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in agreement with it.

## INVOCATION

“MANASULONA KAARUMABBO “

- TELUGU BRAHMO SANGEET -

by MAHA KAVI D KRISHNA SASTRY

English Translation with summary by Sri ILYAS

Even when the darkest of the clouds and murky gloom totally envelope you, sing with a clear heart – Brahma Kripahikevalam... Brahma Kripahikevalam

Even when your heart is gutted in a devastating fire, and body is writhing with poison hemlock, sing with a clear heart – Brahma Kripahikevalam...Brahma Kripahikevalam

Even when your life turns into an endless desert or a horrifying cremation ground or it crumbles into shambles, sing with a clear heart – Brahma Kripahikevalam... Brahma Kripahikevalam

Even when your life blossoms into a fragrant garden with most beautiful skies, and milk gushes in eternal rivers, sing with a clear heart - – Brahma Kripahikevalam... Brahma Kripahikevalam

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## Editorial

We are happy to bring out the second compiled volume of the Indian Messenger for the months of June to November 2020, which is long overdue as all publication activities have been kept on hold due to the unusual circumstances brought about by the pandemic. Since our entire nation has been under complete lockdown since midnight of October 23, 2020, all activities except the essential services have been suspended. As we have remained confined within the safety of our homes we have kept our interactions alive through the virtual media. We are glad that these communications have not been entirely fruitless as we have managed to gather thought-provoking ideas and garner valuable information that may enrich our minds. As all the religious, educational and other public places are closed down the weekly congregational prayers and Bhadrotsava celebrations of the Samajes have been shifted to the virtual mode, making the sessions accessible across geographical boundaries. This may be regarded as a positive impact of an otherwise negative situation.

However, everyone is not fortunate enough to be assured of a secured existence. As our economy nose-dives owing to shrinkage of employment opportunities due to the sudden lockdown and its aftermath, many of our unfortunate brothers and sisters have been stranded far away from their home without enough resources to fall back upon for their sustenance. This has brought about untold misery in the lives of many who have trudged back on foot over miles to reach back to their families. Hence it has been a serious challenge to balance the risks of uncertain death due to the pandemic and certain death due to loss of livelihood. As if that is not enough, the state of West Bengal has been devastated by the cyclone Amphan and the states of Telengana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra are affected by deadly floods. It is heart warming to note that many organisations have come forward to lend their helping hands in mitigating the sufferings of their brethren. The Sadharan Brahmo Samaj and many other Brahmo Samajes have put in their untiring efforts in carrying out relief work. We humbly acknowledge the role played by

these relief workers and pay tribute to all the altruistic endeavours that make this world a better place.

Life is slowly limping back to normal and we have to make every effort to restore the livelihoods to the millions who have been thrown into dire penury and looming uncertainty. Just as other organisations are trying to kick start their activities, we too are making every effort to restore normalcy in our publication activities. We seek your kind feedback in the form of letters to the editor that will help us to improve and make the publications true to the commitments of this time tested organ of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj.

*The fact of God's endowing each individual with the intellectual faculties and sense, implies that he should not, like the other animals, follow the example of his fellows. He should exercise his own intellectual power, with the help of acquired knowledge, to discern good from bad, so that this valuable divine gift should not be left useless.*

**- Raja Rammohan Roy**

## **Bhadrotsava**

### *Brief History*

by K. C. Challa

BHADROTSAV is an important festival of the Brahmos. On 6th of Bhadra 1235 (according to the Bengali calendar) or 20th August 1828 the first Brahma Samaj was opened by Raja Rammohun Roy with Tarachand Chakravarty as its first secretary. It started on a rented house belonging to Feranghee Kamal Bose and accommodated the first theistic congregation. It should also be noted that coincidentally or otherwise other Brahma Samajes were also opened in this particular month of the year. On 22nd August 1869 the consecration was held of the Brahma Samaj of India or the Navavidhan Brahma Samaj. The Brahma Sammilan Samaj was also founded in August 1897.

Let me recall and repeat summary of Acharya Sri Sitaramabrahman's writings on the Brahma Faith:

“Brahma Samaj is a Society of people with Monotheistic Worship (Brahma, the One and Only Formless Almighty) and rational and religious attitude and conduct.

The founder of Brahma Samaj, Raja Rammohan Roy used the word BRAHMA SABHA in the beginning. Brahma Samaj is also called as PRARDHANA SAMAJ. Since spiritual worship is the life-breath of Brahma Samaj, the name Prardhana Samaj is used. To indicate universal character, to proclaim that the Brahma Samaj is not bound by nor does it totally reject any tradition, the word THEISTIC SAMAJ is used. Like a bee that collects honey from different flowers, Brahma Samaj assimilates truth irrespective of its place and time.

