Society. A Descriptive Catalogue of the Sanskrit Manuscripts in the Collection of the Asiatic Society by MM Haraprasad Shastri and revised and edited by Chintaharan Chakravarti (vol. XIV) informs about a good number of manuscripts on different aspects of music. Mr. O. C. Gangoly, one of the experts has demonstrated in his *Rāgas and Rāginīs* (Calcutta, 1948) that some unpublished manuscripts on *Samgītaśāstra* are in the possession of the Asiatic Society which portray some special attention. Besides, in some interesting works written by various scholars – reference of a great patron of

Indian Music and literature – Malik Suluta Śāhi or Malik Sarak Sulitan Śāhi of Kaḍā, near Veṇī is of worth mentioning. This music lover collected various Sanskrit works on music and assembled scholars from different parts of the country. In 1428 A. D. this band of scholars composed the *Samgītaśiromaṇi* at the bidding of the Śāhi. Some of the manuscripts like *Ānandasañjivana* contains about *Vādyādhyāya*, *Rāgādhyāya*, even the manuscript *Samgītapārijāta* informs about *Vādyā* and *Tāla* which have special value in the field of research on music.

There are other references of other patrons in a number of works like Jayachandradeva Saptamacakravarti – patron of Kavibālasarasvatī Subhāmkara, author of *Samgānasāgara*, Gajapati Nārāyaṇadeva, son of Padmanābha – patron of Puruṣottama Miśra, author of *Samgītanarayana* and many others.

A list of manuscripts preserved on *Samgītaśāstra* is given below –

Sl. No.	Accession No.	Name of the Manuscript	Author / Commentator	Folio	Complete / Incomplete	Date	Remarks
1.	G-1781	<i>Samgītaratnākara</i>	Śārṅgadeva	19	Incomplete		Language-Sanskrit Script – Nāgara 4 <sup>th</sup> Chapter only
2	G-9051			40			5 <sup>th</sup> Chapter only
3.	G-1131			06			
4.	G-3821			114		L. S. 362	7 <sup>th</sup> Chapter only.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sl. No.	Accession No.	Name of the Manuscript	Author / Commentator	Folio	Complete / Incomplete	Date	Remarks
5.	G-1110	Commentary on <i>Samgitaratnākara</i>	Kallinātha	1-46 & 38-72	Incomplete	-	-
6.	G-4183	<i>Sadrāgacandrodaya</i>	PundarikaVitthala	14	Incomplete		Language-Sanskrit Script – Nāgara The manuscript gives illustrations of what are called <i>Vinās</i> .
7.	G-5040	<i>Pañcamasaṃhitā</i>	Nārada	5	Incomplete		3 <sup>rd</sup> Chapter only, it deals with <i>Rāgas</i> and <i>Rāginīs</i>
8.	G-8365	<i>Ānandasañjivana</i>	Madanapāla	40	Incomplete		This manuscript contains portions of <i>Pravandhyāyaya</i> , <i>Vādyadhyāya</i> , <i>Rāgadhya</i> .
9.	G-9054	<i>Samgītapārijāta</i>	Ahobala	31	Incomplete		It deals with the <i>Rāgaprakaraṇa</i> .
10.	G-1129			35			
11.	G-1196			22			
12.	G-1713	<i>Samgītaśiromaṇi</i>	Sulutaśāhi	2-26	Incomplete		It deals with different topics of the science of music.
13.	G-2513	<i>Samgītanārayana</i>	Puruṣottama Miśra	69	Complete Chapters	4	
14.	G-4852	<i>Samgasasagara</i>	Subhāmkara	47 + 28	Incomplete		Language-Sanskrit Script- Newāri. This deals with vocal and instrumental music.
15.	G-1195	<i>Rāgamālā</i>	Kṣemakarṇa	15	Complete	S a m v a t 1833	The manuscript contains 134 verses with different topics of Ragas.
16.	G-10243	<i>Rāgamālā</i>	Kṣemakarṇa	25	Incomplete	-	Language-Sanskrit Script-Nāgara
17.	G-8321	<i>Rāgavibodha</i>	Soma	15	Incomplete	-	Language-Sanskrit Script-Nāgara
18.	G-10245	<i>Rāgaratna</i>	Māñikya	4	Incomplete	S a m v a t 1888	Language-Sanskrit Script-Nāgara
19.	G-10615	<i>Samgītacintāmaṇi</i>	Anonymous	1-2 & 1-3	Incomplete	-	Language-Sanskrit Script-Nāgara This deals with the origin of the Ragas.
20.	G-10144	<i>Samgītakautuka</i>		8	Incomplete		Language-Sanskrit Script-Nāgara
21.	G-1139	<i>Sankirṇarāgalakṣaṇa</i>		6	Complete	S a m v a t 1798	It deals with the <i>Rāgalakṣaṇa</i>
22.	G- 8316	<i>Gānaśāstra</i>		9	Complete(?)		Language-Sanskrit Script-Nāgara

