

in memoriam

Remembering Muhammad Siddiq Khan

MUHAMMAD Siddiq Khan, descendant of a respectable family of village Dhubria, P.S. Narayanpur, District Tangail, was born on 21st March 1910 in Rangoon, Burma — his father's workplace. His father Muhammad Ismail Khan, B.A., B.L. was one of the first phase Bangali Muslim graduates of Calcutta University. It may be mentioned that his grandfather Muhammad Israil Khan first went to Burma on being appointed as tutor to the grand-children of Bahadur Shah Jafar, the last Mughal Emperor, defeated and exiled in Burma by the British.

Muhammad Siddiq Khan belonged to a wealthy family and his childhood passed in comfort, but he lost his father in his early age and his widowed mother was tied with litigation over property with his uncle. Hence his school and college days passed in financial difficulties.

He was a very meritorious student and in spite of the financial difficulties he excelled in the examinations.

Appearing from Rangoon, Muhammad Siddiq Khan stood first among all the candidates in the whole of Burma in the Matriculation examination 1925, with distinction in four subjects and received government scholarship for five years.

In 1927 he stood first in the I.A. examination of Rangoon University with distinction English.

In 1929 he received the B.A. honours degree in History of the Rangoon University and stood first in the second class.

In 1931 he got his B.L. degree of the Rangoon University. He was placed in the first class in the first part and in the second class in the second part examinations.

In 1936 he got his M.A. degree in History from the Yangan University and received the Yakub Abdul Ghani Gold Medal.

Muhammad Siddiq Khan began his career as a lecturer in History and Political Science in the Rangoon University College. He served in that capacity from 1931 to 1941. During this period some amount of financial stability and comfort came back to his life. Then came a period of uncertainty.

Due to Japan's aggression on Burma Muhammad Siddiq Khan had to join the exodus. He came to Calcutta from Rangoon almost empty-handed.

During 1943-44 he was Officer-in-Charge of Post Raid Information Service of Civil Defence Department under Home (Defence) Ministry of the Government of Bengal.

He served as Liaison Officer in the Industries Directorate of the Bengal Government during 1944-46.

Muhammad Siddiq Khan is regarded as the father of Library Science in Bangladesh. He was along with Mr. Ahmed Husain a pioneer of the Library Movement. It was his tireless effort that led to the establishment of the Library Science Department in Dhaka University. Mr. Khan became its founder head of the Department. This article is an edited version of the biographical note written by Mohammad Moniruzzaman who is the editor of his complete works published by Bangla Academy.

He was General Secretary of Bengal Province Branch of the Indian Red Cross Society in Calcutta during 1944-47.

After the establishment of Pakistan in 1947 he came to Dhaka and became the General Secretary of the East Pakistan Red Cross Society, 1947-48.

He then served as a Manager, East Pakistan Trading Corporation in Chittagong, 1948-50.

In 1950 he joined Manikgonj Devendra College as Principal.

He was appointed Secretary Pakistan Refugee Rehabilitation Finance Corporation in 1951 and served in that capacity till 1952.

Muhammad Siddiq Khan joined as Secretary to the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Dhaka on February 1, 1953. Dr. Muazzam Hussain was then the Vice-Chancellor, who retired in October 1953. Therefore the Vice-Chancellor had seen Muhammad Siddiq Khan as his Secretary for about eight months only. Yet the scholarly habits of Muhammad Siddiq Khan attracted his attention and he wrote the following comments:

Mr. M.S. Khan possesses a scholarly temperament and is widely read... In my opinion his services may be better utilized as a teacher and research worker in the Department of History of this University.

Professor W.A. Jenkins was the next Vice-Chancellor. He was also aware of the scholarly habits of Muhammad Siddiq Khan. When Mr. Fazle Elahi, Librarian of the Dhaka University, resigned the Vice-Chancellor, requested Professor Nafis Ahmed to take up the responsibility as Acting Librarian in addition to his duties as Professor of Geography. At the same time he assigned Muhammad Siddiq Khan to assist the new Librarian in addition to his own duties as Secretary to the Vice-Chancellor. Professor Nafis Ahmed joined his additional position on May 23, 1954.