BRAHMO SAMAJ IS NOT A NEW RELIGION. It is not against the spirit of the fundamentals of other religions. IT IS A NEW RELIGIOUS PERSPECTIVE. It is a spiritual fellowship, a religious brotherhood. It is the Least Common Multiple (LCM) of religions. Brahma Samaj is one with the

spirit of the fundamental teachings of all religions. IT IS DIFFERENT FROM THE POPULAR BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF EVERY RELIGION.

The AIM OF BRAHMO SAMAJ is to bring about spiritual unity and religious Brotherhood among people of all religions, who believe in ONE God, through a common worship of common God.”

### *The Significance of 6th Bhadra*

By Aniruddha Rakshit

The native Theistic Church of modern India was born on Wednesday, the 20th August, 1828 (৬ই ভাদ্র ১২৩৫ শকাব্দ). It was simply called Brahma Samaj by Raja Rammohun Roy. Ramchandra Sharma (Ramchandra Vidyavagis, younger brother of Rammohun’s venerable Sannyasi associate Hariharananda Trithasvami) was the first preacher and custodian after the Raja left for his last journey. They emphasised the spiritual worship of God and based their discourses on the Vedic Scriptures that focused on the concept that ‘God is the One without an equal, in Whom abide all the worlds and their inhabitants.’. Their worship was founded on the pillars of self-discipline, self-realization and service of others, and discarded the rituals that stood in the unity of the worshippers. The Brahma Samaj or Brahmasabha was basically a social and religious movement of the 19th century and acted as a catalyst to the Bengal Renaissance. Rammohun drew his inspiration from the scriptures of all popular religions of the world, eliminating blind orthodoxy and superstitions.

The Trust Deed of the Brahma Samaj, drawn on 8<sup>th</sup> January, 1830, on the occasion of inaugurating the first Brahma Mandir on 23<sup>rd</sup> January or 11<sup>th</sup> Magh, of the same year, enshrines the Universal worship of the One True God "in this house of worship, which is open to the public, all people, irrespective of caste and creed, shall unite in love for the worship of the Creator of the universe and the Infinite Eternal Being."

According to Rabindranath Tagore

“The pursuit of Brahmanism is the pursuit of surrendering the soul to Brahman with knowledge and love - that is what Chetasya must do. It is not a dull theory; It is a devotional religion”.

## Quit India Movement

Contributed by Aniruddha Rakshit and B.R. Panda

The Quit India Movement or 'Bharat Chodo Andolan' was a water-shed in the freedom struggle of India, which was led by Mahatma Gandhi, who inspired all the people across India to come together against British imperialism. The British Governor-General of India, Lord Linlithgow, involved India into World War II, in 1939 and proposed to induct the Indian soldiers to fight for the British. The Cripps mission was sent to ask for cooperation from the Indian national leaders. The two sides failed to reach an accord as the demand for immediate transfer of power for total self rule was not met with. Talks between Cripps and Indian national leaders having failed, Mahatma Gandhi called for Quit India Movement. It started on August 8,

1942 from Mumbai's Gowalia Tank Maidan which has since come to be known as the August Kranti Maidan. Gandhi gave the clarion call 'do or die' to finally make the British to 'quit'. Although the protest began peacefully, the houses of many of the freedom fighters and the offices of the Congress party were raided. Many of the leaders of the Congress party including Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and others along with Mahatma Gandhi were imprisoned on the charges of sedition. With the leaders in jail, Aruna Asaf Ali presided over the Congress session at the Gowalia Tank Maidan where a large crowd had gathered to hoist the national flag.

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## Life Sketches

### Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray

Born August 1861 - Died 6<sup>th</sup> June

1925

by Aniruddha Rakshit

Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray was an Indian scientist and teacher of repute. He was one of the first “modern” Indian to do path breaking research work in Chemistry. His discovery of the stable compound Mercurous Nitrite in 1896 put him on the world map of great scientists. The ideal of a free nationhood was so strong in him that he established the Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works Ltd, India’s first pharmaceutical company in 1901, to promote India’s self reliance.

**Early Life and Education:** Prafulla Chandra Ray was born on 2 August 1861, in the village of Raruli-Katipara, now in Bangladesh, as the younger son of his father, Harish Chandra Ray, a landlord. His father inspired the zeal to learning in young Prafulla Chandra by providing his sons with an extensive library in their home. His mother, Bhubanmohini

Devi, was very well educated and had very liberal ideas.

Prafulla Chandra moved with his family to Kolkata, then Calcutta, at the age of nine and he was admitted to the Hare School. Due to his illness, he had to return to his village in 1874. He regained his health after two years but it left him permanently frail with sleeplessness and digestive problems. The well-equipped library of his father provided him with the much needed food for his intellects during his long convalescence. After returning to Calcutta (now Kolkata) he joined Albert School from where he passed his Entrance Test in 1979. He then joined the Metropolitan College which is now known as Vidyasagar College. Prafulla Chandra had his lessons in chemistry at the Presidency College where he grew to love it. He set up his own laboratory at home for experimentation.