## The Activities Undertaken by The Asiatic Society, Kolkata during The Swachhata Pakhwada from 16 April 2022 to 30 April 2022

The Asiatic Society, Kolkata observed the Swachhata Pakhwada from 16 April 2022 to 30 April 2022. During this period various events were planned in addition to the *shramdan* at various locations of the Society premises, cleaning of the Sections and also identification and segregation of e-waste from various Sections. On 18th April an exhibition was organised to commemorate the World Heritage Day. A poster writing and drawing competition on *Swachha* was organised on 25 April 2022. A film by National Geographic channel in collaboration with Ministry of Drinking Water & Sanitation titled 'Swachh Bharat : India's Sanitary Revolution' was screened on 28 April 2022. Also, prizes were distributed to the winners of the drawing competition and to the cleanest departments. Publication Department and the Administration Department jointly got the 1st position.



## The Asiatic Society, Kolkata observes International Museum Day on 18th May, 2022

**Keka Adhikari Banerjee**  
Curator, The Asiatic Society

The Asiatic Society, Kolkata organised a visit of the students of New Alipore College at the Museum of the Society followed by feedback session with an extempore competition on 18th May 2022 in observance of 'International Museum Day'. The programme was a part of the ongoing celebration of 'Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav' 2022.

The programme had two segments. A visit of the students of New Alipore College at the Museum of the Society and a feedback session with an extempore competition were organised among the students. Posters regarding the aim and importance of observing the day were displayed throughout the building for general awareness.

The programme began with the welcome address of Dr. Satyabarata Chakrabarti, the General Secretary of the Society. Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society delivered his talks on the theme of IMD 2022 - 'Power of Museums through Personal Experiences' and on the Heritage

preserved by the Asiatic Society, Kolkata at the Vidyasagar Hall of the old building (heritage building of the Society) which was the venue for the feedback session. The extempore speeches of the students were judged by a panel of judges comprising Professor Tapati Mukherjee, Vice President, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, Sujata Misra, Assistant Librarian and Dr. Sakti Mukherjee, Senior Publication Assistant of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata. Observations and relevant comments were given by Professor Biplab Chakrabarti, Library Secretary, Professor Tapan Mondol, Head of the History Dept.-in-Charge) and Professor Sravani Basu of the same department of the New Alipore College. Professor Sujit Kumar Das, Treasurer of the Society proposed the formal vote of thanks. The students were awarded with the gifts from the Museum Souvenir items. The programme was coordinated by Dr. Keka Banerjee Adhikari, Curator of the Museum of the Society.





## Celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity 2022 at The Asiatic Society, Kolkata on 24th May 2022 – A Report

**Dhiman Chakraborty**

Controller of Finance, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata

The International Day for Biological Diversity 2022 was celebrated in a befitting manner at the Society on 24th May 2022. The actual date declared by the United Nations as the International Day for Biological Diversity is May 22nd, but that being a Sunday this year, the celebration took place on 24th May.

Welcoming the gathering, Dr. S. B. Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Society stressed upon the concern of the Society on issues related to life sciences, ecology & environment and as an outcome of which the Society is committed to spread awareness on

such issues. Dr. Chakrabarti mentioned about the interface of Man & Nature in the domain of biological diversity taking reference of the historic declaration by Sir William Jones, the founder of the Asiatic Society on its foundation day in 1784.

Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society while delivering his presidential address, spoke about the urgent need of maintaining the biological framework of the earth for survival of the species that is under threat with the increasing control of man over nature resulting from rapid industrialization and urbanization.



Professor Asok Kanti Sanyal, Biological Science Secretary of the Society and convener of the programme delivered his talk on the theme of this year's International Day of Biological Diversity: 'Building a shared future for all life'. In his speech, Professor Sanyal emphasized that biological diversity is the single most important factor for sustainable development not only for the well-being of human life on earth but also for its equitable share by all organisms. He also mentioned that since 80% of livelihood directly depends on biodiversity, thoughtful use of biological resources is critical for poverty alleviation.

The event had a distinguished panel of speakers who are eminent scientists and academicians from the field of biological sciences. The guest speakers were felicitated with plant saplings.

Professor Nimai Chandra Saha, Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, The University of Burdwan was the first guest speaker of the day. Professor Saha made a detailed presentation on ecosystem diversity with eye-catching visual slides of flora & fauna and their interplay in different geographies and climates. He also talked about the conservation methods of the natural resources and species that constitute the prime task for maintenance of biodiversity.

Dr. J. R. B. Alfred, Former Director, Zoological Survey of India raised an alert stating that extinction of species though is natural, it is happening at a rate thousand times higher than that of pre-human times leading to a disastrous impact on biodiversity. He also elaborated upon the impact of biodiversity across all segments like social, cultural, economic, political, etc. Dr. Alfred

also made a special mention about the Asiatic Society's historic contribution in initiating studies & research on biodiversity 100 years back that lead to the birth of Zoological Survey of India (ZSI).

Dr. Dhriti Banerjee, Director, Zoological Survey of India spoke about ZSI's recent discovery of more than 500 new species that are being added to the repository of faunal species surveyed in ZSI's 106 year old history. Dr. Banerjee also briefed on the Government of India's active intervention in maintaining biodiversity through various schemes and projects implemented through ZSI.

Professor Tapan Kumar Mishra, Former Principal, Vidyasagar College, Kolkata and a Botanist by profession, spoke on the importance of management and conservation of forests and more particularly natural forests as an important component of ecological balance and biodiversity. He substantiated his speech citing quite a few case studies in which he took the role of an activist in social movements for forest protection.

Professor Asok Kanti Sanyal summed up the session urging the young generation to take initiatives at the community level for raising awareness on biodiversity by organizing camps for tree plantation and conservation of species, both flora & fauna.

Dr. Sujit Kumar Das, Treasurer of the Society proposed the formal vote of thanks. The programme was live streamed in the facebook channel of the Society and was covered and reported by The Times of India, Kolkata on 25. 05. 2022. A large section of the participants of the programme included teachers, students and researchers from the field of life sciences.



## Rabindra Nazrul Jayanti organized by Asiatic Society Recreation Club on 30th May 2022



Society's staff performing *Srutinatak 'Mahamaya'* based on a short story by Rabindranath Tagore from *Galpaguchha* collection



*Sangeetalekhya 'Bajre Tomar Baje Banshi'* based on patriotic songs and poems of Rabindranath Tagore and Kazi Nazrul Islam, their influences on the freedom fighters as revealed through the writings and letters of some Martyrs performed by the Society's staff and Research fellows as a part of the celebration of 75 years of India's Independence – *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav*

