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THE ASIATIC SOCIETY
(AN INSTITUTION OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE)
1 PARK STREET ● KOLKATA-700016

CONTENTS

Administrator's Page

Dear Members and Readers!

In the beginning, I wish to mention about events which took place in the month of July. A programme to commemorate the legacy of Raja Rajendralala Mitra, the first Indian President of the Society, was held at Humayun Kabir Hall of the Society on 25th July 2025. On the occasion of International Tiger Day, an Exhibition-cum-Seminar on Tiger was organised on 29th July 2025 at the Vidyasagar Hall of Sir William Jones Bhavan (Heritage Building) of the Society.

The Asiatic Society, in collaboration with Sadinama, organised a seminar on 8th August 2025 to commemorate '150 Years of Vande Mataram', penned by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in 1875. This date also marked the 84th Death Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore. Officials of the Society and dignitaries paid homage to both Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore through this thoughtful seminar.

'Sanskrit Week Celebration' was organised by Ramakrishna Mission Vivekananda Educational and Research Institute (RKMVERI) in collaboration with The Asiatic Society from 6th to 12th August 2025 at Abhedananda Convention Centre, Belur Math.

L to R: Lieutenant Colonel Anant Sinha, Swami Bhajananandaji, Vice-President of Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission and Swami Atmapriyanandaji, Pro-Chancellor and Secretary of RKMVERI at Sanskrit Week Celebration.

Lieutenant Colonel Anant Sinha hoisting National Flag at Metcalfe Hall.

In association with the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, the Society observed 'Partition Horrors Remembrance Day' on 12th August 2025, which featured the screening of a film followed by a seminar. From 12th to 17th August 2025, an Exhibition of Books on the Partition of India, curated from The Asiatic Society's own collection, was held at Metcalfe Hall. On 14th August 2025, staff members of the Society took part in a silent march organised by IGNCA and Ministry of Culture, Government of India, at Science City, in solemn remembrance of the partition horrors.

The 79th Independence Day was celebrated across the Society's campuses and Metcalfe Hall on 15th August 2025 with the hoisting of the National Flag and paying tribute to our national heroes. On this occasion, an exhibition titled 'The Asiatic Society's Journey in Independent India' was held at the Sir William Jones Bhavan (Heritage Building) of the Society featuring rare and significant books from the rich collection of the Society's Library. This exhibition was organised from 15th to 22nd August 2025.

On 18th August 2025, the Society welcomed nine students and five faculty members from Sister Nivedita Government Degree College as part of their educational tour. The group enthusiastically explored the exhibition on 'The Asiatic Society's Journey in Independent India' and visited different Sections of the Society, including the Museum, Library, Conservation and Reprography units, gaining valuable insights into the multifaceted work of the Institution.

We remain sincerely grateful to our Members and well-wishers for their continued support and active participation in the Society's endeavours.

Wish you all a happy reading!

The Asiatic Society
Kolkata

Anant Sinha
Lieutenant Colonel
Administrator, The Asiatic Society

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AN ORDINARY MONTHLY GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASIATIC SOCIETY WILL BE HELD ON MONDAY, 1st SEPTEMBER 2025 AT 5 P. M. AT THE SIR WILLIAM JONES BHAVAN OF THE SOCIETY

MEMBERS ARE REQUESTED TO KINDLY ATTEND THE MEETING

AGENDA

1. Confirmation of the Minutes of the last Ordinary Monthly General Meeting held on 4th August, 2025.
2. Exhibition of presents made to the Society in August, 2025.
3. Notice of Intended Motion, if any, under Regulation 49(d).
4. Matters of current business and routine matters for disposal under Regulation 49(f).
5. The following paper will be read by Dr. Pronoy Roy Chowdhury: "Saga of a Steel Bridge"

1 Park Street, Kolkata-700016
Dated : 21.08.2025

Anant Sinha
Lieutenant Colonel
Administrator, The Asiatic Society

Paper to be read

Saga of a Steel Bridge

Pronoy Roy Chowdhury
Life Member, The Asiatic Society

Abstract

The question of bridging the river Hooghly flowing past the twin cities of Howrah and Calcutta was considered for a long time, as early as 1860. This is because Calcutta was then a very important settlement of the British in India by the bank of the river Hooghly. The Calcutta port was a very busy port, and the Howrah station a terminal station of the then East Indian Railways where railways used to bring passengers and goods from all over India. In 1871, an Act was passed to enable the Lieutenant Governor (Sir G. Campbell) to construct, at the expense of Government, a bridge across the Hooghly, to fix tolls, and to appoint the Port Commissioners to carry out the purposes of the Act. In moving for leave to bring in this Bill, the Hon'ble Sir Ashley Eden stated that a contract had been entered into with Sir Bradford Leslie and that it was hoped the bridge would be completed by the beginning of 1873, at a cost of £150,000. The various

portions of the bridge were manufactured in England and put together in Bengal. The construction of the Calcutta-Howrah floating-bridge over the Hooghly river was completed in 1874 under the supervision of Sir Bradford Leslie.

However crossing the river Hooghly was an unpleasant predicament across the narrow pontoon bridge constructed by Sir Leslie. The Calcutta Port authorities did not allow a permanent bridge over Hooghly river as they feared that the navigable channel of river Hooghly may actually get affected due to construction of any permanent pier-like structure in the valley of the river, causing silting and scouring in the stream channel and consequent reduction of navigable depth.

Although Sir Bradford Leslie, the then Chief Engineer of East India Railway, designed and built the pontoon bridge which connected Howrah with the city of Calcutta, but engineers thought it was not a pragmatic decision considering the fact that river Hooghly is a tidal river, and the structure shall be exposed to severe cyclonic storms and tidal bores which frequents in the river Hooghly. However the structure effectively survived, without any major accident. Although the bridge was built to last for 25 years but it quite effectively served almost three times the predicted life of the structure. However with passage of time, the bridge became inadequate. By 1909, it was found that a new bridge is required to be constructed across the River.

(i) Technical Committees: A technical committee of Engineers was formed in 1909 which floated global tenders for design and specifications of the proposed new bridge. Some 23 firms submitted technical proposals for the same in 1913. The expert committee reported exhaustibly on the submitted proposals. The prize was awarded to a German design submitted by the Maschinan Fabrik Augsberget Nurenburg Co. The German proposal basically consisted of a floating longitudinal pontoon bridge with a 200ft (about 60.96m) opening span of 'Scherzer rolling type' bascule principle with counter-weighted bascule of 100ft (30.48m) each rising up to a perpendicular position to effect the opening. The project was not awarded to the German Company at the time of prevailing war, so the expert committee finally came to the conclusion that the design did not meet all the requirements and decided to reject all the design submitted, a new set of specification was put up and it was decided that more designs and tenders shall be called. In spite of significant efforts the construction of the bridge was not fruitful due to outbreak of the First World War (1914-1919).

