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NABA BALLYGUNGE MAHAVIDYALAYA

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Title of the seminar: *Argalmuktir Suryoday: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*

Type: National

Date: 19th December 2023

Organizers: Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya and Surendranath College for Women

Speakers:

- Dr Amitava Chakraborty, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Associate Professor, Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literature, University of Delhi and Founder Secretary, International Society for Bengali Studies (Chairperson)
- Dr Afroja Khatun, Associate Professor, Department of Bengali, Surendranath College for Women
- Dr Abdus Sattar, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Bengali, Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya

Participants: 99



Poster of the Seminar titled *Argalmuktir Suryoday: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*

Link to 1st part of *Argalmuktir Suryoday: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain* on institutional Youtube link

<https://youtu.be/5NcJjn8JHCs?si=RCW3hUment6w8i-t>

Link to 2nd part of *Argalmuktir Suryoday: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain* on institutional Youtube link

https://youtu.be/z_pvZ2qPFaM?si=L5hw8Tu3Cj9_kYZN


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The inaugural session began with Dr. Ayantika Ghosh, Principal of Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya, Dr. Purnima Biswas, Principal Surendranath College for Women, the esteemed chairperson Dr Amitava Chakraborty, Dean of Arts University of Delhi, Dr Afroja Khatun Associate Professor Department of Bengali, Surendranath College for Women and Dr. Abdus Sattar, Associate Professor and Head, Department of Bengali Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya adorning the dais.

After the formal felicitations, Dr. Purnima Biswas expressed her joy and happiness on signing the Memorandum of Understanding with Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya and the concomitant promises of embarking on fruitful academic ventures together joining hands. Dr Ayantika Ghosh expressed that this collaborative linkage is nothing less than a festival— festival of connecting Sealdah and Kasba bridging the geographical distance by sealing the collaborative purposes chalked out in the MoU through executing symposiums and research discussions together. Dr Ghosh, after extending a hearty welcome to all the guests and dignitaries, expressed the miserable predicament of the women in 1800, which can possibly be conceived by reading *Rupjalal* by Nawab Faizunnesa Choudhurani. She also stated that the purpose of the seminar is to figure out why the focus is on Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, a woman who lived for a shorter span of 52 years and whose pen stopped 91 years ago, when there were other, albeit very few Bengali Muslim women writers like Sufia Kamal who wrote *Nurjahan*, like Haseena Ahmed who wrote *Ashrusayar*, Razia Sirayuddin who wrote *Bhuswarga Kashmir*, a first ever written Bengali travelogue by a woman and that it is the 3 resource persons with specialised knowledge would make us perceive why the society can never be oblivious to Rokeya's role in women's emancipation.



Dr Amitava Chakraborty is being felicitated in the seminar
Argalmuktir Suryodaya: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain on
19/12/2023



Dr Ayantika Ghosh welcoming the audience in the seminar
Argalmuktir Suryodaya: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain on
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Dr Abdus Sattar interestingly emphasised in his crisp yet intriguing and informative lecture on the fact that what Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain craved is not women's rights, but rather human rights. In other words, Rokeya's life-long struggle was to ensure equality between the sexes and provide women equal footing with men their male counterparts. This lecture is evidently reminiscent of Simone de Beauvoir's fundamental text on feminism *The Second Sex* wherein Beauvoir argued that patriarchy pushes women to being the second sex, as somebody other or subordinate to the primary sex, man. It is this periphery of secondness into which women were marginalized that Rokeya endeavoured throughout her life to free them from, to make them equal to men and do away with the discrimination between the sexes. Throughout his lecture Dr Sattar emphasized on the interplay between religion and gender in the patriarchal structures of the society that Rokeya lived in. Dr Sattar drew attention of the audience towards the stringent power structures that were detrimental to women's freedom or even willingness to know the alphabets: growing up in an orthodox Muslim family where Rokeya's father was the flagbearer and preserver of patriarchy, women's emancipation was nothing but perfunctory. In this illuminating talk, the speaker especially mentioned about the fact that Rokeya's attempt to disseminate the ideals of feminism. Her dreams to free women from the shackles of patriarchy was thus not limited to writing fiction and non-fiction about the immediate need of women's freedom for the progress of society, but also she believed in spreading her ideals through an institutionalized system. It is with this dream that Rokeya established one of the pioneering institutes of women's education- Sakhawat Memorial School for Girls and Anjuman-e-Khawateen-e-Islam.



