

# Sadbhavana

## DIGEST

### Sadbhavana (সুভেচ্ছা) in Bengal



“Power said to the world, “You are mine.” The world kept it prisoner on her throne. Love said to the world, “I am yours.” The world gave it the freedom of her house.”

- Rabindranath  
Tagore

# Sadbhavana Digest

## Issue #8, December 2021

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Poush Mela at Shantiniketan

## Editorial

The Sadbhavana Digest is a new format, multiple perspective, multi-media publication. As the annual Poush Mela begins every year in Shantiniketan on the 23rd of December, this issue of the Sadbhavana Digest is focused on the exploration of Sadbhavana in Bengal. Normally, in each issue, we explore three key themes of our times, namely:

Theme 1 - How can we relate to ourselves better?

Theme 2 - How can we relate to other human beings better? And,

Theme 3 - How can we humans relate to nature better?

However, as the letter reproduced below indicates, the Guest Editor decided to use another format.

### Letter from the Guest Editor, Dr Sankar Datta, an alumnus of Shantiniketan

Vijay,

I thought about our conversation last evening. It is useful and thought provoking. But difficult to actualise. In my article, with leads to other work you want me to capture what these thought leaders of Bengal thought about the (1) Relation with Self (2) Relation with Other Human Beings and (3) Relation with Nature.

But most of them (barring Rabindranath and Vivekananda) have said what they had to say about Sadbhavana, through their action and not necessarily through their writing. Let's take the case of Ram Mohan Roy. Bengali weekly Samvad Kaumudi was the most important journal that he published. The Atmiya Sabha published an English weekly called the Bengal Gazette and a Persian newspaper called Miratul-Akbar. Copies of these, though available at National Library Kolkata, have not been digitized.

Similar Vidyasagar wrote books called Barna Parichay (Part 1&2), Vyakaran Kaumudi. The first structuring the Bengali alphabets in a systemic manner and second a grammar text book. None of these talk about self, or other people, or the nature. But the fact that he set up the first (second in India) school for girls, fought to get widow remarriage legislated doesn't that speak volumes about his Sadbhavana.

Now, let's come down to more recent time. Kadambini Ganguly may have written more prescriptions for patient, than books or articles on Self, Other People and Nature. But doesn't the fact that she fought her way to become the First Lady Doctor in India speak volumes? Even coming to those engaged in scientific pursuit, such as Jagadish Chandra Bose, was not recognized for his discovery of radio transmission, because he did not 'publish'. Even his discovery of plants having life was un-noticed as he did not write.

So, in my view, what they thought about Self, Other People and Nature is best captured through their actions, which I have tried to capture in my article.

- **Sankar Datta**

In the spirit of Sadbhavana, we have accepted the structure and content put together by the Guest Editor for the issue, Dr Sankar Datta. We have to admit that it required a broad-minded approach to understand how some of the thinker-doers mentioned, contributed to Sadbhavana though they adopted revolutionary or military tactics or scientific enquiry as their means.

However, with the approval of the Guest Editor, the Editor has added three essays by Tagore, covering the three regular themes of the Sadbhavana Digest, one each on how to deal with the self, with other human beings and with nature. Tagore's essay on the self is longish, but we strongly recommend it to our readers.

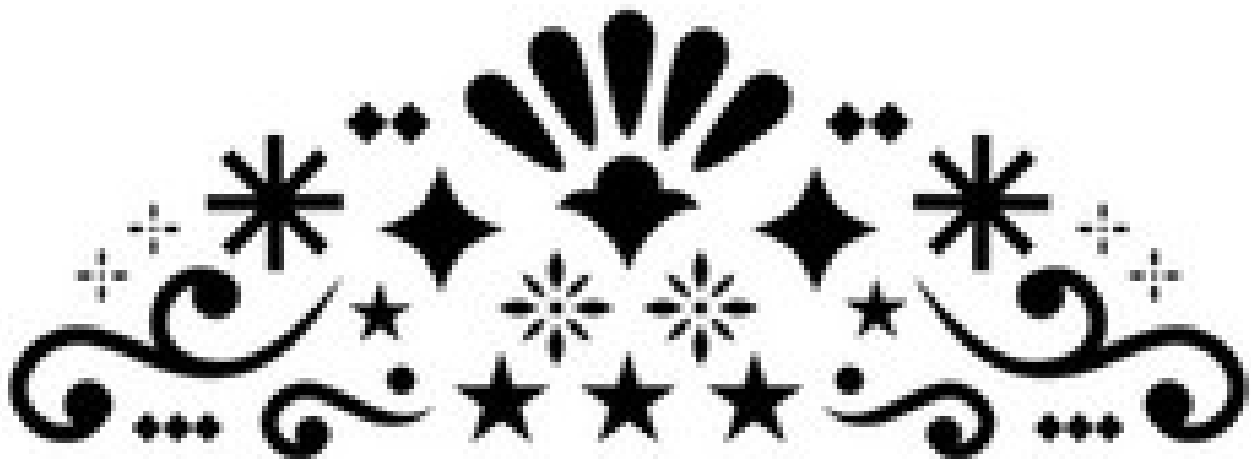
Though the Guest Editor was not convinced, (after all, we Indians are argumentative, and for Bengalis arguments are like Sandesh, to be relished), we have also added sourced articles on Satyajit Ray, Ravi Shankar, Ashapurna Devi, Mahasweta Devi and Amartya Sen.

# Emergence of Seven Streams of Sadbhavana

## Thinking in Bengal

Bengal has had a long tradition of सद्भावना whose literal meaning is feelings about well-being of others, sincere fellow-feeling or simply goodwill. We see there were seven streams of सद्भावना emerging in Bengal.

Religious Reform for Social Change			Thinking of India as a Nation	Education with special focus on Women	Focus on Scientific Inquiry	Post-Independence
Bhakti Movement	Form-less Universal Power	Devotion to Human Forms				
Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1485-1533) and Guru Nanak meets Chaitanya	Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833)	Ramkrishna (1836-86)	Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891)	Chittaranjan Das (1870- 1925)	Prafulla Chandra Ray (1861-1944)	Marxist Influence (1930s-2010)
Fakir Lal Shah (1774-1890)	Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905)	Keshub Chandra Sen (1838-1884)	Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)	Surya Sen (1894-1934)	Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858-1937)	Satyendra Nath (1894-1974)
	Henry Derozio (1809-1831) and Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-1873)	Vivekananda (1863-1902)	Ashutosh Mukherjee ( 1864 - 1924)	Subhas Chandra Bose (1897-1945)	Kadambini Ganguly (1861-1923)	Satyajit Ray and Ravishankar (1920-2012)
Sarada Devi (1953-1920)	Kadambari Devi (1859 - 1884)	Sister Nivedita (1867-1911)	Sarala Roy (1859-1946)	Matangini Hazra (1869-1942)	Bibha Chowdhuri (1913-1991)	Ashapurna Devi (1909-1995) and Mahasweta Devi (1926-2016)





# Sadbhavana through Bhakti -The Pursuit of the Divine

## **Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1485-1533)**

The saint who gathered together the various strands of Bengali Vaishnavism, became a reformer, and founded a sect with enormous influence on Bengal religious life was Visvambhar Misra, later known as Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (1485-1533). We can see Sadbhavana in the Bhakti Movement that flourished from the 16th century in Bengal and coastal Odisha. Bhakti (devotion), conceived as complete sense of love for all beings as a part of the divine, superseded all other forms of religious practice. It challenged the rituals that were a part of the then Hindu culture, including the well-entrenched caste system. Many of the bhakti songs of Chaitanya became quite popular in Bengal. Folk songs like प्रेमे जखन मोज़बे रे मोन, के बा हॉडी के बा डोम। (when you really immerse yourself in love, it does not matter if the other person is of the lower castes - like the Handis engaged in manual disposal of waste and excrement, or the Doms, engaged in performing the last rites).



(Source: By Calcutta Art Studio - British Library, cropped from original, Public Domain, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=9770688>)

Chaitanya's influence on the cultural legacy in Bengal and Odisha has been significant, with many residents performing daily worship to him as an avatar of Krishna. Some attribute to him a Renaissance in Bengal, different from the more well-known 19th-century Bengal Renaissance. Salimullah Khan (b. 1958), a noted Bangladeshi linguist, maintains, "Sixteenth-century is the time of Chaitanya Dev, and it is the beginning of Modernism in Bengal. The concept of 'humanity' that came into fruition is contemporaneous with that of Europe".<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaitanya\\_Mahaprabhu#Teachings](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chaitanya_Mahaprabhu#Teachings)

## Guru Nanak's meeting with Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu



The 200 years spanning the 15th to 16th centuries A.D., was surely the golden era of the Bhakti movement in India. In retrospect, there is no doubt that it was by divine arrangement that the land was flooded with saints of the devotional school at a time when Muslim rulers ruled over most of northern India, while the Bahmani Sultans and the Christian missionaries were making inroads in the south.

At this critical juncture, several great saints appeared on the horizon: Goswami Tulsidas (1497-1623), Kabir (1398-1517), Chandidas and Vidyapati (15th century Bengal), Meerabai (1501-1573), Tukaram (1608-1649), Samarth Guru Ramdas (1605-1681), Purandar das, Bhakt Narsi Mehta of Junagarh (Kathiawar), Shree Daduji (1544-1603) of Gujarat and Bhakt Nabhadras (c. 16th century), Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1538), Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, Nityananda Prabhu, Haridas Thakur, Madhavendra puri, Sri Vallabhacharya, Swami Haridas, Surdas and many more.

A contemporary of Mahaprabhu, Guru Nanak was older to Mahaprabhu by 16 years. He departed five years after the disappearance of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Nanak sought a religious path that avoided the formal structures of both Islam and Hinduism. However, in the Guru Granth Sahib,

there are frequent references to Har Krishen, Gobind, Gopal and Ram. Thus most of the names for God in Gurbani come directly from Vaishnava bhakti school. Clearly, Nanak dev ji believed in a God that was both formless and full of form. Nirgun as well as Sagun. One does not negate the other. Both coexist at the same time, resonating with Sri Chaitanya's philosophy of 'Achintya Bhed Abhed' (inconceivable unity in duality).

In 1506 Nanak visited seven regions across India. He lived for 71 years and within his life time he is believed to have spent 25 years travelling all over the country from Himalaya to Cape Comorin. He also visited Macca and Madina, Turkey and China. It has been estimated that he had walked about 50,000 miles on foot with wooden sandals. He also converted Raja Seonath, the king of Ceylon to his own religion. Before proceeding towards Ceylon he visited Orissa. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and Guru Nanak both met at Puri and spent some time there. This is recorded in Chaitanya Bhagbat of Iswar Das written in Oriya in 17th Century.

A popular legend is told of how Guru Nanak was entering the temple of Lord Jagannath, he met Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu who was coming out. Both offered pranams to each other. Then Nanak turned and started to leave the temple. Mahaprabhu asked him why he was not going inside to have darshan. Guru Nanak replied 'I have already seen the Lord'.

In the Granth Sahib, it is written:

**"Swasi grasi harinam samali,  
Simar bus vishwambhar ak"  
(In order to attain salvation,  
one must chant the holy name of Ram, Hari or Vishwambhar.)**

Source: [https://www.srigaurangashram.in/guru\\_nanak\\_and\\_mahaprabhu.htm](https://www.srigaurangashram.in/guru_nanak_and_mahaprabhu.htm)

## Fakir Lalon Shah (1774 – 1890)

Similar challenging of the traditional form became quite popular in Bengal, as could be reflected in many of the 18th Century folk songs of Lalon Fakir. Also known as Lalon Shah, Lalon Fakir was a prominent Bengali philosopher, author, Baul saint, mystic, songwriter, social reformer and thinker in British India. Regarded as an icon of Bengali culture, he inspired and influenced many poets, social and religious thinkers including Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, and Allen Ginsberg. He "rejected all distinctions of caste and creed". Widely celebrated as an epitome of religious tolerance, he was also accused of heresy during his lifetime and after his death. In his songs, Lalon envisioned a society where all religions and beliefs would stay in harmony.

Sab Loke Koy Lalon Ki Jaat Ei Sansare  
Fokir Lalon bole jaat er ki rup  
Dekhlam na ei nojore  
Shunnot dile hoy musholman  
Nari jaater ki hoy bidhan  
Ami bamun chini poiter proman  
Bamni chinbo ki kore ?

सब लोके कय लालन की जात संसारे  
फ़क़ीर लालन बले जातेर की रुप  
देखलाम ना अई नज़रे।  
सून्नोत दिले हय मुसलमान  
नारिर जातेर की हय बिधान?  
आमी बामोन चीनी पैते प्रमाण,  
बामनी चिनबो की कोरे?





## Some songs of Fakir Lalon



Source: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/ea/1d/72/ea1d72637ab6f4d5be5fae0fa55d3e9c.jpg>



To listen, click on <https://youtu.be/-vgZzv9OKzQ>

Prevalence of this type of folk songs also indicates that at that time people in Bengal were not only challenging the religious divide between the Hindu and Musalman, but was also challenging the orthodoxy of the gender divide. Similar messages of gender/caste/ religious equality could be found in other folk songs of Bengal, such as Kirtan and Baul.



# Religious Reform: Formless Brahmo Upasana

## Western Influence

English language teaching in Bengal was introduced by the East India Company. Ever since the East India Company established its trading stations in Hughli and Jassore in the 1630s and came in direct contact with the trading people. English as a commercial medium began to be cultivated by the local officials of the company. In commercial dealings, the Company engaged local people as interpreters, who became the earliest natives to communicate in mixed Persian, English and Bangla. The *firman* (an oriental sovereign's edict or a grant or permit) granted in 1651 by Shah Shuja to the East India Company was issued in Persian accompanied by its English translation.

However, overcoming the taboos attached with going overseas (Kala Pani)<sup>2</sup> the first educated South Asian to travel to Europe and live in Britain was Shaikh Mirza Syed Muhammad I'tisam ud-Din Panchnuri, a Bengali Muslim cleric, munshi and who represented the Nawab of Bengal, Syed Mir Jafar Ali Khan Bahadur, to the Mughal Empire. I'tisam ud-Din was also appointed as a munshi serving the East India Company. He had drafted and written the text of the 1765 Treaty of Allahabad. He arranged an audience of the officers of the Company with the Emperor Shah Alam at Jahazgarh. He was sponsored to study the British System of administration, which the Nawab found very rational. I'tisam al-Din arrived in England 1765 with his servant Muhammad Muqim during the reign of King George III.

This indicated not only the Nawab's appreciation of the British system of administration, but also willingness of I'tisam ud-Din to break out of several social taboos and go abroad. But more interestingly, these indicate that ground in Bengal was quite ready for a changes that followed, what the western education system brought in.

The educational reforms introduced by the East India Company in the late 18th century and the early 19th century saw the establishment of institutions like the Asiatic Society (1784), Fort William College (1800), Serampore College (1817), Hindu College (1817), Sanskrit College (1824) and others which were exclusively meant for the elite Bengalis in order to educate them according to the European idea of education, learning and value judgement.

This socio-political change in the educational scenario of Bengal quite naturally gave birth to a new intellectual class of Bengalis who perceived the idea of European education as the ideal form of learning and who would later give birth to the Bengal Renaissance and in turn change the panorama of the literary tradition of the 19th century Bangla.

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<sup>2</sup> The kala pani (lit. black water) represents the proscription of the over-reaching seas in Indian culture. According to this prohibition, crossing the seas to foreign lands causes the loss of one's social respectability, as well as the putrefaction of one's cultural character and posterity. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kala\\_pani\\_\(taboo\)#:~:text=The%20kala%20pani%20\(lit.,one's%20cultural%20character%20and%20posterity.](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kala_pani_(taboo)#:~:text=The%20kala%20pani%20(lit.,one's%20cultural%20character%20and%20posterity.)

But this exposure to English form of education left its mark on Bengal. A large number of young Bengalis started propagating rational thinking and countered many of the religious practices that had become fossilised. With this advent of the British East India Company's rule over Bengal, the mainstream literary tradition of the land was transported from its rural base to a highly 'sophisticated' urban elite society. The roots from which Bangla literature had evolved for hundreds of years was soon side-lined and termed as 'folklore' and the rural storytellers whose narratives revolved around a specific religious or social aspect was soon substituted by the educated and intellectual Bengali 'babus' of Calcutta, the then capital of the East India Company. This renaissance became the new Sadbhavana.

According to historian Romesh Chunder Dutt,

"The conquest of Bengal by the English was not only a political revolution, but ushered in a greater revolution in thoughts and ideas, in religion and society... From the stories of gods and goddesses, kings and queens, princes and princesses, we learnt to descend to the humble walks of life, to sympathise with the common citizen or even common peasant.