Sir Basil Mott a distinguished Bridge Engineer strongly recommended the construction of a single span arch-type bridge which he considered to have distinct advantages over any floating bridge or bridge with piers as presenting least possible obstruction to river traffic and with considerably less risk of scour and also simplifying the mechanical difficulties of opening span. He recommended a single span steel arch of about (1400ft) (426.72m) span with a roadway suspended from it at a height giving 25ft of headway at highest water level, and an opening

span of 200ft (60.9m) clear width of the scherzer or trunnion pattern. Although it was also admitted that there is considerable difficulty in ensuing safe foundations for the enormous thrust coming on abutments in Calcutta alluvium. But Sir Mott claimed to overcome such difficulties are related to foundation. He also claimed that the arch-type structure also has aesthetic appearance.

The other significant proposal was received from Sir Bradford Leslie and he submitted a proposal for a pair of floating bridge at the present site, which he referred to as 'twin bridge'- a very much improved type from the existing pontoon bridge with a very ingenious type 'draw spans' which was entirely a new type of innovation designed to withdraw and restore the opening span within two or three minutes instead of half an hour as compared to the then old pontoon bridge. It was claimed that the new proposal ensured much more stability with increased length of pontoon and punt shape ends. The four mooring posts' on each side of the opening span will keep the deck span exactly in position and it was claimed that this arrangement shall be a major improvement on stability.

Historically several committees were formed to discuss the nature of the new Howrah Bridge which shall replace the existing pontoon bridge. Significant among these expert technical committees was the widely referred 'Mookerjee Committee'. The committee was chaired by the well-known Bengali industrialist Sir Rajendranath Mookherjee, the other members included, Sir Clement Hindley, the then Chairman of Calcutta Port Commissioners and Mr. J. McGlashan, Chief Engineer of Kolkata Port Commissioners in 1921.This committee unanimously recommended in the favour of adopting 'Cantilever bridge' across the river Hooghly.

In the year 1926, the new Howrah Bridge Act was passed. In the year 1929, the consultant firm Messers Rendel, Palmer and Tritton of Westminster, presented a report on a bridge across river Hooghly between Howrah and Kolkata to the Calcutta Port Commissioners. The report was divided into two sections each dealing with an alternative design, the first being concerned with a bridge of cantilever type, while the other discussing a floating non-opening bridge and in case a preliminary cost of estimate.

(ii) **Tenders and Specifications:** Global tenders were floated in 1934-35 on the basis of the decision of a majority of the sub-committee of Calcutta Port Commission, recommendations were made to accept the tender of the Cleveland Bridge and Engineering Company Ltd. of Darlington, for construction of New Howrah Bridge over river Hooghly in accordance with the official design prepared by Messers Rendel Palmer & Tritton of Westminster, with recommendation to use Indian Steel if proper quality of steel may be identified. The cantilever bridge was to span 1500ft (457.2m) across Hooghly and the width of roadway 71ft (21.6m). In 1921, the Chief Engineer of Port

Commissioners (now Calcutta Port Trust) conducted test to ascertain bearing capacity of the soil, and found that the bearing capacity of the clay bed was satisfactory for a heavy bridge structure and settlement was almost negligible. Messers Rendel, Palmer & Tritton, the consultant engineers firm also conducted test with cylinders 6ft (1.82m) in dia sunk 10 ft. (3m) in hard clay at King Georges dock of Calcutta Port Commissioners (presently Kolkata Port Trust). The test report of Rendel, Palmer and Tritton indicated that on both sides of the river the existing clay bed shall provide for a factor of safety of exactly two, under the worst conditions of load and wind pressure, so the design was considered safe.

(iii) **Material for Construction:** As per recommendation of the tender for Howrah Bridge, it was required to use steel of appropriate quality and engineering property preferably manufactured in India. In connection to the same, a special type of steel called high tensile low alloy steel containing Copper and Chromium known commercially as 'Tiscrom' was manufactured at TISCO Jamshedpur. The chemical composition of high strength steel is so balanced as to obtain the requirement of integration of several properties such as strength, resistance to impact, increase of corrosion and abrasion resistance, ease of forming satisfactory welding. The available quality of steel especially carbon steel which was widely used for bridge truss construction could not take high stress before failure so large sections were required adding to unnecessary dead weight and material cost. The total quantity of Howrah Bridge steel weighed about 26500 tones consisted of high tensile steel, mild steel, cast and forged steel. The consignment of the steel was supplied by Tata Iron and Steel Co. for construction of the Howrah Bridge superstructure. Such a lofty achievement revolutionized the steel industry in India. The issue was highly recognized and was even discussed at the Presidential address of Indian Science Congress, Varanasi, 1941.

(iv) **The Construction of the Bridge:** Fabrication and erection of steel work of the Howrah Bridge across river Hooghly of Calcutta was done by the contractor agency Cleveland Bridge and Engineering Company Ltd. of Darlington, UK, as per design of consultant firm Rendel Palmer & Tritton, Westminster London. The fabrication work was however carried out by the sub-contractor Braithwaite Burn and Jessop Construction Company (BBJ) in its workshops at Calcutta.

The superstructure of the bridge was erected with the help of a special type of crane called creeper crane. It was designed especially for the work by the agency called Wellman Smith Owen Engineering Corporation Ltd. The crane unit was specially designed for the purpose of erection of the cantilever bridge. The crane consisted of two 60 ton slewing and derricking jib cranes lifting load at 40ft (12.19m) radius on a main frame structure designed to travel along the top chord, the cranes had to creep the anchor arm lying at an angle of approximately 30° to horizontal and

pass over the apex of the tower and descend on the main cantilever chords of the central span at angles varying for about 22° at the tower to about 9° near the end of the arm. Therefore to form a path along which the crane has to move 'fleeting tracks' were provided and placed on bridge chords.

(v) **The Bridge Superstucture**: The Howrah Bridge is a suspended balanced cantilever steel truss bridge. The bridge is primarily constructed of built-up steel sections riveted together. The bridge is of through type; the deck hangs between the two main piers from suspenders (hangers 39 nos) from the lower chord. The anchor portion does not carry the deck and they are located at ground level. The main span of the bridge is 1500ft (457.2m) between centres of the main pier. The main span is composed of two cantilever spans and a suspended span. The two cantilever arms are 468ft (142.6m) long and a suspended span is 564ft (171.9m). The anchor arms are each 325 feet (99.06m) long. The main trusses of the bridge are spaced 76 feet (23.16m) and the road is 71 feet wide (21.64m) between the kerbs accommodating eight lanes of vehicular traffic and two 15 feet (4.5m) cantilever footways on either side of the bridge for the pedestrian. The two towers of the bridge are 270 feet (82.3m) high above road level and 76ft (23.16m) apart at the top the giant towers were bolted down at the base with the pier. The cantilever and the suspended span are connected with pin connection, forming a hinge. This arrangement is made through vertical member which carriers only vertical axial load. There are expansion joints between the cantilever and the suspended span to accommodate charges of temperature due to heating and cooling of the steel truss, by sun rays etc. The main towers are sufficiently flexible to accommodate elastic deformation of the structure in the plane of the bridge. The bridge was officially opened to service in 1943, in the midst of 2nd World War, so no formal opening took place and a solitary tram crossed the bridge. It is currently the sixth longest cantilever bridge in the world. Sir Hubert Shirley-Smith, a distinguished British Civil Engineer was the Chief Engineer of Howrah bridge project.

