

Tribute to Gopal Chandra Bhattacharya: Pioneer Science Communicator

Indian Science News Association (ISNA) and Gopal Chandra Bhattacharya Bigyan Prasara Samiti (GCBPPS) jointly paid a humble tribute to Gopal Chandra Bhattacharya, an eminent entomologist and a naturalist, on 8th April, 2024 in the N.R. Sen Auditorium, University of Calcutta (Rajabazar Campus).

The programme started with a speech by Dr. Sumitra Chaudhuri, President, GCBPPS. In her speech, she stated about the progress of science teaching and education in the early days of the 19th century. Raja Ram Mohan Roy was the first person who wanted to introduce modern science and technology in Indian education and requested Lord Armhurst to introduce it. Calcutta Medical College was founded in 1935.

Thereafter science teaching and learning started in Presidency College in 1873 and in the University of Calcutta in 1914. Dr. Chaudhuri mentioned the names of Acharya P.C. Ray and Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose who went abroad for getting higher degree and came back to teach in Presidency College. She told about Gopal Chandra Bhattacharya, who did not have any higher Indian or foreign degree, but he started studying nature since 1921. He was enthusiastic to study Bengal's very own indigenous flora and fauna. He was introduced to J.C. Bose by Pulin Behari Das. J.C. Bose was astonished by his intellect, enthusiasm and writing ability. Afterwards, Gopal Chandra worked with Prof. Satyen Bose. He made the scientific facts available to the common man of Bengal. He wrote in Bengali and was the editor of *Jnan-O-Bijan* journal.

Next speaker was Prof. Manas Chakrabarty, Honorary Secretary of ISNA. He first narrated a brief history of ISNA and humbly mentioned that many stalwarts contributed their articles in *Science*

and *Culture* published by ISNA. He proudly stated that Gopal Chandra Bhattacharya had a number of publications in *Science and Culture*. He also mentioned about the two e-papers published by ISNA, viz, *Bigyan Kahon* and *Scientifica Communica*. He requested everyone present in the hall to keep in touch with this heritage organization. Gopal Chandra Bhattacharya was born in 1895 in Bangladesh and got first division in Matriculation. Then he narrated various interesting facts about Gopal Chandra Bhattacharya's life and works. He particularly mentioned about his works on bio-luminescence and metamorphosis of tadpoles. He mentioned about the contributions of Gopal Chandra which are 14 books, 200 research papers and 18 Bengali articles. At the end of his speech, he sadly told that a man like Gopal Chandra Bhattacharya did not get respect that he deserved.

Next speaker was Dr. B.K. Mahapatra, former Principal Scientist, ICAR-Central Institute of Fisheries Education. His topic was '*Banglar Harie Jaowa Maach O Onanyo Jolojo Jiber Gurutto O Sombhabona*'. The speaker mentioned the name of various fishes that were indigenous to Bengal and were very popular and tasty. But due to certain reasons they are either extinct or endangered at present. He explained the reasons behind this. The main causes are water pollution, climate change, destruction of wetland, random entry of foreign species, single species fish culture,



L to R: Dr. Purnabasu Chaudhuri, Dr. Amit Krishna De, Dr. Sumitra Chaudhuri, Prof. Manas Chakrabarty, Dr. B.K. Mahapatra and Ms. Mala Chakraborty Bhattacharya

giving emphasis on large carp fish culture and less interest on rearing and reproduction of small fishes. He also discussed the nutritional values of different fishes. Import values of freshwater fishes, and brackish water fishes were also discussed.

Next speaker was Dr. Purnabasu Chaudhuri, Assistant Professor, Environmental Science Department, University of Calcutta. His topic was '*Gopalchandra Bhattacharjya O Kumeru Onchole Boigganik Obhijan: Sekal O Ekal*'. In his speech, he correlated Gopal Chandra Bhattacharya's articles on *kumeru*, the present south pole. He mentioned that his discoveries were always ahead of time. He mentioned that Gopal Chandra Bhattacharya was the pioneer in science communication. He mentioned the ship and Shackleton's immense contribution and narrated the story, and mentioned about Captain Scott and Amundsen. Dr. Chaudhuri told humbly that Gopal Chandra Bhattacharya introduced them to the Bengali readers through his writings. Through an interesting slide show, he narrated different expeditions and discussed how Gopal Chandra Bhattacharya wrote accurately and in details about these expeditions. He discussed various important issues, researches, training, hazards about south pole. He discussed the similarities between his writing and original south pole. Then he discussed about the present day's expeditions to south pole. He mentioned about aurora and Gopal Chandra's writing on it. He mentioned that he himself experienced the changes in climate as it was mentioned in Gopal Chandra's writing.