There is little doubt that the early 19th century the Bengali intellect learned to raise questions about social political arrangements, traditions and beliefs under the impact of British rule in the Indian subcontinent. In a unique manner, Bengal had witnessed an intellectual awakening that deserves to be called a Renaissance in European style.

The new intellectual avalanche of European knowledge, especially philosophy, history, science and literature through the medium of education in English may be said to have affected contemporary mind and life very radically."

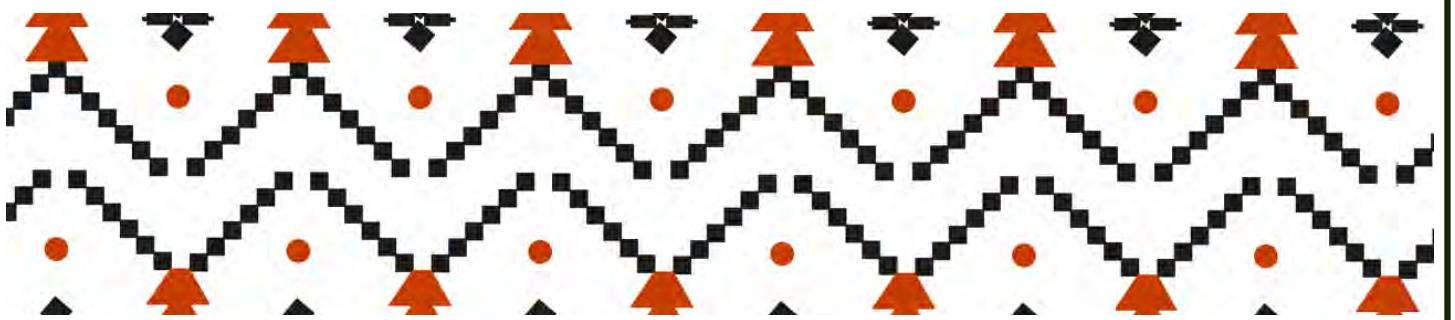
Renaissance minds included Raja Rammohan Roy (1774-1833), Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809-1831) and his radical disciples Debendranath Tagore (1817-1905) and his followers, Akshay Kumar Datta (1820-1826), Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-91), Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-73), Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838-94), Rabondranath Tagore (1861-1941) and Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902).

Some of the significant changes that can be observed in this period were:

- Appearance of a large number of newspapers and periodicals
- Growth of numerous societies and associations
- Emergence of a number of reform movements, both religious and social

This also led to

- A secular struggle for rational freethinking
- Growth of modern Bengali literature
- Spread of Western education and ideas
- Fervent and diverse intellectual inquiry
- Rise of nationalism challenging the foreign subjugation of country



## Raja Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833)

One of the prime movers in this movement, Ram Mohan Roy was born a Rarhi Kulin (noble) Brahmin. Among Kulin Brahmins – those from the Rarhi district of Bengal were notorious in the 19th century for living off dowries by marrying several women. Kulinism was a synonym for polygamy and the dowry system, both of which Rammohan campaigned against. Ram Mohan started his formal education in the village pathshala where he learned Bengali and some Sanskrit and Persian. Later he is said to have studied Persian and Arabic in a madrasa in Patna and after that he was sent to Benares to learn the intricacies of Sanskrit and Hindu scripture, including the Vedas and Upanishads.

From 1803 till 1815, Roy worked as a 'munshi' (private clerk) to Thomas Woodroffe, registrar of the Appellate Court at Murshidabad. Roy resigned from the post and then worked for John Digby, an East India Company collector. Between 1810 and 1820, he published numerous works on a wide range of subjects including religion and politics. In 1830, Ram Mohan Roy travelled to the UK as an ambassador of the Mughal Empire to ensure that Lord William Bentinck's Bengal Sati Regulation, banning the practice of Sati, was not overturned. In addition, he persuaded the British government to increase the Mughal Emperor's stipend by £30,000. In 1831, the Mughal Emperor Akbar II conferred the title 'Raja' on him.



Source: [https://images.indianexpress.com/2016/08/raja\\_ram\\_mohan\\_roy-759.jpg](https://images.indianexpress.com/2016/08/raja_ram_mohan_roy-759.jpg)

Ram Mohan Roy was quite concerned about the malice of the Hindu religious practices. In his letter written to James Silk-Buckingham on January 18, 1818 he stated how the “present system of religion adhered to by the Hindus is not well calculated to promote their political interests.” This is because of the distinction of castes, introducing innumerable divisions & subdivisions among them, has entirely deprived them of patriotic feeling and the multitude of religious rites and ceremonies; and the laws of purification have totally disqualified them from undertaking any difficult enterprises. It is necessary that some change should take place in their religion, at least for the sake of their political advantage & social comfort.

In 1828, Roy set up the Brahmo Samaj, a reformist movement of the Hindu religion that aimed at fighting social evils that were prevalent in the society. He opposed superstitious practices, customs such as Sati, polygamy, child marriage, the rigidity of the caste system and its excesses, and sought property inheritance rights for women. As a result of his hard work in fighting Sati, the governor of the Bengal Presidency, Lord William Bentinck, formally banned the practice on December 4, in the year 1829.







## Debendranath Tagore (1817–1905)

Debendranath Tagore was a Hindu philosopher and religious reformer, active in the Brahmo Samaj (earlier called Bramho Sabha or the “Society of Brahma,” also translated as Society of God). On his initial visits to the Brahmo Sabha, Debendranath noticed how people of all castes and creeds were welcomed in without discrimination. He ran a separate theological society called Tatwabodhini Sabha (literally meaning Understanding the Basic Principles), but later decided to merge the two and take over the Brahmo movement.

Many think that it was he who converted the Brahmo Samaj, a rationalist movement, which decried the rituals associated with any religion, into a religion, Brahmo Dharma. Debendranath argued that before adopting any practice, especially as a religion, we must understand the basic principles behind such practice. Debendranath wrote voluminously in his native Bengali. His Brahmo-Dharma (1854; “The Religion of God”) is a commentary on the ancient Sanskrit scriptures and their application in the then current context.

Until his death Debendranath Tagore bore the title Maharishi (“Great Sage”). Devendranath Tagore with twenty followers accepted the Brahmo creed from Ram Chandra Vidyabagish on 21 December 1843 (7 Poush 1250 according to the Bengali calendar). This was the basis of Poush Utsav (the Festival of Poush) at Shantiniketan.



## Poush Mela (পৌষ মেলা) – A Festival of Sadbhavana

Poush Mela (Bengali: পৌষ মেলা) is an annual fair and festival that takes place in Santiniketan, in Birbhum District in the Indian state of West Bengal, marking the harvest season. Commencing on the 7th day of the month of Poush, the fair officially lasts for three days, although vendors may stay until the month-end as per the university regulations. From 2017 onwards the fair lasted for six days. The key characteristic of this fair include live performances of Bengali folk music, such as baul, kirtan and Kobigan.

From 1894 onwards, the Poush Mela has been organized every year, .except for three times due to the Bengal Famine of 1943, Direct Action Day of 1946 and the COVID-19 pandemic. In earlier days the mela (fair) was held in the ground on the north side of Brahma mandir (also referred to as glass temple). On that day, a firework display was held in earlier days after evening prayers. As the mela increased in size, it was shifted to the field in Purbapalli.



Poush Utsav is inaugurated on 7 Poush (around 23 December). At dawn, Shantiniketan wakes up to the soft music of shehnai. The first to enter the scenario is the Vaitalik group, who go round the ashrama (hermitage) singing songs. It is followed by a prayer-meeting at Chhatimtala. Then the entire congregation moves on to Uttarayan singing songs.

Poush Mela is characterized by the live performances of Bengali folk music, especially the baul music. It includes folk songs, dances and tribal sports. This fair offers a perfect insight of the true heritage of the state. The students of Shantiniketan present their magnificent performance and make this festival more enjoyable and glamorous. Each day of this festival is filled with different activities. The last day of this fair is devoted to those who are related to Shantiniketan.



# Sadbhavana through Spiritual Pursuit

At this time another set of social reformers emerged in Bengal, who also thought religious reforms were essential for a harmonious society. They were opposed to religious rituals most of which were based on blind adoption of conventional preaching. This led to a new form of Sadbhavana – through spiritual pursuit.

## **Ramakrishna Paramahansa (1836-1886)**



Source:  
[https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/\\_GleGTXkeNd5YBPz9Q-DXrMpr0IshNdyvoRkT02IfqTB5uwpE3Dkp28FAk6CMXK1i4mlVC3dyCdztUOVyKSicVTEIHkVWvMyeukCP\\_DFO-mrldhV](https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/_GleGTXkeNd5YBPz9Q-DXrMpr0IshNdyvoRkT02IfqTB5uwpE3Dkp28FAk6CMXK1i4mlVC3dyCdztUOVyKSicVTEIHkVWvMyeukCP_DFO-mrldhV)

Gadadhar Chattopadhyaya, who came to be known as Ramakrishna Paramahansa later attended a village school, and not a school with English methods of education, for 12 years. He later rejected the traditional schooling saying that he was not interested in a "bread-winning education". He started establishing contacts with various sages and ascetics, from whom he became well-versed in the Puranas, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and the Bhagavata Purana, hearing them from wandering monks and the Kathaks—a class of men in ancient India who preached and sang the Purāṇas. He could read and write only in Bengali. He then grew up practicing Bhakti towards Lord Rama and his duties as a priest at the Dakshineswar temple led him to practice worship of Mother Kali.

Ramakrishna stated that religious reform was absolutely necessary, but not by obfuscating the existence of God, but by surrendering to the God, in any form, following any set of rituals. Lord Krishna, Mother Kali, or Christ all are same, whether you believe in god with a form or even formless, monotheist or polytheist or even an atheist, all you need to do is to surrender. Ramakrishna drew from several religious

approaches, including devotion toward the Goddess Kali and observance of elements from Tantra, Bhakti, Vaishnava, and Advaita Vedanta, as well as dalliances with Christianity and Islam. He held that the world's various religious traditions represented "so many paths to reach one and the same goal." His followers came to regard him as an avatara (reincarnation), or divine incarnation, as did some of the prominent Hindu scholars of his day.

There itself he challenged the tradition of distinction between Shaktism with Vaishnavism and Shaivism. He offered pujas to both with equal sincerity. This world view of the different sects of the Hindu religion, his mystical temperament and ecstasies gradually gained him widespread acknowledgement, attracting to him various spiritual teachers, social leaders, Bengali elite and scores of lay followers frequented Dakshineswar to spend some time with him. In 1866, Govinda Roy, an Islamic teacher who practised Sufism, initiated Ramakrishna into Islam. Ramakrishna was so impressed by Govinda's faith and love for God that he decided to engage himself into experiencing the spiritual mood through Islam, reasoning, "This also is a path to realisation of God; the sportive mother, the source of infinite Lila, has been blessing many people with the attainment of her lotus feet through this path also. I must see how through it she makes those who take refuge in her, attain their desired end."

After his death, his chief disciple Swami Vivekananda popularized his ideas among Western audiences and founded both the Ramakrishna Math, which provides spiritual training for monastics and householder devotees, and the Ramakrishna Mission, to provide charity, social work and education.



## Sarada Devi (1853-1920)



Source: [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarada\\_Devi](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sarada_Devi)

Sarada Devi was the wife and spiritual consort of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, a nineteenth-century Hindu mystic. Sarada Devi is also reverentially addressed as the Holy Mother (Sri Sri Maa) by the followers of the Sri Ramakrishna monastic order. The Sri Sarada Math and Ramakrishna Sarada Mission situated at Dakshineswar is based on the ideals and life of Sarada Devi. She played an important role in the growth of the Ramakrishna Movement.

She was only six years old while Ramakrishna was 23 years old. After the marriage, Sarada mostly stayed at Jayrambati and joined Ramakrishna in Dakshineswar Kali temple at the age of eighteen. According to her biographers, both lived "lives of unbroken continence, showing the ideals of a householder and of the monastic ways of life". After Ramakrishna's death, the disciples of Ramakrishna regarded her as their own mother, and looked to her for advice and encouragement. The followers of the Ramakrishna movement and a large section of devotees across the world worship Sarada Devi as an incarnation of the Adi Parashakti or the Divine Mother.

Ma Sarada poured to the world a love as divine as that of the Universal Mother who could never show any discrimination towards any section of humanity. When she was old and living in her village Jayrambati, a man called Amjad came to her. A well-known thief in the area, he belonged to the Muslim community, who then were silk weavers. Colonial rule destroyed their livelihood, and many of them indulged in robbery. Amjad had also been arrested for robbery and released.

When the local people refused to serve Amjad, Holy Mother defiantly said that for her, 'Amjad was as much her child as Sarat' (Swami Saradananda was one of the beloved disciples of Sri Ramakrishna.) Then, she proceeded to serve him food with her hands. For the mother, a hungry child cannot be barred by any social division.



Source: <https://swarajyamag.com/culture/remembering-sarada-devi-mother-saint-revolutionary>

## Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902)



Born Narendranath Datta, he was one of the most powerful disciples of the 19th-century Indian mystic Ramakrishna. Influenced by Western esotericism, he was a key figure in the introduction of the Indian darsanas (philosophy, teachings, and practices) of Vedanta and Yoga to the Western world, and is credited with raising interfaith awareness, bringing Hinduism to the status of a major world religion during the late 19th century. He was a major force in the contemporary Hindu reform movements in India, and contributed to the concept of nationalism in colonial India. He is perhaps best known for his speech which began with the words "Sisters and brothers of America ...," in which he introduced Hinduism at the Parliament of the World Religions in Chicago in 1893. Subhash Chandra Bose drew significant inspiration from him.

Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/80/Swami\\_Vivekananda\\_1893\\_Scanned\\_Image.jpg/375px-Swami\\_Vivekananda\\_1893\\_Scanned\\_Image.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/8/80/Swami_Vivekananda_1893_Scanned_Image.jpg/375px-Swami_Vivekananda_1893_Scanned_Image.jpg)

At the age of eight, Narendranath enrolled at Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar's Metropolitan Institution, for his schooling. Later Narendra joined Keshab Chandra Sen's Nava Vidhan. Narendra became a member of a Freemasonry lodge "at some point before 1884" and of the Sadharan Brahmo Samaj in his twenties, a breakaway faction of the Brahmo Samaj led by Keshab Chandra Sen and Debendranath Tagore. From 1881 to 1884, he was also active in Sen's Band of Hope, which tried to discourage youths from smoking and drinking. For Vivekananda's thoughts on Holistic Development through Religious Harmony, click on <https://www.swamivivekananda.guru/2021/05/12/holistic-development-through-religious-harmony-part-2/>





## Sri Aurobindo (1872-1950)



Originally named Aurobindo Ghose, Sri Aurobindo was a yogi, seer, philosopher, poet, and Indian nationalist who propounded a philosophy of divine life on earth through spiritual evolution. Aurobindo was educated at the University of Cambridge, where he became proficient in two classical and several modern European languages. After returning to India in 1892, he held various administrative and professorial posts in Baroda and Calcutta. Turning to his native culture, he began the serious study of Yoga and Indian languages, including classical Sanskrit.

From 1902 to 1910 Aurobindo partook in the struggle to free India from the British raj (rule). As a result of his political activities, he was imprisoned in 1908. Two years later he fled British India and found refuge in the French colony of Pondichéry (now Puducherry) in southeastern India, where he devoted himself for the rest of his life to the development of his “integral” yoga, which was characterized by its holistic approach and its aim of a fulfilled and spiritually transformed life on earth. In Pondichéry he founded a community of spiritual seekers, which took shape as the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1926. In that year he entrusted the work of guiding the seekers to his spiritual collaborator, Mirra Alfassa (1878–1973), who was called “the Mother” in the ashram. The ashram eventually attracted seekers from many countries throughout the world.

The evolutionary philosophy underlying Aurobindo’s integral yoga is explored in his main prose work, *The Life Divine* (1939). Rejecting the traditional Indian approach of striving for moksha (liberation from the cycle of death and rebirth, or samsara) as a means of reaching happier, transcendental planes of existence, Aurobindo held that terrestrial life itself, in its higher evolutionary stages, is the real goal of creation. He believed that the basic principles of matter, life, and mind would be succeeded through terrestrial evolution by the principle of supermind as an intermediate power between the two spheres of the infinite and the finite. Such a future consciousness would help to create a joyful life in keeping with the highest goal of creation, expressing values such as love, harmony, unity and knowledge and successfully overcoming the age-old resistance of dark forces against efforts to manifest the divine on earth.

