Society for the History of Science Kolkata

Newsletter

No.2 September, 2025

About the Society

The objective of the society is to promote research and teaching in the history of science in the context of India through the ages. Here the term science includes also technology, environment and medicine. The term history includes history in all possible dimensions. Thus, the said society focuses on histories of science, technology, environment and medicine (HISTEM). In achieving this, the society intends to strengthen the linkages between other institutions and organizations interested in the history of science leading to greater appreciation of the role of the history of science in society.

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Editorial

The Newsletter you now hold serves as a cherished ritual offering at the altar of the Society for the History of Science Kolkata (SHSK), presented annually during the Society's conferences. Conceived as a conduit of shared knowledge and scholarly engagement, it chronicles recent events and developments, offers insightful book reviews, announces the arrival of new publications, and highlights scholarships and fellowships—all within the vibrant domain of the history of science.

In addition to our regular features—updates on events and seminars, book reviews and newly received titles, as well as fellowships and scholarships of interest to enthusiasts of the history of science—this issue presents three thought-provoking scholarly articles.

The first, by renowned journalist and acclaimed author Dr. Dinesh Sharma, is titled *Science in Indian Languages – Hyderabad's Contribution to India*. It explores the rich intellectual and cultural heritage of Hyderabad, spanning education, literature, art, business, science, and even cuisine. The article resonates beautifully with the theme of this year's annual seminar, *Science in the Deccan: A Historical and Contemporary Perspective*, to be held at Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU), Hyderabad, from 15th to 17th September 2025.

The second article comes from Dr. Chandrima Shaha, a distinguished scientist and the first woman President of the Indian National Science Academy. Her essay offers a visionary perspective on the future trajectory of nurturing scientific development in India, highlighting opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

The third piece is a personal reflection—my own—on how the Society for the History of Science Kolkata (SHSK) might further deepen its engagement with academia and society. The inspiration for this article was sparked by a compelling document shared by Professor Deepak Kumar, which prompted me to consider new avenues for promoting the relevance of the history of science. The relevant portion of the document has been reproduced in the article.

This volume also aims to promote academic engagement by highlighting a selection of esteemed book series pertinent to HISTEM, thereby encouraging researchers to publish with leading academic publishers. We hope that having the book series from top publishers at one location, including Cambridge University Press, Manchester University Press, Palgrave Macmillan, and Primus Books, will be helpful to young researchers.

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It is heartening to note the growing involvement of SHSK members in national initiatives. Of the eleven-member Steering Committee—including mentors—formed to establish a National Science and Technology Digital Archive at the Birla Industrial & Technological Museum (BITM), under the aegis of the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, nine are SHSK members. Similarly, the Bose Institute's proposal to create a Centre of Excellence for science and technology in pre-independent India, centered around J.C. Bose and his contemporaries, includes a dedicated course on the history of science. Two SHSK members are part of the committee overseeing this initiative.

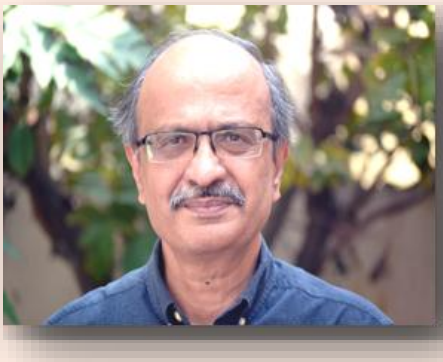
Finally, I extend my heartfelt thanks to the editorial team for their meticulous efforts in curating documents of enduring relevance have infused the Newsletter with vitality and purpose.

I hope you enjoy reading it—and I warmly invite you to share your thoughts and suggestions to help us make it even better.

Suprakash Chandra Roy
Editor-in-Chief
Newsletter, SHSK

Science in Indian languages – Hyderabad's contribution to India

Dinesh C Sharma



The decision of the Madhya Pradesh government in 2022 to introduce Hindi as the medium of instruction in the MBBS course triggered a debate over the feasibility of teaching technical courses in Indian languages. It was argued that students can better comprehend technical subjects in their mother tongue rather than in English. The example of Russia, Germany, Japan etc. was cited to demonstrate the feasibility of teaching medicine and engineering in Indian languages. The Osmania University was the first Indian higher education institution to teach all subjects – from philosophy to medicine – in Urdu when it was founded in 1917.

The earliest schemes to teach technical subjects in Indian languages date to the late nineteenth century when modern education in India took its roots. The Government of Bengal in 1869 appointed a committee to advise on the preparation of medical treatises in vernaculars, highlighting that the issue extends beyond medical terminology to all modern sciences. The problem identified was the vast number of European terms for which there were no equivalents in vernaculars, which severely hampered the translation of scientific works.

Syed Husain Bilgrami (later known by his title Imad-Ul Mulk), who played a vital role in the spread of modern education in the Hyderabad state, stressed the need for authorities to establish a uniform, elastic system of nomenclature that aligned with the genius of Indian languages. In 1871, he wrote a review of ideas regarding developing a uniform system for rendering scientific and technical terms into Indian vernacular languages.

Bilgrami cited the work of three scholars - Baboo Rajendro Lall Mitter, Maulvi Tameez Khan Bahadur and Rai Sohun Lall. Mitter advocated translation, not 'servile verbatim translation,' but one that provides words serving as 'signs for the thing signified'. He classified words into six groups based on their nature (ordinary words used technically, crude nouns, scientific crude names, scientific double names, single words with clear etymological meaning, and compound terms) and proposed asset of rules for translation and transliteration for different categories of words.

Maulvi Tameez Khan Bahadur agreed on the value of available vernacular terms but opposed coining new ones. He advocated retaining European terms when vernacular equivalents were unavailable, rather than drawing new vocables from classical Indian languages. He divided European scientific terminology into three groups: technical words with precise vernacular synonyms; terms without apparent vernacular equivalents, and those terms with no existing vernacular equivalents. He proposed using vernacular words for the first two groups, while retaining European terms for the third group, stating that mere acquaintance with a Sanskrit, Arabic, or Persian vocable does not provide a better understanding.

Rai Sohun Lall suggested discarding difficult terms and substituting them with vocables from 'the language of the people as it is spoken' – like 'Thermometer' becomes "*Garmi Nap*" (Heat measurer) - to facilitate scientific culture for the masses.

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Bilgrami dismissed the idea of wholesale transliteration of European terms as it would make vernaculars ‘mongrel’ and burdensome, devoid of etymological significance to vernacular scholars. He suggested simplicity, uniformity, and precision as the motto for translating scientific texts. He proposed preferring simple terms for simple objects; retaining English terms when their coined vernacular versions are of equal difficulty; preferring compound terms for compound substances, ensuring they convey knowledge of components’ and rejecting European or Asiatic terms that gave a mistaken notion of the significate's nature or properties.

In his view, Sanskrit was ‘immeasurably superior to Arabic’ in its capability for furnishing compound and derivative vocables and submitting words to modifications via prefixes and suffixes. He noted that Arabic lacked elastic machinery for new derivatives despite its historical role in preserving and transmitting Greek learning and contributing significantly to European science (Alchemy, Algebra). Persian was a powerful auxiliary, supplying numerous words and being germane to both Urdu and Hindi, with an elegant manner of forming compounds and derivatives.

The time to implement some of these ideas in Hyderabad came when Sir Akbar Hydari mooted the idea of a new university with Urdu medium in 1917. He felt that making English the sole vehicle of higher education was a mistake as ‘most of the time which should be spent on the acquisition of the sciences and arts is spent on the acquisition of the foreign medium.’ Urdu was suggested because it was the official language of the state and was understood by a vast majority of the population, besides being ‘an Aryan language’ with ‘direct kinship with other Indian languages.’

Syed Ross Masood, head of the Department of Public Instruction, was sent to Japan which pioneered teaching in the Japanese language at all levels. To transplant Western sciences into Japan, the Japanese created equivalents of Western scientific concepts. While some were replaced with existing Japanese words, others were assigned new Japanese words coined deliberately.

Image: Arts College, Osmania University
(Credit: Dinesh C Sharma)

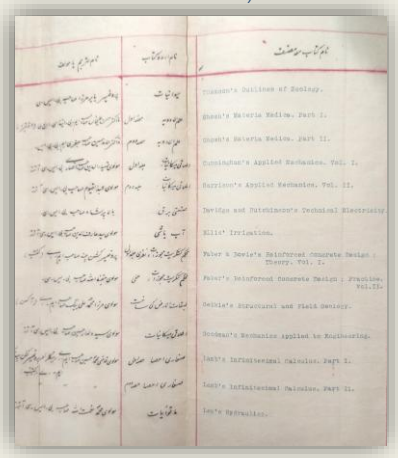

Image: A page from the workbook of The Translation Bureau
(Credit: Dinesh C Sharma)

To emulate the model In Hyderabad, a Bureau of Translation and Compilation was established for preparing standard textbooks in Urdu. The university decided that international nomenclature should be adopted for branches of medicine and engineering. A layered method was formulated for the translation of scientific terms divided into three groups – nomenclature, notations and terminology. For nomenclature (like names of various elements and compounds, their symbols etc), transliteration was rendered into Urdu along with the terms of European languages. Terminology and notations were translated and compiled in Urdu with the help of classical and Indian languages like Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Urdu and Hindi. The exercise resulted in the translation of 356 books in philosophy, history, law, economics, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, medicine and engineering by 1946, and nearly 100,000 technical terms were compiled.

When the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) formed a Scientific Terminology Committee in 1940 to examine the 'adoption of a uniform scientific terminology on all-India level' Sir Akbar Hydari was made its chairman. The panel recommended the Osmania approach of using international nomenclature and notations while using vernacular for concepts, properties, processes, instruments etc. It concluded that 'wherever international terms in (in their English form) are already in common use in India, they should be retained' and adopted for Indian use before any attempt is made to invent an Indian equivalent using classical languages. The ideas of teaching sciences in Indian languages that germinated in Hyderabad remain relevant in the twenty-first century.

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Upcoming challenges in nurturing the science and technology enterprise

Chandrima Shaha

India has made significant progress in economic growth, social development, nuclear and space research, and health sciences over the past fifty years. However, more strategic measures are needed to address emerging challenges and reach the goal of becoming a $30 trillion economy by 2047. Achieving these objectives requires robust support for research and development in science and technology, which are essential drivers of national growth and prosperity.

The long-term success and sustainability of an enterprise depend on having skilled and dedicated professionals. The office of the Principal Scientific Officer reported in 2023 that there are currently 0.255 scientists per thousand people in India. This low number needs to improve, requiring coordinated efforts from policymakers, educators, researchers, innovators, entrepreneurs, and industry leaders. Several important aspects are examined in this analysis.

The development of scientific personnel depends on the education system's capacity to cultivate students' interest in science. Targeted initiatives in this area will foster a robust community of students motivated to pursue scientific careers. A primary challenge is increasing the enrollment of grassroots learners in science disciplines. Implementing parental education initiatives can promote equal educational opportunities for both male and female children. In many social contexts, boys' education is prioritized over that of girls. Whatever the enrolment, it is essential to sustain student engagement in science. Educational systems should implement innovative and personalized learning experiences that address the needs of technologically proficient generations. Moreover, instruction that emphasizes critical thinking over rote memorization is essential for students' cognitive development. Given the diversity of student backgrounds and socioeconomic status, awarding competitive scholarships throughout academic careers can support deserving individuals. A significant challenge is the limited availability of job opportunities in science-related fields, which often leads students to pursue alternative career paths. As more students opt for computer science and management, the number of dedicated scientific researchers may decline.

Personalized learning is particularly important in India, given its diverse linguistic and cultural landscape. By 2025, internet usage is expected to rise significantly, with Generation Z and Generation Alpha comprising most new users. Generation Alpha, having grown up in the digital era, is anticipated to demonstrate advanced technological skills and contribute meaningfully to India's development goals by 2047. While digital technologies such as smart boards, virtual labs, and interactive tools are increasingly present in classrooms, ensuring equitable access for students nationwide remains a challenge. Pune's digital planetarium illustrates how immersive technology can foster interest in science. However, direct human interaction, including student visits to scientific laboratories and engagement with researchers, continues to be essential. To support these efforts, it is important to understand student needs, develop engaging digital content, and implement personalized learning strategies. Establishing competitive scholarships, reducing higher education costs, and providing teacher training are also necessary.

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Furthermore, offering courses in science communication and journalism and integrating the history of science into curricula will help cultivate a strong community of science storytellers to inspire student interest. India's expenditure on research and development (R&D) remains below 0.7% of gross domestic product (GDP). While the R&D budget has increased, its proportion relative to GDP has stayed the same. To face ongoing challenges, both innovation and entrepreneurship are urgent needs.

However, at the core of all innovation, basic discoveries form a knowledge foundation. Abraham Flexner, an influential American educator, argued that intellectual curiosity and new insights can cross disciplinary boundaries and lead to major scientific and technological progress. The discovery of electricity by Michael Faraday illustrates such unexpected scientific advancements. Similarly, JC Bose's work on microwaves emerged not from industrial ambition but from profound investigation into the polarization of electric waves – an elegant testament to how pure science can reshape the world. Likewise, C.V. Raman's question, 'Why is the colour of sky and sea blue?' resulted in findings that continue to influence current scientific research. Additionally, examples like CRISPR-based gene editing, driven by simple scientific curiosity, demonstrate how basic research can be exceedingly beneficial to society, transforming agriculture and medicine. Therefore, for a country like India, with its unique needs, targeted investing in fundamental research is crucial. To garner that funding, understanding and fostering political support for expanding basic research is crucial. Blue sky research, defined as exploratory research without immediate commercial goals, should be allowed to progress without strict time limits. Requiring scientists to directly connect their research to commercialization can hinder scientific creativity. However, to facilitate the translation of basic research, establishing high-standard hubs that connect research institutions, hospitals, and industry is vital for accelerating the practical application of scientific discoveries. For research, an efficient system that reduces bureaucratic hurdles in faculty recruitment will enable universities and research institutions to hire better faculty and thereby strengthen the teaching system. In this context, academic freedom should be granted to universities and other scientific institutes to decide on research types, faculty hiring, and student selection. In the context of hiring, institutions should be encouraged to establish specific gender equity targets within both scientific and administrative positions. Comprehensive mentorship programs should be developed to support the professional advancement of women and other underprivileged individuals. Interdisciplinary programs must be promoted by engaging multiple institutions and diverse scientific teams.

In conclusion, the government must implement additional targeted initiatives and expand existing support mechanisms. Although some challenges have been addressed, significantly greater efforts are required to meet the needs of the rapidly growing population.

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Reviving a Forgotten Discipline: The History of Science in Indian Academia

Suprakash Chandra Roy

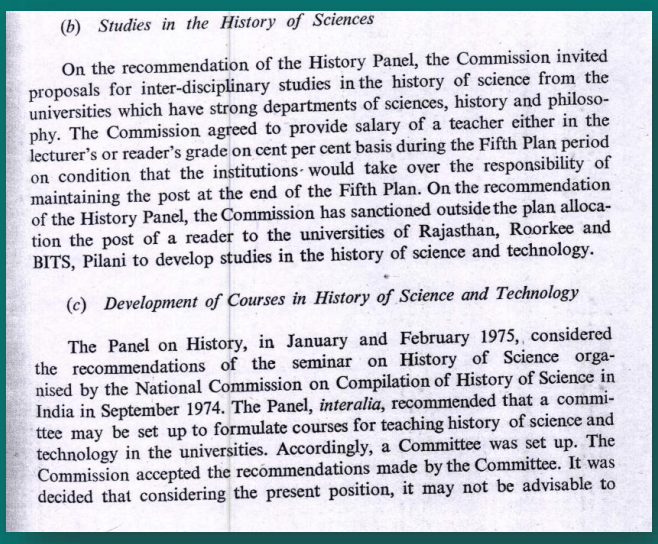
Nearly five decades ago, the University Grants Commission (UGC) of India took a visionary step. In its Annual Report for 1975–76, the Commission not only encouraged universities to pursue studies in the history of science but also actively invited interdisciplinary proposals to advance this field.

Chaired by Professor Satish Chandra and comprising twelve members, the Commission's commitment appeared genuine: it pledged full financial support for lecturer and reader-level positions during the Fifth Plan period and even sanctioned additional posts outside the plan allocation for Rajasthan University, Roorkee University (now IIT Roorkee), and BITS Pilani. (The relevant portion of the UGC report is included in the newsletter p. xx)

This archival revelation, brought to light by Professor Deepak Kumar, sparked a personal inquiry: how far have we progressed since then?