## টুম অফ স্যান্ড: একটি পাঠ প্রতিক্রিয়া

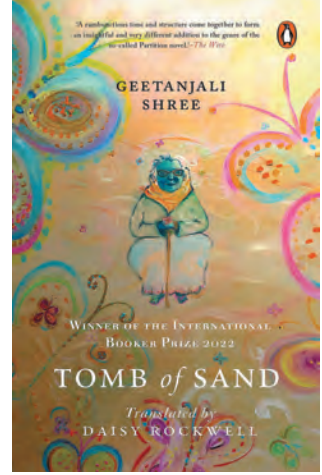
টুম অফ স্যান্ড

গীতাঞ্জলি শ্রী

অনুবাদ : ডেইজি রকওয়েল

পেঙ্গুইন বুকস, ২০২২

দাম: ৬৯৯ টাকা



ইংরেজি ভাষায় সাহিত্য রচনায় 'বুকার' প্রাইজ ইতিমধ্যে ভারতীয় সাহিত্যিকরা পেয়েছেন। কিন্তু, আঞ্চলিক ভাষায় রচিত সাহিত্যের ইংরেজি অনুবাদে বুকার প্রাইজ চালু হওয়ার পর এই প্রথম একজন ভারতীয় বুকার সম্মানে ভূষিত হলেন। গীতাঞ্জলি শ্রী তার 'রেত সমাধি' উপন্যাসের জন্য ২০২২ এর বুকার সম্মান অর্জন করলেন।

ভারতীয় লেখিকা গীতাঞ্জলি শ্রী-র হিন্দী উপন্যাসের ইংরেজি অনুবাদক ডেইজি রকওয়েল। তিনিও অনুবাদিকা হিসেবে বুকার পুরস্কারের সমান ভাগীদার। সঙ্গত কারণেই। এমন সার্থক অনুবাদ না হলে আন্তর্জাতিক দরবারে কেই বা বুঝাত গীতাঞ্জলির সৃষ্টির মহত্ত্ব। ভারতীয় সাহিত্য তো বাদই দিলাম—আর এক গীতাঞ্জলি মানে গুরুদেব রবীন্দ্রনাথের গীতাঞ্জলি-র মতো অনুবাদ হলে বাংলা সাহিত্যেই বিভূতিভূষণ, তারাশঙ্কর, মানিক, পরশুরাম, সুধীন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত, জীবনানন্দ-সহ আরো অনেকের সৃষ্টি আরো কত আন্তর্জাতিক সম্মান আনত এদেশে।

অনুবাদ সাহিত্য অনেক আঞ্চলিক ভাষার সাহিত্যকেই বিশ্বের দরবারে প্রতিষ্ঠা দিয়েছে যুগে যুগে। পাশাপাশি এ বিতর্কও জারি আছে যে অনুবাদ সাহিত্যে সোর্স ল্যাঙ্গুয়েজের কৃষ্টি, সংস্কৃতি ও অন্যান্য বৈশিষ্ট্যের কতটা টার্গেট ল্যাঙ্গুয়েজে অনুবাদ করা

সম্ভব। সোর্স ল্যাঙ্গুয়েজ ও টার্গেট ল্যাঙ্গুয়েজের মধ্যে অনুবাদের এই ফারাক কোনোদিনই কোনো অবস্থাতে মেটার নয়। অনেক আন্তর্জাতিক মানের সাহিত্য তাই অনুবাদের অসম্পূর্ণতার কারণে আন্তর্জাতিক স্তরে চর্চিত হয়নি। যথার্থ মূল্যায়ন হয়নি সেইসব সৃষ্টির।

গীতাঞ্জলির শ্রী'র টুম অফ স্যান্ড উপন্যাস বুকার পুরস্কার পাওয়া মাত্র আমরা বইটি হাতে পাওয়ার জন্য সক্রিয় হলাম। এই উপন্যাসের বিস্তার এক মা ও মেয়েকে কেন্দ্র করে। এই 'মা' কাহিনীর একেবারে সূচনায় সদ্য স্বামীহারা। তার বড় ছেলে পদস্থ সরকারি আমলা, বিবাহিত। তাদের সন্তান সিদ্ধার্থ, উপন্যাস জুড়ে তার নাম সিড। অন্য ছেলে বিদেশে থাকে। এই উপন্যাসের যেখানে শুরু তখন 'মা'-এর পুত্রসন্তান 'বড়ে' চাকরির অবসরের দ্বারপ্রান্তে। মেয়ে বেটি, দাদার থেকে বছর দশকের ছোট, পেশায় ফ্রিল্যান্স সাংবাদিক। চিরাচরিত সংসারধর্মে না থাকলেও বেটি'র ঘনিষ্ঠ সম্পর্কের উপস্থিতি আছে এই উপন্যাসে। উপন্যাসের প্রথম পর্বের শিরোনাম 'Ma's back' আর দ্বিতীয় পর্ব 'Sunlight'। এছাড়া আছে তৃতীয় পর্ব 'Back to the Front'। প্রথম পর্বের শুরুতে মুখ্য চরিত্র 'মা' সদ্য বিধবা। লেখিকার বর্ণনায় দেখা যাচ্ছে, এই শোকাহতা, স্বামীহারা বৃদ্ধা শুধু এক দেওয়ালের মুখোমুখি, কাত হয়ে শোয়া। জাগতিক সমস্ত কিছু থেকেই তিনি বিচ্ছিন্ন করেছেন