Source: [https://gumlet.assettype.com/swarajya%2F2018-06%2Fb753e932-cea7-4ae8-b7bd-d45cb46b200a%2Ffc5800da\\_a5ae\\_4ff1\\_9fa3\\_0b1ffb08199b.jpg?q=75&auto=format%2Ccompress&w=1200](https://gumlet.assettype.com/swarajya%2F2018-06%2Fb753e932-cea7-4ae8-b7bd-d45cb46b200a%2Ffc5800da_a5ae_4ff1_9fa3_0b1ffb08199b.jpg?q=75&auto=format%2Ccompress&w=1200)

Aurobindo’s voluminous literary output comprises *The Life Divine*, his major works include *Essays on the Gita* (1922), *Collected Poems and Plays* (1942), *The Synthesis of Yoga* (1948), *The Human Cycle* (1949), *The Ideal of Human Unity* (1949), *Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol* (1950), and *On the Veda* (1956).

(Source of article: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sri-Aurobindo> )

# Education as the Basis of Sadbhavana

## **Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891)**

The other most significant Sadbhavana thinkers who influenced thinking of well-being of not only Bengal but also the whole of India was Ishwar Chandra Bandyopadhyay, later known as Vidyasagar. He was one of the most powerful Indian educator and social reformer of the nineteenth century. He, citing various Upanishad scriptures, argued that women also have right to get educated and need to be educated as much as men do. Almost around the same time when Savitribai Phule set up the first school for girl's education in Pune, Ishwar Chandra along with John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune, with support from Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, Ramgopal Ghosh, and Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, founded the Calcutta Female School in 1849. The school started in Mukherjee's home in Baitakkhana (now known as Bowbazar), with 21 girls enrolled.

In 1854, Ishwar Chandra took up a strong resistance against the Wood's Despatch, considered the Magna Carta of Indian education which primarily focused on education of the upper classes. As he advocated equality of men-women, upper-lower castes, took strong objection favouring education of upper echelons of the society. In 1859, the government's education policy reiterated "the spread of vernacular elementary instruction among the lower orders" Ishwar Chandra again jumped on the battle ground. He wrote "As the best, if not the only practicable means of promoting education in Bengal, the Government should, in my humble opinion, confine itself to the education of the higher classes on a comprehensive scale" and leave the education of the masses to private initiatives.



Source: <https://cdn.dnaindia.com/sites/default/files/styles/full/public/2019/05/16/823849-ishwar-chandra-vidyasagar-portrait.jpg>

Ishwar Chandra did not stop with the education of the Bengali girls (of upper and lower castes) only. He spent several years in Karmatar, a sleepy tribal hamlet about 20 km from the district headquarters of Jamtara, starting in 1873. He set up a girls' school and a night school for adults on the premises of his house, which he called Nandan Kanan. He also opened a free homeopathy clinic to provide some medical care to these unprivileged tribal people.

Ishwar Chandra was the most prominent campaigner for Hindu widow remarriage, petitioning the Legislative council despite severe opposition, including a counter petition by the Dharma Sabha, 'society in defence of Hindu way of life or culture', which had nearly four times as many members. Even though widow remarriage was considered a flagrant breach of Hindu customs and was staunchly opposed, Lord Dalhousie personally finalised the bill and the Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, 1856 was passed, to ameliorate the conditions of widows arising after stopping of Sati practice.

Shortly after Vidyasagar's death, Rabindranath Tagore reverently wrote about him: "One wonders how God, in the process of producing forty million Bengalis, produced a Man!"



## Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809 – 1831)

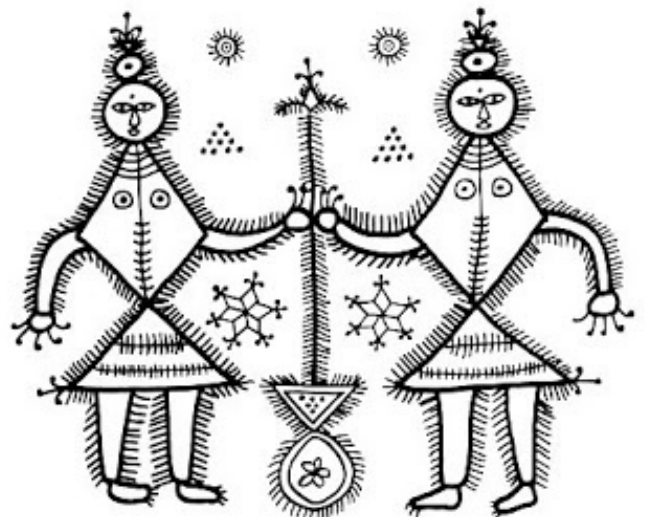
Derozio was an Anglo-Indian poet and assistant headmaster of Hindu College, Kolkata. He was a radical thinker of his time and one of the first Indian educators to disseminate Western learning and science among the young men of Bengal. Long after his early death, his legacy lived on among his former students, who came to be known as Young Bengals and many of whom became prominent in social reform, law, and journalism. In May 1826, at age 17, he was appointed teacher in English literature and history at the new Hindu College. Derozio's intense zeal for teaching and his interactions with students created a sensation at Hindu College. He organized debates where ideas and social norms were freely debated.[1] In 1828, he motivated students to form a literary and debating club called the Academic Association.

This was a time when Hindu society in Bengal was undergoing considerable turmoil. In 1828, Raja Ram Mohan Roy established the Brahmo Samaj, which kept Hindu ideals but denied idolatry. In 1854, Ishwar Chandra took up a strong resistance against the Wood's Despatch, considered the Magna Carta of Indian education which primarily focused on education of the upper classes. As he advocated equality of men-women, upper-lower castes, took strong objection favouring education of upper echelons of the society. In 1859, the government's education policy reiterated "the spread of vernacular elementary instruction among the lower orders" Ishwar Chandra again jumped on the battle ground. He wrote "As the best, if not the only practicable means of promoting education in Bengal, the Government should, in my humble opinion, confine itself to the education of the higher classes on a comprehensive scale" and leave the education of the masses to private initiatives.

idolatry. This resulted in a backlash within orthodox Hindu society. Derozio helped discuss the ideas for social change already in the air. Despite his youth, he was considered a great scholar and a thinker. Within a short period, he drew around him a group of intelligent boys in college. He constantly encouraged them to think freely, to question, and not to accept anything blindly. His teachings inspired the development of the spirit of liberty, equality, and freedom. They also tried to remove social evils, improve the condition of women and peasants, and promote liberty through freedom of the press, trial by jury, and so on. His activities brought about the intellectual revolution in Bengal. It was called the Young Bengal Movement and his students, also known as Derozians, were fiery patriots.

Due to backlash from conservative parents who disliked his wide-ranging and open discussion of religious issues, Derozio was dismissed from his post in April 1831, shortly before his death. In 1838, after his death, members of the Young Bengal movement established a second society called the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge. Its main objective was to acquire and disseminate knowledge about the condition of the country.

(Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry\\_Louis\\_Vivian\\_Derozio](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Louis_Vivian_Derozio) )





## Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-73)



Source: <https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQZkKn6AvLvO5zakpSyq6cULDFd6xPHknepxg&usqp=CAU>

In this period quite a few other Bengali intellectual elite got influences by the Western Rational education. One amongst them, who played a very significant role was Michael Madhusudan Dutt, who was born to an educated, upper middle class Hindu family. After he finished his education in the village, he joined the Hindu College in Kolkata with the eventual aim of becoming a barrister.

At Hindu College, Michael studied under a westernized curriculum in a university which had been expressly founded for the "uplift of the natives". The university stipulated that all students had to dress in Western clothing, eat European cuisine using cutlery, learn British songs and speak only English. He converted himself to Christianity, to register a protest against some of the orthodoxies in the Hindu religion. Initially he started writing poems in English but later he started to explore and imitate and improvise the different genres of European literature in his native language Bengali. Meghnadbadh Kavya, the first Bangla secondary epic was written by Michael Madhusudan Dutta in 1861, which follows the poetic tradition of Milton's Paradise Lost intricately. Sonnets were also introduced into Bangla literary tradition by Madhusudan.

In his first Bangla Epic Meghnadbadh Kavya, Madhusudan, though built on the traditional story of Ramayana, took a very non-conventional position. Here Madhusudan took Ravana's son Meghnad as the protagonist of the story, and Ram was projected as an 'invader winner'. Some scholars consider this as his protest against the British invaders. Similar way of questioning the status quo could be seen in his other writings, such as Krishna Kumari (1860) and Buro Shaliker Ghare Ron (1860).



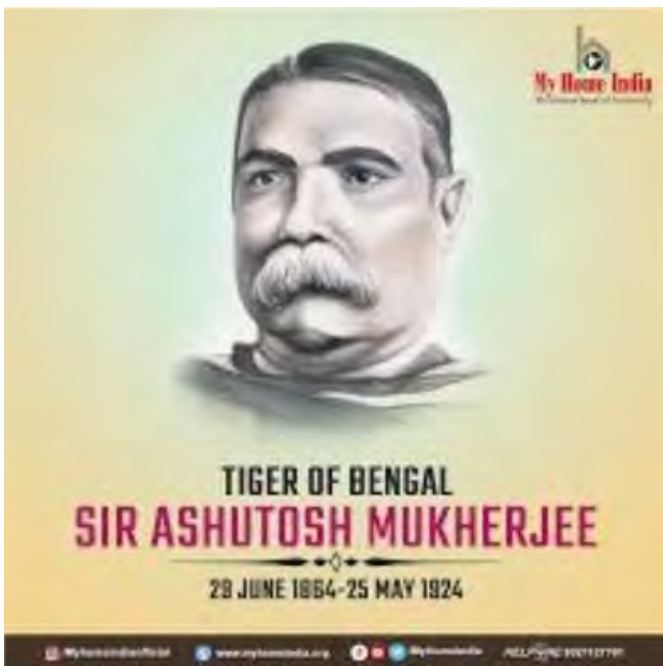
## Sir Ashutosh Mukhopadhyay, (1864-1924)

He was a prolific Bengali educator, jurist, barrister and mathematician. He was the first student to be awarded a dual degree (MA in Mathematics and MSc in Physics) from Calcutta University. Perhaps the most emphatic figure of Indian education, he was a man of great personality, high self-respect, courage and towering administrative ability. The second Indian Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta for four consecutive two-year terms (1906–1914) and a fifth two-year term (1921–23), Mukherjee was responsible for the foundation of the Bengal Technical Institute in 1906, which later known as Jadavpur University and the University College of Science (Rajabazar Science College) of the Calcutta University in 1914.

Mukherjee also played a vital role in the founding of the University College of Law popularly known as Hazra Law College. The Calcutta Mathematical Society was also founded by Mukherjee in 1908 and he served as the president of the Society from 1908 to 1923. He was also the president of the inaugural session of the Indian Science Congress in 1914 held at the Rajabazar Science College, which he founded. The Ashutosh College was also founded

Under his stewardship in 1916, when he was Vice-chancellor of University of Calcutta. His work on Elliptic Functions was praised by the Royal Society as a contribution of "outstanding merit. He also practiced as a lawyer in Calcutta High Court from 1897 to 1904. He was also conferred an LL.D. and was appointed the Tagore Professor of Law of the Calcutta University. In 1904, he was appointed a puisne judge of the High Court, and subsequently served as its acting Chief Justice for a couple of years.

He was often called "Banglar Bagh" ("The Bengal Tiger") for his high self-esteem, courage and academic integrity.



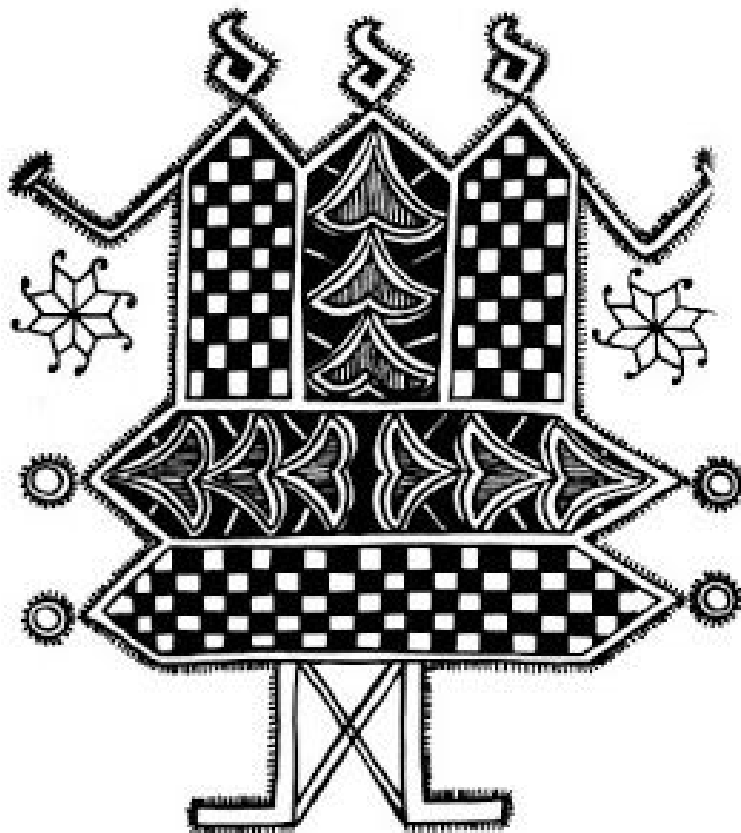
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## Sadbhavana through Patriotic Nationalism

Another set of Bengali thought leaders emerged from this rationalist education. They raised questions about 'who does the nation belong to', 'who should manage this nation'. As described by historian R.C. Dutt, this also led to formation of nationalist thinking. This evolution of a national identity from narrow filial loyalties, based on caste, language and region, was a major step towards building Sadbhavana.

### **Womesh Chunder Bonnerjee (1844 -1906)<sup>3</sup>**

One such young man, an Indian lawyer, popularly known as W.C.Bonnerjee, was educated at the Oriental Seminary and the Hindu School, Calcutta. In 1861 he articulated with a British solicitor. Bonnerjee went to England to study Law. On his return, Bonnerjee was enrolled as an advocate at the Calcutta High Court. He became involved with Calcutta University; he was a member of its Syndicate, President of its Faculty of Law (1884), and the first representative on the Legislative Council (1894–95). He strongly believed that Indians needed a political organisation. Bonnerjee was one of the founder-members of the Indian National Congress in December 1885. Proposed by Allan Octavian Hume, he was unanimously elected the first President.



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<sup>3</sup> His preferred spelling of his name reflected his affinity towards the West.

## Surendranath Banerjee (1848 - 1925)

Another Bengali student who also strongly argued the need of a political organization of Indians, was Surendranath Bannerjee. He completed his graduation from University of Calcutta and travelled to England in 1868 to complete Indian Civil Service (the first Indian ICS, though Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay was appointed a Deputy Magistrate, in 1858, as he joined the Subordinate Executive Service), to become a part of those who administer the nation.



Source: <https://www.forwardpress.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Surendranath-Banerjee-Feature-e1556852222373.jpg>

But, he also founded Indian National Association, for governing the matters of the nation, on July 26, 1876, the first Indian political organisation which later joined hands with W.C.Bonnerjee, to become the Indian National Congress, where he became a senior leader. Banerjee in later years was a critic of the proposed method of civil disobedience advocated by Mohandas Gandhi, the rising popular leader of Indian nationalists and the Congress Party.



## Chittaranjan Das (1870 –1925)

He was popularly called Deshbandhu (Friend of the Nation), was an Bengali Nationalist & Indian freedom fighter, political activist and lawyer during the Indian independence movement and founder-leader of the Swaraj Party (Independence party) in Bengal during the period of British colonial rule in India. His name is abbreviated as C. R. Das. Though he was from a Brahmo Family and started his career as a lawyer in Calcutta High Court, in 1894 in a stunning move Chittaranjan Das gave up his lucrative practice, and plunged headlong into politics during the non-cooperation movement against the British colonial government. But he returned back to practice in the historic trial of the Alipore bomb case in 1908, as the defence counsel of Sri Aurobindo Ghosh.

C.R.Das was a leading figure in Bengal during the Non-Cooperation Movement of 1919–1922, and initiated the ban on British-made clothes, setting an example by burning his own European clothes and wearing Khadi clothes. At one time, his clothes were tailored and washed in Paris and he maintained a permanent laundry in Paris to ship his clothes to Calcutta. He sacrificed all this luxury when he became attached to the Freedom Movement. He brought out a newspaper called Forward and later changed its name to Liberty as part of his support for various anti-British movements in India. When the Calcutta Municipal Corporation was formed, he became its first mayor. He was a believer in non-violence and constitutional methods for the realisation of national independence, and advocated Hindu-Muslim unity. Two of his important disciples were Surya Sen and Subhas Chandra Bose.



Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/02/Chittaranjan\\_Das\\_3.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/02/Chittaranjan_Das_3.jpg)





## Anandamath and Vande Mataram

Anandamath: (Bengali আনন্দমঠ Anandomôṭh) (lit. The Abbey of Bliss) is a Bengali fiction, written by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and published in 1882. It is inspired by and set in the background of the Sannyasi Rebellion in the late 18th century, it is considered one of the most important novels in the history of Bengali and Indian literature. Its importance was heightened by the fact that it became synonymous with the struggle for Indian independence from colonial rule.



Vande Mataram, "Hail to the Mother India", first song to represent Bengal - or India, which is almost synonymous at that time as far as nationalism is concerned - as the Motherland was published in this novel.

Source: <https://www.storytel.com/images/640x640/0001003263.jpg>



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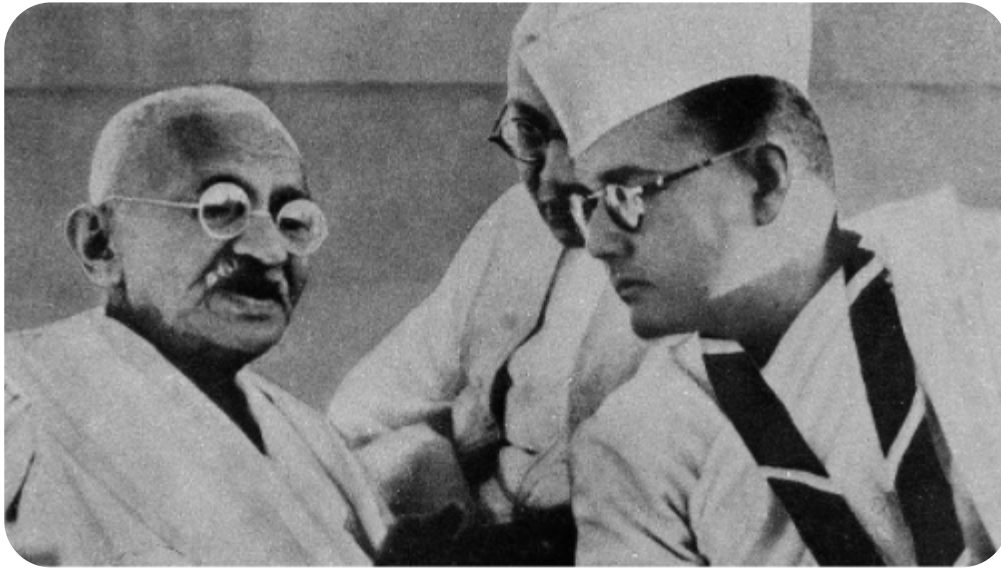
## Surya Sen (1894–1934)

Surya Kumar Sen was an Indian revolutionary who was influential in the Indian independence movement against British rule in India and is best known for leading the 1930 Chittagong Armoury Raid. Sen was a school teacher by profession and was popularly known as Master Da. He was influenced by the nationalist ideals while he was a student of B.A. in Berhampore College. In 1918, he was selected as president of the Indian National Congress's Chittagong branch. Though he was an active participant in the Non-co-operation movement, also strongly believed that for obtaining independence from the British Raj, it was also essential to engage in an armed struggle. Sen was fond of saying "Humanism is a special virtue of the revolutionary."

After the great Chittagong Raid on British Armoury Station in 1930 he was arrested on 16 February 1933, tried and was hanged on 12 January 1934. Many of his fellow revolutionaries were caught and sentenced to long periods of imprisonment. He was tortured by the police before hanging. It is said that his teeth were hammered off and his nails were plucked out by the jailer so that he could not say 'Vande Mataram' on his death. Das inspired and inducted a large number of young men in the nationalist movement.



## Subhas Chandra Bose (1897–1945)



Source: [https://images.newindianexpress.com/uploads/user/imagelibrary/2021/10/21/w900X450/46\\_D2-129-238\\_n.jpg?w=400&dpr=2.6](https://images.newindianexpress.com/uploads/user/imagelibrary/2021/10/21/w900X450/46_D2-129-238_n.jpg?w=400&dpr=2.6)

Subhash Bose had been a leader of the younger, radical, wing of the Indian National Congress in the late 1920s and 1930s, rising to become Congress President in 1938 and 1939. However, he was ousted from Congress leadership positions in 1939 following differences with Mohandas Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru.

He was subsequently placed under house arrest by the British before escaping from India in 1940. Bose arrived in Germany in April 1941, where the leadership offered unexpected, if sometimes ambivalent, sympathy for the cause of India's independence, contrasting starkly with its attitudes towards other colonised peoples and ethnic communities. In November 1941, with German funds, a Free India Centre was set up in Berlin, and soon a Free India Radio, on which Bose broadcast nightly.

Subhash Bose's defiant patriotism made him a hero in India, but whose attempt during World War II to rid India of British rule with the help of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan left a troubled legacy. The title Netaji was first applied in early 1942 by the Indian soldiers of the Indische Legion and by the German and Indian officials in the Special Bureau for India in Berlin, was later used throughout India. A 3,000-strong Free India Legion, comprising Indians captured by Erwin Rommel's Afrika Korps, was also formed to aid in a possible future German land invasion of India. By spring 1942, in light of Japanese victories in southeast Asia and changing German priorities, a German invasion of India became untenable, and Bose became keen to move to southeast Asia. Adolf Hitler, during his only meeting with Bose in late May 1942, suggested the same, and offered to arrange for a submarine transport to the East. Identifying strongly with the Axis powers, and no longer apologetically, Bose boarded a German submarine in February 1943. Off Madagascar, he was transferred to a Japanese submarine from which he disembarked in Japanese-held Sumatra in May 1943.



Source: <https://images.indianexpress.com/2019/01/netaji.jpg>

With Japanese support, Bose revamped the Indian National Army (INA), which had been founded in 1942 by Major Iwaichi Fujiwara and Captain Mohan Singh and comprised Indian soldiers of the British Indian army who had been captured by the Japanese in the Battle of Singapore. To these, after Bose's arrival, were added Indian civilians in Malaya and Singapore. Before long the Provisional Government of Free India, presided by Bose, was formed in the Japanese-occupied Andaman and Nicobar Islands. In late 1944, the British Indian Army first halted and then reversed the Japanese attack on India. Almost half the Japanese forces and fully half the participating INA contingent were killed. The INA was driven down the Malay Peninsula and surrendered with the recapture of Singapore. Bose had earlier chosen not to surrender with his forces, but rather to escape to Manchuria. It was said that he died from third-degree burns received when his plane crashed in Taiwan.

Indira Gandhi said: "[There is] the need for national unity. Equally important is the need in every Indian heart of an intense love of the country. This was the love that inspired Netaji. This sword here is as much a symbol of Netaji's courage as of his intense love for his country. This intensity, this passion and fire, is something lacking in us today. We fritter away our passion in petty disputes and in the pursuit of narrow personal or group gains. We do not put this passion into the service of the nation. If we do this, we will have the courage to face every difficulty. Netaji had this courage. He was ever prepared for sacrifice. This courage, this spirit of sacrifice, is his message. (Translation of a Hindi speech by Smt Indira Gandhi at a meeting to welcome the relics of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Delhi, December 17, 1967.

<https://sadbhavana.academy/2020/11/11/neta-ji-subhash-chandra-bose/>)





## Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899–1976)

In November of 1922, the young poet was arrested in Calcutta, India, accused of sedition by the British government. He had recently published the poem “Anandomoyee Agomone” (“The Coming of Anandamoyee”), invoking the Hindu goddess Durga, who is beloved and celebrated with particular verve across Bengal. In the poem, however, Nazrul summons the warrior goddess to fight against imperial rule, denouncing the “butchery” of colonization, describing the ways in which Indians were “whipped” and “hanged,” and calling on Bengali youth to sacrifice their lives to overthrow the British.

Anti-colonial sentiment was spreading across the subcontinent, and it was especially fierce in Calcutta, which had been the capital of British India until 1911, when it was moved to New Delhi because of rising nationalism. Nazrul’s language, nonetheless, came in stark contrast to both the ethos of Gandhi’s nonviolent Satyagraha movement and the lyricism of the traditional “high” Bengali of his contemporaries, such as the revered Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore. Furthermore, though Nazrul, was born Muslim, his supplication of Durga was emblematic of what was already at the crux of both the controversy and the power of his work: the embodiment of Hindu-Muslim unity in letter and spirit.

In response to his sedition charge, Nazrul further shocked the British and the Bengalis alike by representing himself in court, reading aloud from what became the essay “Deposition of a Political Prisoner.” Contrasting the tyranny of colonial rule with the divine “truth” of the poet, who “expresses the unexpressed,” he conjured, too, the image of a *dhumketu*, a comet. *Dhumketu* was also the title of the literary journal Nazrul then edited, in which “Anandomoyee Agomone” originally appeared (translation by Rajbondir Jabanbandi): “On one hand is the crown of the state and on the other is the flaming comet. One is the king with the mandate to convict. The other is the truth, bearing the truth of justice.” Nazrul was imprisoned for a year.



Source: <https://i.ytimg.com/vi/g0EcwJe5lwM/maxresdefault.jpg>



Nazrul's opposition to British rule had been galvanized when he served in the British army during World War I, in the all-Bengali 49th regiment based in Karachi. There, he encountered the cultural richness of pan-Islamic history, including the writings of the eleventh-century Persian poet Omar Khayyam and the fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafez, both of whose work, along with portions of the Koran, he would later translate into Bengali. Nazrul was also introduced to the ghazal, the poetic form that would later influence his own writing. At the same time, he was appalled that the victory of the Allies resulted in the widening of European colonization across North Africa and the Middle East, fracturing much of the Muslim world.

After the war, Nazrul returned to his native Bengal determined to write and rally against foreign rule. In doing so, he also sought to prevent Hindu-Muslim violence. Seeing, too, the abuse of the poor at the hands of wealthy Bengali landowners, known as Zamindars (Nazrul himself had been born into a rural farming family), he advocated against class and caste oppression. In the process, he would prove himself revolutionary, igniting both Bengali literature and its politics.

A year before his sedition charge, Nazrul published what remains his most celebrated poem, "Bidrohi" ("The Rebel," translated below by Sajed Kamal), which emphasizes interdependence. Again integrating Hindu deities with Muslim references, the poem builds into a fury that defies not only religious pigeonholing, but also the flattening or separation of human experience:

I'm the madness of the recluse,  
I'm the sigh of grief of a widow,  
I'm the anguish of the dejected,  
I'm the suffering of the homeless . . .  
I'm the eternal Rebel,  
I have risen beyond this world, alone  
With my head ever held high!

Known ever since as the Bidrohi Kobi, or "rebel poet," Nazrul endures as a household name on both sides of the Bengali border, in the Indian state of West Bengal and in Bangladesh, where he remains honored as the national poet... Bengali culture is vibrantly literary—Kolkata hosts the largest annual book fair on earth, with an average of over 2 million visitors—and it was common to find plaques and pictures of Nazrul alongside of those of Tagore, who remains something of a patron saint. But even as the pleas for compassion and equality that made Nazrul controversial a century ago felt increasingly urgent in light of the current persecution of Muslims and critics of the ruling Hindu nationalist government, translations of Nazrul's writing were often difficult to find.

Source: <https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/dispatches/article/celebrating-kazi-nazrul-islam-rebel-poet-of-bengal-liesl-schwabe>

# The Role of Women in Building Sadbhavana

## **Sarala Roy (1859-1946)**

The first attempt to bring together all women interested in women's education in Bengal was at the convocation of Bengal Women's Education Conference in February 1927. This led to the formation of the Bengal Women's Education League under the leadership of Sarala Roy. Apart from her founding the Gokhale Memorial School, she was the first woman to be secretary of Brahmo Balika Vidyalaya. Sarala worked very hard for the upliftment of women and her contribution for the cause of women's education is never to be forgotten. She established a girls' school and a Mahila Samiti (organization of women) at Dhaka. On her return to Kolkata she was a member of Swarnakumari Devi's Sakhi Samiti focusing on poor and widowed women, to educate them and make them economically self-sufficient. While in England, she established Women's Education League. She also founded the All India Women's Conference (AIWC) in 1927 in Pune.

## **Suniti Devi (1864-1932)**

Suniti was social reformer Keshub Chandra Sen's eldest daughter, who became the queen in the Cooch Behar royal family, recounted her travel to England in her 'Autobiography of an Indian Princess', one of the earliest treatises in English by a woman. She was invited to be a part of the 1877 celebrations when Victoria became the empress. Keshub Sen who was an active member of the Brahmo Samaj, looked at this as an opportunity for women of an exposure to the wider world outside. In 1882, it was a major stride against the social bondage, when Krishnabhabini Das, not from a royal/ elite Bengali family, shed her saree for a gown and a hat to travel to England with her husband, who took up teaching Sanskrit, Persian and Bengali to clerks and officers in the British Administrative Services. She also started the practice of home tutoring for the children of these officers, proclaiming strongly that women could also work with British officers families.



## Kadambini Ganguly (1861-1923)



Born as Kadambini Bose, in Bhagalpur, her father was a Brahmo reformer Braja Kishore Basu, who was actively engaged in promotion of Bhagalpur Mahila Samiti in 1863, one of the first few women's organization. Kadambini completed her formal education from Banga Mahila Vidyalaya, which later merged with the Bethune School. She was the first candidate from the Bethune School to appear for the University of Calcutta entrance exam and created history becoming the first woman to pass the test as early as 1878. Her success encouraged Bethune College to introduce FA (First Arts) course in 1883. Kadambini was one of the first two FAs, alongwith Chandramukhi Basu 1860-1944), in British India.

Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/62/Kadambini\\_Ganguly.jpg/300px-Kadambini\\_Ganguly.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/62/Kadambini_Ganguly.jpg/300px-Kadambini_Ganguly.jpg)

Apart from demanding her right to education, she challenged everything the society deemed unacceptable at every step. She married her teacher, Dwarkanath Ganguly, a prominent Brahmo Samaj leader from the Banga Mahila Vidyalaya, who was 20 years older to her. She sought admission in medical college, which was refused on the ground that medicine was not a profession for women. Kadambini Ganguly refused to give up. She struggled against all odds and 1886 became one of the first Indian women physicians eligible to practice western medicine. She received her GBMC (Graduate of Bengal Medical College) degree, allowing her to practice. She even left for the United Kingdom in 1892 to get more experience in her field and received various certificates from Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Dublin.



Source: [https://pbs.twimg.com/media/EB\\_TM0cUEAErGU9.jpg](https://pbs.twimg.com/media/EB_TM0cUEAErGU9.jpg)

One lady who also joined the independence movement and needs a mention here was Matangini Hazra. She was an Indian revolutionary who participated in the Indian independence movement until she was shot dead by the British Indian police in front of the Tamluk Police Station on 29 September 1942. She was affectionately known as Gandhi Buri, Bengali for old lady Gandhi. She inspired many women to join the Quit India movement and boycott of foreign made clothes.



## Ashapura Devi (1909 –1995)

Continuing this tradition was Ashapura Devi, a prominent Indian novelist and poet in Bengali. In 1936, she first wrote a story for adults, "Patni O Preyoshi", published in the Puja issue of Ananda Bazar Patrika. Prem O Prayojan was her first novel for adults, published in 1944. Her magnum opus, the trilogy Pratham Pratishruti (1964), Subarnolata (1967) and Bakul Katha (1974), symbolises an endless struggle for women to achieve equal rights.[13] According to Somak Ghoshal, writing for Mint, "Ashapura Devi wrote about women and men whose lives were claustrophobically restricted by social, economic and psychological conditions." In 1976, she was awarded the Jnanpith Award and Padma Shri by the Government of India,[1] D.Litt. by the Jadavpur University, Rabindra Bharati and Vishwa Bharati University honoured her with Deshikottama in 1989.

(Source: [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashapura\\_Devi](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ashapura_Devi))





# Tagore as the Gurudev of Sadbhavana

## **Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)**

The contribution of Tagore in the area of education cannot be condensed down in a small article. He believed that Education should be in full touch with our complete life—economic, intellectual, aesthetic, social and spiritual. Universal brotherhood of mankind is the bed rock of his philosophy of internationalism. Education cannot be and should not be alienated from the nature within which we live. He was also a strong propagator of the Brahmo philosophy of life. One of his contribution was In 1901, he established an open-air school. It was a prayer hall with marble flooring and was named 'The Mandir' (temple)'. Rabindranath envisioned a centre of learning which would have the best of both the east and the west. He introduced nature based learning. He introduced the system of giving an exposure to the child to various elements that nature brings to them, before they chose to study anything, especially as detailed by curriculum. He introduced co-educational learning right from school level way back in 1907, while Smt. Hans Mehta Committee on co-education recommended it for schools in general in India in 1962.