In consultation with all Heads of Departments Professor Jenkins decided to appoint a full-time Librarian. He also decided to properly train such an appointee. The Executive Council accepted this proposal of the Vice-Chancellor and decided to nominate the Secretary to the Vice-Chancellor Muhammad

Siddiq Khan for this training and after the training, to appoint him as Librarian.

Muhammad Siddiq Khan worked as assistant to the Acting Librarian Professor Nafis Ahmed from May to August 1954.

Meanwhile, after nominating Muhammad Siddiq Khan for the training as Librarian Professor Jenkins contacted Ronald Irwin, Director, School of Librarianship and Archives, London. He personally knew Professor Irwin. He met Professor Irwin in London during vacation and requested him to prepare a programme of proper training for the Librarian of Dhaka University. Since after completion of the training Muhammad Siddiq Khan was scheduled to join as Librarian of Dhaka University, a special training programme and syllabus was drawn for him by Professor Irwin. In this regard Dr. Irwin wrote:

... it would be much wiser to special training as well as a modified diploma course. With that end in view, rather than taking the normal Diploma in Librarianship examination which includes two papers which require a knowledge of French, German and Latin, the learning of which would largely an waste of time for a librarian in the East, it was agreed that he should substitute two other papers and take special practical train in certain libraries.

Since Professor Jenkins has decided this special training programme with Professor Irwin the Vice-Chancellor gave specific instruction to the Registrar in this regard before sending Muhammad Siddiq Khan to London.

Muhammad Siddiq Khan arrived in London on 30 September 1954. He was then 44 years of age and was out of touch with regular course work for about 20 years. Yet, on reaching London he started regular course work as decided by Professor Irwin. Dr. M. H. Khan writes:

During the first session Muhammad Siddiq Khan attended normal librarianship courses in the following subjects: History and Theory of Librarianship; Administration of National and University Libraries; Bibliography (2 papers); administration of special Libraries; Cataloging and Classifications

(3 papers). Muhammad Siddiq Khan scored 66%, 81%, 66.5%, 70% and 64.33% marks respectively in these papers.

After due completion of course work, M.S. Khan spent one academic year in working intensively in selected university and other academic libraries in Great Britain. Professor Irwin arranged training programme with the following libraries:

Institute of Advanced Legal Library, University of London, 1 week.

Institute of Historical Research Library, University of London, 1 week.

Edinburgh University Library, Edinburgh, Scotland, 8 weeks.

Birmingham University Library, Birmingham, 4 weeks.

India Office Library, London, 10 weeks.

University of London Library, London, 4 weeks.

Queen Mary College Library, 4 weeks.

Muhammad Siddiq Khan successfully completed his training in these libraries. All of the libraries under whom Khan worked in their report submitted to Professor Irwin spoke very high of him. Muhammad Siddiq Khan's work was commended and indeed, in certain cases they went out of their way to write saying how much they have appreciated not only his working with them but the critical and valuable suggestions that he made about their libraries. (M.H. Khan, Ibid, pp. 8-9.)

During his training in London Muhammad Siddiq Khan set his goal in developing the Dhaka University Library into a world standard first class library and wrote to Professor Jenkins long letter about this aspect. Dr. M.H. Khan writes:

Automation and modernization of libraries were Siddiq Khan's favourite study. He was very much concerned with establishment of a microfilming and photocopying unit in the Dhaka University Library. In order to realize this object he contacted many photographic

manufacturers like Kodak and others active in England in those days. He has even prepared to import photographic equipment as his personal baggage if the University could arrange finance, although he could not realize his dream while in England he did not give up. The present Microfilming and Photocopying Unit as one finds in the Dhaka University Library, was created entirely due to his sustained efforts and persuasion which induced the Asia Foundation to make gift of the necessary equipment. His serious study of reprography in England helped him to build and develop this section.

