

**VARENDRA RESEARCH SOCIETY: ITS  
VISION AND MISSION (1910-1963)**

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BY

**DINESH CHANDRA RAY**

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR IN HISTORY

SOUTHFIELD COLLEGE (FORMERLY LORETO COLLEGE),

DARJEELING, WEST BENGAL

GUIDE

**PROFESSOR ICHHIMUDDIN SARKAR**

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL**

MAY, 2015

# DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled “VARENDRA RESEARCH SOCIETY: ITS VISION AND MISSION (1910-1963)” has been prepared by me under the supervision of Professor Ichhimuddin Sarkar, Department of History, University of North Bengal. No part of the thesis has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

*Dinesh Chandra Ray*

*12/5/15*

Dinesh Chandra Ray)

# UNIVERSITY OF NORTH BENGAL

*Dr. Ichhimuddin Sarkar*  
Professor  
Department of History



Raja Rammohunpur  
P.O. North Bengal University  
Dist. Darjeeling - 734013  
West Bengal (India)  
Phone : 0353 - 2776351(O), 9474390421(M)  
E-mail : isarkar\_nbu@yahoo.com

Ref. No. ....

Date 12/5/15 .....

## CERTIFICATE

I certify that Mr. Dinesh Chandra Ray has prepared the thesis entitled "VARENDRA RESEARCH SOCIETY: ITS VISION AND MISSION (1910-1963)", for the award of Ph.D degree of the University of North Bengal, under my guidance.

He has carried out the work at the department of History, University of North Bengal.

*Ichhimuddin Sarkar*

**PROF. I. SARKAR**  
PROFESSOR  
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
University of North Bengal

# VARENDRA RESEARCH SOCIETY: ITS VISION AND MISSION (1910-1963)

## ABSTRACT

The thesis under consideration entitled 'Varendra Research Society: Its Vision and Mission' is an inclusive study in which an endeavor has been made to focus the input of Varendra Research Society in reconstructing the history, predominantly, the early history of Bengal.

It is to be mentioned that the historical researches in Bengal as well as India, broadly speaking in scientific style, seem to have started with the establishment of British rule in India. Sir William Jones may be regarded as one of the pioneer researchers in the discovery of India's past for his association in founding Asiatic Society in 1784. This Asiatic Society, undeniably, had inspired in establishing a few other research societies and institutions, government and non-government, in various parts of India. However, it took more than hundred years to originate such institutions.

It is quite unfortunate that till the middle of nineteenth century, neither in Bengal nor in India there was an ambiance of historical culture in the truest sense. At that time, since historical research based on the study of original documents was hardly known, the history of Bengal, specifically the ancient history of Bengalees, has not been composed. Owing to this, thinkers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, even during the eighties of the nineteenth century had to lament and crave for the history of Bengal vis-à-vis the Bengalees.

Roughly, subsequent the eighties of the nineteenth century the consciousness about history seemed to have got a greater flow. Thus in such ripened circumstances a number of research societies and institutions gradually got growing in Bengal from the last decade of Nineteenth and first decade of Twentieth century. Accordingly, the Varendra Research Society was

founded in 1910, in Rajshahi, now in Bangladesh, principally with the efforts of Sarat Kumar Ray, Akshaya Kumar Maitra and Ramaprasad Chanda. The Society's museum came into existence when two of the Public Library's rooms were arranged for the preservation and exhibition of the assembled antiquities. The Society also developed a well set off library in the museum.

Keeping the influence and inspiration of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, established in 1784 and the absence of written history, particularly of ancient period in view, it is to be mentioned that the establishment of a historical research society at Rajshahi, was the result of another set of factors. These can be categorized and analyzed under following heads:

1. The ancient heritage and ample archaeological evidences of Varendra region along with the inspirations provided by the British investigators like Wilkins, Buchanan and Cunningham.
2. The influence of the grievances expressed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore in their writings related to history regarding the paucity of documentation.
3. The historical temper and attachment of the three principal founders—Akshaya Kumar Maitra (henceforth A. K. Maitra), Sarat kumar Roy(henceforth S. K. Roy) and Ramaprasad Chanda.
4. To safeguard the history of India as well as Bengal from distortion.
5. The favourable cultural ambience of Rajshahi town.

To administer the activities of the Varendra Research Society, there was a Council of Management. At the outset there were 11(eleven)<sup>12</sup> members and subsequently the number revolved to 12(twelve). But the museum and the library of the Society came under a separate

Committee of management in 1937 since the Society approached the Provincial Government to take over its museum under Charitable Endowments Act, 1890, with certain reservation of rights and provisions. However the relation between Society and museum remained unaffected.

It is to be noted that rediscovery of early history of Bengal as well as the Bengalees was the eventual vision of the Varendra Research Society. In the light of the vision; the Society had fixed up its mission under following heads:

I) Collection of antiquities through - a) Exploration b) Excavation

II) Research &

III) Publication

Within 1912 the VRS succeeded to explore a number of places and came off with nearly 150 stone and metal sculptures and over 500 manuscripts and a few stone and copperplate inscriptions in their disposal. Exhilarating by the sensation of the success of exploration, the Varendra Research Society made an effort to put its exertion in a number of perceptive excavation. In actual fact, there was a prerequisite of excavation in some sites to ascertain the genuine and flourishing history of pre-Islamic Bengal. They excavated the ancient sites like Kumarpur, Mahisantosh, Deo-para Padumeshwar and Paharpur.

In consequence of these exploration, excavation and other alternative mode of collection, the museum of the Varendra Research Society was came out as an epistolary of antiquities for the history of ancient Bengal. It is to be kept in mind that the museum of the VRS was not filled up merely with sculptures, inscriptions, terra-cotta and coins of the Ancient period of Bengal, a lot of Muslim inscriptions, sculptures were also added to the museum.

On the other hand, the library, the nucleus of the museum of VRS too came into view as a prosperous library comprising of manuscripts, rare books, periodicals, bulletins, magazines, reports and other well-off literary stuffs.

Varendra Research Society, however, was not satiated in creating only a depository for the components of writing the history of Bengal. But by the skill of the Society's scholars it was, indeed, shaped into a proper space for research. With the Publication of research outcome like *Gaudarajamala*, *Gaudalekhamala*, *Inscription of Bengal Volume III* and others, it has provided the required blow needed to change the conventional notion of history in Bengal. For, the society became beacon bearer who showed the path of writing the ancient history of Bengal on the basis of stone and copper inscriptions. It is to be noted that *Gaudarajamala* is the first history book written in modern scientific style. And *Gaudalekhamala* and *Inscription of Bengal Volume III* are the major source book of the early history of Bengal. The other research books and articles of the scholars (like, Nanigopal Majumder, Nirodbandhu Sanyal, Sarashikumar Saraswati, Upendranath Ghoshal, Radhagobindo Basak, Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharya) of the Society had contributed to fill many gaps of the ancient history of Bengal. It has also made contribution in the medieval history of Bengal by publishing *Inscription of Bengal Volume IV*.

However, 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. And owing to the collective result of these inflamed problems and intimidations, the VRS was totally wiped out in 1963. The foster child of the society was transferred to the hands of the University of Rajshahi in October 1964.

Date: 12/5/15

*Dinesh Chandra Ray*

(Dinesh Chandra Ray)

## PREFACE

The history of ancient Bengal is in fact the history of Varendra-Pundra-Gaur and vice versa. Hence, there should not be any hesitation in calling Varendra region as the cradle of the archaeological evidences of the history of Bengal. But till the establishment of Varendra Research Society there was no proper recurrent exploration made in this region in order to assemble these evidences. Consequently, the ancient history of Bengal was not composed. The Varendra Research society assumed this worthy responsibility of sequential investigation of evidences in Varendra region to rediscover the early history of Bengal.

With the conscientious efforts of its members the Varendra Research Society was successful to carry out job of explorations contiguous to North Bengal and some other parts of Bengal, as well as few places of northern India. Besides, it carried out works of excavations in some antique sites of Bengal. Consequently, it has been able to assimilate huge collection of splendid and unique relics of the past civilization of Bengal. The library of the Varendra Research Society has been able to secure 11075 volumes by October, 1964. These invaluable archaeological cum literary sources were indispensably required for any serious investigation, particularly the ones that were related to the political and cultural history of ancient Bengal. And by utilizing these archaeological and literary ingredients the skilled scholars of the Society became successful to establish this society as the pioneer in rediscovering/reconstructing the early history of Bengal in modern scientific style.

An endeavor to present a systematic study of the 'Varendra Research Society: Its Vision and Mission(1910-1963)' has been made here in the subsequent pages. The work is prepared for the Doctorate Degree of the University of North Bengal.

In preparing this work, all accessible source materials both primary and secondary have been cautiously scrutinized before use. Uses of diacritical marks in common terms have been avoided.

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*Dinesh Chandra Ray*

(Dinesh Chandra Ray)

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*Dinesh Chandra Ray*

(Dinesh Chandra Ray)

## ABBREVIATIONS

ADI:	Archaeological Department of India
ADP:	Archaeological Department of Pakistan
ALOC:	All India Oriental Conference
A.K. Maitra:	Akshaya Kumar Maitra
AMPA:	Ancient Manument Preservation Act
BSS:	Bangiya Sahitya Sammelon
CEA:	Charitable Endowment Act
CU:	Calcutta University
EIC:	East India Company
GEP:	Government of East Pakistan
GL:	<i>Gaudalekhamala</i>
GR:	<i>Gaudarajamala</i>
GSA:	Gauda School of Art
IAR:	Indo-Aryan Races
IB:	Inscription of Bengal
IM:	Indian Museum
NB:	North Bengal
RA:	Rajsahi Association
RC:	<i>Ramcaritam</i>
S. K. Roy:	Sarat Kumar Roy
SMF:	Savita Memorial fund
TBRTF:	Trustees of Basanta Kumar Roy trust fund
TTA:	Treasure Trove Act
TTC:	Treasure trove coins
UNESO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
VRM:	Varendra Research Museum
VRS:	Varendra Research Society

## GLOSSARY

<i>Aitihashik Chitra:</i>	Historical journal, published by Akshaya Kumar Maitra
<i>Alamkara-Kaustava:</i>	It is a work on Sanskrit poetics
Anusandhan:	Research/Investigation
<i>Bangla Puthir Talika:</i>	List of Bengali Manuscripts
<i>Bhasha-Vritti:</i>	A commentary on Panini's grammatical aphorism
Darga:	Tomb
Deopara:	Vijay Sena's inscription was traced from this village
<i>Jatitattva:</i>	Ethnology
Kotivarsha:	It was a vishaya under Pundravardhanabhukti
Magadh:	South Bihar
Mahasthan:	It is identified as the ancient Pundravardhana nagara
<i>Mandala:</i>	An administrative units in ancient days
Paharpur:	The famous Sompuri vihara was excavated here
Panchanagari:	It was a vishaya under Pundravardhanabhukti
<i>Pandit:</i>	learned man
Pundravardhana:	An ancient Bhukti/province
<i>Rajamala:</i>	Dynastic history
Samatat:	South-East Bengal/Gangetic Delta
Suhma:	Western Bengal
Supervisor:	Officials to inspect the work of the employee of revenue department
<i>Taratantram:</i>	Tantric Mahavidya which relates to the worship of Tara
<i>Tararahashyavrittika:</i>	A compilation which deals with the mysteries of Tara cult
Uttarvanga:	Northern Bengal
Vanga	East Bengal
Varendra:	Varendra was an important division of ancient Bengal
<i>Vihara:</i>	Buddhist monastery
<i>Vishaya:</i>	District

## A Note on Diacritics

### Sanskrit

#### Vowels

अ आ इ ई उ ऊ ऋ ए ऐ ओ औ • ऌ  
a ā i ī u ū ṛ e ai o au m ḥ

#### Consonants

क ख ग घ ङ च छ ज झ ञ  
ka kha ga gha ṅa ca cha ja jha ṅa

ट ठ ड ढ ण त थ द ध न  
ṭa ṭha ḍa ḍha ṇa ta tha da dha na

प फ ब भ म य र ल व  
pa pha ba bha ma ya ra la va

श ष स ह  
śa ṣa sa ha

# CONTENTS

Introduction	1-7
Chapter-I Idea & Genesis of the Varendra Research Society	8-29
Chapter-II Organizational & Administrative Structure	30-42
Chapter-III Growth, Prospects & Research Pursuits	43-135
Chapter-IV Problems & Challenges	136-143
Chapter-V:Varendra Research Society and its relation with the contemporary Research Institution of India	144-171
Chapter-VI: Varendra Research Society and the construction of Bengal's past	172-192
Epilogue	193-197
Appendices	198-199
Bibliography	200-211
Maps	212-213
Plates	214-226

## INTRODUCTION

The scientific documentation of history resulting from its emergence as an independent discipline started evolving during the fifteenth-sixteenth century Europe.<sup>1</sup> In fact, in the fifteenth and sixteenth century Europe, as a byproduct of the European renaissance, humanism got evolved. This humanism was the vital foundation of all cultural changes, including the historical ideas pertaining to the renaissance in Europe. The historians got powerfully influenced by the Secular humanism particularly. In reality, there was an absence of the complete historical sense earlier. The beginning of the humanist movement with Petrarch and Boccaccio helped in germination of a sense of history.<sup>2</sup> Petrarch's *Letters to the Ancient Dead*, cultivated awareness among the writers of his time. The same attitude provoked them to approach the ancient art. This sense of distance exotically paralleled with development of a wisdom of perspective in the common interest in archaeology. There was an inclination to retreat back into the past, to restructure those types of thought and expression which had been the most characteristic of it.<sup>3</sup> History was no longer a descriptive attachment to theology; slowly but surely history emerged as a discipline in its own right; The theological interpretation of history and the mystical ingredient in history were swapped by a new secular interpretation.<sup>4</sup>

But the historical research in India was not started in a systematic manner prior to the institution of British rule. Sir William Jones and his Asiatic Society may be regarded as the pioneers in the discovery of India's past. Even, though Jones was not the earliest among the Orientalists. Investigation, pertaining to the knowledge of history and heritage of Bengal in some degree had begun with the very establishment of British rule in Bengal. In fact, the British East India Company employed a number of Supervisors who had been assigned to amass roughly, the indigenous customs, traditions, Socio-economic condition and history of

different quarters of Bengal, along with their ordinary duty to inspect the performances of the employee of the department of revenue. Still, Jones seems to be the primary one to think in terms of foregrounding an enduring institution, for Oriental studies and researches at a grand scale in this country. In 1784, he founded the Asiatic Society “for enquiry into the history and antiquities, arts, science and literatures of Asia” (*Journal of the Asiatic society of Bengal*, 1832). Actually, Jones and other thirty founder members wanted to grow it as a centre for Asian studies together with nearly the whole thing in relation to man and nature inside the geographical confines of the continent.<sup>5</sup> This Asiatic Society, undeniably, had inspired in establishing a few other research societies and institutions, government and non-government, in various parts of India. However, it took more than hundred years to originate such institutions.

In fact till the middle of nineteenth century historical research based on the study of original documents was hardly known and consequently the history of Bengal, in particular the ancient history of Bengalees, has not been composed. Moreover at that time the Bengalees were quite unaware of utilizing archaeology as the major ingredient<sup>6</sup> of writing the ancient history. Although a few disjunctive surveys were conducted by the Britishers<sup>7</sup> but those hardly contributed to the composition of the ancient history of Bengal. They were also indifferent towards Northern Bengal which has been central to ancient history of Bengal. And consequently there was no major explorations made at this region. This however does not imply that there was no existence of any significant Bengalee archaeologist at the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the nineteenth century. As evidence one can name Rajendralal Mitra. Yet his two significant essays were focused on Orissa and Bihar. Rajendralal Mitra, who had initially been the librarian, and later on secretary, assistant president and finally the first Indian president of the Asiatic society, published articles on inscription and subsequently researched the antiquities of Orissa and the ruin of Bodhgaya under governmental patronage. Due to all these, thinkers

like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, even during the eighties of the nineteenth century had to lament and crave for the history of Bengal vis-à-vis the Bengalees.<sup>8</sup>

However, the situation was changing gradually. As a result the controversy emerged out regarding what would be the proper scientific way of writing history. This debate continued not only in Bengal but rather it was a pan Indian controversy. Another important matter that seemed to have bothered the contemporaries was that Indian history ought to be written by its own natives and at the same time it has to be unbiased.<sup>9</sup> The scholars were the major participants in this debatable issue were mainly Akshaya Kumar Maitra from Bengal, Nilkantha Sastri from Madras, Ghyanshyam Ojha from Rajasthan and many others. Akshaya Kumar Maitra created carved a niche for him as the pioneer of writing the history of Bengal in scientific style. It is to be noted that the British scholars of Bengal, from their biased and motivated outlook had painted a bleak image of Sirajudaulah and Mirkashim and strangely enough, none felt doubtful and accepted it as a genuine history. But Maitra challenged the accuracy of it and formulated his own view with the formidable array of facts culled from old and authentic documents. Not only he had rejected the notions fueled by the British writers but Akshaya Kumar had also refuted Bankim Chandra's standpoint regarding Mirkashim and wrote a correct history.

Hence in such state of affairs a number of research societies step by step got emerging in Bengal as well as India from the last decade of Nineteenth century. Lord Curzon's initiatives regarding the Preservation of Ancient Monuments Act certainly resulted in the founding of at least 30 archaeological museums(government sponsored) in India, including those at Sarnath(1904), Agra(1906), Ajmer(1908), Delhi Fort(1909), Bijapur(1912), Nalanda(1917) and Sanchi(1919).<sup>10</sup> Accordingly,the Bengal Academy of Literature( though it was a literary society, it had interest on history and heritage) came into being in 1893, which was changed to Bangiya Sahitya Parishad on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1894.<sup>11</sup> Calcutta Historical Society,

an organization of the British officials was formed in 1907 to congregate a goodly pile of information and afford the stuff in favour of a full and enduring history of old Calcutta.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, the Varendra Research Society was founded in 1910, Punjab Historical Society in 1910<sup>13</sup>, Kamrupa Anusandhana Samiti in 1912<sup>14</sup>, Bihar and Orissa Research Society in 1915<sup>15</sup>, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute in July 1915<sup>16</sup>, the K. R. Cama Oriental Institute(although the proposal was come in 1909) in 1916<sup>17</sup>, the Andhra Historical Research Society about the middle of 1921<sup>18</sup> and the Bombay Historical Society in April 1925<sup>19</sup>. And they were pursued by a number of other similar institutions. The aims and objectives of all these societies and institutions were directed more or less, to explore and record the aspects of regional and local history and culture. But the sticking point of the present investigator is definitely the Varendra Research Society (Varendra Anushandhan Samiti) which was established (1910) in Rajshahi, now in Bangladesh, primarily with the objective of the rediscovery of early history and culture of Bengal.

The foundation of Varendra Research Society can be taken as a breakthrough for the goals it intended to achieve from the beginning to investigate and record history, heritage and culture of early history of Bengal. It appears that at least three illustrious sons of Bengal took the leading role for the foundation of this research institution. They were Sarat Kumar of Dayarampur (Dighapatiya Raj family), Akshaya Kumar Maitra, a prominent lawyer of Rajshahi and Ramaprasad Chanda, a local school teacher.

With the objective of the rediscovery of early history of Bengal the Varendra Research Society since its inception down to its extinction in 1963 took up a number of projects or missions and as a result of the implementation of those missions it developed into one of the most renowned research institutions of eastern India.

Keeping in mind the above fact the present dissertation titled *Varendra Research Society: Its Vision and Mission* attempts to present a comprehensive history of the Society from the very time of its onset. Among the major aspects that the dissertation is to scan and highlight are the idea and genesis of the Varendra Research Society, its management, growth with prospects, its problems and relation with similar contemporary institutions. One of the important design of the work is to record its achievements for the reconstruction of the early history of Bengal.

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## Chapter - I

### Idea and Genesis of the Varendra Research Society

Since the Varendra research Society was named after Varendra region, not after the Rajshahi town, it seems to be the first and foremost duty of the present investigator to analyze the term in brief before inflowing into the discourses of its idea and genesis. Therefore, it is necessary to note that the Indian sources talk about quite a lot of physical names which refer to different regional divisions of Bengal. Varendra was one of such unit which was co-extensive with large tracts of North Bengal. The land is now called Barind, Barinda or Varendra—derived from the old name ‘Varindri’, the form in which it occurs in Sanskrit literature. The area lies on the north of the Ganges, in the colonial division of Rajshahi, between two rivers—the Mahananda on the west and the Karotoya on the east.<sup>1</sup> It was a mandala of the ancient Bhukti of Pundravardhana.<sup>2</sup> It is to be mentioned that, according to the description of inscriptions discovered in different parts of Bengal (colonial), we find that, before the Muslim rule the country was divided for administrative purposes into bhuktis or provinces. These were subdivided into mandalas or divisions. Varendra, the land of the Pundra people, which along with Vanga (east Bengal), Samatata (the Gangetic delta), Suhma (West Bengal called Radha), Anga territory round Bhagalpur, Mithila (Tirhut), Magadha (South Bihar) and kalinga (Orissa) used to be regarded as the Prachi (the east). Sandhyakar Nandi, the famous poet of the eleventh century of the Christian era, called it the holiest land on account of the sacred rivers, the Ganges and Karotoya—flowing by its two sides and Punarbhava running through the middle.<sup>3</sup> On the basis of the inscriptions of the Senas, Nihar Ranjan Roy has included present Bagura, greater Dinajpur, Rajshahi and Pabna (Padumba) into Varendra region.<sup>4</sup> However, the western boundary of Varendri is, in no way

clear to us.<sup>5</sup> Although, there is possibility that some portions of the eastern parts of malda would also have been into this region.<sup>6</sup>

Anyway, keeping the influence and inspiration of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, established in 1784 and the absence of written history<sup>7</sup>, particularly of ancient period in view, it may be mentioned that the establishment of a historical research society at Rajshahi, was the result of another set of factors. These can be categorized and analyzed under following heads:

6. The ancient heritage and ample archaeological evidences of Varendra region along with the inspirations provided by the British investigators like Wilkins, Buchanan and Cunningham.
7. The influence of the grievances expressed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore in their writings related to history regarding the paucity of documentation.
8. The historical temper and attachment of the three principal founders—Akshaya Kumar Maitra (henceforth A. K. Maitra), Sarat Kumar Roy (henceforth S. K. Roy) and Ramaprasad Chanda.
9. To safeguard the history of India as well as Bengal from distortion.
10. The favourable cultural ambience of Rajshahi town.

Looking at the ancient history of Bengal, one can trace that the present areas of Varendra-Pundra-Gaur happened to be the center of culture and civilization. In other words, we can say that the history of ancient Bengal is in fact the history of Varendra-Pundra-Gaur and vice versa. Therefore, there should not be any hesitation in calling Varendra region as the cradle of the archaeological evidences of the history of Bengal. But there was no proper recurrent exploration made in order to assemble these evidences. As a result, the important

archaeological antiquities remained negligently scattered in the various districts of Varendra and there was every possibility of their mutilation and disfigurement.<sup>8</sup>

However, towards the end of the eighteenth century, the historical research on the basis of archaeological evidences got initiated at Varendra region, with the assistance and encouragement of the British officials. David Kolf through his analysis has shown that the officials of the East Indian Company, particularly the more elite among them, came from the intellectual-cultural milieu of the eighteenth century European Enlightenment.<sup>9</sup> In addition to the eighteenth century Enlightenment, there was the influence of European Romanticism which contributed to a new interest, not only in distant races, societies and civilizations, but in distant history of epochs.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, for administrative obligations, the company-officials had to be acquainted with the local language and culture of the people.<sup>11</sup> Accordingly, the archaeological research in Varendra region got accelerated with Charles Wilkins's unveiling of the Badal Inscription in November, 1780. In this regard it must be acknowledged that with the discovery of the Badal inscription, Indian epigraphy got initiated. Subsequently, at Amgachhi in Dinajpur, the copper plate of Vignrahapal III was unearthed, and was deciphered by Colebrook. In this respect, significant contribution has been made by Dr Buchanan Hamilton.<sup>12</sup> In the beginning of the nineteenth century Dr Hamilton made a general survey, in course of which some of the places (Dinajpur and Bogura districts) of archaeological interest were outwardly examined. After Buchanan, Alexander Cunningham's name is worth mentioning. However, he could spare time only for a flying visit to some of the sites. Yet it was under his supervision (1879-80) that the detailed descriptions and maps of the archaeological sites like Gaur and Pandua got published. Besides these personalities, personal curiosity induced by Umesh Chandra Batbal, Creighton, Ravenshaw and Westmacott resulted in the scrutinizing of some of the relics of the antiquity. Ravenshaw in his work *Gaur, Its Ruins & Inscriptions*, published in 1878 has given generous description of Gaur. Westmacott

with the publication of his *Indian Antiquary* got himself engaged with the then ongoing debate regarding the identification of Pundravardhana and he spotted Vardhanakot of Dinajpur as Pundravardhana. Yet, due to paucity of time, none of them could make an uninterrupted exploration extensively. Additional restraints were put up by the land owners with their reservations in trespassing their terrain and also by the limitations drawn by Treasure Trove Act.

Nevertheless, it has to be recognized that the various archaeological evidences like stone-inscriptions, copper plates, archaeological sites, sculptures, pillars etc that got extracted from various parts of Varendra region had definitely enhanced the significance of this area as the hub of one of the most ancient civilizations of Bengal. For, every relics of antiquity is a monument of the past, capable of disclosing a story, which is the story of culture of its locality in bygone epochs of its history.<sup>13</sup> All these findings and the various archaeological evidences lying scattered round this region had certainly motivated the people, committed to history—like A.K. Maitra, S.K. Roy and Ramaprasad Chanda—to collect and preserve the ingredients for a methodical and systematic writing of the history of Varendra vis-à-vis Bengal.

The next factor that might have directly or indirectly influenced the founders of Varendra Research Society has been the historical contemplations and discontentment expressed by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore. Actually the absence of an authentically documented as well as scripted history of Bengal cum Bengalees even during the 80s of the nineteenth century had annoyed both Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore. Bengalees did not have a history—this misconception had turned into a maxim.<sup>14</sup> The lack of interest among the Bengalees regarding historical practices had augmented their frustration. For these reasons we can find that Bankim Chandra chattopadhyay had not only pleaded for historical studies but also

emphasized upon the importance of writing of history through his various essays like Muscle power of the Bengalees ('*Bangaleer Bahubal*'), The Disgrace of India ('*Bharatkalanka*'), A Few Words Regarding the History of Bengal ('*Banglar Itihash Sammondhe koekti Katha*'), and many others.

Out of his frustration from the unavailability of any written history of Bengal, Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay had lamented that the history of Greenland has been written; even that of Mawri people is on page; however, the land that was constituted of the places like Gour –Tamralipta -Saptagram etc, that land has no documented history in writing. According to him, the reason behind this is not scarcity of the components of writing history, but rather, the lack of any investigation.

In 1881, the editor of *Bangadarshan* had tried to inspire his readers by stating that it is the obligation of a race to write down its history. Inspiring the people to fulfill this responsibility, Bankim Chandra wrote:

“There is no accessible history of Bengal, whatsoever is there is not history, rather fictions—only some narratives of the alien, invaders of Bengal and their biographies. We claim for the history of Bengal, else Bengal will be short of conviction. Who will write?

You will write, I will write, all of us will be writing it. ....»<sup>15</sup>

Rabindranath has called it an appetite for history.<sup>16</sup> After the death of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in 1894, the cause was taken up by Rabindranath. Under his editorial, the Bengali journal entitled *Sadhana*, started publishing essays related to the history of Bengal. In the preface to the first volume of *Aitihashik Chitra*, Tagore wrote:

“.....in memorizing entirely the history written by others, one might become a scholar or might score high marks in the examination, however, the impetus that is required in indigenous writing of history by collecting the native historical ingredients, that results not into eruditeness alone. That will create current in the stagnant pool of our mindscape. That instigation, that endeavor will enliven us.”<sup>17</sup>

Regarding the commencement of the writing of the history of Bengalees by the Bengalee themselves, Tagore wrote: “There is no harm in taking assistance from others so far as collection is concerned, but we should strengthen ourselves in our resourcefulness.”<sup>18</sup>

In reality, in response to Bankim’s clarion call, the successful lawyer like Akshaya Kumar Maitra has taken up the nurturing of history through the collection of historical components, as his vocation. This sentiment has shared by many scholars of our time, for examples someone opines “that Akshaya Kumar had realized the genuineness of Bankim Chandra’s disappointment and thereby got motivated in his aspirations.”<sup>19</sup> In this context, one may recall Maitra’s outstanding works namely *Golam Hossain*. In *Golam Hossain* Akshaya Kumar has himself written: “Due to the dearth of our indigenous history, we have become the object of ridicule by the foreigners... we don’t write our history; don’t show deserving respect to someone who is writing history; whether it is ancient or modern, we are equally indifferent to all. Presently in the newly awakened world of Bengali literature, fictions are acclaimed more day by day. On the other hand, due to people’s apathy, history of our land is getting dormant. Whatever is flourishing in the name of history is in majority, a mere derivation of the conclusions drawn by the foreign writers.”<sup>20</sup>

The fact that Akshaya Kumar Maitra has got stimulated by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, gets further support from the writing of Akshaya Kumar’s follower, Rajendralal Acharya: “I do remember—we the school and college students had congregated

together to condole on Bankim Chandra's demise....the entire hall was packed up. Akshaya Kumar's self-composed essay got read out in front of the multitudes by his own sweet voice. ...Intense reverence for Bankim Chandra got expressed in Akshaya Kumar's speech."<sup>21</sup>

However, Bankim Chandra could not see the activities of his follower. Because, he expired (1894) few months before the publication of Akshaya Kumar's highly acclaimed book, *Sirajaudullah. Aitihashik Chitra* got published after a lapse of five years. Rabindranath happened to be Akshaya Kumar's friend. On account of Tagore's profound interest, Akshaya Kumar had started publishing his quarterly historical journal *Aitihashik Chitra*.<sup>22</sup>

Ramaprasad Chanda was so very much influenced by reading Bankim Chandra's essays related to history that he could not stop himself from meeting Bankim Chandra. In that interaction with Bankim Chandra he had expressed of his preparation of writing an authentic history of Bengal. Having motivated him, Bankim Chandra recommended him to go for an effortful collection of evidences.<sup>23</sup> Ramaprasad Chanda confessed of Bankim Chandra's influence upon him in his writing entitled *Bankim Chandra O Banglar Itihash* where he wrote:

“- - - having going through this touching episode, many Bengalee Youth aspiring to be poets had got inclined towards history. Having invited to play the leading role in the discourse of historical criticism, I feel honoured and whatever hard work I have undertaken, seems to be successful.”<sup>24</sup>

The cultural and majestic, Sarat Kumar Roy too was stimulated by the works of Bankim Chandra, which gets evident by his own statements:

“- - - how is it possible that the land with places like Gour, Tamralipta, Saptagram, does not poses a history? It is unfortunate that till date, no one could have apprehended the element of grievance that was implicit in this prophetic interrogation of Bankim Chandra.”<sup>25</sup>

At this juncture, question might arise that, despite the fact that Bankim Chandra and Rabindranath had personally inspired Akshaya Kumar, Sarat Kumar and Ramaprasad, yet what relation does bear with the establishment a society? The answer to this question finds its germination in the following announcement of Bankim Chandra:

“Come let’s work together for investigating the history of the Bengalees. Let them work as per their competence; a little fire flies illuminates far off places. This is not a task for single hand, together we must accomplish it.”<sup>26</sup> The implication is that it is a universal work; a collective responsibility for it is to rescue the history of Bengal vis-à-vis Bengalees.

It is beyond any doubt that the leitmotif behind the establishment of Varendra Research Society is nothing but the genuine submission of Sarat Kumar Ray, Akshaya Kumar Maitra and Ramaprasad Chanda, to history. This trio was greatly interested in history and heritage. Among them Akshaya Kumar right from his student life, got relentlessly attracted to history. He himself has written that, “Like my father I too got so affectionate that whenever I got time I used to get involved with history.”<sup>27</sup> Thus during the free periods of his Entrance-ship, he finished writing up the *Bangabijoy Kavya*. Most of his works written before the establishment of Varendra Research Society – *Sirajudoulah*, *Samarsingha*, *Sitaram*, and *Mirkasim* etc. – were all based on historical accounts. When lord Curzon wished to have some information regarding Gour then under the pleading of Maharaj Suryakanta Acharya Choudhury, Akshaya Kumar Maitra had written *Gaura under the Hindus* in 1902 for the

fulfillment of Lord Curzon's demands.<sup>28</sup> Actually long before the foundation of Varendra Research Society Akshaya Kumar Maitra had established himself as the pioneer of the modern, scientific and systematic research of the history of Bengal.<sup>29</sup>

Sarat Kumar Ray was at once an academician and archaeologist. It is worth mentioning that he was the third son of the Zamindar of Dighapatiya, Raja Pramathnath Ray. Pramathnath took his education from the famous Bengalee archaeologist, Rajendralal Mitra who was solely responsible in inculcating adoration towards archaeology in the entire family and later it got diffused particularly in Sarat Kumar of the succeeding generation.<sup>30</sup> He was an esteemed member of both the Asiatic Society and Bangiya Sahitya Parisad. After the completion of his master degree (1900) in physics from Calcutta University his intense involvement with archaeology instigated him to visit Europe in 1900 in order to inspect Pompeii, Thibi and other ancient sites. Sarat Kumar's enthrillment at witnessing such extensive sites of archaeological important can find parallel only in his later experiences of observing the archaeological treasures of Bhagalpur.

Ramaprasad Chanda's deep interest in history finds evidence in his writing of *Hindu Jatir Adhopatoner Karon* ('Reason for the deterioration of the Hindu Race') which he had taken to show Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Amidst acute economic crisis and joblessness, he continued publishing a few of his essays in *Dawn* magazine, the foremost of which was *Some Forgotten Chapters of Early Indian History*, published in 1900 in the august volume of the *Dawn*. In the year of 1901 when Ramaprasad joined Hindu School as an assistant teacher, H. H. Risley's highly controversial census report got published where Risley had commented about the absence of the Aryan blood among the Indians, particularly the Bengalees. To Ramaprasad, however, it seemed that Risley's views were arbitrary and based on inadequate data and accordingly he made up his mind to make more systematic study on the issue.

Consequently in 1907 he published his essay entitled *Origin of the Races of Bengal in East and West Journal* by pointing out the futility of Risley's notion.<sup>31</sup>

So it is now clear that A.K. Maitra, S.K. Ray and Ramaprasad Chanda came close to one another in order to form a society by virtue of their common interest in research and antiquarian studies.

The establishment of Varendra Research Society played a vital role in safeguarding the history of Bengal cum India from distortion by the endeavour of writing the authentic history of Bengal. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar rightly pointed out that “the study of Indian history by the Indians started almost as a reaction against the writings of European scholars, who often depicted a prejudice and distorted version of Indian history and culture.”<sup>32</sup>

It has been already stated before that following the path paved by the Asiatic society, many English writers and historian, later on, got involved into the investigation and research related to Indian history. Unfortunately quite a bulk of misinformation got juxtaposed along with the truth in the writings of many of these renowned historians. Particularly, as the administrator of the East India Company these English writers failed to perceive the demerits of colonial rule in this country. Accordingly their main objective of writing the history of India was centered round the fortification of English colonial power through expansion. Racial pride and superiority complex over the natives formed the characteristic of their writing. By portraying a declining India those English historians were trying to justify the rationale behind the British imperialism in India through self propaganda as saviors.

This motivated writing also holds true regarding the regional history, specifically that of the history of Bengal. Both Charles Stuart (1813) and Marshman (1831) wrote two separate books with the similar title of *History of Bengal*. None of these were history in the

real sense of the term. Critiquing these sorts of writing, Bankim Chandra, in *Banga Darshan* commented:

“The English Sahebs had produced innumerable books regarding the history of Bengal. The book by Stuart saheb is so heavy that, if thrown, it can injure even a young fellow; and Marshman, Lethbridge and many others had effortlessly composed books on the history of Bengal with the motive of earning essay money.”<sup>33</sup>

Bankim Chandra, Rabindra Nath Tagore followed by Akshaya Kumar, Sarat Kumar and Ramaprasad had all suffered from the distortion of history of India in general and Bengal in particular. The writers like Bankimchandra and Rabindranath, by their pointed writing had tried to inspire the educated Bengalees to be historically engaged in preserving the history of Bengal from deformation. It is likely that the later group of scholaras like A. K. Maitra, Ramprasad and others were motivated by the inspiration provided by the formers, organized themselves in gathering the ingredients of history of Bengal and nurture it scientifically for the sake of cleansing out the true and unbiased history of Bengal.

