

“SIKSHA-SEVAK”- A Mouth piece of Silchar Siksha Parishad.

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ABSTRACT

The importance of an educational journal was felt among the education enthusiasts of the then period of Surma Barak Valley. As a result ‘Siksha-Sevak’ was published in the month of Sravana, 1332 (Bengali Year) from Silchar. The last issue of the ‘Siksha-Sevak’ was published in Kartik, 1348. Almost all the intellectuals of Surma Barak Valley had been associated with the said journal published over a long span of seventeen years (1925-1941).

‘Siksha-Sevak’ was a trimonthly journal in nature. Although education related articles were given importance in ‘Siksha-Sevak’, but a good number of valuable write-ups on local history and traditions were published, as influenced by the waves of feelings and emotions pertaining to the regional traditions started in Bengal at that time.

Key Words :

Siksha-Sevak, Silchar Normal School, Thomas Fisher, Miss Evans, Purba Banga Geetika, Muhammad Sahidullah, Bongiyoy Sahitya Parishad, Silchar Siksha parishad.

Siksha Sevak published from Silchar in the month of Sravan, 1332, is a trimonthly journal dealing with educational matters. The first and last issues of the journal were published in the months of Sravana, 1332 and Kartick, 1348 respectively. Almost all the intellectuals of the Surma Barak Valley had been associated with the said journal published over a long span Seventeen years.

As there exists a practice of twisting wick before lighting a lamp, so also identically there exists a background connected with the publication of the journal ‘Siksha Sevak’. It is seen according to facts available that it was Thomas Fisher who first made an effort in 1834-35 to introduce modern education system in the Barak Valley. (D. Dutta, Cachar District Resords, Page 17, letters from Fisher to the Commissioner, Dhaka Division, June 1834). The then superintendent J. G. Burns out of his own initiative in 1837 made preparations for setting up schools (D.utta, Cachar District Records, Page 46, letters from Buras to Gordon, Commission of Dhaka, No. 100, 22nd Sep, 1837), but the proposal of both the officers did not get importance from the then common people. In the subsequent course of time, with the help of some enthusiastic individuals, particularly with the subscriptions of European managers of tea gardens there came ‘Anglo Vernicular School’ into existence in Silchar in the month of May, 1857. Simultaneously Branch Vernicular Schools were, too, established in Katigorah

and Hailakandi respectively (A. Chakraborty, advent of Education in Cachar under British Rule, 1832-1874, paper presented in the National Seminar on History & Society of South Assam, Assam University (22-24 January, 1995). When it became difficult to run schools by collecting subscriptions, consequently first schools at Katigorah and Hailakandi and later on school at Silchar were closed.

Afterwards Rev. William prize gave a start to the ancient Vernicular school of Silchar on 1st December, 1860, but he changed the name of the school and renamed it as High Grammar School, which being converted as District School in 1868 now goes by Government Higher Secondary Girls' School.

Side by side efforts had been on the wheel for female education, too. It was Miss Evans who came forward to set up school for girls. Basically due to her initiative "Middle Vernicular School" was established in Silchar in 1895 and persons like Miss William, Miss Loyad, and Miss Jenkins were her helping hands in this work. The same school is at present known as Government Higher Secondary and Multipurpose Girls' School.

Silchar Normal School was established in the month of January, 1907. Aghornath Adhikari, Jagannath Deb, Ramesh Chandra Bhattacharjee, Tarinee Charan Das, Rajendra Chandra Roy had been the faculty members of this school established for training of teachers.

Along with school centric activities, the act of stretching out of the cultivation of thoughts pertaining to education, too, continued amongst them. So, in consequence of that the journal 'Siksha Sevak' came into existence in 1332 (Bengali year) following an assiduity of Silchar Siksha Parishad.

