

A Resume of Celebrations

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It was a pleasant November morning, not of biting cold, nor of sweltering heat, when the centennial celebration of our historic institution started. As a pioneer in the field of higher education, Bangabasi College needs no introduction. It started modestly with 43 students on its rolls and with the passage of time developed into a huge institution imparting higher education to about six to seven thousand students every year and working in several shifts—Day, Morning, Evening and Commerce. In course of time, however, the 'shifts' blossomed into three autonomous institutions named Bangabasi Morning College, Bangabasi Evening College and Bangabasi College of Commerce.

Apart from its size, Bangabasi College can boast of its glorious heritage as a centre for nursing national spirit among the youngsters. Mr. Balaram Jakhar, former Speaker of Lok Sabha, in his message sent for the Centenary Souvenir rightly observed : "Bangabasi College, itself a product of Bengal Renaissance, helped its students in acquiring knowledge and developing critical acumen to assess the dehumanising effects of British imperialism."

Sri P. K. Bose, one of the former principals of the College recalled, "During the days of alien rule, the college

served as an asylum for political sufferers—students and teachers” Swami Lokeshwarananda, an alumnus in his Purbashrama also very correctly observed, “In our days, Bangabasi College was a National College.” To organise centenary celebrations of such an institution in a befitting manner was a stupendous task and we had all the fears whether we shall be able to be equal to the responsibilities entrusted to us.

PREPARATIONS

On the recommendation of the Teachers’ Council, Bangabasi College, the College Governing Body formed a Preparatory Committee with representatives of the staff and students of the college, the principals and teachers’ representatives of the sister colleges and the representatives of the non-teaching Employees’ Association of Bangabasi Group of Colleges. The Preparatory Committee at its meeting on 13.2.85 set forth the objectives of the centenary celebrations, outlined the broad framework of the programme to be implemented and then on the basis of an unanimous decision proposed to convert itself into the Centenary Celebration Committee with power of co-option.

One of the first things the Committee did was to have an ‘Appeal’ published in several leading English as well as vernacular newspapers, calling upon all concerned with the well being of the institution to come forward with their co-operation, contributions and counsels, to make the celebration a success. Insertions were also given in the leading dailies for the information of our alumni.

In the next meeting of the Centenary Celebration Committee dated 27.2.85, Bangabasi College Centenary Fund was created with an initial contribution of Rs. 2000/- from Bangabasi College. It was also resolved that the Bank account be opened for this purpose and it be operated jointly by the Treasurer and either of the Joint Secretaries. In the same meeting several Sub-Committees were formed each with a convener or joint convener & to ensure efficient management of the manifold activities connected with the celebrations.

A programme Sub-Committee was later formed with the conveners of all the Sub-committees, The Joint Secretaries of the Celebration Committee acted as its conveners. The Programme Sub-Committee in a number of its sessions finalised the Draft Programme for the celebration. An estimated Budget to put through the programme was then prepared by the Joint Secretaries and the Treasurer. The next step was to place the Programme and the Budget before the Centenary Celebration Committee which at its meeting held on 28.2.86 approved them with certain modifications.

It is needless to mention that the success of a celebration of this dimension depends largely on organisation, fund collection and public relations. Since the alumni of the institution in their thousands are scattered just about any where, in every walk of life both at home and abroad, it had been even exceedingly difficult task for us to contact them. We, however, resorted to every available means, ranging from newspaper insertions to sending personal letters to contact as many of them as possible.

In our programme, the plan for the development of the institution including the construction and repair of college buildings and development of its Library and Laboratories was naturally accorded priority. We, therefore, approached the concerned departments of the State as well as the Central Govt. for liberal grants. With this end in view we met Prof. Nirmal Bose, the then Education Minister, Govt. of West Bengal and the Deputy Secretary, University Grants Commission, New Delhi. We also met Dr. A. P. Mitra, Director General, CSIR, a distinguished alumnus of this institution with the request to provide necessary funds for organising national seminars on the occasion of the Centenary Celebration. We also wrote to the Department of Sports and Youth Services, Govt. of West Bengal for seminar grants. The U.G.C. did not pay any grant and we had to remain satisfied with the meagre amount of Rs. 15000/- sanctioned by the Education Department, Govt. of West Bengal. We also received a grant of Rs. 15000/- from the CSIR and a sum of Rs. 5000/- from the Sports and Youth Services Deptt., Govt. of West Bengal, for organising seminars. Collections from the alumni also fell far short of our expectations.