Despite the UGC's early enthusiasm, the outcomes are sobering. There is no accessible record of how many universities responded to the Commission's invitation. A review of the official websites of the three named institutions reveals a disappointing picture—except for BITS Pilani.

BITS Pilani's Department of Humanities and Social Sciences offers courses and research opportunities that touch upon the history of science within broader humanities frameworks. While it lacks a dedicated program, its Ph.D. offerings allow for focused inquiry into the subject. In contrast, Rajasthan University and IIT Roorkee show no visible engagement with the history of science. More broadly, the discipline has yet to find formal recognition as a standalone academic field in Indian universities.

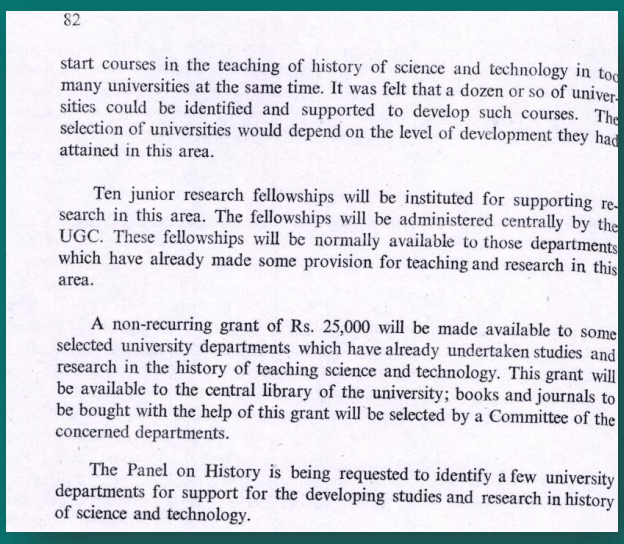


(b) *Studies in the History of Sciences*

On the recommendation of the History Panel, the Commission invited proposals for inter-disciplinary studies in the history of science from the universities which have strong departments of sciences, history and philosophy. The Commission agreed to provide salary of a teacher either in the lecturer's or reader's grade on cent per cent basis during the Fifth Plan period on condition that the institutions would take over the responsibility of maintaining the post at the end of the Fifth Plan. On the recommendation of the History Panel, the Commission has sanctioned outside the plan allocation the post of a reader to the universities of Rajasthan, Roorkee and BITS, Pilani to develop studies in the history of science and technology.

(c) *Development of Courses in History of Science and Technology*

The Panel on History, in January and February 1975, considered the recommendations of the seminar on History of Science organised by the National Commission on Compilation of History of Science in India in September 1974. The Panel, *interalia*, recommended that a committee may be set up to formulate courses for teaching history of science and technology in the universities. Accordingly, a Committee was set up. The Commission accepted the recommendations made by the Committee. It was decided that considering the present position, it may not be advisable to



82

start courses in the teaching of history of science and technology in too many universities at the same time. It was felt that a dozen or so of universities could be identified and supported to develop such courses. The selection of universities would depend on the level of development they had attained in this area.

Ten junior research fellowships will be instituted for supporting research in this area. The fellowships will be administered centrally by the UGC. These fellowships will be normally available to those departments which have already made some provision for teaching and research in this area.

A non-recurring grant of Rs. 25,000 will be made available to some selected university departments which have already undertaken studies and research in the history of teaching science and technology. This grant will be available to the central library of the university; books and journals to be bought with the help of this grant will be selected by a Committee of the concerned departments.

The Panel on History is being requested to identify a few university departments for support for the developing studies and research in history of science and technology.

Relevant portions of the UGC Report 1975-76

The intellectual roots of this field in India trace back to the Asiatic Society, where Oriental Studies initially focused on South Asia's languages, literature, and antiquities. By the late 19th century, Indian scholars began expanding this scope to include indigenous scientific traditions, challenging colonial narratives and reclaiming historical agency.

One of the earliest and most significant contributions came from the eminent chemist P.C. Ray, whose *History of Hindu Chemistry* (1902; reprinted 1956) remains a landmark work. Ray's international engagement is noteworthy—he was the first Indian elected to the editorial board of *Isis*, the pioneering American journal on the history of science. In a 1913 letter to Nobel laureate Svante Arrhenius, Ray wrote:

"I take the liberty to send you my *History of Hindu Chemistry*... It will perhaps interest you to know that in ancient India chemistry was pursued with zeal and enthusiasm."

It wasn't until 1950 that the need for organized study of the history of science was formally articulated at a UNESCO-sponsored symposium at the University of Delhi. A decade later, the Indian National Science Academy (INSA) established a History of Science Board, which evolved into the National Commission for History of Science in 1989. INSA continues to support young researchers and projects in this domain, yet the pace of institutional adoption remains sluggish.

Encouragingly, a handful of universities have begun integrating history of science courses within humanities and social science departments. These initiatives, though modest, signal a growing awareness of the field's importance.

With the recent formation of the Society for History of Science, Kolkata, a new chapter begins. The question now is: how can this society catalyze meaningful change?

Like an athlete preparing for a leap, the groundwork has been laid through incremental steps. The Society must now engage with government bodies, academic institutions, and funding agencies to advocate for the formal recognition and expansion of history of science programs. Strategic partnerships, public outreach, and policy engagement will be key to transforming latent interest into institutional commitment.

India's scientific heritage is rich, layered, and deeply intertwined with its cultural and intellectual history. To neglect its study is to overlook a vital dimension of our identity. The time has come to reclaim and reimagine the history of science—not as a peripheral curiosity, but as a central pillar of academic inquiry.

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THE SECOND ANNUAL SEMINAR OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE KOLKATA (SHSK)

Key Outcomes of the Seminar

- **Fostered national and international collaboration in the history of science, technology, medicine, and environment.**
- **Recognized emerging scholars through research presentations and the S.P. Banerjee Memorial Prize.**
- **Promoted interdisciplinary approaches aligned with NEP 2020.**
- **Launched SHSK's first Newsletter to enhance academic outreach.**
- **Released Springer volume *"Decolonising Science and Modernity in South Asia"*, expanding scholarly discourse.**
- **Reinforced SHSK's position as a leading platform for science education history in India.**

The Second Annual Seminar and meeting of the Society for the History of Science Kolkata (SHSK) was held on 11-13 November 2024. This international event was organized in collaboration with the Department of History, Faculty of Social Sciences; Institute of Science; and Indian Institute of Technology; Banaras Hindu University (BHU), Varanasi. The seminar aimed to promote teaching and research in the history of science in India across various historical periods in consonance with its central theme, "Science Education in India through the Ages." It encompassed topics related to technology, environment, and medicine, while also integrating diverse perspectives from the Social Sciences, tracing back to ancient times.

The three-day program involved participation from over 250 students, research scholars, both veteran and amateur and faculty members. Attendees represented esteemed institutions, including BHU, Kyoto University, Japan, Rabindra Bharati University, IIT-BHU, IIT-Indore, IIT-Kanpur, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Jadavpur University, K. R. Mangalam University, Babasaheb Ambedkar University, Ambedkar University Delhi, University of Delhi, Shiv Nadar University, West Bengal State University, University of Burdwan, as well as various other prominent colleges and universities of both national and international acclaim.

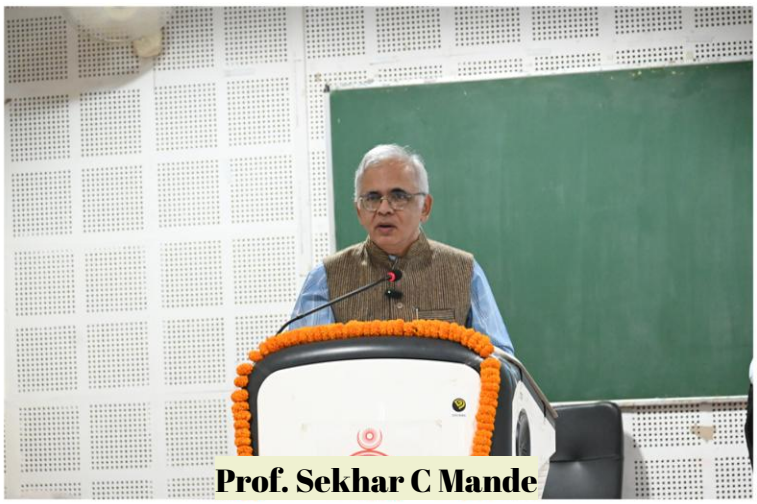
Special Lectures in the Second Annual Seminar

The three-day program involved participation from over 250 students, research scholars, both veteran and amateur and faculty members. Attendees represented esteemed institutions, including BHU, Kyoto University, Japan, Rabindra Bharati University, IIT-BHU, IIT-Indore, IIT-Kanpur, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Jadavpur University, K. R. Mangalam University, Babasaheb Ambedkar University, Ambedkar University Delhi, University of Delhi, Shiv Nadar University, West Bengal State University, University of Burdwan, as well as various other prominent colleges and universities of both national and international acclaim.

The welcome address was delivered by Professor Binda D. Paranjape, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, BHU. This was followed by an address by Professor Deepak Kumar, President of the Society, the inaugural speech was delivered by renowned mathematician Professor Dinesh Singh, Chancellor of K. R. Mangalam University. Professor Sekhar C. Mande, Distinguished Professor at the Bioinformatics Centre of Savitribai Phule Pune University, delivered his address as the Guest of Honour. The inaugural session was chaired by Professor Ghan Shyam, Head of the Department of History, Faculty of Social Sciences, BHU.

The program had the privilege of hosting nine invited lectures presented by esteemed professors and researchers, including Professor Prithvish Nag (Former Surveyor General of India & Vice Chancellor, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith, Varanasi), Professor Rohan D'Souza (Graduate School of Asian & African Studies, Kyoto University, Japan), Professor Y. Singh (Honorary Professor, Department of Physics, Institute of Science, BHU), Professor S. C. Lakhotia (Distinguished Professor, Department of Zoology, Institute of Science, BHU), Professor Mallickarjun Joshi (Former Professor, Department of Geology, Institute of Science, BHU), Professor Rajiv Kumar Mandal (Department of Mines & Metallurgical Engineering, IIT-BHU), Professor Sukh Mahendra Singh (Department of Biotechnology, Institute of Science, BHU), and Dr. Amit Ranjan Basu (independent researcher). Furthermore, twenty research papers were presented by emerging researchers and junior faculty members from various regions across the country. A panel discussion entitled "Alternative Techne" was held and the speakers in this 3 session were Thamarai Selvan (Community Scholar, Society for the History of Technology), and K.V. Cybil (IIT-BHU).

Prof. Dhrub Kumar Singh



Prof. Sekhar C Mande

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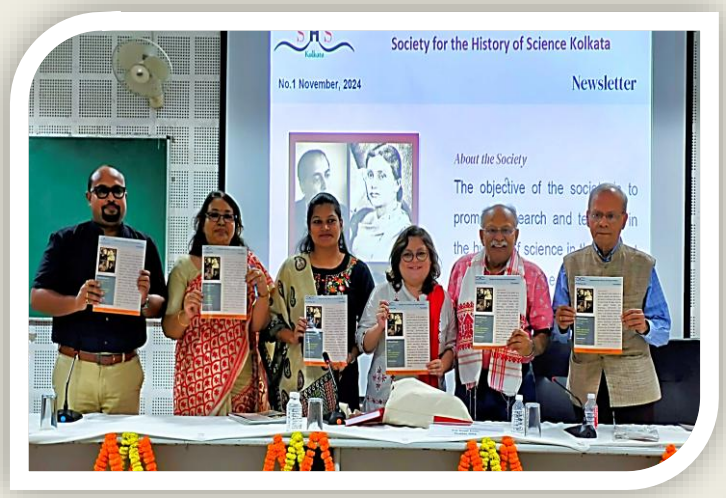

The second day of the conference marked the formal release of the book," Decolonising Science and Modernity in South Asia: Questioning Concepts, Constructing Histories" (Springer, 2024, Link-https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-97-1829-0), which was edited by Sahara Ahmed and Suvobrata Sarkar, both of whom are affiliated with Rabindra Bharati University. Ahmed and Sarkar are, respectively, the Secretary and Treasurer of the Society. Professor Deepak Kumar, the President of the SHSK and a former Professor of History of Science & Education at JNU in New Delhi, chaired the book release event. The topic, background, themes, and contributors of the book were discussed by Professor Sreerup Raychaudhuri, Director of Bharat Kala Bhawan at BHU, and Professor Arun Bandopadhyay, former Nurul Hassan Chair Professor of History at the University of Calcutta and Vice-President of SHSK. After the book launch, the first Newsletter of the Society was formally published.

The "S.P. Banerjee Memorial Prize for the History of Engineering and Technology" was awarded to Dr. Sunayana Maiti for her research paper entitled, "Tracing the Historical Roots of Why Supply Exceeded Demand: Unemployment in the Engineering Profession in India, Circa 1940s1970s." Educated at University of Calcutta and Aarhus University, Dr. Maiti is a Guest Lecturer of History at West Bengal State University.

The valedictory address was delivered by Professor Arun Bandopadhyay, the former Nurul Hassan Chair Professor of History at the University of Calcutta and Vice-President of SHSK. The event was chaired by Professor Ghan Shyam, Head of the Department of History, Faculty of Social Sciences, BHU.

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The society expresses its sincere gratitude to the Sponsored Research & Industrial Consultancy Cell (SRICC) at BHU, the Indian Council for Social Science Research (ICSSR), the Anusandhan National Research Foundation, the Science & Engineering Research Board (SERB), and the 5 Council for Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR) of New Delhi for their generous financial support. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 underscores the significance of multidisciplinarity within educational frameworks. Illuminating this pertinent thrust area, the seminar effectively showcased the interaction between the sciences and the humanities, an area that has become increasingly prioritized among esteemed national institutions such as the IITs, the IISERs, IISc. Bangalore, BHU, JNU, and the University of Delhi, among others. The collaborating institution, BHU, is renowned for its robust tradition of advancing teaching and research in the domains of Science, Technology, and Medicine (STM).

National Science & Technology Digital Archive (NSTDA): A Milestone in Preserving India's Scientific Heritage

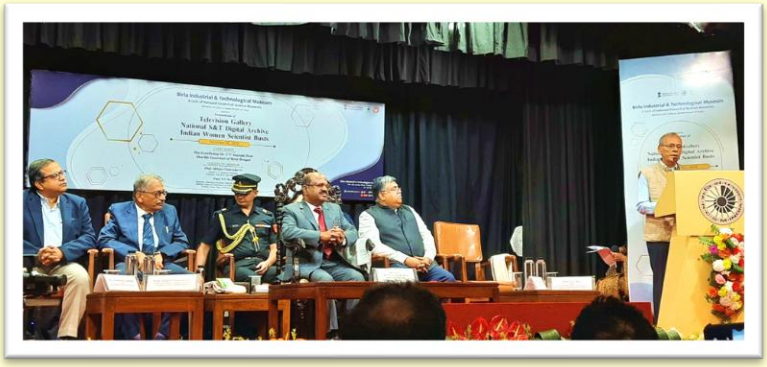
On December 5, 2024, the Birla Industrial & Technological Museum (BITM), Kolkata, hosted a landmark event marking the formal inauguration of the National Science & Technology Digital Archive (NSTDA). This initiative, developed under the guidance of the National Council of Science Museums (NCSM), represents a significant milestone in the preservation, documentation, and public dissemination of India's scientific and technological heritage. The NSTDA is a comprehensive digital repository dedicated to collecting, curating, and showcasing rare manuscripts, scientific documents, archival photographs, blueprints, audiovisual materials, and historically significant artifacts from across the country.

The event was graced by the Hon'ble Governor of West Bengal, Dr. C. V. Ananda Bose, who delivered the keynote address. In his speech, the Governor emphasized the vital role of digital archives in the 21st century, describing the NSTDA as a "gateway to India's scientific legacy and a pillar of inclusive, accessible education." He noted that such repositories not only preserve the achievements of past scientists but also ignite curiosity and innovation among students and young researchers. He particularly highlighted the archive's potential to inspire underrepresented communities and promote gender equity in science, in alignment with national priorities.

