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CONTENTS

	Page No.
INVOCATION	126
Editorial	127
Brahmo Dharma & Brahmo Samaj - 6 Satish Chandra Chakraborty	128
Dr. Sir Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar: The Architect of Prarthana Samaj - Dr. Dilip S. Joag	132
Brahmo Samaj.	137
Acknowledgement	139

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agreement with it.

INVOCATION

Prayer without faith is but a mockery and can never bear fruit.

- *Keshub Chandra Sen*

* * * * *

O God, grant this boon
That I may never forget thee,
And that I may sing thy praise with zest
This is all the wealth I ask.
I, desire n o t distinction, not, riches.
I do not want emancipation from existence.
I pray that I may live to praise thee
And enjoy the company of the good.

- *Tukaram*

* * * * *

Adopt the pace of nature: her secret is patience.

- *Emerson*

Editorial

Recently I came across a video programme that sadly lamented the gradual demise of the power of contemplation in individuals. The discussion struck me as extremely relevant and a matter of great concern. The ability to think critically, introspect and innovate, has brought the human race to its present state of superior and comfortable existence compared all other fellow creatures. Whether that is a boon or a bane, whether this intelligence is also threatening the very continuation of this earth, may be a matter of debate. But, this ability in humans to think freely, unencumbered by peer pressure or burdened by the contemporary prejudices, has definitely gifted the world its greatest thinkers and philosophers who have enriched mankind with their lofty ideas. Whenever human society has come to the brink of abysmal darkness, these free and brave truth-seekers have shown the light to freedom of judgement.

The shackles of ignorance enslave the mind as they have done in the past. But, today It is different kind of blindness! We are getting lured away by habits that are imposed upon us by thoughtless and imprudent (mis)use of the gifts of technological innovations. Unfortunately, the fruits of independent and 'out-of-the-box' thinking of a few brilliant minds have robbed away the capability to reflect from the minds of millions who are getting trapped in a world driven by mass madness, where individuality is sacrificed at the altar of collective frenzy. Every technology has its use and misuse. It needs sensible selection of their application to derive the benefits.

The pace of life has increased by leaps and bounds leaving no time for contemplation. As mankind join the rat race to keep ahead of others in a violently competitive world, the advent of technology assisted dissemination of information as well as misinformation leaves no time for the assimilation of the data acquired. Even our education system is geared towards amassing 'information' to such an extent that there is no time to translate that into knowledge. The ability to ponder, judge, sift the data and make conscious selection of ideas is getting lost. As the pace accelerates and the atmosphere of competition pervades, it leaves little time for the younger generations for individual choice. In this unsettling world the role of free thinking becomes even more important as it gives the much-needed sanity and stability to people. After all we are gifted of this life only once. It is too precious a possession to let go waste. The worth of this life depends on the ability to find our right place in tune with our world and not be driven like a herd of cattle.

In this issue we continue with the sixth part of the translation of the Bengali book 'Brahmo Dharma O Brahmo Samaj' by Acharya Satish Chandra Chakraborty. Professor Dilip Joag pays tribute to Sir Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar.

Brahmo Dharma & Brahmo Samaj

Part - 6

Achrya Satish Chandra Chakraborty

Chapter 5 (Continued)

Prayer on Different Occasions

Wedding and Related Ceremonies:

Brahmo Samaj recommends marriage between adult couple, both of whom are willingly entering taking the marriage vow after selecting the life partner. The blessing of the parents and mutual selection of the couple make the union a happy occasion.

In Hindu marriage, the bride is given away to the groom by the guardian of the bride. The groom requests the bride's father to give away the bride and then accepts her from her father/ guardian. Giving away of the bride to the groom and the acceptance of the bride by the groom is considered 'marriage' according to the Hindu law.