The last but not the least factor which contributed to form a historical research society in and around Rajsahi, was the favourable educational and cultural atmosphere that developed in the Town. However, far from being the educational and cultural hub, Rajsahi itself would not have developed as a town if Natore, the then administrative headquarter would not have suffered from problems like water-logging, malaria, unavailability of navigable rivers etc.<sup>34</sup> In fact, till 1824 there was hardly any existence of a town called Rajsahi. In the place of present Rajsahi town, there were two villages called Rampur and Bolyaliya. Due to the above mentioned difficulties Amherst in 1825 had shifted the administrative centre to Rampur-Boyaliya.<sup>35</sup> Along with geographical and other favourable conditions, in no time Rampur-Boyaliya flourished as the administrative hub and soon

expanded through transformation into the present Rajsahi town. With governmental and non-governmental support, schools, Madrashas and colleges were established for western as well as indigenous education. Within a short time Rajsahi town became the major attraction for Zaminders, landlords, lawyers, teachers, doctors, clerks and other educationists. Consequently, various institutions aimed at social welfare and cultivation of education-literature-culture was founded. Following the trend, Rajsahi Association was inaugurated in 1872 by the support provided by Promothnath Ray Bahadur, the Zaminder of Dighapatiya.<sup>36</sup> This association, one hand had upgraded Rajsahi College into a Degree college, opened Rajsahi Agricultural institute and hospital, and on the other it played pivotal role in spreading of culture and literature.

With the formation of Rajsahi Association the social life of Rajsahi gained a new pace and in 1279 B.S., under the inspiration of the ideologies propagated by *Banga Darshan* Of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, a monthly journal called *Gyanankur* started publishing from Rajsahi which in turn, buoyanced up the literary arena of Rajsahi resulting in the publications of many other literary journals. In 1304 B.S. the literary magazine titled *Utshaho* started issuing from Rajsahi. In 1305 B.S. (1899), with the goal of scientific and systematic writing of history, Akshaya Kumar Maitra as the editor brought out *Aitihashik Chitra*. Apart from magazines Akshaya Kumar's *Sirajudaulah*, a well researched historical work also came out during this time, in 1898. For all this literary happenings, Fajlul Haque in his book entitled *Rajsahir Sanskritic Aitijhya (1825-1952)* [*The Cultural Heritage of Rajsahi (1825-1952)*], has leveled this period as the golden era of the cultural –literary history of Rajsahi. This golden era continued till thirties of the twentieth century. Within this period many other educational institutes along with a public library (1884) was established.

The above reasons are evident enough to assert that by the end of nineteenth century Rajsahi had evolved into a centre for the pursuits of higher knowledge and cultural activities.

It is needless to state that these hospitable ambiances had favoured in the formation of Varendra Research Society.

For all the above discussed factors and circumstances during the first decade of twentieth century, when situation seemed to be ripe enough for the establishment of a historical research centre in and around Rajsahi, at that very juncture the session for Bangiya Sahitya Sammelon(Literary Conference of Bengal) was held in Bhagolpur in February 1910. It is noteworthy that, various centers were established in places like Rangpur, Rajsahi, Dacca, Kumilla, Guwahati etc. in order to relate the rural and suburban Bengal with the activities recommended in the Bengal Literary Conference. In the Bhagolpur conference Sarat Kumar Ray, Akshaya Kumar Maitra and Ramapraprsad Chanda went as delegates from Rajsahi branch and at the end of the conference they went for an inspection cum collection evidences at the nearby archaeological site, accompanied by Rakhadas Banerjee, the assistant curator of Indian Museum and Naresh Chandra Das, a renowned lawyer of Bhagolpur. Sarat Kumar Ray became highly impressed by the magnificent archaeological evidences.<sup>37</sup> observing the enriched archaeological resources, at Bhagolpur itself, the representatives from Rahsahi, started thinking seriously about the ancient archaeological resources available around the Varendra region. They recalled of Vijaya Sen's inscription that was traced at village called Deopara, close to Rajsahi town. On their way back Akshaya Kumar opined that, regular exploration at Varendra region would result in the collection of various ingredients for the history of ancient Bengal.<sup>38</sup> While travelling itself they planned for an archaeological trip to Gour, near Malda, which later on was cancelled in favour of the places under Godagari police station. The logic was that Godagari is much near to Rajsahi compare to Gour, and it was from Deopara village situated within Godagari police station that C.T. Metcalfe(1865) had discovered an inscription of Vijaya Sen. Obviously as the tracing spot of the ancient inscription, Deopara provoked the trio to emerge into a thorough investigation in and around

the spot.<sup>39</sup> However prior to that, returning back to Rajsahi, Sarat Kumar Ray, Akshaya Kumar Maitra and Ramaprasad Chanda realized about the urgency of organizing an investigatory group and accordingly they organized themselves into a research and exploration team.<sup>40</sup> Invited by this investigatory team, Rakhaldas Banerjee of Indian Museum and Ramkaml Singha of Bangiya Sahitya Parishad met the foremost exploration at the areas surrounding Godagari police station. At their very first attempt they could explore, after inspecting various places in and around Godagari police station, thirty two antiquities which is indeed a significant collection. However complications aroused with Rakhaldas Banerjee and Ramkamal Singha's proposal of taking the collected materials to the Indian Museum and Bangiya Sahitya Parishad. Their argument was that the proper preservation of this gathered antics along with the proper propagation of their artistic merit could not meet adequately from Rajsahi. Ramaprasad Chanda protested against that and he pleaded before Sarat Kumar Ray, the leader of the exploration team to retain those ancient evidences to Rajsahi so that through regular investigation and collection, the task of researching about the ancient history of Varendra region could be accelerated. The eminent inhabitants of Rajsahi like Bhubon Mohan Maitra and Sashadhar Ray strongly supported Chanda's appeal.<sup>41</sup> Manirul Haque in his "Varendra Research Society and Museum : a Review in the New Millennium" has remarked that Akshaya Kumar Maitra has maintained silence regarding this issue.<sup>42</sup> However there is hardly any truth in this observation. For, Akshaya kumar was the only personality who had been pursuing about the investigation and preservation of historical evidences in North Bengal long before the formation of this investigatory team. In this context the presidential speech delivered by Akshaya kumar Maitra in the opening session of Uttar Banga Sahitya Sammelan (Literary Conference of North Bengal) is worth mentioning.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, while staying at Rajendralal Acharya's house in Bagura during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Session of Uttarbanga Sahitya Sammelan, Akshaya Kumar had often expressed his anxiety regarding

this issue during his personal communications with Rajendralal. Based on that interaction Rajendralal had written:

“ . . . on account of the conference, when he resided at Bagura as my guest the only issue Akshaya kumar had kept on emphasizing was that of assembling all the historical evidences of the entire North Bengal and to preserve them together at one particular place.”<sup>44</sup>

Finally, decision was taken to retain the antiquities in Rajsahi with the agenda of a regular exploration of the area. As a part of this agenda Khanjanpur region of Bagura district has been selected as the primary spot for the beginning of the recurrent explorations. It is worth reminding that in the exploratory camp at Khanjanpur, the final resolution regarding the foundation of a full-fledged investigation cum research centre has been taken up (June 1910) although informally Varendra Research Society seem to have already emerged out right from the formation of investigatory team. However there is hardly any disagreement about the fact that the hunt for archaeological evidences was its only preoccupation. Ultimately, in the very year the Varendra Research Society got officially commenced from 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1910.

The Society's museum came into existence when two of the Public Library's rooms were arranged for the preservation and exhibition of the assembled antiquities. The notion that “museum has originated from the urge of collecting and exhibiting of ancient artistic evidences, archaeological evidences and heritage”<sup>45</sup> finds its fullest manifestation in the museum of Varendra Research Society.

In the recent times a debate has got centered round the issue that among the museum and society, which one was formulated earlier. This controversy got actually initiated by an article written by Mukhlesur Rahman, the former curator (1966-1986), which stated:

‘it is thus abundantly clear that with the sculptures collected during their first tour by the Kumar and his associates, the Varendra Research Museum was born in April 1910 and the decision to form a society (the Varendra Research Society) was not taken till the month of June of the same year.’<sup>46</sup> Based on this information of Rahman Saheb, Manirul Haque in 2004 <sup>47</sup> and Muhammad Rajjakul Islam in 2007 <sup>48</sup> had also consented to the fact that the Museum precedes the Society.

The erudite scholar like Mukhlesur Rahman must not have been motivatedly given birth to this controversy. Rather in most of his writings prior to this, he had mentioned of the Varendra Research Society as the parent body. It seems that later on he got little bit confused with the word ‘research’ that is visible in the very name of Varendra Research Society. Another probable reason of his view might be the dates of government recognition of the museum (1913) of the VRS and the VRS as a society (1914). Henceforth, Rahman Saheb has written, “As its name indicates the society was set up for research and for promoting the cause of its advancements.”<sup>49</sup> But research was not used by the founders of Varendra Research Society to denote only enquiry or study. They had also connoted it in order to indicate investigation or search. The research works obviously did not begin before June 1910. But, Varendra Research Society originated definitely as an investigatory body. In his presidential address Sarat kumar has categorically stated that:

“Inspired by Akshaya Kumar’s enthusiastic spirit, I and my respected friend Ramaprasad Chanda have founded this Society at a small scale and at the very first opportunity we have visited in and around Rajsahi for exploring some of the places of Varendra Region. On our invitation, our respected friend Rakhil Babu came from Calcutta in order to join with us.”<sup>50</sup> Respected Rahman Saheb has projected the incident of retaining 32 antiquities that got collected from the first exploration to Rajsahi, as the formation of the museum itself. However the stepping stone towards

an idea is not same as the concrete manifestation of that idea. Moreover, how can the courtyard of Pramadanath Ray's house, where those thirty two antiquities were placed, be termed as a museum? Definitely be cannot. Providing a modern definition of museum would further clarify it. According to the modern conception,

Museum=

M—Man

U—Utilization

S—Surrounding

E—Exhibition

U—Understanding

M—Mankind

In other terms museum is that institution established to make the mankind conscious about the value of our animate and inanimate surroundings through the exhibition of the evidences originated from the creative and cognizant man.<sup>51</sup> Unfortunately the collected antiquities could not be placed for exhibition before transporting them to the public library. Moreover, is it possible to segregate the official establishment of Varendra Research Museum from that of Varendra Research Society? Obviously be not. If we do so we have to push back the establishment of the Museum for quite a few years back, that is 1916, for the founders had never viewed them separately(at least till 1937) or never established them differently. They have established the one and all as the Varendra Research Society.<sup>52</sup> In reality, Varendra Research Museum is a significant and integral part of the Varendra Research Society itself. For all these reasons in the old annual reports of the Museum<sup>53</sup> or even in the notification no-3227mis, dated the 6<sup>th</sup> November 1937, issued by the Bengal Government<sup>54</sup>,

Varendra Research Society has been specifically mentioned to be the founder of Varendra Research Museum.

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## Chapter- II

### Organizational and Administrative Structure

#### Organizational Structure:

The organizational structure of the Varendra Research Society was reasonably taken from, no other than the Asiatic Society of Bengal. But not only Varendra Research Society, similar kind of institutions established in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, influenced by the structure of Asiatic Society, share similar kind of organizational structures.

The following accounts for the exact structure of the Varendra Research Society:

Patron→Vice-patrons→ Vice- presidents→Ordinary Members→ Associate Members→ Honorary Members.

**Patron:** From the dawn of its establishment there was a patron of VRS who was the Head of the province, i.e. the Governor of Bengal. Lord Carmichael was the first patron of VRS.<sup>1</sup> In order to witness the society's activities in 1912 he came to Rajshahi, and the archaeological artefacts collected by the society pleased him much.<sup>2</sup>

**Vice-patrons:** Mainly, the District Magistrate/Divisional Commissioner and the donor Zaminders and the Zaminders associated with the spread of knowledge were supposed to be selected to this post. FJ Monahan, the friend and admirer of the society in its calamitous opening days, was the first Vice-patron.<sup>3</sup> In this post simultaneously at best five people had extended their helping hand.<sup>4</sup> But in 1927 this post was extinct. The last Vice-patron was Pramadanath Roy of Dighapatiya.<sup>5</sup>

**Vice presidents:** This honorary post was created in 1915-16. Justice Sir J.G. Woodroffe had the credit to adorne this post at first .<sup>6</sup> Later on this post was occupied by the Superintendent

of the Archaeological Survey of India and distinguished scholars. At the same time three people at max occupied this post.

**Ordinary or paying members:** All the subscribed members fall into this category. These members are divided in two classes:

**a) Resident** (in Rajshahi Town) and

**b) Non-resident** <sup>7</sup>

In fact the subscription money of these ordinary members' fuelled the treasury of the society.

From these members the President, Director and Secretary, Treasurer and others were elected for the Council of Management. The maximum number of members (123) was enlisted in 1933-34.<sup>8</sup>

**Associate members:** The members under the above head were connected with the VRS but they were not bound to pay the subscription money like other ordinary members. They were not even bound to attend all the meetings of the society. But these people helped the society on several occurrences.<sup>9</sup> In the period of 1932-1937 their maximum number which was 11, is listed.

**Honorary members:** Famous scholars but Interested in the activities of VRS were given this honorary post. Incidentally, French scholar A. Foucher adorned this post for a long time as one and only member. Later this number was increased to the maximum of three.<sup>10</sup>

**Administrative structure:**

To administer the activities of the Varendra Research Society, there was a Council of Management. At the outset there were 11(eleven)<sup>11</sup> members and subsequently the number

revolved to 12(twelve). However, Mukhlesur Rahman talked about 13 members (of the Mangement Council) which is not confirms by means of the evidences.<sup>12</sup> Possibly he included the Assistant Librarian in the list. But it is not mentioned in a single document that the Assistant Librarian was the member of the Council of Management. Even the Annual Reports do not expose an indication of it. Whatever the case may be, the Council was consisted of the following members:

1.	President
2.	Director
3.	Honorary Seretary
4.	Assistant                      Honorary Secretary
5.	Honorary Treasurer
6.	Honorary Librarian
7.	Honorary Keeper
8.	Member(ordinary)
9.	Member(ordinary)
10.	Member(ordinary)
11.	Member(ordinary)
12.	Member(ordinary)

Table no -1

The President and the Director of the Council were used to be elected from the ordinary or paying members designed for a three years occupancy during the annual general meeting and the rest for a year.<sup>13</sup> It may be mentioned that both the stalwarts namely, Sarat Kumar Ray and Akshaya Kumar Maitra got the opportunity to enjoy the posts of

presidentship and directorship respectively till their last days of their life. In other words, throughout their tenure of office both Sarat Kumar Ray and Akshayay Kumar Maitra were elected every year in the posts mentioned. However, in the last few years of his life, Akshyaya Kumar Maitra could not play an active part in the activities of VRS. And after his death (1930), the post of Director was moved out. It was replaced by a post of Vice President in the Council.<sup>14</sup>

There was always an honorary auditor in the Society to audit the financial credit of the same. Intended for the apposite maintenance of the Society's museum, the Government of Bengal approved a post of curator in the last month of 1924. Accordingly, Nanigopal Majumdar, a salaried(Rs. 250/- per month) curator was appointed in the commencement of the year 1925.<sup>15</sup> Anyway, in 1926 and 1927, both the year when Nanigopal Majumdar, the salaried curator went away to the excavation at Mehenjodaro along with the Archaeological Department of India( four months each year), Kshitish Chandra Sarkar acted as honorary curator in the absence of the former.<sup>16</sup> Nanigopal Majumdar was succeeded by Nirodbandhu Sanyal as curator who rendered his service in the post for about 23 years( 1927- 1950).

To handle the affairs of the office and maintain the security of the museum and the garden, the VRS had some subordinate personnel as under:

<b>Number of Persons</b>	<b>Name of Post</b>	<b>Working place</b>
01	Clerk	Office
01	Peon	Office
01	Durwan	Museum
02	Mali	Garden

Table- 2

The museum and the library of the Society came under a separate Committee of management in 1937 since the Society approached the Provincial Government to take over its

museum under Charitable Endowments Act, 1890, with certain reservation of rights and provisions. Keeping the conservation and development of the museum in view the said proposal was approached. An Endowment (Varendra Research Museum Endowment<sup>17</sup>) was also created for the administration of the museum to which an amount of Rs. 30000<sup>18</sup> was charitably contributed by the executors appointed under the will of Basanta Kumar Ray of Dighapatiya.<sup>19</sup> By the notification (Government of Bengal) no 3227 Mis. Dated the 6<sup>th</sup> November, 1937, the administration of the museum was entrusted to a Committee comprising of:<sup>20</sup>

i) The Magistrate of Rajshahi district who was elected as the chairman of the Museum administration. The first chairman was R. H. G. Johoston.

ii) Principal of the Rajshahi College.

iii) The Superintendent of Archaeology, Eastern Circle. Although it was replaced by the Superintendent of the archaeological section of Indian Museum by the Government notification No. 242 Tmisc. dated the 13<sup>th</sup> October, 1939.

iv) A representative of the Trustees of Kumar Basanta Kumar Ray Fund and in the absence of any such Trustee a representative of the descendants of Raja Promoda Nath Ray Bahadur in the male line. It was Mahendra Kumar Saha Chaudhury who was nominated as the first representative of Kumar Basanta Kumar Ray's Trust Fund to the committee.

v) Sarat Kumar Ray and after his death a representative of his family in the male line.

vi) Two representatives of the Varendra Research Society. It is to be noted that Rai Bahadur Brojendra Mohan Maitra and Durgadas Bhattacharyya were elected first as the representatives from Varendra Research Society to the Committee of Management of the Museum.

vii) Three representatives (non-official) of the following three divisions of Bengal- Rajshahi, Presidency and Burdwan- which were to be nominated by Provincial Government. Accordingly, Saradindu Narayan Ray, the Zamindar of Dinajpur, J. C. Maitra, the Principal of Berhampur College and Taraknath Mukherjee, the Chairman of Hugli District Board were nominated first as the non-official representatives of the Government of Bengal to the Committee from Rajshahi, Presidency and Burdwan divisions.<sup>21</sup>

viii) Rai Bahadur Ramaprasad Chanda, one of the founder members of the VRS and after his death a representative of the Calcutta or any other duly constituted University to which the Rajshahi College was for the time being affiliated.

ix) Curator of the Museum was appointed as the secretary to the Committee. Naturally, Nirodbandhu Sanyal, the then curator became the first secretary of the Committee. But it is noticeable that the secretary had no voting right.

### Sketch of the Committee of Mangement of Varendra Research Museum

Serial No.	Members	Important Designation
1.	District Magistrate of Rajshahi	Chairman
2.	Principal of Rajshahi College	
3.	Superintendent of Archaeology, Eastern Circle	
4.	A representative of the Trustees of Basanta Kumar Ray Trust fund	
5.	Sarat kumar Ray, founder member	
6-7	Two representatives of the VRS	
8-10	Three representatives of Rajshahi, Presidency and burdwan divisions	
11	Ramaprasad Chanda, founder member	
12	Curator of the Museum	Secretary

Table-3

In the post independence phase there were few alterations in the membership of the Committee of Management of the museum owing to the partition. However, the basic structure remained unaffected. The alterations were:<sup>22</sup>

- i) Superintendent of Archaeological section of Indian Museum was replaced by Superintendent of Archaeology of East Pakistan.
- ii) Earlier there was the provision to elect three members from three divisions (Rajshahi, Presidency & Burdwan). But after the partion all three members of this category had to elect only from Rajshahi division.

iii) Following the death of Ramaprsad Chanda (1942), the founder member, a representative of Calcutta University was in the Committee of Management. Since the Calcutta University along with whole Calcutta was included in the Independent India, a representative of Dacca University (1947- 1953) was included in the Committee. And after the establishment of University of Rajshahi, the membership was transferred to a representative of the same.

It is to be noted that though the museum came under a separate Committee of Administration in 1937, the number of subordinate staff in the museum remained same as it was under the management of Varendra Research Society i.e.-

1 Clerk

1 Office peon

1 Durwan<sup>23</sup>

2 Mali and

1 Sweeper.

However, the newly formed administrative committee appointed another committee in 1938 to frame rules for the management of the museum and library. The rules and by-laws prepared by the committee were adopted with some modifications by the administrative committee of the museum. Besides the framing of the rules and laws, the administrative committee of the museum also appointed the following standing sub- committees:<sup>24</sup>

i) Building sub-committee

ii) Library sub-committee and

iii) Publication sub-committee.

After the formation of the library sub- committee, a number of steps were taken to re-organize the library. The library sub-committee classified the collections of the library into three sections:

- i) Valuable books and documents which had gone out of print long ago,
- ii) Books which were available in the market but were very important and expensive and
- iii) Ordinary books which could be replaced more easily.

After classifying the books, the library sub-committee framed some norms for the issue of the same. It was decided that the books of category- 1, should not be issued outside the reading room and books of category-2, might be loaned out only on production of full value of the book as security money and ordinary books might be loaned on signing a receipt which should contain an undertaking to repay the value of the book to the museum in case it was not returned.<sup>25</sup>

It may be pointed out that there were very few examples of museums in India privately endowed like Varendra Research Museum. It was a general matter in U. S. A. <sup>26</sup> But in India it was one of the rarest examples since most of them were organized, administered and financed by the various governments and states.<sup>27</sup>

Till the transfer of the museum to the authority of the University of Rajshahi in October, 1964, the Varendra Research Museum and Library was governed and functioned according to the above stated administrative composition.<sup>28</sup> However, there was a change in 1950 in the staff pattern of the museum. Salaried curator was replaced by the honorary curator.<sup>29</sup> Actually, in 1950, the then curator Nirodbandhu Sanyal migrated to India and no one was appointed in the vacant post of salaried curator. I. H. Zuberi was appointed but as

honorary curator. One more addition was come about. The Committee of Manzement formulated a post of assistant curator in which D. K. Chakravarty was appointed first.<sup>30</sup>

Following the reassignment of the museum and library to a separate administrative body, even though merely on paper, there was few automatic alterations in the configuration of the Council of Management of Varendra Research Society. In fact, till 1937, the whole thing (including the museum abd library) of the VRS were conducted by a single administrative body. The curator and librarian were important members of the Council of Management of the VRS. But in the altered arrangement, the stated two posts (i.e. curator and librarian) lost its utility in the Council of VRS. Consequently, these two posts were dissolved from the Council of Management of VRS.<sup>31</sup>

It is to be noted that in the post independence phase, the Council of of Mangement of the VRS adopted an added re-organization scheme to infuse a new life in the activities of the Society. Accordingly, the activities of the Society were grouped under following sections: <sup>32</sup>

- i) History and Archaeology
- ii) Literature and Philosophy
- iii) Art
- iv) Ethnology and Anthropology
- v) Natural Science.

Moreover, aforementioned each section was placed under a member to take initiative in organizing research, discussion, meetings, lectures, conferences and exhibitions.

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17. *Annual Report for the year 1936- 37 & 1937- 38.*
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20. *Annual Report for the year 1936- 37 & 1937- 38.*
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23. The number of menials (*Durwan*) of the Museum increased 1 to 2 by 1949.
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### Chapter-III

## Growth, Prospects and Research Pursuits

Having been elected Sarat Kumar Ray, Akshaya Kumar Maitra and Ramaprasad Chanda as president, director and secretary respectively, the Varendra Research Society had officially come into existence on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1910 with the following vision:

“The chief aim of this research society is to discover the truth and thereby ennourish the knowledge resource of mankind . . . . . Another important motive of the Society is to reveal the cultural ambiance that existed in ancient Bengal. As the clan unless and until we realize the reasons of our prosperity and depravity, how can we decide about the path that will pave way for development? . . . . . It is a well known fact that the Bengalee culture got flourished even outside India and influenced the places like Nepal, Tibet, Java, Bali, and other far off regions. Again one needs to contemplate upon the accounts of the degeneration of the Bengalees. . . . . All these need to be specified only to highlight the importance of the investigation cum research activities in every sphere of life.”<sup>1</sup>

Hence, it is not so difficult to understand that the rediscovery of early history of Bengal as well as that of Bengalees were the main and ultimate vision of the Varendra Research Society. In the Annual Report of 1935-36 of the Society, it has been recorded in this regard that:

“It grew out of a small Research party organized in 1910 by Sarat Kumar Ray of Dighapatiya with the avowed object of promoting and encouraging the study of Archaeology, History, Literature and Art in relation to India and with reference to Bengal.”

So, despite the vision of the Varendra Research Society was to restore the history of Bengal, a few issues of some other places of India were too incorporated in it. For the reason, that the link of the history of Bengal cannot be exactly bounded within the periphery of undivided Bengal. To a certain extent, the history of Bengal was furthermore associated with the other regions of India and outside India.<sup>2</sup> Anyway, in the light of the vision; the Society had fixed up its mission under the following heads:<sup>3</sup>

I) Collection of antiquities through - a) Exploration and b) Excavation

II) Research and

III) Publication

It is to be mentioned that prior to the ceremonial investiture on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1910, the Varendra Research Society had accomplished two explorative tours, first one was in April, 1910 and the next one in the month of June of the same year, and consequently became successful to put together a collection of a quantity of antiquities. At the outset, the Society used to conserve the antiquities by and large on the premises of the abode of Pramadanath Ray, the eldest brother of Sarat Kumar Ray. However a few specimens were as well got accommodation in the residences of Mahendra Kumar Saha Chowdhury and Kalipsanna Acharya.<sup>4</sup> Subsequently, the collections were removed to the two rooms of the Ghoramara Public Library to put on display. Kalipsanna Acharya was chosen as the opening keeper<sup>5</sup> of these collections or museum.

It would be unjust if we will not affix at this point two lists of names on the way to discuss the initial activities of Varendra Research Society. In fact, in addition to Sarat Kumar Ray, Akshaya Kumar Maitra and Ramaprasad Chanda, there were a number of individuals who were the attendants of the Varendra Research Society. The first list is of those who

were directly involved themselves in the initial activities of the Society. The persons of this list were Rajendralal Acharya, Yogendra Nath Gupta, Golam Yazdani, Sreeram Maitra, Vaidyanath Sanyal, Srish Chandra Sastri, Radhagobinda Basak, Debendragoti Ray, Kaliprasanna Acharya, Girish Chandra Vedantatirtha, Satish Chandra Siddhanta Bhusan and painter Anathbandhu Maitra.<sup>6</sup> And the 2<sup>nd</sup> list consists of those people who had a high regard for the Society and encouraged it by providing hospitality, felicitation, opinion, advise, assistance, backing and information of unexplored and the sites under the process of investigation. They were, for example, kshaunish Chandra Roy Bahadur of Nabadwip, Hemendra Kumar Ray of Dighapatiya, Gopal Lal Roy of Rangpur, Chandrakishor Ray of Vardhanakuti, Radhagobinda Roy Bahadur of Dinajpur, Roy Bahadur Kedarprasanna Lahiri( Kashimpur Rajshahi), Roy Bahadur Kumudinikanta Bandopadhaya(Rajshahi), Meeenakumari, Hemlata Choudhurany , Lalit Mohan Maitra , Ramaprasad Mallik (Rajshahi), Surendra Chandra Roy Chowdhury, Narayan Chandra Roy Chowdhury(Mahadebpur , Rajshahi), Yogesh Chandra Bandopadhaya(Manhali, Dinajpur), Rajendra Chandra Sanyal(Balurghat, Dinajpur), Bhuban Mohan Maitra, Kishorimohan Chowdhury, Kalicharan Saha, Harimohan Chowdhury, Seikh Lal Muhammad ( Rajshahi), Seikh Sirajuddin (Bagura), Karuna Kumar Datta Gupta, Jogichandra Chakraborty(Dinajpur), Nalinikanta Adikary, Chintamohan Mukhapadhaya(Balurghat, Dinajpur), Amarendra Nath Chowdhury(Ranaghat, Nadiya), Mahendra Kumar Saha Chowdhury and so on.<sup>7</sup>

It may be pointed out that since there was no permissible right of collecting sculptures and antiquities by the non-governmental enterprises till the first decade of the twentieth century, the endurance of Varendra Research Society had to experience of a danger at its very initial phase. In point of fact that the threat came into sight (1911) when the Indian Museum, Calcutta, demanded an inscribed Buddha image which had been collected by the Varendra Research Society from Balurghat. The Indian Museum was not prepared to be pleased by

getting hold of only just that icon and consequently ordered the Society to send out its all rare and exclusive specimens.<sup>8</sup> However, in due course the dispute was resolved with the meddling of F. J. Monahan, the Divisional Commissioner of Rajshahi and the assurance of Sarat Kumar Ray to put up a fitting building intended for the defense and conservation of the archaeological remnants. Yet, the Society had to make arrangement all the way through the intermediary of Monahan for the appointment of the Governor of Bengal to bring him to Rajshahi. This sort of backing of Monahan Saheb<sup>9</sup> afforded during the early phase of the Society was not easily forgettable. The VRS<sup>10</sup> as well even did not try to forget it. Because, the noble vision of VRS would have been died out in the starting point, without the support of Monahan. For that reason, we can notice to cite heartily about that assistance by Sarat Kumar Ray and Akshaya Kumar Maitra in their presidential address and ‘Upakramnika’ (introduction) of Gaudarajamala. Anyhow, the invitation letter of the Governor was possibly imparted by Sarat Kumar Ray according to the arrangement of Monahan, for which the former had to go to Darjeeling (In Darjeeling the Dighapatiya Roy family had a residence), the then summer capital of the Bengal presidency.<sup>11</sup> While Lord Carmichael, the then governor of Bengal landed at Rajshahi, the VRS had to organize a particular exposition of the sculptures to make an impression on him. If, truth to be told, Carmichael was overwhelmed by witnessing the exposition of the sculptures of the VRS.<sup>12</sup> It is to be noted that because of that awe-inspiring exhibition, the administration of Bengal in their Correspondence No. 11 dated 14 February, 1913 guaranteed just the correct liberty to the advocator of local museums in the question of ancient sculptures and antiquities. Consequently the activities of the Varendra Research Society in the area of collection, preservation and exposition got officially recognized. And in the succeeding year (1914) the VRS got registered according to the Indian Society Act (1860).

Additionally, the Society took up the preparation of a well set library in the museum to prop up and egg on the research and study of Indian history and culture. The first round collection of the library was put up principally by means of gifts obtained from the members of the Society. The initiative was taken in this path, no other than, Sarat Kumar Ray, the president of the Society. His remunerated representatives not only rummaged around the interior of Rajshahi district in favour of this cherished purpose, but as well in other districts, such as Pabna, Bogra, Dinajpur, Mymensingh, Jessore, Dacca and Comilla.<sup>13</sup> In addition, at the expense of the Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray, Srish Chandra Chakravarti went to Banaras and Mathura in search of the manuscripts of Jitendra Buddhi's *Nyasa*.<sup>14</sup> To be brief, the first round collection( Old Sanskrit as well as Bengali and few Nepali manuscripts), it comes into view , was collected by Sarat Kumar Ray who presented them to the Society's library. Among the other contributors of the collection at this stage, the most significant name was Maulavi Ahmad Sharif who presented 338 manuscripts which were collected by his uncle Abdul Karim.<sup>15</sup> Gopal Lal Ray, the zamindar of Rangpur presented all works of his personal library to the Society.<sup>16</sup> But owing to the dearth of records the names of each and every preliminary contributor cannot be identified.

In the direction of building a research facilitating rich library the above stated pathway i.e. the collection of old texts and manuscripts was not sufficient. Therefore, the Varendra Research Society took up some alternative means to collect manuscripts, books, reports, Journals and periodicals. They were as follows:

i) By purchasing;

ii) Exchanging with the Society's own publications;

iii) Publications on antiquarians of the government of India and other similar (with VRS) research institutions were acquired as presents.

It is to be recorded that Radhagobinda Basak, the lecturer in Sanskrit at Rajshahi College was assigned as the first honorary librarian of Varendra Research Society.

With the escalation of antiquities step by step the difficulty of accommodation was strongly felt in view of the fact that the Society had no place of abode of its hold. Truly there was an inevitability of the construction of a building for the ideal preservation and exhibition of the collected antiquities or to smooth the progress of the scholars to use those (antiquities) in support of their study and research. Above and beyond, there was the liability to keep up the promise of the president Sarat Kumar Ray.<sup>17</sup> In view of that, the present well-ventilated and roomy building which abodes the museum was put up by Sarat Kumar Ray at an colossal expenses of Rs. 62554/- and the terra firma, nearly two acres, was thoughtfully handed down by his brother Promoda Nath Ray of Dighapatiya and Basanta Kumar Ray, another Kumar of the similar line too made a input of Rs. 11000/- for the same use.<sup>18</sup> The underpinning stone was put down by His Excellency Lord Carmichael, the then Governor of Bengal in November 13, 1916. It is to be pointed out that in consideration of the public nature of the building and the organization, many individuals, laymen as well as engineers delivered copious service in its construction.<sup>19</sup> Interesting to cite that the drawing of the building was prepared by Sarat Kumar Ray himself. Resembling to the match box, the building was erected in ancient Gauda art or Pala style. The construction was completed in 1919. The antiquities that had put aside year after year were able to find permanent building for preservation. On 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1919, His Excellency Lord Ronaldshay, the then Governor of Bengal opened the building with admiring the family unit of Sarat Kumar Ray. In his speech Ronaldshay admired that “ The Society will ever remain under a deep debt of gratitude to the founder president Mr. Sarat Kumar Ray for his princely generosity towards it and its thanks likewise due to Promoda Nath of Dighapatiya for his generous and valued support.”<sup>20</sup> By the by, A. Foucher, the eminent French scholar and buddy of Rolandshay was

a distinguished guest in the opening ceremony. In the same day Sarat Kumar Ray vested the command of the building in a Board of Trustees, under whom the Varendra Research Society was to subsist in it for the purpose with the condition so that if the Varendra Research Society would get in touch with the danger line of extinction, the building will go back to himself or his successors or heirs.<sup>21</sup> One more clause was appended in the year 1924 through which the authorization to the Society to make use of the room of the main building intended for purposes additional than the shelter of the library and the museum would be terminable on sixth months notice.<sup>22</sup>

It is well-known that on the way to run an organization the most essential item is monetary aspect. Unquestionably, it is not an exception in the case of Varendra Research Society which took up a number of projects concurrently. Hence, it is our sense of duty to give something the once-over this aspect of the VRS. The basis of income of the Varendra Research Society can be divided under following heads:

- I) Income from subscriptions of the members;
- II) Generous donations of Sarat Kumar Ray;

It is to be point out that since the moment in time of the inception of the Varendra Research Society Sarat Kumar Ray started to make available of Rs. 200/- for each month towards it to meet the expenses and upkeep of the collection. Sarat Kumar Ray abridged his donation from Rs. 200 to Rs. 50 in the year 1917 while the Society began to obtain of Rs.100/- from the Government intended for the same cause. Even though the bulk of expenses either in the direction of exploration, excavation, excursion, publication of research works or to send Ramaprasad Chanda, Nanigopal Majumdar and Nirodhbandhu Sanyal for the handy training in excavation have been met from fund openhandedly bestowed by him.

Therefore, it can be said that the funding of Sarat Kumar Ray was the key source of income of the Society despite the fact that there were a number of other devices of income.

III) Onetime donation of different personages;

IV) Income from the sale of publication;

It is to be cited that this source of income came into being from the publication of Gaudarajamala and Gaudalekhamala, the two foremost works of the Varendra Research Society.

V) Government funds:

In the year 1917 the Government of Bengal sanctioned a grant of Rs.100 per month for the operation of the museum and in the year 1925 an additional grant of Rs. 250 per month for the salary of the curator. The latter grant was sanctioned for three years.<sup>23</sup> Hence, the latter grant would have been expired in December, 1927. Yet, within this duration the council of management of the Varendra Research Society made intense appeal to the Government to continue the same. In spite of the earnest representations and even special solicitations to the concerned respectable Minister and the Governor, the Government of Bengal dropped off the grant assigned for the curator from Rs. 250 to 150 per month December, 1927 on the ground of unsatisfactory support as of the public.<sup>24</sup> The Government funding was undesirably reduced 20% for the second occasion with effect from March 1932 on relation of their financial crisis.<sup>25</sup> Consequently, the grant for the curator was dropped down to Rs. 120 per month from March 1932.

