



In the last issue we saluted the people of India. In this issue we salute the people of Bihar. Bihar, in comparison to Gujarat, Maharashtra or Tamil Nadu, is a poorer state. Many gaps are there in available medical facilities. More unemployment and a majority of daily wage-earners with strong class & caste differences and strong political divisions afflict the Biharis. Even then the people of Bihar has shown grit to stand and fight the pandemic better than big brothers.

Yet again we mourn the death of victims of this terrible ailment caused by Novel Corona virus, health-staff fighting its menace and poor who died due to unemployment, deprivation and hunger.

## A chronicle and historical review of Bengalee Association, Bihar – 1938-1997\*

[Contd. From the last issue]

- Bhakat Prasad Majumdar and Gurucharan Samanta

III

Approached from the angle of activities, we can divide the history of Bengalee Association in three phases – from 1938 to 1948, from 1948 to 1966 and since 1966. The third phase, though began in 1966, actually activated the Association from 1966.

**1938-48:** The primary objective of forming the Association was to oppose the system of Domicile Certificates, and that was the main issue during the first phase. Bihar government used to demand Domicile Certificate from the Bengalees of Bihar for employment, education and business; it was demanded even from the Rarhis of Manbhum and Bhagalpur, who were living in Bihar for hundreds of years. After publication of the Order dated 18th and 22nd February 1938, signed by the then Chief Secretary of Bihar W. B. Brett and Conservator of Forests J. S. Owden the issue of Bihari-Bengalee came to the fore. The president of the Association P. R. Das and Secretary Shailendra Nath Dutta raised in front of the National Congress the unjustified nature of the demand for certificates. Mr. Das raised the question in front of Congress Working Committee on 3rd and 4th April 1938, printed in the minutes of the Working Committee on 2nd and 12th page. Congress Working Committee gave the responsibility of solving this problem of Bengali-Bihari to Babu Rajendra Prasad. Hence, again on 21st-22nd August, Mr. Das sent a memorandum of 64 pages to Rajendra Babu on the eve of Wardha conference. Association hoped that the formula provided by National Congress will be accepted by the congress government of Bihar as well. But, the government of Bihar literally did not implement the resolution adopted in Bardoli session of Congress. It just changed a bit the rules for submitting the certificate. We know from a letter written by Mr. Das on 3rd January 1939, that Rajendra Babu had given a decision that to get a certificate of domicile from the government one shall have to submit evidence of living in Bihar continually for ten years. In the field of education, in those institutions where number of students admitted are less, seats will be reserved for each of the communities of Bihar in the proportion of percentage of their population. Though, in the field of business no certificate would be needed, yet Bihar government will have the right to direct the commercial establishments to accord preference to the Biharis. And in those areas of Bihar, where Bengali is the lingua franca, there preferably, primary education may be provided in Bengali (vide Central Privileges File). On 29th May 1946, the Deputy Secretary of Education Department of Government of Bihar informed the Association that to get scholarship in government-run educational institutions and in other matters, Bengalees will have to submit domicile certificate as before. That meant that Domicile rules will not be changed (vide No. 1572, Directive of the Education Deptt. Govt. of Bihar). on 13th March 1946 the government of Bihar imposed a new type of Domicile Certificate (See Behar Herald dated 12.6.1947). hence the fact is that the Association could not make the government to withdraw domicile rule in totality even after trying for nine years. But, since 2nd World war had begun, there was a boom in employment and business, the issue of domicile lost importance for the time being. The famine of Bengal, war, movement of 1942, political rise and movement after war, independence and the dreams associated with new constitution pressed to the background the problems of education, employment, business etc. the Association also became inactive. After adoption of the Constitution of India, Public Employment Act was promulgated which

was in line with the demand of the Association and thus the domicile system became inoperative.

Even in the first phase of activities, there are examples that the Association efforted for education in Bengali medium or inclusion of Bengali as language-subject in schools, but those were limited to adoption of resolutions or making requests to the government. In the general body meeting of 1946, unanimously it was resolved that Bihar government should arrange learning of Bengali and compulsory and optional subjects (vide Circular of the Secretary dated 2nd November 1946). Government did not make any arrangement for learning of Bengali as optional subject. Since 1937, no Bengali student could get admission in government college without domicile certificate. The Association began its protests against this and also made requests to the government. In the annual general body meeting of 1940, the Secretary informed that only the Principal of Patna College, on the request of the Association, has accepted the resolution of Bardoli Congress.

In some other matters, efforts made by the Association failed totally. The leaders of the Association efforted much to get the number of Bengalees living in Bihar be counted properly during the census. But census report revealed that the number of Bengalees were reduced to 11.07 lakhs in 1951 from 11.89 lakhs in 1931. No comment is needed. Many of the resolutions, viz. establishing swadeshi mill by Bengalees (1941), establishing bank, forming chamber of commerce, establishing premier science and technology college etc. just remained in the files. In the general body meeting held at Purulia, it was also decided that premier science colleges will be established by the central committee at Patna and in the districts by the branches. On the request made by the central committee Chaibasa and Patna branch committed to donate twenty-five thousand rupees each for the purpose. But this was also not materialized.