নিজেকে। সামনের দেওয়ালকে শুধু স্বীকার করে জাগতিক সবকিছু থেকে পিছন ফিরেছেন তিনি।

“This was the sort of wall towards which Ma, now just this side of eighty, was sliding, gradually. A cold wall, during those winter days, and riddled with cracks, the way ordinary walls can be.

What can never be known for certain was whether the wall was playing the greater role in pulling Ma towards it, or whether it was her own desire to show her back to her family that drew her in.”

টুম অফ স্যান্ড উপন্যাসের শুরুতে এই চিত্রকল্প কাহিনীর নির্মাণ ও বিনির্মাণের এক গুরুত্বপূর্ণ স্তম্ভ। একদিকে মা চরিত্রের এ যেমন এক চরম নিঃসঙ্গতা, একাকিত্ব ও জগৎ সংসারের প্রতি নির্লিপ্তির প্রতীক, অন্যদিকে জীবনের দীর্ঘ পথের সুখ-দুঃখের সঙ্গী তার স্বামীর প্রয়াণের কারণে তৈরি হওয়া শূন্যতার অভিব্যক্তি বলেও মনে হতে পারে। এহেন পরিস্থিতি থেকে কাহিনীর বিস্তার আমাদের দেখাবে ‘মা’-এর আচরণ নিছকই সনাতন হিন্দু নারীর বিধবা হওয়ার শোক অথবা পারিপার্শ্বিক পারিবারিক জীবন থেকে নিজেকে বিচ্ছিন্ন করে নেওয়া নয়। বড় ছেলে চাকরি থেকে অবসর নেওয়ার পরে মাকে কাছে রাখতে চাইলেও স্বামীর মৃত্যুর পরে ‘মা’ আশ্রয় নিলেন মেয়ে বেটির কাছে। সূচনায় স্বামীর মৃত্যুর পর থেকে একটা বড় অংশ জুড়ে ‘মা’ অবসাদে আচ্ছন্ন, কার্যত চারপাশের জগৎ থেকে বিচ্ছিন্ন। অথচ, এই সত্তারই এক অপ্রত্যাশিত পরিবর্তন আসে উপন্যাসের পরবর্তী অংশে। মেয়ে বেটির বয়ানে “When Ma came to my home she began to dream new dreams”। ‘মা’-এর এই নতুন জীবন, এই নতুন স্বপ্ন আবার করে তৈরি হওয়া জীবনের প্রতি মোহ আকর্ষণ—বাইরের জগৎ বাইরের বন্ধু, বাইরের চরিত্রদের সাথে নিবিড় সখ্যতাই এই উপন্যাসের চমক ও চালিকাশক্তি। ‘মা’-এর এই নতুন জীবনে বাড়িতে যে অতিথিদের নিত্য আসা যাওয়া তাদের অন্যতম

রোজি বুয়া একজন বৃহন্নলা। এই পরিবারে রোজি এই পর্বের এক মুখ্য চরিত্র হয়ে উঠলেও উপন্যাসের কাহিনীর অনেক দেরিতে পাঠক জানতে পারে যে ‘মা’ এর সাথে ‘রোজির’ পরিচিতি রোজির ছোটবেলা থেকেই। এইভাবেই গীতাঞ্জলির উপন্যাসের মুখ্য চরিত্র হয়ে ওঠে নারী ও বৃহন্নলা—সমাজের দুই বহু অবহেলিত, বঞ্চিত অংশ।