Wedding as per the Brahmo faith is different from this concept. Here, the bride and groom have equal consent in the marriage and accept each other as per their own free wills in presence of the assembled congregation. This main difference between these two forms of marriage should not be confused. There is no scope of giving the bride away. The parent/guardian merely presents the

willing bride or the groom to be wedded according to their own volition. Two adult persons promise to accept each other and share their lives in happiness and adversity with unflinching camaraderie. This is the essence of Brahmo marriage, which is conducted with due solemnity. Hence all other festivities that lend some amount of frivolity to the solemn occasion are conducted after the wedding ceremony is over. Therefore, it is necessary that the entire atmosphere remains suitably muted in temper. The Engagement ceremony, Bachelor feast, Welcoming the bride and other accompanying celebrations are observed with due solemnity so that the seriousness of the occasion is not hampered.

If the wedding is celebrated in a Brahmo prayer hall, then it becomes easier to maintain the gravity of the occasion. It is better if both the families combine their forces to make the occasion successful. Brahmo Samaj is against dowry system. The families of both the bride and groom enjoy equal status in a Brahmo marriage just as the Bride and Groom are held in equal importance.

Engagement Ceremony: If there is delay between selection of bride and groom and

the actual wedding ceremony, then it is desirable to have an engagement ceremony where the engagement is formally announced before an assembled gathering of friends and relatives. After a short prayer the Acharya advises the would-be bride and groom of their future responsibilities and commitments, seeking the blessing of elders. The couple are then permitted to meet each other and interact so that they become familiar with each other before they are wedded. This interval is essential to allow love to blossom and respect for each other to flourish. After the prayer is concluded, often the groom presents the bride with an engagement ring.

Wedding:

Social Functions Preceding the Marriage Ceremony: Bachelor's Feast or Aiburo Bhat: Prior to the wedding it is desirable that prayer meetings are held in the houses of the bride and groom respectively to express their thankfulness and gratitude to the All Mighty. The departed elders of both the families need to be remembered with love and respect and their blessings are sought.

Main Wedding: The place where the wedding ceremony is to take place must be prepared suitably to reflect the gravity of the solemn occasion. All Brahma marriages are needed to be legalized through a registration process. This not only safe guards the interest of the couple in case of inter-caste marriages but also

adheres to the social ideals set by the Brahma Samaj. If the wedding ceremony and the legal process of registration take place on the same day, then it is desirable that the bride and groom make the preliminary declaration of marriage is done before the ceremony starts. The Registrar and the witnesses must be within hearing distance of the bride and groom so that they can clearly hear the marriage vows.

The Ceremony: After the bride and groom along with their presenters, the Acharya, the choir and the assembled guests take their seats, the ceremony begins with the first song. The Acharya will then pray to seek the blessings of the Supreme Being.

Introducing the Bride and the Groom: The Acharya will next introduce the bride and groom to the assembled gathering and seek permission.

Consent of the Bride and Groom: The Acharya will then ask for the whole-hearted consent, individually from the bride and the groom.

This will be followed by the second song before the Acharya offers the main prayer. The third song will be sung after the prayer. Then the Acharya will take the right hand of the bride, put it on the right hand of the groom, wrap a garland around and initiate the marriage vows.

Marriage vows are as follows:

Bride: I (bride's name) in presence of God Almighty and the assembled gathering as

witness, take you (groom's name) in free will and full consent to be my legal husband. In wealth and adversity, happiness and sorrow, health and illness, I will devote myself for ever to your wellbeing; I will never surpass you in materially and spiritually. Let my soul be yours, and your soul be mine and let our joint soul be in God.

Groom: I (groom's name) in presence of God Almighty and the assembled gathering as witness, take you (bride's name) in free will and full consent to be my legal wife. In wealth and adversity, happiness and sorrow, health and illness, I will devote myself for ever to your wellbeing; I will never surpass you in materially and spiritually. Let my soul be yours, and your soul be mine and let our joint soul be in God.

The bride and groom then take the joint vow and exchange the garlands and the wedding rings. Exchange of rings is however not compulsory. A third hymn is sung before the Acharya delivers his sermon to the newly-weds. The ceremony ends with the last song.

Reception of the Bride in Her New Home: The relatives of the bride welcome her in to their fold with hymns and prayer. An elder in the family will speak to welcome her in their midst.