**Second phase, from 1948 to 1966** was a period of inactivity for the Association. Possible reasons may be: lessening of seriousness of the problem of domicile as an aftermath of war, domicile rule being nullified by Constitution of India and Public Employment Act, lessening of importance of the problem due to reorganization of states in which many of the Bengali-speaking areas were sliced out from Bihar and also resultant spread of the feeling of hopelessness among the rest of Bengalees, diminution of the economic status of Bengalees due to famine, partition, abolition of zamindari etc., pressure from above to accept Hindi as national and state language, retreat of Bengalees from the political parties, helplessness and unnecessary fear, ignorance about the constitutional and legal rights etc. **Beginning of the third phase for the Association is taken to be 1966, but actual reorganization started from 1968.** The nature of decisions and style of work in this period is quite different from the earlier phases. Earlier, on 27th October of 1946, a resolution was adopted that Bengalees should learn Hindi (Letter No. 181, Central File). But this circular by the secretary couldn't attract the attention of the bengalees. In the third phase, in 11th annula general body meeting of 1969, president himself his saying in his speech, "Learning Hindi is absolutely necessary (Page 6). He and Dr. Bishtu Mukhopadhyay are using the term "Bengali-speaking Bihari" for Bengalees of Bihar (vide presidents' speeches in 10th and 14th Annual General Body meeting held at Patna and Darbhanga, Pages 10 and 12). In this

**Phase the emblem for the** Continued to Page-2

### EDITORIAL

#### Pandemic and Bengalee Association

Eighty second foundation day of Bengalee Association, Bihar passed away without any public observance either by the centre or by any of the branches. The country and the world is passing through the nightmare of a pandemic caused by a virus, yet half-known, and an enforced lockdown, advised by the scientists to be the biggest social weapon to fight out that virus – the ultimate economic, social and psychological results of the lockdown as well, remain half-known. Well, like the proverbial half-filled glass of water, half-known is inching towards the known for the positive minded people, and sliding in the abyss of unknown for negative minded people. It is appreciable that like the other historic periods, the branches of Bengalee Association, Bihar and its members are proving themselves to be positive minded people. The branch-wise WhatsApp groups and Facebook pages are replete with photographs of relief work among the people, scientific information about the ways to prevent the infection and appeals to mobilize donations. Purnia and Chhapra branches have reported distribution of food articles, Bhagalpur Durga Bari has donated a good sum for the relief fund whereas centrally a collection is being made. Centrally also, fund mobilization is continuing.

With the people of the world, we earnestly hope that this nightmare will end. Till then, we all will try to stay safe, stay at home as far as possible, take all the prescribed precautions, yet stand beside the people in need; rather voluntarily offer our help to the local administration.

#### What the statement of RBI Governor means

- D. Mitra

As we know the Indian economy is in deep trouble. The economic growth has been declining ragingly. Economy expanded 4.7% year on year basis in last quarter of 2019. It is the weakest growth rate since first quarter of 2013. On the expenditure side, faster declines were seen for gross fixed capital formation (-5.2% vs -4.1% in the third quarter). The declines in exports were (-) 5.5% vs (-) 2.1% and in imports (-) 11.2% vs (-) 9.3%. Manufacturing (-0.2% vs -0.4%) contracted and construction slowed sharply (0.3% vs 2.9%). [sourced from tradingeconomics.com] Former Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian has said, that the Indian economy is heading towards an "intensive care unit" and that a "Great Slowdown" was imminent.

Another former Chief Economic Adviser to the Government of India, Shri Shankar Acharya has revealed from Periodic Labour Force Survey for 2017-18 released by NSO on June 2019 that the open unemployment rate has almost tripled since 2011-12 to 6.1 per cent. Since the poor can rarely afford to be unemployed, much of this increase reflects a surge in educated unemployed. The youth (15-29) unemployment rate has almost tripled to 17.8 per cent in 2017-18, with a staggering 36 per cent for graduates and post-graduates. total employment in India actually fell by a few million between 2011-12 and 2017-18, for the first time since 1972-73.

These figures and statements from former economic advisors relate to pre-pandemic economy. Under the Covid19 pandemic the growth rate is expected to nosedive to below 1 percent. International rating agency Fitch has slashed India's GDP growth rate projections for 2020-21 to 0.8 per cent.

On the banking front we know that the situation is extremely scary. A CARE Ratings study of 37 SCBs as of November 14, 2019 (18 public sector banks and 19 private sector banks) reveals that bad loans of the SCBs as on March 31, 2019 was Rs 8.94 lakh crore. Nearly 2 lakh crore rupees have been written off. As per RBI the provisional figure of closing balance of Gross Non-Performance Assets was INR 9,36,474 crores. NPAs of all SCBs Recovered through Various Channels (Lok Adalats, DRTs, SARFAESI and IBC) for the year 2016-17 was Rs 385 billion and for the year 2017-18 (P), it was Rs. 404 billion. These constituted only 13.8 and 13.7 percent of total bad loans involved in the recovery process respectively.

In this backdrop we have to examine the infusion of liquidity to the banks for providing corporate, MSMEs credit at very low interest rate, and for long term projects at repo-rate.

Banks' are being made the cannon fodder due to these policies. The banks have been told to provide credit at an abysmally low rate to corporate, to contract interest spread, to make higher provisioning, to degrade its asset quality, to extend the time for reckoning a loan as NPA, even in long term projects on real estate (which has already been a sector that created a lot of NPAs) both banks and NBFCs are to extend the time for reckoning NPA. Now, we know that banks give credit to certain limited sections, mostly big corporate or firms. Every chance is there that banks won't get back the money. Where these banks will stand? Will the central

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## The Last Days of the First Rebel, Derozio (Selection)

- Jawhar Sircar

Born : 18 April 1809  
Died : 26 Dec. 1831 (aged 22)

