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Mainly Devoted to Religious, Social, Moral and Educational Topics

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agreement with it.

## **INVOCATION**

Let us wait for a little while, and those whose eyes are turned to God and eternity,  
the longest life is but a little while,- let us wait then in faith hope and charity;  
these shall abide but the greatest of these is charity.

**- Max Müller**

\* \* \* \* \*

Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one's  
weakness. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without  
a heart.

**- Mahatma Gandhi**

\* \* \* \* \*

The smallest act of kindness is worth more than the greatest intention.

**- Khalil Gibran**

## Editorial

Nature never fails to surprise us and catch us unprepared to handle the sudden retribution. However much the human society tries to rewrite its own destiny by the marvels of scientific and technological advancement, nature teaches us a humble lesson. Since last month, the entire country is reeling under the fury of nature. The city of Calcutta remained inundated for days and there has been great loss to property and habitat. No one has been spared of this devastation, which has proved to be a leveler of the rich and the poor.

Recently, the scientists are wondering if the disconnect of the present human race from the natural surroundings has made mankind immune to the genetic modifications by nature that make us adapt to the changing environments! Whether that is an advantage we have given ourselves or not, is a matter of debate. But our total isolation from nature has made us completely incompetent to live in harmony with the world around us. This is indeed a proven fact. No creature on earth can bring about such devastation to ones own living space, paving the way for its future generations into possible extinction.

Awareness about one's own environment and ability to gauge its impacts on everyday existence are perhaps inbuilt within the instinct of all living creature. What sets the human beings apart is their ability to turn this awareness into knowledge, that can be used as an instrument to improve upon the living condition. Hence, scientific knowledge and technological aspirations that spring there-of, have to be tempered by wisdom. Sagacity comes with experience and therefore it is essential to educate future generations by passing on the experiences of the forefathers laced with wisdom and good sense. When we stand on the brink of environmental disaster, the need to make our system of education meaningful is crucial. Technical and Scientific knowhow without any philosophical foundation makes any education system ineffective and pave the way to our self-annihilation.

Great thinkers have impressed this idea on the human society through time immemorial. One should learn to live with equanimity and in harmony with our surroundings. That should be imbued in the minds of the younger generations so that the universe is conserved. Preserving the environment is also a way of serving our Maker.

In this issue we publish the third part of the article by Amitava Khastgir on Tagore and Western Philosophy. We publish an article by Sanjoy Chanda on Education Reform and Raja Rammohun Roy. Prithwijit Das pays tribute to Brojo Shundar Mitro, who played a significant role in propagating the ideals of the Brahmo Samaj in the erstwhile East Bengal by founding the Dhaka (Dacca) Brahmo Samaj.

## Tagore and Western Philosophy

### Part - 3

Amitava Khastgir

In the final phase of his life (August 1941) Tagore observed about his concept of the 'Jeevan Devata'.

‘আমার একটি যুগ্মসত্তা আমি অনুভব করেছিলুম যেন যুগ্ম নক্ষত্রের মতো ... তারই সংকল্প পূর্ণ হচ্ছে আমার মধ্যে দিয়ে ... এ যেন অর্ধনারীশ্বরের মতো ভাবখানা ... বাইরে যার প্রকাশ বাস্তবে সে বহু, অন্তরে যার প্রকাশ সে এক। স্ব’র্গ হইতে বিদায়’ এখানে সুর নেমেছে উর্ধ্বলোক থেকে মর্তের পথে ... শেষ পর্যন্ত আমি এই বাণীর পন্থাতেই আমার পদ্য ও গদ্যরচনাকে চালনা করেছি –

জগতের মাঝে কত বিচিত্র তুমি হে  
তুমি বিচিত্ররূপিনি।’

‘I had felt a dual Being as through like twinstars ... It is that Being’s intention which is getting fulfilled through me in the manner of Ardhanarishwar. In its external manifestation it is plural, in its internal manifestation, it is solitary. In “Farewell from Heaven” the melody descends from the transcendent realm towards the mundane. In the long run, this is the path along which I have driven my poetry and prose’. [Translation by the author].