এই উপন্যাসের অন্যতম আকর্ষণীয় দিক বিষণ্ণতার অতল থেকে একজন বৃদ্ধার উঠে আসা, অসমর্থ শরীরেও আবার নতুন করে জীবনকে গড়ে তোলা। স্বামীর মৃত্যুর পরে যে বৃদ্ধার জীবনের প্রতি নিরাসক্তি নির্লিপ্তি থেকে তাকে টেনে তুলতে ব্যর্থ তার পুত্র-কন্যা, নাতিরা—সেই প্রবীণার পুনরুজ্জীবন, অতি সক্রিয়তা—কখনও কখনও বিব্রত করছে, বিস্মিত করছে তার কন্যা বেটিকেও। উপন্যাসের দ্বিতীয় পর্ব ‘Sunlight’ এবং অন্তিম পর্ব ‘Back to the Front’ এই বৃদ্ধার জীবনের অন্যতম গুরুত্বপূর্ণ অধ্যায়—যে পর্বগুলোতে তাঁর রূপান্তরকামী বাল্যবন্ধু রোজির সাথে তার নতুন করে গড়ে ওঠা সখ্যতা তার কৈশোরের দেশভাগের বিপন্নতার, যন্ত্রণার অতীতে তাকে ফিরিয়ে নিয়ে যায়। উপন্যাস প্রথম পর্ব বিস্তারলাভ করে এক অসম্ভব শ্লথতায়—পরবর্তী দুই অংশ তুলনামূলক ভাবে ঘটনাবহুলতায় ও গতিতে সম্পূর্ণ ভিন্ন। এই ঘটনাবহুলতা, ‘মা’র জীবনে নতুন প্রাণশক্তির উন্মেষ, সবকিছুরই কেন্দ্রে মুখ্য চরিত্র হয়ে ওঠে রোজি। বৃদ্ধার রোজির সঙ্গে অন্তরঙ্গতা, উচ্ছলতার দৈনন্দিন জীবনে সকলের অজান্তে বলি হয় ‘কেকে’, বেটির এক সময়ের একান্ত নিকটজন। এই ‘কেকে’র সাথে একসময়ের প্রাণোচ্ছল সম্পর্ক থেকে বর্তমানে বেটি অনেকটা দূরত্ব রচনা করেছে।

‘মা’ যখন রোজির সাথে প্রাত্যহিক মেলামেশায় অনুপ্রাণিত হচ্ছে দেশভাগের আগের স্মৃতিকে revisit করতে তখন উপন্যাসে আকস্মিক মৃত্যু ঘটছে রোজির। কিন্তু এই মৃত্যুই আরো তাড়িত করছে ‘মা’-এর পাকিস্তানে যাওয়ার বাসনাকে এবং বেটিকেও বোঝাতে পারছে বৃদ্ধা তার এই ইচ্ছেপূরণে সম্মত হওয়ায়। ভিসা-বিহীন তার ইঙ্গিত দেশে পৌঁছতে পারলেও

বেআইনী অনুপ্রবেশের দায়ে যখন জেরার মুখে পড়তে হচ্ছে তখনই এই বর্ষীয়ান নারীর প্রতিক্রিয়ায় আমরা মুখোমুখি হচ্ছি অনেক বিষয়ের, যা তলিয়ে দেখার তাগিদ তৈরী করাই উপন্যাসিকের মূল প্রতিপাদ্য।