VI) Savita Memorial Fund:

President Sarat Kumar Ray brought into being this fund in remembrance of his lamented son Savita Ray, a very amiable and talented boy who had been deceased from this

earth while merely in his fifteenth year (Born on the 4<sup>th</sup> Magha, 1308 B.S. and died on 28<sup>th</sup> Chaitra, 1322 B.S.), to the huge sorrowfulness of each and every one who knew the boy.<sup>26</sup> Actually, the bereaved father was keen to present a sequence of classical and until then unprinted works, such as *Bhasha-Vritti*, *Dhatupradipa* etc. with the lad's funds and in so doing to remember his dear name by connecting with them.<sup>27</sup> The fund was first made use of for the publication of *Bhasha-Vritti* in 1918.

Since the Society had been handling the Savita Memorial Fund free of cost, the donor of the fund agreed to let the Society to draw Rs. 100 per month for running it.<sup>28</sup>

#### VII) Grant of Rajshahi Municipality:

This is neither a copious fund nor it subsists for a long period of time. In point of fact that the Varendra Research Society by exploiting the instances of contemporary Europe and America where the museums were very often enjoyed the benefaction of the local Municipal Body/ Corporation,<sup>29</sup> applied to the Rajshahi Municipality for the financial assistance. The Rajshahi Municipality responded to it and sanctioned a grant of Rs. 100 per annum.<sup>30</sup> But the Municipality reduced this grant from Rs. 100 to Rs. 50 by 1928, while it increased collection of taxes from the Society.<sup>31</sup> And by the year 1931 the allowance was stopped up entirely.

It is to be noted that a suggestion to generate a Board of Trust by means of raising funds in support of management of the Society's museum was talked about in a meeting of 29<sup>th</sup> August, 1926.<sup>32</sup> An unofficial committee was as well employed to report on the conditions of such a scheme. Despite, the fact that the report of the committee scrutinized by the Council of Management of the Society, the plan of such radical change was discarded at that time.

But the financial condition of the Society was gone down in the succeeding decade. At this juncture of affairs it was felt that a museum resembling the one the Society had put up was of significance to the nation as a whole rather than to a plain private body.<sup>33</sup> It was then considered that the museum's interest would be more safe and sound in the hands of the Government of Bengal than in those of a private Society with very undersupplied funds at its disposal. In view of that an endowment fund was made for the management of the Society's museum. In fact the Trustees of Basanta Kumar Ray's Trust Fund very empathetically came up to Society's support with the face value of Rs. 30000 on certain conditions. It is to be stated that Basanta Kumar Ray through his Will dated 11<sup>th</sup> August, 1920 selected Promoda Nath Ray, Mahendra Kumar Saha Chowdhury and Hemanta Kumar Ray as executors and trustees thereof and whereas the said Basanta Kumar Ray breathed his last on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1920 without having revoked and changed the said Will Probate whereof was properly granted to the said executors by the District Judge of Rajshahi on September of 1921.<sup>34</sup> Under the clauses of the said Will, it was determined that the executors were supposed to be relevant the same to the objects useful to the residents of Rajshahi and it was furthermore directed that the amount must stay behind intact and the interest only ought to be used for the purpose. By way of this basis the Trustees stepped forward for the support of VRS with the condition of –

“The museum and the library of the Varendra Research Society should be transformed to the Government of Bengal for its future development and maintenance in perpetuity as a Provincial Museum and a representative of the Trustees of Basanta Kumar Ray's Trust Fund(TBKRTF) is to be included in the committee of management.”<sup>35</sup>

The stipulations of the Trustees of Basanta Kumar Ray's Trust Fund, was evaluated in the gathering dated 21<sup>th</sup> July, 1935 and finally it came to a decision that the fund (donation)

should be accepted. The decision was authenticated in a Special General meeting dated 28<sup>th</sup> September of the same year. Hence, a representation was put forwarded to the Government of Bengal in which the latter was appealed to get hold of the Museum and Library of the Society as a Provincial Museum under their direct supervision. Initially the Government of Bengal turned down the request on financial grounds.<sup>36</sup> Seeing that the VRS was stuck with, the Government in the end agreed to acknowledge partial liability for the management of the Museum and the Library of the Society in line with the scheme projected by them. Accordingly, the Society's Museum and Library were turned into a charitable institution under the Charitable Endowment Act, 1890 by the notification of the Government of Bengal Education Department, No. 3227 Mis. dated the 6<sup>th</sup> November, 1937.<sup>37</sup>

By the above mentioned notification, the site and building of the Varendra Research Society, its museum, now branded as the Varendra Research Museum, including of archaeological, historical and other bits and pieces and its library with books in print and manuscripts and as well its furniture and other belongings were vested in the Treasurer of Charitable Endowments, Bengal, on conviction for the maintenance and enhancement of the Varendra Research Museum.

### **EXPLORATION:**

“The history of Greenland has been written; even that of Mawri people is on page; however, the land that was constituted of the places like Gour –Tamralipta -Saptagram etc, that land has no documented history in writing” - quoting this statement of Bankim Chandra, Akshaya Kumar Maitra acknowledged in the Upakramnika(Introduction) of *Gaudarajamla* that ‘the reason behind this is not paucity of the elements of writing history, but rather, the lack of any investigation’. In the same Upakramnika(Introduction) he also revealed that the Varendra Research Society was originated to fill up that need of gathering information all the

way through investigation. And it needs no mention that the exploration was the most important mechanism of the VRS in favour of their investigatory projects.

The Account of earliest exploratory expedition of the Varendra Research Society has already been mentioned in Chapter I since the origin and the earliest exploratory expedition of the Society were interconnected with each other. Anyway, in the foremost exploratory trip which was carried out in April 1910 at the areas surrounding Godagari Police Station, there were Rakhaldas Banerjee of Indian Museum and Ramkamal Singha of Bangiya Shahitya Parisad besides Sarat Kumar Ray, Akshaya Kumar Maitra and Ramaprasad Chanda. At their very opening effort they could explore the places like Deopara, Pal para, Chhabbishnagar, Mandoil, Kumarpur, Vijayanagar, Khetur, Jugpur, Gulai, Itahar and so on of Godagari police station.<sup>38</sup> It is to be noted that Harimohan Chowdhury of Mandoil village and Al – haj – Lal Muhammad, the Zamindar of Gulai bigheartedly hosted the explorative team.<sup>39</sup> And it was Al – haj – Lal Muhammad who first presented three pieces of sculptures to the said team.<sup>40</sup> Within the five days of duration the explorative party collected thirty-two precious statuettes, including the life-size image of Chandi. It is to be highlighted that the illustrious Ganga icon, made of black stone and preserves in the Varendra Research Museum, was collected through this trip.<sup>41</sup>

The amazing success of the foremost explorative tour helped out Sarat Kumar Ray, Akshaya Kumar Maitra and Ramaprasad Chanda, the three pillars of Varendra Research Society to become aware of the truth that it would not be an impractical task to accumulate colossal archaeological evidences of the history of ancient Bengal if this sort of exploration could be persistent on a regular basis.<sup>42</sup> In view of that, the plan was made up to carry on regular exploration in and around Varendra region. According to this plan, the Khanjanpur of Bagura district was selected as the first site of regular exploration which was accomplished in the month of June of the same year (1910). In addition to Sarat Kumar Ray, Akshaya Kumar

Maitra and Ramaprasad Chanda, Sriram Maitra, an apprehensive personage in the archaeology of Varendra involved himself in this expedition. The first regular exploration of Khanjanpur proved to be a booming one and the party became successful to assemble a number of antiques in consequence of the keenness of said Sriram Maitra. Mentionable that even though Khanjanpur was the selected site of this expedition, the explorative party not only restricted their exploration within the same, but incorporated to the adjacent places like, Paharpur, Shivpur, Manglabari, Jogi-Ghupa, Amair and Gurni.

Owing to the success of the initial two attempts, the VRS set in motion to carry out programmes in this direction in a regular basis. Consequently, within 1912 the VRS succeeded to explore the places like Deopara, Palpara, Chhabishnagar, Mandoil, Malancha, Kumarpur, Vijayanagara, Khetur, Jugpur, Gulai, Itahar, Paharpur and Haludbihar in Rajshahi; Khanjanpur, Mahasthan, Khetlal, Mahipur, Chhatingram and Satoil in Bagura; Birat and Satgarh in Rangpur; Dinajpur, Bangarh, Manohali, Basor, Tapan Dighi, Balurghat, Mahisantosh, Aagardwigan, Jagaddal, Aamoir, Dhuroil, Jogighopa, Hargouri and Ghoraghat in Dinajpur district; Kashi and Sarnath in Benaras; Vikrampur in Dacca and came off with nearly 150 stone and metal sculptures and over 500 manuscripts and a few stone and copperplate inscriptions in their disposal.<sup>43</sup>

Subsequent to the year 1912 the VRS organized their explorative operations regularly. But, ahead of the year 1926 there was a fall down in this course. In other words, the regular explorative tour of the VRS was stopped up eve of the year 1926. Nevertheless, there were some short term tours conducted by the members of the Society during the slack time. And in the month of February – March of the year 1926, the Society, yet again set out the regular explorative tour. It was organized and personally under taken by the president Sarat Kumar Ray and he was escorted by Nirodbandhu Sanyal, Bijay Nath Sarkar, Prafulla Chandra Gosh and Prabhash Chandra Sen.

At some stage in the early part of this expedition which set in motion at Paharpur, the party explored the northern part of Bagura district and a small number of places in the vicinity of it lying in the districts of Rajshahi, Dinajpur and Rangpur. All through the later part, the party visited a quantity of places in the South of the Bagura opening with Bagura town. According to the documentation of Bijay Nath Sarkar, the secretary of the VRS, the party explored following places: <sup>44</sup>

i) Paharpur (Rajshahi District), three miles west of Jamalganj, E.B.R. excavations which were in progress there, had exposed a titanic Buddhist temple bedecked with datos of Terra-cotta plaques bearing an assortment of interesting figures;

ii) Manglabari or Hara-Gauri(Dinajpur District), 8 miles north-west of Paharpur. The party noticed the inscribed pillar of Gurava Mishra, minister of the emperor Narayana Pala and the dilapidated temple on the top of small mound close to it. The pillar is well-known locally as '*Bhimer Panthi*';

iii) Khetal- (Bogura District), 8 miles east of Jamalganj. A Vishnu icon and a portion of an Uma- Mahesvara image were collected from there;

iv) Kalai, 4 miles north- east of Khetal. A giant icon of Vishnu was recovered;

v) Poonatta- 3 miles east of Kalai. A fragment of a 'mother and child' image and a few Siva Lingas were lying in the neighborhood of the bazaar;

vi) Basila- 3 miles south of Khetal. A section of a Vishnu figure and a broken Siva Linga were collected;

vii) Baratra- 4 miles north-east of Khetal;

Viii) Matrai- 8 miles north-east of Khetal. A monolith weighing over a ton bearing an inscription of Prahasita Sharma was dug out and removed to the museum;

ix) Biala- 3 miles north of Matrai. Three Vishnu images and the fragment of a fourth one were collected;

x) Silimpur- 1 mile west of Biala. From this place came the inscription of Prahasa Sharma;

xi) Bolgram- 1 mile west of Silimpur. Many of the images in the adjoining villages of Biala, Gurni etc appear to have come from Bolgram. A few fragments of Vishnu image were lying beneath a Banyan tree. There were a number of mounds surrounded by a moat which is famous as the 'Bali Rajar Bari'. Possibly this village is indistinguishable with 'Balagrama' of the Silimpur inscription;

xii) Birat-(Rampur District), 6 miles west of Matrai. It had a mound well-known as 'Birat Rajar Bari'. The Kumar of Vardhankuthi excavated this mound and had exposed a brick structure adjacent to a stone sanctum. The plain was comparable to that of the temple revealed at Paharpur but was on a much smaller scale;

xiii) Madhainagar- (Bogura District)- 4 miles west of Matrai. Some fragments of Vishnu and Surya images were recovered;

xiv) Kendul- 2miles west of Madhainagar. A fragment of Vishnu and a Siva Linga were removed to the museum;

xv) Gurni- 4 miles north-west of Matrai. An inscribed stone image of Tara and a fragment of Vishnu were picked up;

xvi) Briddhigram- 8 miles north-west of Gurni. Image of Vishnu, some fragments of Surya were lifted from this place;

- xvii) Patharghata – 2 miles west of Briddhigram. A stand stone capital decorated with Lion heads, broken image of dancing Ganesha, a Boddhisattva were collected from there;
- xviii) Hili- (Bagura District)- About four miles to the east of the Ghoraghat road. A image of Vishnu was picked up;
- xix) Jangai-(Dinajpur District), 8 miles north-east of Hili. A fragment of Mahisha-Mardini was collected;
- xx) Bogura- A number of images of Surya, Vishnu and Chandi were collected;
- xxi) Sherpur- 12 miles south of Bagura. A miniature bronge image of Sadasiva was collected;
- xxii) Mhasthangarh- 8 miles north of Bogra. It is identified with the ancient city of Pundravardhana. A stone inscription from Mahasthan was removed to the museum;
- xxiii) Bihar- on the bank of the Nagar River and 4 miles north-west of Mahasthangarh. The ruins at Bhasu-Bihar about a mile off were identified by Cunningham with those of the Po-Shi-Vihara described by Hiuen Tsang.

It is to be brought up that there was no single well thought-out regular exploration later than the year 1926. Yet, it is not accurate to pronounce that there were no explorations by any means. The Society, evidently, executed a quantity of alternative short tour or excursion instead of organized regular explorative expedition. In addition, the entire short tours were not restricted within the periphery of Varendra, to a certain extent; they were carried out in further parts of Bengal as well as other provinces of India. On or after the year 1926 to 1937 the short excursions acted upon by the Society were as follows:

- i) 1926-27- Minuscule trips were exercised by certain members of the Society, one of them being to the excavation site of Paharpur;<sup>45</sup>

ii) 1927-28- Mr. Nirodbandhu Sanyal, the then curator of the Society's museum completed a few diminutive excursions to Paharpur in course of which he assembled quite a few archeological finds. He also visited Mahasthan. Likewise, Mr. Sanyal and Mr. Kshitish Chandra Sarkar, the then assistant Secretary of the Society, while on a trip to Malda to gather some relics, visited Gaur and Ramkeli;<sup>46</sup>

iii) 1928-29- This year the Sarat Kumar Ray made small trips to Balurghat and Ghoraghat in Dinajpur; Dubalhati in Rajshahi and Sherpur in Bagura in course of which he brought together a few stone images and other antiquities;<sup>47</sup>

iv) 1929-30- Curator Nirodbandhu Sanyal made short tours to Bangarh and Tapan, Dinajpur Palace in Dinajpur and Rangpur to examine the collection of the Rangpur Shahitya Parishad in favour of the study of the antiquities of this part of North Bengal;<sup>48</sup>

v) 1930-31- Some excursions were carried out by Sarat Kumar Ray, Kumar Amitabha Ray and Kalidas Duatt in Katwa and Garh Mandaran and by Bijay Nath Sarkar and Kalidas Dutt in Sundarbans, where in the major sites were visited were Jatal Deul, Dalbari, Kankandighi, Raidighi, Govindpur and Banshamnagar;<sup>49</sup>

vi) 1931-32- Members like Sarat Kumar Ray, Sarasi Kumar Saraswati , Kshitish Chandra Sarkar and Vijay Nath Sarkar undertook tours for exploration but at their individual expenses.<sup>50</sup> A small amount of relics were appended to the museum;

vii) 1932-33- This is a significant year subsequent to 1926 in the direction of exploration. This year, no less than 47 part of a set of antiquities were added to the museum, nearly every one of which was collected all the way through exploration. Despite the fact that there was no regular organized exploration, three imperative tours were undertaken by the research scholar Sarasi Kumar Saraswati. He explored large segments of the districts of Malda, Dinajpur and

Bagura. The expenditure of his exploration was provided by Sarat Kumar Ray. Moreover, Professor S. Saraf-ud-din undertook a trip to Gaur, Pandua and contiguous places on his personal operating cost. And President Sarat Kumar Ray engaged himself on an additional tour to Gaya, Rajgir, Nalanda, Bihar, Patna and Pawapuri ;<sup>51</sup>

viii) 1933-34- Sarasi Kumar Saraswati took a diminutive trip to Simla for the study of an image of a twenty-armed goddess which he identified with Mahalakxmi;<sup>52</sup>

ix) 1934-35- Sarasi Kumar Saraswati and Dwijendra Kumar Chakravarty , the office assistant made a tour within the Dinajpur district at the outlay of the Society and visited Dinajpur, Raiganj, Chhota Pandua, Mohoso, Kamalabari, Itahar, Khamarora, Bhadrasila, Bankur, Sonapur, Baigunbari, Shadea, Surohor, Mahendra and Piyalipara.<sup>53</sup> They collected a few sculptures which were made over to the museum;

x) 1935-36-<sup>54</sup> – This year president Sarat Kumar Ray travelled around Puri, Bhubaneswar, Khandagiri, Udaygiri, Dhabalgiri, and Jaipur in Orissa. Besides the president, curator Nirodbandhu Sanyal toured to Allahabad, Delhi, Mathura, Agra, and Fatepur- Sikri as well as Puri and Bhubaneswar.

### **Excavation:**

Exhilarating by the sensation of the success of exploration, the Varendra Research Society made an effort to put its exertion in a number of perceptive excavation. In actual fact, there was a prerequisite of excavation in some sites to ascertain the genuine and flourishing history of pre-Islamic Bengal. In this regard, President Sarat Kumar Ray put down in black and white in one of his speech for a session (Calcutta) of Bangiya Shahitya Parishad:

“It needs to kick off excavation on the way to expose the archaeological chattels of these archaeological sites of Bengal. History would be revealed only with the

discovery of archeological chattels. On the contrary, it would be unfeasible to depict the genuine history by means of the evidences collected till date. It would be incapable to bring about the genuine history in any point of time if it remains satisfy with those limited evidences. History of Bengalees should be revealed by the Bengalees themselves and they are supposed to be engaged into digging the earth with shovel.”<sup>55</sup> Every single student of history is acquainted with that this statement is not merely a catchphrase of aphorism. This is integrated with the scientific method of finding the past evidences.

### **Kumarpur:**

The Varendra Research Society opted first Kumarpur of Godagari police station in Rajshahi district as its site in this direction. In his presidential address Sarat Kumar Ray brought up that the Society dug out a little segment of Kumarpur mound by 1912 and the outcome would be made public in a certain time. But it was not publicized, in all probability, in view of the fact that there was no such significant outcome of this initial endeavor.

The excavation of Kumarpur, yet again, got a fresh start. It is to be pointed out that there were more than a few mounds at Kumarpur within the one and the same neighborhood. However, one of them, footing next to the side of the main street from Rajshahi to Godagari was erected a Mausoleum over the grave of Ali Kuli, a Muslim nobleman.<sup>56</sup> In fact, the sighting of three inscriptions of Mughol period (17<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) from the zenith of this Mausoleum shoved the Society to point up the notice of the local authorities as well as the Archaeological department in 1923 to take actions under the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act.<sup>57</sup> Following a succession of communications, Mokarma and Uparbari, the two significant archaeological mounds were brought under the provisions of the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act and affirmed to be looked after by the Government.

By means of their passion of venture of excavation the VRS unveiled the hidden foundations of brick wall of atypical width (more than 9 feet) at Uparbari and a Saivate / Hindu temple at Mokarma. At Mokarma lower ingredient of a pillar from a Hindu temple has been unearthed and this had been afterward made use of as a lamp post by the Mahamedans.<sup>58</sup> The heap on which the Mausoleum situated, stone relics indicative of Hindu derivation were seen lying on. The location is supposed to have shaped part of Vijaynagar; the first capital of the Sena Kings of Bengal and Deopara or Padumeswar from where the copper inscription of Vijayasena was lifted up is not very far-off from the vicinity.

### **Mahisantosh:**

Yet, not the Kumarpur, it was Mahisantosh, the earliest thriving excavation of the VRS as well as the Bengalees of their own enterprise. For the reason that it was accomplished in the year 1916 where as successful excavation of Kumarpur was carried out after 1923.

The site is located three miles faraway from Balurghat in Dinajpur district. The members of the VRS inspected the place in 1911. At that point in time there was an old Darga of the 15<sup>th</sup> century of the Cristian era encircled by a brick built fence<sup>59</sup> and a heap exclusively crammed with brick, stone and jungles. And there were two inscriptions affixed with the fence of the Darga. Even, several British writers referred to the ruins of Mahisantosh in their writings. But none of them, talked about the ruins of Mahisantosh. During the occasion of their first visit the members of the Society desired to transport one significant stone of the said heap to Rajshahi. However, owing to the dearth of time and being observant of the verity that the porters could refuse to touch the consecrated stone, they had to return with empty hands. In the succeeding years one of the two inscriptions were omitted and there was every risk of missing the pillars of the heap. Hence, the VRS came to a decision to excavate the site in the year 1916. The digging was initiated in the month of December under

the supervision of Debendragoti Ray, the member of the Society from Balurghat. And sponsor Sarat Kumar Ray in company with Akshaya Kumar Maitra, Ramaprasad Chanda, Upendra Nath Ghosal, and Bimalcharan Maitra joined with him in the Christmas recess.<sup>60</sup>

The VRS was successful to divulge the piece of information that the heap was derived as a consequence of the segregation of the brick-stones of the Mausoleum. But the most expensive outcome of this excavation was the detection of the striking presence of Brahminical and Buddhist art in the stones and pillars of the Mausoleum. Actually, a number of icons of Hindu deities like Mahishamardini, Vishnu, Surya etc and Buddha images were exposed from the debris of stones of the remains of Mausoleum. Since the stones are not fit in to the same era and same school of art, Akshaya Kumar corroborated that the brick and stones of the Mausoleum were brought from various Hindu and Buddhist temples of varied periods which were most likely not far-flung from the Mausoleum.<sup>61</sup>

#### **Deopara-Padyumeswar:**

Another significant attainment in this direction of the Society was the excavation of Padyumeswar tank (pool) in Deopara village. Deopara is a village of Godagari police station in Rajshahi district. It is to be pointed out that the inscription of Vijay Sena, the Sena king was discovered from the eastern part of this pool. The excavation was begun in the month of April in 1919. The total expenditure of the work was Rs. 200, half of which was put in by the Rajshahi District Board and the further paid by the Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray.<sup>62</sup> The operation of the Society turn out to be booming to find out 64 valued sculpture and three terracotta Manasa- ghtatas from the bed of the pool.

The fabulous success of Deopara- Padyumeswar stirred the Society and indisputably multiplied the guts of the members of the Society. Consequently, the Society took up schemes in favour of further operations in the similar line. But, till date the Society had no

trained scholar of its own in the technique of excavation. For that reason the VRS had to go through a number of difficulties. And so the Society deputed Ramaprasad Chanda in the Department of Archaeology in the year 1917 with the recommendation and arrangement of Sir John Marshall, the director of the Archaeological Survey of India. Ramaprasad had gained the practical knowledge of the method of excavation as a trainee in the archaeological sites of Taxila, Mathura and Sarnath and returned back to Rajshahi in the year 1919.<sup>63</sup> But the Society became unsuccessful to get a hold of this knowledge of Ramaprasad. Because the consort of Chanda breathed her last immediately after the conclusion of the training and the bereaved man left Rajshahi for Calcutta.<sup>64</sup> And there he got the employment of lecturership in Calcutta University in the department of History and Culture with the support of Ashutosh Mukherjee.

### **Paharpur:**

The most gallant step in this line was taken by the VRS in the year 1922-1923 when the president Sarat Kumar Ray consigned funds in the hands of Calcutta University intended for the excavation at Paharpur. The Government endorsed some funds in this plan as well. Being pleased about the sense of duty of Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray, the Archaeological Survey of India stated in its annual report of the year 1921-22 that:

“The scheme is to be financed partly by the Government of India and partly by Sarat Kumar Ray of Dighapatia, who by his magnificent donations and active interest in the cause of Archaeology has set a rare example to his countrymen.”

Paharpur is a mauza of Badalgachi police station of Rajshahi district. The village has achieved its name on or after a high mound (Pahar). The location had been inspected previously by Buchanan Hamilton, Westmaccot and Alexander Cunningham. Whereas Buchanan and Westmaccot illustrated the site of a Buddhist temple, the supposition of the

third person(Cunningham) was that it was of a Brahminical composition.<sup>65</sup> However, Akshaya Kumar in his discourse in Calcutta University decisively propped up the opinion of Buchanan and Westmaccot taking into account the loftiness( 80 feet) and the collective characteristics of the mound. And one month later, following the Calcutta University lecture of Akshaya Kumar Maitra, one inscription was uncovered from Paharpur by Sriram Maitra, one of the moffosil members of VRS. The inscription consists of a stanza of four lines in Sanskrit which bears witness to the Buddhistic derivation of this remains.<sup>66</sup>

It is to be highlighted that a little section of the heap was dug up by one Ghanesyam in 1876, who laid bare a large boulder which merely made certain the fact that the heap was composed of solid bricks. Therefore, taking into consideration the fundamental nature of Paharpur mound the VRS formulated prospective grounding to excavate it. But ahead of implementing the plan there was a requisite of its safeguard from reckless vandalism. In view of that, the Society submitted an application to the District Magistrate of Rajshahi as well as the Superintendent of the Archaeological Survey of India, Eastern Circle in support of the consent of the work and safeguard of the mound. The Archaeological Survey of India took action positively. The corollary was that the Paharpur mound was avowed by the Government of Bengal as protected mound under the Ancient Monuments Act of 1904. After receiving permission, the VRS set up the excavation in the year 1923 in collaboration with Calcutta University. D.R. Bhandarkar of Calcutta University supervised the project. Unfortunately the Calcutta University put an end to the excavation after some momentous progress of the work.

However, the task of excavation at Paharpur was taken up again by the Archeological Department in the year 1925. It is interesting to note that even on this Government scheme the Government and Kumar equally shared the financial contribution.<sup>67</sup> For this reason the Society was given a quantity of priceless antiquities (sculptures and terracotta plaques) subsequent to the completion of the excavation in 1934.<sup>68</sup> It is astonishing to note that the

systematic excavation of the Archaeological Department unearthed the remains of a Buddhist structure, i.e. the Sompuri Vihara decorated with dados of terra-cotta plaques bearing various eye-catching figures.<sup>69</sup>

It was with a view to carry out such big projects i.e. excavations by itself, the Society made a decision to send its curator at the eminent site of Mahenjodaro in Sind for handy training in excavation. As a result, Nanigopal Majumdar, the curator of the Society's museum took a course of training in excavation at Mahenjodaro under the direct supervision of Sir John Marshall. As regards the work of Nanigopal at Mahenjodaro Sir John Marshall remarked "Mr. Majumdar did good work at Mahenjodaro and that he looks forward to enlisting his help in future excavations in Varendra."<sup>70</sup> It is unfortunate that the Society yet again fell short to make use of the practical knowledge in excavation of Nanigopal Majumdar. In fact, being besieged by the work of Nanigopal Majumdar in the training phase, the Archaeological Department of India came to a decision to employ him in the post of Assistant director. Thus, Nanigopal gave up his job of curatorship in 1927 to join the Archaeological Department.<sup>71</sup> Even though the Society did not remain motionless exasperating with the development. Rather, it decided to send Nirodbandhu Sanyal as the third representative to get appropriate training in excavation. With the permission of the Archaeological Department Sanyal partook in excavation in the site of Mahasthan under the expert guidance of, no other than, K. N. Dikshit.<sup>72</sup>

To execute the long cherished aspiration to excavate a decisive and colossal site of North Bengal by itself, the VRS made each and every preparation in the 3<sup>rd</sup> decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>73</sup> At this instant they had a curator who had been regularly trained in excavation. Correspondence was also made for the purpose in 1930-31 with the Director of Archaeology in India requesting him to entrust the excavation of a chosen site to the Society.<sup>74</sup> A sympathetic reply was also received by the Society from the Archaeological Survey of India.

But the accomplishment of this type of attempt depends absolutely on funds. And as the Society was stricken by economic depression at that juncture, the projected scheme could not be materialized. After the failure of this elongated attempt of the 3<sup>rd</sup> decade the VRS could not take up ever any scheme in this direction of excavation.

### **Casts:**

Besides exploration and excavation, a crucial step was advocated in 1926, by way of augmenting the Society's assortment and enhancing its efficacy to the scholars of comparative art, was the plaster cast of a few stupendous sculptures discovered and conserved in other parts of India. On the whole the sculptures which were revealed by VRS within the periphery of Varendra were more or less belonging to the related period and same school of art. Anyway, the first cast was of the renowned Mauryan female figurine which was exposed from Didarganj and potted in Patna Museum. The cast was crafted by Shyamapada Mishra, the modeler of the Patna Museum. It was handed over (1926) in exchange of a Vishnu image from the museum of the Society.<sup>75</sup> Six new plaster casts of the Sunga and Saka epochs were added in the following year. The outlay of these six plaster casts – one of being disbursed by Jadunath Sarkar and of four by Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray and that of one being paid out from a donation contributed by Hiralal Ghosh.<sup>76</sup>

Furthermore, the Varendra Research Society purchased an old print of the ruins of the city of Gaur drawn and engraved by Thomas Daniell and published in 1795.<sup>77</sup>

In consequence of these explorations, excavation and other alternative mode of collection, the museum of the Varendra Research Society was come out as an epistolary of antiquities for the history of ancient Bengal. It is to be kept in mind that the museum of the VRS was not filled up merely with sculptures, inscriptions, terra-cotta and coins of the Ancient period of Bengal, a lot of Muslim inscriptions, sculptures were also added to the

museum. In conjunction with them a quantity of coins issued by the Sultans of Bengal and Delhi and as well of the Mughol emperors were appended.

On the other hand, the library, the nucleus of the museum of VRS too came into view as a prosperous library comprising of manuscripts, rare books, periodicals, bulletins, magazines, reports and other well-off literary stuffs.

The statistics of the anthology of the museum and library (till 1937) of the Varendra Research Society are put together in the following tables:

**Collection of the Museum till 1937 <sup>78</sup>**

Serial no	Bits and pieces	April 1910 - November 1937
1.	<b>Sculptures</b>	
	a)Stone→	761
	b)Metal→	41
	c)Wood→	2
	d)Clay →	4
	Sculptures= Total	808
2.	<b>Epigraphs</b>	
	a)Copper plates →	10
	b)Stone, Sanskrit→	12
	c)Brick , Sanskrit→	1
	d)Stone, Arabic →	6
	e)Stone, Persian→	2
	f)Bronze cannon, Persian →	2
	Epigraphs= Total	33
3.	<b>Coins</b>	
	a)Gold →	23
	b)Silver →	215
	c)Copper→	182

	d)Billon →	13
	e)Nickel →	–
	f)Lead →	1
	Coins=	Total
		434
	<b>Terra-cottas</b>	
	a)Ornamental bricks→	196
	b)Human figures →	10
	c)Animal figures →	1
4.	d)Pottery →	31
	e)Inscribed Seals →	20
	f)Moulded Plaques→	14
	g)Glazed tiles →	29
	Terra-cottas=	Total
		301
5.	<b>Farman and Documents</b> →	5
6.	<b>Guns</b> →	4
7.	<b>Garments</b> →	4
<b>Grand Total=</b>		<b>1589</b>

Table- 4

**Library Collection** <sup>79</sup>

Serial no	Bits and pieces	April 1910 - November 1937
	<b>Manuscripts</b>	
1.	a)Sanskrit→	2530
	b)Bengali→	1223
	Manuscripts=	Total
		3753
2.	<b>Books and Periodicals</b>	1832
3.	<b>Other Literary items</b>	291

Table-5

### **Research and Publication till 1937:**

The Varendra Research Society had not ceased its sense of duty by means of accumulating the evidences of history of Bengal or by making the display of the same in its museum. It is already submitted that the Society executed a number of sustaining operations to realize the vision of the reconstruction of history of Bengal. And undeniably, the research and publication was one of the key mission in the line.<sup>80</sup> Accordingly, the skilled scholars of the VRS carried out research scheme from the very beginning with the basis of the stuffs collected by the society, formerly discovered evidences and utilizing its own handy reference library. And thus the Society took in hand the programme of compilation of the upshots of research activities and publishes them in a series of work named '*Gaudavivarana*'. Intended for the motive of discussion of different subject matters in different divisions, the VRS divided the '*Gaudavivarana*' into eight sections:<sup>81</sup>

- i) *Rajamala* (Dynastic History)
- ii) *Shilpamala* (Art)
- iii) *Vivaranamala* (Antiquarian Topography)
- iv) *Lekhamala* (Inscriptions)
- v) *Granthamala* (Old Sanskrit text)
- vi) *Jatitattva* (Ethnology)
- vii) *Shrimurtitattva* (Iconography)
- viii) *Upasak Sampraday* (Religious Sects).

The proficient scholars of the Varendra Research Society were not only contended with the subjects connected to the history of Bengal, relatively, they practiced different other

subjects interrelated to the history of greater India. Moreover, just not the research outcome, several old manuscripts were also published with notes and introduction as the segment of *Gaudavivarana*.

It is nearly beyond belief to note that above and beyond skillful scholars like Akshaya Kumar Maitra, Ramaprasad Chanda, Radhagovinda Basak, Kshitish Chandra Sarkar, Nanigopal Majumdar and so forth, there was a Post Graduate scholarship in the Varendra Research Society which was sanctioned by the Government of Bengal in appreciation of the former's involvement in the field of research activities. Tarapada Bhattacharya was the first post-graduate research scholar appointed to the Society under the direction and control of Akshaya Kumar Maitra.<sup>82</sup> The subject of his research was *Indian Architecture*. And Since Nanigopal Majumdar, the curator of the museum was also a distinguished scholar, the Society tried hard to place one research scholar under him.<sup>83</sup> But the effort turned out to be unproductive. Anyway, after the conclusion of the tenure of Tarapada Bhattacharya in the month of July, 1927, he was replaced by Nirodbandhu Sanyal. It is to be noted that, Nirodbandhu Sanyal was linked up with the Society, even prior to that appointment.<sup>84</sup> At that earlier period he studied the *Architecture in the Barhut Reliefs*. And when he joined as the post-graduate research scholar, he engaged himself in research into the *Early History of Bengal*.<sup>85</sup> Although the moment when Nirodbandhu Sanyal joined in the post of curator of the museum as the replacement of Nanigopal Majumdar<sup>86</sup>, the Government of Bengal put an end to the Post Graduate scholarship. Lot of efforts were made in support of the reinstatement of the scholarship. In due course, the Director of the Public Instruction (DPI) considered the issue very empathetically and restored the same.<sup>87</sup> Accordingly, Sarasi Kumar Saraswati had been appointed as the third post-graduate research scholar to the Society under the supervision of Nirodbandhu Sanyal, the curator in the month of July, 1931. Sarasi Kumar Saraswati worked on *Art and Archaeology of Bengal*.<sup>88</sup> The tenure of his scholarship was

completed by May 31, 1934. Though he applied for a renewal of his scholarship to complete the work, the extension was not approved.

To provide knowledge to the students of Rajshahi in the method of research the society opened a student's section in the year 1930-31. In actual fact, the educationists who visited the Society's compound, including the Sadler Commission recommended the Society to fabricate some close cooperation between the two institutions of Rajshahi viz... the Rajshahi College and the Varendra Research Society.<sup>89</sup> As a result the advanced students of Rajshahi College entertained instructions in various subjects such as epigraphy, numismatics, sculpture, iconography and reading and editing of manuscripts. Curator Nirodbandhu Sanyal and post-graduate research scholar Sarasi Kumar Saraswati used to take classes on Sunday in this section.<sup>90</sup> It is soothing to cite that the Student Section produced sweeping inquisitiveness among the advanced students of Rajshahi College. In other words, it can be uttered that the experimentation proved to be very successful.

### **Research Outcome Till 1937:**

#### **I) *Gaudarajamala* (1912)-**

This foremost original work of the Varendra Research Society was put in writing by Ramaprasad Chanda, the then secretary and published as the first volume of the first part of *Gaudavivarana*. The intact chronological political account (Dynastic History) of Bengal till the institution of the Muslim regime was integrated in it.

*Gaudarajamala* was essentially the history of Ancient Bengal composed on the basis of stone inscriptions and copperplates. An additional set of sources like the study of inscriptions discovered in other provinces, historical essence of the old manuscripts and the researches of the earlier investigators in the line were put into effect in writing this invaluable

work .<sup>91</sup> However, Ramaprasad Chanda did not show any sort of curiosity on popular fairy stories in lettering it.