We must, however, remember that the realization and insight of a pure philosopher and a pure poet would not be

identical in every respect. Hence, the ‘bipolar God’ of Whitehead and ‘Jeevan devata’ of Tagore are not mirror-images of each other. The same identity-in-difference is also noticeable in case of another contemporary philosopher, Henri Bergson (1859-1941) who, to a certain extent, influenced Whitehead and who was not unknown to Tagore. Bergson’s philosophical doctrine is known as ‘Creative Evolution’. The most important tenet of it is ‘Elan Vital’ or ‘Life-force’: ‘Life is a sort of cosmic movement of which we are expressions rather than parts. As such we are all motivated by this elan-vital. It, rather than mind or matter, is the fundamental reality, and we become aware of it in ourselves through immediate experience, and in others through sympathy or intuition’. Let us juxtapose the all-too familiar lines from Tagore’s ‘Balaka’ beside this quotation from Bergson:

পুলকিত নিশ্চলের অন্তরে অন্তরে  
বেগের আবেগ।

পর্বত চাহিল হতে বইশাখের নিরুদ্দেশ মেঘ  
তরুশ্রেণী চাহে, পাখা মেলি

মাটির বন্ধন ফেলি

অই শব্দরেখা ধ’রে চকিতে হইতে দিশাহারা

আকাশের খুঁজিতে কেনারা ঃ-

বাজিল ব্যাকুল বাণী নিখিলের প্রাণেহেথা নয়,  
হেথা নয়, অন্য কোথা, অন্য কোনোখানে।

[No suitable translation can be given]

Here are two more parallel quotes: ‘But of the road which was going to be travelled, the human mind could have nothing to say; for the road has been created ‘paripassu’ with the act of travelling over it, being nothing but the direction of this act itself.’ (Creative Evolution).

‘চলরে সোজা ফেলরে বোঝা

রেখে দে তোর রাস্তা খোঁজা

চলার বেগে পায়ের তলায় রাস্তা জেগেছে’  
(ফাল্গুনী)

March straight ahead, cast off your burden, cease searching for a way; the momentum of your travel generates the path beneath your feet’ (Phalguni)

The latter excerpt seems almost like a verse-transcription of the former.

It is hard to believe that these lines were penned without any awareness of the other visionary experience as set down in ‘Creative Evolution’.

John Dewey (1859 – 1952) was one of the stalwarts of Pragmatism as well as Naturalism. One of his major works ‘Experience and Nature’ (1929) has been preserved in the Tagore archive. Like Tagore, Dewey also believed in the harmonization of the mental faculties of man with natural environment: ‘The world of nature as a whole constitutes the sum total of reality. We must do without [supernatural entities] and find viable substitutes for them such as human ideals

and human fulfillment here and now (Reasoned religion) R. B. Edward.

I take the liberty of quoting Tagore in Bengali to convey the nuances of this message: ‘আমার এই রূপের জগতে অরূপের পরিচয়। তার বাইরে আমার যাবার পথ নেই, যেহেতু এখানে আমার আনন্দই আমাকে আবদ্ধ করে রাখে। আমি আছি সীমার অসীমতা নিয়ে ... আমি এই ইহলোকবাসী – এখানে আমার সহজ সঞ্চারন।’ (Letter to Dilip Kumar Roy, September 1935)

He further observes: ‘আমি এও জানি এর বাইরে আধ্যাত্মলোক আছে; যাঁরা জীবনমুক্ত সেখানে তাঁদের বিহার ... আমি তাঁদের সঙ্গে চলতে পারব না কেন না আমি যেটুকু মুক্তির রস পাই তা এই অন্তহীন রূপের রঙ্গভূমিতে।’ (Letter to Dilip Kumar Roy, September 1935)

Exigencies of space prevents one from exploring Tagore’s affinity, if any, with Western philosophers of antiquity. His ‘Ethical idealism’, such as it is, could have something to do with Kant (of whom he was aware) as also his discovery of a religious basis for morality and his drawing a clear distinction between good and evil. Kant, it may be recalled, had sought to establish an ethical basis for religion. Tagore – the poet – in his last phase (1931-41) wrote certain lines verging on existentialist angst (anxiety) and had glimpses of the dark abyss visualized by two foremost Existentialists Martin Heidegger and Jean Paul Sartre. There is no trace of this anxiety and dread in Tagore – the philosopher, either in the

‘Religion of Man’ or in ‘The Religion of the Artist’ (written in 1937). There is a great deal of anxiety and pessimism in his death-bed testament, ‘The Crisis of Civilisation’ which however is not a philosophical treatise.