At the end, Dr. Amit Krishna De, Honorary Secretary of ISNA thanked everybody for attending this seminar. □

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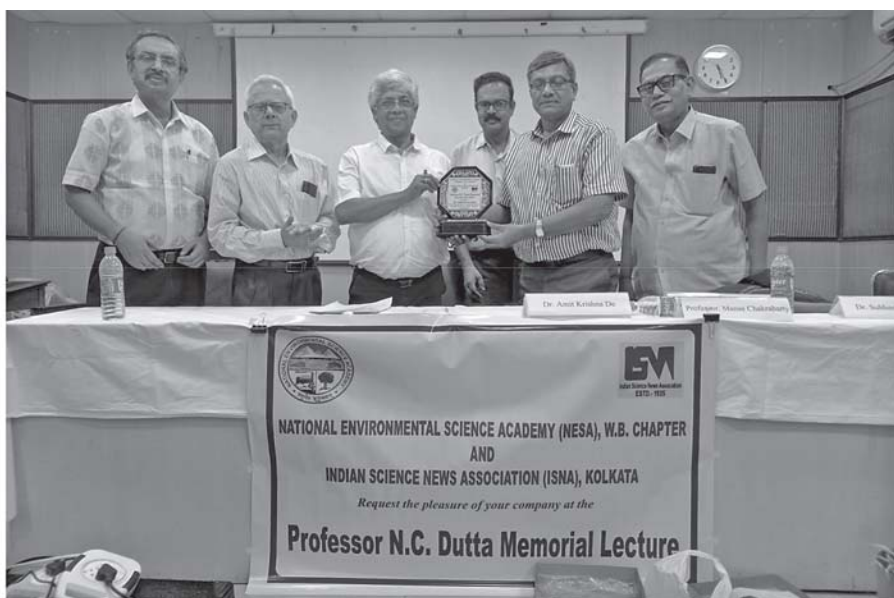
Celebration of 6th Professor N.C. Datta Memorial Lecture

The 6th Professor N.C. Datta Memorial Lecture was organised by National Environmental Science Academy (NESA), W.B. Chapter and Indian Science News Association (ISNA), Kolkata on 'Earth Day', 22nd April, 2024 at N.R. Sen Auditorium, University of Calcutta (Rajabazar Campus) at 4.30 p.m. The programme was chaired by Prof. Nimai Chandra Saha, Principal, Bidhannagar College and former Vice-Chancellor, The University of Burdwan. Dr. Amit Krishna De, Chairman, NESA, W.B. Chapter and Honorary Secretary, ISNA in his

welcome address dwelt on the rich contribution of Late Prof. N.C. Datta as former Chairman in shaping the NESA, W.B. Chapter activities over the years. He also served as Vice-President and Honorary Secretary of ISNA. Prof. Datta was a distinguished academician in the field of animal biology at University of Calcutta and also a humane person who left an indelible mark among his admirers and students with his simple and austere lifestyle.

Dr. Subhendu B. Patra, Convenor, NESA, W.B. Chapter spoke on the activities of NESA over the years and also how during the stint of Prof. Datta as Chairman, he was instrumental in increasing the membership strength of the Association by interacting with students of different colleges and institutes. Prof. Manas Chakrabarty, Honorary Secretary, ISNA introduced the speaker for the memorial lecture, Shri Subhankar Sen Gupta, a member of Indian Forest Service, West Bengal Cadre, presently posted as Chief Conservator of Forests and Director, Zoological Gardens, Alipore, Kolkata. After completing his M. Sc. in Zoology from Calcutta University and M.Sc. in Forestry from the Forest Research Institute & Colleges, Dehra Dun, he also completed the Post Graduate Diploma in Wildlife Management from Wildlife Institute of India, Dehra Dun and was awarded Gold Medal with Hons. During his long service career, he has worked mostly in the field of wildlife management and has been actively associated with the management of important species like elephants, rhinos, tigers and critically endangered vultures and has worked towards mitigation of Human-Wildlife Conflict throughout the state.