It is remarkable that the first volume of the first part of *Gaudavivarana* i.e. *Gaudarajamala* was written in Bengali in the hope that it would reach like a calendar in the hands of every Bengalees in every corner of Bengal to furnish knowledge concerning the ancient history of their own.<sup>92</sup>

## II) *Gaudalekhamala* (1912)-

In this work Akshaya Kumar Maitra amassed fifteen exclusive Inscriptions (Copper and stone) of the Pala period and put out with annotations and prologue as the opening volume of the fourth part (Lekhamala) of *Gaudavivarana*. The incorporated inscriptions were:

- i) Khalimpur Copper Plate of Dharmapaladeva
- ii) Keshaba Prashasti
- iii) Mughyer Copper Plate of Devapaladeva
- iv) Veerdeb Prashasti
- v) Bhagalpur Copper Plate of Narayanapaladeva
- vi) Badal Inscription
- vii) Bageeswari Inscription of Gopaladeva II
- viii) Shatrusen Inscription of Gopaladeva II
- ix) Bangarh Copper Plate of Mahipaladeva I
- x) Baladitya/Nalanda Inscription

xi) Sarnath Inscription of Mahipaladeva I

Xii) Krsishne- Dwarika temple Inscription of Nayapaladeva

xiii) Amgachi Copper Plate of Vighrapaladeva III

xiv) Kamouli Copper Plate of Vaidyadeva

xv) Manahali Copper Plate of Madanapaladeva.

Akshaya Kumar Maitra had pointed out two important reasons regarding the importance of the anthology of *Gaudalekhamala* :<sup>93</sup>

Firstly, “Among the ancient stone and metal inscriptions written in Sanskrit that got discovered till date (1912), although not a huge number of them have intimate associations with the history of Bengal yet it was a tiresome work to trace out about a particular inscription from the existing bulk of books and essays. Although Kilharn had to help in overcoming this difficulty yet there was no possibility to know about all these ancient inscriptions together in Bengali.”

Secondly, “The history of Bengal that gets revealed through the ancient inscriptions, the history of Varendra occupies the major parts. It is because; all these antiquities are related to the rulers of Varendra region. Without compiling all these inscriptions together the endeavour to have a collected account of Gauda would not have been possible and it would also have been impossible to deliver, through proper interpretation, the authentic meaning of descriptions available in the inscriptions. Only after comprehending a large number of ancient inscriptions of one particular period, one can recognize the real meaning of the descriptions available in the antiquities. One inscription complements to the deciphering and interpretation of another one. The inscriptions when get explained singularly, there is

possibility that it might appear to be a trivial one, however when eventually other inscriptions get discovered, then the historians often understand the real importance of the previous one.”

It is to be remembered that later than the publication of *Gaudalekhamala*, more than hundred inscriptions of the Pala period got discovered. However, the well composed *Gaudalekhamala* is still indispensable to the scholars to work on Pala period.<sup>94</sup>

### III) *Tara-tantram* (1914)-

The VRS published Girish Chandra Vedanta Tirtha's *Taratantram* as the first work of Gauda Granthamala with the introduction of Akshaya Kumar Maitra.

It may be noted that the *Taratantram* is one of the *Tantric Mahavidya* (majestic instruction) which relates to the veneration of Tara.<sup>95</sup> The huge quantity of works associated with worship of Tara, demonstrate the enormous popularity which one acquired and maintained by this cult. To give an idea about useful light on the system of Tantric worship, the VRS tried to find out and publish old original manuscripts on Tantras. The Society not only turned out to be successful to collect Girish Chandra Vedanta Tirtha's *Taratantram* but more than a few rare original works on the same.

### iv) *Kashika-Vivarana- Panjika*(*The Nyasa*)-

Jitendra Buddhi's *Kashika-Vivarana-Panjika* (A commentary on Vamana-Jayaditya's *Kaska*), was published by VRS in eight chapters of three volumes.

All the eight chapters were edited with occasional notes by Srish Chandra Chakravarti, the superintendent of Sanskrit manuscripts of the Society. The first two chapters or the first volume was published in 1914.<sup>96</sup> By 1924 four more chapters were published. The 7<sup>th</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> chapters were brought out in 1925. It is to be remembered that the last two chapters were published with the help of Savita memorial fund.<sup>97</sup>

The work of edition of *Kashika-Vivarana-Panjika* by Srish Chandra Chakravarti was highly admired by the scholars. In the words of Professor H. Jacobi of Germany and Professor Sten Konow,<sup>98</sup>

“Done in a scholarly manner”

“The edition is very good and scholar like.”

#### V) *The Indo-Aryan Races* (1916)-

It was the first volume of the 6<sup>th</sup> part (Jatitatta) of the *Gaudavivarana*. It is the product of ground-breaking research of Ramaprasad Chanda on ethnography.<sup>99</sup>

Actually, after going through the study of a number of works for a long time and completing experimentations according to anthropological methods, Ramaprasad Chanda had written a quantity of essays on the origin and features of the Bengalees. *The Indo-Aryan Races* was put out as the compilation of those essays. Therefore it is, no doubt, an outstanding work. Professor A. Berriedal Keith stated that

“This, the fifth of the publication of the Varendra Research Society, is by far the most important work issued by the Society and forms a valuable addition to the literature dealing with the origin of the Indo-Aryan peoples.”<sup>100</sup>

#### VI) *The Bhashavritti* (1918)-

The *Bhasha- vritti* of Purushottamdeva is, in actual fact, a commentary on Panini’s grammatical aphorism with the exception of those which totally is relevant to the Vedas.<sup>101</sup> This grammatical work was edited by Srish Chandra Chakravarti and dedicated to Sabita Ray, the deceased son of Sarat Kumar Ray.

It may be pointed out that there was a vast stride of Buddhist culture over North Bengal all through the pre- Muhameddan rule. It touched its literary motion and it facilitated to a large extent in dispersal the classical education there. Grammatical works by Buddhists such as Vamana - Jayaditya, Jitendrabuddhi, Maitreya Rakshita and Purushottamdeva, were enormously studied by and the Bhasha- Vritti fashioned an elementary textbook of Sanskrit grammar to its literary populace.

However, the primary attempt to publish this important grammatical work was made by Peetambara Tarkalankar and Harish Chandra Goshwami with the benefaction of Babu Prasanna Kumar Bhattacharya of Rajshahi in 1906; But after no more than the first six forms had been in print, Babu Prasanna Kumar expired and the effort fell through; One more endeavor to publish the same, with the aid of those manuscripts, was next made by the Asiatic society of Bengal; Although ahead of the completion of the printing of the first part of its first chapter the Asiatic society also kept back the work in abeyance; Eventually, it was published by the Varendra Research Society.<sup>102</sup>

#### VII) *Dhatupradipah-*

The Society published one more Sanskrit manuscript, *Dhatupradipah* of Maitreya Rakshita in the year 1919. It is a work on Paniniya dhatupatha or Sanskrit verbal roots. It is also edited by Srish Chandra Chakravarti.

VIII) *A Catalogue of the Archaeological Relics in the Museum of Varendra Research Society* was prepared by Radhagovinda Basak and Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharyya and published in 1919.

IX) *A Descriptive List of Copper Plates and Inscriptions in the Museum of the Varendra Research Society* was also compiled by Nirodbandhu Sanyal and brought out in the year 1928. The expenditure of its printing was very kindly contributed by Jadunath Sarkar.<sup>103</sup>

**X) *Alamkara- Kaustabha-***

Kavi Karnapura's *Alamkara- Kaustabha* is a work on Sanskrit poetics. The VRS decided to publish it in two (I & II) parts. Accordingly those were published in 1926 and 1934 under the compilation of Sivaprasad Bhattacharyya.

The work was extremely appreciated by the then reputed scholars like Ganganath Jha, A. B. Keith and H. Jacobi.<sup>104</sup>

**XI) *Prayaschitta- Prakaranam-***

It is a text on expiatory rites written by Bhatta Bhavadeva.<sup>105</sup> Under the compilation of Girish Chandra Vedantatirtha the text was published in 1927.

**XII) *Inscriptions of Bengal, Volume III* (1929)-**

This worth mentioning collection was edited with translations and notes by Nanigopal Majumdar. In fact, during the publication of *Gaudalekhamala*, the Society voiced its inclination to issue similar volumes containing the inscriptions of the Senas and other dynasties. Since the Society was busy in other activities, it could not take up that scheme for a long time. But in the month of December, 1924 when Nanigopal Majumdar joined in the post of curator of the Society, the council of management asked him to take up the work starting with the Sena inscriptions. It was resolute that the proposed work should be written down in English as a replacement for Bengali, so that it might get in touch with a wider sphere of readers.<sup>106</sup> The manuscript was sent to the Press early in 1926. As, the Society thought about the publication of two companion volumes, one dealing with the Gupta

inscriptions (the task was assigned to Radhagovinda Basak <sup>107</sup>) and the other with the Pala inscriptions (the job was assigned to Nirodbandhu Sanyal <sup>108</sup>) and as the current volume would come after them in sequential order, it was being proclaimed as 'Volume III' of the sequence. <sup>109</sup> It is unfortunate that the Society became unsuccessful to put out the first two volumes (I and II).

In the *Inscriptions of Bengal, Volume III*, altogether seventeen inscriptions have been edited, moreover six more dealt with in the Appendices. They are as follows:

- i) Rampal Copper plate of Srichandra
- ii) Kedarpur Copper plate of Srichandra
- iii) Belava copper plate of Bhojavarman
- iv) Bhubaneswar Inscription of Bhatta- Bhavadeva
- v) Deopara Inscription of Vijayasena
- vi) Barrackpur Copper Plate of Vijayasena
- vii) Naihati Copper plate of Vallalasena
- viii) Anulia Copper Plate of Lakshmanasena
- ix) Govindpur Copper Plate of Lakshmanasena
- x) Tarpandighi Copper Plate of Lakshmanasena
- xi) Madhainagar Copper Plate of Lakshmanasena
- xii) Dacca Image Inscription of Lakshmanasena
- xiii) Edilpur Copper Plate of Kesavasena

xiv) Madanapada Copper Plate of Visvarupasena

xv) Calcutta Shahitya- Parishad Copper Plate of Visvarupasena

xvi) Ramganj Copper Plate of Isvaraghosha

xvii) Chittagong Copper Plate of Damodara.

Among this seventeen inscriptions, No. xvi and xvii are isolated inscriptions which do not appertain to any of these dynasties.<sup>110</sup>

The Appendices of the work includes following six inscriptions:

i) Dhullia Copper Plate of Srichandra

ii) Edilpur Copper Plate of Srichandra

iii) A Copper Plate of Harivarman

iv) Paikore Image Inscription of Vijayasena

v) Sundarban Copper Plate of Lakshmanasena

vi) Adavadi Copper Plate of Dasarathadeva.

It seems to be essential to note down that every single outstanding research outcomes of the Society were not published. It was not possible on account of the non-existence of organ/ journal of the Society. One such non-published outstanding research outcome was Akshaya Kumar Maitra's *Fall of the Pala Empire*. Actually, this was a course of lecture delivered by A. K. Maitra at Calcutta University on the invitation of the University(1915). Unfortunately, neither the Varendra Research Society nor the Calcutta University published it. Although R. C. Majumdar printed a summary of the same in Bengali in four issues of the monthly periodical *Manasi O Marmavani*, Phalgun and Chaitra, B. S. 1322 and Vaisakh and

Jaistha, B. S. 1323.<sup>111</sup> After the death of Kshitish Chandra Sarkar (Who migrated from Rajshahi to India), his wife Usha Rani Sarkar handed over it to Nirmal Chandra Chowdhury, the responsible citizen of Jalpaiguri. Nirmal Chandra Chowdhury put forward it to the disposal of University of North Bengal. Considering its academic value of the work the University of North Bengal published it in the year 1987 with the introduction of D. C. Sircar.<sup>112</sup>

### **Monographs:**

In the year 1915-16 a momentous step was assumed by the Council of Management of the Varendra Research Society by passing a resolution to publish certain original articles of archaeological and historical interest as Monographs of the Society.<sup>113</sup> The decision was taken up with the expectation that such monographs would be a gesture to the members of the Society who were given by that time but were material return for the contribution they used to pay. Unfortunately, the scheme was not put into operation for no less than 10 years. It was executed after the appointment of Nanigopal Majumdar as curator in the museum of the Society. As a result, the No.1 of the series (Monographs), an innovative article of Nanigopal Majumdar on *Nalanda Copper Plate of Devapaladeva* which pitches welcome radiance on the issue of cultural relation between the Islands of Indian archipelago (Far-east) and Northern India<sup>114</sup>, was published in April, 1926.

Nalanda Copper Plate, however, was not first construed by Nanigopal Majumdar. Following the uncovering of this epigraph in the excavation of Nalanda, an apprehensive abstract was published in the Annual Progress Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, Central Circle, 1920-21, pp. 37-38 and in the Director General's Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India, 1920-21, p. 27.<sup>115</sup> Afterward, Professor Kielhorn and

Hirananda Sastri decoded the same in *Indian Antiquary*, Volume XXI, pp. 257-58 and *Epigraphia Indica*, Volume XVII, PP. 324-27 correspondingly.<sup>116</sup>

Nevertheless, the significance of the article reclines in the verity that Nanigopal made alteration on some points of the earlier translation by confuting the explanations made by the previous scholars. Besides, Nanigopal was the first scholar who highlighted a few fresh but crucial points of the epigraph. In this regard it can be said that the earlier analysts have transported to light bunch of details bearing Indian influence to the people and culture of the Far-east, predominantly in the field of art and religion. But no one attempted to take a look at the answer of the query that from which particular parts of India contributed to expand of Buddhism or Buddhist art there. Nanigopal tried to get the answer of the query and finally he became successful in uncovering it. To him Magadh, very precisely Nalanda of Northern India was the source from which the Buddhist religion and art was derived by the Islands of the Indian Archipelago.<sup>117</sup>

### ***Monograph-2***

*Mahasthan and its Environs* by Prabhas Chandra Sen, the second Monograph of the Society was published in 1929. In fact this monograph has grown out of a short article on *the Antiquity of Mahasthan* which was read by the author Prabhas Chandra Sen on 22<sup>nd</sup> April, 1926, at a literary conference of the Society. Though the monograph was written down with local data and surveillance, the Society also brought in loan the Mahasthan inscription from the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

Prabhas Chandra Sen made an effort to recognize Mahasthan (on the west bank of Karotoya, 8 miles north of Bogra town) with Pundranagara, the ancient capital of Bengal. However, Sir Alexander Cunningham was the pioneer in this regard. Because it was he, who first pointed out Mahasthan the same as Pundranagara. But it was Prabhas Chandra Sen who

presented reliable and passionate explication. Seeing as the inscription equips no detection of the exact spot of pundranagara, the capital of ancient Bengal, Sen tried to shield his estimation with the support of the literary evidences. And the atlas he had put in order signified ‘eloquently than any word can do, of the archaeological importance of the locality and the needs for its exploration (excavation).’<sup>118</sup> The excavation in Mahasthan in succeeding occasion established the view of Cunningham and Prabhas Chandra Sen.

### ***Monographs- 3***

This number was published containing with the following articles:

- i) *The Antiquities of Khari* by Kalidas Dutt
- ii) *A new type of Vishnu from North Bengal* by Nanigopal Majumdar
- iii) *The Mother and Child images of Bengal* by Nirodbandhu Sanyal.

Among the three, the first article, *The Antiquities of Khari* was sent by Kalidas Dutt to the literary conference of the Society.<sup>119</sup> It is to be noted down that ahead of the advent of the Muslims, Bengal was divided for functions of administration into *Bhuktis* or divisions and these divisions were subdivided into *Mandalas*. Likewise, Khari was one of such *Mandalas* of Bengal. The Khari Mandala of those days included probably the whole of the Sundarban part of 24 Paraganas, east of the old course of Ganges, Ganger Bada.<sup>120</sup> And therefore, Kalidas Dutt aimed to illustrate the richness of this tract by providing an organized description of the exposed archeological finds.

*A new type of Vishnu from North Bengal* was first put out in the *Modern Review* in February, 1929. With the consent of *Modern Review*, the Society published it as the 2<sup>nd</sup> article of the Monographs – 3. The Vishnu image on which the article rests was brought by Sarat Kumar Ray from Kalandarpur of Bogra district in 1926.<sup>121</sup> The sculpture corresponds

to a divinity who puts on a lengthy wreath getting in touch with the Knees with four hands put up with respectively *Sankha* (Conch), *Chakra* (discus), *Gada* (Mace), and *Padma* (Lotus). What appends noticeably to the attention of the sculpture are two miniature figure i.e., a two armed male figure seated in meditation on top of Vishnu's head and a six armed dancing male figure beneath Vishnu's lotus seat. This form of Vishnu's representation is uncommon in Bengal art. However it is not odd in other Indian provinces. Anyhow, Nanigopal Majumdar identified those miniature male figures as Brahma and Siva respectively.<sup>122</sup>

The third article of the monograph i.e. *Mother and Child images of Bengal* was earlier contributed by Nirodbandhu Sanyal to the Oriental Conference held at Lahore in 1928.<sup>123</sup>

It is mentionable that Mother and Child image is a common group in medieval sculptures of Bengal. Hence, this group of sculptures came under the disposal of museum of VRS just by the year 1929. "The mothers in these sculptures appears as reclining on a bed with a male infant lying by her side keeping a hand on her breast; her person is covered with by a cloth, with a scarf thrown over her left shoulder and she is also decked in elaborate jewelry; In the right hand she holds an utpala(water lily); at her feet sits a female figure, either end is a female attendant one with a fly-whisk, the other generally with a fan; at the top of the back-slab appears a number of divine figures, which are, generally Siva-Linga, Kartikeya, Ganesa and Navagraha, besides the Gandharvas on either side; other figures are also sometimes found in addition."<sup>124</sup>

But the veracity is that scholars like A. K. Coomarswamy, M. M. Ganguly, Alexander Cunningham, and V. Smith and so on expressed divergent views concerning the subject in which these sculptures belong. While some categorized these sculptures with the nativity of Buddha or nativity of Mahavira, others identified them with either nativity of Ganesa or nativity of Krishna. However, Nirodbandhu Sanyal, all the way through his research,

unwaveringly established that these groups of sculptures symbolize the nativity of Krishna or *Janmashtami* since it bears a resemblance so strongly the depiction of it in the *Puranas*.

#### ***Monographs-4***

The monographs no-4 was brought out in 1930 with four articles and the whole cost of it was munificently contributed by Rai Bahadur Surendra Nath Bhaduri of Gwalior.<sup>125</sup>

The first item of these monographs was Kalidas Dutt's *Antiquities of North- West Sundarban*. It may be cited that Kalidas Dutt in his earlier article (Monographs – 3) had given some account of the antiquities of Khari and the neighbouring villages in the eastern or Poundravardhana section of Sundarban. And in the present article he copes with those in the northern half of the western or Vardhana section, the mouths of the Ganges and Sagar Islands.<sup>126</sup>

In the second article, *A New Specimen of Bengal Sculpture*, Kshitish Chandra Sarkar talked about the identity of the Kalandarpur image which is in relief resting on a stone slab measuring 32” x 15”. The uppermost part of the stone slab holds the icon of a seated male figure affianced in Dhyana (contemplation). To all appearances, however the icon in question could present a few distinctiveness forms of Vishnu, but it is unneeded to state that such a materialization with a dhyani Buddha. These considerations elevated a genuine uncertainty in relation to a specific and accurate identification of the figure.<sup>127</sup> Still, Kshitish Chandra Sarkar by means of his sharp and detailed analysis succeeded to identify it as a *Bodhisatva* (a type of *Manjushree* or other *Bodhisatva*), but he confessed that it could seem to one at first sight as a form of a Brahminical image.<sup>128</sup>

The third article is the account of *a tour in Dinajpur and Rangpur* carried out by Nirodbandhu Sanyal. He was accompanied by K.N. Dikshit, superintendent, Archaeological

Survey, Eastern Circle.<sup>129</sup> Sanyal and Dikshit visited the celebrated ancient site of Bangarh and its neighbouring ruins( like, Dinajpur Palace, Tapan etc.) in the south – west corner of the district of Dinajpur. To Sanyal Bangarh, “ was an important place from very early times and it had more than one name – Banapura, Umavana, Kotivarsha, Sonitapura and Devikota ; the site was a flourishing city from the time of the imperial Guptas to that of the early Muslim rulers; five copper plate grants have been discovered at Damodarpur, not very far from Bangarah, which shows that under the Guptas from A. D. 443 to 544, the city of Kotivarsha was the headquarters of a district of the same name, under the Bhukti of Pundravardhana; it was known to the Muhammedan historian, as the most important military post on the northern frontier of the territory of Lakhanawati , founded by Muhammad – i – Bakhtiyar and formed the base of further Muhammedan operations in this directions.”<sup>130</sup>

After concluding their excursion in Dinajpur, Sanyal and Dikshit walked off to Rangpur to sight the Rangpur Shahitya Parishad Collection. Here they too witnessed the Tapa Collection i. e. the individual sculptural collection of Nalinimohan Ray Chaudhury, the Zamindar of Tapa.

In *The Vaisnava Cult*, the fourth article of the monographs, Syamacharan Chakravarty had examined different stages of Vaisnavism. Chakravarty instituted his analysis with the Vishnu of Rig Veda and Narayana of Epics and then scrutinized the Ekantika Dharma, the Pancharatra system step by step along with the worship of Gopala – Krishna as the very last phase.<sup>131</sup>

### ***Monographs-5***

The monographs no- 5 was published in 1934 containing with seven articles. They are as follows-

i) *The Antiquities of Sundarbans* by Kalidas Dutt-

It is to be noted that in his aforementioned paper, *Antiquities of Khari* ( Monographs no – 3), Kalidas Dutt illustrated several antiquarian vestiges revealed in the south- eastern parts of Diamond Harbour and Alipur subdivisions of the 24 Paraganas district. But in *The Antiquities of Sundarbans* , above and beyond furnishing a comprehensive explanation including the architectural style of two temples – Jatar Deul and Delbari which were already mentioned in the *Antiquities of Khari* , he explained an additional temple i. e. the temple of Bonsham Nagore as well as a small number of new antiquities.<sup>132</sup>

ii) *The Mainamati Copper- Plate of Ranavankamalla Harikaladeva: 1141* by Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharyya-

This 24 lines proto Bengali Copper plate was exposed in the year 1803 at Mainamati, five miles in the direction of the west of the town Comilla and first deciphered and published by the famous Orientalist H. T. Colebrooke in the Asiatic Researches with an unconcerned facsimile and several erroneous reading.<sup>133</sup> Therefore, Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharyya re- deciphered the inscription. Although, in-between, an acceptable interpretation was provided by N. K. Bhattasali of Dacca museum, Bhattacharyya made further perfection in Bhattasali's reading. While Colebrooke identified Pattikera, the emblazoned terms of the copper plate merely as an important city and thereby diminished its significance, both Bgattasali and Bhattacharyya recognized as a powerful ancient realm. Not only that Bhattacharyya interpreted and explained in the approved manner that there was a social and political contact between Pattikera and Arakan or Burma and a highly regarded family of the Arakanese derivation settled and continued to exist in the 13<sup>th</sup> century A. D. in the district of Tippera. In his own words, "...All these references prove by implication that the kingdom of Pattikerea as powerful one of considerable dimensions, far exceeding the narrow limits of a small paragona

that now preserves its name; and the migration of Burmese families at the court of this king is nothing incompatible with social and political intercourse with Burma covering a period of more than a century.”<sup>134</sup>

iii) *A Short Catalogue of Some Aboriginal Rites and Customs from Chutia Nagpur* by Kshitish Chandra Sarkar-

This piece is as of the field of ethnological study. Here Kshitish Chandra Sarkar presented the customs and rites of various aboriginal tribes of Chutianagpur. Among the indigenous ethnic groups of Chutianagpur nearly each month of the year is connected with certain customs and rituals. Therefore, Sarkar instigated with the month of Chaitra parallel to March- April in which the natives of Chutianagpur on the very last day of the month rejoice the ‘Bhokta ceremony’.<sup>135</sup> Though there is no inclusive resemblance, Sarkar compared this ceremony with that of the ‘Charak Puja’ of Bengal in the perspective of cruelty. Then he evaluated the ‘Rohan Parab’ of the month of Jaistha, worship of Serpent deity, ‘Manasa’ on the last day of Shraban, ‘Karam Puja’ of the month of Bhadra, ‘Chchata Parab’, on the last day of the same month, ‘Jitaparab’ of the month of Asvin, worship of Goddess ‘Kali’ of the month of Kartick and ‘Aska Cake Parab’ of the final day of Aग्रahayan. In addition, he talked about the ‘Karakhonta<sup>136</sup> Parab’ of the third day of *Dewali*. In this game “.. a number of buffaloes are tethered to their respective posts and are excited by a determined throw of a stuffed hide moulded into the shape of an animal on introducing a lot of straw within its hold; the bull that puts the boar to rout and strikes it dead is made much of and its owner is made the headman of the whole community...”<sup>137</sup> Fascinatingly, Sarkar compared Karakhota with that of the Spanish ‘Matador’.<sup>138</sup>

iv) *A very rare work on Sanskrit Prosody, not found elsewhere but imperfectly preserved in the library of the Varendra Research Society* by Dhires Chandra Acharyya Sastri-

In this item Dhires Chandra Acharyya Sastri coped with the 'Chhandamalanta', a manual Sanskrit metrics of Purusottam Bhatta. Dhires Chandra had corroborated the date of the text. He had assigned Purusottam Bhatta with the later part of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, a little earlier than Jayadeva. <sup>139</sup> Likewise, he highlighted some values of the work. He put in writing, " Although the work of Gangadas ( disciple of Purusottam) is very popular all over India, it is an incomplete manual Sanskrit prosody; but even the fragment at our disposal shows that Purusottam did not fight shy of this important but abstruse portion of metrics; moreover a section of this book on 'Geetabritta' or songs alluded to before; this point has not been touched in any of the existing treaties on Sanskrit prosody; his treatment of 'Upajati' metre is fuller and clear than of any other known work." <sup>140</sup>

v) *Somapura- an Ancient Buddhist Monastery in Varendri* by Dr. U. N. Ghoshal-

Before the preparation of this paper, the excavation of Paharpur i. e. Somapura Vihara was just about concluded. However, Upendra Nath Goshal through his paper had thrown some light upon this once celebrated monastery with the help of a small amount of literary references. In fact, Ghoshal tried to make out essence of the information of three Tibetan works (two of Lama Taranath and one of Khaupo Yese) with reference to Sompuri Vihara.

Lama Taranath in his *History of Buddhism in India* (translated version) and *Mine of Precious Stones* (translated version) and Khaupo Yese in his *Pag Sam Jan Zong* brought up the Somapura Vihara as Sompuri Vihara. To Ghoshal this was an occurrence of their coordination of flawed translation of Sanskrit names in Tibetan. Secondly, both Tibetan writers accredited the institution of the Sompura Vihara to the sovereign Devapala whom they illustrated as the son of Dharmapala. But Ghoshal proved the information as absolutely incorrect with the assistance of the clay seals bearing- Sri= Sompure Sri= Dharmapaladeva=

Mahavihariya- arya- bhiksusamghasya etc. revealed at some point in the excavation of Paharpur.

But the information of those Tibetan works greeted by Ghoshal was a biographical explanation of an Acharya called *Ratnakarasanti* (briefly called Santi). This Acharya supposed to have been born in a Brahmana family, intended as monk at Odantapuri and learned Mahayana- sutras all along with Tantras at Vikramshila; after concluding his studies he worked for several years as head of the Sompura Vihara.<sup>141</sup> But neither the Tibetan scholars nor Ghoshal succeeded to authenticate the epoch in which the Acharya belongs.

vi) *Aghora- Rudra* by Nirodbandhu Sanyal-

Nirodbandhu Sanyal initiated this article with Siva and Saiva philosophy. After that he made available a description of the derivation of Aghora (a- ghora, non terrific), one of the five characteristics of Siva.<sup>142</sup> He pointed out the taxonomy of Aghora with the eleven Rudras. And after discussing the rituals and representations of Aghora, Sanyal examined the Aghora image under the collection of Varendra Research Society and of the Dacca museum.<sup>143</sup> He finished the article by supplying some information on a sect of ascetics or Aghori which is related with the cult of Aghora.

vii) *The Vrndavanakavya and its Author* by Sivaprasad Bhattacharyya-

The *Vrndavanakavya* is a *Yamaka- kavya*. The work provides information that its author Mananka was the son of monarch Ugrasena. With the aid of inscriptional verifications Sivaprasad Bhattacharyya recognized Ugrasena and Mananka with the Rastrakuta sovereigns Dhruva and Govinda III respectively. But since there is no affirmation from the inscriptions about the poetic command of Govinda III, Sivaprasad doubted that it( work) could be originated from the pen of some court poet of Govinda III.<sup>144</sup> To Sivaprasad there was no plot

in the work and the narrative of the same in the common style reminding one of similar things in the writings of the classic masters including Kalidas and Valmiki.<sup>145</sup> Anyway, subsequent to traditional salutation, the work proceeds to recount the wandering of Krishna with his brother Balarama over Vrndavana and their leisurely sipping of the waters of the Yamuna in a holiday mood in the companionship of cowherd associates; there is also the account of the rainy season in a finished form.

### ***Monographs- 6***

Reminiscent of the monographs- 5, the monographs- 6 too contained seven articles. It was published in 1935 and the articles are as follows:

i) *Biral Inscription of Sayfuddin Firoz Shah: A. H. 880* by S. Sharafuddin-

The Biral inscription was revealed by Upendra Prasad Lahiri in 1923 and presented to the Society. So, Sharaffudin put out the article from the original inscription.

After the customary salutation, this Arabic inscription describes about the foundation of a mosque by Sayfuddin Firoz Shah in A. H. 880. It is to be noted that since there was a ruler in Gaur named Shamsuddin Yusuf Shah in the referred time, Sharafuddin assumed that in that very date Malik Adil who subsequently known as Sayfuddin Firoz Shah became a rebel and curved out a small principality for himself in a part of the Sultanate of Gaur.<sup>146</sup>

ii) *Rajshahi Inscription of Jamaluddin Fath Shah 887 A. H.* by S. Sharafuddin-

The Rajshahi inscription was transported from Gour to Rajshahi by E. H. Rudock, once District Magistrate of Rajshahi and after his transfer from Rajshahi, a gardener conveyed the same to the mosque of Hetam Khan Mahalla of Rajshahi town. Subsequently, it was granted and preserved to the museum of VRS at the attempt of the present author.

The inscription traces the reconstruction of a stone edifice in the time of well known Makhdum Mawlana Ata Wahiduddin in the reign of Sultan Abul Muzaffar Fath Shah, son of Sultan Mahmud Shah I in the year 887 A. H. It is pleasing to note that the erection of a mosque at the time (896 A. H.) of renowned Makhdum Qutb Awaliya Makhdum Mawlama Ata. Consequently, Sharafuddin identified the saint Makhdum of both the inscriptions as a same individual. He also expressed that ‘ it is highly probable that the saint was generally known as Makhdum Mawlana Ata but his proper name was Wahiduddin.’<sup>147</sup>

iii) *A Note on the Baigram Copper plate: Year 128( Gupta)* by Sarasi Kumar Saraswati-

The unearthing of Baigram copper plate was publicized on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1932 by Gauda Research Society of Howrah.<sup>148</sup> And when Saraswati published this article, Dr. Radhagovinda Basak was editing the same plate for the *Epigraphia Indica*.<sup>149</sup>

This Sanskrit inscription was of the era of Kumaragupta I and records the purchase of revenue Free State land. But Saraswati extracted a number of important points from it. Firstly, Saraswati found out close resembles between the land transaction procedure of Baigram copper plate and other copper plates of ancient Bengal.

Secondly, this inscription provides the name of a new *Vishaya*- that of Panchanagari, the district headquarter (Vishayadhikarana) being located at a place known by the same name. Saraswati became certain that ‘this Panchanagari was like Kotivarsha and Khada Para, one of the many districts into which old Pundravardhanabhukti was divided in the 5<sup>th</sup> century A.D.’<sup>150</sup>

Thirdly, he had revealed the fact that the Vishayapati of Panchanagari was directly appointed by the emperor, although it was an exception. He remarked that “...Kumaramatya Kulavridhi, the Vishayapati of Panchanagari, seems to have been directly appointed by the

emperor himself, his epithet, Bhattarakapadanuddhyata, clearly implying such an inference.”

151

Fourthly, Saraswati laid emphasis that the customary value, at which unassessed lands were sold, varied in different districts of early Bengal. In Panchanagari the rate was two *Dinaras* per *Kulyarapa* but in Kotivarsha it was three *Dinaras* per *Kulyarapa*.<sup>152</sup>

The fifth point, highlighted by Saraswati was that the Baigram copper plate(448 AD) provides reference to both the gold and silver coins of Gupta period. According to him “... the silver currency, introduced by Chandragupta II and considerably extended by his successors, Kumaragupta I and Skandagupta, seems to be for the first time mentioned in this inscription.”<sup>153</sup> And he concluded with that a Dinara (Golden coin) was equal to sixteen Rupakas (silver coin).

Finally, Saraswati focused on the method of defining the boundaries of land. To him “.. it is a unique method perhaps mentioned for the first time, of defining the boundaries by making the four quarters by chaff cinder.” He took for granted that the practice was to dig up some soil by the side of the line of segregation all around the land in question and to seal it up with chaff cinder.<sup>154</sup>

iv) *Siva and Sakti* by Atal Bihari Ghosh-

This is an incredible article of Atal Bihari Ghosh. He has put in plain words realistically here, the notion of what the combination of Siva and *Sakti* implies through the back up of several relevant instances. He illustrated Siva the same as insight trait and *Sakti* as might trait. But the authenticity is that without insight *Sakti* is sightless and without might Siva is lame.<sup>155</sup> For that reason, he uttered that these two cannot be alienated. He concluded

by articulating that according to the Brahminical religion earth was originated because of the union of these two.

v) *A note on the reign of Alauddin Firoz Shah III of Gaud* by b S. Sharafuddin-

In this paper S. Sharafuddin accurately established the reign of Alauddin Firoz Shah, the Sultan of Gaud. It is noticeable that scholars like Stewart and others assigned the reign of Alauddin Firoz Shah as three months on the basis of the information from the *Riyaz- us- Salatin*. But Sharafuddin proved the earlier observation as wide of the mark with the help of three silver coins and an inscription of the reign of Sultan Alauddin Firoz Shah and asserted that the duration was not less than three years.<sup>156</sup>

vi) *Rajshahi inscription of Ghiyathuddin Bahadur Shah: 966 A. H.* by Sharafuddin-

In this item Sharafuddin dealt with two inscriptions. The first one was of the reign of Ghiyathuddin Bahadur Shah collected from a mosque of kumarpur in Rajshahi, and the next one from a mosque of Kusumba. After translating and interpreting date, language and other points of the inscriptions, Sharafuddin came to the conclusion that the same Sulayman, the converted Zamindar Chilman Majumdar of Mauza Kusumba, was the founder of both the mosques on which they appear to have been originally set up.<sup>157</sup>

vii) *Mahalaksmi* by Sarasi Kumar Saraswati-

In this article Sarasi Kumar Saraswati coped with an exceptional image of Mahalaksmi of tenth century A. D. which was revealed from the village Simla in the district of Rajshahi. The icon is twenty handed holding different weapons. It wears a jatamukuta (matted tiara) over which is represented a miniature linga. To prove it as the Mahaliksmi image, Saraswati profoundly examined and clarified the weapons, ornaments, celestial vehicle and so on of the same. Besides, the description of Puranas as regards the depiction of

Mahalaksmi was also scrutinized. Accordingly, Saraswati succeeded in verifying that the Mahalksmi can have any number of arms, though eighteen is the conventional number.<sup>158</sup> He also commented that the mini carving of the Linga was occasionally attached to the Goddess Mahalaksmi only.

**Other recorded research works/ papers till 1937:**

In the year 1925-26, Nanigopal Majumdar contributed five research papers. They were as follows-<sup>159</sup>

- i) *Notes on Some Buddhist Sculptures.*
- ii) *The new Sunga inscription from Ayodhya.*
- iii) *Jamalgarh inscription of the year 359.*
- iv) *Peswar Museum Inscription of the year 168 and*
- v) *Adi Buddha in Eastern India.*

In that year Nirodbandhu Sanyal was active in the study of an vital epoch of Northern Indian history, viz. that prior to the Muhamadan take-over. The foremost outgrowth of the study, a piece of writing on '*the Predecessors of the Gahadavalas*' was accepted for the publication in the journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

Year 1926-27-<sup>160</sup>

Nanigopal Majumdar put in a few research papers-

- i) *A New Brahmi Inscription from Mathura.*
- ii) *Rohitagiri of the Rampal Copper- Plate.*
- iii) *A gold- plated Bronze from Mahasthan.*

Year 1927- 28-<sup>161</sup>

Ahead of his departure from VRS, Nanigopal Majumdar wrote an important paper-

i) *Adi Buddha in Eastern school of Art.*

Nirodbandhu Sanyal wrote down some papers-

i) *The Buddhist inscription of the time of Jayachandradeva.*

ii) *A new type of Revanta from Dinajpur district.*

iii) *Early History of Haihayas.*

Year 1929- 30-<sup>162</sup>

Nirodbandhu Sanyal put in writing a paper on *Surya in Bengal Art*, which he read at the Bengali Literary Conference in Calcutta in February 1930.