He established the Viswa Bharati University in West Bengal in 1921. He initiated conscious efforts of rural development in Sriniketan experiment in 1922, for which he sent his son to acquire a degree in agriculture from United States. He conceived of a co-operative society for health services, which combined with a health insurance in 1928. He had immense faith in human beings, because he believed that god is manifested in man. It is through an understanding of humanity that we can attain the ultimate goal of life and since the creator manifests in a unique manner, every person tries to realize the creator in his own way.

Rabindranath Tagore wrote:

“I was brought up in an atmosphere of aspiration, aspiration for the expansion of the human spirit. We in our home sought freedom of power in our language, freedom of imagination in our literature, freedom of soul in our religious creeds and that of mind in our social environment. Such an opportunity has given me confidence in the power of education which is one with life and only which can give us real freedom, the highest that is claimed for man, his freedom of moral communion in the human world....

I try to assert in my words and works that education has its only meaning and object in freedom—freedom from ignorance about the laws of the universe, and freedom from passion and prejudice in our communication with the human world. In my institution I have attempted to create an atmosphere of naturalness in our relationship with strangers, and the spirit of hospitality which is the first virtue in men that made civilization possible. I invited thinkers and scholars from foreign lands to let our boys know how easy it is to realise our common fellowship, when we deal with those who are great, and that it is the puny who with their petty vanities set up barriers between man and man.”

(Rabindranath Tagore; “Ideals of Education”, The Visva -Bharati Quarterly 1929: 73-74)



<https://www.deccanherald.com/sites/dh/files/styles/largehorizontal/public/articleimages/2021/08/22/rabindranath-tagore-dh-photo-1022300-1629617678.jpg?itok=A6DXRMsm>

## Tagore on the Problem of Self

AT ONE POLE of my being I am one with stocks and stones. There I have to acknowledge the rule of universal law. That is where the foundation of my existence lies, deep down below. Its strength lies in its being held firm in the clasp of the comprehensive world, and in the fullness of its community with all things.

But at the other pole of my being I am separate from all. There I have broken through the cordon of equality and stand alone as an individual. I am absolutely unique, I am I, I am incomparable. The whole weight of the universe cannot crush out this individuality of mine. I maintain it in spite of the tremendous gravitation of all things. It is small in appearance but great in reality. For it holds its own against the forces that would rob it of its distinction and make it one with the dust.

This is the superstructure of the self which rises from the indeterminate depth and darkness of its foundation into the open, proud of its isolation, proud of having given shape to a single individual idea of the architect's which has no duplicate in the whole universe. If this individuality be demolished then though no material be lost, not an atom destroyed the creative joy which was crystallised therein is gone. We are absolutely bankrupt if we are deprived of this speciality, this individuality, which is the only thing we can call our own; and which, if lost, is also a loss to the whole world. It is most valuable because it is not universal. And therefore only through it can we gain the universe more truly than if we were lying within its breast unconscious of our distinctiveness. The universal is ever seeking its consummation in the unique. And the desire we have to keep our uniqueness intact is really the desire of the universe acting in us. It is our joy of the infinite in us that gives us our joy in ourselves.

That this separateness of self is considered by man as his most precious possession is proved by the sufferings he undergoes and the sins he commits for its sake. But the consciousness of separation has come from the eating of the fruit of knowledge. It has led man to shame and crime and death; yet it is dearer to him than any paradise where the self lies, securely slumbering in perfect innocence in the womb of mother nature.

It is a constant striving and suffering for us to maintain the separateness of this self of ours. And in fact it is this suffering which measures its value. One side of the value is sacrifice, which represents how much the cost has been. The other side of it is the attainment, which represents how much has been gained. If the self meant nothing to us but pain and sacrifice, it could have no value for us, and on no account would we willingly undergo such sacrifice. In such case there could be no doubt at all that the highest object of humanity would be the annihilation of self.

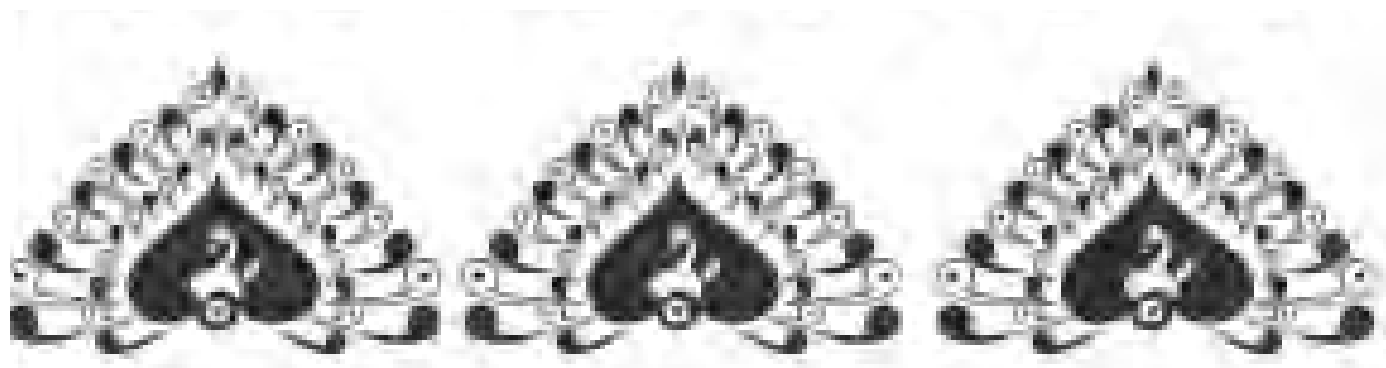
But if there is a corresponding gain, if it does not end in a void but in a fullness, then it is clear that its negative qualities, its very sufferings and sacrifices, make it all the more precious. That it is so has been proved by those who have realized the positive significance of self, and have accepted its responsibilities with eagerness and undergone sacrifices without flinching.



With the foregoing introduction it will be easy for me to answer the question once asked by one of my audience as to whether the annihilation of self was not been held by India as the supreme goal of humanity?

In the first place we must keep in mind the fact that man is never literal in the expression of his ideas, except in matters most trivial. Very often man's words are not a language at all, but merely a local gesture of the dumb. They may indicate, but do not express his thoughts. The more vital his thoughts the more have his words to be explained by the context of his life. Those who seek to know his meaning by the aid of the dictionary only technically reach the house, for they are stopped by the outside wall and find no entrance to the hall. This is the reason why the teachings of our greater prophets give rise to endless disputations when we try to understand them by following their words and not by realising them in our own lives. The men who are cursed with the gift of the literal mind are the unfortunate ones who are always busy with the nets and neglect the fishing.

It is not only in Buddhism and the Indian religion but in Christianity too, that the ideal of selflessness is preached with all fervour. In the last the symbol of death has been used for expressing the idea of man's deliverance from the life which is not true. This is the same as Nirvana, the symbol of the extinction of the lamp.



In the typical thought of India it is held that the true deliverance of man is the deliverance from avidya, from ignorance. It is not in destroying anything that is positive and real, for that cannot be possible, but that which is negative, which obstruct our vision of truth. When this obstruction, which is ignorance, is removed, then only is the eye lid drawn up which is no loss to the eye.

It is our ignorance which makes us think that our self, as self, is real, that it has its complete meaning in itself. When we take that wrong view of self then we try to live in such a manner as to make self the ultimate object of our life. Then are we doomed to disappointment like the man who tries to reach his destination by firmly clutching the dust of the road. Our self has no means of holding us, for its own nature is to pass on; and by clinging to this thread of self which is passing through the loom of life we cannot make it serve the purpose of the cloth into which it is being woven. When a man, with elaborate care, arranges for an enjoyment of the self, he lights a fire but has no dough to make his bread with; the fire flares up and consumes itself to extinction, like an unnatural beast that eats its own progeny and dies.

In an unknown language the words are tyrannically prominent. They stop us but say nothing. To be rescued from this fetter of words we must rid ourselves of the avidya, our ignorance, and then our mind will find its freedom in the inner idea. But it could be foolish to say that our ignorance of the language can be dispelled only by the destruction of the words. No, when the perfect knowledge comes, every word remains in its place, only they do not bind us to themselves, but let us pass through them and lead us to the idea which is emancipation.

Thus it is only avidya which makes the self our fetter by making us think that it is an end in itself, and by preventing our seeing that it contains the idea that transcends its limits. That is why the wise man comes and says, 'Set yourselves free from the avidya', know your true soul and be saved from the grasp of the self which imprisons you.

We gain our freedom when we attain our truest nature. The man who is an artist finds his artistic freedom when he finds his ideal of art. Then is he freed from laborious attempts at imitation, from the goadings of popular approbation. It is the function of religion not to destroy our nature but to fulfil it.

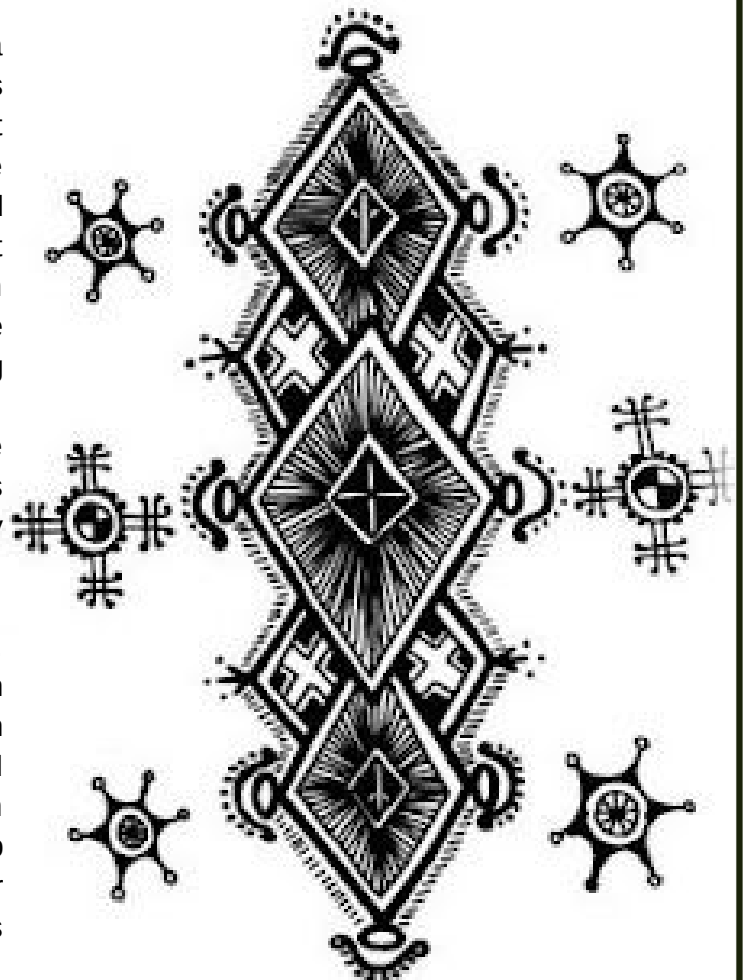
The Sanskrit word dharma which is usually translated into English as religion has a deeper meaning in our language. Dharma is the innermost nature, the essence, the implicit truth, of all things. Dharma is the ultimate purpose that is working in our self. When any wrong is done we say that dharma is violated, meaning that the lie has been given to our true nature.

But this dharma, which is the truth in us, is not apparent, because it is inherent. So much so, that it has been held that sinfulness is the nature of man, and only by the special grace of God can a particular person be saved. This is like saying that the nature of the seed is to remain enfolded within its shell, and it is only by some special miracle that it can be grown into a tree. But do we not know that the appearance of the seed contradicts its true nature. When you submit it to chemical analysis you may find in it carbon and protein and a good many other things, but not the idea of a branching tree. Only when the tree begins to take shape do you come to see its dharma, and then you can affirm without doubt that the seed which has been wasted and allowed to rot in the ground has been thwarted in its dharma, in the fulfilment of its true nature. In the history of humanity we have known the living seed in us to sprout. We have seen the great purpose in us taking shape in the lives of our greatest men, and have felt certain that though there are numerous individual lives that seem ineffectual, still it is not their dharma to remain barren; but it is for them to burst their cover and transform themselves into a vigorous spiritual shoot, growing up into the air and light, and branching out in all directions.

The freedom of the seed is in the attainment of its dharma, its nature and destiny of becoming a tree; it is the non-accomplishment which is its prison. The sacrifice by which a thing attains its fulfilment is not a sacrifice which ends in death; it is the casting-off of bonds which wins freedom.

When we know the highest ideal of freedom which a man has, we know his dharma, the essence of his nature, the real meaning of his self. At first sight it seems that man counts that as freedom by which he gets unbounded opportunities of self-gratification and self-aggrandizement. But surely this is not borne out by history. Our revelatory men have always been those who have lived the life of self-sacrifice. The higher nature in man always seeks for something which transcends itself and yet is its deepest truth; which claims all its sacrifice, yet makes this sacrifice its own recompense. This is man's dharma, man's religion, and man's self is the vessel which is to carry this sacrifice to the altar.

We can look at our self in its two different aspects. The self which displays itself, and the self which transcends itself and thereby reveals its own meaning. To display itself it tries to be big, to stand upon the pedestal of its accumulations, and to retain everything to itself. To reveal itself it gives up everything it has, thus becoming perfect like a flower that has blossomed out from the bud, pouring from its chalice of beauty all its sweetness.





The lamp contains its oil, which it holds securely in its close grasp and guards from the least loss. Thus is it separate from all other objects around it and is miserly. But when lighted it finds its meaning at once; its relation with all things far and near is established, and it freely sacrifices its fund of oil to feed the flame.

Such a lamp is our self. So long as it hoards its possessions it keeps itself dark, its conduct contradicts its true purpose. When it finds illumination it forgets itself in a moment, holds the light high, and serves it with everything it has; for therein is its revelation. This revelation is the freedom which Buddha preached. He asked the lamp to give up its oil. But purposeless giving up is a still darker poverty which he never could have meant. The lamp must give up its oil to the light and thus set free the purpose it has in its hoarding. This is emancipation. The path Buddha pointed out was not merely the practice of self-abnegation, but the widening of love. And therein lies the true meaning of Buddha's preaching.

When we find that the state of Nirvana preached by Buddha is through love, then we know for certain that Nirvana is the highest culmination of love. For love is an end unto itself. Everything else raises the question 'Why?' in our mind, and we require a reason for it. But when we say, 'I love,' then there is no room for the 'why'; it is the final answer in itself.

Doubtless, even selfishness impels one to give away. But the selfish man does it on compulsion. That is like plucking fruit when it is unripe; you have to tear it from the tree and bruise the branch. But when a man loves, giving becomes a matter of joy to him, like the tree's surrender of the ripe fruit. All our belongings assume a weight by the ceaseless gravitation of our selfish desires; we cannot easily cast them away from us. They seem to belong to our very nature, to stick to us as a second skin, and we bleed as we detach them. But when we are possessed by love, its force acts in the opposite direction. The things that closely adhered to us lose their adhesion and weight, and we find that they are not of us. Far from being a loss to give them away, we find in that the fulfilment of our nature.

Thus we find in perfect love the freedom of our self. That only which is done for love is done freely, however much pain it may cause. Therefore working for love is freedom in action. This is the meaning of the teaching of disinterested work in the Gita.

The Gita says action we must have, for only in action do we manifest our nature. But this manifestation is not perfect so long as our action is not free. In fact, our nature is obscured by work done by the compulsion of want or fear. The mother reveals herself in the service of her children, so our true freedom is not the freedom from action but freedom in action, which can only be attained in the work of love.



God's manifestation is in his work of creation, and it is said in the Upanishad, Knowledge, power, and action are of his nature they are not imposed upon him from outside. Therefore his work is his freedom, and in his creation he realizes himself. The same thing is said elsewhere in other words: From joy does spring all this creation, by joy is it maintained, towards joy does it-progress, and into joy does it enter.' This means that God's creation has not its source in any necessity; it comes from his fullness of joy; it is his love that creates, therefore in creation is his own revealment.

The artist who has a joy in the fullness of his artistic idea objectifies it and thus gains it more fully by holding it afar. It is joy which detaches ourselves from us, and then gives it form in creations of love in order to make it more perfectly our own. Hence there must be this separation, not a separation of repulsion but a separation of love. Repulsion has only the one element, the element of severance. But love has two, the element of severance, which is only an appearance, and the element of union which is the ultimate truth. Just as when the father tosses his child up from his arms it has the appearance of rejection but its truth is quite the reverse.