The teaching community became zealous in 1924 of publishing an education related journal. Meanwhile Roy Saheb Ananda Mohan Dutta during his stint as a Deputy Inspector of Schools in north Srihatta wrote a letter to the then D.P.I of Assam on the 11th June, 1924 seeking permission of publishing an education related journal, and which was sent through the Inspectors of Schools of both Surma Valley and Hilly Areas. Ananda Mohan Dutta in return got the permission on 17th October, 1924 of publishing a journal, but Ananda Mohan had a planning that the proposed journal would be published as a monthly one. By this time Satish Chandra Roy was appointed as an Inspector of the Schools of Surma Valley, and he, too, being enthusiastic in this regard convened a meeting of the departmental Deputy Inspectors and headmasters of Karimganj. A 5-member committee was also constituted in the said meeting. This committee led by Satish Chandra Roy after having had a discussion with that led by Ananda Mohan Dutta caused to appear an appeal on 5th Jyaistha, 1332 stating that— (page a added her)— the act of publishing an education-related monthly journal has been under discussion for a long time in Surma Valley. A proposal was adopted of publishing such a journal in the sessions of Srihatta and Karimganj respectively of educational conference. According permission from government has already been obtained and it is decided to publish the journal from the ensuing first day of Sraavan. Those who as pioneers have been trying in this respect are nothing but representatives of teachers and inspection employees of Surma Valley. They have set their hand to it knowing well of your sincere enthusiasm in this matter.

The journal will contain 48 pages in the size of demy 8 pages. Articles concerning educational matters of Bengali medium schools will cover almost half of its space and the remaining part is going to be contributed with articles dealing with general educational as well as literary matters. Its name is Siksha-Sevak. The annual subscription inclusive of postage is Rs. 2110 (Rupees Two thousand One hundred and Ten) only.

It is expected that you helping in every respect like sending of articles, cluster of subscribers would make a successful accomplishment of this endeavour. You are also requested to send the articles addressing in the name of Sree Manomohan Mazumder, Deputy Inspector, Silchar.

Sincerely yours

Sree Sarada Charan Sharma
Sree Baikuntha Nath Bhattacharjee
Sree Surendra Kumar Chakraborty
Sree Purna Chandra Bhattacharjee
Sree Jagannath Dey
Sree Ananda Mohan Dutta
Sree Bharat Chandra Choudhury
Azhar Ali Choudhury
Sree Khirode Chandra Purkayastha
Sree Manomohan Mazumder

Satish Chandra Roy let us know about the objective of the journal under the heading– “Siksha Sevaker Jatpatra”– “The purpose of the journal is not to take a photograph only, nor the responsibility of representatives gets over just in exposing everybody’s secret thoughts and feelings belonging to society. If the journal does not try to get the society look in another direction, not helping in moulding public opinion, and if it sitting on the chair of a guide or leader does not lead the entire country and nation towards a healthy, stable and developed life, then the very purpose of journal will prove abortive— Siksha Sevak is to brilliantly highlight the connection of infinite time that we have with the endless, unrevealed and unseen world, it would point out for us that feasible ideal life and unfinished duties as what we should be plus what ought to be done, in a word, this very journal will be systematizer of all the duties of educational world as well as guide of all the workers.”

The printing work of the first issue of the first year of ‘Siksha-Sevak’ started in Bani Press, Srihatta, but subsequently when the ‘Siksha-Sevak’ office was shifted to Silchar, the said journal started to be printed and published from Sadhya Press, Silchar. The two different quotes given below were being printed in English and Bengali respectively on the cover page of ‘Siksha-Sevak’, such as “The future of mankind is in the hands of the school master” - Victor Hugo and it used to be written at the bottom of it òò>y~öiîû |p|î;îÄê !ÿÇpyöìçîöi,,pîû £yöi“póó (the future of mankind is in the hands of Siksha-Sevak.

The journal was primarily being published quarterly; but it is difficult indeed to say why on which background the persons who undertook the enterprise did budge from their declared decision.

