



Two Significant Lives

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Meghnad Saha : The Scientist with a Vision

Meghnad Saha was born on 6 October 1893 at Seoratali, a village of erstwhile East Bengal, now in Bangladesh. A boy from a very poor family, he started his primary education at Simulia and later joined the Collegiate School at Dacca. A brilliant boy with a photographic memory and an aptitude for learning, Meghnad became the favourite student of his teachers. He secured the first place in the matriculation examination and later graduated from the Presidency College in Science in 1911 and also did his M.Sc. in mixed mathematics. Later he joined Calcutta University as a lecturer. In the very next year the University conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Science. He was also honoured by the 'Premchand Roychand Scholarship' in 1919 on the basis of his dissertation 'On the Harvard classification of Stellar Spectra'. His thesis on, 'On origin of lines in Stellar Spectra' was awarded the Griffith Prize of the Calcutta University in the year 1920.

In 1927, Meghnad Saha was elected as Fellow of Royal Society, London. By his arduous and determined efforts, National Institute of Sciences of India started its journey in 1935 as the supreme co-ordinating academy. His next venture being the formation of the Indian Science News Association at Calcutta, and the publication of the journal of Science and Culture on the model of the popular journal 'Nature', of England. Dr. Saha joined the Calcutta University as Palit Professor in 1938. In the same time he was deeply involved in the establishment of the Institute of Nuclear Physics mainly concentrating on nuclear chemistry, the theoretical nuclear science, neutron physics, particle accelerator and proper dealing

with alpha, beta and gama spectroscopy. He was appointed as Director of the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (IACS) in 1952. The activities of Indian Physical Society and the Indian Journal of Physics were nurtured by him for a long time. He devoted twenty years of his life studying the Vedas, Upanishads, the Purans and all the Hindu astronomical texts in the notion of extracting the Scientific truths.

Not only the fields of science, his vast workful life included the social reform movements of post-freedom India too. Saha was elected as Member of Parliament, as an independent candidate in 1952. During his tenure, he presented a strong case for developing nuclear power in India and of having an international pool of atomic resources and suggested measures by which India could benefit from it. He also conducted a significant work through his researches on the reform of the Indian Calendar in the meanwhile. As the President of the East Bengal Refugee Relief Committee, he was actively involved in the rehabilitation of the refugees after independence. During his term in the Parliament, he always stressed the need to reorganise the states on linguistic basis.

The secret of Dr. Meghnad Saha's success as a Scientist was primarily due to his inquisitive mind and his clarity of ideas.

This eminent scientist and able parliamentarian passed away on February 16, 1956. His life has set an example of a scientist who not only devoted his life in the revelation of truth from the enigmatic ocean of science but also served as a true son of a captive mother, for the all ages to come.