Professor Suprakash C. Roy, Chairman of the Steering Committee for the NSTDA, introduced the session, followed by a detailed overview of the Archive's vision and structure by Shri Soumen Ghosh, Senior Curator, Birla Industrial & Technological Museum (BITM), Kolkata. He described the initiative as a "living, evolving platform" that welcomes scholarly contributions from universities, research institutes, museums, and individuals. According to Mr. Ghosh, the Archive has been designed to be interactive, multilingual, and universally accessible, with an intuitive user interface that allows students, teachers, and researchers to explore the deep and diverse roots of Indian science and technology. He called upon the scientific and academic community to treat the NSTDA not only as a reference source but as a collaborative and participatory space for enriching India's collective scientific memory.

In addition to the Archive, the program also featured the inauguration of a new Television Gallery, displaying the evolution of broadcast technology in India, and the unveiling of a sculptural tribute to ten pioneering Indian women scientists, symbolizing the Museum's broader commitment to representation and scientific inclusion. Together, these three initiatives reflect BITM's core mission of fostering scientific literacy, preserving knowledge systems, and bridging the gap between history, education, and innovation.

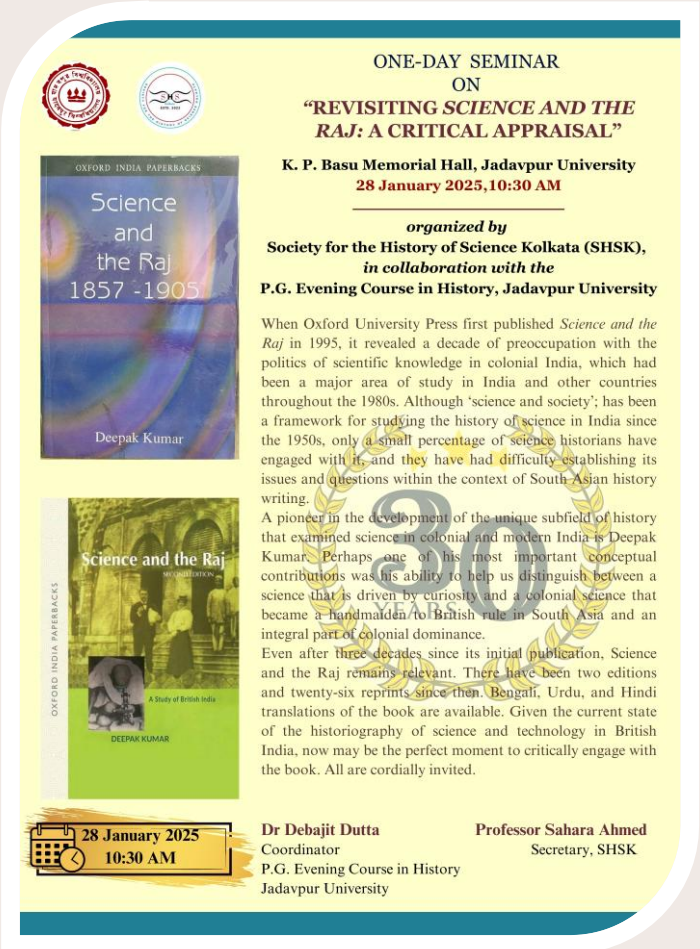
The launch of the National Science & Technology Digital Archive marks a visionary leap in India's efforts to safeguard and share its scientific achievements with future generations. By bringing together historical artifacts and cutting-edge digital tools, the NSTDA offers not only a repository of the past but a springboard for future discovery, collaboration, and inspiration. It stands as a testament to the power of public knowledge institutions to shape inclusive, informed, and scientifically engaged societies.



Revisiting *Science and the Raj*: A Critical Appraisal

Organized by the Society for the History of Science Kolkata (SHSK)
In collaboration with P.G. Evening Course in History, Jadavpur University
at
K.P. Basu Memorial Hall, Jadavpur University on 28 January 2025

When Oxford University Press released Deepak Kumar's *Science and the Raj* in 1995, it encapsulated a decade's growing interest in the interplay between scientific knowledge and colonial politics in India. Throughout the 1980s, both global and Indian scholars increasingly examined how science was shaped by—and, conversely, shaped—power dynamics, particularly during colonial rule. Kumar's book marked a pivotal moment in this intellectual movement.



The **keynote session** was particularly memorable, chaired by Professor Deepak Kumar, who filled the room with admirers and students. Professor Ranjan Chakrabarti presented a thought-provoking lecture titled "Re-reading a Classic," revisiting the ongoing intellectual challenges posed by the book and emphasizing its departure from traditional celebrations of science.

At the time of its release, few historians in India were fully engaging with the "science and society" framework that had gradually gained traction since the 1950s. *Science and the Raj*intervened decisively, shedding light on and enriching the study of colonial science as al egitimate historical subfield within South Asian historiography. A key achievement of the book was its ability to distinguish between science driven by genuine curiosity and the form of science that served as an instrument of British control—a potent means for extracting knowledge and exerting authority.

Fast forward thirty years and twenty-six reprints later, with translations in Bengali, Urdu, and Hindi, the book continues to encourage readers to ponder how deeply colonial logic has influenced scientific thought and institutional practices in India. The seminar held at Jadavpur University in 2025 was specifically organized to reflect on this lasting significance and to bring fresh scholarly perspectives to a classic text that remains ever relevant.

Inaugural Session

The day began with an engaging welcome from Professor Sahara Ahmed, who highlighted how "Science and the Raj" opened new avenues in historiography and fostered interdisciplinary reflection among historians of science, technology, medicine, environment, and empire.

Continued...

The session included the launch of an edited volume, "Does Environmental History Matter? Shikar, Subsistence, Sustenance, and the Sciences" (Primus Books, 2024), edited by Professor Chakrabarti and released by Professor Kumar, marking a significant moment.
Sri Barun Sarkar from Oxford University Press shared insights into the book's publication journey, underscoring its influence on both South Asian scholarship and the global history of science, particularly due to its accessibility and multiple translations.

First Technical Session: Personal Readings and Intellectual Encounters

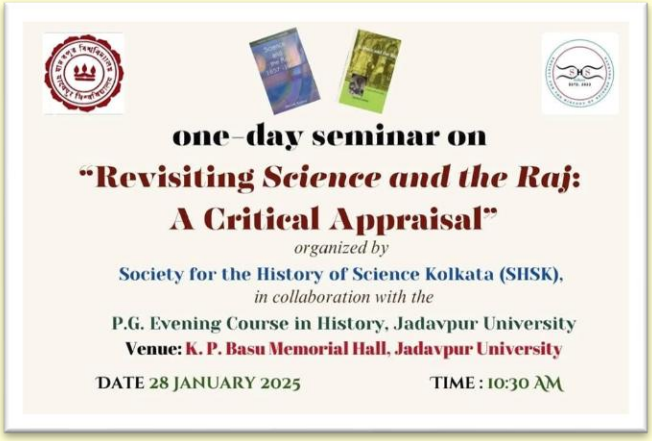
Chair: Professor Sutapa Chatterjee Sarkar
Professor Nupur Dasgupta shared how she encountered *Science and the Raj* in her journey through the world of HISTEM. Her talk, *"A Reader in the Margins,"* was deeply personal, describing the book as both a text and a companion that walked alongside her through changing academic climates.
Professor Raj Sekhar Basu followed with a talk titled *"A reluctant sojourner,"* blending wit, anecdote, and insight. He spoke candidly of his early encounters with the book, the initial skepticism it provoked, and the eventual intellectual transformation it catalyzed. His reflections showed just how powerful the book has been in unsettling inherited assumptions.

Second Technical Session: Colonial Science in Agrarian Bengal

Chair: Professor Arabinda Samanta
Professor Bipasha Raha delivered a sharply focused paper on how *Science and the Raj* provide a valuable analytical lens for understanding agrarian histories in colonial Bengal. She explored how colonial science was not limited to laboratories or city institutions extended into the fields and forests, shaping land policies, crop choices, and peasant lives.
Her paper showed how the book's ideas could be taken beyond the bounds of science history and applied to broader questions of rural economy, resistance, and environment.

Third Technical Session: Critical Re-imaginings of Colonial Knowledge

Chair: Professor Sujata Mukherjee
Dr Santanu Chacraverti delivered a session with a deep and critical reflection on the phrase "colonial scientific touch." His paper challenged the lingering belief in the objectivity of colonial science and invited listeners to revisit it with a decolonial lens.
Dr Arnab Chakraborty, Associate Professor at the College of Liberal Arts, Shanghai University, China, delivered a talk titled "Continuities and Transformations in Science and Medicine in Pre- and Post-Colonial India."
Dr Dipsikha Acharya added an intriguing dimension by focusing on the historiography of iron in India. Her paper explored how the framing of "primitive" versus "scientific" iron production methods had been shaped by colonial narratives, echoing many of the core arguments found in *Science and the Raj*.



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Fourth Technical Session: Animals, Health, and Empire

Chair: Professor Achintya Kumar Dutta

Dr Rahul Bhowmik gave an engaging presentation on colonial ophiology. the study of snakes and how it evolved in British India. He showed how scientific knowledge is often borrowed from indigenous traditions while simultaneously dismissing them as "unscientific."

Mr Aryama Ghosh offered a rare and refreshing animal history perspective, intersecting it with the historiography of colonial science. His talk demonstrated how *Science and the Raj* continue to open doors for newer thematic approaches, including nonhuman histories.

Dr Sulagna Som concluded the session with an eye-opening paper on British imperial health policies concerning white women in India, examining how race, gender, and scientific authority intersected in the regulation of women's bodies and health care under the Raj.

Valedictory Session: The Book, the Scholar, the Legacy

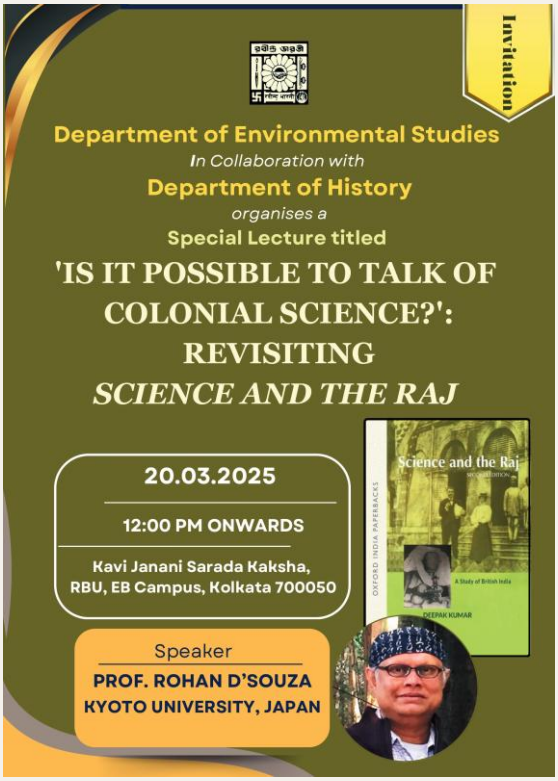
Chair: Professor Samir Kumar Saha

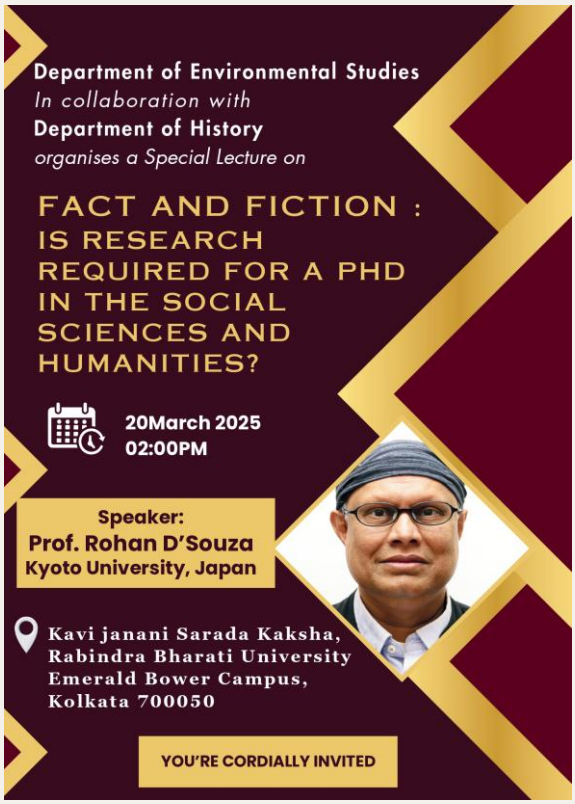
Speaker: Professor Arun Bandopadhyay

The day concluded with **Professor Arun Bandopadhyay's** valedictory address, an elegant tribute to both the book and the scholar who wrote it. He spoke not just about *Science and the Raj* as a text, but about how it transformed a generation of students and scholars into more critical, questioning thinkers. He emphasized that even after three decades, the questions raised by the book remain urgent in a world still shaped by colonial knowledge structures.

The seminar ended with a heartfelt vote of thanks by Dr Debajit Dutta, who expressed gratitude to all the speakers, participants, and attendees who had made the event such an intellectually nourishing space. This seminar was not just a celebration of a book—it was a celebration of critical thinking. It reminded everyone in the room that history is never settled, and that books like *Science and the Raj* are not just written once; they are rewritten every time they are read, taught, debated, and questioned.

Distinguished Lecture Series by Prof. Rohan D'Souza (Kyoto University, Japan)





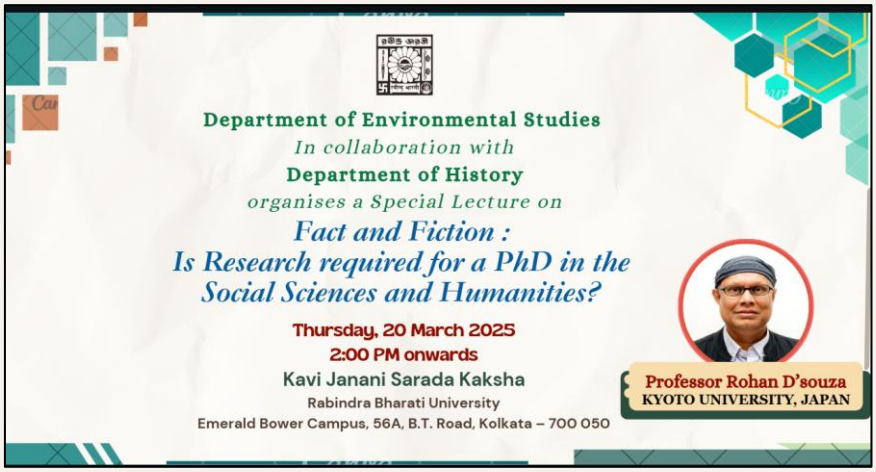
Rabindra Bharati University had the privilege of hosting two insightful lectures by Prof. Rohan D'Souza, Professor at the Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University, on March 20, 2025. Jointly organized by the Department of Environmental Studies and the Department of History, the lectures brought together students, scholars, and faculty from across disciplines for a day of stimulating academic discourse at the university's Emerald Bower Campus.

The first lecture of the day, titled *"Revisiting Science and the Raj"*, was chaired by Professor Nupur Dasgupta of the Department of History, Jadavpur University. In this talk, Prof. D'Souza explored the complex interplay between science and empire in colonial India. He argued that scientific endeavors under British rule—such as large-scale irrigation, river management, and forest conservation—were deeply embedded in the imperial project, serving both political control and economic extraction. Drawing from environmental history and postcolonial scholarship, he demonstrated how these scientific interventions displaced indigenous knowledge systems and reshaped the subcontinent's ecological landscape. Prof. Dasgupta's introductory remarks and concluding observations added valuable historical context, prompting deeper reflections on how colonial legacies persist in contemporary environmental governance.

Continued...

The second lecture, delivered in the afternoon, was titled *"Fact and Fiction: Is Research Required for a PhD in Social Sciences and Humanities?"* and was chaired by Professor Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury, noted academic and former Vice-Chancellor of Rabindra Bharati University. In this session, Prof. D'Souza challenged conventional notions of what constitutes research in the humanities and social sciences. He emphasized that scholarship in these fields often relies on theoretical inquiry, conceptual innovation, and critical interpretation rather than empirical data collection alone.

The lecture sparked thoughtful dialogue on the nature of academic rigor, the constraints of institutional definitions, and the importance of preserving intellectual plurality in doctoral research. Prof. Basu Ray Chaudhury's chairing of the session helped anchor the discussion within broader debates on higher education and research policy in India.

