



Ministry of Culture
Government of India

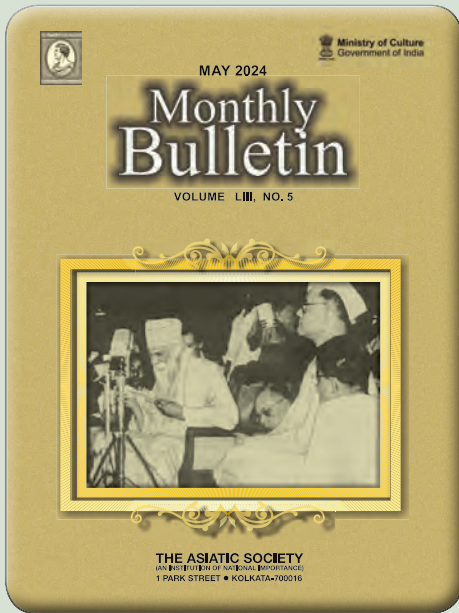
MAY 2024

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



Cover Description:
Rabindranath Tagore and Subhas Chandra Bose at the inauguration of Mahajati Sadan

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From the Desk of the General Secretary

Dear Members and Well-wishers,

The most important event in the month of May is our Annual General Meeting along with the prestigious Awards Giving Function. Like the earlier years this year also the Asiatic Society has conferred 13 numbers of prestigious Awards on eminent academicians of the country. In addition to this, 10 numbers of Annual Lectureships were also awarded to equally eminent academicians belonging to various academic disciplines. One Honorary Fellowship was also awarded to Dr. Sanghamitra Bandyopadhyay, Director, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.

This year 240th Annual General Meeting and Awards Giving Ceremony is scheduled to be held on 6th May, 2024.

During the last month an exhibition was organised entitled 'Disciplined Sensitivity' by Ella Gazdane Olosz, Hungarian textile artist from 17th April to 18th April, 2024 in collaboration with Listz Institute – Hungarian Cultural Centre Delhi. We had also observed the World Heritage Day on 18th April, 2024. A brief discussion was organised at the Society along with streaming it live through other channels. A photography competition was held on this occasion along with an exhibition of other photographs provided by the participants on the heritage sites, monuments etc. The programme was organised by the Museum Section in an appropriate manner. Two important books, one – *Danbir Moti Lall Seal, Life and Works* written by Dr. S.K. Nath, Medical Science Secretary and another book entitled *Prak Itihas O Mutty Lall Seal* written by Shri Shyamal Das, Life Member of the Society were released in the premises of the Society on 30th April, 2024.

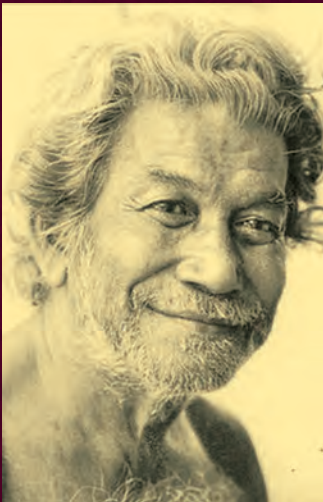
Friends, the month of May is also important otherwise to all of us due to the reason that a number of renowned personalities, in different fields of their respective specialisations of excellence, were born in this month. The whole world observed with reverence these dates of their birth as a mark of respect. A few instances would give us its reflective coverage such as Satyajit Ray (b. 02.05.1921), Karl Marx (b. 05.05.1818), Rabindranath Tagore (b. 07.05.1861), Gurusaday Dutt (b. 10.05.1882), Florence Nightingale (b. 12.05.1820), Ronald Ross (b. 13.05.1857), Bertrand Russell (b. 18.05.1872), Raja Rammohun Roy (b. 22.05.1774), Kazi Nazrul Islam (b. 24.05.1899), Rash Behari Bose (b. 25.05.1886), Ramkinkar Baij (b. 25.05.1906). Three historical memorable events also took place in the month of May. For example, the police fired on the demonstration for the protection of Bengali language in Cachar, Assam on 19.05.1961; Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay conquered Mount Everest on 29.05.1953 and Rabindranath Tagore withdrew his name from the conferred Knighthood in protest of Jallianwala Bag Massacre on 30.05.1919.

The Society is trying to complete all its committed academic activities within this financial year.

Please keep well and safe.



Gurusaday Dutt
(b. 10.05.1882)



Ramkinkar Baij
(b. 25.05.1906)

(S. B. Chakrabarti)
General Secretary



संस्कृति मंत्रालय
MINISTRY OF
CULTURE

The Asiatic Society

Founded in 1784

(An Institution of National Importance declared by an Act of Parliament)
and

(An Autonomous Organization under Ministry of Culture, Government of India)

Patron : Hon'ble Governor of West Bengal

Ref. No. : 60

Date : 26-04-2024

NOTICE

The 240th Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Awards Giving Ceremony of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata will be held on Monday, 6th May, 2024 at 05:00 p.m. at Vidyasagar Hall of the Asiatic Society as per the following schedule:

05.01 P.M.	Invocation.
05.03 P.M.	Felicitation to the Hon'ble Guest-in-Chief
05.05 P.M.	Welcome Address by the General Secretary of the Asiatic Society.
05.10 P.M.	Presidential Remarks by the President of the Asiatic Society.
05.20 P.M.	Presentation of Medals/Plaques to the Recipients by Hon'ble Guest-in-Chief.
05.45 P.M.	Address by Hon'ble Guest-in-Chief.
05.55 P.M.	Vote of thanks by the Treasurer of the Asiatic Society.
05.59 P.M.	National Anthem
06:00 P.M.	Departure of Hon'ble Guest in-Chief

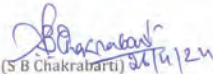
Thereafter, the meeting will continue to transact the following business as per Regulation 50 (c) of the Asiatic Society:

- To hear the Report of the Election Committee containing the whole process of Election including the election results
- To hear the Annual Report of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata for the year 2023-24, prepared by the Council, in accordance with the provisions of Regulation 41, Clause (f);
- To consider the Balance Sheet, the Audited Accounts and the Auditor's Report of the Society for the year 2022-23, referred to in Regulation 59A, along with the observations of the Council thereon, if any (The Audited Accounts, the Balance Sheet and the Auditor's Report for the year 2022-23 have already been adopted in the Extra-Ordinary General Meeting held on 4th September, 2023).
- Presidential Address by the President of the Asiatic Society

A notice of any motion arising out of the Annual Report and the other papers as aforesaid may be given at the meeting or within seven days thereafter.

All the members are requested to kindly make it convenient to attend the said meeting and award giving ceremony.

Date: 26th April, 2024


(S B Chakrabarti) 26/4/24
General Secretary

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website : www.asiaticsocietykolkata.org | e-mail:gs.asiatic@gmail.com / theasiaticsociety@gmail.com



Ministry of Culture
Government of India

The Asiatic Society Kolkata

Cordially invites you to the
240th Annual General Meeting
and
Awards Giving Ceremony
to be held at Vidyasagar Hall of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata
on Monday, 6th May 2024 at 5 p.m.

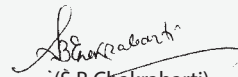
Justice Shyamal Sen

Former Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court & Former Governor of West Bengal
will grace the occasion as Guest-in-Chief and present the awards to the recipients.

Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick

President of the Asiatic Society will preside over the function.

1 Park Street, Kolkata-700016
Dated : 26.04.2024


(S.B. Chakrabarti)
General Secretary

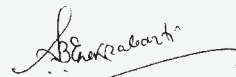
AN ORDINARY MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY WILL BE HELD ON 6TH MAY, MONDAY, 2024 AT THE VIDYASAGAR HALL OF THE SOCIETY IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TERMINATION OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO BE PRESENT

AGENDA

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the last Ordinary Monthly General Meeting held on 1st April, 2024.
2. Exhibition of presents made to the Society in April, 2024
3. Notice of Intended Motion, if any, under Regulation 49(d).
4. Matters of current business and routine matters for disposal under Regulation 49(f).
5. Consideration of reports and communications from the Council as per Regulation 49(g).

1 Park Street, Kolkata-700016
Dated : 26.04.2024


(S.B. Chakrabarti)
General Secretary

Awardees of Plaques, Medals and Lectureships of The Asiatic Society for the year 2023

Honorary Fellow	
<p>Professor Sanghamitra Bandyopadhyay, Eminent Indian Computer Scientist, Director, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata and Padma Shri Awardee has been elected as Honorary Fellow of the Asiatic Society for the year 2023.</p>	
Medal/Plaque	
1. RABINDRANATH TAGORE BIRTH CENTENARY PLAQUE	<p>Professor Chandrasekhar Kambhar, Eminent Kannada Folklorist and Padma Shri and Jnanpith Awardee, for his Creative Contributions to Human Culture.</p>
2. PANDIT ISWAR CHANDRA VIDYASAGAR GOLD PLAQUE	<p>Shri Sumanta Banerjee, Eminent Historian, Journalist and Cultural Theorist, for his Significant Contributions to Contemporary Social issues.</p>
3. INDIRA GANDHI GOLD PLAQUE	<p>Professor Bashabi Fraser, Eminent Indian-born Scottish Academic, Writer and Co-founder and Director of the Scottish Centre of Tagore Studies, for her Significant Contributions to Inter-Cultural Co-operations.</p>
4. PROFESSOR SUKUMAR SEN MEMORIAL GOLD MEDAL	<p>Professor Nagen Saikia, Eminent Assamese Writer and Sahitya Academy Awardee, for his Important Contributions in the Academic Field.</p>
5. PROFESSOR HEM CHANDRA RAYCHAUDHURI BIRTH CENTENARY GOLD MEDAL	<p>Professor Krishna Mohan Shrimali, Retired Professor of History at the University of Delhi, for his Important Contributions in the Field of Indian History.</p>
6. R P CHANDA BIRTH CENTENARY MEDAL	<p>Professor Triloki N. Pandey, Professor of Anthropology at University of California Santa Cruz, for his Important Contributions in Anthropology.</p>

LIST OF AWARDEES

7. SIR JADUNATH SARKAR GOLD MEDAL

Dr. T C A Raghavan, Former Indian Diplomat, for his Important Contributions to History.

8. DR. PRABHATI MUKHERJEE MEMORIAL GOLD MEDAL

Ms. Ritu Menon, Indian Feminist and Writer, for her Creative Contributions to the Subject of 'Women Question from Ancient Times to Date.'

9. DURGA PRASAD KHAITAN MEMORIAL GOLD MEDAL

Professor Man Mohan Sharma, FRS, Eminent Chemical Engineer and Padma Bhushan (1987) and Padma Vibhushan Awardee, for his Notable Contributions to Science.

10. DR. BIMALA CHURN LAW GOLD MEDAL

Professor Prabal Kumar Sen, Retired Professor of Philosophy, University of Calcutta, for his Important Contributions in the Field of Philosophy.

11. DR. NARESH CHANDRA SENGUPTA GOLD MEDAL

Ms. Flavia Agnes, Eminent Women's Rights Lawyer, for her Outstanding Contributions in the Field of Society and Law in Ancient and Mediaeval India.

12. RANADHIR ROY MEMORIAL GOLD MEDAL

Professor Buddhadev Das, Professor in Esraj, Department of Hindusthani Classical Music, Sangeet Bhavana, Visva-Bharati, for his Creative Contributions to Instrumental Music.

13. PROFESSOR NIRMAL NATH CHATTERJEE MEDAL

Ms. Ankita Basak, Research Scholar, Department of Geology, University of Calcutta, for her Important Contributions to the Knowledge of Economic Geology.

Lectureship

1. PANDIT ISWAR CHANDRA VIDYASAGAR LECTURESHIP

Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Eminent Clinical Scientist, Former Chief Scientist at World Health Organization and Former Director General of Indian Council of Medical Research, for her Significant Contributions in the Field of Science and Technology.

2. RAJA RAJENDRALAL MITRA MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP

Professor B.N. Patnaik, Retired Professor of English and Linguistics, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, for his Notable Contributions in the Field of Indological Studies.

3. INDIRA GANDHI MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP

Professor Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Eminent Literary Theorist, for her Significant Contributions in the Field of Cultural Pluralism.

LIST OF AWARDEES

4. PROFESSOR SUNITI KUMAR CHATTERJI MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP

Professor Goutam Sengupta, Retired Professor of Applied Linguistics, University of Hyderabad, for his Significant Contributions in the Field of Linguistics.

5. DR. PANCHANAN MITRA MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP

Professor Prasanta Kumar Chattopadhyay, Visiting Professor, College of Medicine and Forensics, Jiaotong University, Xi'an, China and Past-President, Indo-Pacific Association of Law, Medicine and Science, for his Significant Contributions in the Field of Anthropology.

6. DR. SATYENDRA NATH SEN MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP

Professor Abhirup Sarkar, Professor of Economics at Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata for his Significant Contributions in the Field of Social Science.

7. DR. BIMANBEHARI MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP

Professor Sashi Bala, Dean, Centre for Indology, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Delhi, for her Notable Contributions in the Field of Indian History.

8. ABHA MAITI ANNUAL MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP

Professor Promode Kumar Misra, Eminent Social Anthropologist, for his Significant Contributions towards the Development of Marginal Communities in India.

9. SWAMI PRANAVANANDA MEMORIAL LECTURESHIP

Professor Sukant K. Chaudhury, Professor of Eminence, Department of Sociology, University of Lucknow, for his Significant Contributions in the Field of Religion and Culture.

10. G.S.I. SESQUICENTENNIAL COMMEMORATIVE LECTURESHIP

Professor Sudipta Sengupta, Retired Professor in Structural Geology in Jadavpur University, the first Indian Women to set foot on Antarctica, for her Significant Contributions in the Field of Earth Science.



President's Column

Asiatic Society Publication Endeavours: The Beginnings *

The central motto of the Asiatic Society, after it was established in 1784, was publication of all types through Journals and Periodicals. In one of his Annual discourses, Sir William Jones, the founder of Asiatic Society, professed, "It will flourish, if naturalists, chemists, antiquaries, philologers and men of sciences, in different parts of Asia, will commit their observations to writing, and send them to the Asiatic Society at Calcutta, it will languish if such communication shall be long intermittent, and it will die away, if they shall entirely cease. William Jones's expectations have been fulfilled hence, resulting in the Asiatic Society being a two hundred and forty years old Institution "bearing the prestige of the oldest surviving publishing house of the country." Dr. R.C Majumdar's comment on this is worth noting in the context when he said that "the high ideal of Sir William Jones was realized beyond expectations by the publication of learned articles and treatises on the history and antiquities, arts, sciences and literature of Asia."

Of course the high expectations of Sir William Jones were not fulfilled immediately thereafter. The publication was delayed by a few more years. In a letter written in September 1788, Jones wrote, 'The Society

has as yet published nothing but has material for two quarto volume and will, I hope, send one to Europe next spring' It was in 1788 that the first volume under the title 'Asiatic Researches' (instead of 'Asiatic Miscellany' originally thought of by Jones) was first published. It contained 28 articles (a third of which was by Jones himself) and the printed matter ran into 488 pages. At the initial stage of the publication, Jones had contributed immensely. As Rajendralal Mitra mentioned, no less than 29 papers were contributed by him in the first 4 volumes of the *Asiatick Researches* and his translation of Manu had been a standard text book of reference for a hundred years. He likewise translated into English the 'Sakuntala' by Kalidasa and the 'Gitagovinda' of Jayadeva.¹ But initially the Journal was published only irregularly, the scarcity of fund being the main cause of this irregular publication.²

It was James Prinsep, who planned to bring out the Journal with a new character. The first issue of the journal named as the *The Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* was first published in 1832 with the aim "to give publicity to such oriental matters as the antiquaries, the linguist, the traveller and the naturalist may glean in the ample field open to their industry in this part of the world, that

* This constitutes a part of the Presidential Address at the AGM of the Asiatic Society held on 06.05.2024

1 Rajendralal Mitra - *Centenary Review of the Asiatic Society, 1784 to 1883*
2 Rajendralal Mitra, *ibid*, p-30

is Asia, and as far means would permit, to the progress of the various sciences at home especially such as are connected in any way with Asia." Starting from 1832, the Journal has passed three stages and entered the fourth stage in 1953, when it was renamed as *Journal of the Asiatic Society* from the original, the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*.

To go back to the early years of the beginnings of the Journal, almost all the landmark discoveries in the scientific arenas and the literary and documentary analyses found its publications in the Journal of the Asiatic Society. We can mention a few of such important publications apart from those by Jones and Prinsep, who have already been mentioned. Thus we had the landmark writings of H H Willson, who, among other things, made an elegant translation of the *Meghduta* and a translation of the fourth volume of the *Rigveda* and a critical review of Max Muller's Vedic literature, whose connection with the Society, according to Rajendralal Mitra, extended over a quarter of a century and during whose period the stability and credit of the Society was thoroughly established; H T Colebrooke, who was the President of the Asiatic Society for ten years from 1806 to 1815 and who contributed nineteen papers to the Transactions of the Asiatic Society: a great mathematician, a zealous astronomer and a profound Sanskrit scholar and who was the founder of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland; Bryan Hughton, whose contributions to the society lay in carrying on pursuits of literary and scientific arenas hitherto unexplored and whose contribution to the Society amount to a total of 112 papers, besides a large number of donations of valuable manuscripts and specimens of Natural History. Apart from those already mentioned, the most frequent contributors to the Journal were, among others, Mr. H H Piddington, Dr. H. Falconer, Dr. J. Campbell, Mr. Csoma de

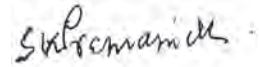
Koros, Captain J. D. Cunningham, General A Cunningham, Col. R. Everest, Mr. W. T. Hanford, Dr. R. Mitra and Mr. H. Blochmann. As Rajendralal Mitra calculates, in his said *Centenary Review*, that during the period under review, the Society had published either directly or indirectly and including the index, 84 volumes of the Journal and 19 volumes of the Proceedings. These 103 volumes represent roughly speaking a total of 50,000 papers of closely printed matters, replete with innumerable essays, papers, monographs and notes of great interest. To obviate the difficulty of going through these volumes physically, a carefully prepared index to the volumes had been prepared by Rajendralal Mitra himself in the year 1856. This endeavour has been continuing over time since then for the next 150 years by indexes prepared by the writers including that by Sibdas Chowdhury. The latest such prepared index is now in the press.

In the said Centenary Review (1784-1884) Rajendralal Mitra had also made a rough calculation of the published materials of the Asiatic Society. As he says, 'It has published a total of 354 volumes, including 21 volumes of the Asiatic Researches and Index, 84 volumes of the Journal and Index, 19 volumes of the Proceedings, 167 volumes of Oriental works of different kinds, 31 volumes of miscellaneous works relating to India, 14 volumes of Catalogues of various kinds and 18 volumes of 'Notices of Sanskrit Manuscripts'. As Mitra says, 'This compares very favourably with the works of other and older Societies in other parts of the Earth' (Centenary Review, P-81)

Apart from publications in the Asiatic Society Journal, the Society also undertook another series of publications in the Asiatic Society known as the Bibliotheca Indica Series. In and around the late forties of the 19th century, the Society endeavoured to publish various works of oriental literature, grammar, dictionaries and studies of critical editions of Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Rajasthani,

Kashmiri, Hindi, Tibetan, Persian, Bengali and such other languages. Works under this Series included some works by scholars like Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar. Dr A. Sprenger and J.R Ballantyne. After the arrival of Csoma de Koros at Almorah, after his long sojourn in Tibet, the Society was able to publish his scholarly works on Tibetan Grammar and Dictionary. The Origin of this series of publications has been described by Rajendralal Mitra, in his *Centenary Review*, thus, “.. Sir James Macintosh, then President of the ‘Literary Sociey of Bombay’ submitted a scheme for the regular publication of Sanskrit texts, and on July 2, 1808, the Asiatic Society resolved to publish from time to time, as the funds will admit of it, in Volumes distinct from the Asiatick Researches,

translations of short works in the Sanskrit and other Asiatick languages, or extracts and descriptive accounts of books of greater length in these languages which may be offered to the Society and appear deserving of publication” and the publications may be extended to incorporate all Asiatic books. The series of volumes be entitled ‘Bibliotheca Asiatica’ or a descriptive catalogue of Asiatic books, with extracts and translations” (Rajendralal Mitra, *Centenary Review*, p-56). This Bibliotheca Indica series, which was started in the first quarter of the 19th century, has been continuously functioning since then and has been instrumental in publishing invaluable books and manuscripts.