So we must know that the meaning of our self is not to be found in its separateness from God and others, but in the ceaseless realization of yoga, of union; not on the side of the canvas where it is blank, but on the side where the picture is being painted.

This is the reason why the separateness of our self has been described by our philosophers as maya, as an illusion, because it has no intrinsic reality of its own. It looks perilous; it raises its isolation to a giddy height and casts a black shadow upon the fair face of existence; from the outside it has an aspect of a sudden disruption, rebellious and destructive; it is proud, domineering and wayward, it is ready to rob the world of all its wealth to gratify its craving of a moment; to pluck with a reckless, cruel hand all the plumes from the divine bird of beauty to deck its ugliness for a day; indeed man's legend has it that it bears the black mark of disobedience stamped on its forehead for ever; but still all this is maya, envelopment of avidya it is the mist, it is not the sun; it is the black smoke that presages the fire of love.

Imagine some savage who, in his ignorance, thinks that it is the paper of the banknote that has the magic, by virtue of which the possessor of it gets all he wants. He piles up the papers, hides them, handles them in all sorts of absurd ways, and then at last, wearied by his efforts, comes to the sad conclusion that they are absolutely worthless, only fit to be thrown into the fire. But the wise man knows that the paper of the banknote is all maya, and until it is given up to the bank it is futile. It is only avidya, our ignorance that makes us believe that the separateness of our self like the paper of the banknote is precious in itself, and by acting on this belief our self is rendered valueless. It is only when the avidya is removed that this very self comes to us with a wealth which is priceless. For He manifests Himself in deathless forms which His joy assumes. These forms are separate from Him, and the value that these forms have is only what his joy has imparted to them. When we transfer back these forms into that original joy, which is love, then we cash them in the bank and we find their truth.

When pure necessity drives man to his work it takes an accidental and contingent character, it becomes a mere makeshift arrangement; it is deserted and left in ruins when necessity changes its course. But when his work is the outcome of joy, the forms that it takes have the elements of immortality. The immortal in man imparts to it its own quality of permanence.

Our self, as a form of God's joy, is deathless. For his joy is amritam, eternal. This it is in us which makes us sceptical of death, even when the fact of death cannot be doubted. In reconciliation of this contradiction in us we come to the truth that in the dualism of death and life there is a harmony. We know that the life of a soul, which is finite in its expression and infinite in its principle, must go through the portals of death in its journey to realize the infinite. It is death which is monistic, it has no life in it. But life is dualistic; it has an appearance as well as truth; and death is that appearance, that maya, which is an inseparable companion to life. Our self to live must go through a continual change and growth of form, which may be termed a continual death and a continual life going on at the same time. It is really courting death when we refuse to accept death; when we wish to give the form of the self some fixed changelessness; when the self feels no impulse which urges it to grow out of itself; when it treats its limits as final and acts accordingly. Then comes our teacher's call to die to this death; not a call to annihilation but so eternal life. It is the extinction of the lamp in the morning light; not the abolition of the sun. It is really asking us consciously to give effect to the innermost wish that we have in the depths of our nature.

We have a dual set of desires in our being, which it should be our endeavour to bring into a harmony. In the region of our physical nature we have one set of which we are conscious always. We wish to enjoy our food and drink, we banker after bodily pleasure and comfort. These desires are self-centred; they are solely concerned with their respective impulses. The wishes of our palate often run counter to what our stomach can allow.

But we have another set, which is the desire of our physical system as a whole, of which we are usually unconscious. It is the wish for health. This is always doing its work, mending and repairing, making new adjustments in cases of accident, and skilfully restoring the balance wherever disturbed. It has no concern with the fulfilment of our immediate bodily desires, but it goes beyond the present time. It is the principle of our physical wholeness, it links our life with its past and its future and maintains the unity of its parts. He who is wise knows it, and makes his other physical wishes harmonise with it.





We have a greater body which is the social body. Society is an organism, of which we as parts have our individual wishes. We want our own pleasure and licence. We want to pay less and gain more than anybody else. This causes scramblings and fights. But there is that other wish in us which does its work in the depths of the social being. It is the wish for the welfare of the society. It transcends the limits of the present and the personal. It is on the side of the infinite.

He who is wise tries to harmonise the wishes that seek for self-gratification with the wish for the social good, and only thus can he realize his higher self. In its finite aspect the self is conscious of its separateness, and there it is ruthless in its attempt to have more distinction than all others. But in its infinite aspect its wish is to gain that harmony which leads to its perfection and not its mere aggrandizement.

The emancipation of our physical nature is in attaining health, of our social being in attaining goodness, and of our self in attaining love. This last is what Buddha describes as extinction - the extinction of selfishness. This is the function of love, and it does not lead to darkness but to illumination. This is the attainment of bodhi, or the true awakening; it is the revealing in us of the infinite joy by the light of love.

The passage of our self is through its selfhood, which is independent, to its attainment of soul, which is harmonious. This harmony can never be reached through compulsion. So our will, in the history of its growth, must come through independence and rebellion to the ultimate completion. We must have the possibility of the negative form of freedom, which is licence, before we can attain the positive freedom, which is love.

This negative freedom, the freedom of self-will, can turn its back upon its highest realization, but it cannot cut itself away from it altogether, for then it will lose its own meaning. Our self-will has freedom up to a certain extent; it can know what it is to break away from the path, but it cannot continue in that direction indefinitely. For we are finite on our negative side. We must come to an end in our evil doing, in our career of discord. For evil is not infinite, and discord cannot be an end in itself. Our will has freedom in order that it may find out that its true course is towards goodness and love. For goodness and love are infinite, and only in the infinite is the perfect realization of freedom possible. So our will can be free not towards the limitations of our self, not where it is maya and negation, but towards the unlimited, where is truth and love. Our freedom cannot go against its own principle of freedom and yet be free; it cannot commit suicide and yet live. We cannot say that we should have infinite freedom to fetter ourselves, for the fettering ends the freedom.



So in the freedom of our will, we have the same dualism of appearance and truth - our self-will is only the appearance of freedom and love is the truth. When we try to make this appearance independent of truth, then our attempt brings misery and proves its own futility in the end. Everything has this dualism of maya and satyam, appearance and truth. Words are maya where they are merely sounds and finite, they are satyam where they are ideas and infinite. Our self is maya where it is merely individual and finite, where it considers its separateness as absolute; it is satyam where it recognizes its essence in the universal and infinite, in the supreme self, in paramatman. This is what Christ means when he says, 'Before Abraham was I am.' This is the eternal I am that speaks through the I am that is in me. The individual I am attains its perfect end when it realizes its freedom of harmony in the infinite I am. Then is its mukti, its deliverance from the thralldom of maya, of appearance which springs from avidya, from ignorance; its emancipation in cantam civam advaitam, in the perfect repose in truth, in the perfect activity in goodness, and in the perfect union in love.



Not only in our self but also in nature is there this separateness from God, which has been described as maya by our philosophers, because the separateness does not exist by itself, it does not limit God's infinity from outside. It is his own will that has imposed limits to itself, just as the chess-player restricts his will with regard to the moving of the chessmen. The player willingly enters into definite relations with each particular piece and realizes the joy of his power by these very restrictions. It is not that he cannot move the chessmen just as he pleases, but if he does so then there can be no play. If God assumes his role of omnipotence, then his creation is at an end and his power loses all its meaning. For power to be a power must act within limits. God's water must be water, his earth can never be other than earth. The law that has made them water and earth is his own law by which he has separated the play from the player, for therein the joy of the player consists.

As by the limits of law nature is separated from God, so it is the limits of its egoism which separates the self from him. He has willingly set limits to his will, and has given us mastery over the little world of our own. It is like a father's settling upon his son some allowance within the limit of which he is free to do what he likes. Though it remains a portion of the father's own property, yet he frees it from the operation of his own will. The reason of it is that the will, which is love's will and therefore free, can have its joy only in a union with another free will. The tyrant who must have slaves looks upon them as instruments of his purpose. It is the consciousness of his own necessity which makes him crush the will out of them, to make his self-interest absolutely secure. This self-interest cannot brook the least freedom in others, because it is not itself free. The tyrant is really dependent on his slaves, and therefore he tries to make them completely useful by making them subservient to his own will. But a lover must have two wills for the realization of his love, because the consummation of love is in harmony, the harmony between free-dom and freedom.

So God's love from which our self has taken form has made it separate from God; and it is God's love which again establishes a reconciliation and unites God with our self through the separation. That is why our self has to go through endless renewals. For in its career of separateness it cannot go on for ever. Separateness is the finitude where it finds its barriers to come back again and again to its infinite source. Our self has ceaselessly to cast off its age, repeatedly shed its limits in oblivion and death, in order to realize its immortal youth. Its personality must merge in the universal time after time, in fact pass through it every moment, ever to refresh its individual life. It must follow the eternal rhythm and touch the fundamental unity at every step, and thus maintain its separation balanced in beauty and strength.

The play of life and death we see everywhere - this transmutation of the old into the new. The day comes to us every morning, naked and white, fresh as a flower. But we know it is old. It is age itself. It is that very ancient day which took up the newborn earth in its arms, covered it with its white mantle of light, and sent it forth on its pilgrimage among the stars.

Yet its feet are untired and its eyes undimmed. It carries the golden amulet of ageless eternity, at whose touch all wrinkles vanish from the forehead of creation. In the very core of the world's heart stands immortal youth. Death and decay cast over its face momentary shadows and pass on; they leave no marks of their steps - and truth remains fresh and young.



This old, old day of our earth is born again and again every morning. It comes back to the original refrain of its music. If its march were the march of an infinite straight line, if it had not the awful pause of its plunge in the abysmal darkness and its repeated rebirth in the life of the endless beginning, then it would gradually soil and bury truth with its dust and spread ceaseless aching over the earth under its heavy tread. Then every moment would leave its load of weariness behind, and decrepitude would reign supreme on its throne of eternal dirt. But every morning the day is reborn among the newly - blossomed flowers with the same message retold and the same assurance renewed that death eternally dies, that the waves of turmoil are on the surface, and that the sea of tranquillity is fathomless. The curtain of night is drawn aside and truth emerges without a speck of dust on its garment, without a furrow of age on its lineaments.

We see that he who is before everything else is the same to-day. Every note of the song of creation comes fresh from his voice. The universe is not a mere echo, reverberating from sky to sky, like a homeless wanderer - the echo of an old song sung once for all in the dim beginning of things and then left orphaned. Every moment it comes from the heart of the master, it is breathed in his breath.

And that is the reason why it overspreads the sky like a thought taking shape in a poem, and never has to break into pieces with the burden of its own accumulating weight. Hence the surprise of endless variations, the advent of the unaccountable, the ceaseless procession of individuals, each of whom is without a parallel in creation. As at the first so to the last, the beginning never ends - the world is ever old and ever new.

It is for our self to know that it must be born anew every moment of its life. It must break through all illusions that encase it in their crust to make it appear old, burdening it with death.

For life is immortal youthfulness, and it hates age that tries to clog its movements - age that belongs not to life in truth, but follows it as the shadow follows the lamp.

Our life, like a river, strikes its banks not to find itself closed in by them, but to realize anew every moment that it has its unending opening towards the sea. It is as a poem that strikes its metre at every step not to be silenced by its rigid regulations, but to give expression every moment to the inner freedom of its harmony.

The boundary walls of our individuality thrust us back within our limits, on the one hand, and thus lead us, on the other, to the unlimited. Only when we try to make these limits infinite are we launched into an impossible contradiction and court miserable failure.

This is the cause which leads to the great revolutions in human history. Whenever the part, spurning the whole, tries to run a separate course of its own, the great pull of the all gives it a violent wrench, stops it suddenly, and brings it to the dust. Whenever the individual tries to dam the ever-flowing current of the world-force and imprison it within the area of his particular use, it brings on disaster. However powerful a king may be, he cannot raise his standard of rebellion against the infinite source of strength, which is unity, and yet remain powerful.

It has been said, By unrighteousness men prosper, gain what they desire, and triumph over their enemies, but at the end they are cut off at the root and suffer extinction.

Our roots must go deep down into the universal if we would attain the greatness of personality.

It is the end of our self to seek that union. It must bend its head low in love and meekness and take its stand where great and small all meet. It has to gain by its loss and rise by its surrender. His games would be a horror to the child if he could not come back to his mother, and our pride of personality will be a curse to us if we cannot give it up in love. We must know that it is only the revelation of the Infinite which is endlessly new and eternally beautiful in us and gives the only meaning to our self.

# Tagore's Message of Communal Harmony with a Rakhi

114 years ago, Rabindranath Tagore used the sacred thread of Rakhi to conjoin two lands divided by the then Imperial British administration. Rakhi, or Raksha Bandhan, symbolises love and unity between a girl and her brother, as she ties an amulet on her wrist. But 114 years ago, Rabindranath Tagore used the sacred thread of Rakhi to conjoin two lands divided by the then Imperial British administration, a stroke that carried with it the burden of political strategy.

The Bengal Presidency, as the region was known, comprised of Bengal with modern-day Bihar, parts of Chhattisgarh, Orissa, and Assam and was the largest province with a population of 78.5 million. Bengal was the furnace of India's independence movement and its huge geographical area made life difficult for the British administration, which is why they brought in the infamous policy of divide and rule. Initially, they planned to divide just based on language, but then Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, decided to create a new region for the Muslim population.

The orders were passed in August 1905 and came into effect on October 16. It resulted in a great uproar in the Bengali society, with a visible Hindu-Muslim rift. Muslim leaders, who initially thought the partition disadvantageous, gave their assent after the Muslim majority province of Eastern Bengal and Assam were created. The Hindu protest against the partition was seen as interference in a Muslim province. While the Hindu Bengali leaders feared that they would be reduced to a minority in Muslim-dominated regions, Muslim Bengali leaders saw that as an opportunity to have their separate land and create an independent identity.

When the British government trying to divide Bengal and the Hindu-Muslim unity, Rabindranath Tagore appeared as the beacon of peace. Always a visionary, the bard decided to use the occasion of Raksha Bandhan which coincided with the partition as a weapon against the prevalent loathing in a society.

In the month of Shravan, the 'Kobiguru' (as he is affectionately called in Bengali) gave a clarion call to the two communities, Hindus and Muslims, to tie Rakhi on each other's hand. The act sent out a message of unity and brotherhood laced with defiance against the British order. Tagore was by then was already a prominent figure in the Bengali society (he would win the Nobel Prize in 1913), and hundreds from both communities responded to his call. The streets of Kolkata, Dhaka, Barishal, Chittagong, Rangpur, Sylhet were thronged with enthusiastic people tying rakhi on each other's hands. Though the move failed to deter the British administration, it shed new light on Raksha Bandhan.

Fresh protests arose that refused to die down, resulting in the unification of Bengal when King George announced in December 1911 that eastern Bengal would be assimilated into the Bengal Presidency. Bengali-dominated districts were once again unified and Assam, Bihar, and Orissa were separated.





## Tagore's Love of Nature



Rabindranath Tagore's love of nature was profound. For him the wide-open skies, spaciousness, and tranquility of the countryside symbolized freedom. His paintings of nature are evocative, filled with a sense of mystery and longing, often depicting large, old trees by a river—as K. G. Subramanyan (a noted contemporary artist, born in 1924, who studied and taught at Santiniketan) described, “haunting woodlands with a textured filigree of pen hatchings and squiggles, or dark and somber trees silhouetted against a jewellike sunset.” The luxuriant woodlands surrounding Santiniketan, where Tagore lived and built a school and university system, were his inspiration.

At Santiniketan classes were held outdoors, because he believed that “nature [is] the greatest of all teachers” and that “children should be surrounded with the things of nature which have their own educational value.” The fact that Tagore chose to leave his pictures untitled was also an expression of freedom; they were open-ended and free of narrative, allowing the viewer to build his or her own interpretations. He believed that his paintings, like nature, were expressions of freedom, which could not be confined within the scope of words.

Source: <https://archive.artic.edu/tagore/nature/>





# Scientific Inquiry — A New Basis for Sadbhavana

## **Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose, (1858-1937)**

The first CSI CIE FRS, was a biologist, physicist, botanist and an early writer of science fiction. He pioneered the investigation of radio and microwave optics, made significant contributions to plant science, and was a major force behind the expansion of experimental science on the Indian subcontinent. IEEE named him one of the fathers of radio science. Bose is considered the father of Bengali science fiction, and also invented the crescograph, a device for measuring the growth of plants. A crater on the moon has been named in his honour. He founded Bose Institute, a premier research institute of India and also one of its oldest. Established in 1917, the institute was the first interdisciplinary research centre in Asia. He served as the Director of Bose Institute from its inception until his death.