We, therefore, had to depend on internal resources, viz : contributions of the staff, students and the authorities of Bangabasi College, the staff and authorities of the sister colleges as well as the non-teaching employees of the Bangabasi Group of Colleges. The Teachers' Council, the Students' Union and the Employees' Association of the College made a desperate drive collecting advertisements for the Souvenir to be published at the inaugural function and also for sponsorships of the functions. But even this untiring effort left yet a big gap between our commit-

ments and collection.

Needless to say, the organizers had to pass through the most uneasy time even as the day for the inauguration ceremony was approaching. Having no other source to fall back upon, we had to appeal the Governing Body of Bangabasi College for a loan of Rs. 50000/- to the Centenary Celebration Committee. The Governing Body responded positively to our appeal and granted the loan. It is our satisfaction to note that a sum of Rs. 40.000/- had been repayed and the Principal has been requested to treat the remaining sum of Rs. 10000/- as contribution of College, with of course the approval of the Governing Body.

Precious time was lost in criticisms and controversies often over trivialities. Such was the atmosphere when the day of the 27th November dawned in 1986, we all assembled at 86, Suresh Sarkar Road, Entally, to pay our respectful homage to our illustrious founder Acharya Giris Chandra Bose. Thus the inauguration of the centennial of one of the greatest institutions of higher education started.

INAUGURATION & OPENING FUNCTION

On 27th November morning a torch procession of the teachers and students, both past and present, members of the non-teaching staff, former and present Principals and some members of the founder's family set out from the founder's house and reached the college premises, having passed through A. P. C. Road, Dharmatala Street,

Nirmal Chandra Street, Bowbazar Street, Amherst Street and Scott Lane. This impressive procession created a magnificent impact on the minds of the pedestrians and the residents of the houses along the route.

At the main entrance of the college the torch was received by Sri P. K. Bose, former Principal and an ex-student of the college. With Sri Bose holding aloft the flaming torch in the midst of an atmosphere heavily laden with the sweet notes of Bhairabi played on the senhai and the blowing of conch-shells, there was something of the ethereal that touched everyone present with a sentiment of nostalgic tenderness.

Sri P. K. Bose then hoisted the flag of the college and the statue of the founder beautifully decorated for the occasion was garlanded by him and others. At the other gate of the college, the statue of Jatin Das, an ex-student of the college, who embraced a martyr's death through his epic fast for 63 days in Lahore Jail on 13th September, 1929, was garlanded by Sudev Bhusan Ghosh, an ex-Principal and an ex-student of the college. This was followed by an address by Sri Bishnu Bera, the present Principal, welcoming the distinguished gathering in his characteristic eloquence. Among the ex-students was present Sri Sahadev Rana, a member of the Royal family of Nepal, who came all the way from Nepal to pay his respect to his alma mater on the solemn occasion. With light refreshment the flag-hoisting ceremony came to a close.

INAUGURAL FUNCTION (27.11.86)

The venue of the afternoon session was the Centenary Auditorium of the University of Calcutta. The auditorium

wore an impressive look with our distinguished guests adorning the dias and students, past and present, filling the auditorium. It was indeed a historic moment when Sri Kamal Bose, the Mayor of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation inaugurated the function as its honoured Guest-in-Chief by switching one hundred lamps in the midst of the chanting of hymns from Upanishads by Dr. Santinath Chatterjee of the Department of Philosophy. This was followed by another great moment with Swami Lokeswarananda one of the oldest and most eminent monk of the Ramakrishna Order and a distinguished alumnus of the College formally presenting a copy of the Centenary Souvenir to Sri Tushar Kanti Ghosh, the President of the inaugural session and oldest alumnus present on the occasion.