Prafulla Chandra won a scholarship to study at the Edinburgh University, in 1882, and earned his degree in 1885. He was honoured with a D. Sc. in 1887 and received the prestigious “Hope Prize” for his thesis on

“Conjugated Sulphates of the Copper-Magnesium Group: A Study of Isomorphous Mixtures and Molecular Combination. At such a young age he published a unique essay in English on India, which was a great eye-opener and showed his keen awareness of the state of governance of his motherland.

Contributions and Achievements: On his return in 1888 Prafulla Chandra joined as an Assistant Professor of Chemistry at the Presidency College in Calcutta next year (1889). He established his research laboratory and trained a dedicated band of students into fine researchers. He had around 150 research publications to his credit, of which many were published in the most renowned journal of his time. While experimenting with Nitrite and Hypo-nitrite compounds, he discovered the stable compound called Mercurous Nitrite in 1896. Other areas of his studies included organic compounds containing Sulphur, double salt, homomorphism and fluorination. Prafulla Chandra Ray read the ancient texts and published his epoch making volumes of “The History of Hindu Chemistry” in 1902 and 1908. He had

extensive knowledge of metallurgy and medicine in ancient India.

After retiring from Presidency College in 1916, Prafulla Chandra Roy joined the University of Calcutta in its College of Science at Upper Circular Road. He spent his life working and teaching there and lived in a room at the campus in order to be near his laboratory and his students.

A supporter of India’s freedom struggle, Prafulla Chandra believed in self reliance. To follow up his ideal he established Bengal Chemical Works with a small capital of 700 INR, which flourished under his supervision. Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works Ltd (BCPW) initially produced herbal products and indigenous medicines which gradually emerged as one of leading chemical and medicine produces.

Prafulla Chandra Ray wanted to use science for the upliftment up the masses through his passionate and devoted social work which kept him engaged during famine and flood. He was a promoter of the Khadi movement. Acharya Prafulla Chandra was a true rationalist who opposed the caste system and other irrational

social prejudices. He took an active part in educational activities of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj and was a council member of Brahma Samaj Educational Society for several years. He participated in Student's Weekly Service and was actively involved in the Society for the improvement of the Backward Classes. He took part in relief missions and other philanthropic activities of Sadharan Brahma Samaj and presided over the 46th session of the East Bengal and Assam Brahma Conference held in 1936 at Tangail. He was a trustee of the Sadharan Brahma Samaj and was elected as its President in 1941. He was actively involved in his social and academic pursuits till his last.

Prafulla Chandra remained a bachelor and died on 16 June 1944, at the ripe old age of 82.

### **Lady Abala Bose**

8 August 1865 – 25 April 1951

By Aniruddha Rakshit

Lady Abala Bose, the daughter of the renowned Brahma reformer Durga Mohan Das, was a visionary and a social worker in her own right who

worked relentlessly towards women's education and alleviation of the misery of the widows.[1] Born in a family of social and political workers, Abala was herself a remarkable person who was a match for her brother Satish Ranjan Das and sister Sarala Roy, both great educationists. Her cousins were Chittaranjan Das, and Chief Justice of India Sudhi Ranjan Das.

Abala was born on 8 August 1865, at Barisal in the famous Das family of Telirbagh, Dhaka, now in Bangladesh. Married to the great scientist and inventor Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose, Lady Abala was his true life partner who gladly sacrificed her own career to support the scientific pursuits of her husband.[1]

Early life: Abala was one of the earlier pupils of Banga Mahila Vidyalaya that finally merged with Bethune School (established by Bethune). She passed her Entrance Test in flying colours, securing a scholarship in 1881. In those days the Calcutta Medical College denied admission to women. Undaunted, Abala joined the Madras Medical College, that admitted female

students, in 1882. She was awarded the Bengal government scholarship for studies in medicine. Unfortunately she had to give up her studies due to ill health. She returned to Calcutta partially completing her course and Jagadish Chandra in 1887.[1]

Abala was one of the early feminists who had a keen interest in empowering women. She was an excellent educator with a clear vision on education reforms. She wrote in *Modern Review*, a leading English magazine, that the reason for a deeper and extended education for women was needed 'not because we may make better matches for our girls... not even that the services of the daughter-in-law may be more valuable in the home of her adoption, but because a woman like a man is first of all a mind, and only in the second place physical and a body.' She inspired many leading women of her times like Poet Kamini Roy, who studied with her in Bethune School, to think in terms of feminism.[2]

Later life: A great proponent of empowerment of women, she set up Nari Shiksha Samiti, a non profit organisation for imparting education

to women, young and adult alike. The society was registered under Act XXI of 1860, in 1919. It was a non-profit voluntary organisation dedicated to public charity through educating and imparting vocational training to women in distress so that they could become economically independent.