Now that we have a fair idea of the scenario at that time, we may take a look at some more records of the troubled period, 1830-1831, to gauge how the last days of Derozio must have been. By 1830, the authorities of the college had just enough of his radicalism on the campus. The Managers of Hindu College decided to act sternly, for the fair name of the institution could not be held to ransom by one precocious young man and his intemperate followers. After all, the Hindu gentry that had a big say in the manner in which the college was run. To cap it all, Derozio's students had started antagonising the rulers of the land as well, by arguing against the British colonisation of India and talking publicly of liberty. This meant that the Hindu orthodox leaders could now seek official British intervention against the exasperating teacher. Then, on the 12th of February 1830, a damning 'anti-colonialist' article came out in the India Gazette and this was looked upon with great concern by the government. Derozio, however, continued his relentless campaign and encouraged his students to start a magazine, Parthenon, that espoused education for women, combating superstition and spoke justice for all. It was ordered to be shut down soon after just two issues, and in May 1830, the Managers of the College issued orders that added teeth to their disciplinary diktats of 1829. The new orders strictly forbade "the teachers from having any communication with their students on religious subjects and especially the religion of the Hindus". But, once the spark of rebellion was ignited, it could hardly be confined to religious debates. The Calcutta Gazette of 4th October 1830 reported that "the Managers of the College having heard that several of its students are in the habit of attending Societies at which political or religious discussions are held, think it necessary to announce their strong disapprobation of the practice and to prohibit its continuance and further that if any student being present at such a Society shall incur serious displeasure". Yet, on 10 December 1830, some 200 persons crowded the Town Hall to celebrate the spirit of liberty ushered in again by France's July Revolution and some had even the temerity to hoist the French tricolour on the monument, symbolising freedom. It was clear that Derozio had to be silenced at any cost, either by the Hindu conservatives or by the British establishment. He could hardly expect any support from the Christian missionaries whom he had annoyed with his occasional espousal of atheism. He must have realised that he was in acute danger, but he continued his task, regardless. As his students recalled later, he kept urging them "to live and die for truth". Things went to such a pass that when Derozio went to meet the Head Master, D'Anselme on the 5th of February 1831, he was so infuriated that he lifted his hand to strike Derozio. This was in the presence of the Management Committee members who had gathered there for a meeting. D'Anselme was prevented by David Hare from actually

hitting Derozio and then he took his ire on Hare by calling him "a vile sycophant". One has hardly ever come across such high drama where the faculty of the college was concerned. Pearychand Mitra recorded later that there was some sort of a patch-up, but the mood of the meeting was definitely against Derozio. On that day, the Managers of the Hindu College took a resolution in their MC meeting "condemning practices that were inconsistent with the Hindu notions of propriety" and banned "Societies that discussed either politics or religion". The radical India Gazette immediately condemned these orders and declared them as "presumptuous, tyrannical and absurd intermeddling with the right of private judgement.....for they have no right to dictate to the students how they shall dispose of their time out of College". The Bengali newspapers, on the other hand, heaved some sigh of relief but were still bitter with the British suppression of what they considered was their fundamental right to burn alive young widows.

Hindu orthodox leaders, who were still frustrated and restless ever since they had lost out to Bentinck and Ram Mohun on the 'Sati' law, became desperate to procure some sort of a victory. Dewan Ram Comul Sen, the grandfather of Keshab Chandra Sen, was the leader of the intolerant brigade and he started actively canvassing for Derozio's dismissal in public and seriously approached the Hindu - dominated management of the college. As a result, the Directors of the Hindu College had to call a 'Special Meeting' on the 23rd of April 1831 for "checking the growing evil and the public alarm arising from the very unwarranted misconduct of a certain teacher". Its ostensible proposal was to save "a great many children who have been entrusted [because Derozio] has materially injured their morals." The hand-written records of this fateful meeting contain a damaging memorandum that accused "Derozio as the root of all evils and the cause of public alarm". It proposed that "he should be discharged from the College" along with "all those students who are publicly hostile to Hinduism". It also demanded action against "any of the boys (who) go to see or attend public lectures". One may note how this strategy combined religion and politics, rather adroitly, for it helped establish thereby a definitely retrograde tradition on the Indian subcontinent, that still flourishes in all the three nations that emerged later.

As expected, the Committee voted 6 to 3 to dismiss Henry Derozio to assuage "the present state of public feeling amongst the Hindoo Community". Radhakanta Deb, Ram Comul Sen, Radhamadhab Bandopadhyay and the "governor" Chandrakumar Tagore voted in favour of the resolution as "absolutely necessary", while Prasanna Kumar Tagore and Rasamoy Datta sided with it as they considered it "expedient". Srikrishna Sinha was the only one who stood boldly against the resolution. The College's Visitor, the famous Orientalist, Dr Horace Hayman Wilson and the noted pro-Indian educationist, David Hare, abstained on the ground that they could not represent Hindu views. The orthodox group failed, however, to pass the second part of the resolution that was to condemn Henry Derozio as "an improper person to be entrusted with the education of youth" because it could not convince the majority.

[Courtesy: The Presidency Alumni, 20 Jan 2017]

## In memoriam

### Irrfan Khan



7 January 1967 – 29 April 2020

"Irrfan Khan was a distinguished and charismatic star in Hindi- and English-language movies whose hardworking career was an enormously valuable bridge between South Asian and Hollywood cinema. He was armed with a sensitive and seductive gaze: his good looks matured in middle age in such a way that he could play dramatic or villainous roles but also romantic leads of a certain age and of a certain emotional wistfulness. You could almost call him Mumbai's Clooney — although it would be condescending to explain this colossal Indian star in Hollywood terms."

- Peter Bradshaw, Guardian, 30th April 2020

### Rishi Kapoor

"Only, Rishi Kapoor was and is so much more. Few actors in Hindi cinema have had this sort of a career arc: from the gawky adolescent pining for his schoolteacher (Mera Naam Joker, 1970) to the naughty ninety-year-old (Kapoor & Sons, 2016), Rishi Kapoor has regaled audiences for close to fifty years. He won a National Award for his debut, became an overnight sensation with his first film as a leading man (Bobby, 1973), and carved a niche for himself with a string of romantic musical blockbusters in an era known for its angst-ridden films. He was the youth icon that is still the toast of the satellite TV circuit. The songs he lip-synced are the bread and butter of all radio stations even today. Then there was the second coming after a brief hiatus in the 1990s - as one of the finest actors in mainstream Hindi cinema with powerhouse performances in films like Do Dooni Chaar, D-Day, Agneepath and others." [From the advertisement for his autobiography, *Khullam Khulla*, on the portal of Amazon.in]



4 September 1952–30 April 2020

### Usha Ganguly

Usha Ganguly was an Indian theatre director-actor and activist. She is known for her work in Hindi theatre in Kolkata. She founded Rangakarmi theatre group in 1976. Apart from thespian Shyamanand Jalan of Padatik (established 1972), she was the only other theatre director to practice Hindi theatre in Kolkata.