(vi) Maintenance of the Steel Bridge: It is a routine job that every 5th or 6th year the Howrah Bridge is painted with anti-corrosive paint material. Fresh tenders were invited by Kolkata Port Trust in 2014 for painting of the bridge. *The Hindu* reported that about 26000 litres of lead-free paint shall be used for painting the bridge. The paint job was monitored by the National Test House Alipore for the quality of paint, the thickness etc. The bridge requires 6 coats of paint and primer to keep the bridge superstructure corrosion free. At first, the old paint and rest shall be removed from the structure. This is followed by two coats of a primer of zinc chromate which has anti-corrosive properties. Then two coats of aluminum paint shall be applied for further protection, following which the final two layers of chlorinated rubber-based paint shall be applied so that the shade will be of steel colour as before.

(vii) **Pollution affecting the Bridge:** For last few years, a major problem was observed, that dropping of birds, bats etc. are threatening the life of the steel structure. These bird droppings cause gradual rusting and corrosion of the steel sections which reduces the lifespan of the Bridge. Wastes thrown from the nearby flower market into the Hooghly river is leading to soil and water pollution. The base structure of the bridge is being damaged because of this pollution. As reported in *The Times of India*, May 31th 2003, Kolkata Port Trust has engaged contractor's for regular cleaning of bird excreta for the steel surface of the bridge for 365 days across the year. They have also drawn attention of the administration and the police to prevent throwing of flower water in the river. *The Telegraph* reports that an internal study of Kolkata Port Trust has revealed that due to vehicular pollution and moisture, corrosion was revealed on the Bridge structure.

A steel truss bridge which was commissioned and opened to traffic on 1943 has successfully served for 82 years and it is one of the busiest bridges with heavy vehicular traffic. The Howrah Bridge was designed at a time when there was no well-developed code for design and construction of bridge, and the engineers had to apply their own judgment for designing of bridges. The material of construction, high tensile low alloy steel which was used for construction of the bridge was a completely new type of material to be used for the first time in such a huge quantity for bridge construction.

The major loading on the bridge during design and commissioning was only animal-driven carts, occasional motorized vehicles and military trucks during war-like activity. But now the bridge is crossed by 1,00,000 motorized vehicles daily, heavy-loaded trucks and 1,50,000 pedestrians regularly cross the bridge. Thus the Howrah Bridge, a suspended balanced cantilever truss bridge on monolith foundation, may be easily claimed as an excellent example of steel bridge construction which has successfully served the purpose in its service life and continues to do so. Thus it is a perfect example of a functional heritage structure.

Ancient Vishnu Temple: From Ruins to Restoration

Arunendu Banerjee
Life Member, The Asiatic Society

In the recent years by the invitation of West Bengal Heritage Commission, Government of West Bengal, the author of this article, visited a declared ancient Heritage-Temple site in Jhargram, West Bengal as a Consultant to inspect and investigate the present condition of the ancient Vishnu Temple and also to suggest technical methodology for possible urgent restoration work, now in dilapidated condition. This was also an interesting time when as a Consultant, a difficult built-heritage conservation work was undertaken and going-on in Gope Palace of West Midnapur. Built-heritage of the Palace was in serious dilapidated condition and finally with our joint participatory efforts, heritage Palace building is finally restored. Just prior to this work as Consultant of West Bengal Heritage Commission conservation, restoration of built-heritage — Rabindra Bhavana, Mungpoo was completed and then Rabindra Bhavana Museum, Mungpoo, Darjeeling is also created. In this hill-cottage, Rabindranath stayed four times during the last period of his life between 1938 and 1940.

As the Consultant of Vishnu Temple work, the author visited the site and it was a shocking experience to find the serious dilapidated, fractured condition of the temple, covered with unwanted tree branches, bushes, shrubs and almost in ruins. The temple is located in Chilkigarh, Jhargram within large medicinal reserve forest– Chilkigarh bio-diversity heritage site with rare varieties of flora and fauna, near Dulung River and Adivasi village in Kanak Durga Temple complex with rich treasures of tangible, intangible and natural heritage. Multiple failures in temple were observed in structural, architectural and environmental elements. The temple was in a dangerous situation– almost vertically sliced into two parts and somehow standing as an unstable equilibrium. We were informed that there was a devastating lightning strike long ago on the temple and from then the temple was abandoned. Chilkigarh Rajbari, trustee of the temple shifted the idol of Vishnu from here to Rajbari area.

After careful removal of shrubs-bushes and debris detailed photographic and measurement-drawing survey were undertaken from all possible corners to identify extent of wounded condition of the temple physically. It could be identified that it is rare *Pancha Ratna* - Five *chura* - pinnacle-creststyled 'Vishnu Temple'. Ancient Vishnu *chakra* was discovered lying inside fractured-gap of rooftop structure near central *chura* - pinnacle, somehow existed in dilapidated temple structure. Central pinnacle and

two rear side pinnacles were in serious dilapidated state. In the front side two *churas* – pinnacles were missing. Structural components of the temple architecture were in unstable state, rather in collapsing stage; somehow it was standing due to earlier lime - *surki* good quality mortars of remaining old structural components and by penetrated roots of unwanted shrubs-bushes which somehow worked as binders. Major plastered surfaces were damaged; some areas were missing and flaked away due to erosion and non-maintenance of the temple for several years. Serious vertical cracks from top to bottom level made the heritage temple look like it was sliced in two parts in this abandoned temple, almost standing as ruin. Ancient design plaques in outside walls were not available instead sand-lime borders with empty space were observed. Two rare ancient heritage relief design with artistic creativity of stone plaques like 'Garuda' image – the mount of Vishnu could be discovered lying in heaps of debris inside the temple, made our finding surer as Vishnu temple. Some broken parts of ancient terracotta plain tiles, laterite -makra stone blocks and bricks in pieces could be discovered from the debris inside the temple. These proved to be important references for conservation work. After successful temple restoration work both heritage stone plaques are now fixed in the front entry wall.

Front *alinda* – *dalan* and *chatal* area of the temple was totally missing including front arch columns, steps and semi-arched roof – which are generally the significant features of such type of *Ratna* Temple. Front and side timber doors of the main temple zone were in collapsing - bending stage. Access into the sanctum sanctorum was undertaken with great difficulties due to heaps of collapsed temple building parts formed into debris. Physical inspection of serious fractured interior condition of temple architecture was observed by entering into the inner core zone. The *Garbhagriha* area – the innermost sanctuary of the temple – the 'sanctum sanctorum' is important for understanding the basic architectural cultural features of the temple. *Garbhagriha* is the location for the main deity - *murti* or worshipped Idol; it is generally the significant focal point of worship and rituals. Major portion of rear wall and vaulted roof-ceiling were in dilapidated state, almost punctured through and through. Outside lights were entering from top and also from inside walls which made our restoration work more difficult. Design of 'sanctum sanctorum' could be identified and also the shape structure of brick-built roof vault and load-bearing walls.