Swapan Kumar Pramanick
President

Envisioning the 'Nation' and 'Internationalism'— Studying the Intellectual Labyrinth and Grid of Actions of Bose and Tagore

Biman Samaddar

Head of the Department, History, Santipur College

In the intellectual space of the veteran thinkers of Indian subcontinent, since the colonial times, the attempts of envisioning the 'nation' remain a major point of commonality. Although the vision(s) had witnessed several dynamics varying from time to time, space to space and person to person, somewhere the idea of 'nation' and 'nationhood' came within the philosophical space of veteran thinkers. Situating the nation and imagination of the same in post-colonial era had been discussed time and again in the writings and speeches of litterateurs like Rabindranath Tagore and politicians like Subhas Chandra Bose. Their actions are also reflections of their thoughts which sometimes witness some intersectionalities between them and sometimes deviation from that theme as well. In this paper we will try to explore the case of Tagore and Bose — how these two ideologues had 'imagined' their nation in the colonial era. We will also throw some light to their writings to find how they had imagined the nation in the global labyrinth and how in the international space they had tried to fit their 'imagined' India. Here we will try to delve into their visions regarding the identity and its relation with the community, civilisation and nation on one hand and on the other hand our focus will lie on the 'linguistic turn' of the words used through

their pen to find the soul of India as a nation and to situate it in an international arena.

(I)

Tagore's Vision of Nationalism and Internationalism — Text and Context:

Tagore's idea of envisioning the nation has been reflected through his series of writings which include numerous poems, essays and the novels too where the principles of nation-building in his eyes had been reflected time and again. Not only Tagore's pen is reflective of thought of Tagore but also his activities in the colonial period gives us the idea to envision the nation and Tagore's way. The principles of unity, harmony in relationships, liberation of thinking, and perfection in action—all of which contribute to the paradise of freedom—are central to Tagore's vision of a free India. The poem like 'Where the Mind is without Fear'¹ for instance, expresses Tagore's idealized picture of an India free from fear, limits, superstitions, dogmas, and blind beliefs, where people would defend the truth, toil, perfection, and national advancement. To have an understanding of the greater picture of nationhood as understood by Tagore we must have understood the psyche of great poet. If we delve into the debate of the text and context, there comes a question of psychoanalysis and the approaches of post-

coloniality through which we can definitely theoretise the thought of Tagore, but to have a lucid understanding we can go forward with an analysis of his writing plotting it parallel to the axis of the contemporary socio-political arena.

Whether to put the berth of 'internationalism' higher than the berth of 'nationalism' in case of Tagore has remained a debate always. Tagore who had talked about 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' ('All the world is our relative') had also wrote song like 'O Amar desher Mati, tomar pore thekai matha' (Oh the soil of my country, I bow to the Motherland!). Here lies the importance of the contextualisation of Tagore's writings. Harold Laski observed in the global context how "nationalism becomes the servant of economics imperialism; it gives the latter its driving force, and the intensity of the adventure provokes war".² Is it applicable to the philosophical labyrinth of Tagore's 'nationalism'? Tagore in his 'Kartar Ichay Karma'³, passionately pleaded in his inimitable style for the right of self-determination for his fatherland. However, he was not prepared to sacrifice truth, justice, and humanity on the so-called altar of 'patriotism'. Tagore did not follow the way ever that can cause him giving divorce to ethics in the path of politics. He never followed something like the Machiavellian maxims of "end justifies the means". In the course of his address on 'Nationalism in India', Tagore went on saying—"even though from childhood I had been taught that idolatry of the Nation is almost better than reverence for God and humanity, I believe I have outgrown that teaching, and it is my conviction that my countrymen will truly gain their India by fighting against the education which teaches them that a country is greater than the ideals of humanity."⁴

Defining the 'Nation' and Tagore: In the Western world, the idea of nation had undergone a lot of changes from time to

time. But even though most of them rely on the definition of nation that emerged along with the emergence of the European nation-states during the post-Westphalian Treaty Era, the concept of 'nation' was still an infant in South Asia. In Tagore's vision too, the idea of 'nation' was not juxtaposable to the Western definition of the same as he related the emergence of nation with 'the sense of the political and economic union of the people'⁵ which is that 'aspect which a whole population assumes when organized for a mechanical purpose.'⁶ Tagore to whom nationalism can be even the 'cruel epidemic of evil';⁷ had also talked about how the imperialism can be an evil force as well. When the colonisers had come up they were harmful like the wild beast in Asia and Africa, that Tagore admitted in his writings undoubtedly and put forward the ways for the 'colonised' to voice. Tagore's pen too remained critical when the imperialist boots touched the grounds of 'Africa'⁸ and his own 'Sonar Bangla' but there remain a 'mean path' always instead of the execution of an extremist model which made Tagore unique in his approach of defining the nation and framing the voice for the same.

Tagore and Conceptualisation of Freedom and Liberation: Tagore had tried to put forward his idea of education, culture, community building during the colonial rule as the part of the conceptualisation of the idea of freedom. He desired the liberation of India from the foreign rule too. But his ideas were definitely unique in its applicability. During the 'Swadeshi Movement in Bengal', the people of Bengal have witnessed major waves of the movements—like 'passive resistance', 'boycott', 'extremism' and 'revolutionary terrorism'⁹. Tagore had neither joined the hands of the 'political mendicants'¹⁰ nor he had become the follower of the extremist trend, rather his thought of the 'atmashakti'¹¹ movement at that juncture had provided a truly alternative

wave of nationalism which was not only a constructive effort but also it had remained an essential juncture to act as a pull factor for both the Hindus and Muslims to participate for the cause of 'united Bengal'¹². Such an effort to mobilise the mass over the cause of a territory surpassing the barrier of the 'communitarian' boundary could not have been possible for any other people of contemporary era except Tagore. Although later on the Gandhian idea of 'Khilafat' had successfully brought the Hindus and Muslims together in the series of liberation movement during the Non-Cooperation Movement in the 1920s, but even in a limited scale how Rabindranath Tagore had called for the 'raksha bandhan' campaign acted as the cultural bridge between the Hindus and Muslims for the time-being even before 'the making of the Mahatma' was a unique case in the history of the earlier decades of 20th Century colonial India.

However, Rabindranath views freedom in a different way. Not only is Tagore's conception of freedom political, but it is also superior in every way. His definition of freedom included both liberation from colonial rule and Western imperialism, as well as freedom from religion, freedom from superstition, freedom from blind beliefs and perceptions.

In his novels *Ghare Baire*¹³ (The Home and the World) and *Char Adhyay* (Four Chapters), Tagore describes how young people who are driven to sacrifice their basic humanity in the service of nationalism and their motherland are worshipped, leading to acts of terrorism, violence, and exploitation. According to Rowlatt Report, 82% of activists were in the 18-30 age range. In order to create a positive flow of work for the freedom of society, this revolutionary manpower required a well-guided, organised enthusiasm. However, Tagore discovered that the movement was developed as a decentralised, completely disorganised one.

When the novel *Ghare Baire* was almost on the verge of its completion, Bengal's terrorist movement reached its second phase. The three characters in the novel¹⁴ — Nikhiles, his wife Bimala, and his friend Sandip present their personal encounter during the onslaught of the Swadeshi movement. Nikhiles, Tagore's alter ego, although a patriot but would not place nation above truth and conscience, asserts: I am willing to serve my country; but my worship I reserve for Right which is far greater than country. To worship my country as a God is to bring curse upon it.

Tagore opposed the deification of the nation since doing so would inevitably elevate it to the status of perfection and eliminate all chance for advancement. Like Tagore, Nikhiles was a real nationalist who placed a strong focus on social reform. Conversely, his charismatic friend Sandip, a swadeshi leader, believes that any action taken in the name of the country is right and that conscience should be set aside. Sandip believes that humanism ought to perish in the flames of pseudo-nationalism's heedless passion. Sandip is essentially a hypocrite who is cunning enough to incite the younger generation while posing as a leader and an opportunist. Unfortunately, the political impetus and the goal of national sovereignty have been extinguished despite the political fire. This is the result of Sandip's Swadeshi fashion. It became evident that the politics for nation degenerated into politics of persons and democracy expiated into autocratic policies. Leaders like Sandip deliberately propagate communalism, racism, anarchy, for their own benefits. The economically backward people are victimised by the revolutionaries. This marks the very theme and nomenclature 'Swadeshi' as highly ironical as the countrymen were excruciated by their own leaders who were supposed to defend them. Thus Tagore through his delineation of Sandip was actually trying to

convey that this nationalist movement was often devastating and misdirecting.

Tagore was to continue denouncing revolutionary nationalism and its reliance on spectacle, violence and sloganeering in his last novel *Char Adhyay*¹⁵. The novel is basically the story of a group of revolutionary terrorists in Bengal revolving around three main characters — Atin, the son of a zamindar who has joined the movement for his love for Ela. Indranath is the leader of the movement whose strategy for selecting beautiful young girls like Ela in the group works well to attract young men and incorporate them in their movement. Atin gradually realises that like Indranath he is losing his true self and humanity. Indranath is more engaged in making himself a larger than life figure, a great man as he himself says: "I'm here because it becomes me; either victory or defeat will be equally great. They (colonial rulers) tried to make me petty by closing the doors on every side. I am determined to show them that I am great, even if that entails disaster at every step. You can see... how these followers have come round me at my call, recking nothing of life and death... Because I know how to call"¹⁶.

Thus his leadership becomes a greed for power. Through this novel Tagore describes how the young men and women lose their humane self when they fall prey to violent patriotism. The four chapters of the novel not only depict the underworld of the revolutionaries but also reveal the frustration, disappointment, degradation, sacrifice of humanism which ultimately ruin their own personal life. So the vain glories of the nationalist leaders like Sandip and Indranath lead to a sense of nada instead of sparking true national sentiment and love.

While talking about the novels written by Tagore, we must focus on one of the widely acclaimed novels of Tagore—*Gora*¹⁷ where initially 'Gora' seems to be a xenophobic Hindu nationalist who wanted to serve his nation defending its casteism, superstitions

and rituals in initial pages. But when he comes to know his true Irish identity and how he has been raised by a Hindu family of Krishnadayal and Anandamoyi, immediately his true 'human' spirit comes up and he exalts internationalism.

(II)

Ideals of Nationalism and Bose: Subhas Chandra Bose, in India's struggle for independence, presented a unique blend of nationalism and internationalism in his ideology. To analyse Bose's perspectives on nationalism, we must emphasise on his belief in a strong, unified India, and his advocacy for international cooperation to combat colonialism and imperialism. By examining Bose's speeches, writings, and actions, this paper delves into the complexities of his ideology and its implications for India's freedom struggle and the broader global context.

Bose's ideology was characterised by a fusion of nationalism and internationalism, reflecting his vision for India's liberation and his commitment to global anti-imperialist movements. Bose's conception of nationalism, had its connection to international solidarity and cooperation. Bose articulated a vision of nationalism rooted in the unity of the Indian people across diverse socio-cultural identities, envisioning a pluralistic India where every individual could contribute to the nation's progress.¹⁸

Bose and Idea of Liberation: In public discourse, it has been stated many a times how Bose's idea of liberation was different from the earlier models of nationalist vision of liberation which was not only different from Gandhians' path but also it was very different from Tagore too. While Tagore had denounced the actions of the revolutionary model of nationalism, Bose had not only supported their efforts but also had maintained close links with

organisations like 'Bengal Volunteers' along with his political mentor, C. R. Das from time to time. It proves his sensitivity and sympathetic attitude towards such efforts in the liberation of the 'Motherland'. Netaji's discovery of the failing impact of 'passive resistance' and 'non-violence' needs a deeper understanding. Civilised means were taken as a weakness. He had chosen the politics of confrontation against the imperial oppression and colonisers' exploitation. The passive resistance of the masses seems to have provided a comfortable space for the likes of General Dyer. Their violence was continuous, with the passive Indians at the receiving end. Moreover, the people who worked for the British, provided them labour and fought their wars, and in return got the Rowlatt Bill and other such ordinances. This became the practice and order of 'Her Majesty's' governance in India. The trend is traceable through the pages of history. "Britain...ruined India economically, politically, culturally and spiritually," said Bose.

Bose tried to solve the problem in a different way through more convincing means. Keeping up with developments around the world, and on a mission to liberate his country, he travelled all over the world, gathering support and creating a plan of action. For him, the young men and women were the core human energy required to rise up and rebelled against the colonial forces, which came to be known as the Indian National Army (INA). It was accompanied by a call for rebellion by the Indian soldiers, which turned out to be a crucial factor in forcing the British to leave. But before they left, they did the real damage. It happened when Netaji was not among us and we fell back on a highly compromised idea of independence. Freedom was buried under an ancient living civilisation that was allowed to be mutilated. The negative effects of that continue to plague the subcontinent to this day and impede progress in the

region. When the parts are disunited and the masses are sidelined, the vested interests and their institutions continue to grow.

Bose's Ideological Synthesis: Bose's synthesis of nationalism and internationalism was not a simplistic juxtaposition but a complex interplay of ideologies shaped by historical contingencies and pragmatic considerations. His militant nationalism reflected a sense of urgency in the face of colonial oppression, while his internationalist outlook underscored the interconnectedness of India's struggle with global anti-colonial movements.

Contrary to the passive resistance advocated by Gandhi, Bose championed militant nationalism, emphasising the imperative for direct action and armed struggle against British colonial rule as the most effective means of achieving independence.¹⁹ Bose viewed India's struggle for independence as part of a broader global movement against imperialism and colonialism. He emphasised the necessity of forging alliances with other oppressed nations and anti-imperialist forces worldwide.²⁰ Bose's controversial collaboration with Axis powers during World War II stemmed from his pragmatic approach to leveraging international support for India's freedom struggle. Despite ideological disparities, Bose saw an opportunity to exploit the geopolitical dynamics of the time.²¹

Subhas Chandra Bose's ideological stance, characterised by the fusion of nationalism and internationalism, offers valuable insights into the complexities of India's freedom struggle and the broader anti-colonial movement. By critically analysing Bose's perspectives on nationalism and internationalism, we can understand the multi-faceted nature of his ideology and its enduring relevance in understanding the dynamics of decolonisation and global solidarity.

Understanding the different aspects of the intersectionality of the intellectual space, thought process and the labyrinth of actions of the two veteran personalities of colonial India, who had walked around the path of nationalism and sometimes beyond that being internationalist, we can understand that their paths did not remain static. Sometimes their ideas on the same destiny followed different roadmaps and sometimes their roadmaps had brought them to different roads too. Within this small arena, we have tried to bring some of the colours of those phenomena in the greater canvas of plotting their ideas on nation, nationhood, nationalism and internationalism though many parts are yet to be coloured by thinkers in future studies.

Endnotes

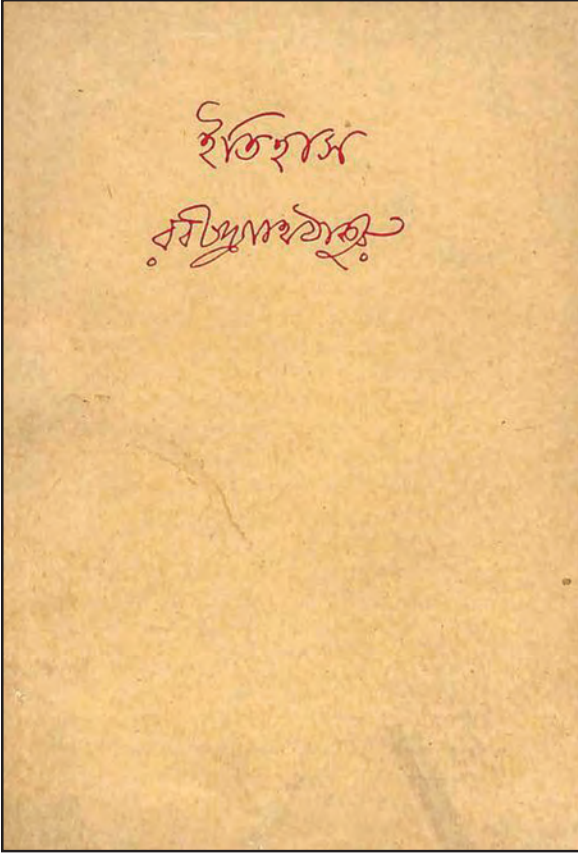
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রবীন্দ্রনাথের ইতিহাসভাবনা: কিছু টুকরো কথা

সব্যসাচী চট্টোপাধ্যায়

ইতিহাস বিভাগ, কল্যাণী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়



১৩৬২ বঙ্গাব্দের ২২ শ্রাবণ (অর্থাৎ ১৯৫৫ খ্রিস্টাব্দে) বিশ্বভারতী থেকে রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের লেখা ইতিহাস নামে একটি বই বের হয়। বলা বাহুল্য, রবীন্দ্রনাথের মৃত্যুর চোদ্দতম বছরকে স্মরণ করেই ঠিক তাঁর মৃত্যুদিনে ওই বই বেরিয়েছিল। বইটিতে রবীন্দ্রনাথের ইতিহাস

সংক্রান্ত কয়েকটি প্রবন্ধ সংকলিত করা হয়েছিল। সংকলনের কাজটা করেছিলেন প্রবোধচন্দ্র সেন এবং পুলিনবিহারী সেন। রবীন্দ্রনাথ বইতে সংকলিত লেখাগুলো লিখেছিলেন বিভিন্ন সাময়িকপত্রে; যার মধ্যে রয়েছে বঙ্গদর্শন, প্রবাসী, বালক, ভাণ্ডার, শান্তিনিকেতন। তবে সিংহভাগ প্রকাশিত হয়েছিল ভারতী পত্রিকায়। সংকলকদ্বয় লিখেছেন, “ভারতবর্ষের ইতিহাস প্রসঙ্গে রচিত রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রবন্ধাবলী এই গ্রন্থে সংকলিত হইল।” এই সংকলনের গোড়ায় রয়েছে পাঁচটি প্রবন্ধ, তারপরে দুটি পরিশিষ্টে দশটি লেখা, পরে তিনটি গ্রন্থ-সমালোচনা আর একেবারে শেষে রয়েছে ‘ইতিহাসকথা’ নামক একটি ছোট প্রবন্ধ। সেই প্রবন্ধে রবীন্দ্রনাথ লিখছেন, “ভালো করিয়া ভাবিয়া দেখিলে আমাদের দেশে শিক্ষিত ও অশিক্ষিতের মধ্যে যে জ্ঞানের বৈষম্য সব চেয়ে বেশি করিয়া অনুভব করা যায়, তাহা ইতিহাসজ্ঞান। স্বদেশে ও বিদেশে মানুষ কী করিয়া বড়ো হইয়াছে, প্রবল হইয়াছে, দল বাঁধিয়াছে, যাহা শ্রেয় জ্ঞান করিয়াছে তাহা কী করিয়া পাইয়াছে, পাইয়া কী করিয়া রক্ষা করিয়াছে, সাধারণ লোকের এ-সমস্ত ধারণা না থাকাতে তাহারা শিক্ষিত লোকের অনেক ভাবনা-চিন্তার কোনো অর্থ খুঁজিয়া পাইতেছে না এবং তাহাদের কাজ-কর্মে যোগ দিতে পারিতেছে