Death and Memorial Service:

Cremation/Burial: There is nothing more peaceful and soothing at the deathbed than

prayer. The relatives of the dying person may pray and sing hymns to calm him/her down. The near ones are grief stricken but they need not vent their grief in order to keep their departing dear one calm and peaceful. Bereavement is tragic no doubt, but it should not overwhelm everyone by excessive outwardly manifestation. Prayer brings peace and calms the grieving mind. Friends and relatives will be informed about the passing away of the individual so that they may help in the final disposal the worldly remains according to the wishes of the departed. Hymns will be sung and prayers will be offered at the time of taking the body to the cremation/burial ground and also before it is cremated/buried. All this will be done with utmost solemnity, paying full respect to the departed soul.

Bereavement: It is desirable that the bereaved family prays with friends and relatives, every day, till the final day of the memorial service. There is no hard and fast rule regarding the time to lapse before the final respect is paid. It is desirable that the memorial service is held while the family is still grief stricken. The service eases the mind and brings peace to the grieving family. Similarly, there is no standard rule for austerity during the interval of grief.

Memorial Service: On the day of the Memorial service, relatives and friends of the departed will assemble for prayer in a somber and solemn atmosphere befitting

the occasion. The nearest relatives of the deceased will sit next to the Acharya, who will offer prayer befitting the occasion. Brahmo faith believes in immortality of the soul. The prayer must highlight this belief. The prayer will be punctuated by suitable hymns and songs. The principal member of the family will speak about the departed and pray for the soul. This may be written in a restrained way. If the family members wish, appropriate excerpts from religious books and philosophical discourses may be read out.

House Warming Ceremony:

At the time of settling in ones' own home, the mind is full of gratitude and happiness. In order to share the joy and happiness, the family may like to celebrate the occasion with friends and relatives. The occasion may be marked by singing 'kirtan' and going around the house, followed by offering prayer. It is desirable that a prayer room is assigned. The owner of the happy household will celebrate the occasion of housewarming appropriately with friends and relatives and be ever grateful to the All Mighty for bestowing such happiness to the family

Dr. Sir Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar: The Architect of Prarthana Samaj

Dr. Dilip S. Joag

Dr. Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar (July 6, 1837 - August 24, 1925) and Justice Mahadeo Govind Ranade were the motivating force in establishing Prarthana Samaj in Maharashtra, particularly in Mumbai and Pune in the 19th century. Both of them were scholars, graduates of the first batch of the newly established (1857) Bombay University. Ranade studied law and offered his services in the Judiciary, while Bhandarkar being research minded, chose academics and research as his career. But both of them were part of the renaissance in western India and led the social reforms movement. They worked so closely in the sphere of socio-religious activities that Ranade - Bhandarkar became a compound word similar to Dnyaneshwar - Tukaram in Maharashtra. Ranade was known throughout the country owing to his multidimensional intellect and national level activities. Bhandarkar was a Sanskrit scholar, a teacher and an Antiquarian of international repute.



In this article I will touch upon three major facets of Dr. Bhandarkar's life – Bhandarkar as an academician, as a Prarthana

Samajist, and as a social reformer.

Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar was born on July 6, 1837 at Malvan, in Ratnagiri district of that time, on the west coast of Maharashtra. He had his school education in Ratnagiri's well-known English High School and then in the Elphinstone Institute, Mumbai, where he received his undergraduate education. He was a very bright student and received a good amount of scholarships sufficient to survive in Mumbai. He studied mathematics under the tutelage of Prof. Dadabhai Nowrojee and Mr. Sydney Owen. With such expert teachers, young Ramkrishna acquired analytical abilities and became outspoken. He was well aware of the developments in Science in Europe at that time. In the year 1858 he was appointed as Fellow at the Elphinstone Institute and in 1862 got his B.A. in Mathematics. He obtained the M.A. degree in Sanskrit in 1866. Because of his mathematics background, he learnt Sanskrit in a non-traditional way. He got his lessons from Sanskrit Scholars and Pandits in Mumbai and Pune and soon became master of Nyaay, Vyaakaran, and Vedaanta. This self-study imbibed in him inquisitiveness, integrity and truthfulness. Therefore, he did not become rigid and one sided like orthodox Pandits.