After deep enquiries and substantial efforts for several months of searching the earliest possible Vishnu temple photo-image reference, ultimately two photos could be discovered lying in the old storage of adjacent later-built (1937) Kanak Durga Temple. From these photos, temple architectural features could be finally identified as it was east-facing 'Pancha Ratna Vishnu Temple' with east-facing *alinda* - veranda, semi-arched roof with triple arches deco-columns in front and small size open arch wall-column on two sides. There were also two open arches in northern and southern sides. Main entry was from east side. As per guiding norms for conservation — restoration work primary reference document is mandatory. After finding the necessary reference complete temple drawing with technical

working schedule and detailed project report is prepared for the commencement of at-site restoration work.

In the communication by West Bengal Heritage Commission, it is mentioned as 250 year-old 'Vishnu Temple'. In a research-based book (1) on local history it is referred that the temple was constructed during the period of Biswarup Tripathi – the then Raja of Chilkigarh. He was a worshipper of Vishnu. He is the descendent of Balabhadra Tripathi- earlier Raja of Chilkigarh. They had direct connection with Orissa. Both Biswarup and his wife Mahamaya Devi were worshippers of Vishnu. In this Temple, there is an influence of Orissa temple-style in structure, material use and foundation design. Overall, Bengal *gharanapanchachura- ratna-* styled 'temple architectural design' is adopted here.

Office of the District Magistrate, Jhargram assisted and executed the conservation, restoration and retrofitting work as per guidance and schedule of work and working methodology designed by us as Consultants on behalf of West Bengal Heritage Commission. As Consultants, our responsibility was also to periodically supervise and inspect the work as per detailed schedule of work up-to completion stage.

After dedicated participatory technical efforts of 'all' concerned involved in the work, finally conservation work of the seriously dilapidated, fractured 'Vishnu Temple' has been completed by systematic structured process of restoration and retrofitting work of several months. It is made possible by concerted efforts of engineers, artisans, skilled masons and carpenters – to save the ancient national treasure. This work after successful completion- 'from

Before

After

ruins to restoration' once again proved the vitality of united creative strength of coded and uncoded knowledge of India. Especially the skilled artisans, masons and carpenters involved in this work rendered their devoted, untiring and dedicated service with their traditional knowledge for the temple which is - one of the most difficult restoration and conservation works.

Connected restored area including Vishnu Temple is: 14 metre x 14 metre. Construction materials of this heritage temple are predominantly with dressed *makra* stone, burnt clay bricks, and burnt clay square tiles with lime surki mortar. Lime surki mortar, lime plastering and lime punning are used. Temple dimension is 6120 mm wide x 4400 mm length; plus 1820 mm wide *dalan* in front of three arches columns and two- sided open arch entry in veranda - *chatal*(*alinda*) area. Overall dimension of the Temple with plinth protection is – 7.76m wide x 7.6m length x 9.15m Height. Three sided plinth projection is around- 820 mm wide. Front main door of the temple is top arch style, timber double- leaf door: 1120 mm- wide x 1870 mm- high. Side door of the Temple is top arch style, timber double-leaf door: 750 mm- wide x 1870 mm- high. Temple load-bearing wall is around 40 inches (1.01m) wide.

At present, this elegant – heritage temple is in restored condition - structural, architectural and as glorious design-built heritage. Complete renovation and restoration work both in exterior- interior and plinth- foundation protection and structural safety measures have been taken through non-stop renovation, retrofitting and restoration work in step by steps with necessary safety measures by providing steel scaffolding and shoring support systems during this important heritage work. Restoration of *chura*s (pinnacles), entire temple with strengthening and with front *alinda (dalan)*, three arches columns with decorative designs- have been undertaken following heritage working technical schedule. Interior work of 'sanctum sanctorum' is undertaken by suiting conservation, restoration work including roof vault, flooring, walls, *kulungi*s, arches and *bedi*.

Finally, this ancient 'Pancharatna Vishnu Temple' is restored and opened to visitors and scholars as special attraction of academic, tourism and pilgrimage after long years – from 'ruins to restoration'.

Reference

(1) Satpati Mrinal Kanti Dr., *Devi Kanakdurga: Itihas o Lokabiswas,* Bengali, Rajashree Publication, Kolkata, 2018. pp. 14

Correspondences of Eminent Scientists associated with The Asiatic Society

Many eminent scientists and academicians were closely associated with The Asiatic Society of Bengal. They enriched the Society in many ways like publishing scientific papers on their groundbreaking inventions in the Journal of the Society, as a fellow or member of the Society. As a result of this, they had made many correspondences with the Society which are preserved as archival documents.

Smt. Manjula Chowdhury, former Senior Cataloguer of the Museum Section documented and accessioned the letters of the eminent scientists. In a series of articles, the correspondences of those scientists excluding the responses that they had received from the Society, will be highlighted and published for the cognizance of the readers.

Upendranath Brahmachari

Letters of Upendranath Brahmachari:

Sir Upendranath Brahmachari (1873-1946) was a renowned Indian scientist and physician who contributed groundbreaking work in tropical medicine and discovered urea stibamine for the treatment of a deadly parasitic disease Kala-azar (visceral leishmaniasis). His discovery had a significant impact on public health, saving countless lives in India and beyond. This prominent person was conferred Rai Bahadur and Knighthood by the British Government.

Throughout his illustrious career, Brahmachari held several prestigious positions and received numerous honours. He was elected fellow of The Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1921. Besides that, he served as the President of The Asiatic Society of Bengal for two years (1928-29).

Correspondences of Upendranath Brahmachari that he made with The Asiatic Society of Bengal are preserved in the archives of the Society and are mentioned below:

1. *1912, 25th February, 10, Nimtolaghat Street, Calcutta*

   Rai Bahadur Upendranath Brahmachari, Member of The Asiatic Society of Bengal, informs the General Secretary of The Asiatic Society of Bengal that at the next General Meeting of The Asiatic Society, he intends to read a paper 'The Alkaloidal Principles and Therapeutic Properties of "Dhanmarua or Chat-Chanda"'.
   (HLS) 1 Pg. The letter was received on 27.02.1912.

2. *1912, 4th March*

   U. N. Brahmachari wants to read a short paper on 'A Case of Black Water Fever' at the next meeting of the Medical Section.
   (HLS) 3 Pgs. The letter was received on 05.03.1912.

3. *1919, 3rd December, 82/3 Cornwallis Street*

   U. N. Brahmachari acknowledges with thanks the letter dated 1st December, 1919 and agrees to serve as a member of the Council of The Asiatic Society for 1920; He also thanks the Council for nominating him for the same.
   (HLS) 1 Pg.

4. *1929, 7th November, 31, Queens Way, New Delhi*

   U. N. Brahmachari thanks V. Manen for his letter informing him that his paper has been accepted for publication in the Journal and entered in the agenda of the Monthly Meeting, also informs that he has got a cheque from Major S. L. Mittra (Mitha?), Shillong for membership of The Asiatic Society.
   (HLS) 2 Pgs. The letter was received on 09.11.1929

5. *1930, 15th January, 82/3 Cornwallis Street, Calcutta*

   Dr. Brahmachari informs the General Secretary that the next meeting of the Medical Section of The Asiatic Society to be held on the 20th instant and he wants to read his paper 'Treatment of Kala-azar with Intramuscular Injection of N-Phenyl-glycineamide-P-Stibinate of Sodium'
   (HLS) 1 Pg. The letter was received on 17.01.1930.