During her lifetime, Lady Abala Bose established around 88 Primary Schools and 14 Adult Education Centers in different parts of undivided Bengal. As a modern educator she pioneered institutional training of Pre-Primary and Primary Teacher's and established Vidyasagar Bani Bhavan Primary Teachers Training Institute in 1925. As the Secretary of Brahma Balika Shikshalaya from 1910 to 1936, she introduced many unusual and revolutionary training programmes in the school curricula. Lady Bose was the first woman president of Sadharan Brahma Samaj from 1944-45.

Lady Abala Bose died on 26 April 1951.[1]

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### **Bhai Sitaram**

Born 20th of August 1879; Died

By Sanjoy Chanda

The message and ideals of the Brahmo Samaj had inspired a large number of men and several of them were inspired to dedicate their lives to service of the Samaj. Bhai Sitaram was one such person and we feel proud of his association with Delhi Brahmo Samaj.

Bhai Sitaram was born in a middleclass family on the 20th of August 1879 in a village in Sargoda district of undivided Punjab. His father was the “Patwari” of the village. His mother was dedicated to Sikh Gurus and, influenced by her,

Sitaramji learned several of the “Shabads” of Guru Granth Sahib.

He started his education in his village school, but for high school studies he had to move to a place called Bhera, 9 kilometers away from his village. Here he stayed at his sister’s house. The Principal of this school was Lala Raghunath Sahai, a Brahmo. Raghunathji used to be visited by a Brahmo missionary Lala Prakash Devji. Also resident of that place was another Brahmo Sri Ruchiram Sahni. Coming in contact with these learned men and the message of the Brahmo Samaj made their mark on young Sitaram’s mind.

After matriculation Sitaramji took up service with the Postal Department. However, his interest in Brahmo Samaj continued. In 1904 he came to Lahore and was formally initiated into the Brahmo Samaj by Lala Prakash Devji in the presence of Pandit Sivanath Sastri who was then visiting Lahore. By then Lala Raghunath Sahai was also in Lahore and was the principal of the Dayal Singh High School. Sitaramji got involved in Samaj work and gradually got immersed in it, so much so that he

gave up his job and dedicated himself fully to the service of the Samaj.

Later on Sitaramji went to Sialkot and started a Brahma Samaj there. He carried his message of love and brotherhood to many other places including Jammu, Rawalpindi, Miawali, Ferozpur, Amritsar, Gurjanwala etc. For many years, he used to go to Calcutta during Maghotsav. In Sialkot a Brahma mandir was built where regular weekly prayers were held.

Bhai Sitaram used to sing very often from “Shabads” of Guru Nanak and Kabir. Due to the influence and inspiration of Pandit Sivanath Sastri, Bhai Sitaram started an “Atmonnati Sabha”. It can be compared to the “Atmiya Sabha” of Raja Rammohun Roy. He also started a school which ran for about 15 years. He published a paper “Brahmo Pracharak”. In 1924 Bhai Sitaram was invited to Basra in Iraq by Dr. Puran Singh. Lahore was his main base, though he was like a roving priest or preacher.

The partition in 1947 caused major upheaval in the lives of millions of people. Bhai Sitaram, along with many Hindus, Sikhs and Brahm

had to leave Lahore. To begin with he came to Amritsar and from there to Delhi. Prof. Salil Sen (Principal of Delhi Polytechnic which was later renamed as Delhi College of Engineering and is now known as Delhi Technology University) and his wife Chitra Sen took Bhai Sitaram into their house in the Civil Lines and he spent most of his stay in Delhi there. From the very beginning he became active among the Brahm of Delhi. Apart from the Brahm who came to Delhi from the Punjab and Sind after the partition, there were a number of Brahm from other parts of the country engaged in Government and other services. The practice then was to meet at someone’s residence for the weekly Sunday prayer meeting. Even Maghotsav would be celebrated in someone’s home.

It was Bhai Sitaram who suggested that a Brahma Samaj be established and a Brahma mandir be built in Delhi. The Delhi Brahm took up the proposal enthusiastically and the Samaj was founded and registered as a society in 1955. Several dedicated members put in a lot of effort to procure land and construct the Raja

Rammohun Roy Memorial Hall which is the seat of Brahma Samaj Delhi now. After the building was constructed, Bhai Sitaram stayed in the guest room there during the last two years of his life. He passed away on the 17th December in 1966.