Dr Abdus Sattar (Associate Professor, Dept of Bengali, Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya) delivering lecture in *Argalmuktir Suryoday: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain* on 19/12/2-23

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Dr Afroja Khatun's riveting began with reference to *Padmarag*, a seminal and powerful text by Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain. She threw light on the fact that Rokeya as the trailblazer of Islam and a beacon of light that beckons forever, had her powerful visions crystallized in *Padmarag*. Dr Khatun in her speech gave the picture of the contemporary times when Rokeya was born. She mentioned that the seed of women's emancipation had already been germinated during Rokeya's time. Vidyasagar had already pioneered widow remarriage, and there were the two legendary women who were the symbolic agencies of women's independence— Kadambini Ganguly and Chandramukhi Basu. She metaphorically explained Rokeya's vision of an imaginary India with an analogy of a 70 years widow named Dinatarini who has established a house, symbolic of humanity and humanitarian principles. In her enlightening lecture, Dr Khatun presented *Padmarag* as a Utopian text initiating with Rokeya's futuristic imaginative vision of India free from religious discriminations. The three storeyed house of which the floors consisting of inhabitants dwelling based on religious differences and the uppermost floor where there is no mention of any religion, resonating humanity, is the symbolic representation of Rokeya's belief that it is humanitarianism that brings one close to God. She talked about Rokeya's passionate zeal to make the women be educated and self-dependent. In her words, the value of labour that Rokeya so zealously talked about, the labour that women daily puts in backbreaking household chores daily for their husband's family is not paid; therefore, what Rokeya enforced was the immediate need for all women to put their labour outside the domestic territory where their labour, efforts and skills would be paid. Dr Khatun's lecture thus opened possibilities of looking at Rokeya's vision and mission through the eyes of Marxist Feminism.



Dr Afroja Khatun (Associate Professor, Dept of Bengali, Surendranath College for Women) delivering lecture in *Argalmuktir Suryoday: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain* on 19/12/2023

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The august audience listened to the two talks delivered by the resource persons of the day in rapt attention. At the end of the two talks, it was the time for the esteemed chair to summarise the session. **Dr Amitava Chakraborty** thanked the organisers for organising such an insightful seminar that not only discussed multiple facets of Rokeya's activities for the upliftment of women's conditions and for eradication of religious discriminations, but also hugely inspired the audience to contemplate about the predicament of women in contemporary society and in their own way endeavour to follow Rokeya's footsteps and ensure equality between the sexes. Dr Chakraborty explained that the two preceding talks were inspiring in their own ways— one being scholarly and having the chosen vocabulary/terminology to enlighten the audience, and the other, a perfect evaluation of Rokeya's life and writings. He added that it has been possible for the two speakers to understand and internalise Rokeya's message deeply not because of achieving erudition in Rokeya's writings, but because they themselves are activists and have dedicated their time and energy for the betterment of society. Dr Chakraborty illumined the audience about the fact that Rokeya was a pioneer of liberal humanism, and throughout her life, she had endeavoured to propagate the philosophy of all humans having equal rights, to disseminate the rights of equal access to education among men and women. He expressed his happiness on being able to chair a session wherein such brilliant information seeped through. He emphasized that both the talks, in a chiseled form, brought out the relevance of a seminar on Rokeya.



Dr Amitava Chakraborty (Associate Professor, Dept of Modern Indian Languages and Literature, University of Delhi) chairing a session in *Argalmuktir Suryodaya: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain* on 19/12/2023

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The interactive session pulsated with the curious questions from the attentive audience, especially the students. The interactive session was not only lively enough to prove that the students had been attentive and interested all the while; but It also touched upon certain facts that were left unexplored in the main session. A student from Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya, Bipasha Saha, cited the instance from the Vedic times when the society was matriarchal, matrifocal, and women were not subordinate to men. Bipasha was curious to know since when did this patriarchy and subordination of the woman start. The resource person's appreciative nod was followed by an informative rejoinder. It is that when marriage, monogamy and property rights were implemented the question of Inheritance of a property came the law was formed such that it is only the male who had the rightful authority to property; even the wife was considered as the property of the husband and her freedom was curbed. Another interesting question from Kaustav Joddar of Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya was if Rokeya was biased towards Islam. The Resource person's reply was that Rokeya was never biased towards any religion; although from her writings, it seems that she was partial towards Islam because of overuse of Purdah system, Burkha system, Fatemamay and Anjuman-e-Khawateen-e Islam, this was done solely for the sake of acceptance by society. It is only that negative criticism narrow down her Struggles for liberal humanism as biasness towards Islam.