We conclude with the testimonies of two savants who were ardent admirers of Tagore the philosopher as well as Tagore the man, and were personally acquainted with him. This is how W. H. Urquhart sums up Tagore’s contribution and status as a philosopher: ‘The philosophy of Sir Rabindranath stands between the old world and the new in Indian through development. He retains what is best in Indian pantheistic tradition – its abhorrence of materialism, its intense spirituality and its conception of nearness of the divine to the human. He points out relentlessly the defects of abstract Pantheism, and rightly exhibits the religious attractiveness of the concrete world in which we live. He draws a clear distinction between good and evil, and finds truly religious basis for morality. He preserves for time and for eternity, the

value of the individual and finds an explanation of human freedom in the conception of the self-limitation of God’ (Pantheism and the Value of Life). These observations, be it remembered, were made in 1917 or thereabouts, and hence precede the final and the most fruitful stage of Tagore’s philosophical development emerging in the ‘Religion of Man’. The ‘Sir Rabindranath’ referred to here is the author of ‘Gitanjali’ and ‘Sadhana’.

Romain Rolland, writing thirteen years later, makes a passing reference to Tagore (along with Gandhi and Aurobindo) in ‘The Life of Vivekananda’ – which however is as rich a tribute as any: ‘As for Tagore, whose Goethe-like genius stands at the junction of all the rivers of India, it is permissible to presume that in him are united and harmonized the two currents of the Brahma Samaj (transmitted to him by his father, the Maharshi) and of the new Vedantism of Ramakrishna and Vivekananda. Rich in both, free in both, he has serenely wedded the West and the East in his own spirit.’

## Education Reform and Raja Rammohun Roy

### Part - 1

Sanjoy Chanda

We are justifiably proud of the scholars of ancient India, such as Aryabhatta, Charak and Bhaskacharya who had made significant contributions to enrich the knowledge of science and mathematics. But we should not forget that for centuries thereafter, there was no endeavour and no development in scientific studies in India. Nobel laureate Dr. Abdus Salam said: “after Bhaskaracharya no book was written on mathematics for a thousand years”. In the middle ages, when in Europe intellectuals like Galileo, Kepler, Newton and others were discovering new truths about Nature and bringing about revolution in the world of knowledge, India remained indifferent to the pursuit of scientific knowledge. Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray says: “The Vedantic Philosophy – which teaches the unreality of the material world, is to a large extent responsible for bringing the study of physical science into disrepute”. The reason behind the progress made by the European countries in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, which enabled them to spread their influence all over the world, was the progress they had made in the fields of science and technology, and that was possible because they had adopted a science-based education system.

Raja Rammohun Roy was the first Indian

to realise that without a radical reform of the education system prevailing in the country then, it would not be possible to awaken the nation from its self-imposed slumber. The entire education system needed to be overhauled. He was convinced that if India were to occupy its place in the comity of nations, that would be possible through acquisition of knowledge similar to that of the European nations following Western model of science based education system.

During his stay in Rangpur Rammohun became proficient in the English language. With the help of Mr. John Digby he used to read books and magazines in English language covering diverse subjects such as literature, European philosophy, Sociology, British laws, articles on scientific subjects etc. He realized how backward India was compared to the modern advanced nations. He was convinced that for India to progress, education of science and mathematics was imperative.

Rammohun himself was eager to learn science and mathematics. As a young boy in Patna, he had studied Euclid's book on Geometry in the Arabic language. Later on, he had read Isaac Newton's “Principia” in its original Latin language, the book which contains mathematical

explanation of ‘Newton’s Laws of Motion’, ‘Gravitation’, and ‘Laws of Planetary Motion’. In Calcutta he engaged a German teacher named Makay to teach him mathematics. Later on, he had written text books in Bengali on geography and geometry. Along with Sri Brajamohan Majumdar he published Bengali translation of Ferguson’s “Introduction to Astronomy”. With the intension of popularizing science, he had published in his Bengali news magazine “Sambad Kaumudi” several articles on scientific subjects such as Echo, Magnets, Crocodiles, Balloons and so on.

Having discussed the background, let us now turn our attention to Rammohun’s involvement in the education system. Rammohun retired from government service and settled down in Calcutta in the year 1815. Soon after that, in 1816, he founded a school in Sunripara. In this school teaching was done in both English and Bengali. It was a free school and its expenses were borne by Rammohun himself.

Among the early advocates of Western education in India, an important name is that of David Hare. In this respect he and Rammohun were associates. David Hare was born in Scotland. In the year 1800, when he was 25 years old, he came to Calcutta and started his business as a watchmaker. While his business prospered, he became concerned with the deplorable condition of the local

population. He decided to stay on in India and devote himself to the cause of its uplift. He had among his clients many influential men and he used to discuss his concerns with them. Rammohun was one of them. Their friendship grew into intimacy.