Most of today's Brahmos of Delhi do not know about Bhai Sitaram. A few of the old timers who met him as children remember him as a gentle, soft spoken person. But for us there is much to be learnt from the life of this saintly man, modest and selfless, who dedicated his life in the service of the Brahma Samaj, to spread the message and ideals of Brahma Dharma. Bhai Sitaram was an ideal Brahma who helped the poor, the needy and those suffering. Sri Gurdial Malik, the well known Brahma leader, paid Bhai Sitaram the following tribute on January 19, 1967:

“Bhai Sitaramji was a beloved of God and man. He was indeed a lantern of faith – faith in the creator, His creation and His creatures. His love for humanity radiated from his love of God. And in the light of his love, hundreds of people and their little lamps were lighted. As he sang

constantly heartfelt thanksgiving to the Divine for His diversities of graces and gifts, he served the sick in body as well as in mind, with the touching tenderness of a mother. Bhai Sitaramji was thus a fountainhead of benedictions to one and all. We offer our reverent and loving salutation to his ever-shining spirit”.

### **Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das**

5<sup>th</sup> November 1870 – 16<sup>th</sup> June 1925

By Aniruddha Rakshit

Chittaranjan Das, the son of Bhuban Mohan Das and nephew of Durga Mohon Das, the social reformer, was born on 5 November, 1870. Chittaranjan was inspired by the spirit of nationalism in his student days at Presidency College, Calcutta, where he took active part in students' movements. He was a member of the Students' Association (1886) and was inspired by Surendranath Banerjee's fiery lectures on patriotism.

Chittaranjan was drawn to the Bengali literature, his favourite the writings of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. However, he excelled in English too. After attending the Inner

Temple in London in 1883 to qualify as a Barrister, Chittaranjan came back to India. While still new to his profession, Chittaranjan was requested by Krishna Kumar Mitra to defend Aurobindo Ghosh, when the latter was an accused in the Alipore Bomb Conspiracy case. Attempts had been made on the life of Mr Kingsford, Chief Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta. Unfortunately Kingsford escaped the attempt but two innocent English ladies succumbed to the attack. Aurobindo Ghosh was charged as the mastermind behind the bomb blast. No lawyer came forward to defend Aurobindo but Chittaranjan took up the challenge. After a trial that lasted 126 days, in which 200 witnesses were examined, Ghosh was acquitted. This was a turning point in his career and he attained great fame after his successful defence of Aurobindo.

Das was the first Mayor of Calcutta when the Corporation was constituted in 1923. He launched 'Forward' a newspaper that challenged the British intellectually and sought to awaken his fellow countrymen. Later it was renamed "Liberty". Das led the Non-Cooperation Movement from the

front. Initially used to aristocratic ways, Chittaranjan lived in great luxury before and all his clothes were sent to Paris for laundry. But he gave up all the luxuries during this movement in 1919-22 and burnt his European clothes before he gave the clarion call to boycott all foreign goods. He was an avid supporter of self rule and after he joining the freedom struggle he gave up his expensive habits to don khadi in his later life. He even gave up his flourishing Law practice and chose to lead his fellow citizens in to the Non Cooperation Movement.

Das and his family suffered at the hands of the British for his political commitments. He was jailed with his wife and son in 1921 and they spent six months in prison. However, he was opposed to the Mahatama and his supporters in the motion against legislative council entries for Congressmen legislators and resigned as the President of the Congress party in its Gaya session. Subhash Chandra Bose was drew his inspiration from Chittaranjan Das and regarded him as his political mentor.

After the Non-Cooperation Movement failed, Das and Motilal Nehru formed the Swaraj Party in opposition to Mahatma Gandhi's leadership of Indian National Congress. They contested the elections and won a majority in the Bengal Legislative Council in 1924.

Das was conversant with British legal system and believed in constitutional methods in realizing Independence. He was a champion of Hindu-Muslim unity and firm believer in local self governance, as well as strengthening of cottage industries and cooperative credit societies. His effort at eradicating social evils was a step towards freedom. He espoused widow re-marriage initiated and donated his home together with the adjoining lands to set up an institution for destitute women a couple of years before he died. The present Chittaranjan Seva Sadan Hospital in Kolkata is founded on this property.

Das was a voracious reader and had a flair for writing. He composed verses for the collections of Mala, Antaryami and Kishore-Kishoree, and contributed to scholarly magazines. He founded the famous

journal 'Bande Mataram' with Aurobindo Ghosh.

Chittaranjan was one of the key persons who established the Brahma Sammilan Samaj. He proposed that this hall was consecrated for the purpose of ensuring full participation of Brahma Ministers and members owing allegiance to all the three factions of the Brahma Samaj, the Adi, the Navavidhan, and the Sadharan Samajes. Hence it was named "Brahma Sammilan Samaj". This formal proposal was passed at a Special General Meeting held on 1st October 1902. Unity of all Brahmos in matters of worship, welfare and social activities was the goal of this nascent institution. Deshbandhu felt that this should be enshrined in the very name as also in the rules and regulations of the Samaj. So he proposed yet another resolution that a committee be appointed to frame rules and regulations and to draw up a trust deed relating to the land and building that the Samaj was hoping to acquire and this also was accepted unanimously. The drafts presented by him were accepted at a meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 1902 and it can be

legitimately surmised that he had done the bulk of the work involved.