Born: 1945, Jodhpur, Rajasthan  
Died: 23 April 2020, Kolkata

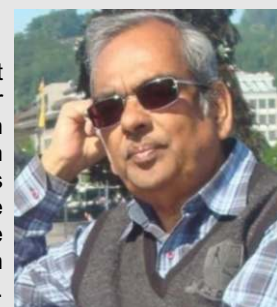
Born in Jodhpur, Rajasthan, in a family from village Nerva in Uttar Pradesh, Usha Ganguly learnt Bharatanatyam dance and later moved to Kolkata, where she studied at Shri Shikshayatan College, Kolkata and did her master's degree in Hindi literature.

She started her career as a teacher at Bhowanipur Education Society College, Calcutta in 1970. In the same year, she started acting with Sangit Kala Mandir. She continued teaching as a Hindi Lecturer at Bhowanipur Education Society College, till her retirement in 2008 and practised theatre alongside. She formed a theatre group, Rangakarmi, in January 1976.

In 2005, Rangakarmi was the only Indian theatre group to perform at the Theatre der Welt Festival in Stuttgart, Germany. It staged the play Rudali at "Punj Pani festival" at Lahore in 2006.

### Prof. Debabrata Ganguly

Prof Debabrata Ganguly, Dept of English, Bhagalpur University, died on 29th March 2020 at 22:20 in the evening in Bangalore. Bhagalpur was his karmabhumi and he had made it his "home". Last 12 years he spent in Asansol and often with his son in Bangalore. Bhagalpur remained with him every day. He remembered fondly every connect he had with the Bengali culture in the city. He missed his colleagues, Friends, students, neighbours and all those who made his life in the city. All his contemporaries remember him as a learned teacher who was loved by his pupils.



## Continued from page-1 A chronicle and ...

Association with the ideal of "Sanghati o Samanway" proposed by Bibhutibhusan Mukhopadhyay and designed by Dr. Gurucharan Samanta was adopted. Whereas, in the Bhagalpur conference held on 2nd March 1969, it was unanimously decided that Bengalees of Bihar will demand recognition as linguistic minority community. In this phase, *Moder garab moder asha* was accepted as Anthem of the Association and a flag designed by Nripendranath Chakrabarty of Jamalpur was accepted as flag of the Association.

Main characteristics of the third phase were adoption of the ideal *Sanghati o samanway* (Solidarity and coordination) and taking the new identity and related rights of a linguistic minority as enshrined in the constitution, as basis for its programme. Since independence, Bengalees of Bihar were recognized as minority only on paper. Recognition by the government for practical purposes began from the year 1970. Only by the efforts of the Association, government directive could be issued extending minority status to related schools and colleges. On the demand of the Association, government formed state level religious and linguistic minorities commission in the year 1970 and in 1971, the secretary of the Association, Dipendra Nath Sarkar was made a member of that commission.

[Continued]

[Bihar Bangali Samiti itibritta, 1938-1997 er itihaser samiksha, Bhakat Prasad Majumdar o Gurucharan Samanta] Translated by Bidyut Pal



Bihar Bangalee Samiti, Chhapra branch & Chhapra Kali Bari distributing relief

## Continued from page-1 What the statement ...

government and RBI would be in a position to recapitalize the banks to the extent it might lose in recoveries? They are bound to incur huge losses. Will RBI guarantee that it will make good the losses? A few months back the Finance Ministry had subsidized our corporate sector by Rs 1.45 lakh crore. The government did not force the willful defaulters, who are all very big borrowers, to pay back the loans to the tune of Rs 3 lakhs crore.

An unprecedented lockdown has been announced for a long month without giving any time to the migrant workers stranded in big cities, far away from their families at villages. No proper and timely arrangements were made for their food, provision of cash for them and transports to let them go back home.

In the given situation the RBI was expected to take out of the box policies that could provide money to the suffering millions and millions of urban and rural toiling people who have lost their jobs due to lockdown and presently facing starvation. When the government is not at all willing to shell out adequate money to feed and save the lives of our toiling humanity through fiscal generosity (it has released so far a miserly amount of Rs 1 lakh and 70 thousand crores) the RBI could have provided money to the various financial institutions including SCBs Regional Rural Banks, NABARD etc. for delivering cash to the poor at very low interest rate or zero interest rate through Jan Dhan accounts or special windows.

It does not require any special knowledge of economics or finance to state that when a huge number of our toiling people are suffering from non-availability of money to buy food, the central banks should print money and distribute it among the people. Call it helicopter money or anything it wishes. Whether he be Milton Friedman, the mentor of neo-liberalism or Ben Bernanke, ex-Governor of the US Fed, a specialist on 1929 global crisis, at least they agree on this point that during such a horrifying situation to save human life the central bank of the country should go the last mile to break the bottleneck in providing cash to the starving people.

[Statement of RBI Governor: [https://m.rbi.org.in/Scripts/bs\\_viewcontent.aspx?id=3853](https://m.rbi.org.in/Scripts/bs_viewcontent.aspx?id=3853)]

Remenbering on his 135th Birthday: Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyay

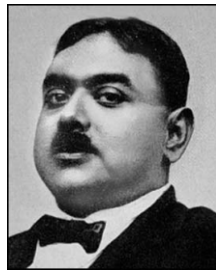
## The origin and development of the Bengali script

[Rakhaldas Bandyopadhyay, also known as R. D. Banerji was an eminent Indian Archaeologist & Museum expert. He is mostly known as the discoverer of Mohenjo-daro, the principal site of the Harappa culture. He did pioneer research work in the origin of Bengali script and made study of Proto-Bengali script. He wrote the classic historical works on medieval Indian coins, and the standard works on the iconography of Indian art, in particular Gupta sculpture and architecture. We reproduce here the Introduction of his Origin of the Bengali Script published by the University of Calcutta in 1919.]