Siddiq Khan's second priority was organization of library materials. In one of his letters he wrote to Dr. Jenkins that he thought that cataloging and classification system in the University Library should be changed. But at that time he was not sure as to which system he was going to adopt. In December 1955 he was examining two or three American systems. He was also planning to purchase classification schedules, list of subject headings, etc., in order to increase depth of knowledge in theory and practice of library classification he also attended a seminar on Bliss Classification system.

Establishment of Library Bindery was his next priority. He was impressed at the Bindery of Edinburgh University Library. He wrote to Dr. Jenkins that he was desirous of establishing a modern Bindery at the Dhaka University Library. But to do this, modern tools would not be available in Dhaka. Therefore he wanted to import some of the binding equipment while returning after his study abroad. But it was not possible for him to acquire those tools since, University could not fund this project. But on arrival, he started the bindery with whatever tools he could acquire locally. (M.H. Khan, Ibid, p.9)

After completing a two-year course on the theory and practice of university librarianship in London School of Librarianship and Archives, under the supervision of Professor Irwin, during 1954-55 and 1955-56, Muhammad Siddiq Khan returned home and joined as Librarian of Dhaka University in June 1956. He served in that position till his retirement in 1972.

The Dhaka University Library was

shifted to the present building from the old Arts Building situated in the premises of the Dhaka Medical College. Mr. K.A. Mohammad Shamsul Huda Mia, one of his former students and colleague in the Dhaka University Library wrote in this regard: 'This transfer of library is an important event in his life and in the history of Dhaka University. The library was transferred peacefully without any loss or damage under his able leadership.' (K.M.M. Shamsul Huda Mia, Amar Shroddheya Shikshak o Karmakarta Janab Muhammad Siddiq Khan, Granthagar Parikrama, 2:2, July-December 1987, p. 17.)

In fact the stamps of success that Muhammad Siddiq Khan has left as the Librarian of the University of Dhaka is great. During this period he performed two other important responsibilities. In 1959 when the Department of Library Science was opened due to his initiative, he was appointed the founder head of the Department. He served in that capacity upto his retirement in 1972.

He also served as Librarian-in-Charge of the East Pakistan Central Public Library during 1961-72.

In fact under his able leadership began the modern studies in Library Science in the Dhaka University and in Bangladesh and it underwent proper development, growth and maturity under his supervision.

He not only gave leadership in the formal education but also in the formation and growth of professional Librarianship Association.

He was Vice-President of Pakistan Library Association in 1957, 1958 and 1965. He was Secretary of the Association from 1962 to 1965. At the same time he was President of East Pakistan Library Association.

He was Vice-President of the Asian Federation of Library Association (AFLA) from 1957 to 1960.

He was UNESCO Expert and leader of the University Library Group in the Regional Seminar of Library Development in South East Asia held in Delhi in 1960.

He also introduced the certificate course in Library Science in the East Pakistan Library Association. Besides, he developed professional relations in important and long term training and application areas with teaching institutions and libraries of Great Britain and the United States of America.

In fine, Muhammad Siddiq Khan was highly successful and a noted Librarian of the University of Dhaka; simultaneously in organizing the professional Library Association he was a pioneer and leader. Muhammad Siddiq Khan breathed his last, after prolonged illness, on 13 August 1978.

impression

Nirad C Chaudhuri : 101 Out

by AMMA' abad

AFTER stroking a quiet century at Oxfor, Nirad C. (C. full stop) did not question the Umpire's decision when given out at 101. His last sixer was at 99; what happened to the other four runs to make it 105? It is not in cold storage; as it takes time to mine a diamond or melt the ore to get the gold. We are the rough are. We produced a diamond or guinea gold, take your choice.