Shri Subhankar Sen Gupta in his presentation on "Conservation of Forest and Wildlife: Importance from Human Perspective" emphasised that forests are the most biologically active ecosystem in land, and home to half of the terrestrial species of plants, animals and insects. It covers 1/3 of Earth's landscape, and 2 billion people depend on forests. Forests play a most vital role in the battle against the climate change. They feed the rivers and are essential to supplying the water for nearly 50% of our larger cities. They maintain the soil fertility as well as soil moisture conservation. Scientific forest management started in 1864 in India by the Britishers in the Presidencies of Bengal, Madras, Bombay and United Provinces, though sustainable forest use was prevalent in our country from the early Ashokan Empire period. The Britishers brought Sir Dietrich Brandis, a German forester, regarded as the father of Indian forestry, from Burma and he introduced Teak, which changed the forest environment ecosystem in the country. Initially, teak was prevalent in the northeastern region, but the Britishers spread it throughout India along



L to R: Dr. Amit Krishna De, Prof. Manas Chakrabarty, Prof. Nimai Chandra Saha, Dr. Subhendu B. Patra, Shri Subhankar Sen Gupta and Prof. Prabir Kumar Saha

with local Sal plantation (already prevalent in the country) for supplying raw materials for the shipbuilding activity in England and Europe and also spreading railway infrastructure for in India and England. The emphasis was on Productivity Forestry, with harvesting of the tree and new volume of timber being grown continuously. Teak, though a very good timber and copice, but in terms of ecosystem, one of the worst species due to presence of toxins in the falling leaves and it does not allow growth of other species as undergrowth, *vis a vis* Sal, which being a native species, allows luxuriant different stories of undergrowth trees and shrubs. So introduction of monoculture teak wiped out the animal and other biodiversity in vast tracts of the country. The vast grasslands in Northern India, extending from Afganisthan to Bihar, which was home to wild animals, including lion and rhinoceros, were burnt and brought under sal plantation for its timber use during the British period. The net result is a modification in the habitat of different grassland species. He also focussed on the policy shift in our Constitution. After independence, the emphasis was on increasing productivity, for production forestry, and this system continued till the '60s. With increasing population requiring more land for homestay agriculture and food, people started killing animals for meat and recreation / sport. As a result, the number of animals started decreasing drastically in the late '60s and early '70s. In 1972, the

Wildlife Protection Act was introduced, which put a ban on killing and capturing of animals and Project Tiger was introduced in 1973 to have a better management of tigers. The Indian Constitution was amended to the 42nd Amendment in 1976, where the Directive Principles of Policy related to Forest and Wildlife was introduced for protecting forest and environment and from Production Forestry it changed to Protection Forestry. The concept of Joint Forest Management for sustainable development was introduced where every revenue earned by the forest will be shared with people. It started with 25% and in West Bengal it is now 40%.

The invaluable role of forests in carbon sequestration to reduce carbon concentration in the environment were also discussed. The *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation measures were highlighted. Conservation breeding through shining examples of breeding of vultures in Rajabhatkhawa Alipurduar and Bataguri Baska in the Sundarbans under his stewardship was highlighted. Under captive breeding, the Manipur dancing deer, endemic to Loktak Lake in Manipur, was introduced in Kolkata Zoo and successfully bred there.

The Chairman of the session, Prof. Nimai Chandra Saha, in his speech appreciated Shri Subhankar Sen Gupta for presenting an exhaustive overview of the history of wildlife conservation in our country including its different facets, the policy changes brought forward in our constitution for wildlife conservation, invaluable work done *in situ* and *ex situ* conservation in our state. He also presented a memento to the speaker on the occasion.

Professor Prabir Kumar Saha, Honorary Treasurer, ISNA presented the customary Vote of Thanks. Dr. Srabanti Basu, Member of Executive Committee, NESA, W.B. Chapter and past student of ISNA anchored the whole programme. □

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