The journal ‘Siksha-Sevak’ had not been edited by any specific individual, rather the names of the members of the guild of editors were mentioned on the title page of every issue. New members had been included in the guild at different times over long span of 17 years. Following were the members of the guild of editors during first issue of the first year - Roy Saheb Saroda Charan Shastri B.A, Roy Saheb Baikuntha Nath Bhattacharjee B.A, Sri Purna

Chandra Shastri M.A, Sri Surendra Kumar Chakraborty B.A, Sri Jagannath Deb B.A, B.T; Roy Saheb Ananda Mohan Dutta B.A, Sri Bharat Chandra Choudhury B.A, Sri Azhar Ali Choudhury, Sri Khirode Chandra Purkayastha M.A, B.T; Sri Manomohan Mazumder.

The fixed code of rules of Siksha-Sevak were as follows :-

1. The subscription of the journal is to be paid in advance, after receiving the first issue, the subscribers would oblige us by forwarding their respective remittance, but those who feel it difficult of sending their subscription through money order, would get the second issue by means of VP Postal Service.
2. The advertisers may know the rate of advertisement and other worth knowing matters if they write letter to the manager of the journal. The payment pertaining to advertisement is to be given in advance.
3. a) The articles should be sent to Sreejukta Jagannath Deb, B.A, B.T; one of the editors, Silchar Siksha-Sevak office.
b) Write-up ought to be written distinctly on one side of a foolscap paper.
c) Disapproved articles would not be returned if the Postal Stamps are not accomplished with the articles concerned.
d) The articles indicative of personal experiences as well as research- oriented would be accepted.

Although education related articles were given importance in 'Siksha-Sevak', yet quite a good number of valuable write-ups concerning local history and traditions were, too, published. From the statistical point of view, the numbers of the published articles of the journal are as follows :-

<u>Subject</u>	<u>Number of Published articles</u>
Mathematics	25
Economics	2
History	6
The Reports of works	11
Sports	10
Biography	55
About Library	3
Astrology	3
Poetry	35
Philosophy	3
Story	1
Article	44
Reminiscence	9
Geography	3
Travelogue	8
Folk Literature	35
Folklore	4
Education	292
Etiquette	5
Music	2

General Knowledge	3
Collection of letters	3
Book Literature	2
Speech	32
General Science	27
The others (Miscellaneous)	39

The table of contents of the first issue of the first year of ‘Siksha-Sevak’ has been cited below as an example—

SIKSHA SEVAK
1st Year 1st Issue
Sravana 1332
Index of Essays

Name of Writings	Writer	Page
1. Siksha (Poem)	Shree Bhuban Mohan Bidyarnab	1
2. Siksha Sevaker Jatpatra	Shree Satish Chandra Roy M.A. (London)	3
3. Ashirbanee (Poem)	Shree Sarachchandra Choudhury B.A.	12
4. Khudra	Shree Rajendra Chandra Das B.A, B.T.	16
5. Abahan (Poem)	Shree Chandra Kumar Bhattacharjee	24
6. Sarir Palon	Shree Bharat Chandra Choudhury B.A.	25
7. Master Mahasaya	Shree Jagannath Deb B.A., B.T.	32
8. Azzan (Poem)	Shree Dalil Uddin Ahamed	39
9. Prathamik Siksha	Shree Manomohan Mazumdar	41
10. Patiganit Siksha	Roy Saheb Saroda Charan Shastri B.A.	46
11. Samayikee		63

The articles published in the journal ‘Siksha-Sevak’ happen to be the outcome of culture of thoughts of a specific point of time of Surma and Barak Valleys. Apart from educational matter, the aspect on which topmost importance was given is local tradition. The publication period of time of ‘Siksha Sevak’ had been from 1925 to 1941. If we have a look on the programmes of this stipulated period of time in terms of Calcutta and Dhaka Universities plus that of Bongiya Sahitya Parishad, it can be obviously understood as why the ‘Siksha-Sevak’ circle was so zealously careful of local traditions. At that time Dinesh Chandra Sen (Service tenure : 1909-1932) was the departmental head of Bengali language and literature of the University of Calcutta and whose editorship ‘the folk literature of Bengal’ was published in 1920. ‘Purba Banga Geetika’ was published in four different parts in between 1923 and 1932. It is needless to say that this very publication boosted up the researchers towards the mundane tradition. During that period of time there had been Muhammad Sahidullah in Dacca (now Dhaka) University. Silmultaneously Bongio Sahitya Parishad, too, was engaged in accumulating the facts of the complete history of Bengal through region-based investigation these waves of intentions and feelings also inspired the thinkings of the intellectuals associated with Siksha-Sevak and that’s why regional tradition was given so much importance in ‘Siksha-Sevak’.