না। পৃথিবীতে মানুষ কী করিয়াছে ও কী করিতে পারে, তাহা না জানা মানুষের পক্ষে শোচনীয় অজ্ঞতা।”

রবীন্দ্রনাথ এ-লেখা লিখেছিলেন *ভাণ্ডার* পত্রিকায় ১৩১২ বঙ্গাব্দের আষাঢ়ে। আর আজ এই ১৪৩১-এর বৈশাখে সামাজিক মাধ্যমে যে ইতিহাসচেতনার অভাব, অজ্ঞানতা এবং অজ্ঞতার প্রকাশ আমরা দেখছি তাতে বিচলিত না হয়ে কোনও উপায় থাকছে না। এই ইতিহাসবিকৃতি একদল লোক তাঁদের নিজস্ব স্বার্থে করে চলেছে আর অজ্ঞতাহেতু এবং এক আরোপিত অতি-জাতীয়তাবাদের প্রভাবে মানুষ, সেই বিকৃত ইতিহাসকে, বৈষম্যের ইতিহাসকে প্রকৃত ইতিহাস বলে গ্রহণ করছে আর তার প্রচার করে চলেছে। এই সময়ে দাঁড়িয়ে যথার্থই দিকনির্দেশ পেতে পারি রবীন্দ্রনাথের বিভিন্ন লেখা থেকে। আর এই আলোচনা সেই চেষ্টাটাই করছে।

তবে প্রথমেই বলে নেওয়া ভালো যে এই কাজ অত্যন্ত গভীর, শ্রম ও সময়সাপেক্ষ। এই আলোচনার সামান্য পরিসরে স্বাভাবিকভাবেই পূর্ণাঙ্গ কোনও আলোচনা সম্ভব নয়। আবার এটাও তো বলা যায় না যে বড় করে আলোচনা করা সম্ভবপর নয় বলে এ আলোচনা করা যাবে না। ভুললে চলবে না যে ইতিহাসবিকৃতি আর উগ্র জাতীয়তাবাদ বিকাশের এই সময়ে রবীন্দ্রনাথের ইতিহাসভাবনা আজ আমাদের কাছে খুবই জরুরি। এ লেখা সেই জরুরি কাজের সূচনা মাত্র। সত্যি কথা বলতে কী রবীন্দ্রনাথ আমাদের কাছে অনেকটাই যেন সঙ্গীতস্রষ্টা (অর্থাৎ সঙ্গীত রচয়িতা আর সুরকার)-র পরিচয়েই সীমাবদ্ধ। আর তাঁর রচিত নৃত্যনাট্য আমরা অভিনয় করি, উপন্যাস পড়ি কিন্তু সে সবার মধ্যে থাকা তাঁর ভাবনাকে কতটা গ্রহণ করি? আত্মীকরণ করি?

রবীন্দ্রনাথের *ইতিহাস* গ্রন্থে যে পাঁচটি প্রবন্ধ সঙ্কলিত হয়েছে তা হল যথাক্রমে ‘ভারতবর্ষের ইতিহাস’, ‘ভারতবর্ষে ইতিহাসের ধারা’, ‘শিবাজী ও মারাঠা জাতি’, ‘শিবাজী ও গুরু গোবিন্দসিংহ’

এবং ‘ভারত-ইতিহাস-চর্চা’। স্বদেশের প্রচলিত ইতিহাস নিয়ে, বিশেষ করে যে ইতিহাস লিখিত এবং পাঠ্য তা সম্পর্কে রবীন্দ্রনাথের বক্তব্য অত্যন্ত স্পষ্ট। তিনি লিখেছেন, “ভারতবর্ষের যে ইতিহাস আমরা পড়ি এবং মুখস্থ করিয়া পরীক্ষা দিই, তাহা ভারতবর্ষের নিশীথকালের একটা দুঃস্বপ্নকাহিনী মাত্র। কোথা হইতে কাহারো আসিল, কাটাকাটি মারামারি পড়িয়া গেল, বাপে-ছেলেয় ভাইয়ে-ভাইয়ে সিংহাসন লইয়া টানাটানি চলিতে লাগিল, এক দল যদি বা যায় কোথা হইতে আর-এক দল উঠিয়া পড়ে — পাঠান মোগল পর্তুগিজ ফরাসী ইংরাজ সকলে মিলিয়া এই স্বপ্নকে উত্তরোত্তর জটিল করিয়া তুলিয়াছে।

কিন্তু এই রক্তবর্ণে রঞ্জিত পরিবর্তমান স্বপ্নদৃশ্যপটের দ্বারা ভারতবর্ষকে আচ্ছন্ন করিয়া দেখিলে যথার্থ ভারতবর্ষকে দেখা হয় না। ভারতবাসী কোথায়, এ-সকল ইতিহাস তাহার কোনো উত্তর দেয় না। যেন ভারতবাসী নাই, কেবল যাঁহারা কাটাকাটি খুনাখুনি করিয়াছে তাহারাই আছে।”

এই প্রবন্ধের শেষে রবীন্দ্রনাথ সবচেয়ে জরুরি কথাটা বলছেন। তিনি লিখছেন, “পৃথিবীর সভ্যসমাজের মধ্যে ভারতবর্ষ নানাকে এক করিবার আদর্শরূপে বিরাজ করিতেছে, তাহার ইতিহাস হইতে ইহাই প্রতিপন্ন হইবে। এককে বিশ্বের মধ্যে ও নিজের আত্মার মধ্যে অনুভব করিয়া সেই এককে বিচিহ্নের মধ্যে স্থাপন করা, জ্ঞানের দ্বারা আবিষ্কার করা, কর্মের দ্বারা প্রতিষ্ঠিত করা, প্রেমের দ্বারা উপলব্ধি করা এবং জীবনের দ্বারা প্রচার করা — নানা বাধাবিপত্তি দুর্গতিসুগতির মধ্যে ভারতবর্ষ ইহাই করিতেছে। ইতিহাসের ভিতর দিয়া যখন ভারতের সেই চিরন্তন ভাবটি অনুভব করিব তখন আমাদের বর্তমানের সহিত অতীতের বিচ্ছেদ বিলুপ্ত হইবে।”

রবীন্দ্রনাথ ভারতের ইতিহাসচর্চা নিজেদের উদ্যোগে করতে প্রয়াসী হয়েছেন মূলত ভারতের ‘নানাকে এক করবার’ আদর্শকে তুলে ধরার

জন্য। অর্থাৎ বিভেদ বা বিরোধের কালপঞ্জী নির্মাণ নয়, তাঁর ইতিহাসচর্চার লক্ষ্য স্বদেশের মিলনমূলক অতীতকে তুলে ধরা। আর সেজন্যই অক্ষয়কুমার মৈত্রেয়ের সম্পাদনায় ১৮৯৯ খ্রিস্টাব্দে যখন রাজশাহী থেকে বের হতে শুরু করল ত্রৈমাসিক পত্রিকা *ঐতিহাসিক চিত্র* তখন সবচেয়ে খুশি হয়েছিলেন রবীন্দ্রনাথ। তিনি ছিলেন এর প্রধান উৎসাহদাতা; *ঐতিহাসিক চিত্র* প্রকাশে রবীন্দ্রনাথ লিখেছিলেন, “আমাদের ইতিহাসকে আমরা পরের হাত হইতে উদ্ধার করিব, ... ‘ঐতিহাসিক চিত্র’ ভারত ইতিহাসের বন্ধনমোচনের জন্য ধর্মযুদ্ধের আয়োজনে প্রবৃত্ত।”

ভারত ইতিহাসের বন্ধনমোচন অন্য সমস্যার জন্ম দিতে পারত তা হল জাতীয়তাবাদজনিত উগ্র দেশপ্রেম। রবীন্দ্রনাথ সে সম্পর্কে সম্পূর্ণ সচেতন। রবীন্দ্রনাথ জাতীয়তাবাদ বিরোধী। তিনি জোর দিচ্ছেন স্বদেশপ্রেমে। রবীন্দ্রনাথ জাতীয়তাবাদ কথাটাই ব্যবহার করছেন না। তিনি নেশন শব্দটিকেই বাংলা ভাষায় ব্যবহার করছেন। ‘প্রাচ্য ও পাশ্চাত্য’ প্রবন্ধে তিনি স্পষ্ট করে লিখছেন, “‘নেশন’ শব্দ আমাদের ভাষায় নাই, আমাদের দেশে ছিল না।” আবার ‘নেশন কী’ প্রবন্ধে লিখছেন, “নেশন একটি সজীব সত্তা, একটি মানস পদার্থ। দুইটি জিনিস এই পদার্থের অন্তঃপ্রকৃতি গঠিত করিয়াছে। সেই দুটি জিনিস বস্তুত একই। তাহার মধ্যে একটি অতীতে অবস্থিত, আর একটি বর্তমানে। একটি হইতেছে সর্বসাধারণের প্রাচীন স্মৃতিসম্পদ, আর একটি পরম্পর সম্মতি, একত্রে বাস করিবার ইচ্ছা – যে অখণ্ড উত্তরাধিকার হস্তগত হইয়াছে তাহাকে উপযুক্তভাবে রক্ষা করিবার ইচ্ছা।”

রবীন্দ্রনাথ জোর দিচ্ছেন সামাজিক শক্তিতে। তাঁর মতে, ইউরোপে রাষ্ট্রশক্তি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ আর ভারতের জোরের জায়গা তার সামাজিক ঐক্য। একেবারে ছোটবেলায় *সহজ পাঠ* পড়ার সময়ই আমাদের পরিচয় ঘটে সামাজিক শক্তির সঙ্গে যখন রবীন্দ্রনাথ লেখেন, “আজ মঙ্গলবার। পাড়ার

জঙ্গল সাফ করার দিন। সব ছেলেরা দঙ্গল বেঁধে যাবে।” এই সামাজিক ঐক্যকেই রবীন্দ্রনাথ ভারতের ইতিহাসের মূল সুর বলে মনে করেন।

মৃদুচ্ছন্দা পালিত তাঁর *ইতিহাসচিন্তায় রবীন্দ্রনাথ* বইতে (কলকাতা: টেগোর রিসার্চ ইনস্টিটিউট, ১৯৯৮) রবীন্দ্রনাথের ইতিহাসভাবনা বিশ্লেষণ করতে গিয়ে প্রাথমিক পর্বে উনিশ শতকের প্রেক্ষিত আলোচনা করেছেন; অনুসন্ধান করেছেন বাংলা ভাষায় ইতিহাসচর্চার প্রয়াসের। রবীন্দ্রনাথের ইতিহাসচর্চা আলোচনা করতে গিয়ে তিনি ছ’টি প্রসঙ্গ উপস্থাপন করেছেন, সেগুলি হল ঝাঙ্গীর রানী (যা রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রথম ঐতিহাসিক নিবন্ধ), প্রতাপাদিত্য, ত্রিপুরা, শিবাজী ও মারাঠা জাতি, শিখ ইতিহাস এবং রাজপুত ইতিহাস। ‘ঝাঙ্গীর রানী’ প্রবন্ধে রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঝাঙ্গীর রানী এবং ১৮৫৭-এর বিদ্রোহের অন্য ভারতীয় যোদ্ধাদের সশ্রদ্ধ মূল্যায়ন করেছেন। এই প্রবন্ধ রবীন্দ্রনাথ লিখছেন ১৮৫৭-এর বিদ্রোহের মাত্র কুড়ি বছর পরে, ১৮৭৭ খ্রিস্টাব্দে। প্রতাপাদিত্য প্রসঙ্গ প্রবন্ধে আসেনি, এসেছে তাঁর প্রথম উপন্যাস *বউ-ঠাকুরানীর হাট* (১৮৮৩)-এ। প্রতাপাদিত্যকে নিয়েই গড়ে উঠেছে এই উপন্যাস। প্রতাপাদিত্যের শক্তির কথা যেমন রবীন্দ্রনাথের লেখায় চিত্রিত তেমনই উঠে এসেছে তাঁর নিষ্ঠুরতা এবং নৃশংসতা। যেটা অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ — তিনি বাঙালি বীর হিসেবে প্রতাপাদিত্যকে চিহ্নিত করেননি, তাঁর এই উপন্যাসে ‘দেশাভিমানবর্জিত’ লেখনীর পরিচয় মেলে। ইতিহাসের প্রবন্ধ না হয়েও তাই এই আখ্যানকে উল্লেখ করতেই হয় রবীন্দ্রনাথের ইতিহাসভাবনার সন্ধান পেতে। ত্রিপুরার বিষয় এসেছে ‘মুকুট’ গল্পে এবং *রাজর্ষি* উপন্যাসে। তবে এটা মনে রাখতেই হবে যে কথাসাহিত্যে ইতিহাসের আখ্যান নির্মাণ আর ইতিহাস রচনা কোনওমতেই এক নয়। শিবাজীকে রবীন্দ্রনাথ আদর্শ চরিত্র হিসেবে চিত্রিত করেছেন এ কথা ঠিক, তবে তিনি শিবাজীর সীমাবদ্ধতাকেও চিহ্নিত করেছেন। শিবাজীর যাবতীয় কৃতিত্বের

কথা বলার পরেও এক সচেতন ইতিহাসসন্ধানীর মতো রবীন্দ্রনাথ এ কথাও মনে করিয়ে দিতে ভুল করেননি যে “সেই বিভাগমূলক ধর্ম সমাজকেই তিনি (শিবাজী) সমস্ত ভারতবর্ষে জয়ী করিবার চেষ্টা করিয়াছিলেন।” আসলে শিবাজী শুধু বাইরের পীড়ন (মুঘল আক্রমণ) দ্বারা চিন্তিত ছিলেন, ভেতরের বাধাগুলোই যে প্রবল হয়ে মানুষকে বিচ্ছিন্ন ও অপমানিত করছে সেদিকে নজর দেননি। ফলে শিবাজীর যা সাফল্য তা তাঁর ব্যক্তিগত; তখনও সামাজিক শক্তি দৃঢ়সংবদ্ধ ছিল না। বহুধাভিত্তক হিন্দু সমাজই যে শিবাজীর পতনের কারণ তা রবীন্দ্রনাথ উল্লেখ করেছেন। কাজেই এখানে রবীন্দ্রনাথ বর্ণিত শিবাজীর সঙ্গে হাল আমলে যাঁরা শিবাজীকে দেশের ঐক্যের প্রতীক বলে চিহ্নিত করেন তাঁদের দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির অনিবার্য বিরোধ।

শিখ এবং মারাঠা জাতির ইতিহাস যেভাবে রবীন্দ্রনাথের লেখায় এসেছে তা প্রথম ধাপে বীরত্বের সূচক। ধর্মের জন্য শিখবীরদের প্রাণ বিসর্জনের মধ্যে যে বীরত্বের সন্ধান রবীন্দ্রনাথ প্রাথমিক পরে করছেন পরে তা পাল্টে গিয়ে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ হচ্ছে মানবধর্মবোধ। এটা সব সময়েই মনে রাখতে হবে যে ‘কথাসাহিত্য’-এ বা ‘কাহিনী’ কবিতায় যে ইতিহাস চিত্রিত তার মধ্যে ইতিহাসবিদের তথ্যের পরিবর্তে অনেক সময়েই গুরুত্বপূর্ণ হয়ে উঠেছে কবির কল্পনা। তবে এটাও ঠিক সব ছাপিয়ে রবীন্দ্রনাথের ভারত-ইতিহাস সন্ধানের প্রধান বিষয় হয়ে ওঠে মিলনমূলক ইতিহাস, ভারতের অখণ্ডতাবোধ এবং সামঞ্জস্যবিধানের প্রচেষ্টা। রবীন্দ্রনাথ ভারতের ইতিহাস রচনার ক্ষেত্রে মূল জোর দিয়েছেন এ দেশের সামাজিক বিবর্তনের ইতিহাসের মধ্যে, ইউরোপের মতো রাষ্ট্রনৈতিক ইতিহাসের মধ্যে নয়।

দেবজ্যোতি বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় তাঁর *রবীন্দ্রনাথের জাতীয়তাবাদ-বিরোধী স্বদেশপ্রেম* গ্রন্থে (কলকাতা: সেতু প্রকাশনী, ২০১৫) জোর দিয়েছেন যে কথায় তা হল স্বদেশপ্রেম রাষ্ট্রবাদী হতেও পারে নাও

হতে পারে কিন্তু জাতীয়তাবাদকে রাষ্ট্রবাদী হতেই হবে। স্বদেশপ্রেম কৌমের অস্তিত্বে বিশ্বাস করে, কৌমগুলোকে যথাযথ মর্যাদা দেয়। স্বদেশী সমাজের আলোচনায় রবীন্দ্রনাথ বারবার যে কথা বলেছেন তা হল আমাদের দেশে নেশন নয়, সমাজ গঠন করতে হবে। রাষ্ট্রীয় ঐক্য নয়, সামাজিক ঐক্যসাধনই মূল কাজ। বঙ্গভঙ্গবিরোধী স্বদেশী আন্দোলনের এক প্রধান পুরোধা যখন ‘বাংলার মাটি বাংলার জল’ গান বাঁধছেন তখন তার মধ্যে প্রধান হয়ে উঠেছে স্বদেশের প্রতি ভালোবাসা, দেশের হৃদয়কে এক করা, মানুষ বাঁধা। পরে যখন তিনি *ঘরে বাইরে* (১৯১৬) উপন্যাস লিখছেন সেখানে তিনি জোর দিচ্ছেন দেশকে দেশ বলে জেনে, মানুষকে মানুষ বলে শ্রদ্ধা ক’রে তার সেবা করার ওপর। নিখিলেশের বয়ানে তিনি লিখছেন, “কোনো-একটা উত্তেজনার কড়া মদ খেয়ে উন্মত্তের মতো দেশের কাজে লাগব না।” দেশের প্রতি ভালোবাসা থাকলে উন্মত্তের মতো কোনো নেশার সম্মোহনের প্রয়োজন হয় না।

১৯১৬-১৭ খ্রিস্টাব্দে রবীন্দ্রনাথ জাতীয়তাবাদ নিয়ে তিনটি বক্তৃতা দেন যা গ্রন্থাকারে প্রকাশিত হয় ইংরেজিতে *ন্যাশানালিজম* নামে। এই বক্তৃতা তিনটি তিনি প্রদান করেছিলেন জাপানে এবং আমেরিকায়। এই তিনটি বক্তৃতার বিষয়— জাপানে, পশ্চিমে এবং ভারতে জাতীয়তাবাদ। রবীন্দ্রনাথের মূল বক্তব্য হল, নেশন-স্টেট দাঁড়িয়ে থাকে এক ধরনের সঙ্ঘবদ্ধ স্বার্থপরতার ওপর যা কখনোই মানবসভ্যতার আদর্শ হতে পারে না। বস্তুত জাতীয় গর্ববোধ দিয়ে শুরু নেশন-স্টেট শেষ পর্যন্ত জাতিগত বিরোধ, ভেদাভেদ ও হানাহানিতে পর্যবসিত হয়।

বঙ্গভঙ্গবিরোধী স্বদেশী আন্দোলন থেকে জালিয়ানওয়ালাবাগ হত্যাকাণ্ডের প্রতিবাদে নাইট উপাধি ত্যাগ, রবীন্দ্রনাথের সব কাজের পেছনে ক্রিয়াশীল ছিল সংবেদনশীলতা, স্বদেশপ্রেম এবং আত্মশক্তি। রবীন্দ্রনাথের উগ্র জাতীয়তাবাদের বিরোধিতার প্রাসঙ্গিকতা আজকের বিদ্বৈষপূর্ণ