6. *1930, 26th February*

   Dr. Brahmachari informs V. Manen that they all feel that it would be desirable to make some arrangements for tea and light refreshments in monthly meeting of The Asiatic Society of Bengal and if there is no objection, he (Brahmachari) will be very happy to bear the expenses for such an arrangement, he already takes permission from Sewell (the President of the Society); requests to start this arrangement from the next monthly meeting in March.
   (ALS) 1 Pg. The letter was received on 28.02.1930.

7. *1930, 27th February*

   U. N. Brahmachari forwards to V. Manen for the use of The Asiatic Society-
   1) 2 doz. tea cups & saucers Eng.
   2) 2 doz. half plates Eng.
   3) 2 pcs sugar basins Eng.
   4) 1 pc milk jug Eng.

5) 2 doz. tea-spoons E. P. N. S.
6) 1 pcs Enamelled Kettle English

(ALS) 1 Pg. The letter was received on 28.02.1930

8. *1930, 6th October, 82/3 Cornwallis Street, Calcutta*

Dr. Brahmachari sends to V. Manen his Presidential Speech for the Science Congress (Medical Section).
(HLS) 1 Pg. The letter was received on 07.10.1930.

9. *1933, 25th April*

Dr. Brahmachari requests V. Manen to ask the Consul-Generals of Italy and France to suggest the names of some good firms in Southern parts of Italy and France where Kala-azar occurs, who may stock Urea Stibamine (Brahmachari) as one of the products of the Brahmachari Research Institute. There have been some enquiries about this product from these parts of Italy and France, so he requests Manen to help the Brahmachari Research Institute with the name of some principal chemists who may be interested in the products of the institute; sends to Manen some copies of the literature on Urea Stibamine (Brahmachari).
(ALS), 1 Pg.

10.1934, 12th September

Dr. Brahmachari thanks Manen for his letter dated 05.09.1934 and says any day during the holidays in the first week of November, 1934 will be suitable.
(ALS), 1 Pg. The letter was received on 13.09.1934

Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis

Letters of Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis:

Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis was a prominent Indian mathematician who had important contributions to statistics and its application in meteorology and anthropology. He was the founder of the Indian Statistical Institute which became a pioneering institute in the field of research, teaching and application of statistics, natural sciences and social sciences.

The correspondences he had with The Asiatic Society of Bengal are mentioned below:

1. *1920, 15th January (?), 210 Cornwallis Street, Calcutta*

P. C. Mahalanobis informs A. H. Harley (Hon. Secretary of the

Society) that he has accepted his nomination as a member of the Council which was mentioned in his (Harley) letter no. 67 dated 15.01.1921 and requests to note that his correct academic initials are- B.Sc. (Cal), M.A. (Cautab) and also he is not F.R.S.E.
(HLS) 1 Pg. The letter was received on 22.01.1921.

2. *1920, 6th March, Calcutta (letter ref. no. 479)*

   P. C. Mahalanobis forwards to the Hon. Secretary a Cheque for Rs. 41/-, his admission fee and 1st quarterly subscription; requests to insert his name in the membership and gives his full name and address.
   (HLS) 1 Pg.

3. *1922, 7th September, Zoological Survey of India,Indian Museum, Calcutta*

   P. C. Mahalanobis informs Dr. Annandale that the statistical analysis of Indian anthropometric data is being seriously hampered for wants of funds; understands that The Asiatic Society obtains from the Government of Bengal a special grant, the primary object of which is the encouragement of the study of anthropology in the province; enquires is it justified for him to apply for a part of this grant; if so, requests to place his applications before the Council.
   (HLS) 2 Pgs.

4. *1922, 9th November, Presidency College, Calcutta*

   P. C. Mahalanobis forwards to the Secretary a paper "On the general method for solving bi-quadratic equation by radicals" – by Nripendra Nath Chattopadhya for communication to the Society.
   (HLS) 2 Pgs. It is a draft letter and the letter no. is 957.

5. *1922, 21st November, The Observatory, Alipore, Calcutta*

   P. C. Mahalanobis gives a note to S. W. Kemp regarding the grant for Biometrical Research.
   (ALS) 1 Pg.

6. *1923, 19th January*

   P. C. Mahalanobis seeks to know from W. Kemp why no paper on Physical Science was published by The Asiatic Society during the year under review.
   (HLS) 1 Pg.

7. *1924, 8th May, Alipore, Calcutta*

   P. C. Mahalanobis thanks Van Manen for electing him Physical Science Secretary of The Asiatic Society.
   (HLS) 1 Pg.

8. *1925, 31st December, The Observatory, Alipore, Calcutta*

   P. C. Mahalanobis informs V. Manen that he will be present on Monday to say a few words about his paper.
   (ALS) 1 Pg. The letter was received on 31.12.1925.

Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray

Letters of Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray:

Acharya Prafulla Chandra Ray was an eminent Indian chemist, industrialist and philanthropist. This prominent scientist brought academia and industry under one umbrella. His deep knowledge in ancient chemistry and his inventions recognized him as a father figure in the Indian chemical industry. He was a fellow and member of The Asiatic Society of Bengal where he published his groundbreaking research on mercurous nitrite. His first research paper from India was on the chemical examination of certain Indian foodstuffs was published in the *Journal of The Asiatic Society of Bengal*. He also acted as the President of the Nagpur Session of the Indian Science Congress in 1920.

Few correspondences of this great person from the archives of the Society are mentioned below:

1. ***1905, 6th July, Presidency College, Calcutta***

   P. C. Ray gives a note on "Rasārnava"; suggests if Rasārnava and Rasara were carefully edited after a comparison of the different Mss and included in the *Bibliotheca India* Series, they might be rescued from neglect and oblivion and in future consulted by those scholars who are interested in the subject, informs a considerable portion of the manuscript has already been made ready for the Press and in the editorial work he (Ray) has been associated with Pandit Haris Ch. Kaviratna.
   He (Ray) requests the Philological Secretary (A.S.) to submit his letter to the Publication Committee of the *Bibliotheca Indica* and to inform him their decision.
   (HLS) 3 Pgs.

2. ***1912, 24th September, Presidency College, Calcutta***

   P. C. Ray forwards a paper by his pupil Jatindra Nath Rakshit, for publication in the Journal of the Society.
   (ALS) 1 Pg.

3. ***1912, 25th September, Presidency College, Calcutta***

   P. C. Ray forwards to the Secretary (A. S.) four papers by K. Bhaduri and R. L. Dutta for publication. As it takes a long time for publication in the Journal, requests to stamp these papers with the seal of the Society and the date of receipt.
   (ALS) 1 Pg. The letter was received on 02.10.1912

4. *1912, 26th November, Presidency College, Calcutta*

   P. C. Ray forwards to the Hon. Secretary the two papers entitled- a. Zincoso-zincic Chloride and b. Double sulphates of barium of the hetro-clyclic bases.
   (HLS) 1 Pg.

5. *1912, 18th December, Presidency College, Calcutta*

   P. C. Ray thanks W. A. K. Christie for his suggestion mentioned in the letter dated 03.12.1912 and returns the paper entirely rewritten.
   (ALS) 1 Pg.

