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## 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**

\* \* \* \* \*

Love is my golden touch  
It turns desire into service  
Earth seeks to become heaven  
Man to become God

**- Boul**

\* \* \* \* \*

There is nothing so frightful as ignorance in action.

**- Goethe**

## Editorial

The Brahmo Samaj having rejected caste hierarchy and caste distinction, had led on crusades against these the social evils. Unfortunately, this social malady plagues our society even today. There are various other prejudices present in the world based on the colour, creed and religion. Unknowingly, we all suffer from one disease or the other that prevents us from adopting the true spirit of equality. In whichever way we please, we judge our neighbours with some preconceived dogmatic view. Have we been able to truly imbibe in us that spirit of equality fostered by our forefathers? Have we been able to rid the less privileged in our society from feeling insignificant compared to the more fortunate ones? The decades long efforts of our nation, which has adopted in our constitution this sense of equality and justice, been able to lift the deprived masses out of their pathetic existence?

Recently I have been listening to a programme where the narrator points out, and quite rightly, that the very tag of 'backward' in identifying classes of people breeds a sense of inferiority from the very childhood. While identifying the untouchables, Gandhiji called them 'Harijans'. There is nothing demeaning about calling them the 'Children of God' but the moment we identify a class of people by any other tag, they start existing as a different class of people. Certain tags have become glorified identities in society while others indicate a subordinate or less privileged connotation. Dr. Ambedkar, who had faced much discrimination in his childhood for belonging to a 'disadvantaged class', provided for measures in our constitution to safeguard the interests of the deprived classes by ensuring reservation policies for the 'scheduled castes and tribes' in government jobs and institutions. But has it solved the problem? Has it empowered the entire communities to come out of their economic and social deprivation? If that was the intent, it has not been served at all. Only a few from the societies targeted, who are privileged to enjoy the benefits for several generations, improve their lot while the teeming millions still suffer the hardships of deprivation. Empowerment has not reached the downtrodden in a way it should have, nor has it taught them to live with their head held high. Still in many villages these unfortunate people are treated as sub-humans. The conscience of our nation needs to rise against such discriminations.

There is talk of caste census; an effort to take a realistic stock of the situation after 78 years of our independence and 75 years after our constitution has guaranteed equality to all its citizens! Making a policy is one thing but implementing it successfully is quite another story. The Brahmo Samaj in the past have moved in the right direction by rejecting caste and leading a mass movement against this evil practice. Since we do not believe in caste system, the very idea of a 'Caste Census' may be an anathema to the

Brahmo Samaj. However, there is no denying that even if there is no place for caste distinction in the Brahmo Samaj, caste discrimination is very much present in the Indian society and is unfortunately on the rise. So, the movement still has relevance today. Can a few of us feel proud that we do not endorse caste in our own society and feel happy about it when millions of our wretched countrymen are suffering because the country cannot be rid itself of this evil system totally?

The question is, whether the Caste Census will be able to implement measures to bring equality and justice to all. We hope that it does not reflect itself in merely tweaking the reservation quotas or will result in seriously launching programmes to empower the less privileged classes who are deprived of human dignity and basic needs of sustenance? To many in this country, freedom has not put an end to their exploitation. Can the Brahmo Samaj again rise up and take an active role in removing this injustice?

We present the third part of the book 'Brahmo Dharma and Brahmo Samaj' by Acharya Satish Chandra Chakraborty, translated in English for the benefit of the non-Bengali speaking readers.

An article by Late Arnab Nag on the foundation of Konnanagar Brahmo Samaj and its founder Shib Chandra Deb is being translated in this issue. We pay our deepest respect to the departed soul of Arnab, who has left us untimely. But within that short span he was with us, he has enriched us with this dedicated research in and his profound knowledge on the Brahmo movement.

Brahmo Samaj played a very important role in empowering women and bring their achievements at par with the men. In this issue Prithwijit Das pays tribute to three such gifted women who have left their indelible mark in different facets of life.