ভারতের সমাজের পক্ষে অত্যন্ত জরুরি। জাতীয়তাবাদের উগ্রতার পরিবর্তে রবীন্দ্রনাথ বারবারই জোর দিয়েছেন এদেশের সমন্বয়ী আদর্শের ওপর। ক্ষিতিমোহন সেনের *ভারতীয় মধ্যযুগে সাধনার ধারা*-র ভূমিকা লিখতে গিয়ে তিনি লিখেছিলেন, “ভারতবর্ষের যে সব ইতিহাস আমরা পড়ি সে তার বাইরের ইতিহাস। সেই ইতিহাসে বিদেশীর অংশই বেশি। তাঁরা রাজ্যশাসন করেছে, যুদ্ধবিগ্রহ করেছে, আমরা সেই বাইরের চাপ স্বীকার করে নিয়েছি,— মাঝে মাঝে মাথা নাড়া দিয়ে সেটা ঠেলে ফেলবার চেষ্টা করেছি, মাঝে মাঝে সে চেষ্টা সফল হয়েছে। মোটের উপর এই ক্ষেত্রে ভারতবর্ষের অকৃতার্থতাই অধ্যায়ের পর অধ্যায় আমাদের চোখে পড়তে থাকে।” এর বিপরীতে তিনি মত প্রকাশ করছেন, রাষ্ট্রিক সাধনা ভারতের সাধনা নয়। ভারতের একটি স্বকীয় সাধনা আছে; সেইটি তার অন্তরের জিনিস। আর তা হল এদেশের মিলন ইতিহাস যা রবীন্দ্রনাথ লিপিবদ্ধ করেছেন তাঁর ‘ভারততীর্থ’ কবিতায় ‘এক দেহে হল লীন’ ভাবনার কথা বলে।

এই মিলনের আকাঙ্ক্ষার নানান ভাবনা ছড়িয়ে আছে রবীন্দ্রনাথের *কালান্তর* বইতে। *কালান্তর* প্রথম বই আকারে বের হচ্ছে ১৩৪৪ বঙ্গাব্দে, তবে এতে সংকলিত প্রবন্ধগুলো আগেই

সাময়িকপত্রে প্রকাশিত। রবীন্দ্রনাথ স্পষ্টই লিখছেন, “রাষ্ট্রনীতির মতো বিষয়ে কোনো বাঁধা মত একেবারে সুসম্পূর্ণভাবে কোনো এক বিশেষ সময়ে আমার মন থেকে উৎপন্ন হয়নি – জীবনের অভিজ্ঞতার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে নানা পরিবর্তনের মধ্যে তারা গড়ে উঠেছে।” সেই অভিজ্ঞতার মধ্যে দিয়েই তিনি এদেশের সমন্বয়ী ইতিহাসের প্রেক্ষিতে মিলনের আকাঙ্ক্ষা ব্যক্ত করেছেন। ‘হিন্দুসমলমান’ প্রবন্ধে তিনি লিখেছেন, “ইতিহাসে বারে বারে দেখা গেছে, যখন কোনো মহাজাতি নবজীবনের প্রেরণায় রাষ্ট্রবিপ্লব প্রবর্তন করেছে তার সঙ্গে প্রবলভাবে প্রকাশ পেয়েছে তার ধর্মবিদ্বেষ।” তাঁর মতে, যে দেশে প্রধানত ধর্মের মিলেই মানুষকে মেলায়, অন্য কোনো বাঁধনে তাকে বাঁধতে পারে না, সে দেশ হতভাগ্য। আজকের ভারতে রাষ্ট্রীয় তরফে ভাষা, ধর্ম, খাদ্যাভ্যাস প্রভৃতি সব ক্ষেত্রে ‘নানা ভাষা, নানা মত, নানা পরিধান’কে অগ্রাহ্য করে সবকিছু এক করার যে সর্বনাশা প্রয়াস শুরু হয়েছে তাতে সেই হতভাগ্য দেশের ছবিই ফুটে উঠছে। এই সর্বনাশা প্রয়াসকে প্রতিরোধ করতে তাই আজ অত্যন্ত জরুরি রবীন্দ্রভাবনাকে আশ্রয় করা, যে ভাবনা নানাকে আপন করার কথা বলে, সমন্বয়ী ভাবনায় একের সঙ্গে অন্যের মিলনের কথা বলে।

Thirstier India

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The city of lakes, Bengaluru, has gone dry this year due to encroachments of water bodies, polluting the lakes till its eutrophication, excessive drawing of water from aquifer etc. If this continues in present pace it will make the city 'zero water' one by 2030. In spite of the fact that Bengaluru city has developed a recent tradition of water recycling in bigger establishments and reviving some of the lakes, the city is facing worst water crisis this year. The water tankers carrying water from outskirts of the city have become lifeline for the city dwellers. This vicious cycle of drawing more and more water from the ground for survival in the one hand and depletion of water table in the other is not being addressed by the state scientifically. This pushes marginal people more vulnerable to water stress.

Only the city of Delhi contributes 79% of the pollutant load to Yamuna. Comptroller and Auditor General's report has found that Ramdev's 'Patanjali' is one of the many industries discharging effluents into Ganga. Among the 12 most polluted rivers of the world the rivers like Ganga and Yamuna are also included. Sixty percent of the water supplied by the Delhi Jal Board is sourced from this polluted Yamuna. Rest of the water comes from groundwater. Reversing groundwater depletion and improving water quality are critical to addressing Delhi's

water disaster.

The Times of India reported on 22 December 2023 that the Sabarmati river in Ahmedabad is being polluted by untreated sewage, as 613 million litres of sewage bypasses the city's treatment plants daily. Private societies, commercial complexes, and industrial units are drawing uncontrollable amounts of groundwater through borewells, adding to the sewage volume. Gujarat High Court ordered to put more sewage treatment plants which remains unattended. This is the one of the few rivers that originates from Aravalli hill ranges in Udaipur district of Rajasthan and flows westward meeting Arabian Sea in the Gulf of Khambhat of Gujarat.

Mumbai and its suburbs need to focus urgently on demand-side management of potable water. The state government made rainwater harvesting mandatory for all buildings over



1,000 sq. mt. in 2002, but its implementation has remained sketchy. Mumbai Rainwater Harvesting Cell remains fund-starved. Though few water holding structures are constructed to tackle localised monsoon-water logging with a capacity of holding 20 MLD floodwater for non-potable purposes with more planning, including the construction of water filling points for tankers, poor maintenance has seen a large quantum of the stored floodwater draining into the sea.

Chennai is a city of "water, water everywhere, but not any drop to drink" (Samuel Taylor Coleridge)' is going dry. Three main rivers pass through the city. These rivers are Adyar, Kosasthalaiyar and Cooum. All these rivers are heavily polluted and drain into the Bay of Bengal. These dying rivers, for centuries, has been a trading link connecting the near and far-east and a gateway to South India. Its success spawned a demand that grew with scant planning and now houses people mostly depending on healthcare, IT and film industries. In 2019, the state could not supply potable water to the citizens, so they started rationing water at 20 liters per day. People call that the 'Day Zero'.

Jaipur, the capital city of Rajasthan has relied on the Ramgarh Dam since long. This dam is its primary surface water source for much of the 20th century. But this dam is no more a source of water to the expanding city. People now rely mostly on ground water. Thus the aquifer of the city is so much heavily exploited that it can no more sustain the rising demand.

The drying river of Gomti and tributaries are now not able to replenish the water being extracted from ground in the city of Lucknow. Rapid urbanisation in the city is now exacerbating the strain on water resources. Bhakra Nangal dam's water holding capacity has also declined due to heavy siltation leading to scarcity of water.

The Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control

Board (APPCB) has informed the National Green Tribunal that a show cause notice has been issued to Adani Wilmar Unit-2, an edible oil refinery in Nellore District on why it should not be shut for pollution and depletion of groundwater in the area. PCB Vijayawada in September 2021 ordered the company to stop using water from outside sources and instead use water supplied by Government authorised sources. Outsiders extract ground water rampantly.

The Crisis is National One

The list does not end here with above few examples. Like urban India rural India is also going to face potable water crisis. Overuse of ground water in the last few decades has aggravated the crisis almost to a point of no return. This is associated with continued neglect and mismanagement of our water sources. Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), a research-based international organisation working on water also focused on water crisis and water policy of India for quite a long time. They state¹ "Estimates put India's groundwater use at roughly one-quarter of the global usage with total usage surpassing that of China and the United States combined. With farmers provided electricity subsidies to help power the groundwater pumping, the water table has seen a drop of up to 4 meters in some parts of the country. This unfettered draining of groundwater sources has accelerated over the past two decades". This statement blames farming practice by using groundwater on the one hand and in the other it points its finger towards subsidising electricity to draw water from ground sources. The first point that needs criticism of this statement is about tapping groundwater sources. It is because farmers of our country does have any other option to produce more crops to feed a vast country like India, they are forced to tap any available source of water near them. The second point is the issue of subsidising agriculture. It is an issue for economists to

debate but unless our 'primary production' is not subsidised how are we going to sustain? In most of the developed countries of the world, agriculture is subsidised and the whole of Europe is now experiencing farmers protest for more subsidies.

United Nations in one of its statements on India's water crisis mentioned² "India has only 4 percent of the global water resources against 18 percent of the global population. The annual utilizable water resources in the country are 447 BCM from groundwater and 690 BCM from surface water. Over 80% of the rural and urban domestic water supplies in India are served by groundwater". This vast exploitation of groundwater is a point of concern.

World Bank in one of its statement mentioned the following-

- 163 Million Indians lack access to safe drinking water
- 210 Million Indians lack access to improved sanitation
- 21% of communicable diseases are linked to unsafe water. Therefore, 500 children under the age of five die from diarrhoea each day in India.

To explain the crisis through more data, it can be said that, as much as 54 per cent of India is confronted with high water stress and almost 600 million people are at higher risk of surface water supply disruptions. Only providing water taps to every household cannot solve the problem unless we make long term plans for replenishing and conserving our water sources.

Struggling to Conserve

Conservation of water mainly refers to protect, preserve, and control the usage of water and its sources. It is the system introduced to manage freshwater, reduce the wastage, restrict both biological and chemical pollutants and protect the water and its resources in order to reduce and to avoid scarcity.

22 March is being observed as World Water Day since 1993 every year. In 1993, during the Earth Summit or the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro, the proposal to designate an annual day for water conservation was introduced as part of the UN's Agenda 21. Subsequently, in December of the same year, the UN General Assembly formally accepted this proposal. The theme of this year's World Water Day was 'water for peace'. Potable water crisis is leading to many conflicts throughout the world. Only observing this day every year will not solve this paramounting problem. Water, that we receive through precipitation, needs to be conserved, used judiciously and allowed to be recharged to the aquifer.

Chennai now is a city of 1,000 tanks which are nearly complete with the pilot project for its new water balance model in Chennai through a network of nature-based solutions, including rainwater harvesting (RWH), vegetation ditches and anaerobic treatment of waste water. Anaerobic treatment is a proven and energy-efficient method for treating industrial wastewater. It uses anaerobic bacteria (biomass) to convert organic pollutants or COD (Chemical Oxygen Demand) into biogas in an oxygen-free environment. This water is passed through biological treatment process where NPK (efficient Nitrogen, Phosphorus, and Potassium) in three layers and then recharged to aquifer.

Archaeological evidence shows that the practice of water conservation is deep-rooted in the science of ancient India. Excavations show that the cities of the Indus Valley Civilisation had excellent systems of water harvesting and drainage. The 'bandhs' and 'talabs' in various parts of the country even in West Bengal mostly during pre-British period has shown the way. This struggle is to go further. Our National Government should take long-term programmes taking into confidence

all the state governments, to conserve surface water and recharge aquifers with all scientifically-tested precaution.

We Share One of the Largest Water Tower of the Planet

The Himalayas contain many of the world's tallest mountains as well as many of the world's glaciers. It is also known as the largest water tower of Asia. The resulting meltwater from these glaciers and snowpack contributes to the water supply for more than one billion people. The Himalayan glaciers play a critical role in supporting Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, China, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. But the glaciers are melting fast. The warming of the earth is adversely affecting all the glaciers of this planet. International discussion on climate change (Convention on Climate Change) has not been able to address this issue though Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), an organisation of the scientists, is repeatedly prescribing what is to be done. But, alas, nobody is trying to understand.

Is Climate Change Only to be Blamed?

Our country has witnessed significant rainfall in some places and severe drought in other in recent years. Our country's susceptibility to extreme weather events, compounded by rapid industrialisation and urbanisation make it vulnerable to a water crisis. In some parts of the country climate change plays a role in water crisis but not the whole. Besides some geographical reasons major problem of such disparity is lack of conservation measures.

There is a huge difference between access to potable water between rich and poor, upper caste and dalits, urban and rural areas and even genders. Still in some parts of our country untouchability is a problem while procuring water from its sources. This disparity is an impediment to meaningful action for every person scheduling their day

around water. Many schools cannot provide water for even drinking and not to talk about its toilets. Restaurants and commercial operations are shifting to paper and plastic cutlery to deal with the water issue. So there is a vicious cycle of creating wastes that are not environment-friendly. Therefore, water governance is one of the most important issues that needs attention.

Water Governance in India

The most important weapon that the state of India has to combat water pollution and management is the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 generally known as 'Water Act 1974'. The latest amendment of this Act was made in last February and is known as the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Amendment Act, 2024 (Water Act 2024). This amendment was made in haste and only within 3-4 days in both the houses of the Parliament. As per our Constitution, water is a state subject. The central government's legislative power is limited unless requested by two or more states for an amendment of the Act. Initially the 'Water Act 2024' will apply to Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, and the union territories. Other states may pass resolutions to extend its applicability to their states. The original Act applies to 25 states and all Union Territories.

The Water Act 1974 was not simply all about water. It, for the first time in India directed the union and state governments to establish institutional frameworks through creation of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and State Pollution Control Boards (SPCB).

These Pollution Control Boards are responsible for monitoring and preventing the contamination of public water resources by sewage and industrial effluents. Gradually these institutions were bestowed with responsibility of taking care of air and many aspects of our physical environment.

Previously in India there was no

technical institution to set standards of different foreign contaminants in water so as to decide its harmful effects. The CPCB's role includes collecting and disseminating data on water pollution and setting technical standards following scientific methods. State level bodies or SPCB has the responsibility to enforces compliance of such standards. SPCBs can impose penalties for violations including factory shutdowns, monetary fines, and imprisonment of up to six years. But the important feature of the original Act is that it requires industrial units to obtain permission from state boards before setting up factories or mines to comply with specific environmental norms.

The Amendments in Nutshell

Amendments to Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act 1974, was done after it was passed by the Parliament in 2024 in pursuance of clause (1) of article 252 of the Constitution of India.

Now there is no requirement of permission from the SPCBs while setting up an industrial unit or anything that discharges effluents to our precious water bodies like rivers, lakes etc. The present amendments permit the central government, in consultation with the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), to exempt certain categories of industrial plants from taking any consent for establishing any industry or treatment plant of any industry, mines etc.

This amendment in the name of decriminalising, replaced 'imprisonment' for "minor" violations with fines. This is nothing but following the principle of 'pollute and pay' by the state. The Act also prohibits

violation of standards (laid down by SPCB) regarding polluting matter in water bodies or on land, barring some exemptions. Exemptions include depositing non-polluting materials on the bank of a stream for reclaiming land. Such amendments to the original 'Act' surely going to make differences in our water governance and our right to get clean water.

Let us Think and Act Sincerely

Cape Town of South Africa has already reached 'day zero' scenario where the municipal authority has expressed their inability to supply water. Few days back water was rationed to each person. The next one may be Bangalore or Chennai and even Delhi.

There is always an alternative. The data shows that Cape Town receives 475 mm of rainfall per year, Bangalore receives 905 mm of rainfall per year, Delhi receives an average annual precipitation of 774.4 mm and Kolkata 1,836.5 mm. So the big difference between these cities shows that we have enough scope to think and act for conserving water that we still receive through precipitation. Let us unite and ask for water governance in the one hand and do our best in our locality to quench our thirst.

Endnotes

- 1 The Water Crisis In India: Everything You Need To Know, April 23 2018. SIWI, Stockholm.
- 2 <https://india.un.org/en/171844-health-water-and-sanitation#:~:text=India%20has%20only%204%20percent,India%20are%20served%20by%20groundwater.>

Navigating Mental Illness within the Health Paradigm of India

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In the global context, a substantial number of the marginalized populace of India are secluded, marginalized, and ostracized as they fall victim to the myths and misconceptions that surround mental illness. In the discourse of health, mental health is one of the most neglected areas, more often than not brushed under the carpet owing to the stigma that it carries. As a result of this, the allocation of policies and resources is scarce for the victims of mental illness. The vulnerable populace of India, the ones suffering from mental illness are thus found languishing in the fringes.

The Mental Healthcare Act 2017 (MHCA 2017) has established the importance of consent, confidentiality, and the right to inclusion for people suffering from mental illness. However, India is still grappling with various socio-cultural issues like gender inequality, poverty, stigma, cultural beliefs, and various forms of discrimination which pose a hindrance to the rights-based policies that can ensure holistic care.

A major chunk of the urban population in India faces mental health issues like anxiety disorders, depression, and substance abuse. Universal Health Coverage for Mental Health has been launched by the World Health Organization (WHO) as an initiative to bridge the gaps that were found in the allocation of resources to the victims of mental illness. With the help of this initiative,

as many as 100 million people will find access to good quality, affordable mental healthcare.

To ensure the overall well-being of human beings, mental health cannot be dissociated from health. Mental illness and substance abuse disorders are responsible for more than 10% of the global disease burden, according

to data furnished by WHO. Although the mental health policies in India have upheld a rights-based approach in providing mental healthcare services, a major chunk of the population of India falls victim to the non-responsive mental health systems.

For people suffering from mental health issues, it is important to secure



their autonomy, where they can make informed decisions about themselves, without any violation from the hierarchical system. As long as a powerplay is at work, large-scale systematic changes will be 'a dream deferred'. The past decade has witnessed certain policies and measures by the Indian government to fill in the gaps and ensure equity in the mental healthcare services. In 2014, the National Mental Health Policy (NMHP) was introduced. Although it has been over nine years since the policy was launched, it has barely been discussed in the Indian psychiatric parlance. From the available oeuvre of work in the arena of public health, the challenges with regard to the implementation of NMHP have been highlighted.

The pandemic of Covid-19 has laid bare the rising mental health issues faced by the common public on a day-to-day basis. It has been reported by the Indian Psychiatry Society that there has been an increase of over 20% in cases of mental illness since the pandemic. Since the routine daily life of people was significantly altered during the pandemic, it resulted in a widespread crisis of mental health. Being locked down to their immediate surroundings, people felt lonely, distressed, and dissociated from the larger world.

The Mental Healthcare Act of 2017 came up with a host of strategies that secure the rights of people with psycho-social disabilities. It harps on the individual autonomy of the person suffering from mental illness suggesting that the treatment must be carried on with informed consent. The family needs to play a key role in "protecting, promoting, and

fulfilling" the rights of people with mental illness.

The main loophole of MHCA 2017 is that it does not focus on the issues faced by the caregivers, the loneliness, and the frustration they face while catering to a person with mental illness. In India, the family plays an integral role in acting as a primary caregiver since our culture is based on interdependence. Moreover, there is a lack of trained mental healthcare professionals, especially in the rural areas of India. Therefore, the family has to act as a key source for administering support to the patient. The MHCA 2017 fails to recognize these major areas.

What is the Way Forward?

