

Chapter- IV

Problems and Challenges

Besides the dispute in the early hours with the Indian museum on the subject of the legitimacy of the conservation of antiquities, the Varendra Research Society had to countenance a range of problems and intimidations. A few of them were got to the bottom of. But the Society became abortive to overcome most of its problems. Owing to the collective result of these inflamed problems and intimidations, the VRS was totally wiped out in 1963.

I)The first and foremost quandary of the VRS was its below par number of members. Since the VRS signed up itself in discovering the history and heritage of the Bengalees, it was expected to get spontaneous support of the culturally mindful Bengalees, principally the concerned people of Northern Bengal. But the veracity was poles apart. Though the Society appealed to the people year after year to get its membership, the public rejoinder was far off from expectancy. It is to be cited that the uppermost number of members registered for a year was 137(ordinary- 123, associate 11 and honorary 3).¹ Whereas the number of members of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society bumped up to 199 within one year of its foundation (1915).² Not only that, the number of membership dropped off every year following 1934 and it got exceedingly smaller in the fourth decade of the twentieth century. However, subsequent to the liberation of the Indian subcontinent (Pakistan and India), the number reached to a modest figure on account of the adoption of re- organization scheme. But the number yet again began to decline at a fast pace with the failure of the aforementioned scheme and in 1963 it was not as much of than.¹⁵

II) Financial problem was the key snag of VRS. In fact the pecuniary order of the Society was never sound. More than ever the earnings of VRS from its membership, except two-three financial years, was no account pleasing. Additionally, the subscription of the ordinary

members was not regular. Several members used to keep arrear of their payment. Though the Society made an effort to boost up its earnings through the put up for sale of its publication was very little to run an institution like VRS. The Government funding was also not adequate. Moreover, the Government grant was cut down twice at the rate of 20%. Notwithstanding the repeated appeal of the VRS to restore the same, neither the pre-independent Government nor the post-independent Government brought back the same till 1962. Consequently, the Society was principally dependant on the helping hands of bighearted Sarat Kumar Ray to carry out its all activities. But the financial affluences of Sarat Kumar Ray was not similar in 1910 or 1920 and 1931-32. It was nearly unfeasible for Sarat Kumar Ray to hand down gargantuan financial input in the past 1931-32 period. And so, he brought up in the presidential address of this period that “At the present I don’t have enough material comfort to make a contribution in the permanent fund.”³ It is noted that although a suggestion to develop a permanent fund was made by A. K. Maitra and R. P. Chanda, the Society did not accomplish the same. Above and beyond, the Society became unsuccessful to bring together any sum for that proposed permanent fund.

The issue of monetary setback was, therefore, certainly a spot of interminable attention of the VRS. To overcome this state of affairs VRM was made over to a semi-Government establishment by giving way the supervision of the VRM to a Board of Trust. However, the condition remained unaltered. Because the alteration of management of VRM merely secured the obtainable Government allowances designed for the upkeep of the museum and the salary of the curator. But it failed to give an idea about any suitable source of fiscal solution for the prolongation of every part of activities of VRM.

III) The Museum of the VRS was deprived from its righteousness for a long time since the VRS was in the Bengal list for distribution of antiquities by the Government of India under Treasure Trove Act. Surprisingly, the VRS did not get a hold of a single Treasure Trove

Coins so far till March, 1929. The piece of information was highlighted with immense dissatisfaction in its annual report.⁴ This was come about possibly just because of the embryonic of this great institution in the unfocused zones (North Bengal) of Bengal.

IV) The pulling out of post- graduate research scholarship by the Government, firstly in 1927 and fully on May 31, 1934 was also had an effect on the cause of research of the VRS. Although quite a lot of exertions were made to breathe life into the scholarship but devoid of optimistic result.

V) A lot of its early workers, investigators and researchers whose enthusiastic and passionate actions were dependable for its growth and progress, were in the subsequent years detached from the Society - a few of them by demise and several others by means of transfer of service. The demise of Akshaya Kumar Maitra and Sarat Kumar Ray in 1930 and 1946 were huge blow to the Society. In fact it was not possible to get the substitutes of learned persons like Akshaya Kumar Maitra and munificent persons like Sarat Kumar Ray. And there was no exception in the case of VRS. Moreover, scholars like Ramaprasad Chanda(1917), Radhagovinda Basak(1921), Nanigopal Majumdar(1927) and afterwards Upendra Nath Goshal, Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharyya, Golam Yajdani and so on left Rajshahi either for their transfer of service or for better opportunities which extremely affected the activities of the Society, predominantly the research work.