দুটি ভিন্ন দেশ যা আগে একটাই দেশ ছিল। কিছু মানুষ যাদের জন্ম ও জীবন কেটেছে যে দেশে, যে অঞ্চলে, তারা এখন অন্য দেশে। সেখানে যেতে এখন সীমান্ত পার হতে হয়, পাসপোর্ট ভিসা লাগে। সেখানে যাওয়ার কারণ দর্শাতে হয়। সীমান্ত ও সীমানা টুম অফ স্যান্ড-এ হয়ে ওঠে বিভেদের প্রতীক। এই বিভেদ এই উপন্যাসে রূপক হয়ে ওঠে, মানুষে মানুষে বিভেদের। এই বিভেদ মানুষে মানুষে সৃষ্টি করা হয় দেশ, লিঙ্গ ও ধর্মের ভিত্তিতে। এই সীমানা, এই সীমান্ত এবং বিভেদের বিরুদ্ধেই বলিষ্ঠ উপন্যাস গীতাঞ্জলির টুম অফ স্যান্ড। উপন্যাসের অন্তিম পর্বে অশীতিপর ‘মা’ (চন্দা) পাকিস্তানে পৌঁছে যখন ভিসা না থাকার কারণে জেরার মুখে পড়ে তখন বিস্ময়াবিষ্ট হয়ে সে-ই পাল্টা প্রশ্নের মুখে দাঁড় করিয়ে দেয় অফিসারকে। অফিসারকে সে জানায় যে এটা তারই দেশ, একদিন ছেড়ে যেতে হয়েছিল—আজ মনের ইচ্ছে চরিতার্থ করতে আবার তার এখানে আসা। বরং উল্টে তারই জিজ্ঞাসা, এর জন্য অনুমতি নিতে হবে কেন। গীতাঞ্জলি শ্রীর উপন্যাস টুম অফ স্যান্ড এ যখন এই জিজ্ঞাসা, এই প্রতিবাদ, পৃথিবীর দিকে দিকে তখন আরো সীমান্ত, আরো সীমানা, আরো প্রতিবন্ধকতা, আরো গোষ্ঠী সংঘর্ষ। রাষ্ট্রীয় নিয়ন্ত্রণকে অতিক্রম করে এই বিভাজিকাগুলিকে মুছে দেওয়ার স্বপ্নই এই উপন্যাসের অন্যতম স্বপ্ন। সরকারের এই নিয়ন্ত্রণ যা মূলত নির্ভরশীল ভিসা, পাসপোর্ট, ম্যারেজ রেজিস্ট্রেশন সার্টিফিকেটের মতো নিষ্প্রাণ দলিলের উপর—তার বিরুদ্ধে প্রতিবাদই গীতাঞ্জলির এই উপন্যাসের অন্যতম প্রধান বার্তা।

উপন্যাসের সূচনায় স্বামীর মৃত্যুশোকে মূহমান চন্দা (‘মা’) শয্যাশায়ী। এই উপন্যাসের নামকরণের সঙ্গে সায়ুজ্যপূর্ণ এই শোকের সমাধি। এই সমাধি থেকে পুনরুত্থান ‘মা’-এর, উপন্যাসের প্রায় দেড়শো পাতা অতিক্রম করে। স্বভাবতই একটা বড় অংশ জুড়ে উপন্যাসের গতি বড়ই মন্তুর এবং পাঠকের পক্ষে একঘেয়ে। কিন্তু এই ‘দীর্ঘ একঘেয়েমি’ উপন্যাসের অন্যতম জরুরী উপাদান। একজন বৃদ্ধা, স্বামীর মৃত্যুর পর যিনি কার্যত এক স্বেচ্ছাসমাধিতে নিজেকে সমাহিত করেছিলেন, সেখান থেকেই তার নাটকীয় প্রত্যাবর্তন বিধৃত আছে *রেত সমাধি* উপন্যাসে। এই সমাধি থেকে পুনরুত্থানের প্রক্রিয়া প্রত্যাশিতভাবেই শ্লথ। কিন্তু এই দুঃসাহসিক কাজ গীতাঞ্জলি নির্ভয়ে করেছেন। তাই শ্লথতা কাটিয়ে উপন্যাসের মুখ্য চরিত্র ‘মা’ এক দুরন্ত গতির সঞ্চারণ করে কাহিনীর বাকি অংশে। বিপুল বিস্ময়ে পাঠক সওয়ার হয় এই গতির। হঠাৎ যেন প্রতিভাত হয়, ‘মা’ যে সমাধিতে নিজেকে অন্তরিন করেছিল স্বেচ্ছায়, তা আসলে এক বালির সমাধি। এই বালির সমাধি থেকে এক অবিশ্বাস্য দ্রুততায় উঠে আসে উপন্যাসের ‘বৃদ্ধা নায়িকা’। গীতাঞ্জলি পাঠককে নিয়ে যায় এক পরাবাস্তব জগতে যেখানে আমরা দেখি ‘মা’-কে ছাপিয়ে বৃহন্নলা রোজি যখন উপন্যাসের মুখ্য চরিত্র হয়ে উঠছে তখনই তার মৃত্যুর খবর আসে আকস্মিক। উপন্যাসের অন্তিম পর্বে মেয়ে বেটি এবং পাঠক অবগত হয় যে দেশভাগের সময় চন্দা পাকিস্তানে ফেলে আসে তার প্রথম পুরুষকে। এই উপন্যাসের কেন্দ্রে নারীকেই রাখি অথবা দেশভাগকে, ভারতীয় সাহিত্যে টুম অফ স্যান্ড (*রেত সমাধি*) এক অনন্য সৃষ্টি।