## Brahmo Dharma & Brahmo Samaj

### Part - 3

Achrya Satish Chandra Chakraborty

#### Chapter -1

##### *Sin and Virtue*

Doing our duties as His devoted servants according to the dictates of our conscience is called virtue. This brings us closer to our Lord and His blessings are showered on us. God is virtuous; devotion to Him and obedience to His 'will' brings us happiness. When we go against His will, undermining our conscience, we commit great wrong, which is sinful.

Each one of us is responsible for his/her sins and virtues because every individual is free to choose which path to tread according to his/her conscience as per his/her sense of right and wrong. Therefore, one suffers for the sins committed and earns blessings for the virtuous deeds.

##### *Rebirth*

Those who believe in rebirth, profess that the soul, after leaving the body, returns to earth and takes the form of bird and animal or human being to experience happiness or sorrow in the next life according to his/her actions in the previous one. They also believe that we are born again in order to suffer for the previous life. Brahmo Dharma does not subscribe to rebirth.

There is no proof of being reborn. Those who have faith in rebirth cannot recall their experiences in the previous life. If

one does not remember the actions in the previous birth which are responsible for their present state of happiness or sorrow, then how do they suffer the punishment or delight in the rewards for those actions in the earlier life? If one does not remember the wrong doing that has inflicted the present punishment, then how will one correct oneself? The objective of punishing the individual for his/her past misdeed is lost on the person as he has no way of repenting or changing his/her ways. God does not ordain punishment; He is all merciful. He does not penalize unless it is for correction. Therefore, faith in rebirth cannot be the reason for either punishment for sin or reward for virtuous deeds.

Moreover, who can fathom the depth of happiness or despair? Even a person endowed with worldly riches can be suffering greatly. On the other hand, a poor person can be full of happiness and peace of mind in spite of the penury. If it is so difficult to take stock of one's happiness or sorrow in this life, then how can one gauge the level of his/her state of existence in a previous one?

One is never able to find the reason for his/her present state of being, which is impossible to guess. Therefore, there is no point imagining the existence of a previous one.

Further, it may be argued what a person gains in experience and wisdom in his/her previous life is no longer in possession in the next birth if he/she has to return to earth again as a baby; he/she has to start afresh. Therefore, the concept of rebirth is nothing but a figment of imagination.

### ***Penitence***

No external influence can improve our soul. We can attain purity of our soul by improvement of our inner self.

If we commit a wrong deed, we need to repent and through this remorse make a promise to our Maker for not repeating this sinful action. We need to pray to God for the strength and resolve to cleanse our mind of all sinful thoughts. By this repeated repentance we will purify our mind and soul. This is our penitence.

### ***Salvation and Redemption***

Salvation means deliverance; This does not mean release from any external influence, liberation from the cycle of birth or relief from the fear of punishment or retribution; this salvation means rescue from sinful action, intention or thought. When the human spirit proceeds towards the Eternal soul after being empowered with knowledge, wisdom and virtue, then the soul attends salvation. Human spirit will always tread this path of liberation.

Our soul is incomplete without Him, who is complete, inclusive and eternal. The journey of the soul has no end. There is nothing called complete freedom. Brahmo Dharma believes in eternal improvement of our self and spirit.

### ***Afterlife***

The basis of faith in afterlife lies the belief that our soul is not destroyed when our body dies. Soul is immortal. The yearning of the spirit is eternal and the ideals for improvement of the soul is boundless. That desire is not satisfied in this life. This longing of the human soul for such outstanding standards is an indication of a life hereafter. God has planted such wonderful expectation in the human soul and will surely help in realizing it.

Mankind expects reward and punishment for their actions. But that is not satisfied in this life; often one does not get the expected or commensurate reward for the good deeds done. In this mortal existence of ours, many of our quests remain answered; our intense desire to love and be loved, or to become virtuous are seldom satisfied completely. Therefore, we believe that this short life span in this world is not enough for our spirit.

