

Dr. S.K Bhuyan:
a birth - centenary tribute

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While I am going to write a few lines on Dr. Surya Kumar Bhuyan on the occasion of his birth centenary, the remark of William Gerard Hamilton (an English man) on the death of that ever-memorable English poet, critic, Scholar and lexicographer Dr. Johnson (Samuel Johnson-b 1700-d. 1784) came to my mind. Hamilton said, "Johnson is dead. – Let us go to the next best: - there is nobody; no man can be said to put you in mind of Johnson." (Quoted in Boswell's "Life of Johnson"). Dr. Surya Kumar Bhuyan breathed his last on July 5, 1964. It pains me to state that during this period of 30 years to 1994, Assam could not produce any one who could aptly fill the vacuum created by Dr. Bhuyan's death. Works which have been left undone by him are not yet touched by any one. There is nobody, no man can be said to put in mind of Surya Kumar Bhuyan. In my humble opinion, this prolonged vacuum is a great national tragedy. There is only one 'Surya' (the sun) in this visible earth and in the same vein I feel like stating that only one Surya Kumar Bhuyan was produced by Assam.

Mr. Chen Ning Yang a China born-US scientist, who secured Nobel Prize in physics in 1957, wrote how methodical was Mr. Enrico Fermi (who secured Nobel Prize in 1938 and who was a rare combination of both theoretical and experimental excellence). "He used his time very effectively and efficiently. He kept systematic notes in a language that was clearly designed for himself. If somebody raised a problem, he would say, 'let me think, I had worried about this in the year 1927' and then he would pull out his notes of 1927 and look at the index. Usually he could find it very fast and then would proceed to explain the answer. It required tremendous will power and discipline to keep such systematic notes. I tried but could not follow Fermi's method. However, I realized its value and would say that his great solidity as a physicist was derived from his conscious effort towards systematizing what he had acquired as knowledge."

What Mr. Chen said about Mr. Fermi is squarely applicable to the case of Dr. Bhuyan. He had tremendous will power and discipline to keep systematic notes. His great solidity as a historian was derived from his conscious effort towards systematizing what he had acquired as knowledge.

Unless he used his time effectively and efficiently and kept notes systematically, unless he made conscious efforts towards systematizing what he had acquired as knowledge, he could not have authored 14 books in English, 7 Reports and bulletins, 20 books in Assamese, 12 volumes of old Ballads and chronicles edited by him, more than 66 articles in English, more than 86 articles in Assamese, one unpublished lecture. ('The Military System of the Assamese People'). Sir Michael Keane, Governor of Assam from 1932 to 1937 said about Dr. Bhuyan on April 4, 1936 as follows: 'The Professor unites energy with scholarship, method with enthusiasm....' And if Dr. Bhuyan had not written the biographies of Lachit Barphukan, Anundoram Borooah and Rajeswara Simha, probably we would have been deprived of such biographies.

As a poet, Surya Kumar Bhuyan had shown talents which would have equaled him with Rabindra Nath. It was what the 'The Statesman' of Calcutta in its issue dated September 14, 1917 wrote: 'There is compensation in all things, however, and as Sir Rabindra Nath's Poetical star is apparently about to set, another has arisen this on the horizon of far Assam. Mr. S. K. Bhuyan of Jorhat has sent us a copy of his poem "Ye sons of England" which has a swing and lift of its own....'

It is not known to this writer whether Rabindra Nath Tagore had read the poems of any other Assamese writer except those of Surya Kumar Bhuyan. Tagore expressed his delights when he had read the poems of Bhuyan's 'Nirmali'. Tagore wrote to Bhuyan: ' It is difficult to express an opinion on poems written in a language over which one has no command. As far as I have understood, you have brought through the medium of Assamese language the stream of unfettered poetical effusion of the present age, it is through this means that there will be in your literature the pulsation of the new age.'

Nobel Laureate Professor C. V Raman wrote: "It was a piece of good fortune for me to have met Dr. Bhuyan today.... The record of Publications put forth by him during these years is a most remarkable and impressive one of which any university might justifiably feel proud." And this is what Jawaharlal Nehru wrote, "Dr. Bhuyan has kindly shown me some of the manuscripts that he has in his collection. They were remarkable and valuable from the historical point of view.... A number of publications has been issued; more await publication. I hope this good and important work will continue..." The man who wrote the "Discovery of India" could really appreciate the magnitude of achievement made by Dr. Bhuyan. Mr. Lakshmi Nath Phukan wrote in his book " Mahatmarpara Rupkonworoloi" about how Dr. Radhakrishnan respected Dr. Bhuyan, and C. Rajagopalachari wrote to Dr. Bhuyan, " By a happy incident I glanced through the pages until Seven Hindrances attracted my attention, and I stopped to read it all, and I did so with intense pleasure... If you had not sent me your booklet I would have missed a most beautiful and true exposition of philosophy of life."

How Dr. Bhuyan reached this Himalayan height of achievement, he himself wrote: "An inner urge to do my bit to my country, in a way congenial to my aptitude and my opportunities, has provided me the mainspring of action." (The seven Hindrances")

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