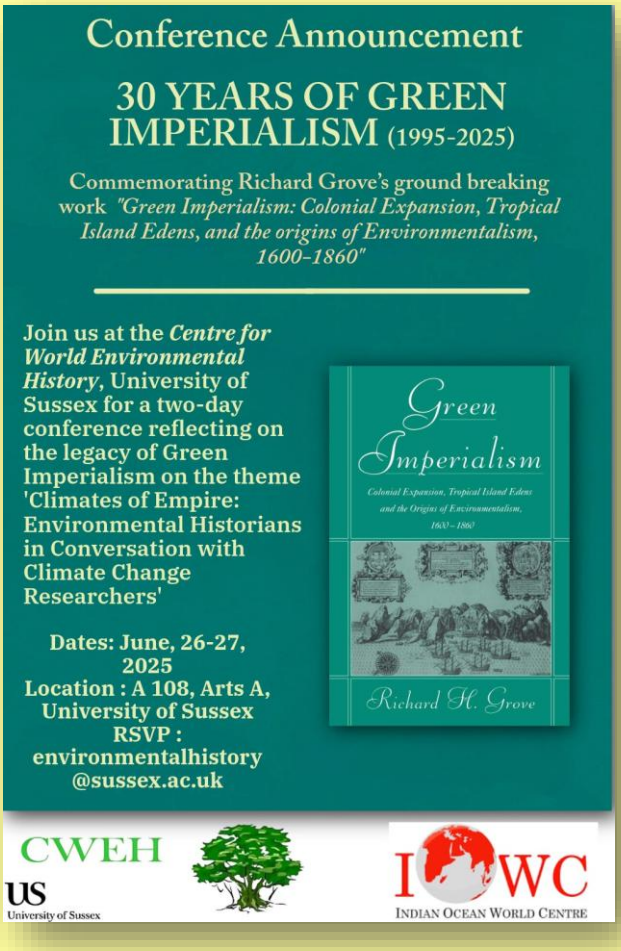


Together, these two lectures offered a rare combination of historical depth and philosophical inquiry. Prof. D'Souza's ability to connect colonial environmental practices with contemporary questions of academic legitimacy made the event highly engaging and relevant. The day served as a successful platform for interdisciplinary exchange, reaffirming Rabindra Bharati University's commitment to fostering critical and inclusive academic dialogue.

International Conference on "Climates of Empire: Environmental Historians in Conversation with Climate Change Researchers"

University of Sussex,

June 26 -27, 2025



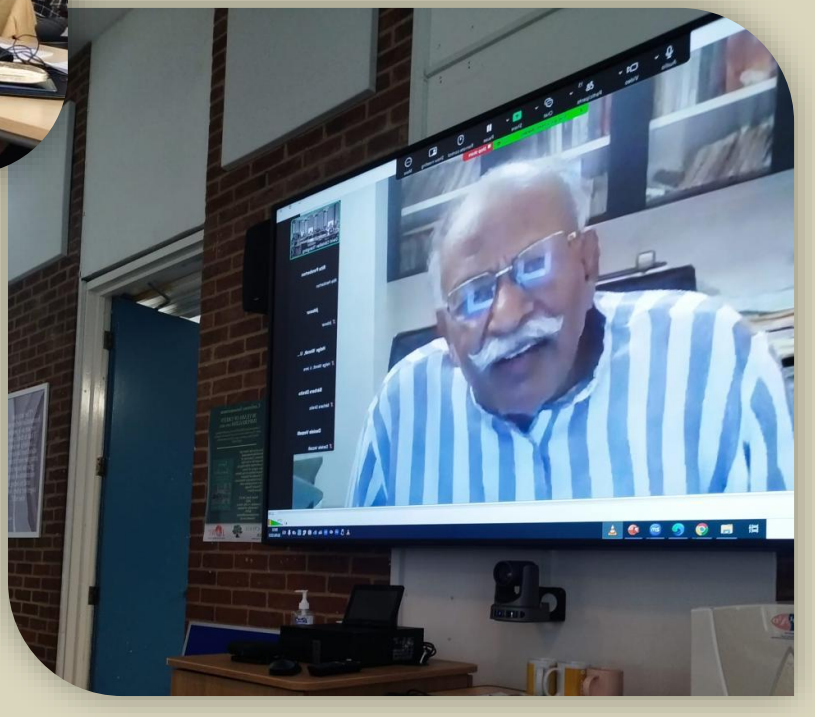
The University of Sussex recently hosted the "Climates of Empire" international conference from June 26-27, 2025. This significant two-day event brought together leading scholars to explore the crucial connections between imperial legacies, environmental history, and contemporary climate change. The conference began with insightful opening remarks from Rohan D'Souza, Vinita Damodaran, and Deepak Kumar, setting a rich intellectual tone.

The first day delved into climate's historical dimensions. Deepak Kumar of Jawaharlal Nehru University participated online in the introductory remarks, contributing to the initial framing of the conference's themes. Panel I: Climate and History covered imperial climates in India, 19th-century Mozambican hydroclimatic variability from colonial records, and climate vulnerabilities in Eastern Africa. John McNeill's Keynote (I), titled "*Green Imperialism* and the Evolution of Environmental History since 1995" directly addressed the enduring legacy of Richard Grove's seminal 1995 book, "Green Imperialism." McNeill's discussion would have highlighted Grove's central argument: that modern environmentalism was significantly shaped by European observations of environmental degradation and early conservation efforts within tropical colonial territories, rather than solely emerging from European intellectual traditions. Celebrating 30 years since its publication, the keynote underscored the book's continued relevance and profound impact on environmental history scholarship. Afternoon sessions broadened the focus. Panel II: Animal Studies and Environmental History offered diverse perspectives, from climate change's impact on Himalayan pastoralism to urban animal kinships. Panel III: Risk and Extreme Events addressed issues like the 1877 El Niño in colonial Malaya and the "Double Commodification of Monsoon." A session on Archives and Collections highlighted vital historical resources. Day one concluded with Gwyn Campbell's Keynote (II) on "Climate and Labour in the Indian Ocean World."

Continued...

The second day continued the vibrant discussions. Panel IV: Landscape and Ecologies 1 revisited "Green Imperialism" and the professionalization of weather prediction in British India. Panel V: Conservation/Plants/Indigenous Medicine offered critical insights into traditional knowledge, "Hidden Hands" in natural histories, indigenous medicines in Zimbabwe, and tropical bryophytes. Panel VI: Landscape and Ecologies 2 presented further analysis, connecting environmental history with climate ethnography and ecological changes in Zimbabwe. Sujit Sivasundaram's Keynote (III) shared "Fragments in the Environmental History of the Indian Ocean," offering profound reflections.

The conference concluded with Panel VII: Environmental Activism and Environmental Imaginations, discussing "Just" Transitions, environmental activism in a climate crisis, and agroecology. A thought-provoking Roundtable, "Who's Afraid of Reparations?: A Roundtable on Planetary Pasts and Futures," stimulated crucial discussions on global justice. The "Climates of Empire" conference was a pivotal event, successfully fostering interdisciplinary dialogue and deepening our understanding of how historical imperial practices continue to shape our environmental present and future. The organizing team—Vinita Damodaran, Rohan D'Souza, Stuart Peters, David Thangsing, and James Hamilton—deserves commendation for an impactful gathering.



Open Call Entangled Ecosystems Grant

What does it mean to be entangled—with a forest, a fungus, or a changing climate? How do field notes, temperature logs, or a canopy scan reveal the pulse of an ecosystem—and the ways it is being disrupted?

Science Gallery Bengaluru and **Shared Ecologies** —a program supported by Shyama Foundation– invite **artists or collectives of Indian nationality** to apply for the Entangled Ecosystems Grant. This is an opportunity to create a new exhibit that explores ecological connections through the intersection of art, science, and research.

The selected artist or collective will collaborate closely with **ecologist Dr Meghna Krishnadas**, engaging with material ranging from plant tissues and fungal cultures to spreadsheets, models, and images of the forest canopy.

We seek proposals that are process-driven, participatory, and immersive—projects that go beyond presenting ideas to open new pathways for discovery. The final work will take the form of an exhibit, though the medium is open to your interpretation. Whether through sound, video, installation, sculpture, or a combination of these, we encourage you to choose the format that best conveys the depth of the ecosystems you wish to explore.

The commissioned exhibit will be developed between July 2025 and February 2026, and will be unveiled in March 2026.

Timeline:
Call goes live: 11 May 2025 -25 June 2025 [11:59 PM IST]
Results by: July 2025
Exhibit production: July 2025 - February 2026
Showcase: March 2026

https://bengaluru.sciencegallery.com/work-with-us-open-calls/entagled-ecosystems-grant

Highlights from the UKAHN History of Nursing Research Colloquium 2025

Keele University, 25 June 2025

The 26th UKAHN History of Nursing Research Colloquium, held June 25, 2025, at Keele University, provided a stimulating platform for nursing historians. Presentations explored nurses' enduring challenges, their often-overlooked contributions, and the crucial role of documenting marginalized experiences, fostering a deeper understanding of the profession's past. The event emphasized nurses' remarkable resilience and commitment to their work, even in adversity.

The colloquium also highlighted the importance of respectful and inclusive research, featuring discussions on the experiences of groups like Aboriginal and Jewish nurses, enriching the historical narrative. UKAHN's dedication to promoting nursing history research was evident in the collaborative atmosphere and the opportunity for researchers to share their work and receive valuable feedback. The successful event underscored the ongoing relevance of nursing history for understanding the profession and shaping its future.

For more on future events, visit the UKAHN website: https://ukahn.org/2025-colloquium-programme/

Science and Technology Studies (STS)-IN: Building the Network

Established in December 2023, the Science and Technology Studies India Network (STS-IN) is rapidly growing, fostering vibrant discussions and research across India. Its city chapters, including a highly active Mumbai Chapter, have hosted impactful seminars and discussions throughout 2024, engaging early career researchers and promoting critical dialogue on STS issues.

STS-IN also launched its website in April 2024 as a central hub for activities and a growing academic repository. Its new blog, NEXUS, provides an accessible platform for short research articles, opinion pieces, and conference reports relevant to STS in the Indian context, aiming to broaden scholarly discourse.

First STS-IN Annual Conference 2025

The highlight of STS-IN's year is fast approaching! The network is incredibly excited to host the First STS-IN Annual Conference in Delhi NCR. This foundational event is a pivotal gathering for scholars, educators, and practitioners, exploring the dynamic intersections of science, technology, and society in India.

Conference Details:

Dates: December 15-17, 2025

Location: Delhi NCR

While the Call for Papers and Panels has now closed, everyone with an interest in STS in India is strongly encouraged to attend and participate in the vibrant discussions!

Registration details will be announced soon on the STS-IN website!

Pre-Conference Workshop for ECRs Plans are well underway for a pre-conference workshop specifically for graduate students and early career researchers (ECRs). This workshop will offer valuable insights, networking opportunities, and skill-building sessions relevant to STS research.

Watch out for further information and registration details for this workshop on the STS-IN website!

For all the latest updates on the conference, workshop, and STS-IN activities, visit their website and blog:

STS-IN Website: stsin.org

Conference Page: stsin.org/stsinc25/NEXUS

Bangalore City Chapters organized a reading group in Cubbon Park to plan future meetings
uss their respective research questions

OFFICE OF THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM | OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE

India's Medical Inheritance and Encounters

ABSTRACT

The present lecture will outline briefly our inheritance of medical knowledge and practices and then the problems that it faced when it encountered the larger world. History of medicine constitute a grand narrative involving trans-national development and international circulation of people, ideas, tools and techniques. Truly, the diseases have no borders. Hence the study of human health requires a joint effort on the part of both scientists and social scientists; neither side has an advantage in method or truth over the other. A biologist, for example, would say the micro-organism yersina pestis causes plague which no doubt is true. But the social constructivists would focus on how different societies or groups within a society would have different perceptions of this disease and would develop different strategies for coping with this grave illness.

VENUE
Biological Sciences Auditorium, IISc

DATE & TIME
2nd September 2025
4PM ONWARDS

भारतीय विज्ञान संस्थान

ug.iisc.ac.in

SPEAKER

Prof. Deepak Kumar
Former Professor of History of Science
JNU, New Delhi

Deepak Kumar obtained his PhD from Delhi University. He initially taught history at Kurukshetra University, then organized history of science division at NISTADS, and since 1998 taught at JNU till his retirement in 2017. One of the pioneers of history of science research in India, he is the author of the classic *Science and the Raj* (1995, OUP, translated into several languages) and a few other books. His *Science and Society in Modern India* (2023, CUP) is used as a textbook in the course on the History and Philosophy of Science currently taught at IISc.

Our upcoming Seminar

MAULANA AZAD NATIONAL URDU UNIVERSITY

Department of History & H.K. Sherwani Centre for Deccan Studies

Society for the History of Science Kolkata (SHSK)

invite you to the National Seminar on the theme

SCIENCE IN THE DECCAN: A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

15 – 17 September 2025

Sponsored by Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi

INAUGURAL SESSION

Chair
Prof. Syed Ainul Hasan
Hon'ble Vice Chancellor, MANUU

Welcome Address
Prof. Rafiullah Azmi
Convenor & Head, Department of History, MANUU

Introduction to the Theme
Prof. Salma Ahmed Farooqui
Convenor & Director, H.K. Sherwani Centre for Deccan Studies, MANUU

Keynote Address
Prof. Atluri Murali
Formerly with Dept. of History, University of Hyderabad

Address by the Chief Guest
Prof. SK. Mahmood, Vice Chairman of the Telangana State Council of Higher Education (TSCHE), Govt. of Telangana

Guest of Honour
Prof. Deepak Kumar
Honorary Professor, Department of History, MANUU

Release of the SHSK Newsletter

Book Release
Fighting the Fever: Kala-azar in Eastern India, 1870s-1940s
of Prof. Achintya Kumar Dutta, Department of History, University of Burdwan, West Bengal, Cambridge University Press, 2025

Date: 15 September 2025 | **Venue:** Library Auditorium | **Time:** 10.30 am onwards

MAULANA AZAD NATIONAL URDU UNIVERSITY

Department of History & H.K. Sherwani Centre for Deccan Studies

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SCIENCE IN THE DECCAN: A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE

15 – 17 September 2025

Sponsored by Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), New Delhi

VALEDICTORY SESSION

Chair
Prof. Farhat Hasan
Department of History, University of Delhi

Chief Guest
Prof. Shakeel Ahmed
Visiting Professor, Centre for Disaster Risk Reduction, Islamic University of Science and Technology, Awantipora, Kashmir

Guest of Honour
Prof. P.H. Mohammad
Dean, School of Arts & Social Sciences, MANUU

Valedictory Address
Dr. Dinesh C. Sharma
Eminent Science Journalist and Jawaharlal Nehru Fellow

Vote of Thanks
Dr. Shahid Jamal, Assistant Professor
H.K. Sherwani Centre for Deccan Studies, MANUU

Date: 17 September 2025 | **Venue:** Library Auditorium | **Time:** 3.00 pm onwards

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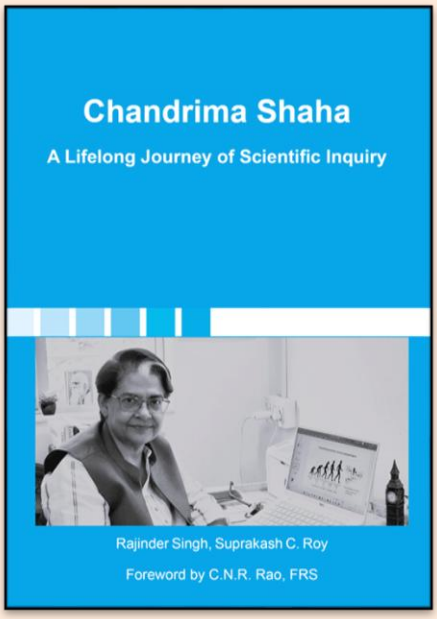
Seminar Coordinators
Dr. A. Subash
Assistant Professor, H.K. Sherwani Centre for Deccan Studies, MANUU
&
Dr. Khalid Ponmulathodi
Assistant Professor, Department of History, MANUU

Chandrima Shaha: A Lifelong Journey of Scientific Inquiry



Rajinder Singh and Suprakash C. Roy, *Chandrima Shaha: A Lifelong Journey of Scientific Inquiry*, Duren, Shaker Verlag, 2024, pp. i-xvi + 1-275, ISBN 978-3-8440-9721-4

Focusing on the renowned biologist Chandrima Shaha, the authors of this book bring out the specific propensities and circumstances that have steered her towards the world of science, enabling her to undertake a remarkable journey in scientific academia, past many an impressive milestone. This book is intended as a biography, but one that is squarely situated in the domain of history of science, thus placing itself in a special sub-set within the field of historical biography.