It is very difficult to predict the state of our soul after we cease in our bodily existence. But we believe that our soul resides in the Eternal soul. It is immaterial to question in what condition our soul will live in Him. He is all knowing and ever merciful. There is no use conjecturing as this will only lead us to deeper confusion.

### ***Heaven and Hell***

There is nothing called Heaven or Hell. Whenever man resides in consciousness of the eternal spirit, that is heaven. Whenever a man transgresses the will of the Supreme being, he/she falls from His grace; that is hell!

If we say that Heaven is where God is, then we ask where is He not present? Therefore, heaven is all pervading and we can have a taste of heaven here itself. But we often forget that He is there and indulge in actions detrimental to His order. By correcting our ways, we may again reside in heaven.

If God is everywhere then where is hell? If we ignore the presence of the Eternal being and take part in sinful actions and nurture sinful thoughts, then we are living in hell even if there are righteous people around us.

Living in Him is living in heaven and going against His will is akin to be cast in hell.

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## Shib Chandra Deb and Konnagar Brahmo Samaj

Arnab Nag



Konnagar, was an under-developed village in the district of Hooghly, Bengal, during the middle of nineteenth century. But it was

dramatically transformed into a prosperous hamlet within a few decades. And all this was due to the untiring efforts of Shib Chandra Deb, whom the famous poet Dinabandhu Mitra made immortal in a poem called Suradhuni.

The reputation and impact of Shib Chandra among his contemporaries were beyond doubt as Konnagar in those days, was recognized by its association with its architect. While describing Deb's contributions, Pundit Tripura Shankar Sen Shastri stated that the goal of Shib Chandra's life was to work for the betterment of his motherland. He founded a society called 'Hitoishini Sabha' for the overall improvement of his native village Konnagar. As a true patriot, he worked untiringly through this organization for improving the road connectivity of his own village by building bridges over rivers. His generous financial aids to

indigent students of both the genders soon transformed a backward village into a thriving township. He founded an English medium school, a Bengali school or Pathashala, along with a night school to impart adult education to the working classes of his locality. His unwavering and untiring efforts bore fruits and Konnagar became well known for the educational institutions founded by Shib Chandra. He generously donated land for the construction of the school buildings and happily shouldered the responsibility of running those institutions.

The railway station and the post office at Konnagar all bear testimony to his initiative and dedicated leadership. He was keen in improving the communication links of his native village with the outside world by improving upon all modes of road connectivity. Being an avid reader himself, Shib Chandra felt the need for a library in his village. The public library of Konnagar bear testimony to this noble endeavor. He was the Municipal Commissioner of Srirampore municipality. He took this opportunity to help in the overall improvement of civil amenities of Konnagar and its neighbourhood.

Shib Chandra Deb was drawn towards the Brahmo Samaj in his early youth. After the Brahmo Samaj was founded in Chitpur, Shib Chandra had the rare opportunity to attend the prayer meeting

in presence of Raja Ram Mohun Roy. This was a rare chance that he enjoyed among his contemporaries.

He was inspired by Brahmoism after he read the *Tatwabodhini Patrika*. His religious fervor lasted throughout his life. Maharshi Devendra Nath treated Shib Chandra, who was six years his senior, with due reverence. While working as a civil servant in Medinipur, he founded the Medinipur Brahmo Samaj. This experience later helped him to found the Brahmo Samaj at Konnagar on May 19, 1863 or 15<sup>th</sup> Jaishtha, 1270 Bangabda according to the Bengali calendar. The first prayer meeting was held at his own residence where Maharshi acted as the Acharya.

When the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj was established in 1878 after a meeting that was held at the Town Hall, all the members of this new theistic church chose the senior most member Shib Chandra as its Secretary. He thereafter established the Konnanagar Brahmo Samaj on March 8, 1879. It was situated on the bank the river on a plot donated by Shib Chandra. He

chose Ananda Mohan Basu, Umesh Chandra Dutta, Panchkari Bandyopadhyay, Satkari Deb and Satyapriya Deb, members of the newly founded Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, as the Trustees of the new Samaj at Konnagar and entrusted them with the smooth functioning of new Brahmo Samaj.