Mental health institutions, communities, and systems need to work in conjunction to address the intersectional needs of people suffering from mental illness. Cross-sectional partnerships need to be developed by civil society organizations with the state government and media so that systematic changes in the discourse of mental health can be brought. The issues of mental health must find their way into the mainstream day-to-day conversations of people so that the stigma surrounding mental illness can be eradicated. Significant transformations in the lives of people suffering from mental illness begin with tiny changes. The policy-makers, resource allocators, and the government should be the harbingers of these small changes so that a world of equity and equality can prevail among people suffering from psycho-social disabilities.



Critical review of the Presidential address, entitled “On Science and Industry” delivered by Sir Rajendra Nath Mookerjee, at the 8th Indian Science Congress, 1921, in the present context

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The birth of Indian Science Congress took place in 1914, when under the able Presidentship of Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee, the famous educationist, jurist and mathematician, the then Chief Justice of the High court of Calcutta and Vice Chancellor of Calcutta University for five terms, and the main driving force behind establishment of the Science College of Calcutta University and overall development of the University, a three-day conference of scientists was organized at The Asiatic Society, Calcutta (now Kolkata).

Some 105 scientists from various spheres of Science participated at the Congress. About 35 of learned papers were presented at the Congress. The preparation for organizing a preliminary Science Congress, was taken on 2nd November 1912 at The Asiatic Society of Bengal¹, a special committee was formed for the purpose and council of The Asiatic Society accepted the proposal for holding the Science Congress in 1914. On 20th November 1913, the special

committee was restructured and Lord Carmichael the then Governor of Bengal was appointed the Patron of the special committee. Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee was elected as the President and Mr. Hooper was elected as the Honorary Secretary and Treasurer of the committee. It was finally decided that the Indian science Congress shall be held on 15th, 16th and 17th January, 1914. Thus, the Indian Science Congress took birth at the cradle of the oldest learned society of Asia. It need not be mentioned that the Congress made rapid progress and significant contribution was achieved in the field of Indian Science.



Sir R.N. Mookerjee, KCIE, KCVO, DSc
(Engg.) MIE

At the first Indian Science Congress, Sir Ashutosh, the General President while deliberating said, “We meet in this historic building (the building of The Asiatic Society was constructed in 1808), on the anniversary of a date ever memorable in the annals of research, scientific and philological, in the British Empire in the East, for it was just one hundred and thirty

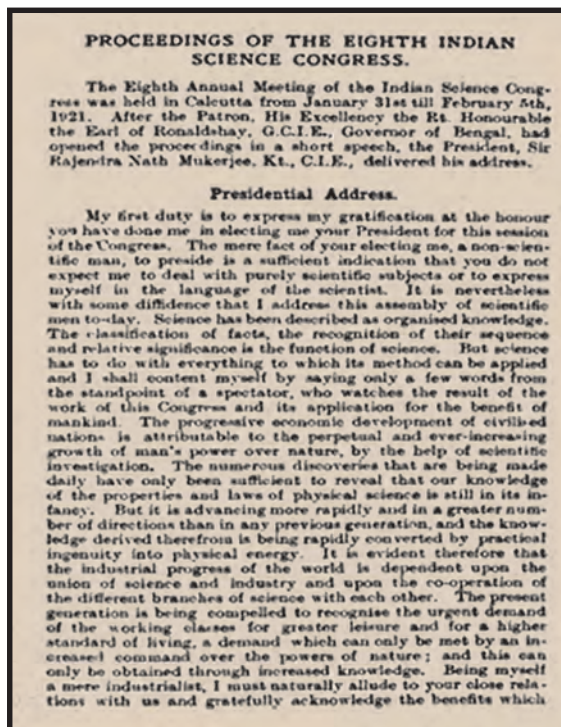
years ago on the 15th of January 1784, The Asiatic Society was founded by Sir William Jones, one of the most gifted of the many noble sons of Britain, who devoted their lives to cause of advancement of knowledge amongst the people of the land. The Asiatic Society, thus founded, has been throughout its long career, the principal source of inspiration in the organization and advancement of scientific research of every description in this country, and it is befitting that the first meeting of the Indian Science Congress should be held in the rooms of the Society and directly under its auspices. It is further fortunate that we should be able to hold the Congress simultaneously with the celebration of the Centenary of foundation of the Indian Museum, which had its origin in the activities of the members of The Asiatic Society, and which by the invaluable work of its scientific officers in various departments has justly attained worldwide attention."

The first Indian Science Congress divided the papers into sectional disciplines, with a sectional President for each of the section. The sections were, (i) Chemistry, (ii) Physics, (iii) Zoology, (iv) Geology, (v) Botany and (vi) Ethnography. It was also resolved that, for the present The Asiatic Society shall be requested to publish the account of proceedings of the Congress and such papers read at the Congress and

agreed upon by the Congress committee and Secretary of The Asiatic Society.

The eighth Indian Science Congress which was held in 1921 at Calcutta, found for the first time a professional Civil Engineer and industrialist as its General President. Incidentally, the Indian Science Congress Association was mostly concerned with scientists and academicians involved in the field of science, and Sir R.N. Mookerjee was not among them. But the reputation of Sir Rajendra Nath Mookerjee (Sir R.N. Mookerjee) preceded him. He was the senior proprietor of Martin and Co. who was the contractor for the construction of Victoria Memorial Hall at Calcutta Maidan, which was conceived by Lord Curzon in 1901 after the death of Queen Victoria. Sir R.N. Mookerjee was decorated with the highest Knight Commander of Royal Victorian Order (KCVO), at the successful completion of the Victoria Memorial

Project, the marble edifice which resembled the Taj Mahal at Agra. Sir Mookerjee was an excellent blend of practical and shrewd businessman, but also a man of honour and fair dealing. He took his education in Civil Engineering from the Bengal Engineering College (present day IEST) and ventured out to be an entrepreneur. At the recommendation of Sir Bradford Leslie, Chief Engineer of the then Chief



Calcutta municipality, he started as a petty contractor of Palta Waterworks (the first Waterworks of eastern India) and went on to then become an industrialist in partnership with Sir Thomas Acquin Martin, forming the Martin and Co. The company progressed at a substantial pace. The Martin Light Railways was maintained by the Martin and Co., which ran railway services between Howrah Maidan via Bargachia to Amta in Howrah district, and also connecting Siakhala in the neighbouring Hooghly district also from Barasat to Basirhat in the present day north 24 Parganas district. Martin and Co. was also responsible for the construction of many palatial buildings in Calcutta such as the Esplanade Mansion, Standard Chartered Building, The HSBC Building, The Mysore Memorial beside the Keoratala Burning Ghat, The Assembly House, The Belur Math Temple, and ofcourse the famous Victoria Memorial Hall at Calcutta Maidan, and many other magnificent buildings and structures in and around Calcutta. Sir R.N. Mookerjee was the Sheriff of Calcutta in 1911 and was bestowed with the Knighthood of Knight Companion of Indian Empire (KCIE). He was also responsible for the development of the Indian Iron and Steel Company at Kulti Asansol, in Bengal. His social and educational pursuits included membership of the Faculty of Engineering of Calcutta University, Member of the Board of Bengal Engineering College Shibpur, Howrah, in 1919, Presidentship of The Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1924-1925 session, Member of the Board of Trustees of the Indian Museum, He was one of the founder members of Calcutta Club, in 1907, founder President of the Institution of Engineers (India), in 1921. Later in the year 1931, he was made the Dean of the Engineering faculty of Calcutta University and was bestowed with the Honorary Degree of DSc (Engg.) by the Senate of Calcutta University. He was the first individual to obtain this highest honour from the University of Calcutta in the field of Civil

Engineering. He was a member of the Indian Industrial Commission in 1916, He presided on the Bengal Retrenchment Committee and the Technical Committee to determine the construction of the famous steel cantilever bridge across river Hooghly called 'Howrah Bridge', in 1921. He was also a member of the Indian Retrenchment Committee, the Committee formed for deciding the fate of the Indian Railways, popularly called the Acworth Railway Committee in 1924, He was also the founder Chairman of the Indian Statistical Institute which was the brainchild of the famous Professor Prasanta Chandra Mahalanabis, this is only to indicate a few of his life's achievements.

The tide of times were changing after the First World War, the Indian Industrial Commission was formed in 1916 under the Presidentship of Sir Thomas Holland, who was the then Director of Geological Survey of India, one of the members of the Industrial Commission was Sir R.N. Mookerjee. The commission travelled across the country and took evidence of the possibility of starting and flourishing industry at various places across the nation. Thus, Sir R.N. Mookerjee had a pan-India idea of the possibility of industrialization which would be essential for strengthening the economy of the country in days to come. With this backdrop, now the Presidential address of Sir R.N. Mookerjee at the 8th Indian Science Congress, is revisited after a gap of 102 years to evaluate the significance of the speech in the present context.

After the usual expression of gratitude for selecting him as the President of the Indian Science Congress he deliberated² "...The mere fact of your electing me, a non-scientific man to preside is a sufficient indication that you do not expect me to deal with purely scientific subjects...". In fact, he dwelt in the realm of applied science, as being a Civil Engineer by profession, he naturally belonged to the arena of applied sciences. He went on to say, "Science has

been described as an organized knowledge. The classification of the facts, the recognition of their sequence and relative significance is the function of Science. But Science has to do with everything to which its methods can be applied...". He went on to impress, "...The progressive economic development of civilized nations is attributable to the perpetual over-increasing growth of man's power over nature, by help of scientific investigations...". He coined the golden realization that, "...it is evident therefore that the industrial progress of the world is dependent upon the union of science and industry upon the co-operation of different branches of science with other." He reflected that, "...in the past, businessmen were inclined to disregard the usefulness of science as applied to industry or accepted its benefits without being conscious of their source. But they are now firmly convinced that science is an invaluable aid to development and advancement of industry, and that the dissemination of scientific knowledge with its experiments and discoveries is an essential condition of industrial progress...".

Engineering is an applied science, which is nothing but application of science to satisfy the specific need of industry and manufacturing. The industrialist and the businessmen has realized it in a difficult way and it was stated by Sir Mookerjee that, "...They are moreover fully alive to the fact that applied science is nothing but application of pure science to a particular problem, the solution of which some manufacturer has found necessary in order to improve, if not indeed in some cases to save his business...". He went on to stress upon the fact, "...The improvement in manufacturing process can only be achieved by the application of science and prosperity of any industry is based on this fundamental truth." Thus, he clearly indicated the direction in which the future progress of Indian industry is directed. He clearly stressed the development

of scientific research for industrial development. He requested the business community to be respectful towards the scientist and his scientific knowledge.

He compared the scientist with a creative individual like the poet. He said, "...Scientists and poets alike are inspired by their need for self-expression rather than the hope of making money. Neither of them can hope to succeed without originality and inspiration, and both have, each in their separate ways, laid the human race under a deep obligation." He clearly stated in an emphatic voice, "if India is to advance commercially and also economically, it must spend money on scientific investigation." He went on to say that, "...The scientific investigator should be provided with means and facilities necessary for proper pursuit of his work...".

For yielding maximum result from scientific pursuit he advised, "...research students must live in close touch with the industrial conditions. The gap between the laboratory and the shop must be bridged." He insisted that the "...Results of the research and discoveries which are published in the annual proceedings of the Science Congress should be brought widely in the notice of everyone interested." He specifically advised that the, "...object of the Congress should be the advertisement of its activities to the non-scientist."

While speaking to the scientific community, he recognized the neglect of their achievements and said, "...We owe to the achievements of science all the benefits and most of the comforts of modern civilization, but it is a strange fact that great honour or profit are seldom the rewards of a life dedicated to science. Generally speaking, our best scientific men work on a mere pittance for the love of their work, but however beneficial their results may be, they usually die poor and unrecognised by the Government and the general public."

Paying deep homage to the scientific

community and highlighting their contribution, he said, "...scientific enquiry is noble in itself and it is its own reward. Nevertheless, if science is to be of practical use to the world, scientific investigators should be duly encouraged and honoured and not left to starve." He went on to say, about the possibilities of scientific research at the contemporary times in the field of agriculture and its benefits for increased production of food and raw materials for industry. He addressed the scientific developments which are affecting the engineering industry, related to the field of metallurgy, electrical, chemical, manufacture of glass, porcelain, optical and surgical instruments etc. He expressed his indebtedness to the Science Congress and said that "...the commercial community is in gratitude to the members of the Science Congress, that without their highest skill in the field of science these technical developments would not have been made possible."

At the fag end of his Presidential speech, he made a clarion call, "...Science is stretching out a hand to industry and it is for industry to appreciate the common need and to respond to the advances of science without stint or question. This alliance of ideal and abstract, with the practical and material activities of human mind, is not only a necessary condition of progress but improves the mental outlook of every person who is affected by such a movement."

He expressed with a futuristic vision, "...lets us look forward therefore to a future in which the scientist, the industrialist and the administrator with a just appreciation, each of his own responsibilities and of great

possibilities which lie in the work of the other, will move towards a common goal, the utmost possible command of mankind over the forces of nature to be used for general betterment and greater happiness of mankind".

Thus, it may be easily concluded that even before the independence of this nation, Sir R.N. Mookerjee understood that the fundamental success for modern business enterprise is only by adoption of scientific methods and techniques of manufacturing and quality control which are laid down by well-proven scientific research. No organization shall persist in the long run if the organization does not meet the following scientific principles of governance, production, mechanization, quality control and market research which are the modern tools of business. This was realized much earlier by the great visionary Sir R.N. Mookerjee and he invited the greater community of industrialists and businessmen to understand the truth and adopt scientific methods to improve industrial produce in India and develop India in an economically and technologically prosperous nation.

References:-

- (1) An account of the Proceedings of Indian Science Congress, held in the rooms of The Asiatic Society of Bengal, Jan 15th, 16th and 17th 1914, *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Annual Report, Feb and May 1914*, New Series, Vol. X, 1914, Calcutta.
- (2) Proceedings of the Eight Indian Science Congress, *Proceedings of The Asiatic Society of Bengal, Annual Report Feb. 1921*, New Series, Vol. XVII, 1921, Calcutta.

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130	1890-94	<i>Dpag-Bsam-Hkhri-Śiñ</i> : Appendix to Bilingual edition, Sanskrit and Tibetan of the <i>Avadāna Kalpalatā</i>	ed. by Śarat Candra Dāsa
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132	1891-94	<i>Sharḥu'l Qaṣāidi'l 'Ashar</i> of Yahyā Tabrīzī	ed. by C. J. Lyall

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Work No.	Date of publication	Name of the book	Writer/Editor/Translator
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209	1912	<i>Bhāṣā-Vṛtti</i> of Puruṣottamadeva, with the commentary of Sṛṣṭidharācārya (1 fasc. Dropped)	ed. by Girīścandra Vedāntatīrtha
210	1912	<i>Tadhkira-I-Shāh Ṭahmāsp</i>	ed. by D. C. Phillott
211	1912-14	<i>Shāh-'Ālam Nāma</i> of Ghulām 'Alī Khān (2 fascs. Incomplete)	ed. by Harinath De, A Suhrawardī and M. Shīrāzī
212	1912	<i>Story of Ti-Med-Kun Den</i> (A Tibetan Nam-thar)	ed. by E. Denison Ross

PUBLICATION

Work No.	Date of publication	Name of the book	Writer/Editor/Translator
213	1912	<i>Gulriz</i> of Diyā'u'd-Dīn Naḥshabī	ed. by R. F. Azoo and Muḥammad Kāzīm Shīrāzī
214	1912-46	' <i>Amal-I-Ṣāliḥ</i> (or <i>Shāhjahān-nāma</i>) of Muhammad Ṣāliḥ Kanbū (4 vols.)	ed. by G. Yazdānī
215	1918-39	<i>Haft Iqlim</i> of Amīn Aḥmad Rāzī (Incomplete)	ed. by 'Abdu'l Muqtadir and E. Denison Ross, A. H. Harley and M. Mahfuz-ul Haq
216	1908	<i>Sragdharā Stotra</i> of Bhikṣu Sarvajña Mitra of Kāśmīra	ed. by Satīśa Candra Vidyābhūṣaṇa
217	1912-21	<i>Sadukti Karṇāmṛta</i> of Śrīdhara Dāsa (2 fascs. Dropped)	ed. by Rāmāvatāra Śarmā
218	1912-14	<i>Sūrī Sarvasva</i> of Govinda Kavibhūṣaṇa (3 fascs. Incomplete)	ed. by Jagannātha Miśra
219	1912	<i>Amara-Ṭīkā-Kāmadhenu</i> (in Tibetan)	ed. by Satīśa Candra Vidyābhūṣaṇa
220	1912-40	<i>Dharma-Bindu</i> of Haribhadra, with the commentary of Muncandra	ed. by L. Suali
221	1913-23	<i>Kavi Kalpalatā</i> of Deveśvara (2 fascs. Incomplete)	ed. by Śarat Candra Śāstrī
222	1913	<i>Viśva Hitam</i> of Mathurānātha Śarmā	ed. by Viśvambhar Jyotiṣārṇava and Śrīś Candra Jyotiratna
223	1913-41	<i>Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī</i> of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Aḥmad (3 vols.)	ed. by B. De and M. Hidāyat Ḥusayn
224	1914-25	<i>Śiva Pariṇayah</i> of Kṛṣṇa Rājānaka	ed. by G. A. Grierson
225	1913-40	<i>Ṭabaqāt-i-Akbarī</i> of Nizāmu'd-Dīn Aḥmad (3 vols.)	tr. by B. De
226	1914	<i>Prajñā Pradīpa</i> of Bhāvaviveka (1 fasc. Incomplete)	ed. by M. Walleser
227	1914-44	<i>Vajjālaggama</i>	ed. by Julius Laber
228	1914-22	<i>Prṭhvīrāja Vijaya</i> with the commentary of Janarāja (3 fascs. Incomplete)	ed. by S. K. Belvalkar

PUBLICATION

Work No.	Date of publication	Name of the book	Writer/Editor/Translator
229	1916-24	<i>Dictionary of Kāshmirī Language</i>	compiled from the materials left by the late Paṇḍita Īśvara Kaula by G. A. Grierson and Mukundarāma Śāstrī of Śrīnagar
230	1917	<i>Nyāya Bindu Index</i> (Sanskrit-Tibetan)	compiled by Satīśa Candra Vidyābhūṣaṇa
231	1917-18	<i>Descriptive Catalogue of Bardic and Historical Manuscripts</i> (Prose chronicles—Jodhpur and Bikaner States; and Bardic poetry of Bikaner State) (3 pts.)	ed. by L. P. Tessitori
232	1917	<i>Vācanikā Rāṭhōra Ratana Sīnghajī Ri Maheśa Dāsota Ri Khiriyā Jaga Ri Kahi</i> of Kririyō Jagō	ed. by L. P. Tessitori
233	1919	<i>Veli Krisana Rukamani Ri Rāṭhōra Rāja Prithī Rāja Ri Kahi</i> of Rāṭhōra Prithī Rāja	ed. by L. P. Tessitori
234	1919-21	<i>Tayyibāt-i-Sa'dī</i> of Muṣliḥu'd-Din Sa'dī Shirāzī	ed. by L. White King
235	1919	<i>Minor Tibetan Texts</i> (The Song of the Eastern Snow Mountain)	ed. & tr. by Johan van Manen

[To be continued]

Compiled by **Sukhendu Bikash Pal**
 Publication Officer-in-Charge
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Story behind the printing of 'Studies in Santal medicine and Connected Folklore' by P.O.Bodding (in the light of the correspondences preserved in the Asiatic Society's museum)

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The book 'Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected folklore' by Rev. P. O Bodding is so popular that it has been reprinted several times. Firstly it was published by The Asiatic Society in three parts between 1925 and 1940. It was reprinted in 1986 and again in 2001. It is a classical work on various diseases and their treatment by the Santals, their unique attitude and their connection to Santal folklore. The Santals used to believe that the diseases are caused by malevolent powers. These powers are satisfied through various attempts made by the professional medicine-men, who are known as Ojhas.¹ By chanting different kind of folksongs, these ojhas would pacify the spirits, who were the originator of the diseases. Bodding collected almost all folksongs popular in Santal community, names of diseases and associated treatments with the indigenous plants and herbs and incorporated in his book.