Shri. Bhandarkar's image as an academician fetched him a job of Headmaster of the reputed Ratnagiri High

School in 1865. During his three years of tenure there, the students of that school won the coveted “Jagannath Shankarsheth Scholarship” for Sanskrit. In 1868, he was appointed Sanskrit teacher and then Assistant Professor at the Elphinstone Institute, Mumbai. In 1882, he was appointed as Professor of Sanskrit at the Poona College (now Deccan College), Pune.

Bhandarkar was attracted to Oriental Research because of an incident when Dr. Manekji Adarjee, in 1870, brought to him a copper plate with old Deonagari inscription on it. His Oriental research started at that point. He studied Pali and Ardhamagadhi languages which helped him study Buddhist literature. He published around 200 research papers in European journals. His notable contributions are the books : Early History of Deccan (1884), Vaishnavism – Shaivism and Other Minor Religions. (1913), A Peep into Early History of India (1920) and Collected Works of R. G. Bhandarkar (1933).

R. G. Bhandarkar was recipient of several honours because of his significant research contributions; among these are Honorary Membership of Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, and Elected Fellow of German Oriental Society. Goettingen University in Germany bestowed upon him Ph. D. degree in 1885. In 1891 Dr. Bhandarkar was honoured with K.C.I.E. by the British Government. In 1893, he was appointed Vice Chancellor of Bombay University. He was the first Indian to be awarded the

L.L.D. degree by Bombay University in the year 1904. Calcutta University followed suit and awarded the Ph.D. degree to Dr. Bhandarkar in 1908.

The unique Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute (BORI) was founded by his disciples and admirers on 6th July 1917 as a gift to Dr. Bhandarkar on his 80th birthday. The Institute has done pioneering work on Mahabharata, Vedas, Puranas, on Buddhism and Jainism and so on. Today BORI is still engaged in oriental research.

The secret of the character of Dr. Bhandarkar was unfolded by the then Chancellor of Bombay University, Governor Lord Lamington while conferring L.L.D. degree on Dr. Bhandarkar in these words: “His object has been to show that individual honesty of purpose, true public spirit and the faculty of cooperation are necessary preliminaries for the efficient working of free institutions. These are the qualities he desires to see infused throughout his countrymen. It is only to be expected that the advocate of such principles should expose himself to the criticism and antagonism of others. It is at this point that perhaps his most striking characteristic appears. His independence of thought has given him a fearlessness and a courage of conviction which have produced a character like that of one of the stoics, or perhaps I might more aptly say, like that of Rama, the Hero of the popular Hindu Epic, and rigid adherent of truth. No opposition could disturb his serenity or make him swerve from the

path that his reason and conscience have dictated to him to follow.”

Dr. Bhandarkar with his knowledge, with his firm faith in truth and justice, with his mathematical rigour, and method of scientific inquiry into social issues became a guiding figure in the social reforms movement in Pune and western India.

Earlier in Mumbai in 1840's Dadoba Pandurang Tarkhadkar, a linguist and an officer in British Government, had formed a secret organization called Paramhans Sabha. The Sabha had an objective of demolishing caste system and uniting all sections of the society as one fraternity. Young Bhandarkar became member of this Sabha. Incidentally Jyotiba Phule was also a member of this Sabha. After many hot discussions, it was agreed in this Sabha that instead of conversion to Christianity attention must be focused on bringing reforms in the present Hindu religion. The Sabha was dissolved due to several reasons. However, in 1864 Keshab Chandra Sen gave public talks in Mumbai and Pune on the Brahmo movement. After that some members of the dissolved Paramhans Sabha under the leadership of Dr. Atmaram Pandurang Tarkhadkar established an open theistic body, Bombay Prarthana Samaj, on the model of Brahmo Samaj in Bengal, in 1867. This was with a full support from Ranade and Bhandarkar who were working outside Mumbai at that time. The Pune Prarthana Samaj was founded in 1870 by members of "Friendly Meetings" group under the leadership of Chintaman Sakharam Chitnis. Dr.