VI) Partition of the country was one of the huge blows to the VRS and VRM. Manirul Hoque illustrated that research activities of the Society were on the whole carried out by the local elite Hindu as well as the lecturers of Rajshahi College; but owing to the partition there was a wide-ranging exodus of the Hindus from Rajshahi to India.⁵ Not surprisingly, the most of the learned members of the Society who were associated with the Rajshahi college left Rajshahi having exercised choice. It was not only a blow to the Society, but bore out as a calamitous.

VII) The dearth of its own organ or journal was noticeably one of the unenthusiastic spot of the Society. Whereas the other research organizations, which were established not ahead of the origin of VRS, possessed their own journal. Ultimately a proposal in support of the debut of a journal came up to the management of VRS in and around the independence of our subcontinent.⁶ However, the point in time was not apposite. Because due to the partition there was turmoil state in the Society which was by and large not suitable to take such task. Thus the scheme could not be put into practice even before the disappearance of the Society in 1963.

VIII) The museum of the VRS had also put up with its problem of defense. Though the compound wall was put up and there was two vulnerable guards intended for the protection, those were not adequate to defend the invaluable artifacts from the view of the fugitives. Actually during the dreadful instances of the Society its compound really turned into a rendezvous for the objectionable rudiments of the vicinity. Accordingly, some exclusive copperplate inscriptions bearing on the milestones of the history of Bengal, viz., the Guptas (Damodarpur copperplate), the Palas (Khalimpur copper plate) and the Senas (Anulia copperplate) have been stolen.⁷ Although an FIR was lodged by the secretary of the Society and the curator of the museum and accordingly an investigation were also made but no hint could be come across.

IX) Though Rajshahi was integrated in the newly shaped Pakistan by reason of the partition, the VRM's reserved fund (Endowment fund) of Rs. 30000 was blocked with the Government of West Bengal.⁸ As a result, the Museum was dispossessed of a sum of about Rs. 1200 which it used obtain per annum as interest thereon.

X) In the post- partition doldrums the very survival of the museum was in jeopardy. Taking advantage of the turmoil situation of the VRS and VRM, some uncultured and callous people

attempted to open a Medical school/ college in the premises of this great institution.⁹ Accordingly the Rajshahi Medical Institute, the selfish private body took possession of the half premises and knocked down some out houses and priceless trees.¹⁰ In support of their immoral actions, the medical institute erected an Anatomy Museum along the western boundary wall. Thus the Medical school lingered in illicit occupation of the museum premises for nearly a decade. But due to the tireless efforts and appeal of Kshitish Chandra Sarkar, the then secretary of the VRS, the Government of East Pakistan responded positively and with their interference the Medical Institute brought to a halt and put back the premises to the Society/Museum along with an amount of compensation.

XI) Though the VRS was engaged in the great job of the discovery of the history and heritage of the Bengalees, it did not obtain as much as necessary support from the intellectuals of southern part of Bengal. It is to be highlighted that the marvelous building of the society was laid by one and opened by another Governor of Bengal, but the two events were given very little or no coverage by the leading daily news papers and monthly journals published from Calcutta.¹¹ Even the similar academic institutions like Asiatic Society or Bangiya Shahitya Parishad did not show much wellbeing on the activities of VRS. It would be attention-grabbing to attach here a case in point. Actually the VRS organized a literary conference in February, explicitly from 14th February to 15th February of the year 1929 and in which every efforts were made to draw together scholars from all parts of Bengal, who had a particular concern in the Archaeology of their relevant divisions. Accordingly the scholars were invited from different parts of Bengal. But regrettably there was no such positive response of the scholars of the southern part of Bengal, with the solitary exception of Mr. Kalidas Dutt who had sent a paper on the *Antiquities of Khari*.¹²

XII) The motion of the progression of VRS would have been smoother, by and large at some point in the mayhem phases if it would get a solid hold of the helping hand of, no other than

Jadunath Sarkar, the distinguished historian of Indian subcontinent and son of the soil of Rajshahi. It would be unjust to jot down that Jadunath was not associated with the VRS. Jadunath made a payment to publish few of the volumes of the VRS. He was also nominated as the honorary vice-president¹³ of the Society. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that as a scholar his contribution in the national level was so massive that if a quantity of his dynamism would exploit in favour of the activities of the Society, the scenario might have been different.