Soon after settling down in Calcutta, Rammohun had established, along with some like-minded friends and associates, an association which he named “Atmiya Sabha”. Here discussions took place on religious subjects as well as social problems and their solutions. Early in 1816, David Hare attended a session of Atmiya Sabha. He spoke on the need of educational reform and the importance of Western science-based education. He then proposed the establishment of an English medium school. Rammohun of course, was in agreement with him. Other members of Atmiya Sabha also supported the proposal with enthusiasm. Following this meeting David Hare drafted a formal proposal. This he did in consultation with Rammohun whose views were reflected in the draft; in fact, even his language had found place in it, writes historian Nirmalya Bagchi. A member of the Atmiya Sabha, Baidyanath Mukhopadhyay, handed over this draft proposal to Sir Edward Hyde East, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

Based on this proposal, Sir Hyde East convened a meeting at his house on the 14th of May 1816. Many of the social



luminaries of Calcutta were present at this meeting. The proposal for setting up an English medium school was accepted by the assembly and decision was taken to call it “Hindu College”. Rammohun had abstained from attending this meeting, but his name was mentioned as one of the promoters. Rammohun’s belief in one God and his public disapproval of idolatry had angered orthodox Hindus. They considered him to be a heretic. Some of those present at the meeting belonged to the orthodox faction and they strongly opposed Rammohun’s involvement in the project, threatening to withdraw their support and their donations if Rammohun was in any way connected to it. When Rammohun was informed of this, he voluntarily dissociated himself from

Hindu College. For him establishment of the school was important, and he did not want to be an impediment to that. Kishori Chand Mitra, first biographer of Rammohun, wrote: “Rammohun willingly allowed himself to be laid aside lest his active cooperation should mar the accomplishment of the project, saying ‘.....If my connection with the proposed college should injure its interests, I would resign all connections’”. Nirmalya Bagchi in his book ‘Rammohun: A Study’ writes: “In the eyes of history, both David Hare and Rammohun deserve the honour of being considered the co-founders of Hindu College”. Hindu College was established on the 20th of January, 1817.

### **Matrimonial**

Groom (preferably Brahmo) required for Kolkata based Brahmo girl, B.Tech., aged 28 years. At present working in Cognizant Technology Solutions Kolkata.  
Contact person: Ajoy Kumar Halder Ph. No. 9062680810

## **Tribute**

### **Remembering Brojo Shundar Mitro**

By  
Prithwijit Das

Here, I am going to write about my great great grandfather Shri Brojo Shundor Mitro; (8 July 1820 - 18 December 1875), who was the founder of Dhaka Brahmo Samaj.

Brojo Shundar was the son of Bhabani Prasad Mitra, who died when he was rather young. As a result, he had to start working on a small salary before the completion of his education. He joined the Commissioner's office at Dhaka as a clerk in 1840, and was subsequently promoted as Deputy Collector in 1845 and as Excise Collector in 1851.

Brojo Shundar Mitro was a social reformer and later founded the Brahmo Samaj at Comilla.

He inspired a number of young men to set up the Brahmo Samaj in Dhaka in the year 1846. The form of service adopted for its gatherings consisted of reading of a written Brahma Strotra or form of adoration addressed to Divinity and concluded with the delivery of a written or printed sermon. It was a simple beginning but Brojo Shundar Mitro instilled so much ardour of soul into it that the Samaj soon succeeded in attracting a large number of followers, mostly consisting of people occupying important government positions.

When Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar raised the storm of widow remarriage, Brojo Shundar Mitro printed copies of his books at his own cost and circulated them widely amongst the people of East Bengal. That created a group of core supporters for the movement in that part of the province. His name is bracketed with that of Durga Mohan Das as a notable contributor in the field of widow remarriage. He assisted in many ways in the spread of female education.

As a result of Brojo Shundar's transfer to Comilla for official work there was slackening in the activities of the Brahmo Samaj. On witnessing this, he bought a house in Armeniatola and lent out a part of it for the activities of the Samaj. At around the same time, as a result of his interest and the efforts of Dina Nath Sen, a school for moral and religious instruction was opened for the youth under the auspices of Dhaka Brahmo Samaj. Aghore Nath Gupta and Bijay Krishna Goswami were appointed as teachers of the school. It was around 1861-62, and later the school was renamed as Jagannath College of

Dhaka.

Debendra Nath Tagore found in Brojo Shundar his true messenger in East Bengal. Being moved by his sincerity after his own visit to East Bengal, Debendra Nath established a bond of friendship by taking the initiative to get Brojo Shundar's third daughter Uma Sundari (1854–1936), married to Prosonno Coomar Biswas (1837–1921), a trusted disciple and dewan of his estates (1866–1899). The marriage was solemnised in 1866/1867 as per the convention of Thakurbari and "Brahmo Dharma".