**শুভোদয় দাশগুপ্ত**

অধ্যাপক, ইংরেজি বিভাগ, এ.পি.সি. কলেজ

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**S 491. 25**

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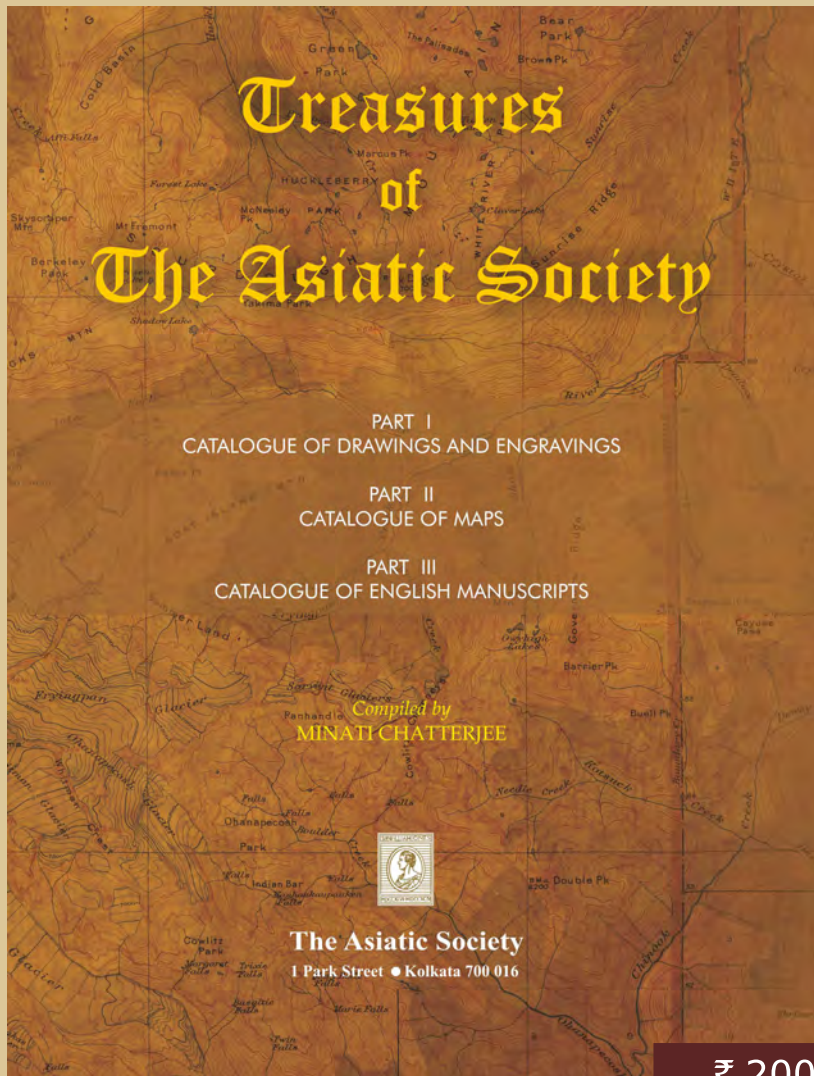
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