No illness could deter him during his short but meteoric rise as a national leader. Aurobindo Gosh gratefully acknowledged the fact that the case that Das fought to save Aurobindo cost him his health that began to fail from May 1925. Das withdrew to a mountain home in Darjeeling where Mahatma Gandhi visited him. He died there on June 16, 1925 aged only 55. The body was brought to Calcutta where the funeral procession was led by Mahatma Gandhi. Rabindranath Tagore even penned a couplet in his honour.

He was a national hero who had immortalized his name in the service

of the nation. The nation honours his memory by naming many enclaves and institutions named him. Dr. B.C. Roy, the erstwhile Chief Minister of West Bengal, named the Railway Locomotive Factory and its colony near Asansol in his name. Firmly cast in metal, the Reserve Bank of India honoured the brave life of Das by issuing a commemorative two rupee coin in 1998. It has been in general circulation since then.

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## Women and Science

### Part - 1

By Sudakshina Kundu Mookerjee

**Introduction:** Science is a study of nature and the behaviour of natural phenomena. It is a knowledge based on facts learnt through observations and performing experiments. The quest starts with systematically gathering information and amassing evidence in support of the hypotheses that can be tested and finally made into laws that govern the natural phenomena. Therefore, science is an objective search for truth based on logic. Science promotes rationality which helps in eradicating the curse of superstition and dogmas from the human society. There is no doubt that scientific spirit needs to be cultivated in every member of any civilised society in order to make the world a better place to live in. Although science knows no boundaries based on caste, creed, religion or gender, yet from time immemorial, there has been little participation of women in science, not only in our country but worldwide.

There are many reasons for this; social norms, societal structures, organizational patterns, relationship between workplace and home front, all have contributed to the reason for exclusion of women from higher education in general and science discipline in particular. Gender bias in higher education has been a great deterrent. Women were allowed much later into University education. The age old universities in the West had kept their gates shut for female students, even after the renaissance. In Imperial India the Universities of Calcutta and Bombay started admitting women from 1877 -78 and 1883 respectively. Hence change in societal mores and institutional structures were needed in order to promote participation of women in education and science.

This article will try to trace the history of science as a discipline and review participation of women in scientific studies, in the backdrop of the world scenario as well as in India. Although

men who have laid down milestones in scientific discoveries far outnumber their female counterparts, yet there are a number of women who have inspired their future generations. This is also a tribute to these trail blazers.

**History of Science:** India perhaps has the longest tradition of Philosophical studies. Other than these philosophical works, there are other religious compendiums, works of state craft and economic theories by Kautilya, literature, dramatics, and volumes on medicine and astronomy. However, there are very few that can be called purely scientific work that lay down the laws of nature based on objective principles and logic. Since ancient times, education has been patronised by religious bodies. In India there were the “ashrams” of the sages, the “sanghas” or monasteries of the Buddhist monks. Buddha’s teachings were perhaps more secular in the sense they encouraged more on living a life on this world, inspired by equality, justice and compassion. But still there is very little evidence of scientific search in its truest sense. Although Ayurveda, the medical science, was well developed in

ancient India, yet after the caste system became rigid during the middle of the first millennium common era, hands-on experimentation became limited, thus rendering scientific studies in its truest sense impossible.

There is evidence of women in ancient India enjoying freedom of education irrespective of caste. But the training imparted was as per ones capability. However, for majority of women this was limited to primary education or training at the basic level. Women scholars, though limited in number, were not uncommon. Philosophers like Gargi, Maitryee, Atreyee and Sulabha left behind their unparalleled scholarship. Lilavati, also known as Khana, was a legendary astronomer and Bhanumati was an ace mathematician. The Buddhists and Jainas encouraged women’s education. However, the study of science as a secular discipline had not yet been developed.

One can find religious texts, literature and liturgy in various forms and languages the world over. In all other ancient civilisations, the priestly

classes were the sole custodians of education. It was not much different in the classical or the medieval world.

In ancient Greece, several scientific minds tried to kindle the fire of scientific enquiry, of whom Pythagorus, Archemedes need special mention for their secular inspirations.

In India Arya Bhatta the great mathematician during the Gupta Empire (476-550 AD) and few others excelled in scientific studies of the planets or Astronomy. However, participation of women remained limited, although not completely absent. Merit Ptah practiced medicine in ancient Egypt around 2700-2500 BC [1]. Hypatia of Alexandria (370-415 CE) was an eminent mathematician but unfortunately died at the hands of an irate Christian mob.[1,2]

Perhaps the Arab world in the early Islamic period practiced some form of secular learning which were soon lost during the Crusades.