He was ahead of his time, but time at last caught up with this naughty-- not the bare-footed Contessa--but the bare-footed by from Kishoregunj. How this small riverside town is going to remember him for shaking up the Bengalee psyche one way or the other, for no less than half a century?

Mind you, he did not invite indiffer-

ence-he had to be noticed, because he never said anything which could be treated with indifference. That is the difference between dust and graded dust. When microchips inside computers can do work wonders, why not a chip of a chap from Kishoregunj?

For the love of his country he had to leave his matribhumi. The bhumiputra was never recalled to his homeland, somewhere in the green meadows of Bengal, where the birds continue to chirp, and the waters gush in wild abandon. He will live up to his name (Nirad), the issues he created will never be settled.

Was he a Circe or Bangal ka jadu? He might be deluded, but his literary illusions caused more than a single delusion in the literary world. He went kick-

ing out of this corporeal life, but he does not care, because his physical presence is not necessary-- he left enough food for the generations in transit on the eve of the millennium. One critic termed him as "The known unIndian" as the "survival of the unfittest." Why Fate cheated him by a mere one year -- he was not allowed to live one year longer, from 1897 to 2000, to span three centuries of South Asian history and modulated culture. He was an eccentric and he was laid to rest in the country of eccentrics. Oxford got his root at the facing end, but it takes more than that to make it grow.

As a former resident of Calcutta, born, educated and brought up in this great city of the Empire, I have some faint stirring of what made Nirad aspire

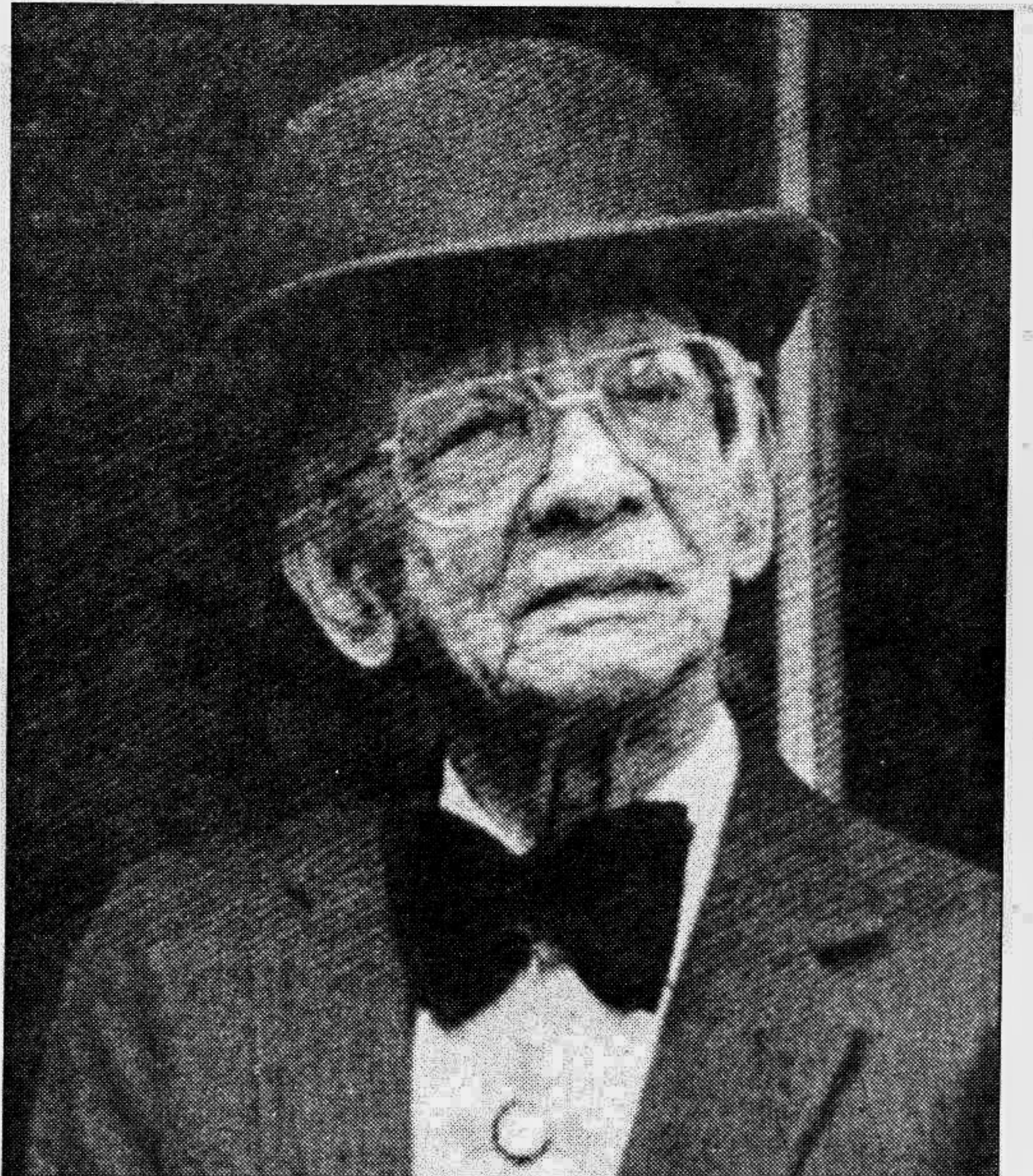
to a level much more than that of any Anglo-Indian 9a mixed community) content to remain a puppet of english form, mores and fashion. The English virus dug deeper into Nirad's subliminal self, and did not rest till he settled in Oxford. Even then the parting kick of this kala shahib was typical of the originality of his mind-- he dubbed that the English did not deserve their England.