6. *1916, 11th November, College of Science, Calcutta*

   P. C. Ray informs the Assistant Secretary (A.S.) that Rajendralal (Bengal Government Research Scholar) is anxious to consult some books in the library of the Society; requests to give him necessary permission.
   (ALS) 1 Pg. The letter was received on 14.11.1916.

7. *1916, 17th November, College of Science, Calcutta*

   P. C. Ray informs the Secretary that Meghnad Saha (Assistant Professor, Science College) has occasion of consulting some periodicals in the library of the Society; requests to permit him to use the library of the Society.
   [In the same letter S. W. Kemp gives his opinion on the matter.]
   (ALS) 1 Pg. The letter was received on 18.11.1916.

8. *1916, 4th December, Science College, 92, Upper Circular Road, Calcutta*

   P. C. Ray informs F. H. Gravely that in reply of his letter no. 2382 dated 02.12.1916, he will be glad if his name be proposed for a sit in the Council.
   (ALS) 1 Pg. The letter was received on 15.12.1916.

9. *1917, 7th March, Science College, Calcutta*

   P. C. Ray thanks the Hon. Secretary for sending him a list of new books on Physical Science which the Imperial Librarian has offered to supply; says he also likes to have a complete list of books and periodicals on Physical Science which are already at the Library of the Society.
   (ALS) 2 Pgs. The letter was received on 08.03.1917.

10. *1918, 12th February, University College of Science, Calcutta*

    P. C. Ray informs the Assistant Secretary that he must send per V. P. P. "Rasarnava" published in the *Bibliotheca Indica*, to the gentleman, as per enclosed postcard.
    (ALS) 1 Pg.

11. *1918, April, University College of Science, Calcutta*

    P. C. Ray forwards to W. A. K. Christie a paper on 'Porphyroxime' by J. N. Rakshit (Chemist of the Opium Deptartment, Ghazipur) who won the Elliott Prize some years ago.
    (ALS) 1 Pg. The letter was received on 06.04.1918.

12.1918, 23rd April, University College of Science, Calcutta

P. C. Ray requests W. A. K. Christie to publish the paper of Meghnad Saha.
(ALS) 1 Pg.

13.1918, 7th March, Science College, Calcutta

P. C. Ray informs W. A. K. Christie that Meghnad Saha is going to read his paper at the meeting but regrets his inability to present at the meeting; thinks he (Christie) has gone through Rakshit's paper; requests to give a synopsis of it to the meeting in five minutes.
(ALS) 1 Pg.

14. 1919, 16th April, Science College, Calcutta

P. C. Ray informs W. A. K. Christie that he has received his letter no. 868 dated 16.04.1919 regarding the bill for International Catalogue; thinks that the bill may be withheld till volume 'Q' is received.
(ALS) 1 Pg.

15. 1919, 4th May, Calcutta

P. C. Ray sends to Christie a paper entitled 'Interaction of Phosphorous Halides and Arsenious and Arsenic Compound', it contains many interesting and unrecorded observations; suggests to publish it in the Journal.
(ALS) 1 Pg.

16. 1919, 1st July, College of Science, Calcutta

P. C. Ray informs W. A. K. Christie that he has received his (Christie) letter no. 1494 dated 28.06.1919 regarding reading the paper on PCl_3 and $AsCl_3$ by N. N. Sen, but he is suffering from insomnia and not possible to attend the meeting; requests him (Christie) to give a five minutes synopsis of it to the meeting.
(HLS) 1 Pg. It is a post-card.

17.1919, 2nd September, Chemical Department, College of Science, Calcutta

P. C. Ray informs W. A. K. Christie about the paper on 'Radiation Pressure' which was looked over by Dr. Meghnad Saha of Physical Science Department, is well-worth publishing in Society's Journal; says he has not been able to do any work for his ill-health; suggests to look for a young and energetic Natural History Secretary for the next session.
(ALS) 2 Pgs.

18. 1919, 17th December, Science College, Calcutta

P. C. Ray returns to W. A. K. Christie the paper with the opinion of the mathematical expert.
(ALS) 1 Pg.

19.1920, 11th March, Science College, Calcutta

P. C. Ray requests W. A. K. Christie to send the Elliott Prize money awarded to J. C. Ghosh per bearer Bhowaniprasad.
(HLS) 1 Pg.

Abbreviations used:

ALS – Typed-letter with autograph
HLS – Handwritten letter with signature

[To be Continued]

Compiled by
Surajit Manna
Museum Section, The Asiatic Society

Programme on Rajendralala Mitra

The Asiatic Society held a programme to commemorate the remarkable legacy of Raja Rajendralala Mitra, the first Indian President of the Society, on 25th July 2025 at Humayun Kabir Hall of the Society.

The programme commenced at 11:30 a.m. with the garlanding of the portrait of Raja Rajendralala Mitra by Lieutenant Colonel Anant Sinha, Administrator of The Asiatic Society. This was followed by the felicitation of the esteemed guests and speakers, Professor Tapati Mukhopadhyay, former Vice-Chancellor of Sidho-Kanho-Birsha University and Former Director of Culture & Cultural Relations, and Adhyaksha, Rabindra-Bhavana, Visva-Bharati University and Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, former Vice-Chancellor of Vidyasagar University by the Administrator.

The Administrator delivered the introductory speech, wherein he highlighted the pivotal role played by Raja Rajendralala Mitra in the intellectual and cultural awakening of 19th-century India. He emphasized Mitra's pioneering work in Indology, his scholarly pursuits, and his leadership within The Asiatic Society as its first Indian President.

This was followed by a deeply engaging lecture by Professor Tapati Mukhopadhyay, who spoke eloquently about the life, work, and vision of Raja Rajendralala Mitra. Her presentation highlighted Mitra's pioneering contributions to the study of Indian antiquity, his unwavering commitment to preserving India's cultural heritage, and his influential role in shaping modern Indian identity through historical scholarship.

L to R: Professor Tapati Mukhopadhyay, Lieutenant Colonel Anant Sinha and Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick at the programme

The session concluded with remarks by Professor Swapan Kumar Pramanick, who offered an insightful summary and contextual reflection on the lasting influence of Raja Rajendralala Mitra in the domains of history, archaeology, and institutional development.

The programme concluded with a formal Vote of Thanks offered by Shri Arupratan Bagchi, Administrative Officer, The Asiatic Society.

An Exhibition-cum-Seminar on Tiger

On the occasion of International Tiger Day, The Asiatic Society, Kolkata organized 'An Exhibition cum Seminar on Tiger' on 29th July 2025 (Tuesday) at the historic Vidyasagar Hall of Sir William Jones Bhavan (Heritage Building) of The Asiatic Society. The event brought together conservation experts, researchers, and enthusiasts to promote awareness about tiger conservation and to celebrate the cultural and ecological significance of this majestic species. The programme commenced at 3 p.m. with the garlanding of the bust of Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar by Dr. Pritam Gurey, Librarian of The Asiatic Society. Dr. Gurey then delivered Welcome Address to the audience, emphasizing the importance of the tiger in India's wildlife heritage and the Society's commitment to environmental education. This was followed by remarks from Shri Srijan De Sarker, Research Fellow (Language & Linguistics Fellowship), and the collector of the exhibition materials. He offered valuable insights into the unique items displayed—ranging from archival prints to rare memorabilia—highlighting global and historical representations of tigers in art, print culture, and everyday objects.