Actually, for the largest part of his scholastic life Jadunath exclusively concentrated on medieval Indian history, principally the history of the Mughals. Generally he was not ready to cross the boundary rope of this field. It is said that the point up to which G. S. Sardesai (Govind Sakharam Sardesai) had been to the Marathas, Jadunath had been the same to the Mughals.¹⁴ Keeping this obligation in mind it can be said on the contrary that he could have tried to solve some of the tribulations of the VRS, at least the financial problem by utilizing his personal influences. Rather, it can be seen in a few cases that Jadunath's action procreated some conflict in the Society. Some invisible matters might work behind that. In this regard it can be mentioned that in 1927 when Sarat Kumar Ray according to the suggestion of Akshaya Kumar Maitra and Ramaprasad Chanda proposed to confer the management of the Museum to a Board of Trust and decided to give Rs. 50000 to organize a permanent fund, Jadunath Sarkar and his cluster protested the same seeing it as a trickery to occupy the museum.¹⁵ Moreover, Jadunath recommended 'not to push the matter of the Trust but allow him to try to secure continuation of the government grant by speaking to the authorities;' but in reality, he did not take any endeavours to revitalize the same grant 'by speaking to the authorities'.¹⁶ This approach of Jadunath Sarkar not only disturbed the devout objective of Sarat Kumar, but caused enough damage to the activities and finances of Varendra Research Society.

XIII) The malfunction of the post- independent re-organization design was one of the prime threats to the subsistence of VRS. It is out of the doubt that the re-organization was not made the grade to boost up any sort of velocity in the activities of the VRS in its sluggish period (1948 – 1963). Relatively the activities of the VRS went down bit by bit and it was stopped up from top to bottom in 1963.

The last but not the least intimidation to the survival of this splendid institute was an attempt to get rid of the relics of VRM to Karachi. In fact the director¹⁷ of the Archaeological Department of Pakistan regulated to propel the archaeological relics of VRM to the central Museum in Karachi in 1962.¹⁸ As a result, the existence of VRM, the sacred institution of the Bengalees got in touch with the threshold of extinction. At last, however, the total extinction of the museum was put aside by means of unrelenting plea, presentation of the clarification of the deeds of the founders along with the handing over of the museum to the guardianship of the University of Rajshahi in 1964.

Notes & References

1. *Annual Report for the year 1933- 34.*
2. *Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society*, Volume- II, Part- I, 1916, p. 1.
3. S. K. Ray, *Presidential Address*, 1931.
4. *Annual Report for the year 1928- 29.*
5. Manirul Haque, ‘The Varendra Research Society and Museum: A Revie in the new Millennium,’ in the *Journal of the Varendra Research Museum*, Volume- IX, University of Rajshahi, 2004, p. 157.

6. *Annual Report of the VRS, 1949.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Report of the working of the Varendra Research Museum, from August 14, 1947 to June 30, 1969,* p. 10.
9. *Annual Report of the VRS, 1949.*
10. *Report of the working of the Varendra Research Museum, op. cit.* p.11
11. Mukhlesur Rahman, Seminar volume on *Akshaya Kumar Maitra and Archaeological studies in Bengal*, VRM, 1982, p. c/3. See also *Museum of the Vrendra Research Society, Rajshahi* in *Modern Review*, February, 1920, p. 177.
12. *Annual Report for the year 1928- 29.*
13. See *Annual Reports from 1925-26 to 1931-32.*
14. S. Jayapalan, *Histriography*, Atlantic, New Delhi, 2004, p. 101.
15. S. K. Ray, *Presidential Address*, 1931.
16. Mukhlesur Rahman, Seminar volume on *Akshaya Kumar Maitra and Archaeological studies in Bengal*, VRM, 1982, p. c/5.
17. The then Director of Archaeological department of Pakistan was a Punjabi Musalman. Probably he might have had very little feelings for this sanctified institution of the Bengalees.
18. Nirmal Chandra Chowdhury , *Akshaya Kumar Maitra: Jibon O Sadhana*, North Bengal University, 1984, p. 100.