Enabled by a liberal parenting in the progressive environment of her parental home, Shaha developed both sporting proficiency and intellectual curiosity. Following these two parallel pathways, she blossomed into a competent sportsperson and eminent biologist. The authors of this book primarily follow the academic axis of her life that propels Shaha's stellar journey from her PhD at the Institute of Chemical Biology, Kolkata, to her postdoctoral stints – first at the University of Kansas, then at the Greenwald Laboratory and finally at the Population Council's Society for Study of Reproduction, New York - to her permanent faculty position at the National Institute of Immunology, Delhi, where she built own independent laboratory. The collaborative aspect of her scientific engagement, too, gets appropriate attention; the book brings out the way in which her association with the Population Council crystallized into a long-term one, with collaborative projects and a Biotechnology Career Award of the Rockefeller Foundation that saw her spending many a productive summer at the Council between 1986 and 2007. Another crucial aspect of a scientist's career is the young scientists she grooms; the authors accordingly bring out Shaha's joyful association with numerous students and researchers culminating in valuable publications. The book also demonstrates how ably the prolific researcher doubled up as an efficient academic administrator; in 2012, the Department of Biotechnology made her the director of NII. Chandrima officially retired from the position in 2016, after five years of successful steering of NII, only to be deservedly appointed as a Professor of Eminence at the Institute.

As is to be expected of a historical biography of a scientist, a sizeable part of the book is devoted to an in-depth coverage of Shaha's research, beginning with an examination her doctoral thesis and then successively elaborating the subsequent phases of her research, even as the book pertinently assesses the question of Shaha's overall impact on the scientific community.

Continued....

The book details her doctoral research on plant compounds derived from *Aristolochia Indica* Linn.; the authors indicate that since the thesis specially addressed the impact of the plant's extracts on the female reproductive processes, Chandrima acquired such a deep insight into the principles of reproductive and cell biology that they came to constitute the overarching specialization in which her future researches would come to be mapped.

The book then presents in a nutshell Shaha's postdoctoral researches, respectively on steroidal modulation of ovarian function and the functional role that certain testicular peptides play in the reproductive processes; during this phase the mentorship of Gilbert S. Greenwald and the exposure to international academia at the University of Kansas Medical Center and then at the Biomedical Center of the Population Council, expanded Shaha's collaborative reach and opened up channels for the global dissemination of her research. The book then identifies a significant turn in Shaha's career – her return to India to occupy a faculty position in 1984 in NII, where her own laboratory would become a site of prolific research. The authors devote two detailed chapters to bring out the scientific significance of the research projects of the laboratory. They demonstrate that during the seventies to the nineties the laboratory was abuzz with significant research on the human sperm function; significantly, this thrust coincided with the Government of India's strategies of population control. The research under Chandrima's aegis on sperms and testicular cells tied up with the contemporaneous quest for a sperm vaccine. Shaha's idea was to find a protein in the human sperm that would block, whenever necessary, the interaction with the egg. The book also shows how Shaha's research on testicular cells gradually veered towards addressing causes of male infertility.

A close reading of the sixth chapter of the book gives the reader a sense of the way in which the dynamic environment of laboratory-based research, in tandem with new global trends in the concerned area, may transform and diversify a scientist's tryst with the chosen field of enquiry. Shaha's laboratory that had already attained high standards in work on the cellular defense system, found Shaha in the new millennium pioneering the study of cell death in our country – a research area that had only recently exploded in global scientific literature. The authors also indicate how this line of inquiry started in this lab as study of testicular cell apoptosis and then broadened into the study of death pathways active in different cell types. They pertinently tie this research direction up with the contemporary growth in cancer research and bring out the significance of the two related themes that now came to particularly preoccupy Shaha's research agenda – study of the *Leishmania* parasite and cellular defense against the spread of *Leishmaniasis*. In pursuing research on defense mechanisms, the lab, now attracting excellent doctoral and postdoctoral researchers, almost inevitably branched off into the study of drug actions on the parasite and thus became part of the wider quest for drugs combating cell death.

Commendably, the authors have not weeded out the fact of Shaha's authorship of popular pieces on science from this biography. It should be borne in mind that writing of popular science has been conventionally given an inferior status by the world of 'high' science.

Continued....

The authors see in Shaha a renowned scientist, who did not subscribe to this hierarchy, if only because she believed that popular science has a major role in attracting youngsters to a serious cultivation of science.

The other aspect that the authors have rightly considered as integral to situating Shaha as a versatile human being in her own historical time is her active involvement in photography and sports (she ultimately had to quit playing cricket to privilege her academic career) and later in sports commentary. Finally the book has also attempted to show how Shaha as a person and scientist has been appreciated by different members of the scientific community, whether in India or abroad.

The book scores in being written from an awareness that scientific academia (and its ways of recognizing achievement) – like the wider society that embeds it - is male-dominated. Recognizing that gender disparity in scientific academia is a global phenomenon - it took about three hundred years for the Royal Society of London to elect women Fellows - the authors accord the Indian situation its historical specificity and detail how low is the proportion of women Fellows in the in different branches of science in the Indian Academy of Sciences and the Indian National Science Academy, respectively. It is within this perspective of a yawning gender gap that the book biographically situates Chandrima Shaha's journey as a scientist, pointing out that by the time Shaha was elected the first woman president of INSA in 2020, eighty five years had elapsed since the founding of the academy in 1935. Indeed, it is this awareness of inequality that commits the authors to a project of writing biographies of women scientists in India – the biography of Shaha follows the biographies of Bibha Chowdhury and Purnima Sinha. The question as to why, despite the declared commitment in the Indian science academies to 'promote women scientists', detailed biographies of individual women scientists are rare in India, sets the critical tone for the book. The care with which the authors move out of the confines of an exclusively academic trail to unfurl the full spectrum of Shaha's personality not only does justice to biography as a genre but also emphasizes that Shaha was not venturing into only a single male-dominated domain, viz., science, but into other male preserves as well, like the game of cricket (in the 1970s) and sports commentary. The book celebrates the many firsts that marked Shaha's achievements as a woman – one of the first women cricketers in India, the first woman director of NII, the first woman president of INSA and the first woman cricket commentator in All India Radio. The authors also tease out from their gleaned data how Shaha as a woman scientist was acutely sensitive and responsive to the gender disparity in the science academe.

The book thus performs the valuable task of 'putting women back in' the history-writing on science in India. Such writing back, breaking the preexisting silence, is certainly the first crucial step to writing women's history in any field.

Continued....

Building upon this foundation, subsequent research shall be able to use more intense gender-sensitivity to historically probe the patriarchal mores latent in much of the scientific academia in India. It will be the task of future research to ask whether Shaha's own climb to preeminence itself was a smooth journey, after all, and whether male-domination in academia did not subtly intervene to make her ascent more difficult than that of her male counterparts. New research would also have to study the ways in which women's difference (from the male mainstream) shaped Shaha's choices; why, for example, she was eager to work towards a male-contraceptive vaccine in a patriarchal society that placed the entire onus of contraception on the woman's body, ensuring that the 'potency' of the male was not tampered with. It also remains to be asked why Shaha moved away from this search and gradually veered towards addressing the problem of male infertility. Did she do so voluntarily, or was there a compulsion? After all, the scientific establishment in India, including fund allocation, is neither pre-political nor adequately gender-sensitive.

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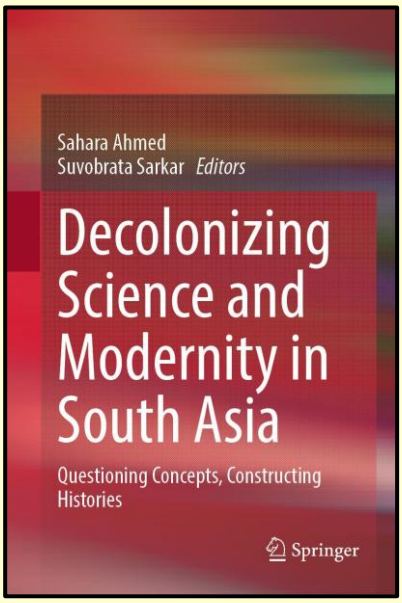
Decolonisation of Knowledge: The Indian Experience



Sahara Ahmed and Suvobrata Sarkar (Eds.). *Decolonizing Science and Modernity in South Asia: Questioning Concepts, Constructing Histories*. Singapore: Springer. 2024. ISBN 978-981-97-1828-3; ISBN 978-981-97-1829-0 (eBook)

Decolonisation has gained new traction in social sciences and humanities in recent times, where the focus is on decolonisation of ideas and intellectual practices including institutional sites of knowledge production and dissemination, unlike its earlier, nationalist avatar. In other words, the current debate centres on the decolonisation of *knowledge*, and the edited volume under review focuses on this theme in the Indian context. This edited book on the history of science, technology and medicine consists of fifteen chapters contributed by erudite scholars in the field.

They nudge the readers to revisit the familiar themes in the field from the new vantagepoint of decolonisation of knowledge, and largely succeed in their attempt to provide new directions in the ongoing debate.

The fifteen chapters in the volume are organised into five sections. These are, Part I: 'Emerging Disciplines and Science in vernacular', Part II: 'Plural Healing and Multiplicity', Part III: 'Institutionalisation and Professionalisation of New Knowledge', Part IV: 'Metropolitan Methods, Colonial Practices', and Part V: 'Science and Multiple Modernities'. This thematic organisation reflects the editorial imagination behind the book as introducing the decolonial perspective as a variation on the conventional themes of scholarly interest in the field. Decolonisation thus turns out to be a theoretical extension of the postcolonial critique of science, technology and medicine, with an added emphasis on vernacular knowledge traditions and practices, intellectual responses to western science, and the attempts to institutionalise modern science in India, during colonial and postcolonial times. This editorial approach seems to evince an intellectual compulsion to present a nascent scholarly discourse with extreme caution and care, for decolonisation of knowledge is misconstrued as and rapidly appropriated into the right-wing political rhetoric in India, unlike its African and Latin American versions. The growing policy demand to incorporate Indian knowledge systems and traditions into the university curriculum springs from such a populist political persuasion. Any serious academic pursuit of the theme of decolonisation of knowledge cannot avoid staying clear of such an orientation, and *Decolonising Science and Modernity in South Asia* is no exception.

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However, the readers of this resourceful volume cannot overlook the departures the chapters take from postcolonial studies of science. There are attempts to develop new decolonial historiographical approaches to understanding the distinct knowledge-practices, which appears in the nebula of colonial modernity in India.

Revitalisation of Ayurveda (Chapter 4, Saurav Kumar Rai) thus appears as an attempt to interactively construct a unique 'indigenous' identity that was not entirely based on an imitation of the western medicine, nor simply a standardisation of traditional therapeutic practices. Neshat Quaiser's discussion on the social epistemological status of bazaari-subaltern practices of Unani that existed in creative cultural tension with the elitist, textual tradition of Unani as well as the colonial allopathic medicine (chapter 5) is another strong example for this differentiation of decolonial historiography from the postcolonial one. The chapter on Satyendra Nath Bose's ambivalent status within global science as a scientist from the periphery (chapter 12, Deepanwita Dasgupta), similarly challenges the postcolonialist treatment of the centre-periphery relationship in colonial science, with the help of the concept of 'peripheral creativity'. The chapters on Rabindranath Tagore (13, Shiv Visvanathan) and M.K. Gandhi (14, Dhruv Raina), revisit the old perspectives on their creative and critical engagement with science, technology and modernity, and present fresh resources for decolonial thought. The chapter on developing a creative comparative philosophy (chapter 15, Nirmalya Narayan Chakraborty) similarly offers a fresh decolonial perspective on engaging with diverse western and non-western systems of philosophy.

There are also chapters which present new themes within the ambit of postcolonial studies of science, technology and medicine, but presenting new insights and information. The chapters respectively on the 'folk' medicine of Rajbanshis, a scheduled caste community from sub-Himalayan Bengal (Chapter 6, Rup Kumar Barman), and the Śubhaṅkarī Tradition of "computing and mathematical instruction" that emerged in the Mughal period mainly in Bengal (Chapter 1, Santanu Chacraverti) open fresh windows to understanding 'minor' traditions of indigenous knowledge practices. There are several chapters which explore new themes in the domestication of science in India such as Ruchi Ram Sahni's efforts to popularise science in colonial Punjab (chapter 2, Kamlesh Mohan), the cultural negotiations and the linguistic politics over developing technical terminology in Hindi in the early twentieth century (chapter 3, Sandipan Baksi) and the politics behind (chapter 11, Arnab Rai Choudhuri) the carving for and conferring of British honours (Fellowship of the Royal Society of London and Knighthood) to native scientists in colonial India. Venni V. Krishna offers a revised version of his well-read paper (first published in 1997) on the emergence of Indian scientific community (chapter 10). There are three chapters, which investigate specific cases of institutionalisation of science, technology and medicine in India. These are the analyses of electrical engineering education in colonial Calcutta against the backdrop of industrialisation (chapter 7, Suvobrata Sarkar), establishment of the Calcutta Dental College in 1920 (later, R. Ahmed Dental Medical College and Hospital) in Calcutta (chapter 8, Sahara Ahmed) and the failed governmental entrepreneurial efforts in electronics and computer fabrication in India in the 1960s and 1970s (chapter 9, Dinesh C. Sharma).

Continued..

As I mentioned in the beginning, these discussions firmly situate decolonisation of knowledge within the larger paradigm of postcolonial studies of science, technology and medicine that has been domineering the South Asian historiographies of knowledge since the 1980s.

In their introduction to the volume, Sahara Ahmed and Suvobrata Sarkar claim that "the volume interrelates a wide range of perspectives from the lived experiences of coloniality and decolonial thought and practices in different local histories from South Asia" (p. xxxii). This statement hints the promising character of the ongoing project of social history of knowledge in South Asia and how decolonial thought can give it a new impetus. It suggests the need to focus on the everydayness of the knowledge-practices and the diverse local contexts where these practices are alive and kicking in specific temporalities. However, the volume also implicitly informs the reader that Historians of science, technology and medicine in South Asia have a long way to go in their attempt to present this diversity. The volume consists of chapters almost exclusively on North India and West-Bengal, though it claims to be a volume on South Asia. The chapters that present case studies from undivided Punjab and Bengal are the only exceptions that weakly support the South Asian claim. The almost complete absence of the south Indian contexts from the volume also is hard to unsee. However, these shortcomings in no way eclipse the significance of this volume that marks an important historiographical shift in the social history of knowledge. This volume is a fresh and timely addition to the debates on decolonisation in India.