Year 1930- 31-<sup>163</sup>

Following papers were contributed by the scholars of the Society-

- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| a) Nirodbandhu Sanyal      | i) <i>Dhurail Inscription of Mahamuda Shah</i>     |
| b) Kshitish Chandra Sarkar | i) <i>A new specimen of Surya from Varendra</i>    |
|                            | ii) <i>The Capital of the Pala Empire</i>          |
| Sarasi Kumar Saraswati     | i) <i>The Brahminical Iconography in Gupta Art</i> |
|                            | ii) <i>The Pala Empire</i>                         |
| Radhagovida Basak          | i) <i>The Murder of Rajyavardhana</i>              |

Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharyya i) *Mandana, Suresvara and Bhavabhuti: the problem of their identity*

ii) *The lost kingdom of Harikela*

U. N. Ghosal

i) *New light on Gupta administration*

ii) *Taranath's history of Buddhism in India*

iii) *On some points relating to the Maurya Administrative System*

Jitendra Nath Banerjea

i) *The Webbed Figures of Buddha*

Haran Chandra Chakladar

i) *Contribution of Bihar to Vedic Culture*

Sivaprasad Bhattacharyya

i) *The Dhvanyaloka and the Text of Dhvani Karikas*

Shyamacharan Chakravari

i) *Origin and Development of Bengal School of Nyaya*

*Philosophy*

Kalipada Bhattacharyya

i) *Some Problems of Samkhya philosophy and Samkhya*

*literature*

Dhires Chandra Acharyya

i) *On the Existence of Rice in the Regvedic Age and the Original*

*home of the Aryans*

Bijay Nath Sarkar

i) *Finger Posts of Bengal history*

Year 1931- 32-<sup>164</sup>

Kshitish Chandra Sarkar

i) *Kurkihar I*

- Radhagovinda Bsak i) *Sasanka, King of Bengal*
- U. N. Ghosal i) *On a Few Technical Terms in the Hindu Revenue System*  
 ii) *Some Notes on Ownership of Soil in Ancient India*
- R. C. Majumdar i) *King Nayanadeva of Mithila*
- Jitendra Nath Banerjee i) *Ushnisha- Siraskata ( a Mahapurusha Lakshmana) in the  
 Early Buddha Images of India*
- Kalipada Bhattacharyya i) *Gleanings from the Gupta Inscriptions*
- Kshitish Chandra Chatterjee i) *Authorship of Anunayasa*  
 ii) *Vyosha*  
 iii) *Kasakritsna*
- Dhiresch Chandra Acharyya iv) *On the 64 Arts of Ancient India*  
 v) *The Age of Savarasvamin*  
 vi) *The Date of Pingali, the Father of Sanskrit Prosody*
- Bijay Nath Sarkar i) *Benaras- Past and Present*
- Aditya Kumar Bhattacharyya i) *Studies in Comparative Ideals*
- Year 1932- 33 <sup>165</sup> -
- Nirodbandhu Sanyal i) *On the so called Images of Chandi in the Rajshahi Museum*  
 ii) *Ren Plate of Givindachandra*

iii) *Reminiscences of the Operations of the Archaeological Survey of India at Mahasthan in 1928- 29*

iv) *Notes on Seated Image of Surya*

v) *The Ghoraghat Temple Inscription of Raja Prannath*

vi) *A Dancing Ganesha from Dinajpur*

vii) *The Monuments of Bengal a) the Stupa, b) Pillars of history c) Begunia Group of Temples*

Shyamacharan Chakravarty i) *The Date of Subandhu's Vasavadatta*

Kalipada Bhattacharyya i) *Belava Copper Plate of Bhojavarman- a Review*

Aditya Kumar Bhattacharyya i) *Religious Worship in and through Literature: from the earliest times to the Present day*

ii) *The Religion and Philosophy of the Bhagavatgita: Some Distinctive Features*

iii) *Introduction to the Study of Ujjvalanilamani*

Kshitish Chandra Chatterjee i) *Panini as a Poet*

Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharyya i) *Jayaditya and Vamana*

ii) *Sri Sri Chaitanya Dever Triobhavakal*

Year 1933- 34- <sup>166</sup>

Kalidas Dutt i) *The Soura Images From the District of 24 Paraganas*

Radhagivinda Basak ii) *The History of North- eastern India*

Year 1934- 35- <sup>167</sup>

Nirodbandhu Sanyal i) *Jaina Iconography: A Document from Varendra*

ii) *Visvarupa*

Ramaprasad Chanda i) *Art in Orissa*

ii) *Temples of Bengal*

S. Sharafuddin i) *The Charter of Al- Madinah*

Year 1935- 36 <sup>168</sup>

Sarasi Kumar Saraswati i) *A Gold Coin of Budhagupta*

ii) *A Clay Head from Kalinjar*

1936- 37 <sup>169</sup>

Sarasi Kumar Saraswati i) *Ghoraghat Inscription of Raja Prannatha*

ii) *Early Sculpture of Bengal*

iii) *Krishna Panel at Paharpur*

Kshitish Chandra Sarkar i) *Kurkihar, Gaya and Bodhgaya*

### **Literary Meetings and conferences:**

Once a year, Varendra Research Society inured to arrange literary gathering and sometimes symposium where research papers were read out. But the records of those were accessible only from 1925.

In the year 1925- 26 five literary meetings occurred and following papers were read-<sup>170</sup>

31 June 1925- *The Story of Buddha in Stone* by Akshaya Kumar Maitra

15<sup>th</sup> August,, *The Date and Place of inception of the Yogavasistha Ramayana* by Sivaprasad Bhattacharyya

14<sup>th</sup> September,, *The India of Kalidasa* by B. N. Sarkar

17<sup>th</sup> February ,, *The Works of Asvaghosha* by Nanigopal Majumdar

14<sup>th</sup> February ,, *Birth and Rise of Buddhism* by Shyamacharan Chakravarty

In the next year (1926- 27) there were one Literary Conference and five gatherings <sup>171</sup>-

22<sup>nd</sup> & 23rd April 1926- Literary Conference & Papers read-

i) *Indian Influence on Cambodia and Sumatra- Java* by Jadunath Sarkar

ii) *The Bengal Commentators on the Amarakosa with Special Reference to Raya Bhattacharyyamukuta's Pada- chintamani* by Sivaprasad Bhattacharyya

iii) *Jitendra- Buddhi's Nyasa and its place in Sanskrit Grammatical Literature* by Sivaprasad Bhattacharyya

iv) *The Discoveries at Mahenjodaro* by Binodbehari Ray

v) *The Antiquity of Mahasthan* by Prabhas Chandra Sen

vi) *The Excavations at Mahenjodaro* by Nanigopal Majumdar

vii) *The Sankhya Philosophy of Kapila and its Influence on the Tantric form of Worship* by Shyamacharan Chakravarty

viii) *The Brahminical Conception of the Temple* Tarapada Bhattacharyya

ix) *A New Buddhist Image*( museum no- 662) by Brojendra Mohan Maitra

x) *A New Four- armed Image from Kalandarpur*(museum no- 661) by Kshitish Chandra Sarkar

Literary Meetings-

First August 1926- *An Introduction to Virasaivism( or the Ligayat cult)* by Sudhendu Kumar Das

20<sup>th</sup> „ „ - i) *Theology of Virasivism* by Sudhendu Kumar Das

ii) *The Mathura Lion Capital* by Nanigopal Majumdar

16<sup>th</sup> January 1927- i) *An Introduction to Pancharatra Vaisnavism* by Sodhendu Kumar Das

21 February „ i) *Rambles from Mathura to Mysore* by Bijay Nath Sarkar

15<sup>th</sup> March „ i) *The Excavations at Paharpur* by Kshitish Chandra Sarkar

ii) *the Architecture in the Barahut Reliefs ( with lantern slides)* by

Nirodbandhu Sanyal

1928-29- Only one scheduled literary meeting was held during the year <sup>172</sup>-

11<sup>th</sup> October 1828- K. N. Dikshit delivered a lecture on the Paharpur excavations, with lantern slides.

An additional speech (non scheduled meeting) was illustrated with lantern slides Kalidas Nag on Indian culture overseas, in which he marked out the spreading out of Indian culture by land through Afghanistan and Central Asia to China and by Sea through the Archipelago and Indo- china to China and Japan.

1929- 30- <sup>173</sup>

During the year five literary gatherings were held and papers read out as follows-

25<sup>th</sup> August 1929- i) *Adavaitavada and Buddhist philosophy* by Sudhendu Kumar Das

30<sup>th</sup> September *The Teaching of the Bhagavat* by Dhires Chandra Acharya

First December „

8<sup>th</sup> December „

4<sup>th</sup> January 1930- *Bacteriology* (with lantern slides) by Kumudnath Chaudhury

Literary conference

4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> January 1930- Following papers were presented-

i) *Muslim India* by Aswini Kumar Mukherjee

ii) *Antiquities of North- west Sundarban* by Kalidas Dutt

iii) *The Recent Additions to our Coin Collection* by N. Sanyal

iv) *The Origin and Development of Vaisnavism* by Shyamacharan Chakravarti

v) *The Influence of Buddhism on Christianity* by kalipada Bhattacharyya

vi) *The Origin of Varendra* by Binod Behari Ray

1930-31- Eight literary jamboree were arranged and following items were read out <sup>174</sup> -

9<sup>th</sup> April 1930- i) *A New Specimen of Surya from Varendra and the Antiquity of the Cult* by Kshitish Chandra Sarkar

17<sup>th</sup> August „ i) *Diversified Assam* by Bijay Nath Sarkar

12<sup>th</sup> September ,, i) *Brahminical Iconography in Gupta Art* by S. K. Saraswati

30<sup>th</sup> November ,, i) *Mughal Painting*( illustrated with lantern slides) by O. C. Ganguly

7<sup>th</sup> December ,, i) *Aghora- Rudra* by N. Sanyal

14<sup>th</sup> December ,, i) *Nature , Art and Literature* by Aditya kumar Bhattacharyya

25<sup>th</sup> January 1931 i) *Some Characteristic Features of Buddha icons* by Jitendra Nath Banerjee

26<sup>th</sup> ,, ,, i) *Aryan Expansion in Eastern India and Beyond* by Hemchandra Chakladar

Literary conference-

14<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> March-

i) *History of Bengal During the Reign of Akbar* by S. K. Ray

ii) *The Proposed Identification of Mother and Child Images as Sadyajata* by n. Sanyal

iii) *The Pala Empire: First Phase* by S. K. Saraswati

iv) *Amaravati School of Sculpture* by Devaprasad Ghosh

v) *The Sinarpur Mound* by Sriram Maitra

vi) *The Poet, the Philosopher and the Prophet* by Jitendra Nath Chakravarty

vii) *Muslim Inscriptions of Bengal* by S. Sharafuddin

viii) *Uluka* by Bsanta Kumar Chatterjee

ix) *The Racial Classification of the Indian People* ( illustrated with lantern slides) by Haranchandra Chakladar

1931- 32-

There was one literary meeting and one important literary Conference was held. The items of the Conference <sup>175</sup> -

i) *Kurkihar I* by Kshitish Chandra Sarkar

ii) *Kurkihar II* by S. K. Saraswati

iii) *On Some Sculptures Illustrating the Life of Krishna* by S. K. Saraswati

iv) *Gleanings from the Gupta Inscriptions* by Kalipada Bhattacharyya

v) *On the 64 Arts of Ancient India* by Dinesh Chandra Acharyya Sastri

vi) *The Age of Savarasvamin* by „ „ „

vii) *The Date of Pingala, the Father of Sanskrit Prosody* by „

viii) *Benaras- Past and Present* by Bijay Nath sarkar

ix) *Studies in Comperative Ideals* by Aditya kumar Bhattacharyya

x) *Gauda or Varendra from About 326 to 725 A. D.* by Prabhas Chandra Sen.

### **Annual Report published till 1937**

The VRS set off the publication of its Annual Report from the year 1925. Unsurprisingly the first report was of the year 1925- 26. This essential attempt was the pet project of, no other than Nanigopal Majumdar. Just following joining as curator in the museum of the Varendra Research Society, Nanigopal Majumdar got the approval of the

council of management of the same in this direction. Till 1937, the VRS published following annual reports:

*I) Annual Report for the year 1925- 26*

*II) Annual Report for the year 1926- 27*

*III) Annual Report for the year 1927- 28*

*IV) Annual Report for the year 1928- 29*

*V) Annual Report for the year 1929- 30*

*VI) Annual Report for the year 1930- 31*

*VII) Annual Report for the year 1931- 32*

*VIII) Annual Report for the year 1932- 33*

*IX) Annual Report for the year 1933-34*

*X) Annual Report for the year 1934- 35*

*XI) Annual Report for the year 1935- 36*

*XII) Annual Report for the year 1936-37 & 1937- 38.*

### **Varendra Research Society and Varendra Research Museum After 1937**

Though the museum of the Varendra Research Society was alienated and came under a different agency of admin in 1937, the earlier relation stuck between these two, yet, was not infected very much. In reality it was not possible to them to steer clear of each other. Because, the museum (VRM <sup>176</sup>) and the Society could only anticipate to grow up closest. Besides, the composition of the new administrative body proves that most of the members

were taken from VRS. In fact the erudite members and associates and scholars of the Society were predominantly the driving force who would make use of the artifacts and the documents to be found in the museum and the library in favour of circulation of knowledge along with culture to both the academic circle and the lay man.<sup>177</sup> On the contrary, the VRM could be altered into an antique superstore. Because, the affiliates of the new museum committee, excluding the nominees of the VRS, had no scrupulous knowledge on historical objects. More to the point, the depot of antiquities is not simply for the escalation of beautification of a museum; rather, it is the major source for the history of Early Bengal. Hence, it can be detected in the annual reports that subsequent to the independence when Sureswari Devi of Puthia made a contribution to the VRS of Rs. 500, the latter, along with the intact sum appended Rs. 150 and offered the VRM intended for accompaniments of antiquities and erection of a compound enclosure.<sup>178</sup> Not only that, the VRS produced joint annual reports as of 1947 to 1949.<sup>179</sup>

However, it is to be pointed out that even later than the transfer of its handy library under the Charitable Endowments Act, the VRS put together a standing apart collection with the assistance of the conditional<sup>180</sup> gift of a few contributors. Among these contributors, the name of Binod Behari Ray is most important. Besides, after the death of Santosh Kumar Chatterjee, the once secretary of the Society, his son handed down with condition quite a lot of rare and priceless books as commemoration to his father.

Yet, it is factual that since the vesting of the belongings under charitable Endowments act (1890) in 1937, the funds and activities of the VRS went through an immense slow down. It was expected at some point in the time of changeover that as soon as the Society would be mitigated of its liability of running the museum, it would be proficient to give out better concentration in the direction of other area of its actions.<sup>181</sup> But the reality was completely opposites.

Nevertheless, with the inception of the year 1947 the enthusiastic members like M. H. Ali, Rajaniprasad Chanda, Kshitish Chandra Sarkar and so forth conferred an impulsion to impart a new spirit in the activities of the VRS.<sup>182</sup> In support of the accomplishment of this re- organization scheme, the council of management of the Society formed few committees and accordingly the council was requested<sup>183</sup>

- i) to amend the existing rules;
- ii) to carry on activities as set out by reorganization scheme;
- iii) to augment resources of the Society;
- iv) to improve the building and garden of the museum;
- v) to start journal and publications as far as possible;
- vi) to include adequate social activities to stimulate popular interest;

But the passion and sincerity with which the re-organization design set in motion could not be kept it up owing to the transfer of M. H. Ali and Rajaniprasad Chanda from Rajshahi.

On the other hand, the aspiration by means of which the supervision of the VRM shifted to a Charitable Endowment was not realized. If truth be told it was not possible with the then income of the museum to uphold that sort of effectiveness which was required of such establishments. Its inadequate resources facilitated the management to handle no more than its routine dealings. Consequently, the museum committee pleaded the government to bring back the cut of the government grants for the maintenance of the museum. But the Government response was disappointing. The latter clarified that they were incapable to take

up issue of the reinstatement of cut on the grants remunerated to the museum until it was come to a decision to reinstate the cut inflicted on alike grants.

It is not that owing to the monetary upheaval the activities of the VRM were totally stopped up. Even, within this state of affairs the museum committee made a decision to adjoin an Anthropological section.<sup>184</sup> The basis of that till 1939 the collection of the museum were chiefly archaeological relics and very little deliberation was granted to the collection of anthropological relics.

A further addition in the museum in the past independence phase was the installation of the Gallery of Islamic Culture. The section slowly but surely turned out to be the destination of relics like, inscriptions, coins, Farman and documents, paintings etc. of Muslim period. It was opened on 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1951 by Nurul Amin, the then chief minister of East Bengal.<sup>185</sup>

In this phase, however, a sufficient amount of improvement in accommodation occurred in the library of the museum. As a result, in 1961 the library was shifted to a new building put up on the northern side of the premises at a sum of Rs. 44, 000 of which major portion( 30,000+ 11000= 41000) was munificently endorsed by the Department of Archaeology and the Government of East Pakistan.<sup>186</sup> Moreover, the Director of Public Instruction, East Pakistan approved a non- recurring grants of Rs. 5000 for the enrichment of the library by means of which substantial additions have been made to the library in its books and furniture.<sup>187</sup>

But the addition of the new library building did not come out as an energizer either to the VRS or the VRM to reinstate their activities. Consequently their activities, particularly of VRS were abridged step by step and absolutely stopped up the same in 1963. Yet, it is astonishing that eve of its own disappearance the Varendra Research Society was able to

shield its hobbyhorse i. e. museum (VRM) from extermination. While the VRM was saved from total destruction, the VRS, it failed to defend from total extinction.

**Collection of VRM from 1937 TO 1964** <sup>188</sup>

Serial no	Bits and pieces	November, 1937 to October, 1964
1.	<b>Sculptures</b>	
	a)Stone	26
	b)Metal	05
	Total =	31
2.	<b>Epigraphs</b>	
	a)Copper plate	02
	b)Stone, Sanskrit	02
	c)Stone, Arabic	15
	d) Stone, Persian	03
	Total =	22
3.	<b>Coins</b>	
	a)Gold	04
	b)Silver	236
	c)Copper	186
	c)Billon	41
	d) Nickel	11
e) Lead	01	
	Total =	479
4.	<b>Terracoras</b>	
	a)Ornamental bricks	22
	b)Human figures	16
	c) Animal ,,	18
	d)Pottery	188
	e) Inscribed seals	09
	f) Moulded plaques	129
g) Glaged tiles	03	

	Total	=	382
5.	<b>Painitings</b>		09
6.	<b>Weapons</b>		22
7.	<b>Farman &amp; Documents</b>		13
8.	<b>Guns</b>		02
<b>Grand Total=</b>			<b>960</b>

Table-VI

Table VII

**Library Collection**<sup>189</sup>

<b>Serial no</b>	<b>Bits and pieces</b>	<b>November,1937to October, 1964</b>	
1.	Books & Periodicals-	4653	
2.	Manuscripts		
	a)Sanskrit-		--
	b) Bengali-		391
3.	Others -	155	
<b>GrandTotal=</b>		<b>5199</b>	

### **Research Outcome:**

The Aforementioned graphic representation signifies that even if the VRS & VRM could not act upon their intact activities, there were atleast a small number of actions which facilitated to accrue some artefacts and volumes in the museum and library respectively. In the sphere of research and publications too they had a say in some degree. The name of Nirodbandhu Sanyal can be brought up as an instance in this regard. In this stage, Sanyal contributed several piece of writing in "*Palli- bandhava*" , the local periodical.<sup>190</sup> He conducted museum tours for groups of students of local college and schools and also post-graduate students of the Calcutta university, who came up to visit the museum from time to

time.<sup>191</sup> Special guide-lectures were also arranged by him for distinguished visitors. And when the University of Rajshahi was set up the teachers, particularly the teachers in history and Bengali literature of the same attached with the Yanja of investigation of this noble institution. Because at that initial stage the university had no infrastructure of its own to accomplish research or other similar works.<sup>192</sup>

#### I) *Ramacaritam-*

The foremost noteworthy publication of the VRM in post transition phase was the *Ramacaritam* of Sandhyakaranandin. The manuscript of this work was discovered by M. M. Haraprasad Sastri from Nepal in 1897. Sastri brought into being the transcript in the *Meoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Volume III, No. 1*. Ever since its publication the Ramcarita has been looked upon as the most essential literary deed relating to the history of the Pala reign. At the same time, the publication of M. M. Sastri produced a subject matter of critical discussion by prominent intellectuals.

To reconcile the dispute and thrash out the deficiencies of Sastri's volume, Debaprasad Sarbadhikary, the then Vice- Chancellor of Calcutta University invited Akshaya Kumar Maitra. Akshaya Kumar responded to the invitation and presented a well researched paper on the text *Ramacaritam*. In his discourse Maitra efficiently offered effective and pleasing suggestions as regards the interpretation of *Ramacaritam*.<sup>193</sup> Hence, a fresh and critical version of the text with a running commentary and an English translation was an immense necessitate. To facilitate this long- felt need, a new edition of *Ramacaritam* was brought out by VRS in 1939 with the support of R. C. Majumadar, Radhagovinda Basak and Nanigopal Banerjee of Dacca University. This trio set right a number of disparities from that of the version of M. M. Sastri.

#### II) *Paribhasavrittii, Janapakasamuccaya, Karakachakra-*

These three treatises of Purusottamdeva on Panini's Grammar were published in Savita Memorial Series. They were edited with an introduction and appendices by Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharyya.

III) *Varendra Research Museum Bangla Puthir Talika* by Manidra Mohan Chaudhury-

The conservation of the manuscripts in the museum has never been suitable. They did not appear to have been classified and set subject wise or alphabetically. They have been recorded one after the other according to the date of receipt. The scholars had to face complicatedness to detect their required Bengali manuscript from the preserved scripts which figured no less than 1500. Therefore, the VRM decided to publish a list of Bengali manuscripts and accordingly it was brought out in 1956.

IV) *Inscriptions of Bengal, Volume IV* (1960)-

This highly praised collection was edited with translations and notes by Shamsud-Din- Ahmad. The inscriptions integrated in this collection are those which were issued by or during the reign of the viceroys and governors employed time to time, by the Sultans of Delhi and also for the period of that of rulers who having proclaimed complete governmental power, ruled over Bengal as independent sovereigns. These inscriptions were gathered at different times by numerous academicians and admirers from a range of sources and locations all over Bengal, Bihar and Orissa which at that time shaped into one governmental unit and governed by a central authority in Bengal.

The inscriptions include in general-<sup>194</sup>

a) Names of reigning kings of governors or their deputies during whose period of rule these were issued with dates.

- b) Reference to charitable buildings and monuments such as mosques, forts, gateways, palaces, bridges and so on.
- c) Dates of construction of the above monuments with names of their authors and donors.
- d) A short genealogy, occasionally of rulers and eminent historical figures and
- e) Sundry other cognate informations.

It is to be stated that this collection is a companion to *Inscriptions of Bengal, Volume III*, published by this Society in 1929. But the publication of the collection delayed on account of various causes, the most vital being the lack of a scholar skilled to undertake its compilation. In this perspective it should be mentioned that the charge of compilation of this valuable work was first given to Ghulam Yazdani,<sup>195</sup> and secondly to S. Sharafuddin<sup>196</sup> and ultimately the work was accomplished at the hands of the present editor.

#### V) *Tararahasyavrittika* (1961)-

The manuscript is unique, it being the oldest of its kind existing in the Indo- pak sub-continent. It was therefore put out in 1961 with the edition and notes of Manindra Mohan Chowdhury Kavyatirtha.

The *Tararahasyavrittika* otherwise called *Vasanatattvabodhini* is actually a compilation which mainly deals with the mysteries of the Tara cult.<sup>197</sup>

#### **Monographs:**

In this phase only two monographs were brought out by the Varendra Research Society, one in the year 1949 and the very last one in 1950.

### ***Monographs No- 7***

The monograph encompassed purely a piece of writing. The title of the item is *The Ancient Monuments of Varendra*. The article chiefly centres round the subject of a lantern speech delivered in the Indian Museum, Calcutta, on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 1927 by Akshaya Kumar Maitra.<sup>198</sup> It was edited with an introduction and appendices by Kshitish Chandra Sarkar and foreworded by R. C. Majumdar.

The illustrated lecture note of A. K. Maitra was initiated with the narrative of the land of Varendra. Afterwards, have as a feature one after other points. The paper includes simultaneously, the unorganized exploration of Buchanan Hamilton, Westmacott and Cunningham in the archaeologically rich in and around Varendra region and the development of a repository of the handy monuments of Varendra with the efforts of the VRS. Maitra analysed the monuments first into i) architectural and ii) iconographic classes and then into i) stone, ii) metal and iii) clay categories.

Maitra put in plain words the history of pillars of Varendra with special reference to Garuda pillar, Kamboja pillar and the Kaivarta pillar. He gave details of the mound of Mandoil, Kumarpur, Kosipur, Mahisantosh, Mahsthan and Paharpur. Here he put emphasis on Paharpur. Then he talked about the Buddhistic images as well as the Santinatha<sup>199</sup>, the Jaina image exposed in this region. Finally he analysed about the village deity/ Snake worship/ Manasha.

Hence it is clear that the monograph no- 7 is an invaluable publication. In the words of R. C. Majumdar “It shows his (Maitra’s) unrivalled knowledge of the monuments lying scattered over vast area and genuine appreciation of their historical importance.”<sup>200</sup>

### ***Monographs No- 8***

The VRS brought into being its final *Monographs- 8* in October, 1950. The monographs consist of seven scholarly papers.

#### **I) *Cultural Notices of India in Early Medieval Arabic Literature* by G. M. Hilali-**

In this item Hilali investigated the cultural relation between India and Arabia even previous to the birth of Islam. Examining the early medieval Arabic literatures, Hilali found two routes of cultural contact- (a) through the means of trade connecting Arabs and South India and (b) Contact all the way through Persia.<sup>201</sup> He has given an idea about how Indian texts, Sanskrit texts in particular, were translated into Pahlawi or Arabic; how certain Indian works had become current in Arabic prior to the birth of Islam and how Indian games like Chess (Sanskrit name Chaturanga- in Persian it became Shatranj) were brought in Persia. He also observed that many Indian scholars and doctors were taken to Bagdad to translate the Sanskrit works. Finally, Hilali highlighted the writings of the Muslim scholars with special reference to Ibn- Nadim who wrote on India.

#### **II) *Mandhuk Inscribed Image of Ganesa of the Reign of Gopal II* by N. B. Sanyal-**

This inscribed image was discovered by Archaeological Survey of India at Mandhuk in Chandina police station of Comilla district. Nirodbandhu Sanyal intensely studied it and presented the paper. The image under notice is a representation of four- armed Ganesa. N. B. Sanyal focused not only on the image but also on the inscription under the seat of the image. Sanyal hauled out few significant information from this inscribed image:<sup>202</sup>

- i) Gopala II, the Pala king had his hold over Vanga and Samatat and
- ii) This image with inscription is an of those mementos which are reminiscent of the dominant note of the times, which was one of the tolerance, Catholicity and mutual good

feeling and respect among the adherents of different faiths that lived here side by side. Because the inscription affords evidence of the conscreation of an image which was a Brahminical one, by one who was apperentl Buddhist.

III) ***A Critical Review on the 'Black- Hole Trgedy' as Presented in the Dacca University Publication- History of Bengal, Volume- II*** by Kshitish Chandra Sarkar-

In this paper Kshitish Chandra Sarkar, the secretary of VRS criticized a version on Black Hole Tragedy which was provided in the *Hisotry of Bengal, Volume II*( P. 476). In fact, on that page of *Hisotry of Bengal, Volume II*, the black hole tragedy has been accepted as an undisputed episode of history without having attempted at discussing the amount of evidence in opposition to it or without keeping in mind the explanation of Akshaya Kumar Maitra who proved the improbability of the story in his work *Sirajuddowla* more than fifty years ago.<sup>203</sup>

IV) ***Religious Toleration in Ancient India*** by Sivaprasanna Lahiri-

Through the study of inscriptions, Sivaprasanna Lahiri, the assistant secretary of VRS had tried to show that the general outlook in Ancient India was one of tolerance. Lahiri set off his discussion with the Asokan inscriptions and in fact, edicts of Asoka present a high pitch of religious toleration in Ancient India. After Asokan inscription, Lahiri focused on Allahabad pillar inscription in which he found the inclination of Samudragupta towards Vaisnava Gods although the Gupta emperor performed Asvamedha Yajna. To Lahiri Chandragupta II too, the next greatest ruler of the Gupta dynasty had excellent religious toleration. He defined king Kharvela as a unique figure in the sphere of religious toleration. Because the Hatigumpha inscription proves the fact that Kharvela repired all temples irrespective of caste and creed. But the most interesting case of religious toleration found by Lahiri was in the Banskhera Grant of Harsavardhana. The Grant supplies information that in the same family while Harsa was a Saivaite, his brother Rajyavardhan embraced Buddhism

and their father Prabhakarvardhana was a devotee of Sun- God. Finally, Lahiri highlighted the tolerance of the Palas whose religion was Buddhism but paid due homage to the Hindu Pantheon.

V) ***Hariyupiya in the Rigveda*** by Ahmad Hasan Dani-

Ahmad Hasan Dani was the superintendent of archaeology, Eastern Circle. He tried to identify Harappa, the famous archaeological site with that of Hariyupiya of Rigveda (Hymn 27 of book VI ). However, Dani was not the first scholar to point out the name of Hariyupiya as a possible counterpart of Harappa.<sup>204</sup> But since the earlier scholars differed in their opinions as regards the interpretation of the passage(Hymn 27 of book VI), he tried to furnish a re- interpretation from the point of an archaeologist by taking due consideration the archaeological resources.

Vi) ***Caste System in Ancient India*** by Sivaprasad Lahiri-

With this article, Lahiri traced that the root of the caste system in the Rigvedic period. To him the Aryans came in the soil of India as conquerors and the by that means the vanquished aboriginals were called by them as Dasas or Dasyu, later on most conveniently placed in the category of Sudras. However, he reminded that the system took its definite and rigorous shape in the Smriti period. In the next stage he highlighted a quantity of interesting piece of information from Manu concerning this part and parcel (caste system) of Brahminical religion.

VII) ***A Muhgal Mosque at Egarasindur*** by Ahmad Hasan Dani-

As the last item of the *Monographs -8*, Ahmad Hasan Dani dealt with a mosque of the reign of emperor Shajahan. The mosque was built by a person named Sadi, the son of Shaikh Sheroo at Egarasindur in Mymensingh district in the year 1652. Dani noticed that the

mosque represents a style which is a happy intermingle of Bengali elements and Mughal features.<sup>205</sup> He clarified that the square structure with octagonal turrets is typical of Bengal and traceable from well-known Ekhlakhi Mausoleum at Hazarat Pandua, but like other Mughal buildings, this mosque is also presented all over, excepting at the east entrances.

**Other recorded research works/ papers:**<sup>206</sup>

A) Maulvi Shamsuddin Ahmad-

i) *Mahenjodaro, a Monograph*, Government of Pakistan Publication Karachi, 1952.

ii) *A Guide to Thatta, a Monograph*, Government of Pakistan Publication Karachi, 1952.

B) Muhammad Abdul Bari-

i) *The Genesis of Pakistan Movement, The Arafat*, Dacca, 1962.

ii) *Early Muslim Historiography*, Proceedings of the Seventh session of Pakistan History conference, Dacca, 1957.

iii) *Political Aims of Saiyid Ahmad Barelwi, The Islamic Culture*, Hyderabad, Deccan, Volume- XXXI, 1956.

iv) *The Faradi Movement*, Proceedings of the Fifth Session of the Pakistan history Conference, Khairpur, 1955.

v) *Islam and Socialism, The Islamic Literature*, Lahore, 1951.

C) Dr. A. F. S. Ahmad-

i) *The Early Urdu and Persian Newspapers of Bengal 1822- 1835*, Rajshahi University Studies, Volume II, 1962.

ii) *The Origin of Separate Representation in India*, *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, Karachi, October, 1964.

Dr. Sahanara Hussain-

i) *Nalanda*, Rajshahi University Studies, 1962.

ii) *Paharpur and its Material Contents*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Volume VI, Dacca, December, 1961.

iii) *Prathamik Madhya Yuge Bengali Nari*, *Purba Megha*, Rajshahi, 1962.

iv) *Sandhyakaranandir Varendri*, *Purba Megha*, Rajshahi, 1963.

v) *The Terracotta Plaques from Paharpur*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Volume- I, No- 2, Dacca, 1963.

Dr. A. B. M. Hussain-

i) *An Introduction to the History of Muslim Culture*, East Pakistan Book Syndicate, Dacca, 1958.

ii) *The Royal Occupation of Fathpur Sikri*, Rajshahi University Studies, 1962.

iii) *Is Islam Compatible with Modern Western Way of Life?* *Young Pakistan*, 1961.

iv) *Why was Fathpur Sikri Built?* *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Volume- VI, Dacca, 1961.

v) *A Study of Firoza Minar at Gaur*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Volume- VII, No- 2, Dacca, 1963.

Dr. Abu Imam-

i) *A Re-examination of Andhra Chronology*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Volume- II, Dacca, 1957.

ii) *Role of Museums in National Reconstruction*, *Museums Journal of Pakistan*, Volume- X, No- 1, 1957.

iii) *An Analysis of the Material Content of the Sculpture of Sanchi*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Volume- III, Dacca, 1958.

iv) *Origin of Name Dacca: A Note*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Volume- III, Dacca, 1958.

v) *Sir Alexander Cunningham (1814- 1893): The First Phase of Indian Archaeology*, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, London, 1963.

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i) *Dinajpur Silalipi*, *Bangla Academy Patrika*, Volume-IV, No- 1, Dacca, 1367 B. S.

ii) *An Ivory Miniature of the Later Mughal Period*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan*, Volume- VI, Dacca, 1961.

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iv) *Mughal Chitrakala( Mughal Painting) in Bengali*, *Purba Magha*, Volume- 1, No- 3, Rajshahi, 1960.

Literary Meetings & Conferences:

Throughout this phase very little literary gatherings were organized wherein following papers were presented:

i) *Date of the Extinction of the House of Raja Kans*, by N. B. Sanyal.

ii) *Date of the Reign of the Hussaini king- Nasir- din Nasrat Shah* by N. B. Sanyal.

iii) *Notices of India in Early Medieval Arabic Literature* by G. M. Hilali.

iv) *Uchcha Siksha Samskdrer Prayojana* by B. C. Bhattacharyya.

v) *The Holwell Monument Recalled* by Kshitish Chandra Sarkar.