### A. The arrangement

In an essay on the origin and development of the Bengali script, one must necessarily follow the steps of the late Hofrath Dr. Georg Bühler, the father of the science of Indian Palaeography. Though Burnell's work on the subject was published long ago, the accuracy of the narrative and the scientific arrangement of Bühler's work have made his claim to the title indisputable. His *Indische Palaeographie* was published in 1896, as a part of the *Grundriss der indoarischen Philologie und Allertumskunde*, organised by that indefatigable publisher, Dr. Karl J. Trübner of Strassburg. The work, as a matter of course, was short and concise, and dealt with the development of Indian alphabets up to the 12th century A. D. The development of the alphabets, from B. C. 350 to 600 A. D., is clearly described in this work. But after that period, lack of materials obliged the learned author to consider the development of the Northern alphabet as a whole, and not according to its varieties. The discoveries made during the last sixteen years have rendered it possible to take up that work now. The arrangement followed in these pages is mainly that of Dr. Bühler's from the dawn of the historical period to the 6th century A. D., but is different with regard to the subsequent periods. In latter periods, more attention has been paid to specimens from North-Eastern India, and the latest discoveries added to the list of epigraphs, have been analysed. Thus, the inscriptions on the railing-pillars at Bodh-Gaya have been placed in their proper position in the chronological order according to the new light thrown on them. In the Gupta period, the addition of a new variety of the alphabet is now possible, owing to the discoveries of the remains of ancient Indian civilisation in the deserts of Central Asia. Fresh discoveries have also made it possible to trace the gradual displacement of the Eastern variety of the Northern alphabet by the Western one, in the 5th and 6th centuries A. D., and to determine the exact epoch of the final displacement. Finally, new materials have facilitated the determination of the type specimens of each variety, in each particular century, with a nearer approach to accuracy.

From the 7th century onward, it has been found impossible to follow the arrangement in Dr. Bühler's work, as the development of the Eastern variety from 600-1100 A. D. has not been clearly shown there. In the following pages, the alphabets of the North-Eastern inscriptions of the 6th and 7th centuries A.D. have been separately analysed. In the 8th century, we find three different varieties of the alphabet in Northern India, or more strictly four, if we count the alphabet of Afghanistan, which is as yet but little known. The Western and Afghanistan varieties were developed from the old



12 April 1885 – 23 May 1930

Western variety, while the Central and Eastern varieties were evolved out of the old Eastern. The Eastern variety lost ground and its Western boundary gradually receded eastwards. The development, of the Eastern alphabet only, has been followed in these pages. It has become possible to show, that proto-Bengali forms were evolved in the North-East, long before the invasion of Northern India, by the Nāgarī alphabet of the South-West, and that Nāgarī has had very little influence upon the development of the Bengali script. The chronology of the Pāla dynasty of Bengal, and specially their relations with the Gurjjara-Pratīhāras have been settled from synchronisms, and a detailed discussion of the subject will be found in my monograph on the Palas of Bengal.

It is evident that N Nārāyanapāla preceded Mahendrapāla and Magadha, specially the Western portion of it was included for some time in the Empire of the Gurjjara-Pratīhāras. The establishment of this sequence is of the utmost importance, as it enables us to treat the analysis of Pāla records, which are dated in the majority of cases in regnal years, with more confidence.

With the introduction of the Nāgarī script in the 10th century, the Western limit of the use of the Eastern alphabet was still further reduced. In the 11th century, we find that, there is very little similarity between the alphabet used in Benāres and that used in Gayā. The progress of the changes has been very rapid, and we find the complete proto-Bengali alphabet in the 11th century A.D. In the 12th century, we find further changes, which make the formation of the modern Bengali alphabet almost complete. The final development of certain letters, such as *i*, *ca* and *na*, are not noticeable until after the Muhammadan conquest. The dearth of records of the 13th and 14th centuries A.D., both manuscript and epigraphic, makes it impossible to follow the development of these letters in this period. The shock of the Muhammadan conquest paralysed Eastern India, from which it never recovered entirely. The blow stunned literature, prevented its growth during the first two centuries after the conquest, and a partial revival was made only in the 15th century. The revival received a fresh impetus from the Neo-Vaisnavism of Caitanya and his followers. With the paralysis of literature, the development of the alphabet also stopped. Very few changes have, indeed, been made in the Eastern alphabet from the 12th century A.D. down to the nineteenth. Such changes, as are noticeable, were made during the 15th and 16th centuries, and have been illustrated by the alphabet used in two Mss. written in Bengali: -

(1) Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, copied in Vikrama Samvat 1492 (1435 A.D.), discovered by Mahāmahopādhyāya

Haraprasāda Sastrī, C. I. E., in Nepal and purchased by him for the Asiatic Society of Bengal. (No. G. 8067.) The complete colophon of this ms. has already been published by me in my monograph on Saptagrama.

(2) Caṅḍidāsa's *Kṛṣṇa-Kīrtana*, a new work discovered by Pandit Vasantarajana Rāya, Vidvadvallabha, the Keeper of the ms. collection of the Vangiya-Sahitya- Parisad. Though the material is paper, the script makes it impossible to assign the ms. to any date later than the 14th century A.D.

The completely developed alphabet has not changed at all during the 17th and 18th centuries A.D. In the 19th century, the vernacular and classical literature received a fresh impetus, as the result of the contact with the West, but the alphabet ceased to change. Its forms were stereotyped by the introduction of the printing press, and it is not likely that in future it will change its forms in each century.