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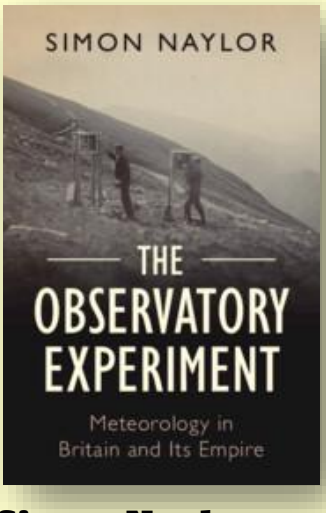

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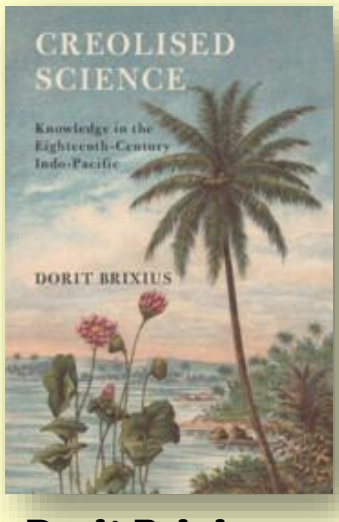

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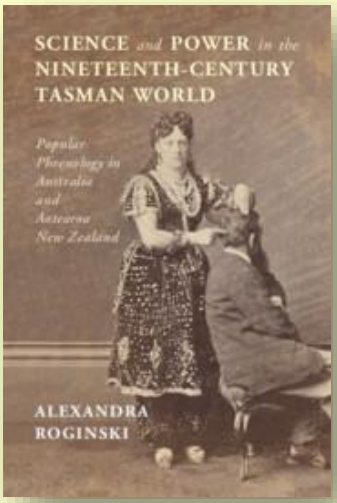

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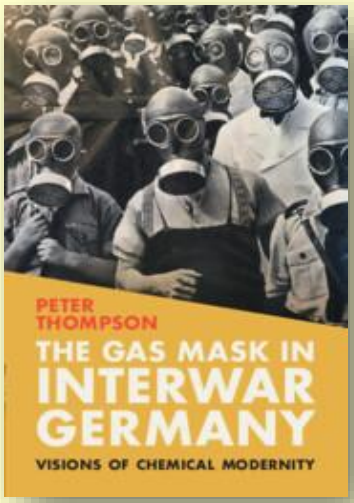

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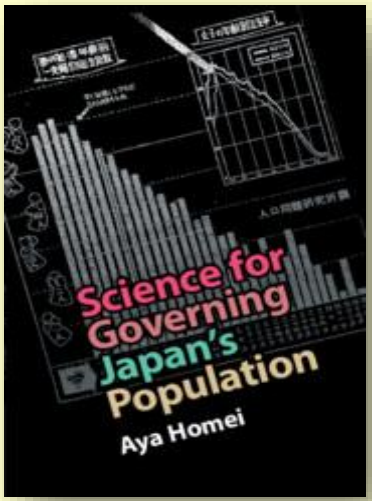

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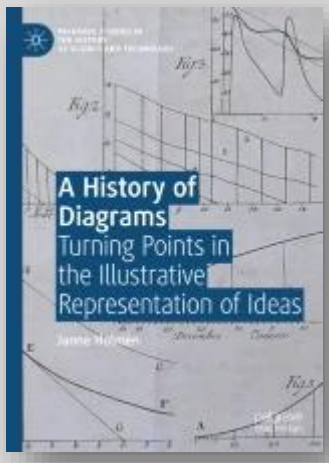

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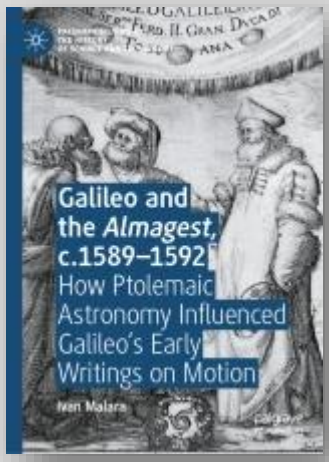

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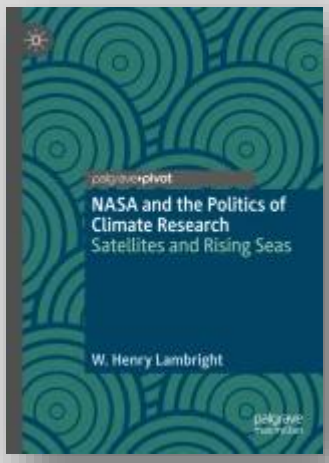

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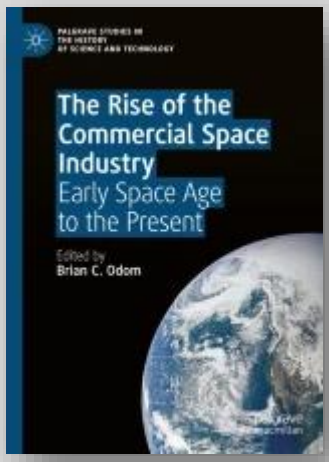

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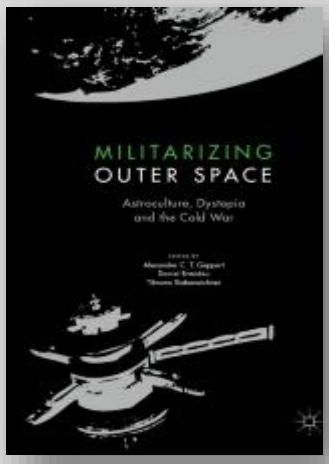

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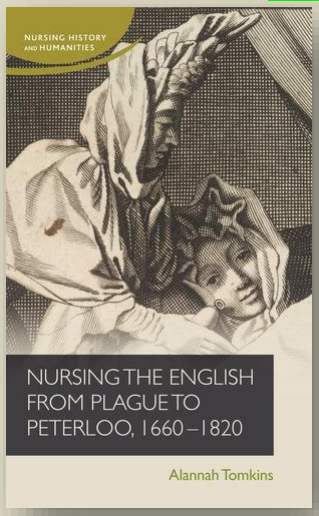

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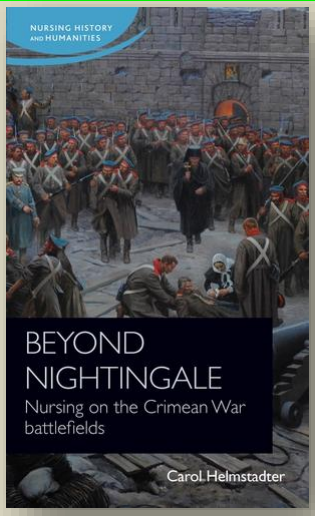

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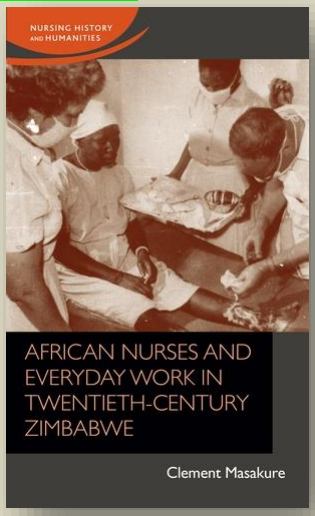

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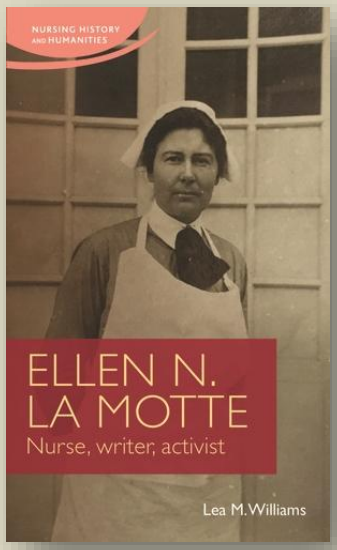

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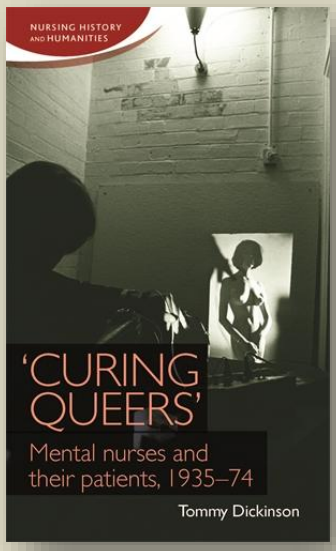

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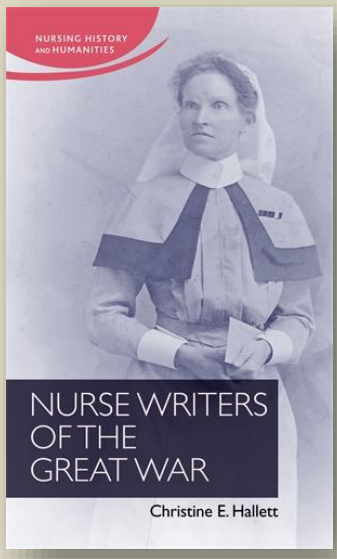

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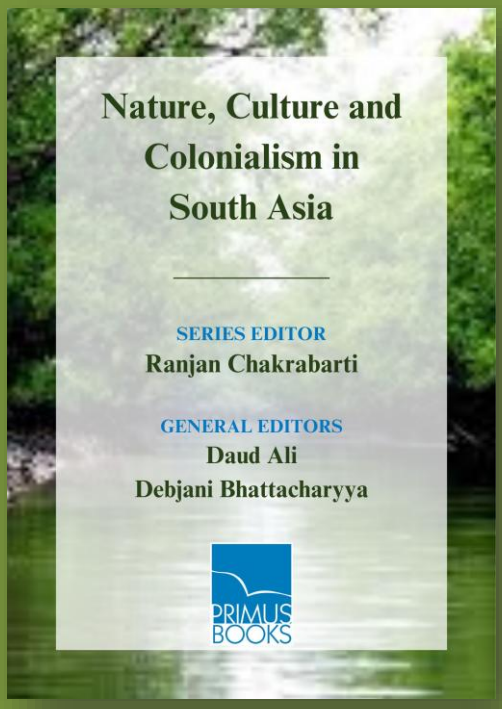

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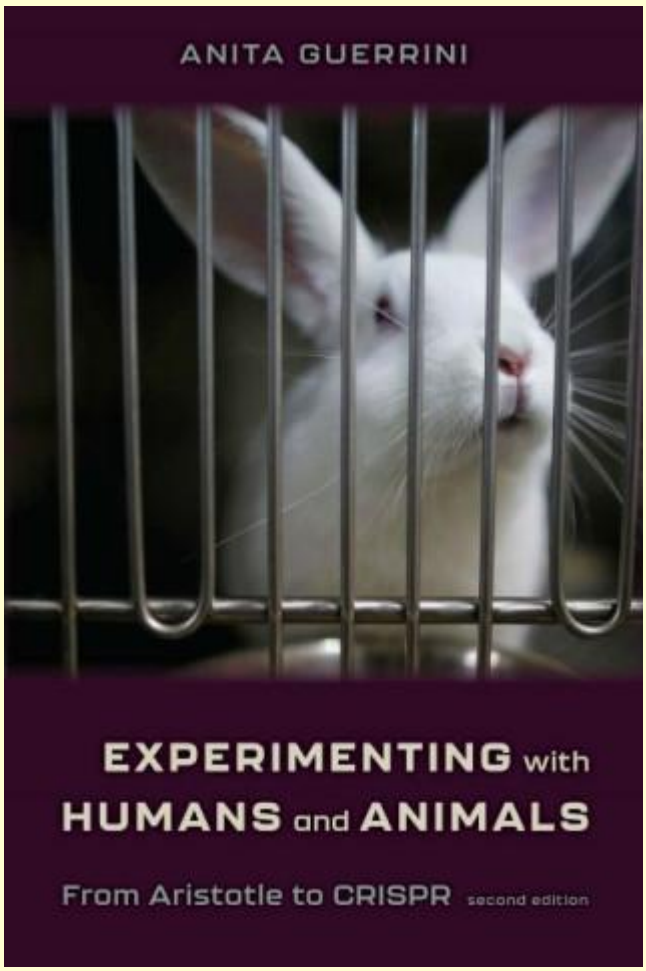

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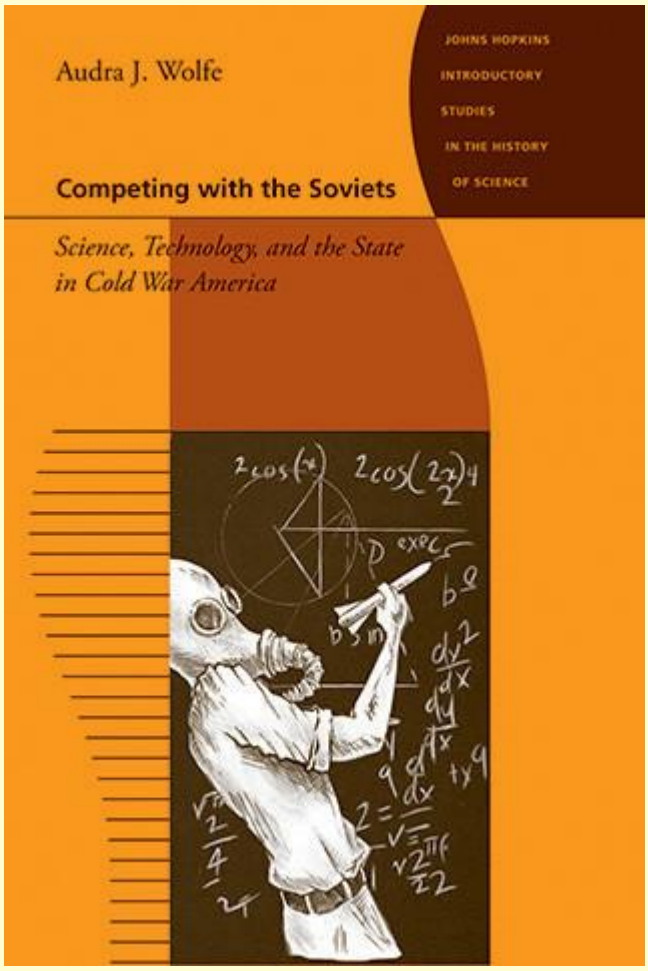

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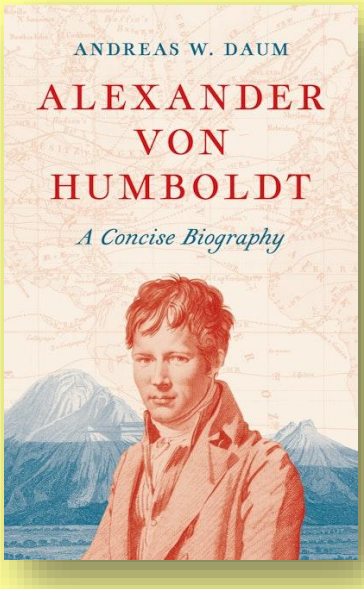

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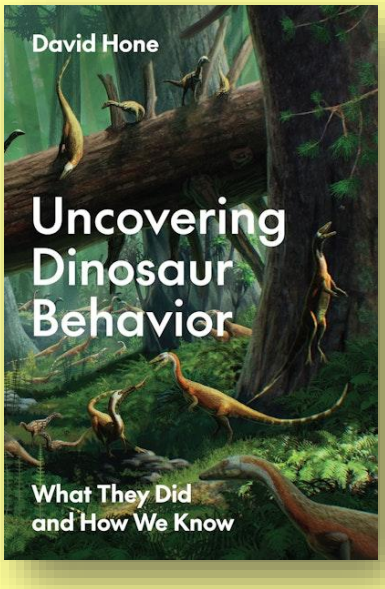

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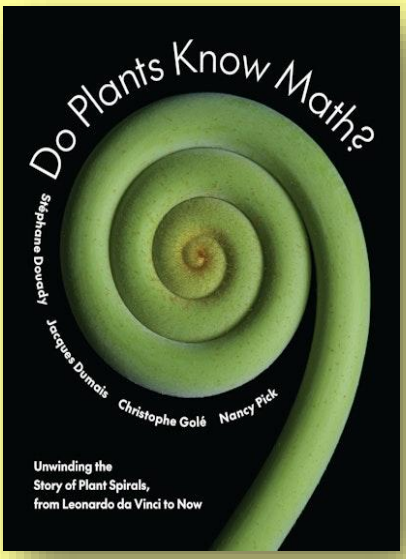

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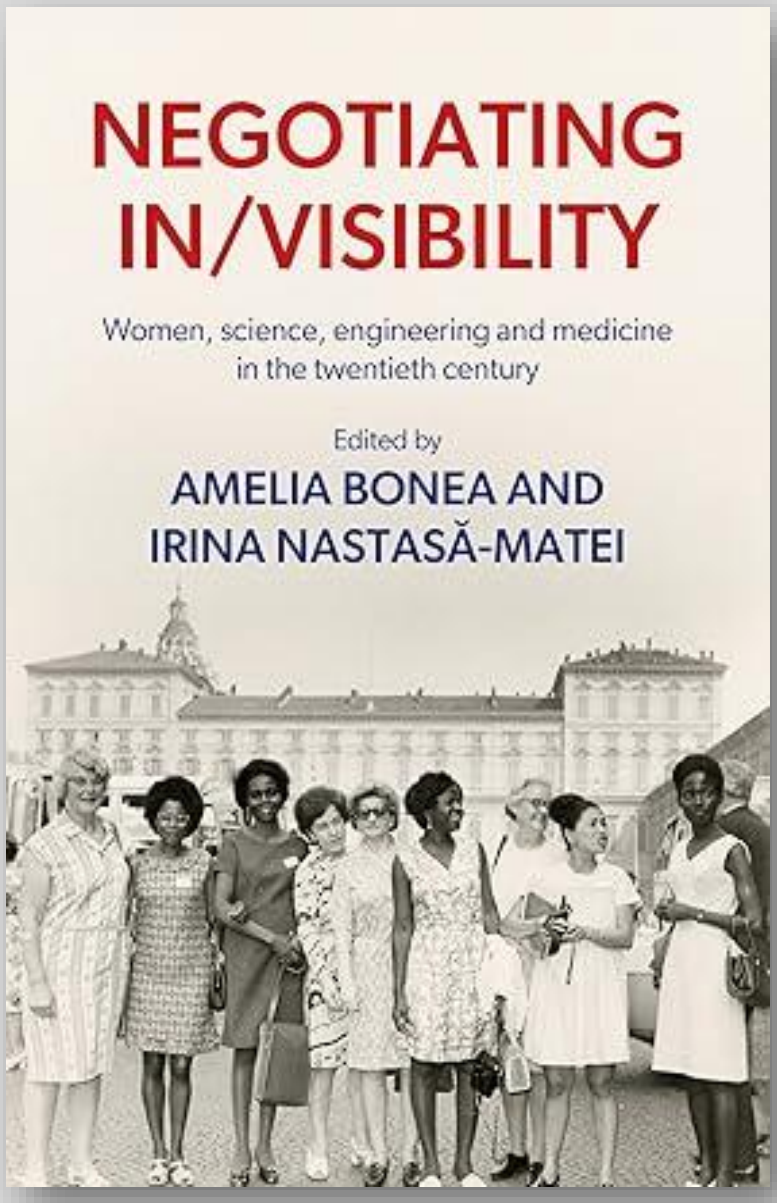
Negotiating In/Visibility: Women, Science, Engineering and Medicine in the Twentieth Century

Amelia Bonea (Editor), Irina Nastasa-matei (Editor))

Manchester University Press, 2025

About The Book



Negotiating In/Visibility explores why women, despite entering science in growing numbers during the twentieth century, remain largely invisible in its historical narratives. It examines the institutional, cultural, and social factors that marginalized their contributions. Using a multilingual archive—including Chinese, Hindi, Japanese, and more—the book presents diverse regional case studies, moving beyond Western-centric perspectives. It combines individual and collective portraits with discussions on work cultures, pedagogy, domesticity, and science communication. The volume not only analyzes how women negotiated male-dominated spaces but also proposes strategies to rethink science, scientists, and labor, aiming to create more inclusive histories of knowledge and education.