Dr. Pritam Gurey, Smt. Mita Sinha and Shri Subhankar Sen Gupta releasing the Bookmark.

The seminar featured two distinguished speakers who shared their field experiences and professional insights. Shri Subhankar SenGupta, IFS (Retd.), former Field Director of Buxa Tiger Reserve and Ex-Officio Chief Conservator of Forests, spoke about the challenges and achievements in tiger conservation during his extensive career. His talk provided a deep understanding of conservation practices and forest management. Smt. Mita Sinha, the first lady Tiger Census Officer in the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, shared her pioneering experiences in wildlife census operations. Her address highlighted the critical role of women in conservation and the unique challenges of working in the Sundarbans ecosystem.

A Special Bookmark was formally released to commemorate the occasion, symbolizing the message of tiger conservation and marking the event's significance.

This was followed by the screening of a documentary film titled 'Dorakata', focusing on tigers. The screening was complemented by a presentation of tiger-

Tigers in Print: A Curated Display of Global Matchbox Art and Collectibles

themed match labels from around the world, offering a unique blend of art, history, and wildlife conservation, and adding a creative dimension to the day's message.

The programme ended with the National Anthem.

Seminar to commemorate 150 years of 'Vande Mataram'

To commemorate 150 years of the composition of 'Vande Mataram'—a landmark in Indian literary and nationalist history—The Asiatic Society, in collaboration with *Sadinama*, organized a thought-provoking seminar on 8th August 2025, at the Humayun Kabir Hall of the Society. The programme brought together distinguished speakers and scholars to reflect on the historical, cultural, and literary significance of Vande Mataram, penned by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in 1875. The occasion was made even more poignant as it also marked the death anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore, observed on the 22nd day of the Bengali month of Sravana. Tagore not only composed the musical rendition of Vande Mataram but also played a pivotal role in popularizing it during India's freedom struggle.

The programme commenced at 3 p.m. with the collective rendition of the National Song, Vande Mataram. This was followed by a ceremonial offering of flower petals by the invited dignitaries to the portraits of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore. Welcome Address was delivered

by Dr. Pritam Gurey, Librarian, The Asiatic Society. This was followed by Introductory Remarks by Dr. Jitendra Jitanshu, Editor of *Sadinama*.

The Academic Session was chaired and moderated by Dr. Ramkumar Mukhopadhyay, former Secretary (Eastern Region), Sahitya Akademi, and Former Director, Publishing Department, Visva-Bharati University. In his brief remarks, Dr. Mukhopadhyay contextualized Vande Mataram as a cultural and political text, noting its enduring impact on the collective imagination of India. Sri Partha Pratim Chattopadhyay, Research Assistant, Bankim Bhavan Gaveshana Kendra, opened the academic session with a meticulously researched presentation on the historical trajectory of Vande Mataram. He examined the genesis of the song in Bankim Chandra's *Anandamath* (1875), its literary structure, and its transformation into a political mantra during India's freedom struggle. His talk highlighted how the song straddled the spheres of devotion and revolution. Shri Priyankar Paliwal, eminent Hindi poet, editor, and former Senior Hindi Officer (Selection Grade), CSIR-Central Glass & Ceramic Research Institute, Kolkata, spoke on the linguistic, poetic, and pan-Indian appeal of Vande Mataram. He highlighted how the song, though deeply-rooted in Bengali literature, resonated across linguistic boundaries and inspired freedom fighters across India. His address also touched upon the emotional and aesthetic dimensions of the text, viewing it as a literary work that transcended time and geography. Dr. Sanjay Kumar, Principal and Secretary of Lalbaba College, offered a comprehensive analysis of the song's role in the freedom struggle and its journey to becoming a national symbol. Each speaker offered a unique perspective, enriching the audience's understanding of Vande Mataram's historical, cultural, and political significance.

Officials and Dignitaries at the programme.

The seminar concluded with a Vote of Thanks by Shri Arupratan Bagchi, Administrative Officer, The Asiatic Society. Dr. Keka Adhikari (Banerjee), In-Charge, Academic Section, The Asiatic Society, successfully coordinated the programme.

Stakeholder Consultative Workshop

The Ministry of Jal Shakti, through the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), has undertaken a significant initiative titled the 'Biodiversity Conservation and Ganga Rejuvenation' project, implemented by the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), with the Jalaj project forming one of its most prominent components, designed to realize the broader Arth Ganga vision by interlinking ecological rejuvenation with sustainable community livelihoods. Within this initiative, the role of Ganga Praharis, who are trained local volunteers, becomes central as they actively support biodiversity conservation efforts, river rejuvenation activities, and promote community-led income-generating initiatives rooted in environmental stewardship. The Jalaj Centres established under this program operate across five thematic models, namely — Livelihood Centres, Awareness and Sale Points, Dolphin Safaris, Homestays, and Health and Wellness Centres, each aimed at serving as focal points of ecological awareness, economic empowerment, and public engagement. With an overarching goal of establishing 75 Jalaj Centres, increasing awareness about the richness of aquatic biodiversity, and encouraging eco-tourism, sustainable local enterprise, and community involvement, a State-Level Stakeholder Consultative Workshop was organized to strengthen inter-sectoral coordination, improve operational efficiency, devise strategic marketing frameworks, and identify new feasible sites for expansion throughout the state of West Bengal.

Glimpse of discussions among stakeholder representatives on expanding Jalaj Awareness and Sale Points across the Ganga basin in West Bengal

A 'Stakeholder Consultative Workshop: Enhancing Coordination, Efficiency, and Marketing Strategies to Ensure Sustainability of Jalaj Models in West Bengal' was held on 12th August, 2025 at the Biswa Bangla Convention Centre in Kolkata, and saw the participation of over 150 stakeholders drawn from various sectors, including government departments, non-governmental organizations, self-help producer groups, private industry representatives, academic institutions, and cultural bodies, thereby creating an inclusive and collaborative platform for meaningful dialogue, idea exchange, and joint

strategizing to ensure the sustainability and scalability of Jalaj models within the state. As part of this initiative, The Asiatic Society deputed two representatives—Shri Akash Das from Academic Section and Shri Surajit Manna from Museum Section—to participate in this important workshop.

The inaugural session of the workshop commenced at 10:30 a.m. with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by the Chief Guest, Shri Debal Ray, IFS, Principal Secretary and Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, West Bengal, who was felicitated by Dr. Ruchi Badola, Dean of the Faculty of Wildlife Sciences at WII, with similar honours extended to other dignitaries by Shri Saurav Gawan, Project Scientist, WII, and Dr. S.A. Hussain, Former Scientist G and Co-Project Investigator of the NMCG-WII projects. The welcome address was delivered by Shri Saurav Gawan, followed by an overview of the workshop's objectives and anticipated outcomes presented by Dr. S.A. Hussain, which led into a detailed progress update on the NMCG-WII project in West Bengal by Dr. Ruchi Badola, offering insights into the achievements and milestones of the initiative within the region. A particularly notable highlight of the inaugural session was the virtual inauguration of 'Jalaj Sundari' at Sajnekhali in the Sunderban Tiger Reserve, a moment that also marked the official release of the West Bengal Project Progress Report, further underlining the progress and expansion potential of the Jalaj initiative in this ecologically sensitive landscape.