Paul Olaf Bodding was born in 1865 in Norway in a mediocre family. He became interested in theology and later on, graduated in this subject from the University of Kristiania (Now University of Oslo). In

¹ Bodding writes in his introduction that the ojha is a Santal, living in his village in constant intercourse with his compatriots and apart from his professional work, he used to influence the mental vision of the Santals by lessening the fear of the bongas.

1890, he came to India, specifically at Santal Parganas, as a missionary priest. During his long stay of about 44 years in this Santal Parganas District, he learnt Santali language, experienced socio-religious customs, and beliefs of the Santals. The outcome of his dedicative works reflected in the book 'Studies in Santal Medicine and Connected folklore'. He became the authority of Santal language and society as well as medicines and mantras of the Santals.

But the story behind this publication or rather printing of this famous book is another interesting fact, which may be discussed in the light of a good number of correspondences done between Rev. Bodding and the then General Secretary of The Asiatic Society – John Van Manen.

Almost 150 correspondences regarding the minute printing, proof checking, translation of mantras and folklores, scientific name of the plants etc. preserved in the Asiatic Society's museum during 1924-25 throw light on the fact that how much difficult was the printing of this particular book. It is also noticeable that what kind of importance was given to the authoritative knowledge of P. O. Bodding by the authority of the Asiatic Society.

In a letter dated 5th August 1924, Manen expresses to Bodding some problems faced for printing the materials for journal. Also he informs that the Baptist Mission Press

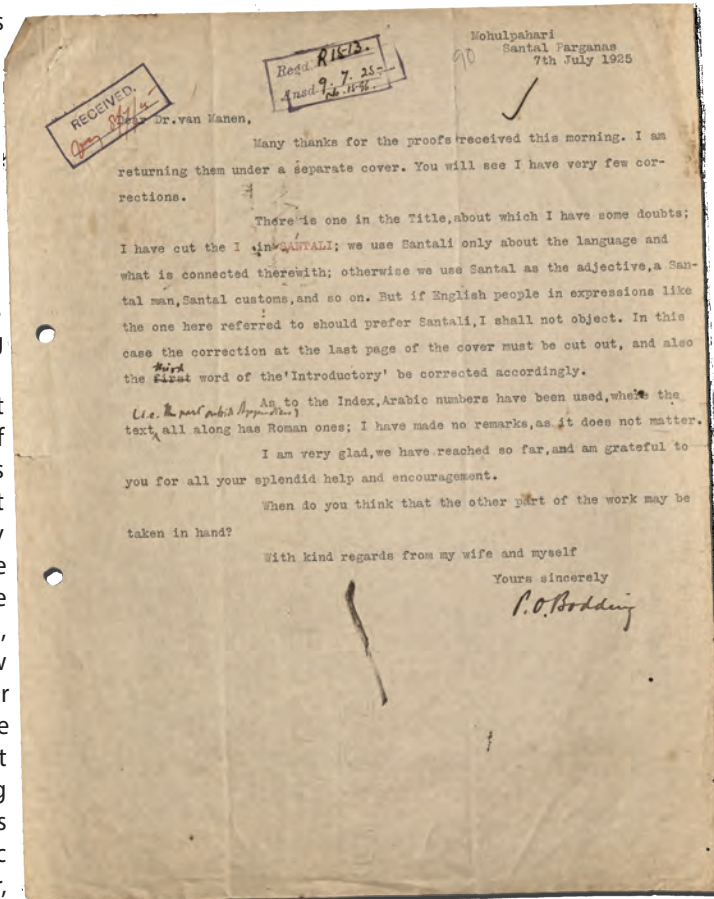
is ready to print the material for journal, but with it he expresses his anxiety about the scientific names of the plant identified by Bruhll for which it may be put off till the Greek Kalends.² Manen expresses his interest and satisfaction on the idea of hypnotism in ancient India.

In reply to this letter Bodding informs the following matters :-

1) That his press is able to do this printing, yet it would be better to send his whole manuscript to the Baptist Mission press. In this regard, it may be noted that he mentions "Santali folktales with its translation has already been in printing in Norway.

2) That he can't say the exact date of completion of this manuscript as at that moment, he was busy in acquiring knowledge of *ojhaism*. So far the Santals are concerned, this practice will throw light to understand their mentality & religion. He also states that at that time he was translating the songs and mantras which had linguistic importance. Moreover, he suggests that it will

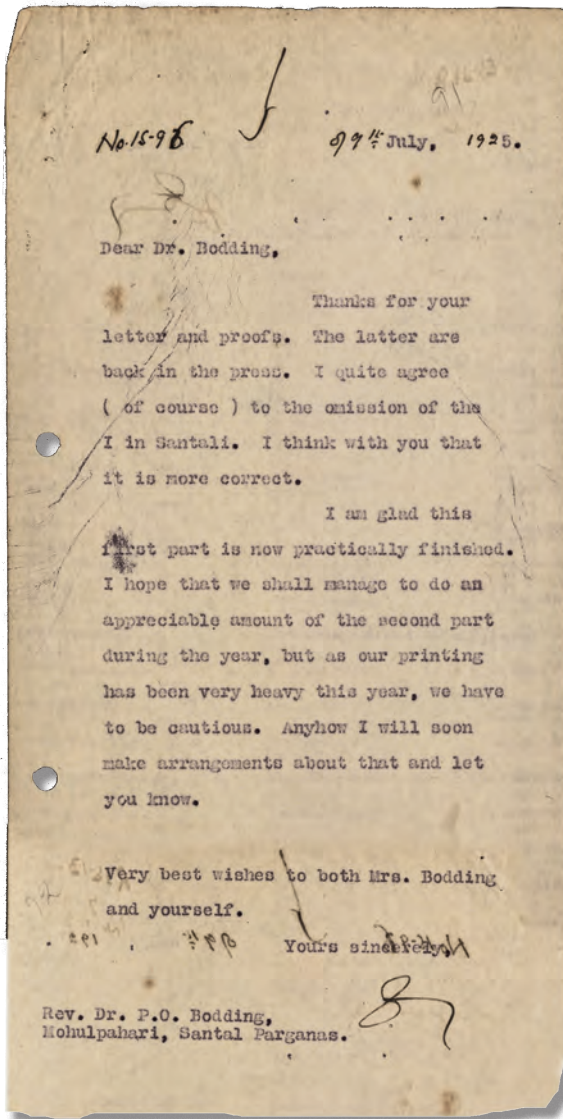
show intercourse between the Santals and lower ethnic strata of North-India. In this letter, he also wants to know whether one, being a member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal (like he himself at the time), can apply for membership of the Royal Asiatic Society of London or not. [Letter of P. O Bodding to Van Manen, 9th August, 1921].



2 This phrase survived for many centuries in Greek & in Roman language. The kalends was a feature of the Roman calendar, but it was not included in the Greek calendar. Consequently, to postpone something ad Kalendas Graecas ("Until he Greek Kalends") was a colloquial expression for postponing something forever (ref : <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/date>, date 7/4/2024).

Manen informed him that Bodding can write directly to Honorary Secretary of Royal Asiatic Society, London and it will take two-three months for their reply. In the letter dated 8th November, 1924, Bodding expresses gratitude to Manen for being a member of Royal Asiatic Society, London.

In a letter, Baptist Mission Press informs Asiatic Society that though it is a special work



but they have no difficulties in dealing with Bodding's work and Santali accents. [Letter no. 2629 dt.29th August, 1924]. Getting this response from the Press, Bodding expresses his happiness. He informs that the completion of the manuscript needs some time, meanwhile he is sending the accented characters of Santali words. He has marked the words in red or underlined. Some may be transliterated in Hindi [Letter dated Sept 9th, 1924]. In reply Manen agrees to give him

ample time to complete his work upto his satisfaction. With this he advises Mr. Bodding to indicate all Santali words in italics or in Roman from very beginning so that they (Baptist Mission Press) can arrange properly [Letter no. 2408, 11th September, 1924]

It is known from the correspondences that Bodding requested Manen to check the English punctuations and Manen did the same. Bodding asked for a book, entitled 'Indian Medicinal Plants' by Lt. Col. K. R. Kirtika which was inevitably required for his work and Manen helped him to get the book.

In some of the letters Bodding discussed detail about the proof, appendix, footnote and additional pages. He was so perfect in particular words that he mentions in one of his letters about 'Bongas' mentioned in each separate lines in which he has no objection. Another interesting fact is that Manen asked Rev. Bodding to give a proper title, to suggest the sequences of component parts and to give detailed information regarding the index on the initiation of a Santal Ojha with mantras and jharnis for further inclusion. [Letter no.2845, dated 3rd November, 1924].

In response, Bodding informs that he has collected quite more mantras but he will send it to Baptist Mission Press before time. Also, he mentions that he has no such choice of sequence, yet suggests an arrangement like: (a) The Santals and disease (b) The Santal Medicine and added the title as 'and connected folklore' just to give importance to ethnological aspect [Letter no. R-352 dt.8th November, 1924].

The particularness is also found in his letter dated 7th July, 1925, where he mentions that 'SANTALI' may be used in case

of language, but 'SANTAL' is used for custom / people. In case if English people like the word 'SANTAL' then he has no objection. But Manen suggested Bodding's view where 'I' may be omitted.

Bodding checked the proof of this book three times. He perfectly added the befitting introduction. He took help for translation of rustic Bengali songs from one of his Bengali friends. He also added a note on Santali pronunciation as prefix as per Manen's advice [Ref. letter dated 14th May, 1925]

Even through the correspondences, it is known that Bodding got 30 copies as Author's copy but Manen said to him that if he needs more he can ask before printing. After final submission of the proof and page numbers given by Bodding, Manen wrote him a letter of appreciation for his achievement staying 30 years among the Santals. Even this work was addressed as

'Corona Operis by Manen which means enlightened work as per my understanding. In spite of his devoted works, Bodding expressed that much of the work is still left to be done and hence, encouraged young scholars to take up the study of ethnology of the lower strata of the population of North-India.

From this discussion it is clearly understood that the book 'Studies in Santali medicine and Connected folklore' was not an easy publication. Santali accents, mantras, names of botanical plants, spellings, particular words in galleries were given emphasis. Not only was Bodding's meticulousness and attention devoted to this publication but also that of the Asiatic Society's, whose understanding of the relative importance of the subject, has led to it being a pivotal step to accomplish the goal effectively.

Śrīmaddharmmavihāra—Monastic Sealing from a Recently Excavated Buddhist Site in South Bihar

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The study of an archaeological history of monastic Buddhism in eastern India is essentially coextensive with that of the Buddhistic material world of the region in the early medieval period. Spatial spread of archaeological sites carrying either brick-bult monastic establishments or, in only a few cases, robust *stūpas* and associated remains, across southern-southeastern Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Bangladesh, display a steady growth between the sixth and the twelfth centuries; three monastic sites that certainly had witnessed a slightly earlier line of genesis are Nalanda, Telhara and Taradih in Bihar, for reasons not relevant to this note.

A closer look into the published literature on the distribution of Buddhist monuments in southern Bihar reveals that only five major monastic/ *stūpa* sites have so far been excavated: Nalanda (Stewart 2018, Sanyal 2018), Atnichak (Verma 2011), Kesariya (Chemburkar 2018 and citations therein) and the more recently excavated one at Telhara (Patil 1963: 562–565, Verma and Sanyal 2016 and citations therein), besides the ever-unreported monastic settlement at Taradih. It should be mentioned in passing that the situation in the neighbourhood is nothing more promising, with only one site so far excavated carefully in Jharkhand, at Sitagarha/ Sitagarh (Dehuri, Mishra and Kumar 2020), and four clearly understandable *vihāra/ stūpa* sites, in West

Bengal. While archaeological researches on monastic Buddhism in eastern India in general and Magadha in particular has been mostly Nalanda centric, in the last few years there has been a marked shift in the approach. New evidences from comparatively less known (Choudhary 2016), and more importantly smaller (Amar 2021), sites are now being closely investigated in understanding the nature of spatial and functional interrelation between a nodal monastic organisation and its immediate hinterland. Based on critical assessment of inscriptional references, significant but hitherto unsung rural monasteries are coming into the orbit of archaeological research. Further, sites outside the circuit of narratives in travelogues are being located in their contexts and their potential is being recognised. It is precisely in this context that the present note, on a recently discovered monastic site in southern Bihar, seeks relevance.

The area around the district of Lakhisarai in Bihar, forming part of the erstwhile Munger district, has a long history of archaeological interest. Systematic survey of this micro-region was first undertaken by Alexander Cunningham, resulting in the notice of a number of Buddhist archaeological sites along the bank of river Kiul, mostly prominent according to him being Rajaona, 'Kiyul', 'Kowaya', 'Birdāban', Jaynagar, 'Non-Garh' and 'Indappe' and Uren

(Cunningham 1873: 151–163). Of course, Cunningham's agenda was to locate Buddhist vestiges based on Xuanzang's travelogue, but the area was indeed full of Buddhist remains, mostly in the form of uniform and wide distribution of sculptural material and brick-built architectural constructions. The area has since been interrogated, with varying research problems in focus, by generations of archaeologists (Patil 1963: 228–229, Chattopadhyay and Sanyal 2008, Kumar 2011, 2019a, 2019b).

The cluster of sites at the central alluvial tract of the present Lakhisarai district comprising the villages of Rajaona–Balgudar–Jaynagar has been well-known not only because of its archaeological significance but also for this cluster yielded and are still yielding, a sizeable number of dated sculptures of the late-first and early-second millennia, recording names of Pāla kings of Bengal–Bihar (for an inventory, Huntington 1984: 203–250). Many of these inscribed art objects refer to the geographical term 'Kṛmilā' or 'Krimilā' as a district-level administrative centre under the Pāla rule. It was D.C. Sircar who categorically argued based on these epigraphic records that this area in Lakhisarai should be identified with

early medieval Kṛmilā (Sircar 1971: 250, 252–254).

In spite of varying degrees and divergent areas of archaeological and epigraphical interest on the region, not a single Buddhist site in Lakhisarai was subjected to excavation until the site under discussion was taken up for digging under a collaborative project of the Bihar Heritage Development Society and the Department of AIHC&A, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan. The structural complex selected for excavation is located atop a modest hill called Lalpahari, thus lending its name to the site, located at the southern fringe of the current habitation area of the Jaynagar village. It forms part of a larger outcrop, now bisected into the twin hillock called Lalpahari and Kalipahari. The entire stretch of tableland atop Lalpahari is covered with scattered structural remains in brick and stone. The one at the centre was explored intensively in 2016, yielding evidence of an exposed circular bastion in brick and some associated Buddhist sculptural compositions, suggesting its identity as a probable monastic complex.

The site was excavated for three seasons between 2017–18 and 2019–20. Excavations yielded a modest but extremely interesting



Fig. 1. Aerial view of the monastic complex atop Lalpahari.

square structural complex, typical of several reported Buddhist monastic sites of Bengal and Bihar. The complex is composed of a square brick architecture, almost throughout supported by stone masonry along the vertical axis of the plinth, surrounded by an enclosure wall. Within this walled complex were unearthed a series of square cells surrounding a central courtyard. The principal

triratha monastic shrine was built as part of the organic plan of the monastery at the centre of the southern monastic wing (Fig. 1). The entire internal complex was structurally well-secured by the regular use of iron dowels in binding the stone masonry and further by the construction of thickset, and sometimes interconnected, rows of rooms in brick. The complex was connected systematically with the aid of a drainage system that terminated through an excellent embellished piece of stone-made *makara* gargoyle. One significant structural attribute of the monastic complex at Lalpahari is the construction of a set of four corner bastions, closely resembling those excavated at the sites at Jagjivanpur in the Malda district of West Bengal (Roy 2012) and Jagdal in the Dhamorihat Upazila of northwestern Bangladesh (Alam 2018, Mita and Rahman 2020), both constructed under direct Pāla patronage, according to epigraphic and transmitted textual sources. What sets the Lalpahari structure apart from the other two, however, is the existence of eight intermediate 'miniature' bastions on all four sides of the complex. Further to the north of the complex, outside the organic plan of the monastery, were excavated two *stūpas*, a square one to the east and a rectangular one to the west

Excavations of the first two seasons revealed a large number of interesting artefacts including inscribed burnt clay tablets depicting Buddha in his quintessential *bhūmisparśa* pose (Fig. 2), stone sculptures, large number of iron objects, copper ornaments including earrings, a wide range of designed bricks and ceramic evidence of equally wide and interesting varieties (Kumar, Harit and Mondal 2019, Kumar and Saha, 2020). In the area of specificities of structural components, charred wooden doorframe and neatly decorated polychrome stucco-plastered floors are unique. However, the most significant discovery of the last year of excavation, that remained so far

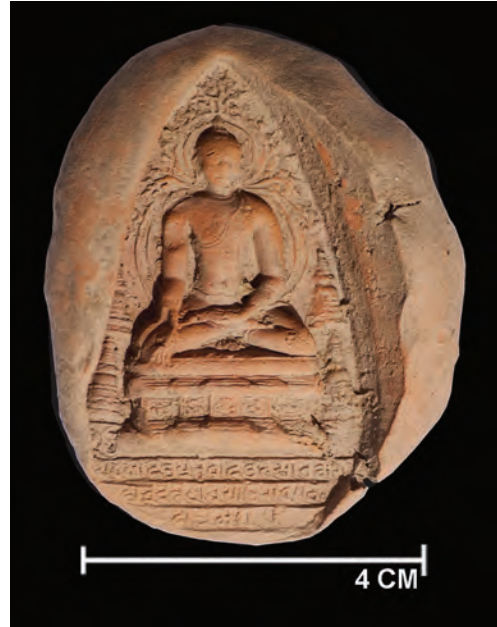


Fig. 2. Inscribed clay tablet from Lalpahari showing Buddha in *bhūmisparśamudrā*.

unpublished and forms the precise subject of this note, is the monastic sealing recording the name of the *Vihāra* located at Lalpahari.

It was in February 2020 in the season of 2019-20, from the structural debris of trench N₃₀E₆₀ towards extreme north of the layout outside the periphery of the complex, that a circular clay tablet of 5×1.5cm dimension was recovered at a depth of 0.97M (Fig. 3). The tablet shows the representative *dharmacakra*-deer composition depicted in the upper half of its flan while the lower half is occupied by two lines of a well-engraved inscription in high relief, stamped from a well-prepared seal. The reverse shows a groove along the horizontal axis of the body, evidently meant for fastening the object with a support, obviously underlining its transportability. The inscription reads (1) *śrīmaddharmavihārī-* (2) *Āryabhiḥṣusaṅhasya*. The script used is clearly identifiable as Gauḍī of about eleventh–twelfth centuries CE. The text can be conveniently translated as '[This



Fig. 3

is the sealing] of the council of monks of the illustrious Dharmavihāra.’ Thus, while the final season of excavation at Lalpahari yielded a number of other usual monastic and structural material from the site, it proved to be of special significance in bringing to light the identifiable evidence of one more Buddhist monastic establishment of southern Bihar of the early medieval period.