About The Editors

Amelia Bonea is a Lecturer in Global History of Science, Technology and Medicine at the University of Manchester. Her academic work focuses on the historical intersections of science, technology, and medicine within a global context.

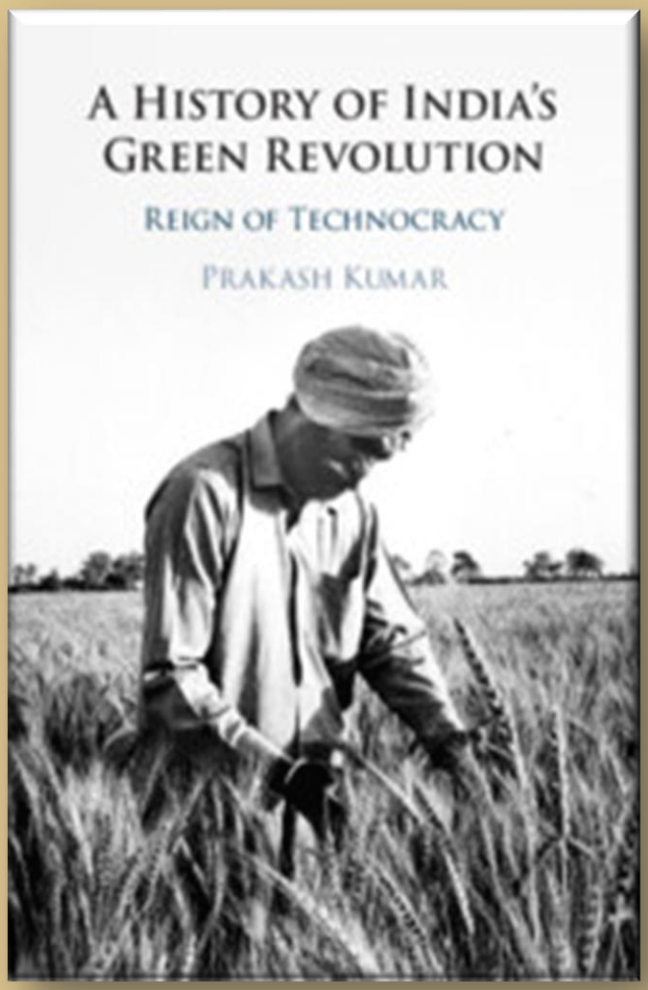
Irina Nastasa-Matei is a Lecturer in the Department of Political Science at the University of Bucharest. Her expertise lies within the field of political science, where she teaches and conducts research.

A History of India's Green Revolution

Prakash Kumar

Cambridge University Press, 2025

About The Book



In the mid-1960s, India's 'green revolution' saw the embrace of more productive agricultural practices and high yielding variety seeds, bringing the country out of food scarcity. Although lauded as a success of the Cold War fight against hunger, the green revolution has also faced criticisms for causing ecological degradation and socio-economic inequality. This book contextualizes the 'green revolution' to show the contingencies and pitfalls of agrarian transformation. Prakash Kumar unpacks its contested history, tracing agricultural modernization in India from colonial-era crop development, to land and tenure reforms, community development, and the expansion of arable lands. He also examines the involvement of the colonial state, post-colonial elites, and American modernizers. Over time, all of these efforts came under the spell of technocracy, an unyielding belief in the power of technology to solve social and economic underdevelopment which, Kumar argues, best explains what caused the green revolution.

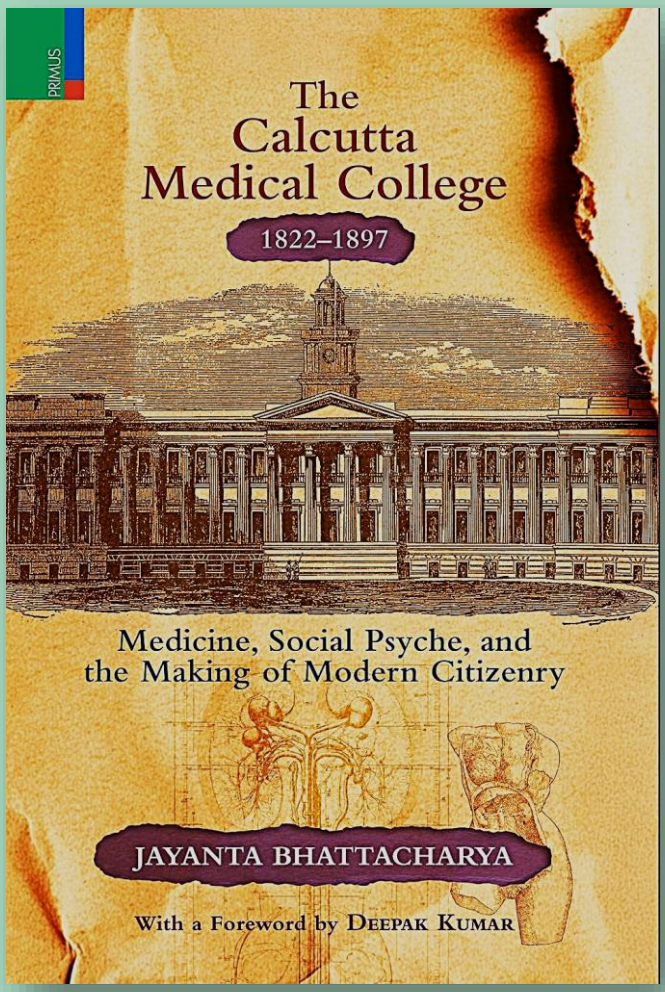
About The Author

Prakash Kumar is an Associate Professor of History and Asian Studies at Pennsylvania State University. His research focuses on South Asian history, particularly the history of science, technology, public health, agriculture, and development studies. He is the author of "Indigo Plantations and Science in Colonial India" (2012) and "A History of India's Green Revolution: Reign of Technocracy," which explores agricultural modernization in India from colonial times to the post-independence era. His work often examines the complexities of development and the interplay of science and society in South Asia.

The Calcutta Medical College, 1822-1897: Medicine, Social Psyche and the Making of Modern Citizenry

Jayanta Bhattacharya

Primus Books, 2025



About the Book

The Calcutta Medical College, 1822–1897: Medicine, Social Psyche, and the Making of Modern Citizenry explores the history of the first medical college in India and its evolution through the nineteenth century. Established during the period of 'hospital medicine', the college paved the way for a paradigm shift in the field of medical cosmology. Not only did this lead to new governing and medical processes—such as dissections during medical classes, post-mortem examinations, and the use of medical tools like stethoscopes—it also had a great impact on the social psyche of the general populace of Bengal. As a result, the students of the college were indoctrinated into new kinds of discipline and governance—two requisites of the emerging semi-modern state. Through such new endeavours, as well as contemporary international events in the medical sphere, changes in the outlook of the British Empire, and the forces of Utilitarianism and Evangelism, the college became a medium for the making of a modern citizenry and led to the birth of a modern public healthcare sector in India.

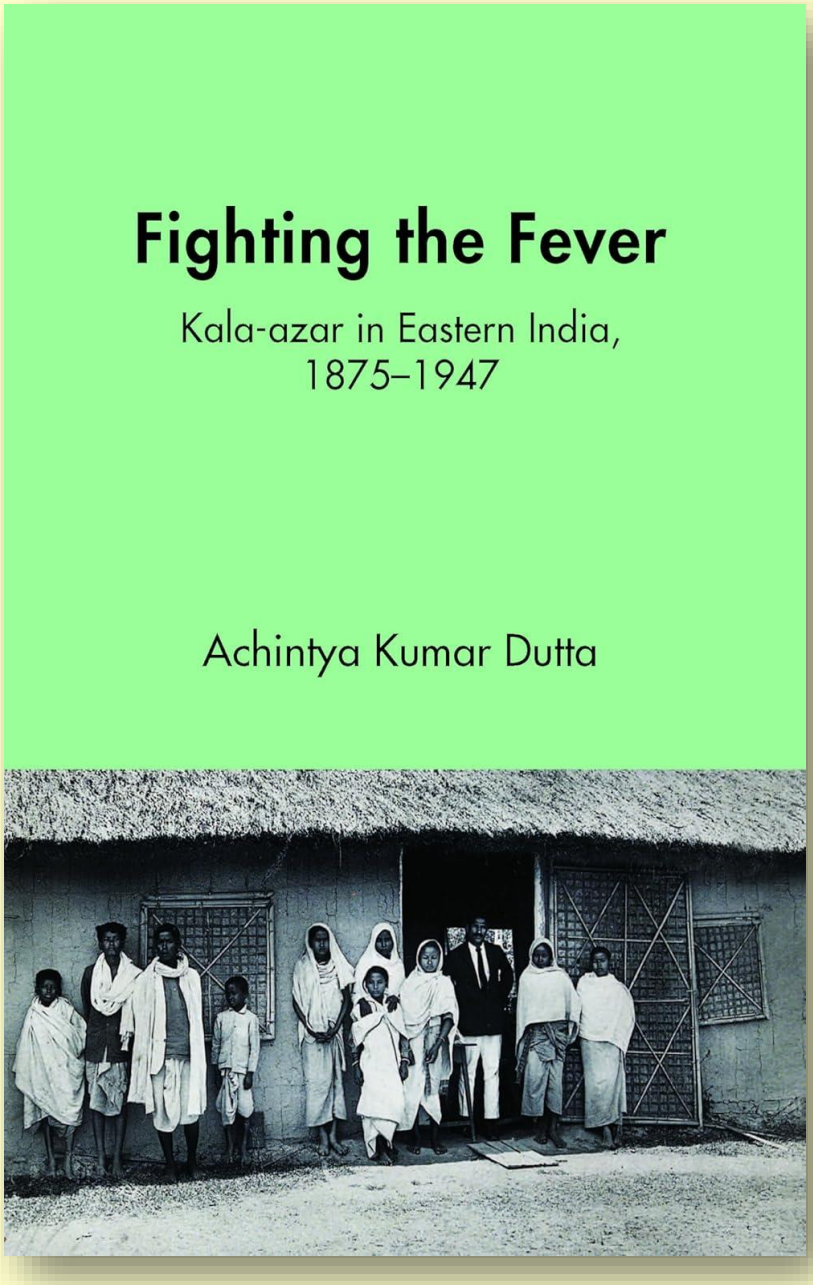
About the Author

Jayanta Bhattacharya is a physician and researcher, and has studied medicine at the Calcutta Medical College. He is a reviewer for the Bulletin of the World Health Organization, Nature, Indian Journal of History of Science, Indian Journal of Medical Ethics, Social History of Medicine, Orientalistische Literaturzeitung, and Revista de humanidades médicas & estudios sociales de la ciencia y la tecnología. He has published books in Bengali, and has contributed numerous research papers, chapters and book reviews to publications in India and abroad.

Fighting the Fever: Kala-azar in Eastern India, 1875–1947

Achintya Kumar Dutta

Cambridge University Press, 2025



About the book

The book investigates certain obscure but important aspects of the social history of disease and medicine in colonial eastern India, covering Assam, Bengal, and Bihar and Orissa-against the backdrop of the outbreak of a lethal disease called kala-azar, or black fever, scientifically known as visceral leishmaniasis, which spread its wings as an epidemic from the 1870s-and chisels out the interaction between the microbe behind the disease and medical interventionism on the one hand and health officials and the state on the other. The book does not narrate a simple account of disease and health. Instead, it analyses the social history of kala-azar in British east India in addition to revealing the hitherto undiscovered areas of research in the field of medical history.

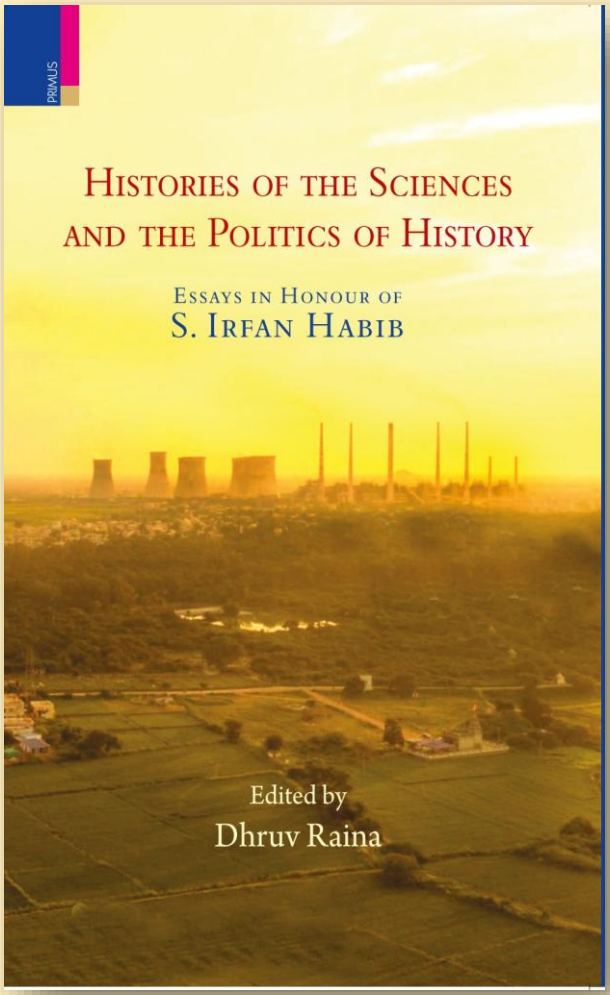
About the author

Achintya Kumar Dutta is Professor of History at the University of Burdwan, India. His areas of interest include the social history of medicine and public health in northeast India in the 19th and 20th centuries with special reference to kala-azar epidemic.

Histories of the Sciences and the Politics of History: Essays in Honour of S. Irfan Habib

***edited by* Dhruv Raina**

Primus Books, 2025



About the Book

The history and politics of the pursuit of the numerous disciplines of the sciences is enmeshed with debates about the impact of colonialism and decolonization, their relationship with emerging 'global' concerns, popular and state-driven science policies of governments, as well as their linkages of languages and cultural expressions. All these have been concerns for research in the academic life of Professor S. Irfan Habib. In his honour, ***Histories of the Sciences and the Politics of History*** presents contributions by scholars who have associated and worked with him or have been his friends in his intellectual journey. This volume covers a range of subjects from the history of science in South Asia to the trends of science policies in different eras in independent India. Other themes which relate to the scientific and democratic ethos evaluated here include the role of princely states in anti-democratic impulses in South Asia and the problems of terms such as 'global history' in history writing. This volume presents us with fresh insights into emerging fields of inquiry in the history of sciences as well as the political nuances of history making and history writing.

