

PANCHANAN KUMAR MUKHERJEE

1922-2011



BISWANATH DAS

If you were a frequenter in the premises of Presidency College (PC), Kolkata during the late eighties or early nineties of the last century, you could hardly miss out this short-statured, lean, aged gentleman, with or without a shabby jacket depending on the season. With his old fashioned umbrella in one hand, and a small discoloured ravin bag with worn - out handles and often the zipper not functioning properly, in the other. And with his patent smile on the lips if you happened to be an acquainted. Often engrossed in files and registers in the Alumni Association(AA) office. Or discussing issues relating to the AA with the Principal or with a Joint Secretary in the English Department. Or moving about from one teaching department to another in search of records and documents. Or even simply paying courtesy visits to teachers, in different buildings, known to him.

No, he was none of the many brilliant alumni of this illustrious college. Nor even a teacher here. And yet the posterity will remember him as one who had genuine love and passion for this institution. As one who worked very hard for ensuring a solid foundation for its PCAA.

He is Panchanan Kumar Mukherjee.

Born on 27 December 1922 at Shibpur, Howrah, Panchanan Kumar had his schooling from B.K. Pal Institution, Baje Shibpur, Howrah. He entered PC as an Intermediate Science student in 1939 and graduated from there with Hons in Chemistry in 1943. There upon he joined the Military Accounts Department (later Controller of Defence Accounts(FYS)), Ministry of Defence, Govt. of India in 1943, and retired from there as a Group A Officer (Admin) in 1982.

The constitution of PCAA has it that the Joint Secretaries are the de facto Chief functionaries of the Association, the Principal of the college with a lot of administrative burden as the head of the institution, being the ex-officio Secretary. A member of the PCAA since 1955, Sri Mukherjee was made its Joint Secretary in the AGM held on 23.2.1988 in recognition of his keen interest in the affairs of the Association. He continued in this office with the other Joint Secretary Sm Kajal Sen Gupta till 25.9. 1993.

When he took over as a Joint Secretary, the PCAA was in a very bad shape. During his tenure of five years and seven months in the office, the organizational, as also the Financial health of the Association improved a lot, thanks to some effective measures taken up by the Executive Committee under his initiative. Total number of Life Members increased from 335 on 31.1.88 to 1562 on 25.9.93(an increase of 369.58%). The financial / fund position also brightened up significantly: from Rs. 62, 509 on 31.1.88 to Rs. 4,39,000 on 25.9.93 (a 570.14% increase). Of course, the 175th Anniversary Celebrations of the college during 1992-93 must have helped the AA to some extent to prosper at such a big pace. These apart, some important milestones were reached during this period. The original constitution of the Association was suitably amended, and thereupon, the Association got registered under W.B. Societies Registration Act of 1961 on 28.9. 1989. The Association participated with suitable programmes in the Tercentenary Celebrations of Calcutta during 1989-90. A Reserve Fund for the Association was created as per a resolution adopted in the AGM of 26.4.90. PCAA of Europe was founded in London in June 1991. The PCAA was involved in a very big way in the 175th Anniversary Celebrations of the College during 1992-93. Personally Sri Mukherjee, as a Joint Secretary of the Organising Committee and the Working Committee, a member of the College History Editing Sub-Committee and a member of the Board of Editors of the Anniversary Volume, worked very hard for the success of the celebrations. In particular, his painstaking sincere efforts in collecting records and documents from different teaching departments, college library, hostel and Students' Union, the Alumni Association etc, for the Anniversary Volume, and correcting the proofs thereof, drew spontaneous admiration from one and all.

What is more remarkable about Sri Mukherjee is that even after relinquishing the office of the Joint Secretary, he would invariably attend every AGM and actively participate in its deliberations, as also other functions organized by the Association or the college, till the other day. Anyone involved in a project on PC (e.g., the author of a volume on the history of the college) would get spontaneous help from him. He would often contribute valuable articles to the Autumn Annual of the PCAA and other occasional publications. One

such contribution deserves special mention. His elaborate history of PCAA (1951-93), with meticulous details of developments arranged chronologically and an annexure dwelling on the contents of the Autumn Annual Vols I-XXI, appearing in the PC 175th Anniversary Volume, is a comprehensive, authentic and invaluable document, and speaks volumes of his sincere and painstaking efforts in collecting and collating the relevant facts and figures. His love and passion for the college and its PCAA in particular, is quite manifest in the almost prophetic concluding para of the above write up : "The immense potential of PCAA, Calcutta has only been marginally tapped so far and it is hoped, given the right drive and imaginative leadership, the Association will become a formidable organization to effectively fulfil the aims and objects for which it stands."

Sri Mukherjee breathed his last on 2nd May 2011. He is survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter, a daughter-in-law and two grand children.

May his soul, rest in peace.

About the Author

Statistics (1961-63); Faculty: Statistics (1968-2002);
Bursar (1985-1997).