However, such higher levels of studies were restricted to very few and participation of women was even less, barring a few exceptions like the cosmologist Abbess Hildegard von

Bingen who wrote on the natural world as well as cause and cures of illness [1,2]. The common men led a more humble existence in learning their trade. There were guilds of the tradesmen who trained their internees in their trades, which were more hands-on training other than scientific experimentations. They perfected their products more through trials and not assisted technologies developed by scientific studies.

After Christianity spread across Europe and parts of Asia, the Church remained the sole custodian of education. Any secular study that contradicted the established beliefs was severely condemned. Galileo Galili (1564-1642), the father of modern physics, was regarded as a heretic by the Catholic Church and kept under house arrest where he died from fever and heart palpitations.

### ***Women's Role in Scientific Studies:***

The women were denied of formal education even in the Western civilisation, their instructions too were limited. History records a few accomplished women in the Universities, but they were more exceptions than the rule. Ms. Bettisia

Gozzadini was a Law Graduate from Bologna University, Italy, in 1237. At the beginning of the fervent period of the Italian Renaissance in the fourteenth century, several women were admitted for higher education. Dorotea Bucca and Novella d'Andrea, both were Law graduates of the Bologna University in the fourteenth century. Luisa de Medrano (Philosophy), Isabella Losa (Theology), Francisca de Lebrija (Rhetorics) & Beatriz Galindo (Latin & teaches Queen), Spain, were products of the sixteenth century Renascent Europe. However, none studied science, which was yet to emerge as a discipline of study, distinct from philosophy or natural philosophy [2-4]. There were few men who practiced science prior to Galileo, with the exception of Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519). The artists like Leonardo and Michael Angelo practiced anatomy, a scientific study, but it was done in secret. Galileo was the first who promoted modern scientific studies by working in observational astronomy, applied science and technology.

India by this time had lost much of its scientific temper of the ancient era [5-7]. The old Vedic schools of studies had stagnated under the sole proprietorship of a few. The technologies used were being jealously guarded by the guilds and artisans. The scientific applications brought to India in the medieval times became closely guarded secrets of their custodians. Knowledge could not percolate to the masses nor could it expand by regular practice or discourse.

Women's education in medieval India was restricted to few members of the elitist and aristocratic families who were taught at home. Although there were few schools for women in different parts of Muslim India, and the Royal ladies like Noor Jehan, Mumtaz Mahal, Jehanara, Zebunnissa, Zeenat-un-Nissa etc were highly accomplished. Bengal in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries saw a number of women scholars like Hati Vidyalkar, Hatu Vidyalkar, Madhabi, Chandrabati, Priyambada, Anandamayee. There were Rava, Roha, Madhabi, Anulakshmi, Sasiprava in the South. However, majority of women were uneducated

as early marriage, “Purdah” and various social taboos came in the way of female education. So women’s participation in science was absent.

However, health care was an area where women had some presence; not as qualified professionals but as quacks and especially in midwifery.

India became exposed to modern science with the coming of the British when few Universities were established for imparting higher education to the natives from the middle of nineteenth century. The first Medical College was started in Calcutta, Bengal, in the year 1835, followed by Madras Medical College. Gradually other medical colleges were started in other provinces like the Medical College in Bombay named after the Governor Sir Robert Grant, in 1845. In 1854 the Agra Medical School was opened which was preceded by the Ecole de Medicine de Pondicherry established by the French in their colony in 1823. But all these Medical Schools and Colleges catered exclusively to the male students. Madras Medical College was the first to open its doors to women.

In India the earliest participation of women in modern science was in the field of medicine. It took more than three decades for women to leave their marks in other branches of scientific studies. This article will narrate the stories of these remarkable women, both in the world and in India, who have charted a course for their posterity.

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## NEWS

### **192nd Bhadrotsav**

The 192nd Bhadrotsav was celebrated on 6th Bhadra, 1427 (23rd August, 2020) was organized by Sadharan Brahma Samaj.

Due to Covid-19 pandemic situation, the entire programme was recorded in video format and uploaded to the Sadharan Brahma Samaj YouTube channel and the link was circulated in various WhatsApp groups.

The divine service was conducted by Shri Asim Ahmed and hymns were rendered by Shri Supratim Chakrabarty, Shri Koushik De, Smt. Tania Ghosh, Smt. Elora Chakrabarty, Smt. Mousumi Chatterjee, Smt. Ritasree Bhattacharya, Smt. Tamali Bose and Smt. Madhulika Ghosh.