Maharshi's boat got stuck on the dry bank of the river near Rishra, on the day Konnagar Samaj was founded, causing much trouble for the Acharya to arrive at the Samaj. Later in 1881, Shib Chandra's wife Smt. Ambika Devi built a pier close to the Samaj building, for ease of communication. Today it is known as the Brahmo Samaj Ghat.

[Translation – Editor]

## Tributes

By Prithwijit Das

### **Shukhalata Rao - Poet & Author** (1886-1969)

Shukhalata Rao, an eminent author of children's books and an active social worker, was the eldest daughter of the illustrious author, printing expert and Brahmo leader Upendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury. She was the sister of Sukumar Ray, a writer par excellence. Sukhalata had an eminent career in teaching. After marriage to Jayanta Rao, son of the well-known Oria poet and founder of Cuttack Brahmo Samaj Shri Madhusudan Rao, she moved to Cuttack. She founded the Shishu-o-Matri Mangal



Kendro (Centre for the Welfare of Children and Mothers) in Cuttack and established the Orissa Nari Seva Sangha. Shukhalata. She was also the editor of Alok, a newspaper.

Shukhalata Rao was given the Kaiser-e-Hind award by the Government of India in 1956 for her book Nije Pora. She had authored a book in English, entitled 'Behula' that narrated the story of Chand

Saudagar, Lakhinder and Behula. Rabindra Nath Tagore wrote the introduction for this book. She also wrote a number of children's books which earned wide acclaim. Shukhalata died in 1969.

### **Sujata Choudhury:**

Sujata Choudhury was born into a Brahmo family, to Prof Prafulla Chandra Roy and Smt. Lolita Devi. Her father Prafulla Chandra was a professor of Guwahati Cotton College. Sujata initial joined the Cotton College where she was the first girl student. Later she completed her BA and MA from Scottish Church College and Calcutta University respectively where she stood First Class First in both the Examinations.

Sujata had several firsts to her name. She was the first Hindu Lady Professor at Aligarh Muslim University. After independence, she came back to Calcutta and took up a job in Ashutosh College. Subsequently in 1952 she joined Government Service and served as a Lecturer of English in both Bethune College and Lady Brabourne College. In 1964 she became full Professor, the first woman to become so. From 1969-1971 she served as the Principal of Lady Brabourne College.

Another feather to her cap was to get a driver's licence, the first woman to get such a licence in the state of Assam. She

was the eldest of three sisters. Amita Malik, Indian's first film journalist and Namita Bose, wife of Dilip Bose the tennis player, were her siblings. She left behind one daughter and a son. Her son Prof Sukanta Chaudhuri, is a very well-known Professor of English. Sujata Choudhury passed away in 2003 at the age of 89.

### **Malati Choudhury:**

Today I will be talking about Malati Choudhury, a Brahmo, a Gandhian and a social worker and finally the wife of Nabakrushna Choudhury, the second Chief Minister of Orissa. She was the first cousin of our erstwhile Home Minister Indrajit Gupta and Chief Secretary Ranajit Gupta.

She did her initial studies from Shantiniketan and joined the Gandhian movement after her marriage. She was elected to the Constituent Assembly and had accompanied Gandhiji in a no of his marches. She was the President of the Utkal Congress Committee and was also awarded the Deshikottama award from Vishwa Bharati.

Her social work in Orissa is legendary and she had received a no of accolades from the Govt and other organisations. She died in 1998 at the age of 93.

## **Rabindranath, The Immortal**

By Jogananda Das

Rabindranath Tagore has passed away. With him passes out an entire Age. It is even impossible to realise now the incalculable loss suffered by Bengal, by India, -may, by the entire world. For, it will be a century before a proper endeavour can be made towards an evaluation of the gigantic personality of Rabindranath Tagore. A descendent of Rammohun Roy and of the greatest prophets of Humanity from Buddha to Nanak and Chaitanya, from Homer and Valmiki to Hafiz, Chandidas, Shakespeare, Goethe, Beethoven and Wagner. Rabindranath will be linked to the galaxy of Immortals for all time to come.