Particulars about the identity of some of the distinguished writers out of the circle pertaining to ‘Siksha-Sevak’ are furnished below :-

Aghore Nath Adhikari : He had been the superintendent of Normal School from 1907 to 1922 and it was he who drew the sketch of the building of Normal School constructed after Chinese design. He was intimately connected with literary and cultural practice of that time of Silchar. He received the twin titles namely Roy sahib and Roy Bahadur from the British government.

Arun Kumar Chanda (1899-1947) : He has the honorary Principal of Gurucharan College plus President of Cachar District Railway and Postal Workers' Union; and, moreover, being a member of Assam Provincial Legislative Assembly in 1937, he became one of the regulating hands in the formation of ministry.

Abdul Bari : Born in the village Borjurai of Cachar in 1901 and worked as a teacher in government High School, who was compiler of different evidences of folk literature particularly of folksong. His compilation under the heading 'Bijon Kusum' was published in 'Siksha Sevak'.

Jagannath Deb : He had been the teacher of Normal School plus a pioneering personality in the study of regional history, who was able in deciphering many a book collected in Normal School. Moreover, he was first editor of Srihatta-Cachar Anusandhan Samiti.

Tarinee Charan Das : He was teacher of Johnston school, Manipur, but joined Normal School in 1910, who retired in the year 1939 after being elevated to the post of Principal. He was culler of folk literature and had the credit of editing 'Siksha-Sevak' for a few years.

Padmanath Bhattacharjee : Period of time ranging from 1868 to 1938. He attained the title Bidyabinode after securing first class second position in the title examination of poetics. He used to teach in Gauhati Cotton College plus put forward his deliberations on the pages of 'Siksha-Sevak' concerning the distinguished personalities.

Ramesh Chandra Bhattachajee : (1882-1929) Science teacher of Normal School. He earned honour of sending telegram in Bengali letters in the session of national conference of Jolsukha, Srihatta, in 1910. The content of the telegraphic message sent for the first time by him was as such— òò~...yöĩ ²I%òþ[þ ²Ïy,,,þ!“þ,þ çöiÁ¿æ~ xyû½þ ££zëüyöiŠéóó (Violent natural calamity has occurred here. The conference has started even amid terrible stress of storm).

Satish Chandra Roy : He was the first Bengali D.P.I. of Assam and worked as teacher in many college of Lahore, Dhaka, Kolikata, Srihatta, Guwahati, and writer of many education related articles.

Surya Kumar Tarkosaraswati : A distinguished Sanskrit Scholar. He started teaching after establishing Chatuspathi in Silchar, which was rechristened after his name in the aftermath of his demise. He was the founder president of 'Prachya Bidya Parishad'.

Hence, it is understood that almost all the persons attached to learning of Surma-Barak Valley of the then period were associated with the journal 'Siksha-Sevak'. The published articles had been outcome of the culture of thought of a specific period of time of Surma-Barak Valley. The publication stint of 'Siksha-Sevak' has covered the period ranging from 1925 to 1941. The waves of feelings and emotions pertaining to practice of regional traditions that started in Bengal at that very time also inspired the managing board of 'Siksha-Sevak', and that's why the practice of local tradition was given importance in the journal 'Siksha-Sevak'. Therefore, in one sense, it is 'Siksha-Sevak', which is itself the first regional research paper of this very region.