### B. The limits of the use of the Eastern Variety

From the beginning of the Empire of the Mauryas till the downfall of the Imperial Guptas, Allahabad and its immediate neighbourhood formed the western limit of the use of the Gupta alphabet. The western limit is the most important one, as this was the only limit which changed its position. Upon the formation of a Western variety in the North-Eastern alphabet, this limit gradually receded eastwards. In the 3th century, Benares formed the eastern boundary of the Western variety, but in the beginning of the 11th century, we find that the limit has receded further East. In the 12th century, both varieties were being used in Magadha, as is shown by the Govindapur Stone Inscription of the Saka year 1059, and the Bodh-Gaya Inscription of Jayacandra. After the Muhammadan conquest, the Western variety gradually spread itself over the whole of South Bihār or Magadha, and the use of the Eastern variety was confined to the western limits of Bengal proper. The use of the Eastern variety, however, lasted in Magadha till the 14th century, when we find it in votive inscriptions, on flag-stones in the court-yard of the Great Temple at Bodh-Gaya, and in a new inscription discovered by Mr. Lal Bihari Lal Singh, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Bihar. The Gaya - *Prapitamahesvara* temple inscription of V. S. 1257 and the Umga Hill inscription of Bhairavendra (V. S. 1496 = 1439 A.D.) show that Nāgarī had entirely displaced the Eastern variety in Magadha.

In the north the snowy mountains formed the northern limit. But in the north-east the Bengali alphabet was adopted in Assam, where not only in the Kamauli grant of Vaidyadeva, but also in other inscriptions, Bengali characters have been exclusively used. In the Assam plates of Vallabhadeva of the Saka year 1107 = 1185 A.D. we find archaisms, which lurked in the backwoods of civilisation. In the east the Bengali script was also being used in Sylhet, where similar archaisms are to be met with in the Sylhet grants of Kesavadeva and Isanadeva. In the south the Bengali script was used throughout Orissa. We find the proto-Bengali script in the Ananta Vasudeva temple inscription of Bhatta Bhavadeva at Bhuvane svara, and the modern Bengali alphabet in the grants of the Ganga Kings Nrsimhadeva II and Nrsiihadeva IV. The modern cursive Odiya script was developed out of the Bengali after the 14th century A. D. like the modern Assamese.

## Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay: A Brief Biography

- Prof. B. B. Mandal

Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya is one of the few literary personalities of India who has become immortal by composing the poem (song) "Bande Mataram". Every Indian respect it as the National Song but many people, particularly the younger generation, do not know about its author. The present write-up gives a brief idea about him.

Bankim Chandra was born on 27th June, 1838 (as per Bengali calendar, on 12th Asharh, 1245) in Kanthalpara village of Naihati in the district of North 24-parganas of West Bengal. He was the third of four sons of Yadav Chandra Chattopadhyay and Durga Devi. His two elder brothers were Shyama Charan and Sanjeeb Chandra who was a famous literary person. The youngest one was Purna Chandra. His father Yadav Chandra was a government official and rose to the rank of Deputy Collector and posted at Medinipur (now West Medinipur). According to religious practice his first lesson started at home in front of the Goddess Saraswati at the age of five. At the age of six, he along with elder brother Sanjeev Chandra had schooling from Medinipur Government Zilla School (now Medinipur Collegiate School) where he wrote his first poem. On 23rd October, 1849 he was admitted in Hooghly Mohsin College (founded by Philanthropist Muhammad Mohsin), later at Presidency college, Kolkata, obtaining a degree in Arts in 1958. He later attended the newly constituted University of Calcutta and became one of its two first graduates. He also obtained a law degree in 1869. In accordance with the practice during that time, he was married at the age of eleven in 1849 with a five year girl of Narayanpur village of his district. He had a son with his first wife who died in 1859. In June, 1860, he married Rajlakshmi Devi of famous Choudhury family of Hali Shahar of North 24 Parganas. They had three daughters. He seemed to be very happy with his second wife.

Bankim Chandra was appointed a deputy Collector of Jassor in 1859 and went on to become the Deputy Magistrate. During his service career of 30 years and one month he was transferred 28 times, his last posting being at Alipore. His service years had brought him into conflicting relations with the British administration. For being an Indian he was denied

due promotion as was given to even less eligible British officer. On account of his political leaning and love for freedom he might have also suffered from haughtiness and unfairness of the ruling British. For these reasons and also due to deteriorating health condition he took voluntary retirement at the age of fifty on 14th September, 1891. However, he was made a companion in the order of Empire in 1894 (that is, an excellent officer of the British Empire). Bankim Chandra was a diabetic for which he was not in good health. On 8th April, 1894 he passed away leaving behind his invaluable creations.

Bankim Chandra was a key figure in literary renaissance of Bengal. Being influenced by the style of writing of Ishwar Chandra Gupta (born at Kanchrapara, 24-parganas, on 6th March, 1812; died on 23rd January, 1859), he began his literary career as a writer of verse and provided inspiration for authors across India. He wrote thirteen novels and many serious, seriocomic, satirical, scientific and critical treatises in Bengali. His works were widely translated into other Indian languages as well as in English. His first novel in Bengali was submitted for a declared prize which he did not win and the novel was never published. His earliest publications were in weekly newspaper "Sangbad Prabhakar" jointly launched by Ishwar Chandra Gupta and Jogendra Mohan Tagore. He started a monthly literary magazine "Bangadarshan" in April, 1872, but it went out of circulation after four years and his elder brother Sanjeev Chandra revived it later.

The thirteen novels of Bankim Chandra are Durgeshnandini, Kapalkundala, Mrinalini, Vishbriksha, Indira, Yugalanguriya, Chandrashekhar, Radharani, Rajani, Krishna kanter Will, Rajsingha, Anandamath and Debi Choudharani. These novels were published during the years 1865 and 1884. Among his several other writings, Shrimatbhagvat Gita and Rajmohan's wife were published in 1902 and 1935 respectively after his death. Rajmohan's will is regarded as the first Indian fiction written in English. Some of his novels, especially Anandmath, reanimated political activism for freedom of India.