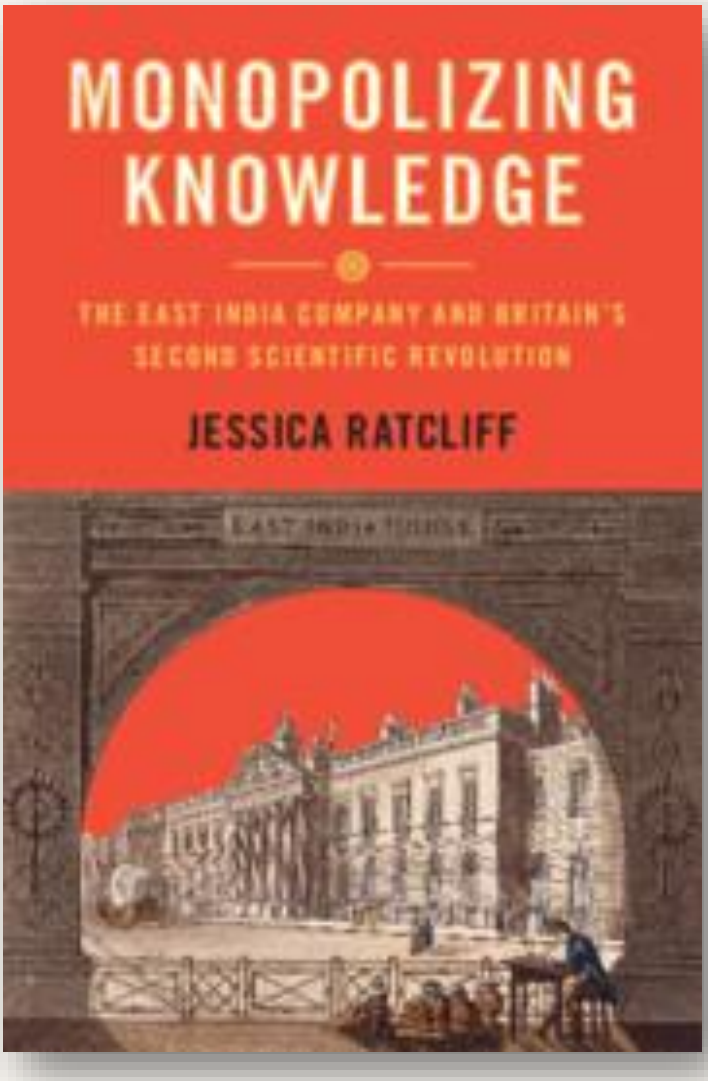
About the Author

Dhruv Raina is Professor, Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He is the author of *Images and Contexts* (2010) and *Needham's Indian Network* (2015) and has co-authored *Domesticating Modern Science* (2006) with S. Irfan Habib. He has also co-edited *Disciplines and Movements* (2022) with Hans Harder and *History of Science in Colonial India* (2007) with S. Irfan Habib.

Monopolizing Knowledge: The East India Company and Britain's Second Scientific Revolution

Jessica Ratcliff

Cambridge University Press, 2025



About the book

In the nineteenth century, an ambitious new library and museum for Asian arts, sciences and natural history was established in the City of London, within the corporate headquarters of the East India Company. Funded with taxes from British India and run by the East India Company, this library-museum was located thousands of miles away from the taxpayers who supported it and the land from which it grew. Jessica Ratcliff documents how the growth of science at the Company depended upon its sweeping monopoly privileges and its ability to act as a sovereign state in British India. She explores how "Company science" became part of the cultural fabric of science in Britain and examines how it fed into Britain's dominance of science production within its empire, as well as Britain's rising preeminence on the scientific world stage.

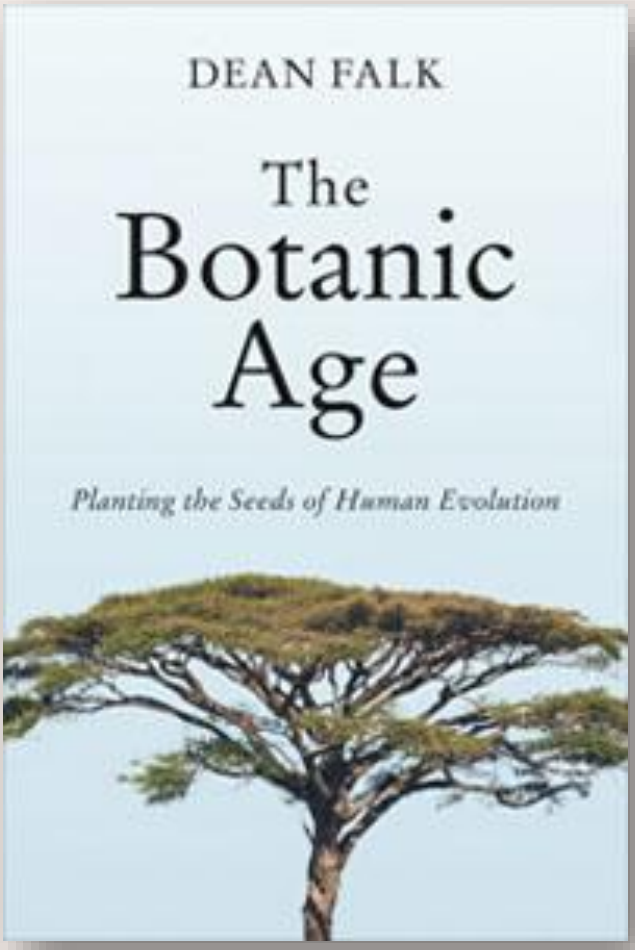
About the author

Jessica Ratcliff is a historian of science and technology specializing in Britain and its former empire from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Her research explores the political, economic, and cultural dimensions of scientific and technological change. Her most recent book, *Monopolizing Knowledge: The East India Company and Britain's Second Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 2025), investigates the evolving practices of knowledge management within the British East India Company, particularly focusing on its institutions in Britain, and demonstrates how this "Company science" influenced and was later integrated into Britain's public scientific endeavors.

The Botanic Age: Planting the Seeds of Human Evolution

Dean Falk

University of Toronto Press, 2025



About the Author

Dean Falk is the Hale G. Smith Professor of Anthropology and a Distinguished Research Professor at Florida State University in Tallahassee. Trained as a biological anthropologist, Falk is interested in the evolution of the brain and the emergence of human cognitive abilities that led to language, music, analytical thinking, and warfare. She has directed collaborative research on the brains and skulls of nonhuman primates, prehistoric human relatives, and recent humans including *Homo floresiensis* (aka "Hobbit") and Albert Einstein. In addition to numerous scientific and popular articles, Falk has written many books, including *Braindance, Finding Our Tongues, The Fossil Chronicles*, and, with Eve Penelope Schofield, *Geeks, Genes, and the Evolution of Asperger Syndrome*.

About the Book

Identifying a period before the Stone Age that represents a key turning point in human evolution, *The Botanic Age* provides a fascinating new look at the first three million years of hominin existence.

How and why did humans get to be so clever and thoughtful? The beginning of the Stone Age, marked by the invention of stone tools, has traditionally dominated discussions about the origin and evolution of human intelligence. However, feminist anthropologists have long theorized that the first tools were actually nests, slings, and baskets that would not have survived in the archaeological record.

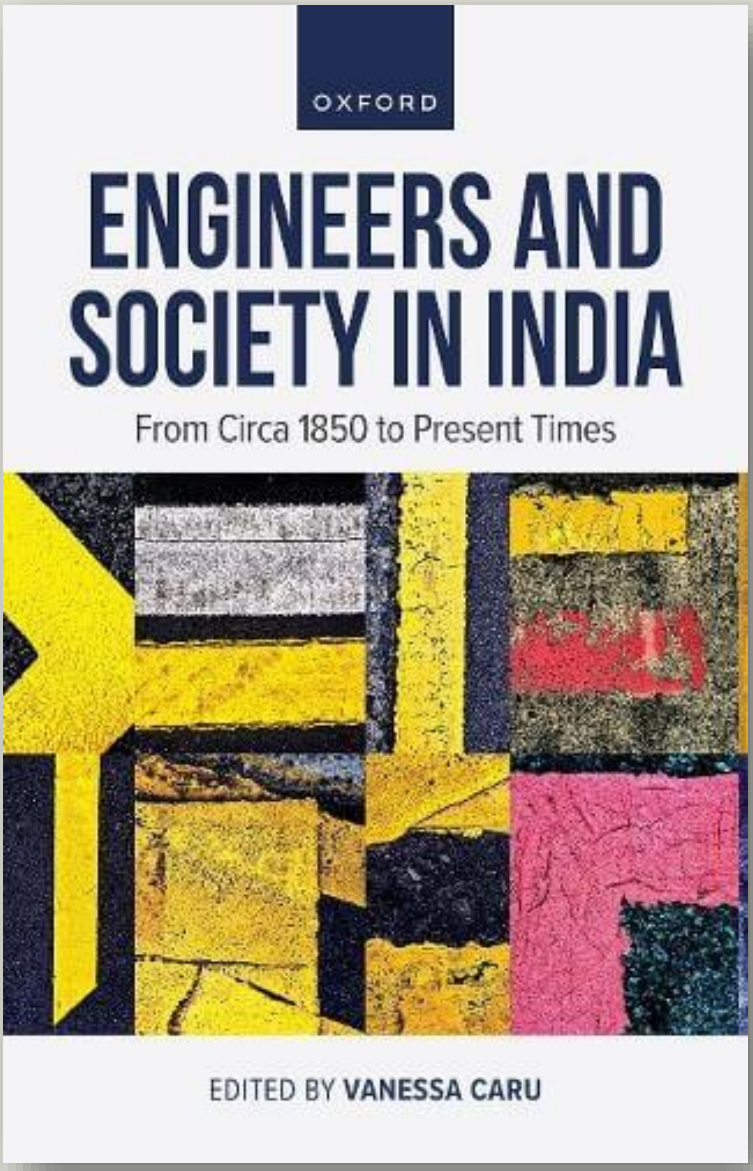
In *The Botanic Age*, leading evolutionary anthropologist Dean Falk argues that millions of years of weaving botanical materials and woodworking preceded the Stone Age, facilitating the basic neurological underpinnings for humankind's later creative and technological inventions. She further suggests that mothers and infants may hold the key to understanding a series of events that eventually kindled the emergence of advanced cognitive abilities, including language and music.

The Botanic Age takes readers millions of years into the past to a time before our relatives began living full-time on the ground. From stationary hominin sleeping trees in Africa to beached trees on the shores of Indonesia, the impact of the Botanic Age on hominin evolution was far-reaching. Only from this vantage point "in the trees" can we really begin to understand how and why our ancestors evolved – and how we became human.

Engineers and Society in India: From circa 1850 to Present Times

***Edited by* Vanessa Caru**

Oxford University Press, 2025



About the Book

This book offers a compelling exploration into the untold history and social dynamics of Indian engineers. Through a series of ten insightful essays, it brings together the perspectives of social scientists and historians from India, the United States, and France. Readers are taken on a journey from the colonial era to the modern day, delving into debates like the Howrah Bridge construction, the migration of Indian engineers to American universities post-Independence, the impact of reservation policies on IIT placements, and the burgeoning coaching culture in Kota. Accompanied by an in-depth introduction that surveys existing scholarship and traces the pivotal shifts in the engineering profession since the 1850s, this book is an essential read for those eager to understand the forces shaping India's engineering landscape.

About the Editor

Vanessa Caru, Research Fellow, National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), CEIAS (Centre for South Asian Studies)

Vanessa Caru is a social historian and a Research Fellow at CESAH (CNRS-EHESS, Paris). She obtained her PhD in history, with a dissertation entitled "Working-class housing and the social question, Bombay (1850-1950)". She is currently researching the social history of the Indian personnel of the Public Works Department in the Bombay Presidency, from the 1860s to the 1960s.

Obituary

Prof. Chittabrata Palit

The Society for the History of Science Kolkata, expresses its deepest condolences on the passing of Professor Chittabrata Palit, an eminent historian and scholar of exceptional depth and dedication. His contributions to the field of history, particularly the history of science and modern Indian thought, have left an indelible mark on academic scholarship. Professor Palit was not only a brilliant academic but also a mentor and guide to generations of students and researchers. His absence will be profoundly felt in the intellectual community.

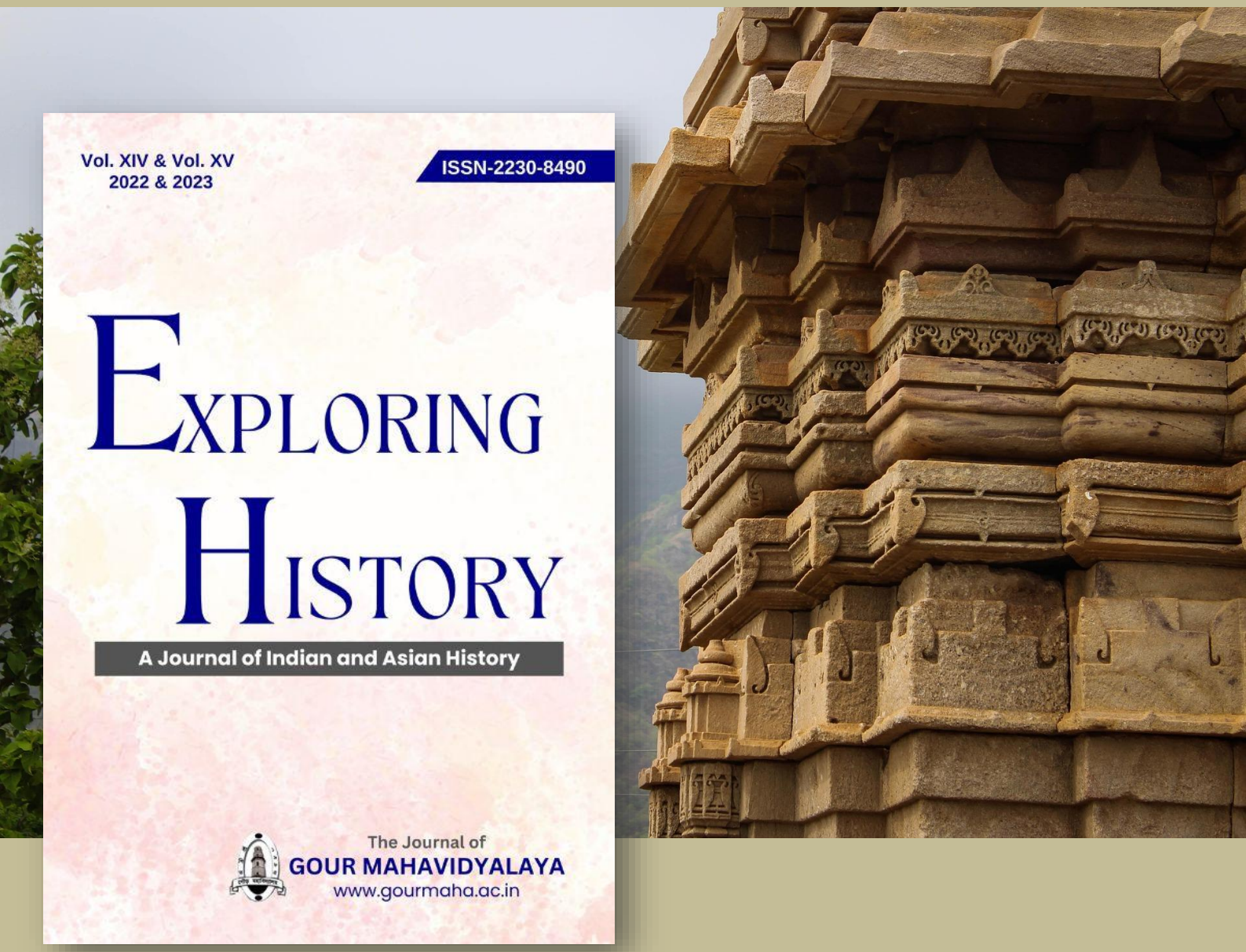
Obituary

PROFESSOR RAJAT KANTA RAY

The Society for the History of Science Kolkata deeply mourns the passing of Professor Rajat Kanta Roy, an eminent scholar and respected mentor. His contributions to the field of history will be remembered with gratitude and admiration.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones.

May his soul rest in peace.



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