Here are some extracts from my note on Nirad C Chaudhuri compiled a few years ago. Nirad C Chaudhuri, the Unknown Bengalee, pops up in the local press at eccentrics have a drawing power which the sane envy-- readers, writers, or observers.

After going through (if that is possible) the autobiography of the unknown Indian soon after it was published; I raised a silent cheer (no witnesses) to the realization that the Bengalees are also capable of producing eccentrics. Today, we badly miss the presence of some eccentric Neta who could be a beacon towards sanity.

I also trekked in his Passage to England, and dipped into The Continent of Circe; and later, enjoyed (it is not necessary to be a sadist) some spicy excerpts from some of his other books or bombshells (we offer crackers now). The English love this genre of genius, as also rice and curry, hence the publication of his first book from England was unlikely to have been a big hurdle. Macaalay set the flag pole on the Bengalee character; therefore the appearance of finely-textured muslim, and less-dense minds from Bengal made the English curiouser, as Lewis Carroll would have put it.

The peripatetic writer from Kishoregunj has transparent originality, in addition to his translucent style,



producing jowar-bhata effect on the readers' progress through the pages, right up to the ghat on the last page.

Nirad was a period piece, the times and the environment have changed. His formative years lay on both sides of the Second (WWII). He saw the two wars, and later, the partition of his motherland; the effects are reflected in some of his later books.

The days of the Raj and the days in Calcutta before the 1939 War left no scars, but the smooth social rhythms of the decade sank into the subconscious. Only Nirad Chaudhuri could scoop out a masterpiece out of the troubled times, for the celebration of the nostalgic parties of the dear and the departed.

How many cheers for the Unknown Bengalee? At least two!

Was he a Circe or Bangal ka jadu? He might be deluded, but his literary illusions caused more than a single delusion in the literary world. He went kicking out of this corporeal life, but he does not care, because his physical presence is not necessary-- he left enough food for the generations in transit on the eve of the millennium. One critic termed him as "The known unIndian" as the "survival of the unfittest." Why Fate cheated him by a mere one year -- he was not allowed to live one year longer, from 1897 to 2000, to span three centuries of South Asian history and modulated culture. He was an eccentric and he was laid to rest in the country of eccentrics.