[https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/jHLXVsU6MerMI2bHtScTLaRUWqUQt2oXbvICOPIDT\\_WCjWWXO7WG61VxMdRPGvttFJStil\\_wl4QTUSXhfYXcpa-MHYQtRv-yZc26wbPz2XwdUFNDNhCF7INYy0IKv2ZuXqglGE-VBppvntXc](https://lh3.googleusercontent.com/proxy/jHLXVsU6MerMI2bHtScTLaRUWqUQt2oXbvICOPIDT_WCjWWXO7WG61VxMdRPGvttFJStil_wl4QTUSXhfYXcpa-MHYQtRv-yZc26wbPz2XwdUFNDNhCF7INYy0IKv2ZuXqglGE-VBppvntXc)

Bose became interested in radio following the 1894 publication of the work of British physicist Oliver Lodge, who studied electromagnetic radiation in the 1890s. Bose realised the disadvantages of studying the light-like properties of long radio waves, and in follow-up research, managed to reduce the waves to the millimetre level (about 5 mm wavelength). During a November 1894 (or 1895) public demonstration at Town Hall of Kolkata, Bose ignited gunpowder and rang a bell at a distance using millimetre range wavelength microwaves. Lieutenant Governor Sir William Mackenzie witnessed Bose's demonstration in the Kolkata Town Hall. In an essay, Bose noted the potential for wireless communications via radio waves.

Bose conducted studies in plant research on *Mimosa pudica* and *Desmodium gyrans* plants. His major contribution in the field of biophysics was the demonstration of the electrical nature of the conduction of various stimuli (e.g., wounds, chemical agents) in plants, establishing that the plants were also living beings. A device to record the movement of the tip of a plant or its roots, crescograph, was invented by Bose.

How did these inventions contribute to Sadbhavana? We do not have to think far - in the time of Corona, we have developed sensitivity to plants and survived indoors while communicating using radio waves.

## Sir Prafulla Chandra Ray (1861-1944)

The other scientist who steered the scientific thinking in Bengal and was known as “Father of Indian Chemistry”, and awarded CIE, FNI, FRASB, FIAS, FCS was Prafulla Chandra Ray. He was a well-known teacher and one of the first “modern” Indian chemical researchers. He discovered the stable compound mercurous nitrite in 1896 and established Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works Ltd, India's first pharmaceutical company in 1901.

In 1882, Prafulla Roy won a scholarship to Edinburgh University, UK and he gained his degree there in 1885. Remaining at Edinburgh to undertake research, he was awarded a D. Sc. in 1887 and the “Hope Prize” for his thesis on “Conjugated Sulphates of the Copper-Magnesium Group: A Study of Isomorphous Mixtures and Molecular Combinations”

Prafulla Ray returned to Calcutta in 1888 and became an assistant professor of Chemistry at the Presidency College in Calcutta in 1889. He established a research laboratory and slowly gathered a group of dedicated students who researched with him. He published around 150 research papers during his lifetime. Many of his articles on science were published in renowned journals of his time. His research included the discovery of the stable compound mercurous nitrite in 1896 while studying nitrite and hyponitrite compounds and their compounds. He also researched organic compounds containing sulphur, double salt, homomorphism and fluorination.

In 1892 with a small capital of Rs 700, he established Bengal Chemical Works. It flourished under his management. The company initially produced herbal products and indigenous medicines. In 1901 the enterprise became a limited company, Bengal Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works Ltd (BCPW) and India's first pharmaceutical company. Gradually, the company expanded and became a leading chemicals and medicine producer. Prafulla Ray was interested in ancient texts and after much research published “The History of Hindu Chemistry” in two volumes in 1902 and 1908. The work detailed the extensive knowledge of metallurgy and medicine in ancient India. In 1916 Prafulla Ray retired from President College and set up the Chemistry Department of the Calcutta University where he worked for more than 20 years.

Prafulla Ray wanted to use the marvels of science for lifting up the masses. He was a very passionate and devoted social worker and he participated eagerly and actively in helping famine and flood struck people in Bengal during the early 1920s. He promoted the khadi material and also established many other industries such as the Bengal Enamel Works, National Tannery Works and the Calcutta Pottery Works. He was a true rationalist and he was completely against the caste system and other irrational social systems. He persistently carried on this work of social reformation till he passed away.

Remaining a bachelor throughout his life, Prafulla Ray retired becoming professor emeritus in 1936 aged 75. He died on 16 June 1944, aged 82." He was also a very passionate and devoted social worker and he did not support the caste system. He displayed Sadbhavana through his deeds.



## Satyendra Nath Bose (1894 –1974)

Satyen Bose was an Indian mathematician and physicist specialising in theoretical physics. He is best known for his work on quantum mechanics in the early 1920s, collaborating with Albert Einstein in developing the foundation for Bose–Einstein statistics and the theory of the Bose–Einstein condensate. A Fellow of the Royal Society, he was awarded India's second highest civilian award, the Padma Vibhushan in 1954 by the Government of India.

The class of particles that obey Bose–Einstein statistics, bosons, was named after Bose by Paul Dirac. A polymath, he had a wide range of interests in varied fields including physics, mathematics, chemistry, biology, mineralogy, philosophy, arts, literature, and music. He served on many research and development committees in sovereign India.

Bosons, a class of elementary subatomic particles in particle physics were named by Dirac after Satyendra Nath Bose to commemorate his contributions to science. Although seven Nobel Prizes were awarded for research related to S N Bose's concepts of the boson, Bose–Einstein statistics and Bose–Einstein condensate, Bose himself was not awarded a Nobel Prize. In his book *The Scientific Edge*, physicist Jayant Narlikar observed:

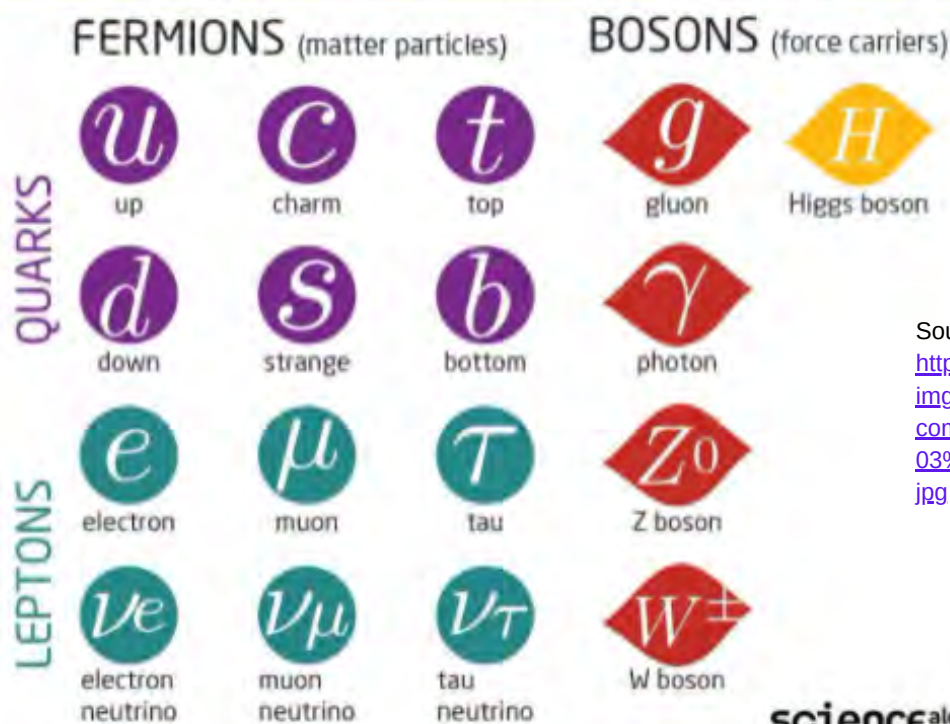
SN Bose's work on particle statistics (c. 1922), which clarified the behaviour of photons (the particles of light in an enclosure) and opened the door to new ideas on statistics of Microsystems that obey the rules of quantum theory, was one of the top ten achievements of 20th century Indian science and could be considered in the Nobel Prize class.

(Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satyendra\\_Nath\\_Bose](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satyendra_Nath_Bose))

When Bose himself was once asked a question about the Nobel Prize, he simply replied with Sadbhavana, "I have got all the recognition I deserve".

In 2016 the existence of the Higgs Boson or the so-called God Particle hypothesised by theoretical physicists was confirmed experimentally, thereby immortalising Satyen Bose.

### The Standard Model of Particle Physics



Source:

<https://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.sciencealert.com%2Fimages%2F2019-03%2FStandardModelParticlePhysicsLogo2.jpg>



## Bibha Chowdhuri (1913-1991)



Source:

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Indian\\_Scientist\\_Bibha\\_Chowdhuri.jpg](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Indian_Scientist_Bibha_Chowdhuri.jpg)

Bibha Chowdhuri (1913 – 1991) was an Indian physicist. She worked on particle physics and cosmic rays. The IAU has re-christened the star HD 86081 as Bibha (a yellow-white dwarf star in the constellation Sextans south of the celestial equator) after her.

After her MSc from Calcutta University, Chowdhuri joined the laboratory of Patrick Blackett for her doctoral studies, working on cosmic rays at the University of Manchester. Her PhD thesis investigated extensive air showers. It is unclear how much her work contributed to Blackett's Nobel Prize.

Chowdhuri returned to India after her PhD, working at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research for eight years. In 1954 she was a visiting researcher at the University of Michigan. She was appointed because Homi Bhabha was still establishing the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, and contacted her thesis examiners for advice on outstanding graduate students. She joined the Physical Research Laboratory and became involved with the Kolar Gold Fields experiments. She moved to Kolkata to work at the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics. She taught physics in French.





# Sadbhavana after Independence

## The Marxist Influence

Sadbhavana thinking did not end with the Young Bengal Movement, till Independence of India. Some such Sadbhavana thinking was reflected in the growing a-religious thinking in Bengal. As mentioned earlier, Ramakrishna Paramhansa very strongly believed and propagate that all Gods were same: we just call them by different names. Though the word 'secularism' had not gained momentum that time, large number of people became followers of Ramakrishna Teachings.

In 1967 in the Naxalbari block of the Siliguri subdivision in Darjeeling district, West Bengal, India, an armed peasant uprising took place. It was mainly led by tribals and the radical communist leaders of Bengal and further developed into Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) in 1969. The event became an inspiration to the Naxalite movement which rapidly spread from West Bengal to other states of India creating division within the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or the CPI(M) party.

Unlike many other political parties in India, the Marxists had a clear political ideology of protecting the interest of the proletariat class (social class of wage-earners, those members of a society whose only possession of significant economic value is their labour power). Marxists also believed that 'Religion is Opium of Masses' using which the Bourgeois controlled the wage-earners. Therefore, for them creating an economic shift in favour of the labour necessitated a religious reform, which was quite different from the ones propagated by the Brahmo Samaj or Ramakrishna Mission. All these three efforts in effect created an a-religious class among critical-thinking Bengalis.

This was further catapulted when the Marxists started gaining popularity in West Bengal. The Marxist Government came to power in West Bengal in 1977 and the Left Front led by the CPI (M) governed Bengal for over 30 years, till 2007. This has left several marks on the **সদ্বাবনা** thinking in Bengal.

A significant step taken by the Marxist Government for the wellbeing of all (**সদ্বাবনা**) was what came to be popularly known as **Operation Barga**. Barga system was a prevalent land tenancy system in West Bengal, which allowed absentee landlords to control sharecropping arrangements and rent fixation over generations. Immediately after coming to power, the Marxist government took up this operation transferring rights to the tiller of the land. It is considered to be one of the most effective land reforms efforts by a state. Introduced in 1978, and given legal backing in 1979 and 1980, Operation Barga became a popular but controversial measure for land reforms. The ultimate aim of these land reforms was to facilitate the conversion of the state's bargadars into landowners, in line with the Directive Principles of State Policy of the Indian Constitution. Operation Barga recorded the names of 1.5 million bargadars, and became the most successful land reform program in India. Apart from this the Marxist Government also brought in several changes in the education system, under the leadership of Anil Basu, which included brining in uniformity of syllabus across all schools, compulsory education in mother tongue among others.



## Satyajit Ray (1921-1992)

A quiet practitioner of Sadbhavana, Satyajit Ray was a Bengali filmmaker, screenwriter, author, essayist, lyricist, magazine editor, illustrator, calligrapher, and music composer. Ray is widely considered one of the greatest filmmakers of all time. Ray's first film, *Pather Panchali* (1955), won eleven international prizes, including the inaugural Best Human Document award at the 1956 Cannes Film Festival. This film, along with *Aparajito* (1956) and *Apur Sansar* (*The World of Apu*) (1959), form *The Apu Trilogy*. He is celebrated for works also include *The Music Room* (1958), *The Big City* (1963) and *Charulata* (1964). Ray was born in Calcutta to renowned writer Sukumar Ray who was prominent in the field of arts and literature. Starting his career as a commercial artist, he was drawn into independent filmmaking after meeting French filmmaker Jean Renoir and viewing Vittorio De Sica's Italian neorealist film *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) during a visit to London.



Source: [https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcScp-ll1HwOV9J2UIqNo\\_ArFcbj0x8jRzY4G1F3Lvz5Chl0VoNal7n689JOdd7E1PxKzSs&usqp=CAU](https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcScp-ll1HwOV9J2UIqNo_ArFcbj0x8jRzY4G1F3Lvz5Chl0VoNal7n689JOdd7E1PxKzSs&usqp=CAU)

Apu and Durga from *Pather Panchali*

Ray directed 36 films, including feature films, documentaries and shorts and authored several short stories and novels, primarily for young children and teenagers. Feluda, the sleuth, and Professor Shonku, the scientist in his science fiction stories, Tarini Khuro, the storyteller and Lalmohan Ganguly, the novelist are popular fictional characters created by him. In 1978, he was awarded an honorary degree by Oxford University.

Ray's work has been described as full of humanism and universality, and of a deceptive simplicity with deep underlying complexity. The Japanese director Akira Kurosawa said, "Not to have seen the cinema of Ray means existing in the world without seeing the sun or the moon." Some critics find his work anti-modern; they criticise him for lacking the new modes of expression or experimentation found in works of Ray's contemporaries, such as Jean-Luc Godard. As Stanley Kauffmann wrote, some critics believe that Ray assumes that viewers "can be interested in a film that simply dwells in its characters, rather than one that imposes dramatic patterns on their lives." Ray said he could do nothing about the slow pace. Kurosawa defended him by saying that Ray's films were not slow; "His work can be described as flowing composedly, like a big river".

The writer V. S. Naipaul compared a scene in *Shatranj Ki Khiladi* (*The Chess Players*) to a Shakespearean play; he wrote, "only three hundred words are spoken but goodness! – terrific things happen. Even critics who did not like the aesthetics of Ray's films generally acknowledged his ability to encompass a whole culture with all its nuances. Ray's obituary in *The Independent* included the question, "Who else can compete?" His work was promoted in France by *The Studio des Ursuline cinema*. French photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson described Ray as "undoubtedly a giant in the film world".

With positive admiration for most of Ray's films, critic Roger Ebert cited The Apu Trilogy among the greatest films. Certain advocates of socialism claim that Ray was not "committed" to the cause of the nation's downtrodden classes while some critics accused him of glorifying poverty in Pather Panchali and Ashani Sanket (Distant Thunder) through lyricism and aesthetics. They said he provided no solution to conflicts in the stories, and was unable to overcome his bourgeois background.

(Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satyajit\\_Ray#Critical\\_and\\_popular\\_responses](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Satyajit_Ray#Critical_and_popular_responses) )



Gupi Gayen Bagha Bayan

Source: <https://mir-s3-cdn-cf.behance.net/projects/404/4e6c4b118558031.Y3JvcCw4NTcsNjcwLDQwLDYx.jpg>



## Ravi Shankar, Sitarist Who Introduced Indian Music to the West, Dies at 92



George Harrison with Ravi Shankar in 1967. Credit...Associated Press

Ravi Shankar, the sitar virtuoso and composer who died on Tuesday at 92, created a passion among Western audiences for the rhythmically vital, melodically flowing ragas of classical Indian music — a fascination that had expanded by the mid-1970s into a flourishing market for world music of all kinds.

In particular, his work with two young semi-apprentices in the 1960s — George Harrison of the Beatles and the composer Philip Glass, a founder of Minimalism — was profoundly influential on both popular and classical music.

And his interactions throughout his career with performers from various Asian and Western traditions — including the violinist Yehudi Menuhin, the flutist Jean-Pierre Rampal and the saxophonist and composer John Coltrane — created hybrids that opened listeners' ears to timbres, rhythms and tuning systems that were entirely new to them.