#### **Annual Report in post 1937 phase:**

After the transfer of administration of the museum, the new museum committee put out only two Annual Reports-

I) *Annula Report for the Year 1938- 39*

II) *Annual Report for the Year 1939- 40.*

And the VRS brought out a three years report (from 1947- 1949)-

I) *Report of the Varendra Research Society, 1949.*

## Notes & References

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3. *Annual Report for the Year 1925-26, 1926-27, 1927-28, 1928-29, 1929-30, 1935-36, 1949.*
4. Kajee Muhammad Michher, *Rajshahir Itihash*, Gatidhara, Dacca, 1965,(2007), p.110
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6. Ramprasad Chanda, *Gadurajamala* , Varendra Research Society, 1912, republished by Nababharat Publishers , Calcutta, 1975, see Upokramnika(Foreword) , p. 0.36
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18. *Report of the Varendra Research Society, 1949.*
19. *Ibid.*
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22. *Annual Report for the year 1925-26.*
23. *Annual Report for the year 1926-27*
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26. Srish Chandra Chakravarti (ed.), *Bhasha- Vritti of Purushottamadeva*, VRS, 1918, see Preface-ii.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Annual Report for the year 1925-26.*
29. *Annual Report for the year 1939-40, Varendra Research Museum.*
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31. *Annual Report for the Year 1927-28.*
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36. *Ibid.*
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58. *Ibid.*
59. *Ibid.* p.8
60. Akshaya Kumar Maitra, ‘Varendra Khanan Bibaran’ in *Uttar Banger Purattva : Sankhpta Itihas*, Akshaya Kumar Maitreya Museum, University of North Bengal, 2005, p.21.
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136. Sporting with the buffaloes are styled as Karakhonta.
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138. *Ibid.* p. 22.
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141. *Ibid.* p. 27.
142. *Ibid.* p. 30.
143. *Ibid.* pp. 32-33.
144. *Ibid.* p. 52.
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146. *Monographs*- 6, pp. 1- 2.
147. *Ibid.* p.3.
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## 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).<sup>1</sup> Whereas the number of members of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society bumped up to 199 within one year of its foundation (1915).<sup>2</sup> 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.<sup>15</sup>

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.”<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup> 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.<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> Accordingly the Rajshahi Medical Institute, the selfish private body took possession of the half premises and knocked down some out houses and priceless trees.<sup>10</sup> 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.<sup>11</sup> 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 literay conference in February, explicitly from 14<sup>th</sup> February to 15<sup>th</sup> 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*.<sup>12</sup>

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-president<sup>13</sup> 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.<sup>14</sup> 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 Ramaprsad Chanda proposed to confer the manazement 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.<sup>15</sup> 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'.<sup>16</sup> This approach of Jadunath Sarkar not only disturbed the 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 director<sup>17</sup> of the Archaeological Department of Pakistan regulated to propel the archaeological relics of VRM to the central Museum in Karachi in 1962.<sup>18</sup> 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.

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4. *Annual Report for the year 1928- 29.*
5. Manirul Haque, 'The Varendra Research Society and Museum: A Review 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 Arcaheological 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 Arcaheological 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.

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## Chapter- V

### **Varendra Research Society and its Relation with the Contemporary Research Institutions of India**

Despite the fact that the society was died out in 1963 and the post 1947 phase appeared like a sluggish period , the VRS & its museum set of profound connections and kept going the same till 1947 with the archaeological Survey of India, the parent body in archaeological field as well as the alike societies and museums of India. Even the institution had close contact with the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon and a few contemporary well-known institute of Europe. As a result the collection, particularly the library collection was turned out to be well off day by day. The museum of the VRS was too benefited owing to this. And because of this thoughtful cavernous relation the scholars of the VRS succeeded to spread their scholarly excellence all over India.

The relation was not one sided. It is not that the Society only just collected as present or bought publications and antiquities from other similar institutes. The other institutions also inured to collect publications of the VRS. Actually, exchange scheme was the basis of the relation. But at some point in time when the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter was fabricated all the publications of the VRS were as well brought up. For this reason the attention would be dogged here merely to highlight items collected by VRS from other similar organizations.

#### **Relation with Archaeological Survey of India:**

The Archaeological Survey of India was structured in 1861 with the purposes of investigation, excavation, conservation, and protection of the monuments and sites of national and international value. It would not be wide of the mark to cite that nearly since the occasion of its inception, the VRS in support of its own obligation set up superb relation with this

parent body in the field of archaeology. Because in 1911 while the survival of the Society was in jeopardy by reason of a wrangle with Indian Museum it had to appeal the Archaeological Survey of India to work out the same. And Sir John Marshall, Director of the Indian Archaeology was one of the adherents of the Society. It was Marshall who granted authorization to VRS in favour of excavation.<sup>1</sup> Keeping in mind the activities in the sphere of excavation, Marshall made arrangement intended for the proper training in excavation to a scholar of VRS under the Department of Archaeology. As a result Ramaprasad Chanda, the secretary of VRS joined at first in the Department of Archaeology as a trainee and within the occupancy (1917- 1919) of his vocation Chanda lifted up inquisitiveness about the ancient and unknown history by organizing lists in text method of the relics which were revealed from the archaeological sites like Taxila, Mathura, Sarnath and of the objets d'art of Sanchi museum.<sup>2</sup> After the completion of Chanda's training, Marshall recommended his name and requested the Bengal Provincial Government to employ him as government remunerated assistant curator in the museum of VRS. Yet, the Provincial Government did not materialize the suggestion. Even in the subsequent years Marshall facilitated Nanigopal Majumdar, the curator of the museum of VRS in similar training. Nanigopal started his training in the eminent archaeological site of Mahenjodaro under, no other than, Sir John Marshall.<sup>3</sup> Besides Marshall, K. N. Dikshit, the officer in command of the Paharpur and Mahasthan excavation permitted Nirodbandhu Sanyal, the curator of the museum of VRS to take practical training.<sup>4</sup> Nirodbandhu Sanyal also learnt the scientific method of cleaning metal images and Muslim numismatics under the expert guidance of, no other than, Dikshit.<sup>5</sup> The support and assistance of Archaeological Survey of India was not forgotten by the Society. In return, Marshall was nominated as the honorary vice president and honorary member of the VRS.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the Society recorded these encouraging aids in their annual reports.

Now it can be approached with the annual reports of the Society.

**1925- 26 :** In the year four putrefied copper plates of the museum were sent to the Archaeological chemist and received back at the advice of the director general of archaeology in India.<sup>7</sup>

**1926- 27:** In this year Archaeological Department presented their nine volumes to the VRS.<sup>8</sup>

**1927- 28 & 1928- 29:** In the first year the Archaeological Survey of India presented 66 photographs and in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year 34 photographs of the Paharpur excavation. Besides, it is already mentioned that on 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1828 K. N. Dikshit delivered a lecture on the paharpur excavations, with lantern slides.

**1929- 30:** In this year VRS took delivery of nine volumes and two silver rupees of William IV and Victoria as Trespure Trove finds. Moreover, three bronze images of Buddha of about the 12<sup>th</sup> century date, forming part of the Trespure Trove find from Negapatam( District Tanjore, Madras), were purchased, having been offered for sale at cost price by the Diretor general of Archaeology of India.<sup>9</sup>

**1930- 31:** The following volumes were obtained by the Society as presents:

A) Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India-

i) No- 37, *Tour in wazinistan and North Baluchistan*, Stein;

ii) No- 38, *Kushan- Sassanian coins*, Herzfeld;

iii) No- 42, *Tour in upper Swat and adjacent hill tracts*, stein;

iv) No- 44, *Exploration in Orissa*.

B) Annual Report of the year 1926-27.

**1932- 33:** In the year VRS got hold of the following items as presents:

- i) *Epigraphia Indica*, Volume XIX, pts. 8.
- ii) *Epigraphia Indica*, Volume XX, pts. 5, 6.
- iii) *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No. 24, Ghosh: *Rock Paintings of Prehistoric and Later Times*.
- iv) *Mahenjodaro and the Indus civilization*, No- 1, Chapter- 1 – XIX and plates- 1 – XIV.
- v) *Do Volume II*, Text, Chapters XX- XXXII, appendices and index.
- vi) *Do Volume- III*, Pl. XV- CIXIV.
- vii) Hamid Kuraishi, *List of Ancient Monuments protected under Act. VII of 1904 in the province of Bihar and Orissa*. ASI (N. I. S.), Volume LI.
- viii) *Medieval Temples of the Dekhan*, ASI (N. I. S.), Volume- XLVIII.
- ix) *Epigraphia Indo- Moslemica*, 1929- 30.
- x) Zafar Hossain: *Bibliography of Indo- Moslem history excluding provincial Monarchies*, *Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India*, No- 45.
- xi) *Cousens: Somnath and Other Medieval Temples in Kathiawad*, ASI (NIS), Volume- XLV.

**1933- 34:**

Presented:

- i) *Epigraphia Indica*, Volume- XXI, pt. 1, 2 and 3 ; Volume XX, pt. 8.
- ii) Sir A.Stein, *Wall paintings from ancient shrines in Central Asia and Sistan*.
- iii) Annual Report (ASI) of the year 1928- 29.

iv) R. D. Banerjee, *Eastern Indian School of Medieval sculptures*, A. S. I., NIS, Volume- XLVII.

v) K. V. S Aiyer, *South Indian Inscriptions*( Texts), Volume- VIII, ASI, ( NIS, volume- LIII).

**1934-35:**In the year Krishna Deva, a reserah scholar of the Archaeological Survey of India had come to Rajshahi to study the antiquities in the museum of the VRS for a short time <sup>10</sup>.

Following publications were presented to the Society:

i) G.R. Kaye, *The Bakhshali Manuscript*, part. III(NIS, Volume – XLIII).

ii) D.R.Sahni, *Guide to the Buddhist ruins of Sarnath*.

iii) *Epigraphia Indica*, Volume- XXI, No- 5 & 6.

iv) A.Foucher, *On the Iconography of the Buddhist nativity*, M. A. S. I., No- 48.

v) Hirananda Sastri, *A Guide to Eliphanta*.

**1935- 36:** obtained as presents-

i) *Epigraphia Indo- Moslemica*, 1931- 32 & 933- 34.

ii) F.H.Andrews, *Descriptive Catalogue of antiquities recovered by Sir Aurel Stein during his explorations in Central Asia, Kansu and Eastern Iran*.

iii) *Epigraphia Indica*, Volume- XXVII, pts. 1, 2 and 3.

iv) Annual Report on the South Indian Epigraphy for the year ending in March, 1932.

v) B.C.Law, *Sravasti in Indian Literature*, M. A. S. I., No- 50.

vi) Annual Report (ASI) for the year 1929- 30.

vii) M.A. Hussain, *A Record of all the Quranic and non-historical epigraphs*, M. A. S. I. No- 47.

**1936- 37: Presents-**

i) B. Prasad, *Animal remains from Harappa*, M. A. S. I., No- 51.

ii) *Epigraphia Indica*, Volume. XXII, pts. 4 – 7

XXIII, pts. 1- 4

XXI, pts. 7.

iii) Annual Report on the South Indian Epigraphy for the year ending in March, 1933 and March 1934.

iv) Annual Report, 1930- 34, pts. I and II.

v) Do , 1934- 35.

vi) M. Nazim, *Bijapur Inscriptions*, M. A. S. I., No- 49.

vii) K.V. Aiyer, Subrahmanya, *South Indian Inscriptions*( Texts), Volume- VIII.

viii) H.N.Wright, *The Coinage and Metrology of the Sultans of Delhi*, 1936.

ix) *A memoir on Kotla Firoz Shah*, Delhi, M. A. S. I.

x) Chas. Duroiselle, *Ananda temple at Pagan*, M. A. S. I., no- 56.

xi) *Epigraphia Indo- Moslemica*, 1933- 34, supplements.

**1938- 39:** In this year, T. N. Ramchandran, the superintendent of Archaeological Survey, Eastern circle, instructed the Society to depute their curator for appropriate training in preservative treatment under the guidance of the Archaeological Chemist at Dehra Dun.<sup>11</sup> Actually it was not viable for the Archaeological Chemist to undertake preservative action of antiquities of all the Museums in India. On the other hand, it was necessary to prevent the antiquities from corrosion. Therefore the curator of the Museum of VRS was sent to Dehra Dun for one month and at the Indian Museum at Ccutta for same duration.

In this year too the Society received some volumes from the A. S. I. –

i) *Epigraphia Indica*, Volume- XXI, pt. 8.

XXIII, pts. 5, 6 & 7

XXII, pt. 8

XXIV, Pts. 1 & 2

ii) Annual Report on the South Indian Epigraphy for the year ending in March, 1933 and March 1935.

iii) A. H. Longhurst , *The Buddhist antiquities of Nagarjunakonda*, Madras, M. A. S. I., no- 54.

iv) Ross, S.C. Alan, *The Numeral Signs of the Mahenjodaro script*, M. A. S. I. no- 57.

v) Annual Report for the year 1935- 36( ASI).

vi) E. J. H. Mackay, *Further Excavations at Mahejodaro*( between years 1927- 31), volume- 1, Text Delhi, 1938.

**Archaeological Survey of Pakistan:**

Subsequent to the liberation and partition of the Indian sub- continent, the VRS developed akin contact with that of the Archaeological Survey of Pakistan. Accordingly the Archaeological Survey of Pakistan rendered support in a number of occasions. In support of this, mention may be made of a stone image of Chamunda representing a new variety of Rudra- Chachika was supplied to the hold of the Society on permanent loan by the Archaeological Survey of Pakistan.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the parent body sanctioned money for the construction of the new building of the library which is already jotted down. And the cost (Rs. 10000) of the publication of *Inscriptions of Bengal, Volume IV* was also paid by the grant of the Archaeological Survey of Pakistan.<sup>13</sup>

It is amazing to note that the Department of Archaeology( Pakistan) selected twelve sculptures of VRM for special exhibition in Japan, West Germany and the Netherlands at some point in 1961- 64. <sup>14</sup> And Mukhlesur Rahman, the then curator of the VRM graced with his presence in the opening of the ‘500 years of art in Pakistan’ at Bonn, West Germany.

### **Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti:**

The title itself of the Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti (which was formed in 1912) is a sign of unfathomable relation between this and the Vrendra Resaerch Society (Varendra Anusandhan Samiti). To be fair enough to utter that the foundation of the Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti was directly instigated by the knock of the VRS. In the words of Tarun Chandra Bhagabati<sup>15</sup>, “ It is a fact that establishment of the Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti was inspired by the formation of the Varendra Anusandhan Samiti.” <sup>16</sup> More to the point, Padmanath Vidyabinod, one of the key founders of Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti was the close friend of Ramaprasad Chanda and Akshaya Kumar Maitra. One interesting thing can be brought to light here that Sasadhhar Ray who proposed Sarat Kumar Ray, Akshaya Kumar Maitra and Ramaprasad Chanda to form VRS, happenstancelly, the same person presided over

the Uttarbanga Shahitya Sammelan (North Bengal Literary Conference) held in 1912 at the premises of the famous temple Kamakhya in which the proposal of the establishment of the Kamrupa Anusandhan Samiti cropped up.

Regardless of the similarity of their title, the method of activities of the Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti had to be quite different. Bhagabati unsatisfactorily remarked, “ We did not have here a personage of the stamp of Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray who would ungrudgingly bear every item of expenditure, however high that might be, for the Samiti; and there was none here like Babu Akshaya Kumar Maitra, who could guide the affairs of the Samiti with confidence.”

It is clear that the Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti ascertained bottomless relation with the VRS for their own inevitability. For that reason the VRS received almost all the items of Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti as presentation. Accordingly a valuable work of the Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti came under the disposal of VRS as presents. In the subsequent years the title of the Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti altered to Assam Research Society and from that moment started to publish their journal. Unsurprisingly, the Assam Research Society sent its journal from its very first issue.

**1933- 34:** *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Volume – I, No- 1.

**1934- 35:** *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Volume – I, Nos- 2- 4.

Volume- II, Nos- 1- 4.

**1935- 36:** *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Volume – III, Nos- 1, 2, 3 & 4.

**1936- 37 & 1937- 38:** *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Volume – IV, Nos- 1, 2 & 4.

Volume V, Nos- 1- 3.

**1938- 39:** *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Volume – IV, No- 3.

Volume V, No- 4.

Volume VI, Nos- 1- 4.

**1939- 40:** *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Volume – VII, Nos- 1- 3.

### **Asiatic Society of Bengal:**

Since the Asiatic Society of Bengal was the source of enticement of the VRS, naturally it tried to make good connections with the same. Even the library of the VRS started its movement in association with the archaeological publications and journals of the Asiatic Society which were came from the private collections of Sarat Kumar Ray. Sarat Kumar Ray himself was the member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. In the initial stage the VRS used to get volumes of the Asiatic Society through Sarat Kumar. On some occasions the VRS directly purchased some important publications.<sup>17</sup> But it can be differentiated that the barter system became customary between these two organizations from 1933. The presidential address of S. K. Ray shows that the Asiatic Society decided to publish two manuscripts, *Vashavritti* of Purushottamdeva and *Tattika* of Sristidhar Birochita, which were the collected works of the VRS.<sup>18</sup>

**1933- 34:** In this year the VRS was invited to send their delegate to the gathering of the 150<sup>th</sup> centenary celebrations of the Asiatic Society of Bengal. Girijasankar Bhattacharyya, the then secretary of the Society was chosen to represent the Society. And the Society received in exchange in the year-

*Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Volume- XXVII, No- 4, 1931.

**1934- 35:** *Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Volume- XXVIII, Nos- 1 and 2, 1932.

Volume- XXIX, Nos- 1, 2, 3 and 4, 1933

Volume- XXX, Nos- 1 and 2, 1934.

**1935- 36:** Sewell, R. B. S., *Geographic and Oceanographic Researches in Indian Waters*, Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Volume- IX, No- 7.

*Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Volume- XXX, No- 8

J. A. S. B. L. - Volume- 1, Nos- 1 and 2

J. A. S. B. Sc.- Volume- 1, Nos- 1 and 2

Y. B. A. S. B. Volume- 1

**1936- 37 & 1937- 38:**

*Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Volume- LXXV, pt. 5.

J. R. A. S. B. L., Volume- I, No- 3

J. R. A. S. B. L., Volume- II, Nos- 1- 3

J. R. A. S. B. Sc., Volume - II, Nos- 1-2

**1938- 39 :**

*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal:*

J. R. A. S. B. L., Volume- III, Nos- 1- 2

J. R. A. S. B. Sc., Volume – III

Year Book- Volume- II, 1936

**1939- 40:**

*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal:*

Letters, Volume- IV, Nos- 1- 4

Science, Volume- IV, Nos- 1- 4

Year Book, Volume- III, 1937

Volume- IV, 1938

Volume- V, 1939.

As a final point it may be noted here that while Nanigopal Majumdar, the curator of the museum of VRS began his academic pursuit with the compilation of *Inscriptions of Bengal , Volume III*, the Asiatic Society provided on loan the half tone blocks of the Belava plate of Bhojavarman and the Dacca Image Inscription of Lakshmanasena.<sup>19</sup>

**Woodbourn Public Library, Bogra:**

The duration of relationship between Woodbourn Public Library and VRS was not so extended. But within this short time the stuffs received by VRS from Woodbourn Public Library was far-fetched. The Woodbourn Public Library presented seventeen stone sculptures ( Museum Nos- 685 – 701) in 1926 to the disposal of the VRS. In the transmission of these precious sculptures, Satyendra Nath Das, Prabhas Chandra Sen and Baidyanath Sanyal played a crucial role of intermediary.<sup>20</sup> Additionally, a fragmentary Jaina image from Mankhali- dhap in Mahasthan was received through the authorities of this library.<sup>21</sup>

### **Bihar and Orissa Research Society:**

This Eastern Indian institution of same category frequently exchanged their publications with VRS. All the copies of the journals published from 1915 to 1936 of the Bihar & Orissa Research Society got to the bookshelf of the library of VRS. Yet, every single journal was not come all the way through exchange. In reality, most of those came through Jadunath Sarkar, one of the celebrated sons of the soil of Rajshahi and honorary vice- president of VRS. Because, Bihar was not only the working place of Jadunath, the recognition, reputation and authority that he held- all originated from the same place. On the other had, some scholars of VRS contributed their article in the journal of the Bihar & Orissa Research Society.

For instance it can be cited the name of Binod Bihari Ray, the member of the VRS, who contributed one of his superlative article, *Harappa and Vedic Hariyupiya* in 1928.<sup>22</sup>

### **Andhra Historical Research Society:**

This important research institute of South India made connections with the VRS. Thus it can be seen in the annual reports of the VRS that from 1933 to 1940 both the societies exchanged their publications. The volumes obtained by VRS are as follows-

**1933- 34:**

*Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society*

Volume-I,	Volume- II
Volume-III,	Volume- IV
Volume- V,	Volume- VI
Volume- VII,	Volume-VIII, pt. 1.

**1934- 35:**

*Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society-*

Volume- VIII, pts.- 2, 3 & 4.

**1935-36:**

*Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society-*

Volume- IX, Pts.- 1, 2 & 3.

**1938- 39:**

*Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society-*

Volume – XI, pts. 1, 2, 3 & 4.

**1939- 40:**

*Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society-*

Volume-XII, pts. 1- 3.

**Karnataka Historical Society:**

The VRS received the following volumes from the Karnataka Historical Society-

**1933-34:**

*Karnataka Historical Review-*

Volume- II, pt. 1.

**1934-35:**

*Karnataka Historical Review-*

Volume- II, pt. 2.

**1936- 37:**

*Karnataka Historical Review-*

Volume- IV, Nos- 1- 2.

**1937- 38:**

*Karnataka Historical Review-*

Volume- III, Nos- 1- 2

**Archaeological Department of H. E. H. the, Nizam of Hyderabad:**

This archaeological department of Hyderabad presented a number of volumes to the VRS. Most of them were annual reports. Apart from the annual reports, there were a few other important volumes-

i)H. Sastri, *Shitab Khan of Warangal*, Hyderabad Archaeological Series, No- 9.

ii) R. L.Turner, *The Gavimath and Palkigundu inscription of Asoka*, Hyderabad Archaeological Series, No- 10 , and

iii) C. R. K. Charlu, *The Kannada inscription of Kopbal*, Hyderabad Archaeological Series, No- 12.

**Bhandarkar Oriental Institute of Poona:**

The relation between VRS and the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute of Poona was fantastic. They used to swap over their publications with each other. Consequently, the annals of Bhandarkar Institute were massed in the library of VRS. More to the point, the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute invited VRS to send its delegates on the events like the Twelfth Anniversary Day of Sir Ramkrishna Bhandarkar. <sup>23</sup>

**Visva Bharati University:**

The VRS ascertained its relation and connection with different contemporary universities. Among them the name of Bisva Bharati University would be the first in listing. A huge numeral of Visva Bharati news, Bisva Bharati quarterly and Bulletin were stockpiled in the library of VRS.

**Annamalai University:**

This University started to issue its journal from 1932.<sup>24</sup> And from 1932 to 1940 all the Journal of the Annamali University assembled in the library of VRS either as presents or in exchange.

**Calcutta University:**

It is known that the VRS had some sort of connection with the Calcutta University. The VRS conducted its Paharpur excavation with the helping hand of the Calcutta University. Not only that, both the organization exchanged their publications. As a result the VRS received the following volumes-

**1930- 31:**

*Journal of the Department of Letters, Volume- XIX, XX.*

**1931- 32:**

*Journal of the Department of Letters, Volume-XXI.*

**1932- 33:**

*Journal of the Department of Letters, Volume-XXII*

**1933- 34:**

i) *Journal of the Department of Letters*, Volume-XXIII.

ii) Ray, H. S., *The Dynastic History of Northern India* ( Early Medieval period).

**1934- 35:**

*Journal of the Department of Letters*, Volume-XXIV.

**1935- 36:**

*Journal of the Department of Letters*, Volume-XXV, XXVI, XXVII.

**1936- 37 & 1937- 38:**

i) *Journal of the Department of Letters*, Volume-XXVIII, XXIX.

ii) Nag, Kalidas, *Art and Archaeology Abroad*, Calcutta, 1937.

iii) Goswami, Kunjagovinda, *Pragaitihasik Mahenjodaro*, 1936.

**1938- 39:** *Journal of the Department of Letters*, Volume-XXX.

**1939- 40:** *Journal of the Department of Letters*, Volume- XXXI, XXXII.

**Watson Museum, Rajkot:**

The VRS not only made contact with a variety of research institutions and universities. It got in touch with a number of contemporary museums of different parts of India. One of them was Watson museum of Rajkot. The items presented from this museum were barely Annual Reports ( till 1940).

**United Province Provincial museum:**

This museum of U. P. as well exchanged its Annual Reports with the Varendra Research Society.

**Madras Government Museum:** The Madras Government Museum supplied to the VRS a number of its Bulletins which enclosed an assortment of precious articles. They were-

**1934- 35:**

i) T.N. Ramchandran, *Buddhist Sculptures from a Stupa near Goli village , Guntur District*, Volume 1, part- 1.

ii) F.H.Gravery, and T.N. Ramchadran, *Catalogue of the South Indian Hindu metal images in the Madras Government Museum*, Volume- 1, Part- 2.

iii) T. N.Ramchandran, *Tiruparuttikunram and its temples: with appendices on Jain units measurement and time, cosmology and classification of souls*, Volume- 1, part- 3.

iv) S.Zuckerman, *The Adichanallur skulls*, Volume II, part- 1.

v) P.Sambamoorthy, *Catalogue of the musical instruments exhibited in the Government Museum, Madras*, Volume- II, Part- 3.

vi) K.Rangachari, *The Srivaisnava Brahmanas*, Volume II, Part- 2.

vii) F. H.Gravery, and T. N.Ramchadran,*The three main styles of temple architecture recognized by the Silpa- Sutras*, Volume III, part- 1.

**1936- 37 & 1937- 38:**

i) A. Aiyappan, *Social and physical Anthropology of Nayadis of Malabar*, Volume- II, Part- 4.

ii) F. H.Gravely, *An outline of Indian temple architecture*, Volume – III, part- 2.

**1938- 39:**

T. G.Aravamuthan, *Catalogue of venetian coins in the Madras Government Museum*, Volume-III, Part-2.

**1939- 40:**

i) *Guide to archaeological galleries*, Madras Government Museum, 1939.

ii) *Illustrations of Indian sculpture for use with the guide to the archaeological galleries*, Madras Government museum, 1939.

Not only had the literary items, the VRS and Madras Government Museum also exchanged their sculptural specimens. In point of fact, the Madras Government Museum arranged to exhibit sculptures of the Northern schools to furnish a scope for comparative study and furthermore to facilitate students of Indian history and culture to glimpse at least a few authentic sample of various schools of art in a place readily available to them. The authority of the Madras Museum were thus in want of some Pala and Sena sculptures and expected an exchange of a metal set of Natesa and his companion Kamasundari of late Chola period with the following five distinguishable stone sculptures of VRM. <sup>25</sup>

No	Description	Size (in inch)
1555	Surya from Niyamatpur (Rajshahi)	29 x 14
1572	Uma- Maheswavara from „ „	20 x 14.5
1578	Dancing Ganesa from Manda (Rajshahi)	17 x 11
1579	Brahma From Manda (Rajshahi)	23.5 x 11.5

Seeing that the Natesa icons were not common particularly with Sivakamasundari and were very much in demand, the proposal was happily accepted by the board of supervision of the VRM and a very fascinating addition was thus made to its( VRM) assortment.<sup>26</sup>

**Curzon Museum of Muttra(Gujrat)** was also in touch with the VRS. Naturally there was exchange of annual reports between these two institutions. And it is because of the stimulation of the local archaeological labrotary of this museum; the VRS decided to estalblish such a lab within its premises and accordingly boosted their curator to take training in the concerned aspect.<sup>27</sup>

#### **All India Oriental Conference:**

VRS was the sensible associate of this Conference. For the reason, that copious scholars of VRS had preferred it the same as the medium to demonstrate their scholarly handiness in all India milieu.

In accordance with the aannual report of VRS, two members, to be exact, Kshitish Chandra Sarkar and Brajendra Mohan Maitra represented the Society in the Oriental Conference held in November, 1928 at Lahore in which Sarkar read a paper on “*Some Aboriginal Custom*” and Nirodbandhu Sanyal as well sent a paper on “*Mother and Child image*” to the conference.<sup>28</sup>

For the duration of Christmas of 1930, the Sixth Oriental Conference was held at Patna. Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray, Brojendra Mohan Maitra, Bijaynath Sarkar, Nirodbandhu Sanyal, Dharani Mohan Maitra, Sarasi Kumar Saraswati, Upendra Nath Ghosal, Radhagovinda Basak, Sivaprasad Bhattacharyya, Kshitish Chandra Sarkar and Kalidas Dutt

were designated for the Conference. However, just six of them were able to grace with their presence and presented following papers-<sup>29</sup>

I) Dinesh Chandra Bhattacharyya- i) *Mandana, Suresvara and Bhavabhuti: the Problem of their Identity.*

ii) *The Lost Kingdom of Harikela.*

II) Sivaprasad Bhattacharyya- i) *The Dhavanyaloka and the Text of the Dhvanikarikas.*

ii) *The Vrindavana Kavya and its author.*

III) Upendra Nath Ghosal- i) *New Light on the Gupta Administration.*

IV) Kshitish Chandra Sarkar- i) *The Capital of the Pala Empire.*

ii) *A new Specimen of Surya From Varendra.*

V) Nirodbandhu Sanyal- i) *Aghora- Rudra.*

VI) Bijay Nath Sarkar- i) *Finger- posts of Bengal History.*

The Seventh Indian Oriental Conference was held in Baroda in Dec, 1933. And Sarat Kumar Ray, Nirodbandhu Sanyal, Sarasi Kumar saraswati, Jitendra Kumar Chakravarty, Anil Chandra Chaudhury, kshitish Chandra Sarkar, Bijay Nath Sarkar and Amitabh Ray were elected as delegates of the society.<sup>30</sup>

The VRS was also sent its representatives to the functions of the –

i) 8<sup>th</sup> All India Oriental Conference, Mysore, 1935.<sup>31</sup>

ii) 9<sup>th</sup> All India Oriental Conference, Trivandrum, 1937.<sup>32</sup>

iii) 10<sup>th</sup> All India Oriental Conference, Hyderabad, 1939. <sup>33</sup>

**Relation with Overseas organizations:**

The Varendra Research Society spread out its contact with some abroad institutions. It built up its connections with the archaeological Survey of neighbouring Ceylon as well a few comparable institutions of Europe.

**Archaeological Survey of Ceylon** transported the following volumes on the basis of exchange-

i) Annual Report on the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon, 1933.

ii) Annual Report of the archaeological Survey of Ceylon, 1934.

iii) Annual Report of the archaeological Survey of Ceylon, 1935, 1936.

iv) S. Paranavitana, 'The Excavations in the Citadel of Anuradhapur,' *Memoir of the Archaeological Survey of Ceylon*. Volume III.

v) Annual Report of the archaeological Survey of Ceylon, 1937.

vi) Annual Report of the archaeological Survey of Ceylon, 1938.

**Museum Association of London:**

It is remarkable that the Museum Association of London intended to carry out a survey of the museum of VRS. Accordingly, Markham, the Empire Secretary of the Museum Association of London, visited the the museum of VRS in January last 1935. The Empire Secretary became pleased about the display and remarked that "This museum will be on the first rank of the smaller museums of Asia." <sup>34</sup>

**Boston Museum of Czechoslovakia** too had connections with the VRS. Of course, the VRS exchanged its items with this museum but in few occasions the Boston Museum presented its volumes to the library of VRS.<sup>35</sup> The recorded *Fine Arts Bulletin* of the Boston Museum are-<sup>36</sup>

1930 -31-	<i>Fine Arts Bulletin Nos- 166 to 171.</i>
1932- 33-	<i>Fine Arts Bulletin Nos- 178 to 183.</i>
1933- 34-	<i>Fine Arts Bulletin Nos- 184 to 189.</i>
1934- 35-	<i>Fine Arts Bulletin Nos- 190 to 195.</i>
1935- 36-	<i>Fine Arts Bulletin Nos- 196 to 201.</i>
1936- 37 & 1937- 38-	<i>Fine Arts Bulletin Nos- 202 to 213.</i>
1938- 39-	<i>Fine Arts Bulletin Nos- 214 to 219.</i>
1939- 40-	<i>Fine Arts Bulletin Nos- 220 to 225.</i>

#### **The Kern Institute, Leyden, Holland:**

The accessible documents confirm that the relation between the Kern Institute and the VRS was developed in and around 1928. The Kern Institute published the Annual Bibliography of Indian Archaeology more or less on a regular basis. And all the volumes ( till 1937) of the Annual Bibliography were given off to the library of VRS in exchange of the publications of the latter. The annual bibliographies were as follows-

i) Annual Bibliography of Indian archaeology, Volume- I, 1926.

- ii) Annual Bibliography of Indian archaeology, Volume- II, 1927.
- iii) Annual Bibliography of Indian archaeology, Volume- III, 1928.
- iv) Annual Bibliography of Indian archaeology, Volume- IV, 1929.
- v) Annual Bibliography of Indian archaeology, Volume- V, 1930.
- vi) Annual Bibliography of Indian archaeology, Volume- VI, 1931.
- vii) Annual Bibliography of Indian archaeology, Volume- VII, 1932.
- viii) Annual Bibliography of Indian archaeology, Volume- VIII, 1933.
- ix) Annual Bibliography of Indian archaeology, Volume- IX, 1934.
- x) Annual Bibliography of Indian archaeology, Volume- X, 1935.
- xi) Annual Bibliography of Indian archaeology, Volume- XI, 1936.
- xii) Annual Bibliography of Indian archaeology, Volume- XII, 1937.

It is to be mentioned that for the study of the Indian art and culture there was a need of a collection of photographic prints of Indian antiquities. In request of J. Ph. Vogel, one of the administrators of the Kern Institute, the VRS sent out 40 photographic prints of Brahminical and Buddhist images of their museum.<sup>37</sup>

Exclusive of the aforesaid investigating institutions and museums of different parts of India and abroad, there were few more establishments with which the VRS had some direct or indirect relation. In the first list of this category the name of Bangiya Sahitya Parisad, Indian Museum,<sup>38</sup> Dacca Museum, Rangpur Shahitya Parisad, Patna Museum and Cooch Behar Shahitya Sabha<sup>39</sup> should be included. They( first list) should be followed by recording the name of Archaeological Museum of Gwalior, Maha- Bodhi Society of India, Greater

India Society, Archaeological Survey of Mysore , Archaeological Department of Jaipur, Prince of Wales Museum of W. India, Archaeological Department of Baroda and the overseas bodies like German Oriental Society and British Mahabodhi Society(London).

The chapter would be incomplete if two- three significant points are not attached here-

i) The Varendra Research Society assigned their curator Nirodbandhu Sanyal to study the different museums, on the whole the North Indian museums since the cultural legacy of Bengal is linked up closely with the rest of India. <sup>40</sup>

ii) Chikyo Yamamoto, a Japanese State Research scholar at the International Academy of Indian Culture, Lahore executed a in-depth study of the exhibits in the VRM for a number of days. <sup>41</sup>

iii) The Society attained a commemorative volume from Cairo( Egypt) on the centenary of Ibrahim Pasha, the idol of Egypt. <sup>42</sup>

iv) Mukhlesur Rahman, the curator of VRM graced with his presence the all Pakistan History Conference at Rajshahi in 1960 and at Karachi in 1961 and the All Pakistan Museum conference held at Dacca in 1961. <sup>43</sup>

## Notes & References

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2. Saiffuddin Chowdhury, and Tasikul Islam(ed.), *Rajshahi Pratibha*, Rajshahi Association, 2000, p.44.
3. *Annual Report for the year 1925- 26.*
4. *Annual report for the year 1927- 28 & 1928- 29.*
5. *Annual Report for the year 1929- 30.*
6. *Annual Report for the year 1930- 31.*
7. *Annual Report for the Year 1925- 26.*
8. *Annual Report for the year 1926- 27.*
9. *Annual Report for the year 1929- 30.*
10. *Annual Report for the year 1934-35.*
11. *Annual Report for the year 1938- 39.*
12. N. B. Sanyal, *Recent Acquisitions to the Varendra Research Museum*, 1949 (Attached with the Report of the VRS, 1949).
13. *Report of the Working of the VRM* (from August 14, 1947 to June 30, 1969), University of Rajshahi, 1969, p. 13.
14. *Ibid.* p. 35.
15. Tarun Chandra Bhagabati- He worked and completed his P. hD. Degree on Kamrup Anusandhan Samiti.