### **Umphan Relief Work**

On 20th May, 2020 super cyclone storm Umphan devastated the large part of coastal West Bengal. After this catastrophic disaster Sadharan Brahma Samaj decided to organize relief work to Sundarban area. The relief was organized through Brahma Samaj Relief Mission sub-committee under the leadership of Smt. Samita Das. It was decided that relief will be distributed in three phases. Aurobindo Seva Kendra extended their support in the first phase of relief distribution.

On 15th July, 2020 first phase relief distribution was organized at Chandipur (Sundarban area). Samita Das, Biswajit Roy, Surajit Das, Sourav Chatterjee, Madhulika Ghosh, Raka Burman from Brahma Samaj and Debjani Das, Ajay Jana, Dilip Halder, Amit Halder from Aurobindo Seva Kendra volunteered relief distribution work at Chandipur. Packets containing Flattened rice (Chira), Jaggery (Gur), Powder Milk, Biscuit, Salt, Soyabean chunks, turmeric powder (haldi), soap & sanitary napkin were distributed to 460 families. Members of a local club also assisted the relief team to complete the distribution work faster.

Second and Third phase of relief work was organized on the same day, 19th August, 2020 in two different places of Sundarban area, one in Masjidbati a small village and another in Chandipur. Dhoti, Saree, rice, pulses (dal), soyabean chunks and

sanitary napkins were distributed to 50 families in Masjidbati village and rice, pulses (dal), soyabean chunks were distributed to 450 families in Chandipur. Relief team consisted of the following members: Samita Das, Sourav Chatterjee, Soumi Chatterjee (daughter of Sourav Chatterjee), Biswajit Roy, Madhulika Ghosh, Manoj Pathak and Malay Halder.

Others who assisted in packing and other logistic support includes all the staffs of Sadharan Brahma Samaj, inmates of Brahma Samaj Mahila Bhavan, Dr. Ketaki Goswami, Shri Aniruddha Rakshit and Shri Premomoy Das.

### **Relief work for Covid-19 situation**

Brahmo Samaj had always helped the needy in the past. In view to combat Covid-19 pandemic a few likeminded fellow Brahma friends along with some alumni of Brahma Balika Shikshalaya had arranged funds to distribute groceries not only to the guardians of students of Brahma Boys School but also to some Brahma families, our extended families like teaching and nonteaching staffs of Brahma Boys' School, nonteaching staffs of Brahma Balika Shikshalaya, Brahma Sammilan Samaj, Bharatborshio Brohmo Mandir and Sadharan Brahma Samaj for consecutive six months from 7th May 2020 to October 2020. Groceries and other essential items were distributed to approximately 60 families every month.

### **Domestic News**

#### **Adya Sraddha**

Sudip Kumar Bose, eldest son of late Suhas Chandra Bose & late Renuka Bose, expired on 3rd September, 2020.

The Adya Sraddha ceremony of late Sudip Kumar Bose was held on 13th September, 2020 morning at his residence at 7, Brindaban Bose Lane, Hatibagan, Kolkata – 6. Shri Supratim Chakrabarty conducted the divine service as also read out from the scriptures, hymns were rendered by Shri Tirthankar Bose. A short life-sketch of late Sudip Kumar Bose was read out by his youngest son Shri Sanjoy

Kumar Bose. An obituary, which was sent by Shri Sugata Ghosh, nephew of the deceased from Hazaribagh, was read out at the ceremony.

**Adya Sraddha**

On 26th October 2020 and 31st October 2020, Pratima Mandal and Dr. Jagadish Chandra Mandal, the couple expired on respective days at their residence at Palta. Dr. Mandal retired as Director General from Meteorological Department. He was sent to America and Australia to read out his papers and was awarded there for his papers. He was also in the Governing Body of Education Society. His wife was a retired teacher and a good home maker.

They were survived by three daughters, son-in-laws, grandsons and granddaughter. The Adya Sradhya was observed on 4th November, 2020 and divine service was conducted by Smt. Kalyanmoyee Chattopadhyay and hymns were sung by Dr. Sanghita Biswas, Smt. Sanchita Malakar. Dr. Mandal's brothers Shri Pushan Kanti Mandal and Shri Mihir Kanti Mandal paid homage to the departed souls. At the end of the occasion lunch was served cordially.

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Dear Friend,

We are updating member records and wish to add authenticated email id and mobile no. for each member for faster and frequent communication process in near future.

Many members have already sent the updated forms, those who haven't received it or couldn't send it kindly update the details below and send us the filled up form through any of the following means:

- a) By post  
or
- b) Send a scanned copy of the filled-up form through e-mail at [brahmosamaj.sadharan@gmail.com](mailto:brahmosamaj.sadharan@gmail.com)

We look forward for your continuing co-operation and support.

Yours truly,

Secretary

**Member Details:**

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

\* You may also mention your family member's Email-id and Mobile No. if you do not have your own email id or mobile

\* Kindly attach a self-attested copy of any of your latest photo ids