Then started the speeches. The president of the Centenary Celebration Committee, Prof. Anil Kumar Mukherjee read out his printed address. It was followed by the welcome address of Principal Bishnu Bera, working President of the Celebration Committee. The Joint Secretary of the Committee Prof. Satyajiban Chakraborty presented the Secretaries' Report and the other Joint Secretary Prof. Gobinda Chandra Banerjee read out a few of the messages received on the occasion. The Chief Guest, Sri Kamal Kumar Basu, then delivered his address highlighting the role of the institution in imparting higher learning to those who had no access to the so-called elite colleges of the city and who were economically handicapped.

This was followed by the reminiscences of the 89 years old President, Sri Tushar Kanti Ghosh, of his good days in the college, speeches of the Guest of Honour,

Prof. Nirmal Bose, Minister-in-charge of Higher Education, Govt. of West Bengal and our Special Guest, Dr. Ashesh Prasad Mitra, Director General, CSIR and an ex-student of the college. The distinguished alumni Swami Lokeswarananda and ex-Principal P. K. Bose also spoke on the occasion. All of them dwelt on the contributions of Bangabasi College to the dissemination of higher education, specially among the poor and middle class students and on the historic role of the college in the stormy days of freedom movement. We are thankful to Calcutta Doordarshan, AIR and newspapers for giving a good coverage of the function. We are also thankful to M/S Sur Enamel for donating food packets. Shortly after the tea break started the cultural function of the day in an auditorium packed to bursting. The cultural fare of the evening included an exquisite Sarod recital by Mr. Dhanesh Khan with tabla by Sri Sankar Ghosh. With the staging of the dance drama 'Chitrangada' by Santiniketan Ashramik Sangha, the curtain rang down on the first day's inaugural function.

STUDENTS' DAY (28.11.86)

On the morning of this day, a blood donation camp was set up in the College Common Room. Students in large number came forward with great enthusiasm to donate blood on the memorable occasion. In the evening, a cultural function was organised in the Centenary Hall, University of Calcutta. The function was presided over by Sri Nirmal Sikder the then Director Calcutta Doordurson and highlighted by recitations by Sri Partha Ghosh and Sm. Gouri Ghosh, Bengali songs from East-West perspectives by Sri Salil Chowdhuri, an ex-student and his Party and the

staging of drama 'Naishabhoj' by Sri Manoj Mitra and Party, was a real treat to the students.

THE STAFF DAY (29.11.86)

The main attraction of the opening session of 'the Staff Day' was a seminar on "Education in a Developing Society." The venue was the Darbhanga Hall of the University of Calcutta. A competent introduction of the subject by Prof. Birendranath Ghosh, convener of the Seminar Sub-Committee set the tone of discussion which attained great height owing to participation by such eminent speakers, as Prof. Satin Chakraborty, a veteran college teacher, Dr. Pratap Chandra Chandra, ex Education Minister, Govt. of India, Sri Kanti Biswas, Hon'ble Minister- in-charge of Secondary Education, Govt. of West Bengal and Prof. Jyoti Bandyopadhyay of the Department of Education, University of Calcutta.

A cultural function was held in the Centenary Hall in the evening. Sri Jagadish Bhattacharyya, an ex-student and former Principal of Bangabasi College of Commerce, presided over the function. Sri Bhattacharyya and the present Principal B. Bera dwelt at length on the rich heritage and glorious tradition of the institution. Then Rabindra Sangeet was presented by our ex-students Gopal Patra and Prasad Sen. The day's function was over with the staging of 'Malini' by Bohurupee.

EX-STUDENTS' DAY (30.11.86)

The last day of the first phase of centenary celebrations was for the ex-students, who met at the Darbhanga Hall, The meeting was presided over by Swami Lokeswarananda, an ex-student and Sahadev Rana, another ex-student was

the Guest-in-Chief. The President spoke at length on his reminiscences of the founder Principal G. C. Bose, specially of his patriotic fervour and his ardent devotion to the cause of education that helped Bangabasi College to carve out a pride of place in the academic life of Bengal. He also recollected the mode of teaching of some of the eminent teachers of his time like Ladli Mitra, Pulinbehari Kar and Jitendranath Chakraborty, whose magic spell attracted students from the elite colleges of the city.