Prosonno Coomar later became trustee of Brahmo Samaj at Bhawanipur along with Rabindranath Tagore (1894) when Debendranath relinquished his interest.

Interested readers may subscribe for our English / Bengali Journal “The Indian Messenger” / “Tattvakaumudi” (তত্ত্ব-কৌমুদী). Subscription form is available in the website of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj at [www.thesadharanbrahmosamaj.org](http://www.thesadharanbrahmosamaj.org)

### 135th Session of the Brahmo Conference

The Brahmo Conference which was founded in 1890 jointly by Bangladesh Brahmo Samaj and Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, had grown over passage of time and from modest beginnings in East Bengal it spread over Bengal and Assam. The current body which was renamed and registered in 1959 had been conducting conferences with the principal objectives of the Brahmo Samajes in mind. The main objectives that were drawn up at the beginning were (a) spiritual sadhana (b) mission work and preaching (c) publication and distribution of literature (d) moral and religious training of Brahmo children (e) Brahmo marriage, (f) maintenance and help of Brahmo family without means (g) social governance.

We believe that the time has come to revive the original “Brahmo Conference” as a common forum through which the Brahmo Samajes may discuss their concerns and collectively work towards viable solutions. Although there is a gap of nearly two decades of the last conference organised by the Brahmo Conference, we strongly feel that this is the right moment to recommence the initiative.

#### Programme Schedule (Venue - Sadharan Brahmo Samaj)

**Friday 5th Dec 2025** 5:30PM – 06:15PM  
Upasana & Hymns

Annual General Meeting of Brahmo Conference (Members Only) 02:15PM – 02:45PM

**Saturday, 6th Dec 2025**

#### First Session

Usha Kirtan 08:30AM – 09:00AM  
Registration 09:00AM – 09:30AM  
Breakfast 09:30AM – 10:00AM  
Upasana & Hymns 10:00AM – 10:30AM  
Welcome Address: 10:30AM – 11:45AM  
President of 135th All India Brahmo Conference, Address of the Chief Guest, Chairman of the Reception Committee  
Break 11:45AM – 12:00PM  
Discourse – 1 followed by Q&A 12:00PM – 12:45PM  
Open Forum for participating Brahmo Samajes 12:45PM – 01:30PM  
Lunch 01:30PM – 02:15PM

#### Second Session

Panel Discussion 02:45PM – 03:30PM  
Discussion: Brahmoism – Glorious Past, Way Forward and Relevance, followed by book release 03:30PM – 04:00PM  
Tea Break 04:00PM – 04:15PM  
Discourse – 2 followed by Q&A 04:15PM – 05:15PM  
Vote of Thanks 05:15PM – 05:30PM  
Prayer 05:30PM – 05:45PM  
Break 05:45PM – 06:00PM  
Cultural Programme 06:15PM – 07:45PM  
Dinner 8:00PM onwards

**Sunday 7th Dec 2025** E

Excursion Assemble at 9:00AM

**Acknowledgement**  
**For the month of September 2025**

**Donation**

<b>DN/GL No.</b>	<b>Donor's Name</b>	<b>Occasion</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Amount Rs.</b>
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GL - 1161	Ake Lonnberg		Brahmo conference Fund	25,000/-

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T.F - 1220	Samita Das & Premomoy Das	Ira Das T.F.	Medical Aid (General) Fund	500/-
		Susama Roy T.F.	Social Work Relief Fund	500/-

## NOTICE

### SADHARAN BRAHMO SAMAJ

**Annual General Meeting to be held on 27/01/2026 Tuesday at 6:30 P.M.**

**Venue: Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Prayer Hall**

### AGENDA

1. President's speech under Rule 14.
2. Annual Report of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj for 2024-2025
3. Audited Accounts of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj for 2024-2025 (March, 2025)
4. Declaration of the results of the Election of the office bearers of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj for 2025-2026
5. Declaration of the results of the Election of the members of the General Committee of Sadharan Brahmo Samaj for 2025-2026 (Kolkata & Mofussil)
6. Greetings
7. Appointment of Auditor for 2025-2026
8. Miscellaneous.

Members of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj are requested to attend.

Date: 20.10.2025  
211, Bidhan Sarani,  
Kolkata - 700006

Biswajit Roy  
Secretary  
Sadharan Brahmo Samaj

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**Kindly correspond to**

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Secretary

***Member Details:***

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Present Address:	
Date of Birth: (dd/mm/yyyy)	
Email Id: *	
Mobile No.: *	
Signature with date:	

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