Subsequent keynote addresses were delivered by Shri Sandeep Nautiyal, IFS, Chief Wildlife Warden of West Bengal, Shri G. Asok Kumar, IAS, Former Director General of NMCG, and Shri Debal Ray, each of whom emphasized the importance of convergence between conservation, livelihoods, and local ownership, culminating in a vote of thanks offered by Shri Zeeshan Ali, Project Scientist at WII, thereby formally concluding the inaugural proceedings. After this, the workshop transitioned into thematic breakout groups, with each group aligned with one of the five Jalaj models, allowing for in-depth discussions, experience-sharing, and site-specific planning; among these, Group B, which focused on Jalaj Awareness and Sale Points, included the representatives from The Asiatic Society, who made significant contributions by proposing several heritage-linked urban and peri-urban sites for new Jalaj installations.

The proposed sites included the iconic Prinsep Ghat in Kolkata, the eco-tourism-friendly Garchumuk Zoological Park in Howrah, the historically resonant Mangal Pandey Ghat in Barrackpore, and the culturally significant Rani Rashmoni Ghat near the heart of Kolkata, each selected based on their rich historical and cultural value, accessibility, and high visitor traffic, and viewed as prime locations for the establishment of interpretive kiosks, facilitation of heritage walks, and the promotion of eco-friendly products made by SHGs and Ganga Praharis, such as terracotta crafts, jute-based items, and herbal goods.

The collective recommendations of Group B were later presented by Dr. Tapas Kumar Gupta of IIT Kharagpur, who consolidated suggestions from The Asiatic Society and other contributing institutions, advocating for the prioritisation of high-footfall, heritage-rich locations for future Jalaj expansion, the active engagement of cultural and academic institutions for educational programming and interpretation, the promotion of eco-tourism and citizen science, and the cultivation of CSR partnerships and market linkages to ensure economic viability and long-term impact. These recommendations were subsequently shared during the summary session, moderated by Dr. Ruchi Badola, where each group presented its key takeaways: Group A emphasized the importance of branding and training for Jalaj Homestays; Group C discussed sustainable design principles for community-led Dolphin Safaris; Group D proposed wellness centres grounded in Ayurvedic traditions; and Group E outlined livelihood strategies for strengthening SHG capacities and market integration.

The workshop concluded with a broad consensus on the formulation of a statewide roadmap for the expansion of Jalaj Centres, rooted in interdisciplinary collaboration, multi-sectoral convergence, and the strategic inclusion of Ganga Praharis as on-ground facilitators of awareness, conservation, and community mobilization. The participation of The Asiatic Society was recognized as pivotal in anchoring heritage and cultural values within the ecological framework of Jalaj, and in demonstrating how archival knowledge, institutional legacy, and public engagement can collectively enhance environmental sustainability efforts.

Group photograph featuring multi-sectoral stakeholders attending the State-Level Workshop on Jalaj Models in West Bengal

Observance of
79th Independence Day
at
Different Premises of The Asiatic Society

Park Street

Salt Lake

Ballygunge

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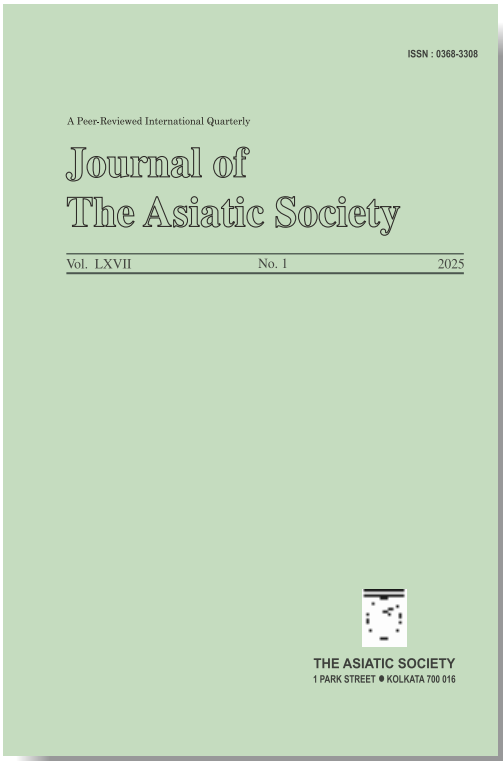

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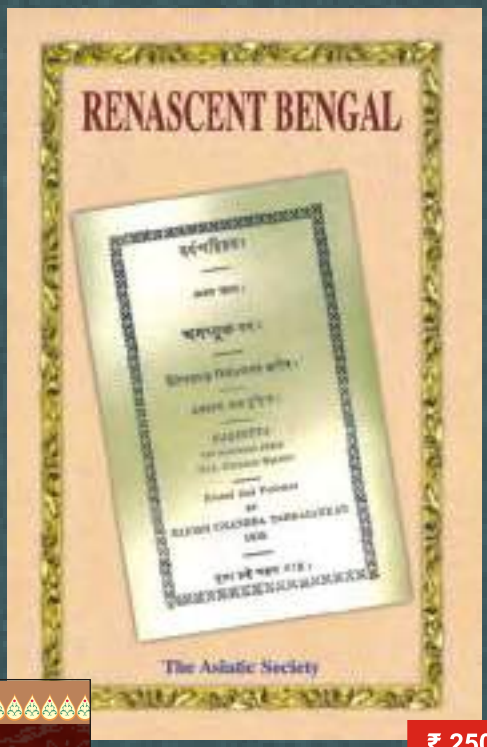

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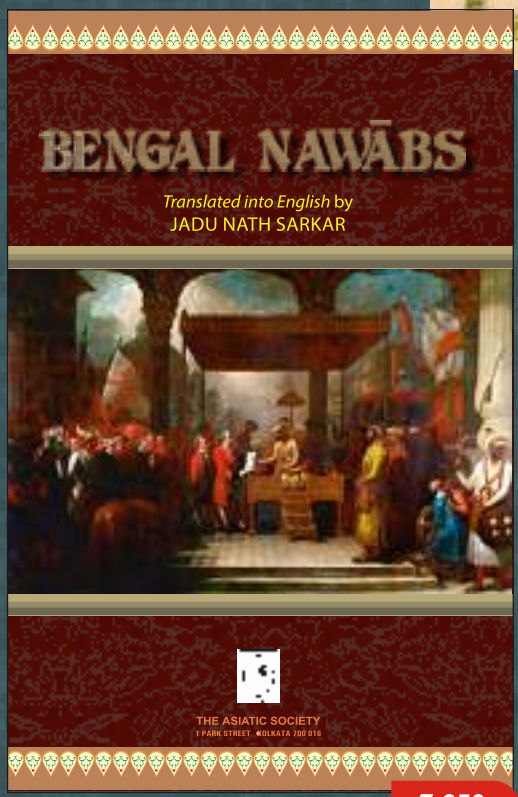

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