Bipasha Saha, PG Bengali 3rd sem student, Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya asking a question in the interactive session



Sangeeta Das, 1st semester student, Surendranath College for Women asking a question in the interactive session



Kaustav Joddar, PG Bengali 3rd sem student, Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya asking a question in the interactive session

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Some wonderful posters on Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain made by the students of Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya and Surendranath College for Women on Rokeya



Poster of Rokeya with Sakhawat Hossain, painted by a student of Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya



Poster of Rokeya's vision unveiling the Constitution's essence, painted by a student of Surendranath College for Women

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Some wonderful posters on Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain made by the students of Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya and Surendranath College for Women



Poster of Anjuman-e-Khawateen-e-Islam, painted by a student of Surendranath College for Women

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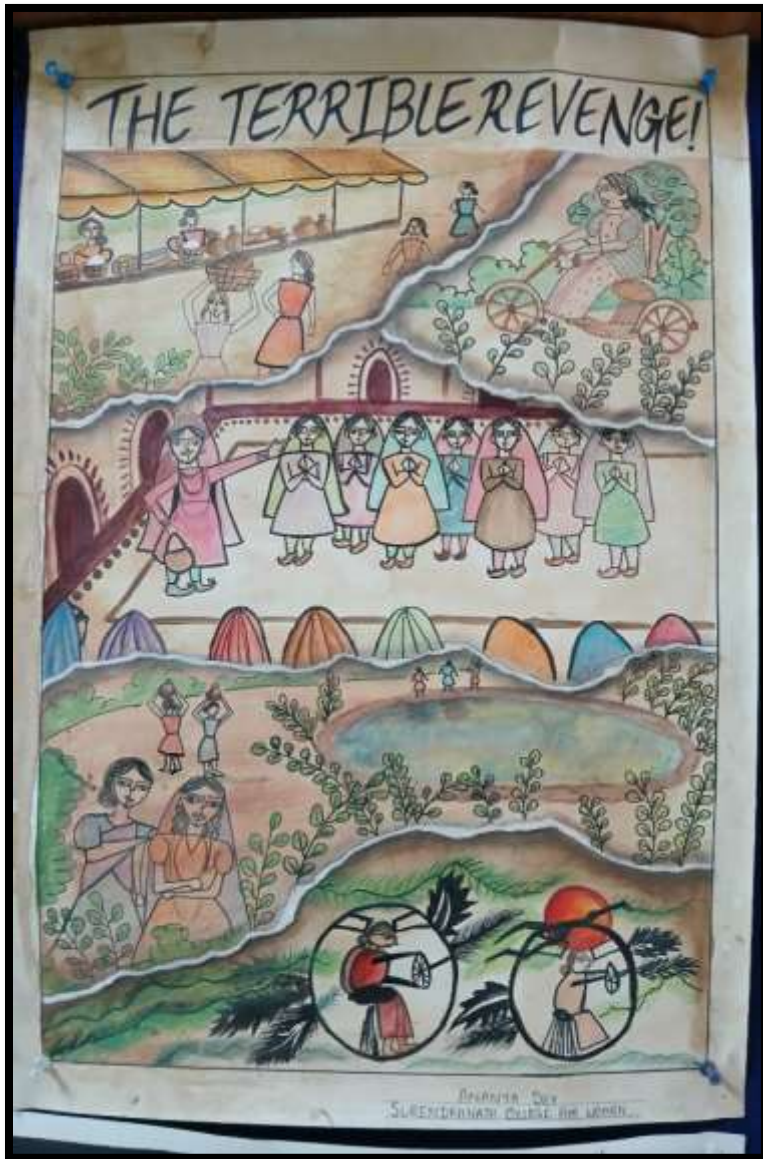
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“The Terrible Revenge”-
a poster painted by a
student of Surendranath
College for Women

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A brilliant idea conceptualized by a student of Surendranath College for Women—“Dharma ekti bishaal attalika”—based on the three-storeyed building in Rokeya’s *Padmarag*, religious divisions and religionless humanity



The institutions to educate women, to give them equal footing with men—established by Rokeya—painted and collaged by a student in poster exhibition on Rokeya

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The second session was solely for the student paper presenters. It was a pleasure to see the students from Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya and Surendranath College for Women put their diligence and knowledge in writing well-researched papers and presenting them with perfect articulation. Atufah Naz, a student from Surendranath College, presented a paper on *Muktiphal* and how in a fairy-tale like setting, it brings out the message of Rokeya's dream for women's freedom. The group presentation by three students from Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya—Bijali Bhuinya, Tina Sarkar and Papiya Khan presented a paper titled "Rokeyar Shikshachintaye Naarimukti" ("Women's Emancipation in Rokeya's Thoughts"). The paper explained how in a society that became an oppressive machinery to keep women voiceless and passive, docile and submissive, Rokeya not only was transgressive but inspired women to break the shackles that chained them and let the universe know that they are not second sex, not women, but humans.