This paper is incomplete if a few words are not written about his timeless creation "Bande Mataram". Bankim Chandra wrote this poem in the year 1876 at Chuchura, West Bengal, which he included in his novel Anandamath published in 1882. The poem was first sung by Rabindranath Tagore in 1896 session of Indian National Congress at Calcutta. Dakhina Charan Sen sang it five years later in 1901 at another Congress session at Calcutta. Poet Sarala Devi Choudurani sang it in Congress Session at Banaras in 1905. Tune of the first two verses of the song was given by Rabindranath Tagore and the rest of the verses by Sarala Devi Chaudurani. Now the poem has been set to a large number of tunes.

Vande Mataram became a popular marching song for political activism and Indian Freedom Movement in 1905. Its popularity provoked the British Government to ban the song and the novel Anandmath containing the song, and the recital of the song was made a crime. But the political workers and general public defied the ban time and again and many went to prison repeatedly for singing it. When Matangini Hazra was shot dead by the police at Tamluk on 29th September, 1942, her last word was "Vande Mataram". However, the ban was overturned after independence of India.

A committee consisting of Rabindranath Tagore, Subhas Chandra Bose, Maulana Azad, Acharya Deva and Jawaharlal Nehru recommended for adoption of parts of Vande Mataram as the national son in 1937. The entire song was not adopted for respecting the sentiments of non-Hindus in the country.

The Constituent Assembly of India adopted Vande Mataram as the national song on 24th January, 1950. Dr. Rajendra Prasad, as President of Constituent Assembly, stated that Vande Mataram had played a historic role in India's freedom struggle and should be honoured equally with the National Anthem. However, the Constitution of India does not have any mention of "National Song".

Bankim Chandra is alive in Indians' hearts through vande Mataram and also through its memorable creations like Kapalkundala, Devi Choudurani etc., which are telecast as movies and T.V. serials.

## On Birth Centenary of Bangabandhu

## Mujib's revolution

- Yatindra Bhatnagar

SHEIKH Mujibur Rehman is, in a way, a born revolutionary. With rebellion writ all over the place he was born in, was brought up, spent his student days and early life, nothing else could be expected from him. What Mujib gave to the world and his people was no doubt a revolution but it was, till a considerable time, a different type of revolution. It was revolution that is mostly understood by India and the Indians. The revolution given to India and the world by great

teachers and leaders of ancient India as well as modern India. It was the revolution of Buddha, of Gandhi and now of Sheikh Mujib bred in that tradition.

Mujib is the product of non-cooperation movement and in later years made that his main weapon. He was also the product of stark-naked communalism, and was a hard campaigner himself, but in his later days underwent a tremendous change to become a symbol of secularism, of Hindu-Muslim unity. From a fanatic Muslim to the hope for the people of other communities – other than fanatic Muslims – he became the apostle of tolerance and anti-communalism. The architect of Bangladesh is a Muslim all right but he is far from being a religious bigot. His religion is confined to the four corners of his house and is limited to his own beliefs and religious practice for him and his own family.

Mujib's revolution, after Partition, was first confined to language – Bengali – for as all democrats should do, he was for the language of the masses, the majority of the people. For the love of his language he displayed the guts to stand up to the architect of Pakistan, none other than Qaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. A fearless crusader, Mujib did not hesitate to defy the Father of Pakistan at a time when his popularity was at its peak and none in Pakistan could dare oppose Jinnah. That was his first major revolt against the establishment in Pakistan and was the beginning of many others.

Sheikh Mujib is not a revolutionary of the modern specie who has made it his profession. They advocate revolution for revolution's sake. They talk more about the revolution but practice less. But Mujib is different and there is hardly any dividing line between what he preaches and practices. When he accepted non-violence as his creed, he stuck to it, even when it meant hardships and privation. What else can a down-trodden people do in the face of stiff-necked military maniacs? In any case this non-violent method of his was not born because he could not take to violent methods. Bengal has been famous for its violent approach. The revolutionary movement of India was led by firebrand Bengalis and bomb-wielding extremists. Even now it is so in West Bengal. In East Bengal, in Bangladesh, the method was changed only because circumstances changed. And even then Mujib's orders were not to touch innocent people of any caste or faith or province. His men are only fighting the ruthless army, the army of occupation and in this struggle armed conflict was inevitable and the only answer to the genocide. Militarists do not understand any other language. They are accustomed to get tit for tat and that works. Mujib would have liked to see non-violence and non-cooperation triumph but the ruling Junta in Pakistan has never enjoyed a reputation for grace, civility and dignified behaviour. So be it and they are getting it in the same coin. But once the enemy is driven out from Bangladesh, I am sure, like Gandhi, and his teachings, Mujib and his men will forgive the blood-thirsty troops of Pakistan who waged a ruthless war on unarmed and innocent people of Bangladesh. But that can wait a little!

Mujib's revolution has other and not less significant aspects also. His struggle was and is against exploitation, political, economic and religious. Mujib's credo is freedom, freedom from exploitation and freedom from domination by a minority, that too military junta. He is a democrat – basically and fully – not a basic democrat as ex-Sadar Ayub and his one-time close friend and associate Bhutto claimed. That style does not suit him. That style really does not do credit to anyone. Mujib is for democracy – universal style – and he is fighting and suffering for that. He knew that autocracy and dictatorship do not deliver the goods, are not valid in present-day world and do not end people's sufferings; on the other hand, multiply them and as a result find their own exponents in thick soup. No doubt for a time, these anti-people activities of the handful, may seem to succeed but the ultimate victory belongs to the people. Mujib is firmly rooted to this idea and so are the people of Bangladesh who are fighting against heavy odds. Sheikh Mujib himself said on this subject: 'They may have money, they may have influence, they have the capacity to use force against the

people. History, however, testifies that determined people can successfully resist and overcome such forces of oppression.'