16. Tarun Chandra Bhagbati, *The Kamrupa Anusandhan Samiti in historical perspectives (1912 A. D. – 1993 A. D.)* Unpublished thesis, P.116.
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19. Nanigopal Majumdar, *Inscriptions of Bengal, Volume- III*, VRS, 1929, p. vii.
20. *Annual Report for the year 1926- 27.*
21. *Annual Report for the year 1928-29.*
22. *Monographs No- 8*, VRS, p. 2.
23. *Annual Report for the year 1936- 37 and 1937- 38.*
24. *Annual Report for the year 1932- 33.*
25. *Annual Report for the year 1939- 40.*
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Annual Report for the year 1936- 37 & 1937- 38.*
28. *Annual Report for the year 1928- 29.*
29. *Report of the delegates of the Varendra Research Society to the Sixth Oriental Conference held at Patna, December, 1930.*
30. *Annual Report for the year 1933- 34.*
31. *Annual Report for the year 1935- 36.*
32. *Annual Report for the year 1936- 37 & 1937- 1938.*

33. *Annual Report for the year 1938- 39.*
34. *Annual Report for the year 935- 36.* See also S. F. Markham & H. Hargreaves, *The Museums of India*, London, 1936.
35. See *Annual Report for the year 1925- 26 to 1939- 40.*
36. See *Annual Report for the year 1930- 31 to 1939- 40.*
37. *Annual Report for the year 1939- 40.*
38. Though the Society had some dispute with the Indian Museum in the initial stage, in the subsequent years, the former sent its curator to the latter to take proper training in the method of archaeological object cleaning.
39. The available record( *Annual Report*1932- 33) shows that the Cooch Behar Shahitya Sabha presented some of their valuable publications- i) *Gitavali*, Volume- I, ii) *Kriyayogasara*, Volume- II, iii) *Upakatha*, Volume- III & IV, iv) *Ramayana* (sundara Kanda), Volume- V, v) *Beharodanto*. The king Of Cooch Behar also presented the copy of *Cooch beharer Itihas*, Volume- I( of Khan Choudhury Amanatulla Ahmad).
40. *Annual Report for the year 1935- 36.*
41. *Annual Report for the year 1938- 39.*
42. *Report of the Varendra Research Society*, 1949.
43. *Report of the working of the Varendra Research Museum, from August 14, 1947 to June 30, 1969*, p.35.

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## Chapter- VI

### **Varendra Research Society and the construction of Bengal's Past**

The contribution of Varendra Research Society in the reconstruction of early history of Bengal can only be evaluated by taking into account the nature of historical activities which had prevailed before the establishment of this institution.

It may be asserted that though the scientific documentation of history resulting from its emergence as an independent discipline, although started evolving during the fifteenth-sixteenth century Europe, yet it took more than a few centuries for the Indian sub- continent to reach at the same stage. To be fair enough, the condition of Indian history was dismal enough before the onset of the British Colonial rule, which intern gave birth to the Asiatic Society. Bengal's history was hardly an exception. Moreover, even after the commencement of the Asiatic Society, the history of Bengal, particularly the ancient history of Bengal witnessed no major improvements. Hence after the formation of Fort William College in 1800, when a catalogue was prepared for the sake of familiarizing the British officials with the culture and civilization of India, then books like *Rajabali* (1808), a work by Mrityunjoy Tarkalankar based on *Kulasastra* or *Pratapaditya Charita* (1801) by Ramram Basu or *Raja Krsnachandra Rahasya Charita* (1805) by Rajiblochan Mukhopadhaya had to be included as the references. William Kerry himself had written a book *Itihashamala* (*A Garland of History* was the sub title of this book in English) in that line. Despite the endeavour undertaken by some scholars to project this writers, Mrityunjoy Tarkalankar and Ramram Basu as the precursors who developed a new paradigm of hybridity of the view by amalgamating the old approach with the new in the task of history-writing. Yet the fact cannot be overlooked that whatever new experiments Mrityunjoy Tarkalankar or Ramram Basu or Rajiblochan

Mukhopadhaya did, but their works which were loaded with stories and fables can never be leveled as a historical account. This will get thoroughly clarified if we go through the content of one of these works. Let us take, for the sake of illustration, the book written by Mrityunjay Vidyalankar. The subject matter of the work is the biographical sketches of the kings that started with Yudhisthir <sup>1</sup> and ended with Tipu Sultan. Despite been aware of Raziuddin Aquil and Partha Chatterjee's recently published *History in the Vernacular*<sup>2</sup> (2008) or Romila Thapar's (ed.) *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History*<sup>3</sup> (2000) yet without any doubt it can be affirmed that *Rajabali* is not a historical text, rather a work full of illusionary fables. *Pratapaditya Charita* or other contemporary works fall within this same category. Actually the historical study of any part of ancient India cannot realize its full potential on the basis of literary sources alone. Explaining the reason behind this the famous Indian archaeologist Dilip Kumar Chakrabarty has written:

“The sources which have been used beginning with the Rig-Veda, were not meant for historical resources and whatever historical information has been gleaned from them is not free from questions( Kalhan's *Rajtarangini*) regarding their chronology, geological applicability and even context.”<sup>4</sup> K. A. N. Sastri also rendered his voice of the “utter impossibility of basing any part of the ancient history of India solely, or even primarily upon literary evidences.”<sup>5</sup>

The task of inculcating the ancient history of Bengal was much difficult one. Moreover the sequential explorations that was required to collect the resources for writing the ancient history of Bengal and also by comparing it with the other evidences related to Bengal's history, that were scattered all over India, was quite impossible a task for a single individual. As a solution, Varendra Research Society was set up as an institution that would symbolize collective endeavor. With the painstaking efforts of its members the Varendra Research Society was successful to carry out works of explorations adjacent to North Bengal

and some other parts of Bengal, as well as few places of northern India. It also carried out works of excavations in some ancient sites of Bengal. Consequently, it has been able to assimilate huge collection of splendid and unique relics of the past civilization of Bengal, that consisting of stone and copper plate inscriptions, sculptures, numismatic evidences, ancient documents and other antiquities of a miscellaneous nature. The relics represent successive phases of the bygone culture of the country extending from the pre Aryan times to the Mughal period. The library of the Varendra Research Society/ Varendra Research Museum has been able to secure 11075 volumes by October, 1964. These invaluable archaeological cum literary sources were indispensably required for any serious investigation, particularly the ones that were related to the political and cultural history of ancient Bengal. Henceforth, it can be affirmed that the creation of a repository of the ingredients prerequisite for scribbling down the history of Bengal, particularly that of the ancient times, is one of the major contributions made by Varendra Research Society.

Varendra Research Society, however, was not satiated in creating only a depository for the components of writing the history of Bengal. Within two years by its publication of *Gaudarajamala* it has provided the required blow needed to change the conventional notion of history in Bengal. Its very release created profound commotion among the historical circuits. For, the society became beacon bearer who showed the path of writing the ancient history of Bengal on the basis of stone and copper inscriptions. It is to be noted that *Gaudarajaramala* has been considered as the path breaking work concerning the ancient history of Bengal, to have been ever written in scientific procedure.

Quite naturally one might develop inquisitive about the reasons that made *Gaudarajamala* one of the most prestigious deeds. As a response to such queries one might visit the introductory preface to *Gaudarajamala* where Askshay Kumar Maitra had

extensively discussed the methodology followed in writing the book. Commenting on the context in relation to which *Gaudarajamala* must be read, Askshay Kumar Maitra has stated:

“before the advent of the Muslim rule, Gouda region was under the reign of the rulers who represented the Sena dynasty. Prior to that the Palas dominated over this region. This fact is prevalent even among the most ahistoric among the Bengalees. This facts have got intertwined with many imaginary incidents interpolated by the folk; the fiction writers have exaggerated much by their story telling capabilities. However reality needs to be extracted from the various controversies pertaining to various issues like, under which circumstances and from which exact time the Pala kings gained their power; what conditions and time frame resulted in their surrender before the rulers of the Sena dynasty and how eventually the Senas too lost their domain ; the sort of relationship they maintained with their subjects and so on. All these issues of the history of Bengal that every Bengalee should have been aware of, failed to gained popularity due to the absence of a proper discursive method.”<sup>6</sup> *Gaudarajamala* deserves the credit of bridging this gap by highlighting the scientific style of narrating the sequential history of ancient Bengal. This text has carefully omitted the classical legends like Yudhisthir on the one hand and characters like Adisur, whose presents cannot be derived from any historical source but from mere folk etymology.

*Guadarajamala* is not only a historical treatise of the Pala and Sena period. For it illustrates chronologically the ups and downs in the Gouda Empire(The Pala and Sena period).

Ramaprasad’s *Gaudarajamala*, never the less is not beyond any criticism. Although meager, yet the shortcomings cannot be fully overlooked.

In fact, ages have lapsed after the publication of *Gaudarajamala* resulting in the discovery of various inscriptions that revealed before us many new incidents as well as informations regarding unknown kings and their dynasties which in effect acted in the alterations of some of the old notions, through fresh investigations. D. C. Sircar in his introduction<sup>11</sup> to the 1975 edition of *Gaudarajamala* (published by Nababharat Publishers), pointed out a few of such alterations.

In spite of that, the review<sup>12</sup> of *Gaudarajamala* given by no other than Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, is worth mentioning here:

“ . . . a few books that were available before this, regarding the history of Bengal were mere compilations of legendaries and ancient myths like that of Rajabali . *Gaudarajamala* is the first history book of Bengal written by following the modern scientific methodology. Much new information regarding the ancient history of Bengal got illuminated by this book and many old notions got turned as null and void.”

Thus it can be said that there was no conscious distortion of history in *Gaudarajamala*, written on the basis of the information available till 1912. The foundation of ancient history of Bengal laid by *Gaudarajamala* did not require any reconstruction for it was crafted by very strong artifact like Ramaprasad Chanda. What followed next was only the replacement of the old colour with the newly gathered information and making new rooms for the new entries like Chandra dynasty, Varma dynasty and so on.

In the reconstruction of the history of Bengal, another revolutionary contribution of Varendra Research Society was the writing and publication of a book regarding the origin of Bengalees, entitled *Indo-Aryan Races*. “There is hardly any Aryan blood among the Indian and among the Bengalees it is almost nil” – the opinion conveyed in a report during the

month of May, 1901 by Herbart Risley had stimulated Ramaprasad to go through various books for quite a long period in order to refute the notion through correct information. Since this issue is related to anthropology, he had efficiently adopted the anthropological research methodologies. With a borrowed instrument he personally travelled from Kashmir to Chhotanagpur collecting data regarding the proportion of the length and width of the head, hair colour and the disparity between the structural formations of the different parts of the body, among various communities. As a result of this experimentations and long term study, he wrote *Indo-Aryan Races* in order to reject Risley's view.

It is worth mentioning that Risley used to think that who so ever used Aryan languages were all people with elongated skull and people of Aryan languages without it, were for him of a hybrid origin resulting from the amalgamation of Non Aryan – Mongoloid races. Noticing the Brachycephalic symptom Risley in 1901 census report had mentioned that Bengalees originated from the mixing of the Mongolians and Dravidians. Not onle risley but even Bengalee archaeologist like Haraprasad Sastri imitating the former had written:

“ the contemporary anthropologists have pointed out that the origin of the Bengalees resulted in the mixing of the Dravidians with the Mongolians. Aryans have come to this place for a short while. It is felt that the Aryans could extent little influence over Bengal surrounded by sea-coast. . . . if the final rites of the Hindus need to be done by an authentic Brahmin, then the Brahmins of Brahmabarta are the most suitable ones; the Brahmins of Bengal are not at all suitable. While analizing the reason, it could be found that the other races apart from Aryans were in majority in Bengal.”<sup>13</sup> It is interesting to note that following Risley, although Sastri had portrayed Bengalees as Dravida-Mongolian hybrid , yet he did not include the Brahmins. Explaining the reasons, he had stated,

“Around 732 A.D. when Yashavarma was the ruler of Kanouj with Vaidic Churamani Bhababhuti as his court poet, at that time most of the rulers of Bengal used to approach him for sending Brahmins for the performance of Vaidic Yajnas (sacrifices). During those days five Brahmins arrived at Bengal along with introducing the Brahmin cult in this region. Even before this, it has been hard that many Brahmins used to come from outside to this place.”<sup>14</sup>

Ramaprasad Chanda by his extensive research on Indo-Aryan Races had been able to prove that the broad cranium is not a feature limited only among the Mongoloids or the broad cranium is not the only characteristics of the Mongoloids. Therefore, according to Ramaprasad, it was futile to declare Bengalees as the amalgamation of the Dravida-Mongoloids on the basis of broad cranium alone because the Armenians of Western Asia and the Slav and Celt of Europe also possessed broad skull although they all used Aryan language. Ramaprasad also informed that the unique features of the Mongoloids were, the declining nose-end, the bulging larynx, thinner eye-brows with curved eyes and none of these features were visible among the Bengalees. In another words the Bengali language and the outlook with sharp nose and faces full of mustache and beard was pole apart from that of the Mongolians. Hence he had come to the conclusion that the people related to the predecessors of Santal and Oraon were the probable aborigins of Bengal and these aboriginals having mixed with the alien Aryans with broad skulls or medium skulls had resulted in the origination of the Bengalees. However he had kept Koch-Rajbashi-Poliya groups of North Bengal outside this category for he had perceived more of Mongolian features in them.

The three volumes of the collection of inscriptions published by Varendra Research Society has been regarded as the major source book of the history of Bengal. We know that Gauda vis-à-vis Bengal possess no written history. Not only Bengal but the entire India suffers from the same situation. The country without any written history has to depend

mainly upon the inscriptions to recover the past. Hence it is quite palpable that the most requisite task was to assemble descriptions from the inscriptions.

Among the three collections, A.K.Maitra's *Gaudalekhamala* needs to be named first. It is noteworthy that although A.K.Maitra's initial fame was dependent upon his treatment of the characters like Sirajudaulah, MirKashim, drawn from the modern history of Bengal, yet after the commencement of Varendra Research Society, he seems to have shifted towards the study of the original sources of ancient Bengal and his command on the Sanskrit language had assisted him to become one of the most worthy man for the task. The fifteen Pala inscriptions, treasured with historical information which were edited and translated by Maitra in *Gaudalekhamala* where previously misinterpreted or partially translated by archaeological experts like Umeshchandra Batbal, Rajendralal Mitra, Balantain, Wilkins, Colebrook, Kilharn, Nagendra Nath Basu and so on. Since none of the explanations were impeccable enough Maitra in *Gaudalekhamala* had to again translate and interpret all the fifteen inscriptions.

The extent of mistakes committed by the former commentators could be illustrated with a few examples. Let us begin with the first inscription of *Gaudalekhamala*. Explaining this Khalimpur Copper Plate of Dharmapala, Umeshchandra Batabyal had previously depicted it as the copperplate for donating land to a famous Brahmin poet called Bhattanarayan by Dharmapala. The immaturity of such explanation gets revealed while comparing it with Maitra's version. According to Maitra it is the copperplate for donating four villages to the Mahasamanta Narayan Varma by Dharmapal. Thereby it was impossible for Batabayl to recover the information regarding the history of Bengal scattered all through this copperplate and for Akshaya Kumar this copperplate deserved to be treated as one of the ingredients of the history of Bengal since it consisted of the accounts of ascendance of the Pala dynasty. Similarly while explaining the third inscription, that is the Mungyer

copperplate of Devapala discovered in 1780, Charles Wilkins had projected Devapala as the son of Bakpala, Dharmapala's brother and eventually many scholars followed Wilkins in their essays. Maitra rectified the mistakes and translated the entire inscription into Bengali.

Apart from these two, Akshaya Kumar also rectified the previous versions of the thirteen other inscriptions, along with providing new information and also translated them for they were important historical evidences regarding the Pala regime.

One important aspect we have to remember here is that the previous commentators were only engaged in identifying the rulers and the dynasties where as Maitra from these ancient inscriptions had explained about other important issues. Witnessing an extraordinary sense of rhetoric in the composition of these inscriptions Maitra has concluded that "in ancient period the study of Sanskrit was regarded as higher education in this country."<sup>15</sup> Therefore R.C. Majumdar, while commenting on *Gaudalekhamala*, had justly observed,

"The first collection of important inscriptions of Bengal, will always rank high among the sourcebooks of the history of Bengal."<sup>16</sup>

Thus we see that even after the laps of hundred years of the publication of *Gaudalekhamala* in 1912 and even though many new inscriptions and information have been found, yet for the scholars of Pala history this book has still remain as an indispensable one.

The efficient editing of *Gaudalekhamala* had established A. K. Maitra as one of the authoritarian researchers of the Pala history which had been able to continue till death. For this reason he was invited from the university of Calcutta in 1915 to deliver a course of lectures on Pala history which resulted in an invaluable course of lectures, entitled the *Fall of the Pala Empire*.<sup>17</sup>

The second source book, brought into being by Varendra Research Society, to deal the ancient history of Bengal, was Nanigopal Majumdar's *Inscriptions of Bengal, Volume III*. In its preface Majumdar himself had written that the main object that he had always kept in view was to students, dealing with the history of Bengal, a useful sourcebook, with such bibliographical details as might be necessary for their guidance.

In this work Majumdar had fetched together each and every one known inscriptions (17) of the reigns of the Chandra and Varman kings and their instantaneous successor Senas. It is to be cited that till 1929 these seventeen inscriptions were the solitary reliable bits and pieces to be had for the history of this phases. Therefore, Majumdar had made available a cautious translation of these priceless inscriptions. Besides, he had measured up to the transcriptions of the early examiners in the field by means of the original stones or copper plates and also examined various interpretations supplied by them.<sup>18</sup> preventative measures has been taken by him to bundle off the all legendary data and give a real meaning of detail description of the records.

Importance of this collection to the contemporary scholars would be apparent if we mention here some of the information of the same. Till date there were no more than three (Edilpur copper plate, Kedarpur plate and Rampal copper plate) revealed inscriptions of the Chandra's. Among them, the Edilpur copper plate was published in *Dacca Review* (Oct, 1912) and *Epigraphia Indica*, Volume-XVIII from which one can merely be acquainted with the fact that the inscription was issued from Vikrampura by Srichandra and he was mediated on the feet of the Mharajadhiraja Trailokyachandradeva.<sup>19</sup> The second one, the Kedarpur Copper Plate is an incomplete deed which was first edited by N. K. Bhattashalli from which one can get a fractional genealogy (Purnachandra – Trailokyachandra- Srichandra) of the Chandra's.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, the third inscription or the Rampal Copper Plate was the single evidence that might be utilized for the historical purposes i.e. for restoration of the history of

the Chandra's. Therefore, Society's member Radhagobinda Basak at the outset and subsequently Nanigopal Mazumdar as the first inscription in this imperative collection had provided detailed translations and elucidations. Therefore it would not be an overstatement to pronounce that because of the efforts of the Varendra Research Society it became possible to get the historical data like that the Chandra's were original inhabitant of Rohtasgadh (Rohitagiri), Shahabad district of Bihar and set up their rule under the leadership of Trailokyachandra in Eastern Bengal i.e. Harikela by taking the advantage of the declining power of the Palas. Moreover, Nanigopal resolved that the Chandra's were the devotee of Buddhism.

For the reconstruction of the history of the Varman's too, the *Inscription Of Bengal, Volume-III* is undoubtedly, the major source book. No other works, even the first scientific history of ancient Bengal, the *Gaudarajamala* of Ramaprasad Chanda did not offer a satisfactory amount of information concerning the Varmana rule. *Gadurajamala* just furnishes the information regarding the establishment of the Varmana rule in Eastern Bengal on the feet of the Palas and the name of a king, Hari Varman of this line.

Actually till that point of time, merely two inscriptions of the Varmanas have been unearthed and published. First one was Harivarman's copper plate and the next one was Bhatta Bhavadeva's (a minister of Varmana reign) Bhubaneswar Inscription which did not provide much information. Nanigopal, therefore, had deciphered and given explanation of the third inscription of the Varmanas i.e. the Belava copper plate of Bhoja Varman with immense importance. However, it should be mentioned that Nanigopal was not the first scholar to decipher it. The Belava copper plate was first published in *Dacca Review* (July, 1912) and then translated by Radhagobinda Basak in *Shahitya* and thirdly interpreted by Rakhaldas Bondopadyay in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (Volume-X). But Nanigopal did not admit those inconsistent and perplexed explanations regarding this

valuable inscription and presented a clear and complete explanation of the same. Nanigopal's interpretation had brought in a comprehensive identity of the Varmanas (Vajravarman - Jatavarman – Samalavarman – Bhojavarman). Among the Varmana rulers, Jatavarman, as Nanigopal interpreted, was the powerful king who extended his supreme power, by casting a shadow on the glory of Prithu, son of Vena, by expanding his dominance over the Angas, by mortifying the dignity of Kamrupa, by bringing into disrepute of the strength of the arms of Divya, by destructing the fate of Govardhana.<sup>21</sup> Likewise, it became clear from Nanigopal's explanation that Jatavarman, his son Samalavarman and his son Bhojavarman were the contemporaries of Vighrahapala, Kumarpala and Madanapala respectively.

In this Volume so as to the eleven Sena inscriptions were translated and clarified, among them, Madhainagar copper plate of Lkshmanasena, Edilpur copperplate of Kesavasena and Madanapada copper plate and Calcutta Shahitya Parisad copper plate of Visvarupasena are of particular attention for us. For the reason that the explanation of the rest seven inscriptions neither had made any significant alterations of the previous explanations, nor it succeeded to highlight any important changes of the description of the *Gadurajamala*. But the account of the above cited four inscriptions supplies a number of important new information. Among the four, in the account of Lakshmanasena's Madhainagar inscription, Majumdar had confirmed that still after their migration to Bengal, the Senas obtained a clean access of the Deccan blood. The rhyme 9<sup>th</sup> of the inscription speaks that Vallalsena got married Ramadevi, the daughter of a Chalukya king. For this basis Samantasena was described as Karnatakshatriya but Lkashamasena was entitled Brahmakshatriya. An additional amazing point regarding the accomplishment of Lakshmanasena has been extorted by Majumdar from this inscription. Though the Deopara inscription states that Lakshamasena's grandfather Vijayasena caused Gaudendra to make a quick retreat, but Nanigopal Majumdar affirmed that either Vijayasena was not able to take

possession of the then Gauda territory, or become unsuccessful to keep hold of the control for any span of time. In support of his claim Majumdar referred to the information of this Madhainagar inscription which states that Lakshmanasena, when a Kumara, during the reign of his father dispossessed the Gauda king of his destiny. Not only that, according to the interpretation of Majumdar, Lakshmanasena raided Kalinga, conquered the king of Kashi and suppressed Kamrupa by means of his proficiency. In the same way the Edilpur copperplate disclosed that Lakshmanasena had two sons, Visvarupasena and Kesavasena and subsequent to the death of Lakshmanasena, Kesavasena became the ruler of Gauda. Conversely, the Madanapada Copper Plate states that Maharajadhiraja Visvarupasena mediated on the foot of the illustrious Lakshmanasena. Both the copperplates were issued not from Vikrampura, but from Falgunagrama and both the kings were complimented as 'the day of destruction' to a certain line of Yavanas. Majumdar proclaimed that it indicates a victory of this two kings jointly or separately over a party of Muhammedan raiders lead by Ghori. But there is not anything in prop up of the statement.

The next volume of compilation of inscriptions manufactured by Varendra research Society was *Inscriptions of Bengal, Volume-IV* . But it is not the source book of ancient history of Bengal, it is linked up with the Medieval history of Bengal. This Volume, therefore, cannot claim the same weight with the early Volumes on inscriptions since there is the existence of a number of written documents of Medieval Bengal's history. Nevertheless, it helps out the researcher and historians in the reconstruction of the history of Medieval Bengal as no contemporary scholars (of medieval time) had left behind any consistent record of accounts of facts. In fact the contemporary Muslim historians directed their operation of outline mainly the happenings connected to their respective benefactor monarchs at Delhi and had diminutive tendency to sneak a look into the events of Bengal, far remotely located from the majestic capital; Bengal was mentioned in their writings only at the time when somewhat

unusual took place in the region, fundamentally had an effect on the interest of the central government at Delhi. Additionally, a few irregular occurrences of Bengal were brought together and put in order by scholars like Ghulam Hussain Salim, Salimullah, Munshi Ilahi Bakhsh and so on their respective works like *Riadus-Salatin*, *Tarikhi Bangla* and *Khurshidi-Jahan-Numa*, which were actually fusion of both the fictitious and unconvincing reports based mostly on local traditions and legendary accounts.<sup>22</sup> For all these, the *Inscriptions of Bengal*, Volume IV is a dependable anthology to a certain extent to fill up the draw backs and to put up the genuine and allied political history of Muslim Bengal. Moreover Shams-uddin Ahmad, the editor of the collection has dealt with the subject matters in a extremely methodical approach and has attempted to put aside the erroneous readings of the earlier scholars but tossed sufficient light on the historical values of the inscriptions.

Varendra Research Society made the historians of Bengal indebted to it by publishing the *Ramacaritam*, the one of the important literary documents of ancient Bengal, predominantly, the history of the Palas, under the edition of R.C. Majumdar, Radhagobinda Basak and Nanigopal Banerjee. It may be known to all that the *Ramacaritam* furnishes an account of the successful uprising in Northern Bengal which costs the Pala king Mahipala, his life and throne and of the reinstatement of the Pala rule by Rampala, his youngest brother. No other Indian text deals with such significant contemporary historical events with such possessions of details.<sup>23</sup> It is to be mentioned that since the early reading and explanation of M.M. Haraprasad Sastri was erroneous and as there was no translations of commented or uncommented portions, the Society published a fresh and critical edition of the text, with a running commentary and English translation. And because of the endeavor of Varendra Research Society the subject matter written in twisted form of *Ramacaritam* turned out to be totally understandable to all.

The monographs, the lectures and essays contributed by the members of the Society have in the same way been got going a lofty character of research and made input in reconstructing ancient history of Bengal.

The activities of Varendra Research Society or the collected antiquities were centered round not only the kings, kingdoms, warfare ,defeat and triumph or about histories that were chiefly political. Rather they revealed the accounts of the common people, their common belief in religion. And most of the activities of ancient Bengal got triggered off the religious issues. The religious imagination gave birth to the idols, the idols necessitated in the construction of the temples, the temples with their conventional ritual enhanced in the discursive formation of the Sastras, the Sastras with their demand of apprehension and propagation gave rise to the educational institutes like that of Sompuri, Odantapuri, Jagaddal and Vikramshila. And for all this causes the exploration, excavation and gatherings of enormous sculptures and architectural remains by the Varendra Research Society in a large sections of Bengal, principally in Varendra was excessively significant. It can not be taken for granted that Varendra Research Society had discovered a arena of the spiritual convictions. What the Society had done was to make clear the unclear notion which was developed from the study of the description of the old records and due to the discovery of religious sculptures and inscriptions. In other words, the Society attested the existing notion regarding the religious belief of the ancient Bengalees with the help of the archaeological evidences. It is because of the activities of Varendra Research Society we came to be acquainted with that the influence and extension of Buddhism in Bengal was extensive from the pre-Gupta period to the reign of the Chandras and after the fall of the Chandras , the Buddhism was completely lost state patronize in Bengal.<sup>24</sup> However, the Buddhism was stayed behind in North Bengal down to the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. <sup>25</sup> At the same time, the Brahminical and Shaiva images of the Pala period collected by the Society affirmed that no

matter what might be the royal religion, a huge section of the common people of the kingdom of Gauda were followed Brahminical and Shaiva religion. And the unearthing<sup>26</sup> of the icons of Santinath and Simhanad-Lokeswar, the Jaina Tirthankars from Varendra by the Society demonstrates that atleast a few section of Gauda people were the admirer of Jainism.

The art specimens brought together by Varendra Research Society were from a different philosophy of art. Because these sculptures formulate dissimilarity from other schools of Indian art by means of their sharp characteristics and arty execution. In reality, the sculptures of Varendra region assumed diminutive or no foreign influences which represent the Mouryan, Sunga and Gupta sculptures. For that reason the sculptures of the Varendra Research Museum, whether Buddhist, Hindu or Jaina show signs of a usual refinement of the figures represented (stood for) and an exacting traditional values to the hieratic perception of art. The costume, the adornment, the hair style, every single item possess a typical temperament of their own. Mukhlesur Rahman correctly pointed out that one may possibly miss in the specimens the old vigour which characterizes Gupta art, but this has been more than compensated by the liveliness and subtle grace of the figures, that bestow them a exceptional poetic excellence and constitute their principal merit as a great works of art.<sup>27</sup> Due to the activities and research of the scholars of Varendra Research Society this different art of philosophy became familiar as the Varendra School of art or Gaudiya School of art. However, it is shocking to remember that prior to the establishment of the Varendra Research Society, being unsuccessful to mark out the lines on which the sculptures had been crafted, the scholars used to categorize the sculptures of this region with that of the Magadha's and the relics of Orissa as provincial one.

It can be mentioned here that even in Lamataranatha's description it has been mentioned that " During the time of Dharmapala, two eminent artists(sculptors), namely Dhiman and his son Bitpala appeared in Varendra led to the rise of a different philosophy of

art, which in due course was extended in various parts of Nepal, Tibet and even China.”

The influence of this school of art can be traced even at Far-east places like Java Island. It is remarkable that, despite not being an art scholar, Sarat Kumar Ray, the president of the Varendra Research Society in 1912, having observed the sculptures collected from Varendra, expressed his own opinion which in turn, rectified Vincent Smith’s notion. He stated that “ Vincent Smith while discussing the sculptures of Java’s Barabudur, failed to trace out the lines on which they had been crafted and therefore sometimes he related the style with that of the Chinese and sometimes with the Indians ; and ultimately unable to form a balance between his contrary views , he accepted it as Indians; The impression that got expressed about the artifacts of Barabudur by Smith in his work entitled ‘*History of Indian Art*’ when being compared and contrasted with the collected evidences of art by us, then it can be clear that from this school of art the artistic style was developed in Barabudur. After witnessing the icons of Varendra he seems to have developed his impression.”<sup>28</sup> Nanigopal Majumdar, while analyzing the reasons of the overwhelming popularity of Varendra style of art to far off Java islands, recorded his opinion of the background in the first monograph entitled *Nalanda Copper plate of Devapaladeva* and concluded that the Nalanda was the source from which the Buddhist religion and art were derived by islands of Indian Archipelago.<sup>29</sup> Discussing the origin and extension of Gauda school of art A. K. Maitra has written that “ to be simple enough, the Gauda school of art started evolving out as the consequence of the Mahayana school of Philosophy. Till the fifth Pala king, Nayapala, the Mahayana School retained its purity which later on had deteriorated and the decadence got reflected even in art. The Varendra style of art was flourished even in Orissa, Magadh and Java islands. Magadh and Gauda being intimately related, with the declining of the Mahayana Buddhism, the relics of these two places also faced decadence. However, due to the difference of background, it was improvised by and large in the areas namely Orissa and Java islands. The brief historical

trajectory of the Gauda School of art lies in the fact that it was originated from Varendra, fortified in Orissa and finally manifested in Java islands. The regional style of art, although transcreates upon the mother style, however, cannot fully alter it. Having distinguished the regional and the source, it is easy to apprehend that the school of art adopted in Orissa and the Islands of Indian archipelago has actually been the Gauda School of art.<sup>30</sup>

Well, as the consequence of the emergence of a different philosophy of art i.e. Varendra school of art, the Varendra artists seemed to have formed guilds. For instance it can be mentioned the name of Ranaka Sulapani, the engraver of Vijayasena's Deopara inscription. Sulapani was described as the 'crest jewel' of Varendraka – Shilpigosthi which has been translated as the 'Guild of the Varendra Artists.'<sup>31</sup> Over and above, the scholars of Varendra Research Society, like Sarasi Kumar Saraswati, Nrirodbandhu Sanyal, Nanigopal Majumdar, Tarapada Bhattacharya, kshitish Chandra Sarkar, Mukhleusr Rahman and so on followed a line of study and research on the artifacts of this school of art and put up a prosperous history of the same. Among them, the input of the first three scholars was massive. Saraswati worked on '*Art & Archaeology of Bengal*'<sup>32</sup> as the third post graduate research scholar of the Society. Moreover, he wrote down a huge number of research articles and volumes which helped out to attain the place of one of the authorities on the art of Gauda. The position of Nirodbandhu Sanyal would be the next in this regard.

In conclusion it won't be erroneous to assert that the Varendra Research Society has facilitated the Bengalees in obtaining knowledge of their antique art and culture. The Bengalees as a race, hence, be supposed to be appreciative to the Society for their contribution in rediscovering their outstanding artistic legacy.

## Notes & References

1. Yudhisthir was not, obviously a historical character. He was the symbol of an honest and pious man which was a character of the great epic *Mahabharata*.
2. In the work, *History in the Vernacular*, the authors have raised question about that there was no history writing in India before colonialism and they suggests that careful readings reveal distinctly indigenous historical narratives. To them, those narratives might be embedded within non-historical literary genres, such as poems, ballads and works within the itihasha- purana tradition, but they are marked by discursive signs that allow them to be recognized as historical.
3. In the work *Cultural Pasts: Essays in Early Indian History*, Romila Thapar explored the society of the heroes in the epics and the later tradition of venerating the hero through a new viewpoint. Accordingly she gave a new life to the character Shakuntala.
4. Dilip Kumar Chakravarti, *India: An Archaeological History*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, p. 1.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Ramaprasad Chanda, *Gaudarajamala*, VRS, 1912, republished by Nababharat publishers, Calcutta, 1975, p. 1.
7. With the help of the information of Megasthenese in *Indica*, Diodorus jotted down that the river Ganges was flowing through the eastern boundary of the Gangaridoi and finally merged with the sea water.
8. Nanigopal Majumdar (ed.), *Inscriptions of Bengal*, Volume- III, VRS, 1929, p. 60.
11. Ramaprasad Chanda, *op. cit.* p.2, See *Introduction* of this book written by D. C. Sircar.

12. Ramaprasad Chanda, *Itihase Bangali*(Collection of Essays of Ramaprasad Chanda), K. P. Bagchi & Company, Calcutta, 1981(1997), See Preface by Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, pp. ix- x.
13. *Ibid.* p. 40.
14. *Ibid.* p. 44.
15. Akshaya Kumar Maitra, *Gaudalekhamala*, Varendra Research Society, 1912, republished by Sanskrita Pustak Bhandar, Calcutta, 2004, p.6.
16. *Monographs No- 7*, VRS, 1949, See Foreword of R. C. Majumdar.
- 17., Akshaya Kumar Maitra, *The Fall of the Pala Empire*, University of North Bengal, 1987, See Introduction by D. C. Sirkar, p. i.
18. Nanigopal Majumdar (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. v.
19. *Op cit.*, Appendics, p. 166.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
22. Shas- ud- din Ahmed (ed.), *Inscriptions of Bengal*, volume- IV, VRM, 1960, p. vii.
23. Ramesh Chandra Majumdar, Radhagovinda Basak & Nanigopal Banerji (ed.), *The Ramacaritam* of Sandhyakaranandin, VRM, 1939, p. v.
24. Sarat Kumar Ray, ‘Uttarbanger Pratnasampad,’ an article in *Uttarbanger Puratatta: Sankhpta Itihas*, University of North Bengal, 2005, p. 10.
25. Nanigopal Majumdar (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 3.

26. *Ibid.* p. 100.

27. Mukhlesur Rahman expressed his feelings regarding the sculptures in such manner in the Report of the working of the Varendra Research Museum, from August 14, 1947 to June 30, 1969, p. 7.

28. Sarat Kumar Ray, *Presidential Address*, 1319 B. S.

29. *Monographs*, No- 1, p. 12.

30. *Letter*(11 Baishakh 1319) which had been written to Ardhendu Kumar Ganguly by Akshaya Kumar Maitra, presently attached in *Akshaya Kumar Maitra : Jibon O Sadhana* by Nirmal Chandra Choudhury, University of North Bengal, 1984, pp. 173- 174.

31. Majumdar, Nanigopal (ed.), *op. cit.*, 45.

32. *Annual Report for the year 1931- 32.*

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## Epilogue

In the preceding pages an attempt has been made to outline a portrait of a pioneering historical research institution of Indian subcontinent- Varendra Research Society. Therefore throughout the present work efforts have been made to explore the activities and achievements of the Varendra Research Society on the basis of materials collected from various research and academic institutions.

In fact the historical researches in Bengal as well as India particularly in scientific style was started with the foundation of Colonial rule. The foremost initiatives were undoubtedly taken up by the British scholars and it was gradually followed by the Indians. Sir William Jones seems to be the pioneer in this regard because of his involvement in establishing Asiatic Society. Yet, in examining the sources it has been found that notwithstanding the presence of Asiatic Society, in reality, till the eighth decade of the nineteenth century, neither in Bengal nor in India there was an ambience of historical culture in the truest sense. Although a few disjunctive surveys were conducted in Bengal by the Britishers like Buchanan Hamilton, Alexander Cunningham, Ravenshaw and Westmacott. But those hardly contributed to the composition of the ancient history of Bengal. Around the end of eighties of the nineteenth century the consciousness about history seemed to have got a greater flow. Thus in such ripened circumstances a number of research societies and institutions gradually got growing in Bengal from the last decade of Nineteenth and first decade of Twentieth century. Lord Curzon too, certainly contributed to generate a momentum towards historical research in this country by escalating curiosity towards the preservation of Indian monuments. Accordingly, the Bengal Academy of Literature (changed to Bangiya Sahitya Parishad ) came into existence in 1893. Calcutta Historical Society, an organization

of the British officials was formed in 1907 to congregate a goodly pile of information of old Calcutta. Similarly, the Varendra Research Society was founded in 1910 in Rajshahi, presently in Bangladesh.