Atufah Naz, a student from Surendranath College for Women presenting a paper on *Muktiphal* in the seminar *Argalmuktir Suryoday: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*



Bijali Bhuinya, Tina Sarkar and Papiya Khan, students of Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya presenting a paper on Rokeyar Chintae Narimukti (Women's Emancipation in Rokeya's Thoughts) in the seminar *Argalmuktir Suryoday: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*

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Another joint paper presented by three students from Surendranath College for Women was titled “*Padmarag Upanyaser Tarinibhavan: Nari parchalito Swayang-sampurno samaj*” (Tarinibhavan of *Padmarag*: a society solely made and run by women”). The presenters were Sangeeta Das, Nivedita Naskar, Bishakha Rong. The thrust of the paper was on Tarinibhavan in *Padmarag*, and a vision of a widow who did not submit to the social diktat but threw down the gauntlet to the detrimental norms perpetuated by the Brahmanical dominant ideology and dedicated her life for the dignity and honour of other women, *Padmarag* was thus presented as an allegory of sisterhood and solidarity among women and Tarinibhavan a safe haven to perpetuate this sorority. Bipasha Saha, a 3rd semester PG student of Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya presented a paper titled “*Rokeyar Narimukti Andolan: Ekal Sekal*” (Rokeya’s Rebellion for Women’s Emancipation: Now and Then). Bipasha’s paper focused on the fact that Rokeya can be said to bear the flag of feminism. Referring to the statement conjecture by Simone de Beauvoir in the *The Second Sex* “One is not born, but rather, becomes a woman” that crystallizes patriarchy, Bipasha said that Rokeya could relate her predicament in familial situation to many books she had read that marginalized women. Bipasha’s paper stressed on the fact that in contemporary times, although women’s position has improved, girls are still pushed to the periphery in the family— the institution which is supposed to usher a girl child to freedom.



Sangeeta Das, Nivedita Naskar and Bishakha Rong, students from Surendranath College for Women presenting a paper on “*Padmarag Upanyaser Tarinibhavan: Nari parchalito Swayang-sampurno samaj*” (Tarinibhavan of *Padmarag*: a society solely made and run by women”) in the seminar *Argalmuktir Suryoday: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*



Bipasha Saha, student of PG 3rd semester, Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya presenting a paper on “*Rokeyar Narimukti Andolan: Ekal Sekal*” (Rokeya’s Rebellion for Women’s Emancipation: Now and Then) in the seminar *Argalmuktir Suryoday: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*

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Dipti Ghosh and Ankita Hazra from Surendranath College from Women presented a brilliant paper on “Atmanirbharshheel naari gorhey tolar lakshye Anjuman-e-Khawateen-e-Islam” (Anjuman-e-khawateen-e-Islam: Aim to create independent womanhood”). Beginning the paper with an apt line from Rokeya’s essay *Ardhangi* “Na jagile sob Bharat lalana, e Bharat ar jagite paribe na” (If the women of India do not wake up, India will not progress), the paper focused on Rokeya’s endeavour to carve a niche of self-reliance for Muslim women by establishing the organization Anjuman-e-Khawateen-e-Islam, emphasizing that not only revolutionary texts suffice to emancipate women, organizational movements are actually instrumental in doing so. Suman Sardar, 5th semester student of Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya spoke on “*Sultana’s Dream: A Vision of Women’s Empowerment*”. In a condensed way, Suman’s paper threw light on *Sultana’s Dream* as a science fiction and Rokeya’s adeptness in handling with a genre that was so long male authorized. Referring to Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland*, the paper stated that the two feminist works unabashedly herald an anti-patriarchal, Utopian domain.



Dipti Ghosh and Ankita Hazra, students of Surendranath College from Women presenting a paper on “Atmanirbharshheel naari gorhey tolar lakshye Anjuman-e-Khawateen-e-Islam” (Anjuman-e-khawateen-e-Islam: Aim to create independent womanhood”) in the seminar *Argalmuktir Suryoday: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*



Suman Sardar, a student from Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya presents a paper on “*Sultana’s Dream: A Vision of Women’s Empowerment*” in the seminar *Argalmuktir Suryoday: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*

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The final paper in the Students' session was by Kaustav Joddar, a PG Bengali 3rd semester student of Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya titled "Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain o Koyekti Garad Bhangaar Gaan" (Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and some songs of rebellion). His paper argued that though Hindus were still progressing, Muslims were still restricted to namaaz, talaq and azaan. Rokeya with her progressive mindset endeavoured to make Muslims think beyond the diktats by the Maulavis.