Mr. Shankar died in San Diego, at a hospital near his home. He had been treated for upper-respiratory and heart ailments in the last year and underwent heart-valve replacement surgery last Thursday, his family said. His final performance was a concert with his daughter, the virtuoso sitarist Anoushka Shankar, on Nov. 4 in Long Beach, Calif. He was also the father of the singer Norah Jones.

Mr. Shankar, a soft-spoken, eloquent man whose own virtuosity transcended musical languages, was trained in both Eastern and Western musical traditions. Although Western audiences were often mystified by the odd sounds and shapes of the instruments when he began touring in Europe and the United States in the early 1950s, Mr. Shankar and his ensemble gradually built a large following for Indian music.



## **A Beatle Was Intrigued**

Western interest in his instrument, the sitar, exploded in 1965 when Harrison encountered one on the set of "Help!," the Beatles' second film. Harrison was intrigued by the instrument, with its small rounded body, long neck and resonating gourd at the top, and its complexity: it has 6 or 7 melody strings and about twice as many sympathetic strings, which are not played but which resonate freely as the other strings are plucked. He soon learned its rudiments and used it that year on a Beatles recording, "Norwegian Wood."

The Rolling Stones, the Animals, the Byrds and other rock groups followed suit, although few went as far as Harrison, who recorded several songs on Beatles albums with Indian musicians rather than with his band mates. By the summer of 1967 the sitar was in vogue.

At first Mr. Shankar reveled in the attention his connection with popular culture had brought him, and he performed for huge audiences at the Monterey International Pop Festival in 1967 and at Woodstock in 1969. He also performed, with the tabla virtuoso Alla Rakha and the sarod player Ali Akbar Khan, at an all-star concert at Madison Square Garden in 1971 that Harrison had organized to help Mr. Shankar raise money for victims of political upheaval in Bangladesh.

But his reach went much further. He composed for films (including the score for Richard Attenborough's "Gandhi" in 1982), ballets, electronic works and concertos for sitar and Western orchestras. As his popularity spread, societies for the presentation of Indian and other traditional music began springing up — the largest one in New York is the World Music Institute — and a thriving world music industry was soon born.

Last week Mr. Shankar was told he would receive a lifetime achievement Grammy Award in February, said Neil Portnow, president of the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences.

Though linked with the early rock era by many Americans, Mr. Shankar came to regard his participation in rock festivals as a mistake, saying he deplored the use of his music, with its roots in an ancient spiritual tradition, as a backdrop for drug use.

"On one hand," he said in a 1985 interview, "I was lucky to have been there at a time when society was changing. And although much of the hippie movement seemed superficial, there was also a lot of sincerity in it, and a tremendous amount of energy. What disturbed me, though, was the use of drugs and the mixing of drugs with our music. And I was hurt by the idea that our classical music was treated as a fad — something that is very common in Western countries.

"People would come to my concerts stoned, and they would sit in the audience drinking Coke and making out with their girlfriends. I found it very humiliating, and there were many times I picked up my sitar and walked away.

"I tried to make the young people sit properly and listen. I assured them that if they wanted to be high, I could make them feel high through the music, without drugs, if they'd only give me a chance. It was a terrible experience at the time.



Ravi Shankar, center, played during the Concert for Bangladesh in Madison Square Garden in New York City in 1971. Credit...Donal F. Holway/The New York Times

"But you know, many of those young people still come to our concerts. They have matured, they are free from drugs and they have a better attitude. And this makes me happy that I went through all that. I have come full circle."

Ravi Shankar, whose formal name was Robindra Shankar Chowdhury, was born on April 7, 1920, in Varanasi, India, to a family of musicians and dancers. His older brother Uday directed a touring Indian dance troupe, which Ravi joined when he was 10. Within five years he had become one of the company's star soloists. He also discovered that he had a facility with the sitar and the sarod, another stringed instrument, as well as the flute and the tabla, an Indian drum.

The idea of helping Western listeners appreciate the intricacies of Indian music occurred to him during his years as a dancer.

"My brother had a house in Paris," he recalled in one interview. "To it came many Western classical musicians. These musicians all made the same point: 'Indian music,' they said, 'is beautiful when we hear it with the dancers. On its own it is repetitious and monotonous.' They talked as if Indian music were an ethnic phenomenon, just another museum piece. Even when they were being decent and kind, I was furious. And at the same time sorry for them. Indian music was so rich and varied and deep. These people hadn't penetrated even the outer skin."

Mr. Shankar soon found, however, that as a young, self-taught musician he had not penetrated very deeply either. In 1936 an Indian court musician, Allaudin Khan, joined the company for a year and set Mr. Shankar on a different path.

### **'I Surrendered Myself'**

"He was the first person frank enough to tell me that I had talent but that I was wasting it — that I was going nowhere, doing nothing," Mr. Shankar said. "Everyone else was full of praise, but he killed my ego and made me humble."

When Mr. Shankar asked Mr. Khan to teach him, he was told that he could learn to play the sitar only after he decided to give up the worldly life he was leading and devote himself fully to his studies. In 1937 Mr. Shankar gave up dancing, sold his Western clothes and returned to India to become a musician.

"I surrendered myself to the old way," he said, "and let me tell you, it was difficult for me to go from places like New York and Chicago to a remote village full of mosquitoes, bedbugs, lizards and snakes, with frogs croaking all night. I was just like a Western young man. But I overcame all that."

After studying with Mr. Khan and marrying his daughter, Annapurna, also a sitarist, Mr. Shankar began his performing career in India. In the 1940s he started bringing Eastern and Western currents together in ballet scores and incidental music for films, including Satyajit Ray's "Apu" trilogy, in the late 1950s. In 1949 he was appointed music director of All India Radio. There he formed the National Orchestra, an ensemble of Indian and Western classical instruments.

Mr. Shankar became increasingly interested in touring outside India in the early 1950s. His appetite was whetted further when he undertook a tour of the Soviet Union in 1954 and was invited to perform in London and New York. But it wasn't until 1956 that he began spending long periods outside India. That year he left his position at All India Radio and toured Europe and the United States.

Through his recitals and his recordings on the Columbia, EMI and World Pacific labels, Mr. Shankar built a Western following for the sitar. In 1952 he began performing with Menuhin, with whom he made three recordings for EMI: "West Meets East" (1967), "West Meets East, Vol. 2" (1968) and "Improvisations: West Meets East" (1977). He also made recordings with Rampal.

Coltrane had become fascinated with Indian music and philosophy in the early 1960s and met with Mr. Shankar several times from 1964 to 1966 to learn the basics of ragas, talas and Indian improvisation techniques. Sitar performances are partly improvised, but the improvisations are strictly governed by a repertory of ragas (melodic patterns representing specific moods, times of day, seasons or events) and talas (intricate rhythmic patterns) that date back several millennia.

Coltrane named his son Ravi Coltrane, also a saxophonist, after Mr. Shankar.

Mr. Shankar loved to mix the music of different cultures. In 1978 he collaborated with several prominent Japanese musicians — Hozan Yamamoto, a shakuhachi player, and Susumu Miyashita, a koto player — on “East Greet East.”

In 1988 his seven-movement “Swar Milan” was performed at the Palace of Culture in Moscow by an ensemble of 140 musicians, including the Russian Folk Ensemble, members of the Moscow Philharmonic and the Ministry of Culture Chorus, as well as Mr. Shankar’s group of Indian musicians. And in 1990 he collaborated with Mr. Glass — who had worked as his assistant on the film score for “Chappaqua” in the late 1960s — on “Passages,” a recording of works he and Mr. Glass composed for each other.

“I have always had an instinct for doing new things,” Mr. Shankar said in 1985. “Call it good or bad, I love to experiment.”



Mr. Shankar in New Delhi in January 2012. Credit...Manish Swarup/Associated Press

Though many listeners became familiar with Mr. Shankar mainly through his cross-cultural, style-blending experiments, his film scores and his concertos, his main love remained the ancient Northern Indian Hindustani style in which he was trained as a young man.

Often his tabla player was Alla Rakha, who became a renowned soloist in his own right. At times, Mr. Shankar also shared the spotlight with Ali Akbar Khan, a master of the sarod, another Indian stringed instrument. These concerts, including an annual performance at Carnegie Hall, adhered to traditional forms, in which the musicians would improvise on a raga, often ecstatically, for about an hour per piece.

## **A Lasting Friendship**

Western listeners who were sensitive to the techniques that Mr. Shankar and his musicians were using to expand on the ragas found the music entrancing and Mr. Shankar’s inventiveness and dexterity startling. Many sought out the music of other sitar, sarod and tabla soloists, as well as Indian vocalists, and branched out to other forms of world music, from China, Japan, Indonesia and eventually African and Latin American countries.

Mr. Shankar maintained his friendship and working relationship with Harrison, who released a recording of a 1972 performance by Mr. Shankar on the Beatles’ Apple label. In 1974 Harrison also produced a recording on his own Dark Horse label by a group billed as Shankar Family and Friends performing in a more popular style — short, bright-edged songs with vocals, rather than expansive instrumental improvisations.

The “friends” included Harrison, listed in the credits as Hari Georgeson, as well as the bassist Klaus Voormann, the pianist Nicky Hopkins, the organist Billy Preston and the flutist Tom Scott. Mr. Shankar toured the United States with Harrison the same year. They last worked together in 1997, when Harrison produced Mr. Shankar’s “Chants of India” CD for EMI.

After Harrison’s death in 2001, Mr. Shankar contributed a new composition to the “Concert for George,” a starry celebration of Harrison’s music staged at the Royal Albert Hall in London in 2002. The new piece, “Arpan,” was performed by an ensemble of Indian and Western musicians led by Anoushka Shankar.

## **Protecting the Heritage**

Mr. Shankar continued to be regarded in the West as the most eloquent spokesman for his country’s music. But his popularity abroad and his experiments with Western musical sounds and styles drew criticism among traditionalists in India.

“In India I have been called a destroyer,” he said in 1981. “But that is only because they mixed my identity as a performer and as a composer. As a composer I have tried everything, even electronic music and avant-garde. But as a performer I am, believe me, getting more classical and more orthodox, jealously protecting the heritage that I have learned.”

Mr. Shankar was a member of the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian Parliament, from 1986 to 1992 — one of 12 “nominated members” chosen by the president for their contributions to Indian culture.

Mr. Shankar taught extensively in the United States and founded a school of Indian music, the Kinnara School, in Los Angeles. He was a visiting professor at City College in New York in 1967. Recordings of his lectures there were the basis for “Learning Indian Music,” a set of cassettes. Mr. Shankar was the subject of a documentary, “Raga: A Film Journey Into the Soul of India,” in 1971, and published two autobiographies: “My Music, My Life” in 1969 and “Raga Mala” in 1997.

In 2010 the Ravi Shankar Foundation started a record label, East Meets West Music, which began by reissuing some of his historic recordings and films, including “Raga.”

Mr. Shankar’s first marriage, to Annapurna Devi, ended in the late 1960s. They had a son, Shubhendra Shankar, who died in 1992. He also had long relationships with Kamala Shastri, a dancer; Sue Jones, a concert producer, with whom he had a daughter, Ms. Jones, in 1979; as well as Sukanya Rajan, whom he married in 1989. Ms. Shankar, the sitar virtuoso, is their daughter, born in 1981. He is survived by his wife and two daughters, as well as three grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

“If I’ve accomplished anything in these past 30 years,” Mr. Shankar said in the 1985 interview, “it’s that I have been able to open the door to our music in the West. I enjoy seeing other Indian musicians — old and young — coming to Europe and America and having some success. I’m happy to have contributed to that.

“Of course now there is a whole new generation out there, so we have to start all over again. To a degree their interest in India has been kindled by ‘Gandhi,’ ‘Passage to India’ and ‘The Jewel in the Crown,’ ” he added, referring to popular Western films and TV shows. “What we have to do now is convey to them an awareness of the richness and diversity of our culture.”





## Mahasweta Devi (1926 -2016)

An epitome of Sadbhavana, particularly for the oppressed and the marginalised, Mahasweta Devi was an Indian writer in Bengali and an activist. Her notable literary works include Hajar Churashir Maa, Rudali, and Aranyer Adhikar. She was a leftist who worked for the rights and empowerment of the tribal people (Lodha and Shabar) of West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh states of India. She was honoured with various literary awards such as the Sahitya Akademi Award (in Bengali), Jnanpith Award and Ramon Magsaysay Award along with India's civilian awards Padma Shri and Padma Vibhushan.



An Indian writer in Bengali and an activist – Mahasweta Devi – was a luminary par excellence. She was one of India's foremost literary figures from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and her literary oeuvre include numerous novels, plays, essays and short stories. Devi is remembered for submerging herself in the lives of India's deprived and sidelined as she recounted the discriminations against them in her writings.

Mahasweta Devi received the Jnanpith Award, India's highest literary honour, in 1996. She was also awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award in 1997. Here are a few of Devi's memorable works.

Hajar Chuarasir Maan (The Mother of [prisoner number] 1084) is one of Devi's most widely read works, written during the height of the Naxalite agitation in Bengal. This novel focuses on the trauma of a mother who wakes up one morning to the devastating news that her son is lying dead in the morgue and her struggle to understand his decision to be a Naxalite. Breast Stories is a collection of short fiction about the breast as more than a symbol of beauty, eroticism, or motherhood, but as a harsh indictment of an exploitative social system and a weapon of resistance." In the Name of the Mother is a set of four stories that expose the traditional portrayal and concept of women and their link to motherhood, which often conceals a communal abuse and attempt to restrict women to their socially prescribed roles. In After Kurukshetra, taking inspiration from the epic Mahabharata, Devi weaves three stories that look at events in the epic from the eyes of women—marginalized, dispossessed and Dalit. Chotti Munda and His Arrow was written in 1980, this novel raises questions about the place of indigenous peoples on the map of India's national identity, land rights and human rights, and the justification of violent resistance as the last resort of a desperate people."

Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/books/features/memorable-works-of-mahasweta-devi/photostory/80251487.cms?picid=80251501>

## Amartya Sen (1993-)

Amartya Sen is an Indian economist and philosopher, who since 1972 has taught and worked in the United Kingdom and the United States. Sen has made contribution to Sadbhavana by working on welfare economics, social choice theory, economic and social justice, economic theories of famines, decision theory, development economics, public health, and measures of well-being of countries. He is currently a Professor of Economics and Philosophy at Harvard University. He formerly served as Master of Trinity College at the University of Cambridge. He was awarded the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences in 1998 and India's Bharat Ratna in 1999 for his work in welfare economics.

Amartya Sen's book *Development As Freedom...* asserts the dialectical relationship between development and freedom, and in essence "a view of development as an integrated process of expansion of substantive freedoms that connect with one another." According to Sen, these freedoms are access to health care, education, political dissent, economic markets, and equality, and each freedom encourages the development of another. Sen depicts this process of the "expansion of substantive freedoms" as "both an ends and a means of development,"... whereby political, economic, and social freedoms "link with each other and with the ends of enhancement of human freedom in general."

This approach enables Sen to appreciate the vital roles town markets and civic organizations—as well as the prevailing social norms inherent within defined communities such as these—play in discerning impediments and instigators of collective and individual freedom. As Sen notes, "People are only free where they can provide for their basic needs and realize their innate abilities." These abilities largely rely on access to resources and the ability to utilize them in a means conducive to the development of individual freedom. Development, therefore, as posed by Sen, provides a fertile base for the establishment of democratic ideals and freedoms, while at the same time further increasing the levels of political, social, and economic development.



Source: <https://images.indianexpress.com/2021/07/amartya-sen-Idea-exchange-illustration-final.jpg>

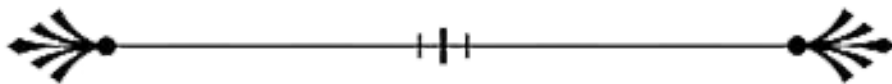


This realization sets Sen's interpretation against mainstream dogma, although not in a confrontational manner. By calling into question the numerous "unfreedoms" perpetuated by contemporary neo-liberal developmental models, and thereby demonstrating the need to enable people "to develop their abilities free from the scourges of poverty, inequality and repression," Sen seeks not to alienate proponents of the traditional "hard-knocks" approach, or at the same time radical grassroots approaches, but to construct an interpretation that advocates a mutually beneficial or "middle-way" approach... This attempt to build bridges between opposing ideological camps while stressing mutual benefit lies at the heart of Sen's contribution...reassuring to those on both sides of the ideological divide. For example, although Sen affirms the extensive use of markets, acknowledging their necessity in promoting economic development...he nevertheless also asserts that those same "markets need to be supplemented with social safety nets.

Source: <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/review-development-freedom#:~:text=Sen's%20basic%20premise%20asserts%20the,%2C%20education%2C%20political%20dissent%2C%20economic>



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