Bhandarkar shouldered the responsibility of wording the cardinal principles of Prarthana Samaj in balanced and proper way. Ranade and Bhandarkar gave the basis of Upanishads, Bhagwad Geeta, Medieval Saint Literature and the Western Liberal Thought to Prarthana Samaj. In the opinion of Dr. Bhandarkar it is wrong to differentiate Prarthana Samajists from Hindus. Prarthana Samaj gives a rational perspective to look at the Hindu religion. The cardinal principles of Prarthana Samaj are such that these will be acceptable to persons having open mind from any religion as these give a rational perspective to look at their own religion as well.

Since 1882 Dr. Bhandarkar was residing in Pune. Earlier in Mumbai and later in Pune together he devoted nearly 50 years of his life for the cause of Prarthana Samaj. The cardinal principles of Prarthana Samaj not only implied dismissal of the age-old caste discrimination, but implied bringing down all kinds of social discrimination. Justice Mahadeo Govind Ranade and Dr. Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar gave philosophical basis to the doctrine of Prarthana Samaj and Maharshi Vitthal Ramji Shinde, who joined Prarthana Samaj later in 1898, showed the path of "Karmayog" to the Samaj.

Dr. Bhandarkar had taken a lot of efforts in building the Prarthana Mandirs in Mumbai and Pune. The beautiful stone Harimandir of Pune Prarthana Samaj stands today as a testimony of Dr. Bhandarkar's vision, leadership and

devotion. Dr. Bhandarkar conducted several activities such as women and children gatherings, Harikeertans, Upasanas and Utsavs. He formed the Tukaram Society in 1901. The aim of the Society was to interpret some difficult Abhangs (poetic compositions) of Saint Tukaram. In about four years 945 Abhangs were studied by the Society with the help of Dr. Bhandarkar. Mention must be made of women gatherings in which 100-200 women used to participate and some of them were inspired to read essays related to the then current topics. The first Marathi female novelist Mrs. Kashibai Kanitkar got inspiration to write through these regular women meets in Pune Prarthana Samaj. Maharashtra Brahmika Samaj was founded on 3rd February 1900 with the sole purpose of upliftment of women in accordance with the cardinal principles of the Brahma Dharma. Unfortunately this Brahmika Samaj did not survive the stroke of Plague in Pune City. Women used to conduct Upasanas and used to read essays on topics such as 'Truth', 'Purification of Mind', 'Highest Bliss' and so on. Such was the concern of Dr. Bhandarkar in women empowerment. Dr. Bhandarkar supported widow remarriage, and cited evidence from Atharvaveda and Aitareya Brahman. Dr. Bhandarkar was a proactive reformer. In 1891 he arranged the remarriage of his own widowed daughter, which invited a lot of criticism from his community.

In 1891, British Government brought the bill of age of consent. The bill was opposed by orthodox leaders and common people in Maharashtra and other places.

Dr. Bhandarkar played a very important role and came out with evidence from Sanskrit volumes of Sushrut and Vagbhatt, and showed that the consent age proposed in the bill was in fact less than that stated by Sushrut and Vagbhatt. Lokmanya Tilak took the side of the orthodox people in the society and ridiculed Dr. Bhandarkar. Dr. Bhandarkar was threatened and had to face stone pelting on his house. But truth abiding and scientific minded Dr. Bhandarkar did not bulge in spite of a large scale harassment. And finally the bill was passed. It is worth mentioning that Dr. Bhandarkar joined Lokmanya Tilak in the movement of prohibition of alcohol.

Dr. Bhandarkar's scientific attitude got reflected in his Upasanas. For example, in one Upasana, he quoted Newton's law of Gravitation and stated that just as the Earth is bound to the Sun by the attractive force of Gravitation, a devotee is attracted to Almighty God. He has also quoted Darwin's theory of evolution, and commented that the human body has evolved from ape, but the mind is yet to be evolved.

Justice Ranade had a great respect for Dr. Bhandarkar. Ranade said, " Dr. Bhandarkar's stature is no less than the great leaders of Brahma Samaj. He is not just an eminent scholar, he is greater than that. He is a guide. He has been an example, by himself, and a teacher, from whom we received the best instructions in our life."

Dr. Bhandarkar left this world on August 24, 1925. In his fond memory a Stupa was erected in the premises of Pune Prarthana

Samaj. But his true monuments are the two institutes “Pune Prarthana Samaj” and “Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune”.