To sum up: first, the monastery atop Lalpahari, the only excavated archaeological evidence of an early medieval hilltop monastic complex in the Gangetic valley, is now identifiable as Dharmavihāra, a nomenclature that has the potential of undergoing further scrutiny; second, a closer introspection into the palaeography of the sealing and the other inscribed clay tablets (cf. Fig. 2) clearly reveals a date close to the twelfth century CE, thus representing the only evidence in eastern India of a monastic sealing datable to such a late date; third,

after Jagjivanpur, Lalpahari furnishes the second evidence of a structurally ‘vihāra’ category of monastic establishment. Finally, we may conclude by putting on record that apart from the monastic sealing published here, two more equally interesting sealings were recovered in course of the last season of excavation. The text written on those might lead one to larger questions about the identity of this monastery and its wider spatial and structural contexts. That should, however, be the subject of another essay.

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Role of The Asiatic Society in the Preservation of Persian Manuscripts and Books

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The Asiatic Society, since its establishment in 1784 CE by Sir William Jones, has been consistently active in preserving and disseminating the knowledge and research of Oriental Studies. The Society possesses a varied and rich collection of Persian Mss. and rare books, which are unique and have great historical and cultural importance as well. Around 3377 [as per published catalogues] Persian Mss. on different subjects such as History, Sufism, Astronomy, Medicine, Religions, and others, are preserved in the museum of The Asiatic Society. Similarly, a large number of Persian books and periodicals are preserved under the Department of Persian, Arabic and Urdu. According to the report submitted on 30th October 2015, 2782 Persian books on different subjects and 79 Persian journals are kept safely in this department. Some of them are extremely rare and have the status of printed manuscripts.

A question arises in our mind that how a huge collection of rare Persian books, Mss. and documents were collected? How it became the world/national heritage of Persian and Islamic Studies?

When the Fort William College was closed down, the entire collection of over six thousand Persian and Arabic books and manuscripts were handed over to The Asiatic Society in 1846. Similarly, a large and rare collection of Persian manuscripts were collected from the Palace Library of Tipu Sultan in 1799, containing illuminated

manuscripts of Quran, an old text of Gulistan of Sa'adi and manuscripts of Padshah Namah bearing an autograph of emperor Shah-jahan. Around 250 valuable Persian manuscripts have been collected as well from the personal library of Radhakanta Deb, the founder of Dharma Sabha and renowned Scholar and leader of the Bengal. C.R. Rama, a great scholar of 20th century Bengal gifted a numerous valuable books and Mss. on Indo-Muslim literature and history to The Asiatic Society of Bengal. A great number of Persian Books and Mss. had been received from the Mughal Imperial library and other Nawabs and Rajas as well.

On the other hand, regular search for manuscripts and gifts received from the different institutions, societies and individuals, made The Asiatic Society, one of the biggest centres of the Persian manuscripts and national heritage of Indo-Islamic Studies.

These valuable manuscripts have been preserved under different collections of The Asiatic Society i.e. The Asiatic Society Collection, Curzon Collection, Third Collection of ASB, and Radha Kanta Deb Collection. Some of them are still worm-eaten, brittle and in deteriorated conditions.

1. The Asiatic Society Collection:

It is considered as the largest collection of the Persian Mss. It contains 1781 rare Persian Mss on different subjects like History, Astronomy, Medicine, Religions, and others.

The descriptive catalogue of the Persian manuscripts of this collection was prepared by Wladimir Ivanow namely/entitled *Concise Descriptive catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Collection of The Asiatic Society of Bengal*, in 1924. It was reprinted in 1985 and 2018 respectively.

2. Curzon Collection:

This is another large collection of Persian Mss. and documents of The Asiatic Society. The first descriptive catalogue of this collection was prepared by Wladimir Ivanow in 1926 A.D., with the title *Concise Descriptive Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Curzon Collection*. Later on, another two supplementary catalogues of this Curzon collection was prepared in 1927 and 1928 respectively. The number of valuable Persian Mss under this collection rose to 1098.

3. Third Collection:

Under this collection, 498 Persian Mss. have been preserved in The Asiatic Society. In 2009, M. Firoze, Joint Philological Secretary of The Asiatic Society edited this catalogue entitled *A Descriptive Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Third Collection of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata* which was earlier compiled by Muhammad Abdullah.

4. Radha Kanta Deb Collection:

There is also a good collection of approximate 250 manuscripts under the head of Radhakanta Deb Collection. It contains Tuhfat-ul-Hind, Diwan-i-Urfi, Diwan-i-Saqqa, Pandnameh-i-Attar Nishapuri, Tarikh-i-Humayun, Kalilah-wa-Dimnah etc. Some of them remain unidentified and incomplete as well. Most of the Persian Mss. of this collection are in a deteriorated condition. It is very unfortunate that the catalogue of Persian Mss. of this huge collection is not published yet, even after the several years of its acquisition.

The catalogues of Persian Mss. and

rare books in the possession of The Asiatic Society, were prepared by the scholars of The Asiatic Society at different times. A special mention of the printed catalogues of Persian Mss. and rare books may be made of:

1. "Fehrist-i-Kutub-i-Qalami wa Matbuat-i-Kutubkhan-i-Asiatic Society" edited by Zahir Ali. (Calcutta, 1837 A.D)
 2. *Catalogue of the Persian Books and Manuscripts in the Library of The Asiatic Society of Bengal* by Maulavi Mirza Ashraf Ali. (Baptist Mission Press, 1890 A.D.)
 3. *Catalogue of the Persian Books and Manuscripts in the Library of The Asiatic Society*, edited by Kamaluddin Ahmad and Abdul Muqtadir (Calcutta, The Bengal Secretariat Book Depot, 1905 A.D.)
 4. *List of Arabic and Persian Manuscripts Acquired by The Asiatic Society of Bengal during 1903-1907*, edited by Hidayat Hosain (Calcutta, 1908)
 5. *List of Arabic and Persian Manuscripts Acquired by The Asiatic Society of Bengal during 1908-1910*, edited by N. Ahmad and H. Razawi (Calcutta, 1911)
 6. *Concise Descriptive Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Collection of The Asiatic Society of Bengal*, edited by Wladimir Ivanow (Calcutta, The Asiatic Society, 1924, reprinted in 1985 & 2018)
 7. *Concise Descriptive Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Curzon Collection*, edited by Wladimir Ivanow (Calcutta, Baptist Mission Press, 1926)
 8. *Catalogue of Persian Printed Books in the Library of The Asiatic Society* compiled by Maulvi Mutiur Rahman in tabular form in 1967.
 9. *A Descriptive Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Third Collection of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata* compiled by Muhammad Abdullah and edited by M. Firoze (The Asiatic Society, Kolkata, 2009)
- Many of precious and rare Persian

manuscripts in the possession of The Asiatic Society have been edited and translated into English and published under Bibliotheca Indica Series such as Ain-iAkbari, Faras Nama, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, Alamgir Nama, Qanun-i-Humayuni, Majma'ul Bahren, Sikandar Nama, Haft Asman etc. The publication of valuable manuscripts was started in 1849 and is still running on.

Conclusion:

The contribution of The Asiatic Society regarding preservation and publication of Persian Mss. and books is a well acknowledged and accepted fact. Due to its rich and varied rare collection of Persian Mss. and books, The Asiatic Society became one of the biggest centres of Persian Studies of the world as well as a national heritage of India. Some Mss. and books under the possession of The Asiatic Society are in a deteriorated condition, worm-eaten, brittle

and need an immediate conservation treatment for protection from further loss of these precious treasures of the Persian Studies.

References:

1. Alam, Mahmood, (2010), Persian Heritage in Bengal, Ph.D Thesis, University of Calcutta.
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3. Bicentenary Souvenir, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata.
4. Ivanow, Wladimir, (2018) *Concise Descriptive Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Collection of The Asiatic Society of Bengal*, The Asiatic Society, Calcutta.
5. Ivanow, Wladimir, (1926) *Concise Descriptive Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Curzon Collection*, Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta.
6. Firoze, M. (2009), *A Descriptive Catalogue of Persian Manuscripts in the Third Collection of The Asiatic Society, Kolkata*, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata,

Raja Rajendralala Mitra Memorial Lecture

The Asiatic Society has organised 'Raja Rajendralala Mitra Memorial Lecture' for the year 2022 on 18th March 2024 at 03:00 p.m. at the Rajendralala Mitra Bhavan, Salt Lake campus of The Asiatic Society. The theme of the programme was entitled as 'Language and Reality: Reflections of Jayanatabhatta, the 9th Century Kashmiri Logician'. The programme commenced with the garlanding of the bust of Raja Rajendralala Mitra by Shri Dwaipayan Mitra, great-grandson of Raja Rajendralala Mitra and Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society respectively followed by offering of flowers to the bust of Raja Rajendralala Mitra by the dignitaries, officials of the Society and other invitees paying homage to the first Indian President of the Society. Welcome Address was delivered by Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Society who, on behalf of the Society presented the prestigious Certificate of Lectureship to Professor



L to R : Professor Vashishtha Narayan Jha, Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick and Dr. Sujit Kumar Das

Vashishtha Narayan Jha, former Director, Centre of Advanced Study in Sanskrit, University of Pune as a gesture of appreciation. Dr. Shakti Mukherji, Research Officer-in-Charge, Academic Section of the Society offered a flowering plant to Professor Jha as a gesture of appreciation from the Society following which Professor Jha delivered an engrossing lecture on the said theme of the programme. The Presidential Address was delivered by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick. The programme concluded with a Vote of Thanks given by Dr. Sujit Kumar Das, Treasurer of the Society.

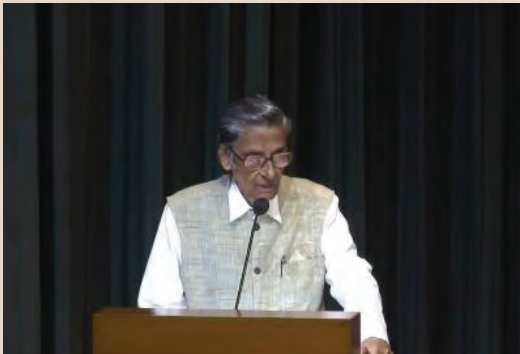
Half-day Seminar on 'Science of Suryanamaskara'

Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute (Declared by Government of India as Deemed University, Belur Math, Howrah) in association with The Asiatic Society has organised a Half-day collaborative seminar on 21st March 2024 at 05:00 p.m. at the Vivekananda Hall, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture (RMIC), Golpark. The theme of the programme was entitled as 'Science of Suryanamaskara' with an aim of disseminating the benefits of the Suryanamaskara and possible mechanism behind it. The seminar was jointly inaugurated by Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary of The Asiatic Society; Swami Atmapriyananda, Pro-Chancellor & Secretary of Vivekananda University, Belur Math; and Swami Suparnananda, Secretary, RMIC Golpark. The inauguration was followed by an address of benediction by Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary of The Asiatic Society. Swami Atmapriyananda, Pro-Chancellor & Secretary of Vivekananda University, Belur Math explained the importance of the Suryanamaskara especially for youths and splendidly concluded the need for inclusion of Suryanamaskara in our daily routine. Swami Suparnananda, Secretary, RMIC Golpark gained the attention of the audience by highlighting the words by Swami Vivekananda in which he urged youth to indulge in exercise so that divine potential in everyone can lead individuals to the supreme goal of

life. Swami Vidyapradananda, Head of Department of Sports, Science & Yoga, Vivekananda University explained in detail the trucha kalpa namaskara of Rig Veda. After the talk by Swami Vidyapradananda, the session progressed with an engaging demonstration of modern dynamic Suryanamaskara, accompanied with vedic mantras, presented by Sanjoy Majhi and Debraj Das, Department of Sports, Science & Yoga, Vivekananda University. Dr. Arnab Das, Assistant Professor, Department of Sports, Science and Yoga, Vivekananda University shared insightful details on the effects of Suryanamaskara on physical as well as mental health. The seminar ended with positive remarks from the audience as well as the organisers.



Swami Atmapriyananda



Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti



Swami Suparnananda

Fire Lecture cum Demonstration



A fire lecture cum demonstration of portable fire extinguishing system for the Quarter January - March 2024 was conducted on 26 March 2024 at 15:00 Hrs at the society premises and was attended by the staff available.

National Seminar on 'Challenges on Vector-borne Diseases in the Changing dynamics of Environment and Climate'



L to R : Professor Asok Kanti Sanyal, Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, Dr. Dhriti Banerjee, Dr. B.K. Tyagi, Dr. Sankar Kumar Nath and Dr. Sujit Kumar Das

The Asiatic Society in association with the Society of Medical Arthropodology has organised a one-day collaborative seminar entitled 'Challenges on vector-borne Diseases in the Changing dynamics of Environment and Climate' on 27th March, 2024 at 11:00 a.m. at the Vidyasagar Hall of The Asiatic Society. The programme started with an inaugural song by Shri Amit Ghosh, an official of the Society followed by garlanding of the bust of Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society. Dr. Keka Adhikari Banerjee, Curator of the Society then started the proceedings and she successfully conducted the whole programme. Welcome Address was delivered by Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Society. The inaugural speech was delivered by Dr. Dhriti Banerjee, Director, Zoological Survey of India (ZSI). Professor Asok Kanti Sanyal, Biological Science Secretary of the Society gave brief introduction on the theme of the seminar. Professor Brij Kishore Tyagi, Professor in Practice, Department of Biosciences,

University Institute of Biotechnology, Chandigarh, President, Society of Medical Arthropodology (SOMA) and Former Director, Centre for Research in Medical Entomology, CRME (ICMR) spoke eloquently about SOMA and announced establishment of the third school under SOMA named Sajal Bhattacharya School of Vector-Borne Diseases at

Kolkata. A Book entitled *Dr. Ronald Ross: Mosquito, Malaria, India and the Nobel Prize: An Untold Story of the First Indian Nobel Laureate* written by Dr. B.K. Tyagi, Dr. Sajal Bhattacharya and Dr. B. Reddy Naik was released on the occasion. Presidential Address was delivered by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick. Dr. Sankar Kumar Nath, Eminent Oncologist & Medical Science Secretary of The Asiatic Society made his remarks on the programme. The inaugural session ended with a Vote of Thanks by Dr. Sujit Kumar Das, Treasurer of the Society.

The first Technical Session began with Key-Note Address delivered by Professor Gautam Chandra, Vice-Chancellor, The University of Burdwan. Professor Dr. B.K. Tyagi in his special seminar lecture spoke eloquently on 'Desert Malaria – an emerging disease paradigm and its challenges in India'. Dr. J. R. B. Alfred, former Director, ZSI chaired the introductory session and made valuable remarks on the two deliberations.

The next Technical Session was chaired by Professor Samiran Chakrabarti, former Professor in the Department of Zoology,

Kalyani University. The session started with the lecture of Dr. Rina Tilak, former Scientist – 'G', Army Medical College, Pune. She delivered her talk with comprehensive presentation on Scrub Typhus. Professor Aniruddha Mukherjee, Department of Environmental Science, University of Calcutta spoke on the environmental issues and its impact on human beings. Dr. Surajita Banerjee, State Entomologist, Government of West Bengal presented her topic 'Challenges of Climate and Environmental changes on Dengue and the impact on Public Health'.

The next and last Technical Session was chaired by Dr. Rina Tilak. Professor Siddhartha Narayan Joarder, WBUAFS presented an account of a success story of little-known disease Blue Tongue. Dr. Sajal Bhattacharya, formerly Head in the Post-Graduate Department of Zoology, Asutosh College, Kolkata spoke on the Aedes-borne viral diseases in the changing environment. Dr. Kunal Majumdar, Professor in Department of Community

Medicine, K.P.C Medical College and Hospital, Kolkata, Ex-Consultant of UNICEF, Kolkata and Arsenic specialist WHO (SEARO) presented an informative speech focusing especially the clinical aspects of vector-borne diseases.

In the last session, Panel Discussion was chaired by Professor Dr. B.K. Tyagi and the three panelists were Dr. Ashis Kumar Hazra, former Additional Director, ZSI; Professor Dr. Goutam Kumar Saha, Professor and former Head of the Department of Zoology, former Director of Institute of Agricultural Science, University of Calcutta and Professor Dr. Sajal Kumar Bhattacharya. A participant raised questions related to role of invasive alien species in respect of using the exotic species like Gambusia and Guppy fishes in control of mosquito larvae. Dr. Sanyal made some comments with current data on invasive species of plants and animals in India. The programme was concluded with a Vote of Thanks given by Professor Asok Kanti Sanyal.

Staff Training Programme



Shri Anindya Acharya, Joint Director (A&E) & C.V.O., National Jute Board, Ministry of Textiles, Government of India conducting a Staff Training Programme on 'Annual Performance Assessment Report (APAR)' at The Asiatic Society, Kolkata on 2nd April, 2024.

Programme at Gorky Sadan



Lighting of lamp by Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary, The Asiatic Society on the occasion of celebration of the 40th Anniversary of the Flight into Space by Indian Cosmonaut Rakesh Sharma and 63rd Anniversary of the First Flight into Space by Yuri Gagarin, in presence of Mr. Alexy Idamkin, Consul General of the Russian Federation in Kolkata, Mr. Sergey Sushin, Vice Consul and Director of the Russian Centre for Science and Culture in Kolkata and Mr. S. Datta, Curator, Birla Planetarium on 3rd April 2024 at Gorky Sadan.

'Disciplined Sensitivity' – An Exhibition of Textile Art

The Asiatic Society in collaboration with the Liszt Institute Hungarian Cultural Centre, Delhi organised an exhibition titled 'Disciplined Sensitivity' at the Vidyasagar Hall of the Society on 17th April 2024. Sixteen carpets were exhibited that were designed and woven by celebrated Hungarian textile artist, Ella Gazdane Olosz who hails from Transylvania and inspired by Alexander Csoma de Koros, the pilgrim scholar from Hungary.

Dr. S.B. Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Society delivered the welcome address. Dr. Mariann Erdő, Director, Liszt Institute introduced the theme of the exhibition. Mr. Viktor Zichó, Hungarian Environmental Activist & Extreme Sportsman who was present on the occasion, shared the experiences of his bicycle expedition during the Covid times (2019 – 2020) of the entire route that Alexander Csoma de Koros travelled by foot from Hungary to Darjeeling, 200 years back.



Members and dignitaries at the programme.

The exhibition was formally inaugurated by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society in presence of the dignitaries and guests.

Celebration of World Heritage Day 2024

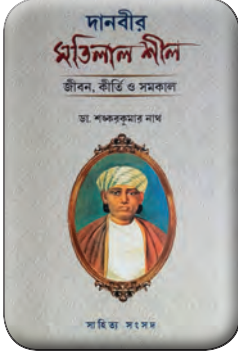
The Asiatic Society celebrated the World Heritage Day on 18th April 2024 in a befitting manner at the Humayun Kabir Hall of the Society which was attended by the members of the Council, staff members, research scholars and guests. The theme for this year's World Heritage Day was 'Discover and Experience Diversity'. The main attraction of the programme was an exhibition of photographs of monuments and heritage sites contributed by the members of the staff and research scholars of the Society. The photographs were taken by them during their trips to places of historical and cultural importance.

Welcoming the gathering, Dr. Satyabrata Chakrabarti, General Secretary of the Society briefed upon the UNESCO's objective behind declaring World Heritage Day and taking a cue from this year's theme, he emphasised how diversity is related with sustainable development on one hand and indigenous knowledge on the other. Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, President of the Society in his Presidential Address talked about the significance of the day in reminding us that what we are today is what we have inherited from the past and that it is our responsibility to preserve our culture, particularly those selective areas of which we cherish and regard as treasures. Professor Asok Kanti Sanyal, Biological Science Secretary of the Society focused his speech on the theme of this year's World Heritage Day. He narrated the evolutionary aspect of cultural heritage its diversity that has evolved through the civilisation of humankind. Professor Sanyal also made references to the displayed photographs and mentioned how they truly demonstrate the theme. Professor Arun Kumar Bandopadhyay, Historical & Archaeological Secretary of the Society spoke on preservation of historical monuments as well as natural heritage. He also remarked that photography is an important instrument for heritage preservation. Professor Tapati Mukherjee, Vice-President of the Society spoke on how The Asiatic Society played a pioneering role in preservation of the heritage and culture of the country and the long history associated with it.