Out of the great churning of the vast ocean of Indian civilization by the iron West, emerged the nectar of Life, full and invigorating. Out of that immortal nectar was born Rabindranath Tagore. In him was personified a complete Age in its best form, - the great Age of Transition, from the mediaeval to the modern, from the local to the universal. It was in Rabindranath and Rabindranath alone that the supreme and sublime genius of the found expression in its infinite variety.

Rabindranath was the living embodiment of the Age of Rammohun, Rammohun Roy was the man who threw open the portals between the East and the West which had lain closed for centuries. That marked the coming of a New Dawn. Then, behind those open and wide portals slowly rose the New Sun, Rabindranath, illuminating the Eastern horizon and gradually filling the entire world, -East, West, North and South, -with glorious sunshine. The leaves danced, the flowers blossomed, birds sang. Life awoke and expanded to the rhythm of the Poet's touch on the harp.

A son of Man and Prophet of Humanity, Rabindranath never bowed to any earthly monarch, however great, in slavish servility. Even during a War, when men fly at men's throats, when races fling themselves against races in utter hatred, Rabindranath Tagore never feared to say what he wanted to say and never hesitated to pay his supreme homage to the Universal Man whom he always regarded as greater and higher than the intensely and exclusively national and racial men.

Rabindranath's death at a time when the world is plunged in wars and battles reminds one of the picture of an ice-topped mountain with its high pinnacle lost in the white clouds of the heavens at the foot of which on every side are constantly breaking the angry waves of the ocean lashed into fury by a tremendous storm. The waves rave and rant, but the rock stands firm. Such a majestic mountain amongst the turbulent ocean was Rabindranath, the immortal poet of universal humanity.

At last the Call comes and the great Poet bows low in obeisance to the Lord and Master.

We will not weep, we will not sorrow. We give farewell to our dearly beloved Poet who goes on to meet the Great One, of whom he was an undying spark. He leaves his immortal imprints behind, which Time will reveal and interpret as Time marches on.

**Brahmo Samaj**  
**Celebration of Borshosesh 1431 and Noboborsho 1432**  
**at Sadharan Brahmo Samaj**

**Borshosesh:** On the evening of the Bengali year 1431 end on 14th April 2025, a prayer and a musical programme was organised at the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj to bid farewell to the Bengali year 1431. The event commenced with a prayer led by Raka Chatterjee Burman.

The following participated in the musical programme: Shri Arin Chattopadhyay, Shri Swapan Chakraborty, Shri Sugata Chattopadhyay, Shri Shubhashish Majumdar, Shri Shantanu Dutta, Shri Bishwadeep Choudhury, Smt. Purba Mukhopadhyay, Smt. Kavita Mukhopadhyay, and Smt. Sropana Chakraborty

**Noboborsho:** On 15th April 2025 (1st Baisakh 1432) at the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj prayer hall morning prayer conducted by Smt. Sutapa Raychaudhuri. In her New Year's worship, that spirit found its living expression, uniting everyone in the commitment to purification.

Brahmosangeet were rendered by the following under the direction of Sri Kaushik De: Smt. Tania Ghosh, Smt. Tamali Bose, Smt. Shukla Sengupta, Smt. Mala Patra, Smt. Dipanwita Ganguly, Smt. Sudeshna Ray, Smt. Sudeshna Raychaudhuri, Smt. Urmi Shil, Smt. Joyshree Chattopadhyay, Sri Pratibhash Gupta, Sri Kalyan Chattopadhyay, Sri Shaurya Chattopadhyay, and Sri Kaushik De.

Accompanying on instruments were Malay Das on Tabla and Shyamal Dhali on Esraj.

**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

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**For the month of March 2025**

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