It is to be noted that being one of the epicenters of ancient Bengal the Varendra region as well as Northern Bengal possessed a huge archaeological evidences, the major ingredient of writing the ancient history. It was revealed that this was the most crucial factor which strongly tempted the dedicated intellectuals like Akshay Kumar Maitra, Sarat Kumar Ray and Ramaprasad Chanda to establish an organization for the rediscovery of early history of Bengal. The germination of such an idea of research institute was also influenced by the inspiration of many Bengali thinkers. Ultimately the idea was materialized as Varendra Research Society. The details have however been described in chapter- I.

To fulfill the vision of rediscovery of early history of Bengal, the Varendra Research Society had carried out a number of missions like, I) Collection of antiquities through exploration and excavation; II) Research and III) Publication.

On or after its humble beginning the Varendra Research Society, slowly but steadily emerged as a flourished institution owing to its multifocal activities. It has been shown in our research that how it carried out regular exploration and short investigatory tours in various corners of Varendra region as well as other parts of Bengal and a few extra regions of Indian subcontinent. In fact because of this action its museum (VRM) has become a magnificent edifice containing the unique relics of the past. And these relies containing sculptures, inscriptions, coins, terracotta, manuscripts etc are essential for the reconstruction of any sphere for the history of ancient Bengal. It is regarded that the base of a race depends on the richness of its history. The huge collection of Varendra Research Museum indicates the richness of the early history of the Bengalees. Being successful in the scheme of exploration

the Society put its endeavor to excavate some archaeological sites of Northern Bengal. The standard excavation of some sites through this private Society is the earliest of its category in India. These attempts of excavation of the Society contributed in some degree to make known the unknown history of the early period of Bengal. For citation mention may be made of Paharpur excavation. The detailed has been discussed in chapter-III.

Varendra Research Society impressed the intellectual world not only through its exploration and excavations or by collecting huge ingredients of history, but proved itself as a multifocal institution all the way through its other missions of research and publication. Actually the skill and expertise of the Society's scholars, indeed, assisted the Society to develop itself into a proper centre for research. The library of Varendra Research Society has also become the most dependable centre of research in the field of any of the periods of Bengal's history and this has got a due focused in our research in the relevant chapter. Hence the Society became successful to bring into reality a flock of shining scholars like, Akshay Kumar Maitra, Ramaprasad Chanda, Nanigopal Majumder, Nirodbandhu Sanyal, Sarashikumar Saraswati, Upendranath Ghoshal, Radhagobindo Basak, and many others, almost all of whom became eminent in the academic world. These scholars contributed a number of original as well as path breaking works and articles. In this respect we should cite the paradigm of *Gaudarajamala*, the first scientific work of early history of Bengal. Similarly we should cite example of *Gaudalekhamala, Inscription of Bengal: Volume III*, as indispensable source books for the ancient history of Bengal. The thorough study on the inscriptions has let us to deal with some issues which might have been left out for a long time.

Thus it appears that the Society has contributed a lot for the sake of historical research and if anyone is to think about the publication trend of the Society, which has been presented

in the chapter no- III, there cannot be doubt at all concerning the vision and mission of the institution.

The dissertation has also presented issues relating to the translations of historical and classical texts(detailed in chapter III) and it is likely that such efforts on the part of the institution has opened many dimensions of historical research undertaken by the scholars during the colonial period and thereafter.

The importance of history of art can hardly be ignored and the Varendra Resaerch Society has contributed a lot in this respect. Our research in this dissertation has presented a detailed study on the subject and at the same time it has recorded the planning and purpose of the museum of the Society for the development of the area mentioned.

Thus it may be observed that though the Varendra Research Society had to run through a number of problems and challenges (detailed in chapter IV), the untiring efforts and commitments of its members and scholars had contributed to develop itself as one of the most renowned research institution in the Indian subcontinent. The fame of this institution was not only restricted to Indian subcontinent, rather it became successful to attain recognition worldwide in some extent. Hence we can see that the secretary general of the United Nations invited the Varendra Research Museum to send a delegate to the UNESCO during the period 17<sup>th</sup> August to 6<sup>th</sup> September, 1949. Even though the partial liability of the museum transferred to a separate committee o administration in 1937, the research works were continued with the same flow. And after the extinction of the Society in 1963 and shifting of the museum to the hands of the University of Rajshahi at least the research work still has been continuing by the scholars of Bangladesh and by the outsiders from different parts of the world.

As a final point it may be stated that the documents and materials collected and preserved in the museum and library would always be source of inspiration to the scholars at large and it is likely that days and after this motivation might reveal some new dimensions which are still untouched. Therefore the name and fame of Varendra Research Society will remain undamaged until and unless the Indological studies come to an end.

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## APPENDICES

### A: Government Notification of 1937 regarding the transfer of partial liability of the museum and library from VRS to the Govt. of Bengal

#### NOTIFICATION.

THE CHARITABLE ENDOWMENTS ACT, 1890.—No. 3227 Mis.—6th November 1937.—Whereas by Deed of Trust, dated the 27th day of November 1919, made between SARAT KUMAR ROY of the first part the said SARAT KUMAR ROY, PRATIVA NATH ROY, AKSHOY KUMAR MAITRA, ROMA PROSAD CHANDA and MOHENDRA KUMAR SAHA CHOWDHURY (hereinafter referred to as "the Trustees") of the second part AND VARENDRA RESEARCH SOCIETY (hereinafter referred to as "the Society") of the third part the said Sarat Kumar Roy transferred unto the Trustees messuages buildings land hereditaments and tenements fully described in the First Schedule hereto (hereinafter referred to as "the said premises") UPON TRUST that they the said Trustees or the survivor or survivors of them or the successors of such survivors or their or his assigns shall and do from time to time and at all times permit and suffer the said premises to be used, occupied, enjoyed, applied and appropriated as and for a place of public Museum for exhibition and location of archaeological, anthropological, historical and other relics books manuscripts and library and for such of the objects of the Society as may with the sanction of the Trustees be determined by the Council of Management of the

## **B: Present Status of Varendra Research Museum**

Nuber of Galleries – 8

„ „ Store room- 7

„ „ Office room-2

„ „ Chambers - 6

„ „ Library- 1 (there are more than 15000 copies in the library)

„ „ employees - 41

„ „ Secuirity personnel-10

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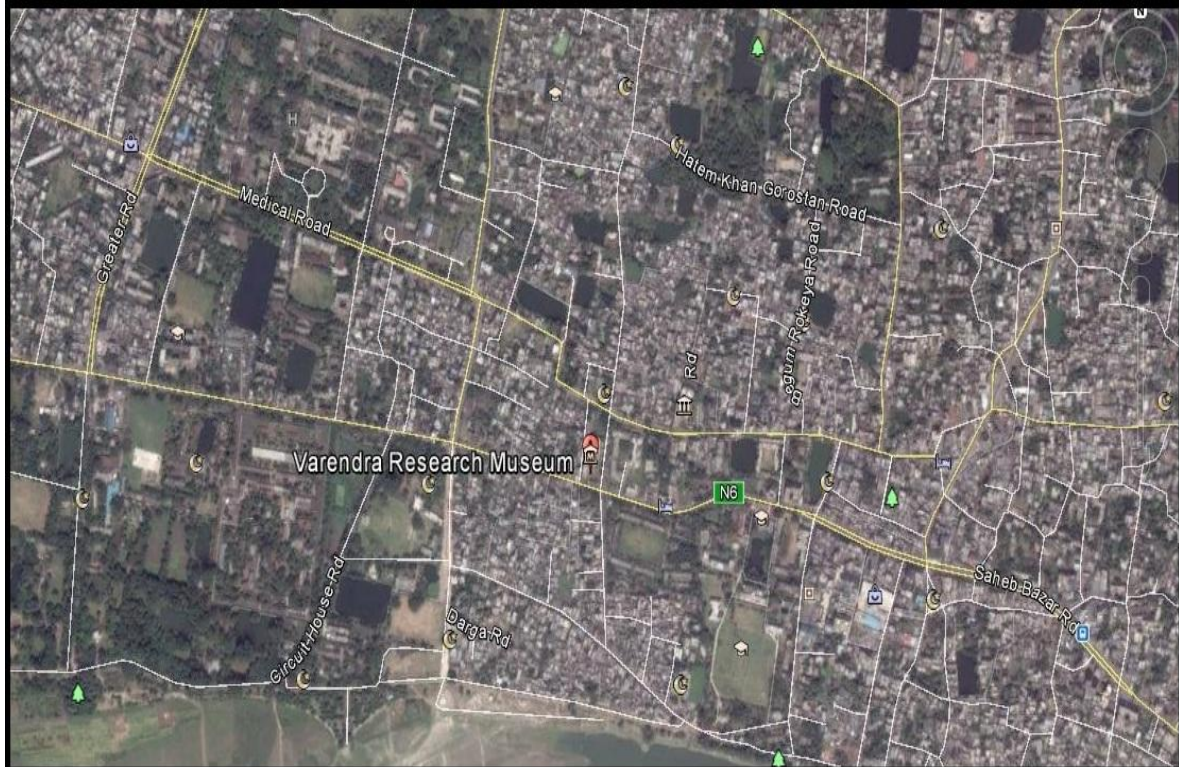
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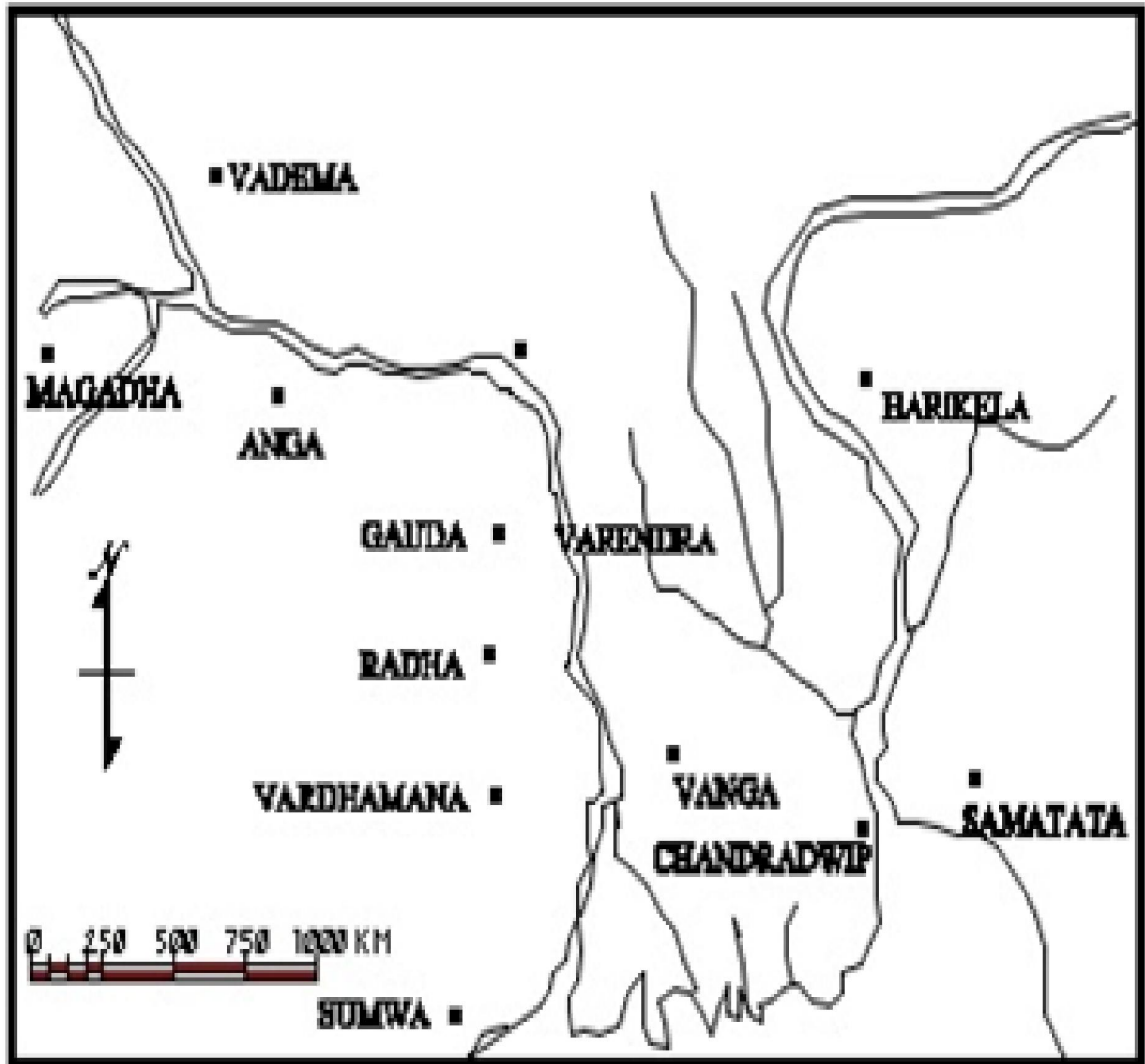
## MAPS

Map- I: Map of Rajshahi with the location of Varendra Research Museum



Map-II Varendra with other ancient regional divisions of Bengal

### ANCIENT MAP OF VARENDRA REGION

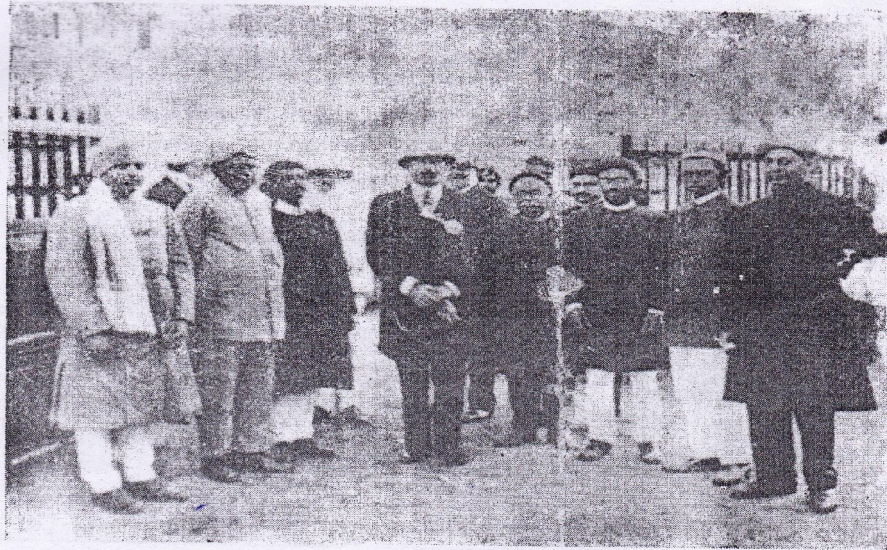


## PLATES

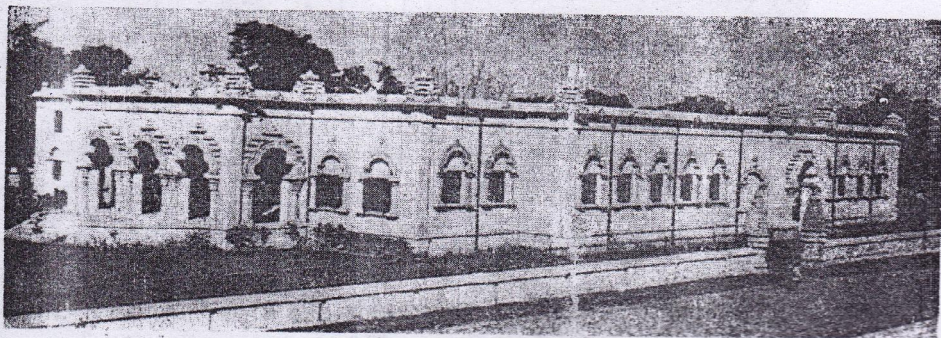
A: Photograph of an exploration:



**B:**

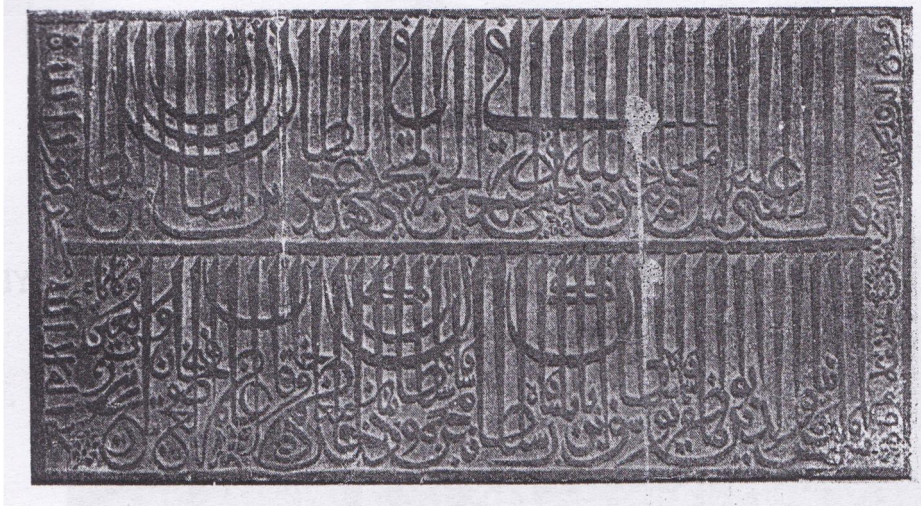
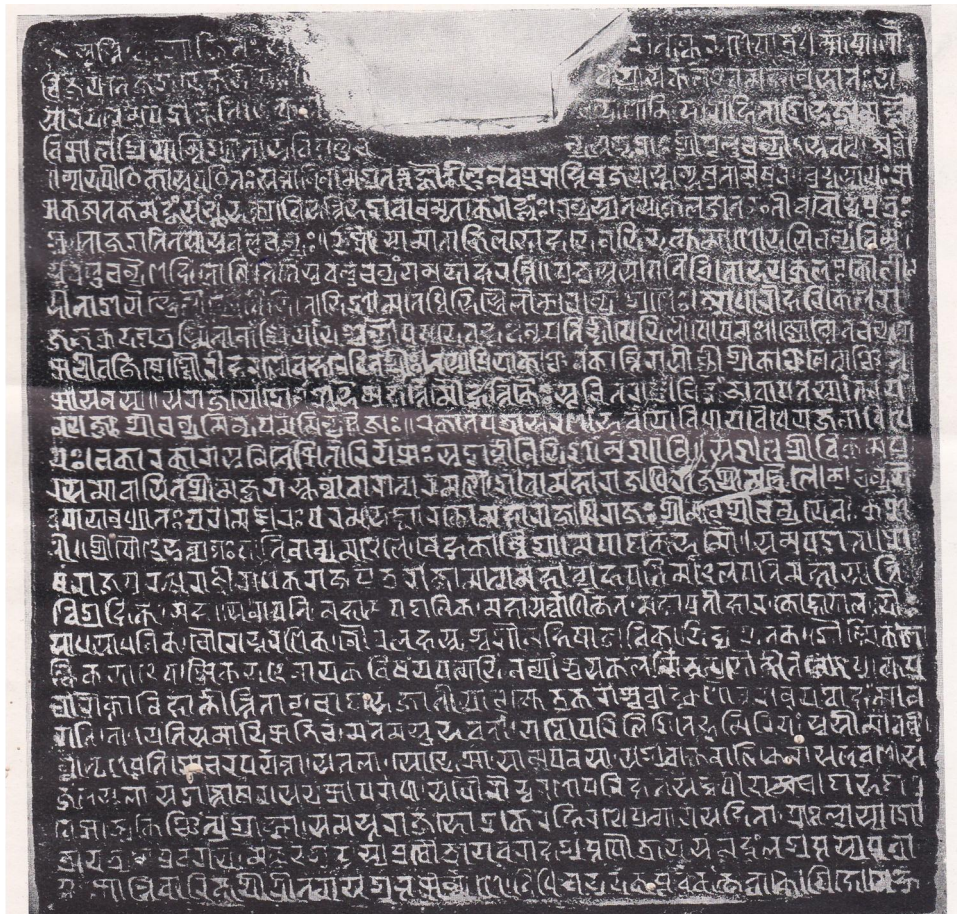


a. Lord Ronaldshay after opening the Museum building on 27 November 1919. On his right, R. P. Chanda, A. K. Maitra and Kumar Sivashekharesvara Ray of Taherpur. Kumar Sarat Kumar Ray standing at extreme right.



b. The Museum building after completion, 1919.

C: Rampal copperplate of Srichandra & Arabic stone inscription of the time of Sultan Samal-Din Yusuf Shah



**D: Photograph of some sculptures of Varendra Research Museum**





a.Ardhanarisvara



b.Manasa

SCULPTURE IN THE VARENDRA RESEARCH MUSEUM



Obverse

Reverse

*Plate 138.* Twin Garuḍa. Stone. From Chandpur Gomastapur, Nawabganj (Rajshahi).

SCULPTURE IN THE VARENDRA RESEARCH MUSEUM



Plate 30. Mañjuśrī, Standing. Stone.  
From Bihar, India.

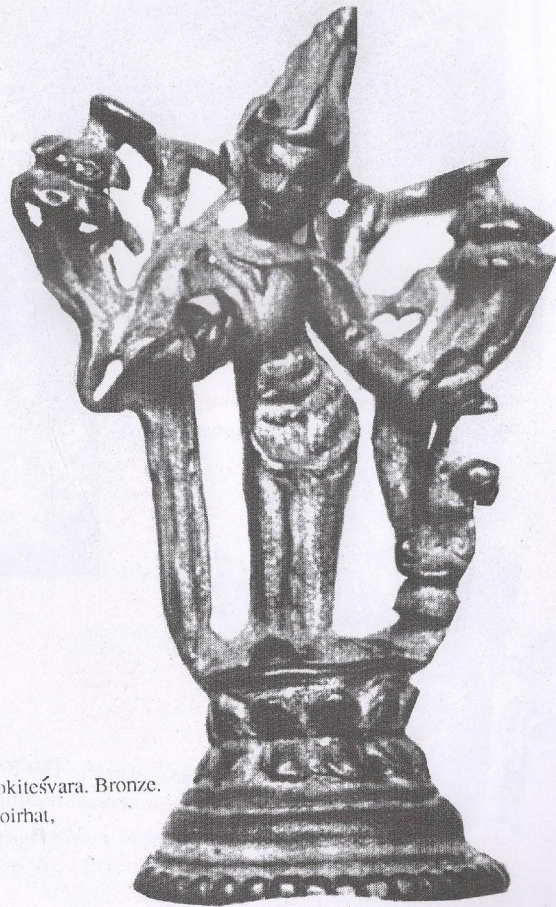


Plate 31. Standing Avalokiteśvara. Bronze.  
From Mangalbari, Dhamoirhat,  
Naogaon (Rajshahi)

SCULPTURE IN THE VARENDRA RESEARCH MUSEUM



*Plate 57.* Khadiravaṇī Tārā, seated. Bronze.  
Provenance unknown.

567

SCULPTURE IN THE VARENDRA RESEARCH MUSEUM



*Plate 240. Sūrya. Seated. Stone. Provenance unrecorded.*

680



*Plate 331.* Head and Bust of a Tree Goddess.  
Stone. From Gulai, Godagari, Rajshahi.

735



*Plate 315.* Yakṣa Couple, Stone. From  
Deopara, Godagari, Rajshahi.

726

SCULPTURE IN THE VARENDRA RESEARCH MUSEUM



*Plate 128.* Nṛsiṃha. Stone. From Tilna.  
Dinajur district.

614

SCULPTURE IN THE VARENDRA RESEARCH MUSEUM



*Plate 122.* Balarāma. Stone. From Haripur, Shibganj, Nawabganj (Rajshahi).

## Stimulation of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee & Rabindranath Tagore in Establishing Historical Research Institutions in Bengal: A Case Study of Varendra Research Society

Dinesh Chandra Ray<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>(Dept of History, Southfield College (Loreto College), Darjeeling, India)

**Abstract:** Historical researches had come into view in Bengal as well as India with the foundation of British rule, particularly, after the establishment of Asiatic society. Some British individuals like Wilkins, Buchanan and Cunningham too had involved themselves in this regard. Yet, due to paucity of time, none of them succeeded, either to make an uninterrupted exploration extensively, or to reconstruct the accurate history of Bengal, particularly of Ancient Bengal. Moreover the British scholars, from their biased and motivated outlook, had painted bleak images of Indian rulers. On the other hand, at that time, the Bengalees were quite unaware of it. Actually, there was absence of an ambience of historical cultural in the truest sense. Additionally there was the deficiency of written history, particularly of ancient period of Bengal. Consequently, the task of inculcating the ancient history of Bengal was much complicated one. Due to all these, thinkers like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore even during the eighties of the nineteenth century had to lament and cry for the history of Bengal vis-à-vis Bengalees. Their grievances and appeal, however, finally had stirred the intellectuals of Rajshahi, like Akhaya Kumar Maitra, Sarat Kumar Ray and Ramaprasad Chanda who set up a research institution called Varendra Research Society to reconstruct the accurate history of Bengal.

**Keywords**—Atthasatit Chitra, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee & Rabindranath Tagore, Gaudarajyasala, Varendra.

Historical researches in Bengal, broadly speaking in scientific style, seem to have started with the establishment of British rule in India. The foremost initiatives were, however, taken up by the British scholars and it was gradually followed by the Indians. Sir William Jones may be regarded as one of the pioneer researchers in the discovery of India's past. Although Jones was not the earliest among the Orientalists, he seems to be the primary one to think in terms of foregrounding an enduring institution for Oriental studies and researches at a grand scale in this country. In 1784, he founded the Asiatic society "for enquiry into the history and antiquities, arts, science and literatures of Asia" (*Journal of the Asiatic society of Bengal*, 1832). This Asiatic Society had inspired in establishing a few other research societies and institutions, government and non-government, in various parts of India. The aims and objectives of all these societies and institutions were directed more or less, to explore and record the aspects of regional and local history and culture. The Varendra research Society (Varendra Anusandhan Samiti) was among one of these societies which was established in Rajshahi, now in Bangladesh, in the year 1910, primarily with the objective of "sequential investigation of evidences in Varendra [1] region". [2]

Keeping the influence and inspiration of the Asiatic Society of Bengal and the absence of written history [3], particularly of ancient period in view, it is to be mentioned that the establishment of a historical research society at Rajshahi, was the result of a different set of factors.

Among them, the influence of the grievances expressed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore in their writings related to history regarding the paucity of documentation was imperative one.

The foundation of the Varendra Research Society might have been directly or indirectly influenced by the historical contemplations and discontentment expressed by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore. Actually the absence of an authentically documented scripted history of Bengal cum Bengalees even during the 80s of the nineteenth century had annoyed both Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and Rabindranath Tagore. Bengalees did not have a history—this misconception had turned into a maxim. [4] The lack of interest among the Bengalees regarding historical practices had augmented their frustration. For these reasons we can find that Bankim Chandra Chatterjee had not only pleaded for historical studies but also emphasized upon the importance of writing of history through his various essays like *Muscle power of the Bengalees* ('Banglar Balvaha'), *The Disgrace of India* ('Bharatkalanka'), *A Few Words Regarding the History of Bengal* ('Banglar Itihas Samasodha koeki Kaha'), *The Disgrace of Bengal* ('Banglar kalanka') and many others.

Out of his frustration from the unavailability of any written history of Bengal, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee had lamented that: the history of Greenland has been written; even that of Maori people/people of

Rajasthan) is on page; however, the land that was constituted of the places like Gour-Tamralipta-Saptagram etc. that land has no documented history in writing. According to him, the reason behind this is not scarcity of the components of writing history, but rather, the lack of any investigation.

In 1881, the editor of *Bangadeshaban* had tried to inspire his readers by stating that it is the obligation of a race to write down its history. Instigating the people to fulfill this responsibility, Bankim Chandra has written:

There is no accessible history of Bengal, whatsoever is there is not history, rather fictions—only some narratives of the alien, invaders of Bengal and their biographies. We claim for the history of Bengal, else Bengal will be short of conviction. Who will write?

You will write, I will write, all of us will be writing it. Anyone who is a Bengalee needs to scribble it down. Even if the mother is dead, yet what delight in retelling her accounts? And since this Bengal, the land of our birth is our universal mother, and then is there no obvious enjoyment in chronicling about her? [5]

Rabindranath has called it an appetite for history. [6] After the death of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee in 1894, the cause was taken up by Rabindranath. Under his editorial, the Bengali journal entitled *Sadbono* started publishing essays related to the history of Bengal. In the preface to the first volume of *Aitihashik Chitra*, Tagore has written:

...in memorizing entirely the history written by others, one might become an scholar or might score high marks in the examination, however, the impetus that is required in indigenous writing of history by collecting the native historical ingredients, that results not into eruditeness alone. That will create current in the stagnant pool of our mindscape. That instigation, that endeavor will enliven us. [7]

Regarding the commencement of the writing of the history of Bengalees by the Bengalee themselves, Tagore has written: "There is no harm in taking assistance from others so far as collection is concerned, but we should strengthen ourselves in the our resourcefulness." [8]

In reality, in response to Bankim's clarion call, the successful lawyer like Akshaya Kumar Maitra has taken up the nurturing of history through the collection of historical components, as his vocation. Saifuddin Chaudhury, a renowned historian of present Rajasthan has also assumed that Akshaya Kumar had realized the genuineness of Bankim Chandra's disappointment and thereby got motivated in his aspirations. [9] In this context, Saifuddin sahib has mentioned of Akshaya Kumar's play, *Golan Hazaar*. In *Golan Hazaar* Akshaya Kumar has himself written: "Due to the death of our indigenous history, we have become the object of ridicule by the foreigners... we don't write our history; don't show deserving respect to someone who is writing history; whether it is ancient or modern, we are equally indifferent to all. Presently in the newly awakened realm of Bengali literature, fictions are acclaimed more day by day. On the other hand, due to people's apathy, history of our land is getting dormant. Whatever is flourishing in the name of history is in majority, a mere derivation of the conclusions drawn by the foreign writers." [10]

The fact that Akshaya Kumar Maitra has got stimulated by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, gets further support from the writing of Akshaya Kumar's follower, Rajendralal Acharya: "I do remember—we the school and college students had congregated together to condole on Bankim Chandra's demise...the entire hall was packed up. Akshaya Kumar's self-composed essay got read out in front of the multitudes by his own sweet voice. ...Intense reverence for Bankim Chandra got expressed in Akshaya Kumar's speech." [11]

However, Bankim Chandra could not witness the activities of his devotee, because, he expired (1894) few months before the publication of Akshaya Kumar's highly acclaimed book, *Srijanadibab*. *Aitihashik Chitra* got published after a lapse of five years. Rabindranath happened to be Akshaya Kumar's friend. On account of Tagore's profound interest, Akshaya Kumar had started publishing his quarterly historical journal *Aitihashik Chitra*. [12]

Ramaprasad Chanda was so very influenced by reading Bankim Chandra's essays related to history that he could not stop himself from meeting Bankim Chandra. In that interaction with Bankim Chandra he had expressed of his preparation of writing an authentic history of Bengal. Having motivated him, Bankim Chandra recommended him to go for an effortful collection of evidences. [2] Ramaprasad Chanda confessed of Bankim Chandra's influence upon him in his account entitled *Bankim Chandra O Banglar Itihas*.

"...having going through this touching episode, many Bengalee Youth aspiring to be poets had got inclined towards history. Having invited to play the leading role in the discourse of historical criticism, I feel honoured and whatever hard work I have undertaken, seems to be successful." [13]

The cultural and majestic, Sarat Kumar Roy too was stimulated by the works of Bankim Chandra, which gets evident by his own statements:

"... how is it possible that the land with places like Gour, Tamralipta, Saptagram, does not poses a history? It is unfortunate that till date, no one could have apprehended the element of grievance that was implicit in this prophetic interrogation of Bankim Chandra." [14]

At this juncture, question might arise that, despite the fact that Bankim Chandra and Rabindranath had personally instigated Akshaya Kumar, Sarat Kumar and Ramaprasad, yet what relation does bear with the

establishment a society? The answer to this question finds its germination in the following announcement of Bankim Chandra:

"Come let's work together for investigating the history of the Bengalees. Let them work as per their competence; a little fire flies illuminates far off places. This is not a task for single hand, together we must accomplish it." [15] The implication is that it is a universal work, a collective responsibility for it is to rescue the history of Bengal vis-à-vis Bengalees.

Bankim Chandra, Rabindranath Tagore followed by Akshaya Kumar, Sarat Kumar and Ramaprasad had all suffered from the distortion of history of India in general and Bengal in particular. The former, by their pointed writing had tried to inspire the educated Bengalees to be historically engaged in preserving the history of Bengal from deformation. The later ones, motivated by the inspiration provided by the former, organized themselves in gathering the ingredients of history of Bengal and nurture it scientifically for the sake of clearing out the true and unmotivated history of Bengal.

The task of inculcating the ancient history of Bengal was much difficult one. Moreover the sequential explorations that was required to collect the resources for writing the ancient history of Bengal and also by comparing it with the other evidences related to Bengal's history, that were scattered all over India, was quite impossible a task for a single individual. As a solution, Varandra Research Society was set up as an institution that would symbolize collective endeavor. With the painstaking efforts of its members the Varandra Research Society was successful to carry out works of explorations adjacent to North Bengal and some other parts of Bengal, as well as few places of northern India. It also carried out works of excavations in some ancient sites of Bengal. Consequently, it has been able to assimilate the huge collection of splendid and unique relics of the past civilization of Bengal, that consisting of stone and copper plate inscriptions, sculptures, numismatic evidences, ancient documents and other antiquities of a miscellaneous nature. The relics represent successive phases of the bygone culture of the country extending from the pre Aryan times to the Mughal period. The library of the Varandra Research Society/ Varandra Research Museum has been able to secure 11075 volumes by October, 1964. These invaluable archaeological cum literary sources were indispensably required for any serious investigation, particularly the ones that were related to the political and cultural history of ancient Bengal. Henceforth, it can be affirmed that the creation of a repository of the ingredients prerequisite for scribbling down the history of Bengal, particularly that of the ancient times, is one of the major contributions made by Varandra Research Society. All of us, as Bengalees, should be indebted to Varandra Research Society for this.

Varandra Research Society, however, was not satiated in creating only a depository for the components of writing the history of Bengal. Within two years by its publication of *Gaudarajamala* and *Gaudalekhamala* has provided the required blow needed to change the conventional notion of history in Bengal. Its very release created profound commotion among the historical circuits. For, the society became beacon bearer who showed the path of writing the ancient history of Bengal on the basis of stone and copper inscriptions. It is to be noted that *Gaudarajamala* and *Gaudalekhamala* has been considered as the path breaking work concerning the ancient history of Bengal, to have been ever written in scientific procedure.

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- [3] Chatterjee, Bankim Chandra, *Banglar Itihas Samasohar Korte Korte*, in *Bankim Rajshahibor*, edited by Yugesh Chandra Rayal, Calcutta, Sahitya Samad, Part-II, 1401 B.S., p.291.
- [4] Choudhury, Sankuho & Islam, Taskeed, *Rajshahi Prastha*, Rajshahi Association, Rajshahi, 2000, p.18
- [5] *Ibid*, see also *Sahitya*, 7<sup>th</sup> year, No-1100, 1303 B.S., p.133
- [6] Chanda, Ramaprasad, *Itihasle Bangalee*, K. P. Bagchi & Company, Calcutta, 1981, Reprinted, 1997, p.46.
- [7] Chatterjee, Bankim Chandra, *Op.cit*.

### Journals:

- [8] The region is now called Varandra –recruited form of the old name Varanadi which lays on the north of the Ganges, in the colonial division of Rajshahi, between two rivers- the Mahanadi on the West and the karnasa on the East.
- [9] Ray, Sarat Kumar, *Presidential Address*, 1219 B.S.
- [10] *Aitahashil Chitra*, *Rabindra Rachanashil*, part-V, p.599
- [11] Tagore, Rabindranath, Introduction, *Aitahashil Chitra*, edited by A. K. Mitra, 1<sup>st</sup> year, part -I, Rajshahi, 1999.
- [12] *Aitahashil Chitra* op.cit. p.601
- [13] *Akshayabara*, 1144 B.S., Magha, P. 282
- [14] Hazra, Dilasa, *Akshaya Kumar Mitra and Bangla Sahityadhar*, in *Journal Of the Varandra Research Museum*, volume- VII, University of Rajshahi, 1983, p.16.
- [15] Tagore, Rabindranath, *op.cit*.