The participants of the exhibition gave a brief description of their photographs and shared their personal experiences while capturing them. The best four photographs were judged by renowned photographer, Ms. Mala Mukherjee and the prizes were distributed to the winners. Professor Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty, Vice-President of the Society delivered the Vote of Thanks. He complimented the participants of the photography exhibitions for their enthusiasm and praised the organisers for the innovative programme. The event was co-ordinated by Dr. Keka Adhikari Banerjee, Curator of the Society and was streamed live on the Facebook page of the Society.



World Heritage Day Celebration at The Asiatic Society



দানবীর মতিলাল শীল : জীবন, কীর্তি ও সমকাল

ডঃ শঙ্করকুমার নাথ

শিশু সাহিত্য সংসদ প্রা. লি., প্রথম প্রকাশ : জানুয়ারী ২০২৪

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মূল্য ৭০০ টাকা

ইস্ট ইন্ডিয়া কোম্পানির আমলে কলকাতার বেশ ক'জন বাঙালি মানুষ ব্যবসা বাণিজ্য করে প্রচুর অর্থ উপার্জন করেন। কিন্তু ইতিহাসে দেখা যায়, এঁদের কেউ কেউ সমাজের কল্যাণকর্মেও রোজগারের একটা ভাল অংশ ব্যয় করেছেন। রামদুলাল সরকারের কথা প্রথম আমাদের মনে পড়ে। ১৭৫২ সালে রামদুলালের জন্ম। একেবারে শৈশবে বাবা মাকে হারিয়েছেন। এক ধনী ঘরে থেকে রামদুলাল তাঁর হিসেবনিকেশ দেখতেন। এক সময় প্রচুর অর্থের মালিক হয়েছেন। হিন্দু কলেজ প্রতিষ্ঠায় তিরিশ হাজার টাকা দিয়েছেন। মাদ্রাজের দুর্ভিক্ষের সময় এক লক্ষ টাকা দান করেন। একাধিক অতিথিশালা তাঁর অর্থে তৈরি হয়েছে। চীন, ইংল্যান্ড ও আমেরিকার ব্যবসায়ী মহলেও তিনি পরিচিতি অর্জন করেছিলেন।

রামদুলালের চার দশক পরে কলকাতার কলুটোলায় আরও একজন মানুষের জন্ম হয়। তিনি মতিলাল শীল। ১৭৯২ সালে তাঁর জন্ম। ১৮৫৪ সালে ইস্ট ইন্ডিয়া কোম্পানির অবসানের কাছাকাছি সময়ে তাঁর মৃত্যু হয়।

১৭৫২ থেকে ১৭৯২। চল্লিশ বছরের ব্যবধানে জন্মেছেন রামদুলাল ও মতিলাল। ঠিক মধ্যবর্তী সময়ে ১৭৭২ সালে জন্ম নিলেন বাংলার রেনেসাঁসের পুরোধা চরিত্র রাজা রামমোহন রায়। সময়টা ছিল নবজাগরণের। পরাধীনতার নাগপাশ ছিন্ন করতে চাইছিলেন কেউ কেউ। তবে সেই অভীক্ষা তখনও বড় আকারে দানা বাঁধেনি। প্রতিবাদের চাকা গড়াতে শুরু করেছিল সিপাহি বিদ্রোহের (অধুনা বলা হয় মহাবিদ্রোহ) পর। সম্মুখ সমরে না গিয়ে স্বদেশবাসীদের কল্যাণে তাঁরা অন্যরকমের পরিকাঠামো গড়ে তুলেছেন। শিক্ষার বিস্তারে অগ্রণী ভূমিকা পালন

করেছেন। আলোচ্য গ্রন্থটিতে মতিলাল শীলের জীবন আখ্যানের বিস্তৃত বিবরণ রয়েছে। লেখকের কথায়, ‘...ওঁর সময়ে তিনি নিবিড়ভাবে যুক্ত ছিলেন শিক্ষা, সংস্কৃতি, সামাজিক, অর্থনৈতিক নানান কর্মকাণ্ডে।’

মতিলালের প্রথম জীবনীকার ছিলেন কিশোরীচাঁদ মিত্র। সেটি ছিল কিশোরীচাঁদের বক্তৃতার লেখ্যরূপ। ছোট বই। পৃষ্ঠা সংখ্যা ৪৭। পরে শ্যামল দাসের সম্পাদনায় ১৯৯৩ সালে তা প্রকাশিত হয়। ১৩৬৪ বঙ্গাব্দে বাংলায় লেখা ১০২ পৃষ্ঠার একটি জীবনীগ্রন্থ লিখেছিলেন হেমেন্দ্রপ্রসাদ ঘোষ। লেখক জানিয়েছেন, ‘তাঁকে নিয়ে লেখা হয়েছে অতি কম, পুস্তক প্রকাশ তো আরও নগণ্য একটি দুটি। তাই আমার পক্ষ থেকে এই প্রয়াস।’ বলতে দ্বিধা নেই প্রায় ৮০ পৃষ্ঠার ৫টি পরিশিষ্ট সম্বলিত এই বৃহদায়তন বইয়ে শুধু মতিলাল শীলের জীবনকথা বিধৃত হয়নি, তাঁর সমকালের সামাজিক চিত্র বিস্তারিতভাবে ফুটে উঠেছে।

বাবা মায়ের একমাত্র সন্তান ছিলেন মতিলাল শীল। বাবা ছোটখাটো কাপড়ের ব্যবসায়ী ছিলেন। ছোটবেলায় একাধিক স্কুলে পড়াশুনা করেছেন তিনি। ইংরেজি খানিকটা শেখা হয়ে যায়। প্রথম জীবনে মতিলাল অনেকটাই বেহিসেবি ছিলেন, এমনটাই নানা লেখায় পরিচয় মেলে। মতিলাল কেরানি হিসেবে ফোর্ট উইলিয়াম দুর্গে কাজ পেয়েছিলেন। বছর দুই পর ১৮১৭ সালে সরকারি বিভাগে কাজে যোগ দেন। মতিলালের এক কাকা গৌরমোহন শীল অত্যন্ত ধনী ছিলেন। তিনি হঠাৎ মারা যান। তাঁর একমাত্র কন্যার স্বামীও মারা যান। বোনের কাছ থেকে কিছু অর্থ নিয়ে ব্যবসা শুরু করেন। কিন্তু লোকসান হয়। এতে তিনি দমে যাননি। ১৮১৯ সালে বোতল ও কর্কের ব্যবসা

করেন। এই ব্যবসায় অনেক লাভ হয়েছিল তাঁর। ইউরোপীয় বণিক স্মিথসনের মুৎসুদ্দি হিসেবে কাজ করেন মতিলাল। সততা ও প্রতিভার জোরে সাহেবের মন জয় করেন। উত্তরোত্তর মতিলালের বাণিজ্য বিস্তৃতি ঘটে। ১৮২৮ সালে দেখা যায়, তিনি আটটি কোম্পানির সঙ্গে ব্যবসা করছেন। এদেশে নীলের ব্যবসায় পণ্ডন করেন তিনি। তিনি এদেশ থেকে ইউরোপে নীল, রেশম, চিনি, সোরা ও চাউল রপ্তানি করতেন আর ইউরোপ থেকে বস্ত্র ও লোহার তৈরি নানা যন্ত্রপাতি আমদানি করতেন। এক সময় ১২/১৩টি জাহাজের মালিক হলেন মতিলাল। কোনো এক/দুটো জিনিসের ব্যবসাতে তিনি লেগে থাকতেন না। বাজারের দিকে তীক্ষ্ণ নজর ছিল তাঁর। বুঝতে পারতেন, কখন কোন্ জিনিসের কেনাবেচায় ঘরে মুনাফা আসবে।

মহিষাদলের রাজপরিবার যেমন শীল পরিবারের কাছে ধার নিয়ে একসময় সব হারিয়েছিল (মতিলাল তখন বেঁচে নেই) তেমনি দেখা যায় মতিলাল শীল বহু মানুষের ঋণ মকুব করে দিয়েছিলেন। এই বইয়ে তার কিছু উদাহরণ রয়েছে। কেমন করে মতিলাল ‘ধর্মতলা বাজার’-এর মালিক হয়েছিলেন, ‘ধর্মতলা বাজার’ শিরোনামে তা বিস্তারিতভাবে আলোচিত হয়েছে। ‘শীলস্ কলেজ’ প্রতিষ্ঠা মতিলাল শীলের অন্যতম শ্রেষ্ঠ অবদান হিসেবে বিবেচিত হয়। মিশনারিরা হিন্দু ছাত্রদের খ্রিস্টান ধর্মের দিকে টেনে নিয়ে যাচ্ছে, তা ঠেকাতে বিদ্যালয় চাই। মতিলাল শীল প্রথমে স্বাক্ষর করে এক লক্ষ টাকা দিলেন। লেখক পরিবেশিত একটি তথ্য আমাদের দ্বিধাশ্বিত করে। ১৮৪৩ সালে তিনি সেন্ট জেভিয়ার্স কলেজের জেসুইটদের সহযোগিতার কথা লিখেছেন। যতদূর জানি আমরা, ১৮৬০ সালে সেন্ট জেভিয়ার্স কলেজ প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়েছে। ১৮৪৩ সালের ২৮ ফেব্রুয়ারি *The Englishman* কাগজ St. Xavier's College নাম এনে আমাদের বিভ্রান্তি বাড়িয়েছে।

যাই হোক, ১৮৪৩ সালে শীল'স কলেজ প্রতিষ্ঠিত হল। এই কলেজের উদ্বোধনী অনুষ্ঠানে বিশিষ্ট ব্যক্তিদের মধ্যে দ্বারকানাথ ঠাকুর, রামকমল সেন, রসময় দত্ত, রেভারেন্ড কৃষ্ণমোহন বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় প্রমুখেরা উপস্থিত ছিলেন। কলেজটি জেসুইটদের তত্ত্বাবধানে বেশিদিন

চলেনি। ১৮৪৪ সালের ২০ সেপ্টেম্বর ছেদ ঘটে ও কলেজের ভার রেভারেন্ড কৃষ্ণমোহনের হাতে ন্যস্ত হয়। ১৮৪৫ সালের জুন মাসে কলেজটিকে পুরোপুরি অবৈতনিক করা হয়েছে। এমন একটি কলেজ তৈরির সামাজিক প্রেক্ষাপট বর্ণনা করেছেন লেখক। সে সময়কার সংবাদপত্রের প্রতিবেদন যোগ করেছেন। এসব উদ্যোগ মিশনারিরা ভাল চোখে দেখেননি। 'The Friends of India' এই কলেজ তৈরির পরিকল্পনাকে 'The New Anti-Missionary Movement' হিসেবে চিহ্নিত করেছিল। ১৮৫৯ সালে প্রথম কলিকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের অধীনে এই কলেজের ছাত্ররা প্রবেশিকা পরীক্ষা দিয়েছে। নানা ঠিকানায় কলেজ স্থানান্তরিত হয়েছে যার বিবরণ রয়েছে এই বইয়ে।

১৮৩৯ সালে যখন হিন্দু কলেজ পাঠশালা তৈরি হয় সেখানে মতিলাল অর্থ দান করেন। বেথুন বালিকা বিদ্যালয় তৈরির সময় মতিলাল শীল হেদুয়ায় তাঁর ইজারা নেওয়া জমি মেয়াদ পেরোনোর আগেই ছেড়ে দেন। আড়িয়াদহে ১৮৫২ সালে একটি অবৈতনিক পাঠশালা স্থাপিত করেন তিনি। ১৮৫৩ সালে হিন্দু মেট্রোপলিটান কলেজ তৈরির পর মতিলাল সেখানে প্রতিমাসে প্রথমে চারশো ও পরে পাঁচশো টাকা দিতেন। তাঁর নাম এই কলেজের পৃষ্ঠপোষক হিসেবে উল্লিখিত ছিল। কলেজের পরিচালন সমিতির সভাপতি ছিলেন রাজা রাধাকান্ত দেব। ১৮৫৩ সালে কলেজের ছাত্রসংখ্যা ছিল ৯৬০। শীল'স ফ্রি কলেজের সঙ্গে এই কলেজের একটা বন্ধন ছিল। ১৮৫৮ সালে সেই বন্ধন ছিন্ন হয়ে যায়।

স্বাস্থ্য ও চিকিৎসাব্যবস্থা প্রসারে মতিলাল শীল প্রচুর অর্থ দান করেন। প্রসূতি হাসপাতাল তৈরিতে মতিলাল এক লক্ষ টাকা দান করেন। ফিভার হাসপাতালের পরিকাঠামো ও ব্যবস্থাপনা নিয়ে মতিলাল যে পরামর্শ দিয়েছিলেন তা সকলেরই নজর কাড়বে। মেডিকেল কলেজ হাসপাতালের জন্য মতিলাল যে জমি দিয়েছিলেন সেকথা অনেকেই হয়তো জানেন। এর জন্য ইংরেজ সরকারের প্রশংসান্য হয়েছেন মতিলাল। বিডন সাহেব চিঠি দিয়ে জানিয়েছেন, ‘স্বীয় জন্মগরস্থ রোগগ্রস্ত দরিদ্রের উপকারের জন্য শ্রীযুক্ত

বাবু মতিলাল শীল যে আশ্চর্য ঔদার্য্য প্রকাশ করিয়াছেন তন্নিমিত্তে কৌশলের সাহেবেরা তাঁহাকে গবর্ণমেন্টের কৃতজ্ঞতা জ্ঞাপন করেন এবং ... তাহা সর্বসাধারণ লোকেদের গোচর করণার্থ শ্রীযুক্ত সরকারী গেজেটে প্রকাশ করিতে মনস্থ করিয়াছেন।' কুষ্ঠরোগীদের বাসস্থানের জন্য মতিলাল মির্জাপুরের জমি দান করেছিলেন। কলকাতা শহরে অগ্নিকাণ্ড নিবারণের জন্য কী ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা যায় সেই বিষয়ে সরকারের কাছে পরামর্শ জমা দিয়েছিলেন মতিলাল। সেই পরামর্শ সকলের প্রশংসা দাবি করেছে। বেলঘরিয়ায় মতিলাল অতিথিশালা গড়ে দিয়েছিলেন। সকল ধর্মের মানুষেরাই সেখানে থাকতে পেতেন। বিশাল আয়োজন ছিল। তিনি মারা যাবার পরে ১৮৬৪ সালের দুর্ভিক্ষে পুত্র হীরালাল শীল তিন হাজার মানুষের ভরণপোষণের দায়িত্ব নিয়েছিলেন।

১৮২৯ সালে সতীদাহ প্রথা নিবারণ হলে দেশের গোঁড়া একদল মানুষ তার বিরোধিতায় নামলেন। ভবানীচরণ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় ১৮৩০ সালে 'ধর্মসভা' গড়লেন। পরিচিত অনেকেই ছিলেন। মতিলাল ছিলেন না। দলাদলিতে এই 'ধর্মসভা' যখন বিপন্ন তখন মতিলাল ও আরও অনেকে যোগ দেন। তবে শর্ত পরিষ্কার। ধর্ম বিষয়ে আলোচনা ও আন্দোলন নয়, ক্ষুধার্তদের অন্নদান ও বিপন্ন মানুষদের বিপদ থেকে রক্ষা 'ধর্মসভা'র প্রধান কাজ হোক, মতিলাল তাই চেয়েছেন। সকলেই তাঁর প্রস্তাবে রাজি হন। তিনি তক্ষুণি তিরিশ হাজার টাকা দিয়েছিলেন। ১৮৪৭ সালে তিনি প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন 'মতিলাল শীল অনাথ ও বিধবা সাহায্য ভাণ্ডার'। সতীদাহ প্রথার বিরোধী ছিলেন মতিলাল শীল।

এসব তো গেল দান-ধ্যানের কথা। এবার ব্যবসার কথায় আসা যাক। ১৮৩৬ সাল থেকে জাহাজ ব্যবসায় যোগ দিয়ে প্রভূত অর্থ উপার্জন করেছেন। রেল লাইন চালু করার বিষয়ে জর্জ স্টিফেনসনকে ১৮৪৪ সালে চিঠি দিয়েছিলেন মতিলাল। তিনি রেললাইন চালু করতে বলেন। তার একদশক পরে ১৮৫৩ সালে ভারতের প্রথম রেললাইন (বোম্বে-থানে) ও ১৮৫৪ সালে বাংলায় প্রথম ২৪ মাইল রেললাইন (হাওড়া-হুগলি) চালু হয়েছে। গঙ্গায় ঘাট তৈরিতে

মতিলাল অর্থ দিয়েছেন। ঘাট তৈরির ইতিহাস লেখক নানা পত্র-পত্রিকা থেকে তুলে এনেছেন। বিধবা বিবাহের সপক্ষে ছিলেন মতিলাল। ঘোষণা করেছিলেন, যিনি প্রথম বিধবা বিবাহ করবেন তাকে তিনি দশ হাজার টাকা দেবেন। ওই আমলে দশ হাজার টাকা এক বিশাল পরিমাণ টাকা তো বটেই। আরও ছিল। কন্যার অভিভাবককে দশ হাজার টাকা ও বিয়ের খরচ বাবদ আরও দশ হাজার টাকা—মোট তিরিশ হাজার টাকা দানের কথা ঘোষণা করেন মতিলাল শীল। সমাজ ছিল এমন কুসংস্কারাচ্ছন্ন, এমন ঘোষণাও মানুষকে প্রতিজ্ঞাবদ্ধ করতে পারেনি। বিদ্যাসাগরের চেষ্টিয় 'বিধবা বিবাহ আইন' ১৮৫৬ সালে পাশ হয়। তার দু'বছর আগে মতিলাল পৃথিবী ছেড়ে চলে যান। মতিলাল শীলের 'আরও দানশীলতা' এবং 'ব্যবসা বিষয়ে আরও কিছু কথা' দুটি পৃথক অধ্যায়ে টুকরো টুকরো ভাবে পেশ করেছেন লেখক। 'কলকাতা ও পুলিশ ও মতিলাল শীল' একটি আকর্ষণীয় অধ্যায় হিসেবে বিবেচিত হবে। তাঁর মৃত্যুসংবাদ নানা পত্র-পত্রিকায় প্রকাশিত হয়েছে। বাড়ির নকশা অনুসন্ধানীদের আগ্রহ বাড়িয়ে তুলবে। পরিশিষ্টে রয়েছে মতিলাল শীলের উইল, কৃষ্ণমোহন মল্লিক ও যদুনাথ ঘোষের জীবনী, মতিলাল শীলের পারিবারিক খরচ, মতিলাল শীলের সম্পত্তির তালিকা ও মতিলাল শীলের বংশ-লতিকা। এমন বইয়ে নির্ঘণ্ট প্রাসঙ্গিক যা আমরা পেয়েছি। বইটির মুদ্রণ ও অঙ্গসৌষ্ঠব বাংলার প্রকাশক জগতের কাছে উদাহরণ হতে পারে। বইয়ে মতিলাল শীলের একাধিক ছবি (আলাদা রকমের) রয়েছে। কিন্তু ডবলিও. বি. ও'শনসির (পৃষ্ঠা ৮২ এবং ২০৪) দুটি ছবি থাকার প্রয়োজন ছিল কি?

সবশেষে বলব, বাংলার উনিশ শতকের গবেষণায় দুর্লভ আলোকচিত্র সমৃদ্ধ এই বই একটি উল্লেখযোগ্য ভূমিকা পালন করবে।

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