Mujib's revolution has another very significant characteristic – it is secular. Hindus, Buddhists and Christians have plunged themselves into it and have been fighting shoulder to shoulder with other Muslim followers of the Sheikh. It cut across religious affiliations and united the whole of East Bengal and its people such as never witnessed before, not even when India was fighting the British. This non-communal unity of the People was achieved by Mujib and his revolution and till this day Pakistani mastermind in intrigue has not been able to find significant collaborators and all attempts to give the Bangladesh revolution a communal turn have hopelessly failed to give to the rulers of Pakistan what they desired and engineered. All that does go to the credit of Mujib. There was a tradition of religious tolerance in Bengal but during and after the partition things had changed, and its impact on communal minds did not die soon. It is indeed a creditable achievement for Mujib and his Awami League to free the people's minds of the utter stupidity and futility of communalism. That was one of the major gains of the struggle of Bangladesh.

The much trumpeted Two-Nation theory as advocated by Muslim League and Jinnah has been buried deep under the heaps of hundreds of thousands of corpses in East Bengal. Islam has failed to keep together the two wings of one country – howsoever artificially it was made. It was proved beyond any shadow of doubt that religion cannot be the basis of political unity. Islam cannot be the binding force in modern-day world like Christianity which has not been able to prevent world wars. As a matter of fact, religion has lost all the unifying element it is supposed to have beyond a certain limit. Mujib and his revolution has contributed a lot to have this new situation where one does not live by religion alone, does not thrive by religion and religious bonds alone. In this political set up and in this modern conception of state religious bonds are fragile. I am writing all this in spite of the fact that most of the countries of Arab and Muslim world have more or less sided with Pakistan and ignored the aspirations of other Muslim dominated people, but that too proves my point. Firstly, that unholy alliance for Pakistan is not out of deep religious affinity – for East Bengalis are also mostly followers of the same faith – it is because of fear of democracy and democratic ideals taking roots in those countries also. Secondly, they are misled and ill-informed about the whole thing. Not many of their envoys take the trouble to find out for themselves the real situation and many of them have a one-track mind. To a jaundiced eye everything will look yellow and it is very very difficult to cure this self-acquired end self-imposed disease. But, I am not that pessimistic, events of Bangladesh have adequately given the correct jolt to these so-called fraternal feelings and the fanatics among the religious-oriented states have, in due course, to see things in clearer perspective. They knowingly keep up a facade of religious fraternity and affinity for fear of a democratic storm breaking out in their territories. But that will not be long before it breaks out, for Mujib has sown the seeds of secularism and democracy.

Mujib's revolution is unique in many ways as I have said in the previous pages. It was not only non-violent in the beginning but free from any rancour and ill-will against the general public of West Pakistan to pamper whom East Pakistan was being exploited. It was also comparatively free from anger towards the other inhabitants from other far away provinces who have made East Bengal their home. Sheikh Mujib himself was far-sighted enough to sense that there were enough provocations for the Bengalis and the situation could be explosive for the non-Bengalis. He gave express orders and clear instructions on the subject. Howsoever the military machine of Pakistan tries, the right thinking and the ones who could see through the perfect Pakistani propaganda, will come to the conclusion that Mujib's was almost a fool-proof secularism and pre-March 25 events were not the result of Bengalis harassing the non-Bengalis. Pakistani martial law authorities have been trying their best to make out a case for intervention by the armed forces saying that because Bengalis had assaulted non-Bengalis the army went out to restore law and order. This was a blatant lie and a hollow pretext and to uncover it

none need supernatural powers.

That was all because of the teachings of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. And his words were the law.

Mujib had sown the seeds of another significant revolution which in due course may or may not benefit Bangladesh but is certainly going to liberate West Pakistan. This struggle of Bangladesh is not only for liberation of East Bengal from the ruthless military clique of Gen. Yahya Khan; this is, in larger context, a struggle for the liberation of all those who are suffering under the colonial regime. It is designed to raise the banner of revolt against all sorts of exploitation and denial of democracy. In the victory of this struggle lies the salvation of other parts of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the other areas still languishing under imperialist yoke.

That it will help usher in the era of democracy for the other parts of Pakistan is undeniable. There are signs of unrest, renewed upsurge in Sind, Baluchistan and NWFP. Bangladesh is showing the path to freedom, democracy and establishment of a just social and economic order. Speaking to a large gathering of Pressmen while releasing my previous book Bangladesh – Birth of A Nation Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram made it very clear. He said:

...the struggle for free Bangladesh will help in liberation of the other parts of Pakistan; it will go a long way to free them from military rule and for the establishment of democracy in West Pakistan.'

These are significant words and coming from the Defence Minister they deserve more attention than is customarily given to speeches at book release functions.

If and when that happens the credit for all that will undoubtedly go to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangabandhu as he is widely known in East Bengal. That is the meaning of the struggle in Bangladesh. This then is the true significance of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman. That is Mujib's revolution. It was started on modest note, gathered storm mid-way and now, in spite of innumerable handicaps, has assumed proportions the like of which have never been witnessed by anyone anywhere in the world.

Mujib has also given the oppressed and exploited Bengalis a new sense of pride, nationalism and has awakened the East Bengalis to a pitch where it is impossible to succumb to pressures and pulls. This is indeed the Bengali Nationalism the wave of which has swept the entire land of Bangladesh and has swept the opponents off their feet. That's why it has been very very difficult for Yahya Khan and his henchmen – and henchwomen if I may use the term for, there are a few – to get hold of a significant number of quislings and set up a puppet government. That was all due to the Bangabandhu whose word had become law in East Bengal and whose writ ran large in the entire country, the Eastern country. It was that same spirit that inspired the Chief Justice of Dacca High Court to refuse to administer the oath of office to the military governor Tikka Khan. History does not have many examples of such boldness on the part of those who are generally regarded as un-revolutionaries; who are not expected to go out of their way and break the rigid rules, conventions and practices prevalent at the time. Judges, they say, do not realise the way wind blows and are in the habit of giving judgments against the trend of the present times. But there are people who inspire the others, even judiciary, to rise to greater heights and take revolutionary steps and there are people who obey the leader of the masses as their own undisputed leader. That was the unique revolution of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman and that was the impact of it on the entire people of Bangladesh. Such a revolution has to succeed for it is Mujib's revolution – unique in conception, exemplary in character and inspiring in content.

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