Bhandarkar's three institutions in Pune, viz., Pune Prarthana Samaj, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute and Deccan College, collaborated in paying Death Centenary Tributes to Dr. Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar on 23rd and 24th August 2025.

Reference:

1 ‘Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar Hyanche Dharmapar Lekh va Vyakhyane’ by D. G. Vaidya (1919), Mumbai.

2 "The Collected Works of J V Naik" Edited by Murali Ranganathan (2016), Published by Asiatic Society of Mumbai.

N.B.: This article is published on occasion of Death Centenary of Dr. R. G. Bhandarkar.

(Author: Prof. Dilip S. Joag is the Trustee and Secretary, Pune Prarthana Samaj, and Former Head and Professor, Department of Physics S. P. Pune University, Pune)

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Brahmo Samaj

Domestic News

Birth Centenary Celebration of Late Arun Kumar Das

Arun Kumar Das (1925-2025) A Chartered Accountant by profession and also was a Professor of Umesh Chandra College. An ardent believer of Brahmo philosophy by birth and a member of Sadharan Brahmo Samaj, holding numerous responsible positions including Secretary for many years and was President till he breathed last.

To mark the occasion of his birth centenary on 20th June 2025, the family members of Late Arun Kumar Das organized a prayer service at Brahmo Balika Shikshalaya, where he had served as Secretary for many years. The service was conducted by Sri Arup Kumar Das, with hymns rendered by the students of the school.

An Essay Writing Competition on Rammohun Roy was held among the students of Brahmo Balika Shikshalaya, followed by a Quiz Contest conducted by Amit Das. The quiz comprised eight rounds of six questions each, covering current affairs, general knowledge, sports, art, culture, and related topics. Prizes were awarded to the top three contestants in both sections of the competition. Refreshments were arranged for all participants. On this occasion, a donation was also made towards arranging lunch for all inmates and support staff of the school's hostel.

On the following day, 21st June 2025, in the evening, the family members of Late Arun Kumar Das organised a deliberation session at the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj Prayer Hall on the theme "*Bartaman Samay Rammohun Royer Dharmiya Swadhinata O Surbobhoumikatar Prasangikata*". The speakers were Shri Jawhar Sircar, former Member of the Rajya Sabha, and Shri Sudin Chattopadhyay, former President of the West Bengal Board of Secondary Education. The discourse was presided over by Shri Prasad Ranjan Roy, former Home Secretary of Govt. of West Bengal, who also shared his valuable observations. Refreshments were served to all.

Adya Sraddha

Abha Bhattashali, D/o late Upendranath Bal and late Pritikana Mal, W/o late Juran Jiban Bhattashai, mother of S/Smt Shrila, Manila, Tuhina and a resident of Golf Green, Kolkata expired on 3rd July, 2025 at an age of 94 years.

The Adya Sraddha ceremony of late Abha Bhattashali was held on Sunday, 6th July, 2025 morning in the Arjun Hall of Jalvayu Towers, Block DJ, Action Area 1D, New Town, Kolkata 700156. At the outset Abhijit Chowdhury, Son-in-law of late Abha Bhattashali made a brief introduction about this programme as also the schedule of the same. Thereafter Shri Tapabrata Brahmachari conducted the divine service as also read out

from scriptures. Hymns were rendered by Shri Supratim Chakrabarty, Smt. Elora Chakrabarty and Shri Sankar Prasad Mitra. The daughters of late Abha Bhattashali paid tributes to the departed soul of their mother. A written message sent by Smt. Shreya Gasnguly, granddaughter of late Abha Bhattashali was read out by her mother Smt. Shrila Chatterjee. Set. Arpita Chatterjee, Shri Shiladitya Sen and Smt. Indrani Sen Sharma paid homage to the departed soul of the deceased. Shri Abhijit Chowdhury paid tribute to the departed soul of the deceased by reading an article written by Shri Sirshendu Mukhopadhyay.

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

Acknowledgement
For the month of June 2025

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GL - 1087	Arup Kumar Das	On the occasion of 100th Birth Anniversary of late Arun Kumar Das	Brahmo Balika Shikshalaya (Montessori Section) Fund	5,000

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