Mr. Sahadev Rana, Guest-in-chief, prefaced his speech with the words "I have come to pay respect to my college in its centenary" and ended in after handing over a cheque for Rs. 20,000/-to Principal B. Bera as his contribution to the college in its centenary celebration.

The next speaker was Sri Ranjit Roy, the renowned journalist and editor of Dainik Basumati. An ex-student of 1931, Sri Roy narrated the recollections of his good old days in the college in a style that had a touch of romance about it. Prof. Yashpal, Chairman, U.G.C., attended the meeting and ably briefed by the Joint Secretary Gobinda Chandra Banerjee on the history of the College. Prof. Yashpal paid a glowing tribute to the College, for producing distinguished scholars who had been occupying prominent place in every walk of national life.

Among the distinguished ex-students who spoke in this session, mention must be specially made of the names of Sri Sudev Bhusan Ghosh, a former Principal of the College, Sri Anil Kumar Roy Chowdhuri, ex-Principal of Bangabasi Morning College, Dr. Subhas Datta, Principal of Bangabasi College of Commerce, Dr. Pranab Ranjan Ghosh, Professor of Bangali, Calcutta University, Sri Nilmani Das (Iron Man),

Sri Nurul Alam and Sri Sisir Ghosh, Cricket coach of the College.

The inaugural function came to a close with a cultural function in which Sri Shib Kumar Chattopadhyay presented 'Puratan Diner Gan.'

OBSERVANCE OF MEMORABLE DAYS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR 1987

The first phase of centenary celebrations ended on 30.11.86 but the tune set by it continued throughout the year 1987. The Centenary Celebration Committee observed Founder's Death anniversary on 1.1.87, Martyr's Day of Jatin Das on 13.9.87 and Founder's Day on 27.11.87, with due solemnity. A classmate of Late Jatin Das, Sri Haripada Bose, attended the function on the Martyr's Day. Sri Haripada Bose, an octogenarian freedom fighter described vividly how he was trained by Jatin Das in a disolate corner of the College to fire revolver. It was a fascinating narration which surcharged the minds of those who attended the function with emotion and patriotic feelings.

FESTIVAL MATCHES

In February, 1987, the Committee organised a number of Festival one-day cricket matches of the students, teachers and the non-teaching employees of the Bangabasi Group of Colleges. The committee also hosted a one-day Cricket Match between the teachers of Bangabasi College and Asutosh College, which the Bangabasi College team won.

CONCLUDING FUNCTION

The year-long celebration ended with a concluding function held on 26th December, 1987. In its afternoon session a national seminar on "Environmental Pollution-

Strategies for combating it" was organised in the Darbhanga Hall of the University of Calcutta, Prof Birendranath Ghosh, convener of the Seminar Sub-Committee, introduced the subject and the invited scholars dwelt at length on the various aspects of pollution hazards and the ecological imbalance that is threatening the existence of life on this part of the globe. Dr. Dilip Kumar Sinha, Pro-Vice Chancellor, C.U., presided over the seminar.

The evening session was held in the Centenary Hall of the University of Calcutta. Dr. Sankar Sen, Vice-Chancellor, Jadavpur University and an ex-student of this institution presided over the function, Dr. Sushil Kumar Mukherjee, ex-Vice Chancellor, C.U., was the Guest-in-Chief. Centenary mementoes were distributed among the students, past and present, teachers and the non-teaching staff. The President Dr. Sen gave away the prizes and certificates of merit to our brilliant students who obtained First class in different Honours subjects at Degree examinations during the period of celebration, 1986-87. The function as well as the centenary celebration came to a close with the drama staged by Group Theatre unit Chetna.

CENTENARY ACCOUNTS

The Joint Secretaries placed before the meeting of Centenary Celebration Committee held on 16.8.88, the account of receipts and expenditures prepared by the Treasurer and duly audited by the Internal Auditor. The Committee unanimously approved the account with a note that the balance should be spent for the publication of the Commemoration Volume.

EPILOGUE

For the grand success of this great event the credit is entirely due to the students, teachers, non-teaching staff and ex-students of the college who laboured fiercely and in unison, sometimes in trying circumstances for days on end. For the omissions and commissions, if any, the responsibility lies squarely on the Centenary Celebration Committee, particularly on its Secretaries.