Kaustav Joddar, PG 3rd semester student, Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya, presenting his paper on "Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain o Koyekti Garad Bhangaar Gaan" (Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and some songs of rebellion) in the seminar *Argalmuktir Suryoday: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain*

OUTCOMES

The seminar ended in:

- ✓ Providing the students from Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya and Surendranath College for Women with the scope to read books beyond curriculum
- ✓ Strengthening research acumen of the students by making them learn to think independently and argue objectively
- ✓ Making the students learn to write original papers and consult secondary sources and make a bibliography, that is the prerequisite for writing dissertations in future
- ✓ Inspiring the audience with Rokeya's pathbreaking activities and making them contemplate that their

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1-11

অর্গলমুক্তির সূর্যোদয়ঃ
 রোকেয়া সাখাওয়াত হোসেন
 (নব শাহিনা মুহম্মাদুল কাদের এবং
 সুরেইশাহ আলম সহঃ সহিত - এর সৈন্য
 সৈন্যের অংশগ্রহণে)
 ০৬/০২/২০২৩

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40.					

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22-35

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56-69

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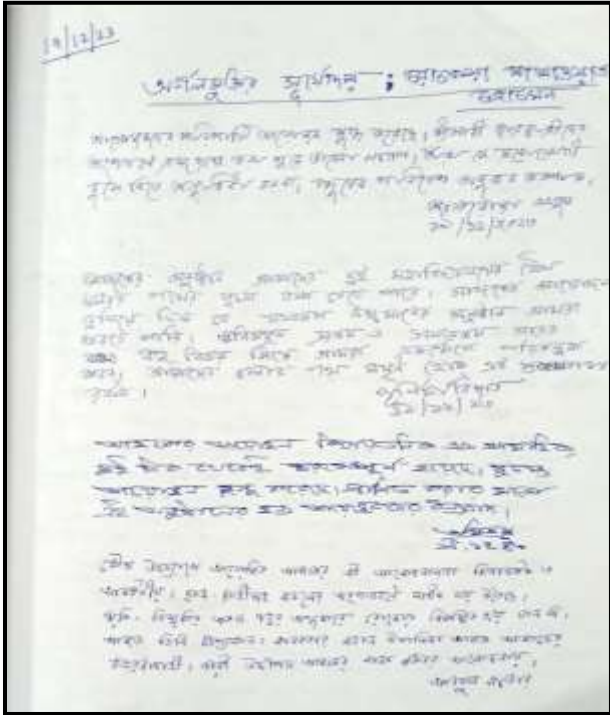
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FEEDBACK FROM THE RESOURCE PERSONS AND DIGNITARIES

Original Feedback in Bangla

Translation in English



Argalmuktir Suryodaya: Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain

The impeccable orderliness in the arrangement of the seminars by the organizers was a pleasurable experience for me. It was an added happiness to see the interested students been inquisitive enough to ask pertinent questions. Glad to find them attentive. It was an extremely amicable environment.

-- Dr Afroja Khatun (Associate Professor, Dept of Bengali, Surendranath College for Women and Resource person) 19/12/2023

It can be said that today's seminar initiated a long journey of togetherness, uniting the two organizing colleges. Today's well-organized seminar is the evidence of our obvious success in organizing programmes of eminence if we collaboratively give efforts. We will work together in future, planning to organize many such programmes on diverse topics. May our collaborative journey be smooth, that's my wish always.

--Dr Purnima Biswas (Principal, Surendranath College for Women) 19/12/2-23

Today's seminar was fulfilling and successful, both from the academic as well as social points of view. The skill and expertise in the organization pleased me profoundly. Thanks to the organizers for organizing such an event that has potentials to inspire, to motivate to bring in better changes in the society.

--Dr Amitava Chakraborty (Associate Professor, Dept of Modern Indian Languages and Literature and Dean of Arts, University of Delhi and Founder Secretary, Bangabidya Trust, Kolkata and Resource Person) 19/12/2023

The joint organization of today's seminar is highly pleasing and inspiring. The active participation of the students made it a huge success. It is soul-fulfilling to see that Rokeya has not passed into oblivion. She is still luminous. As a torchbearer of humanism, Rokeya is still inspiring an this has been reflected in today's discussions.

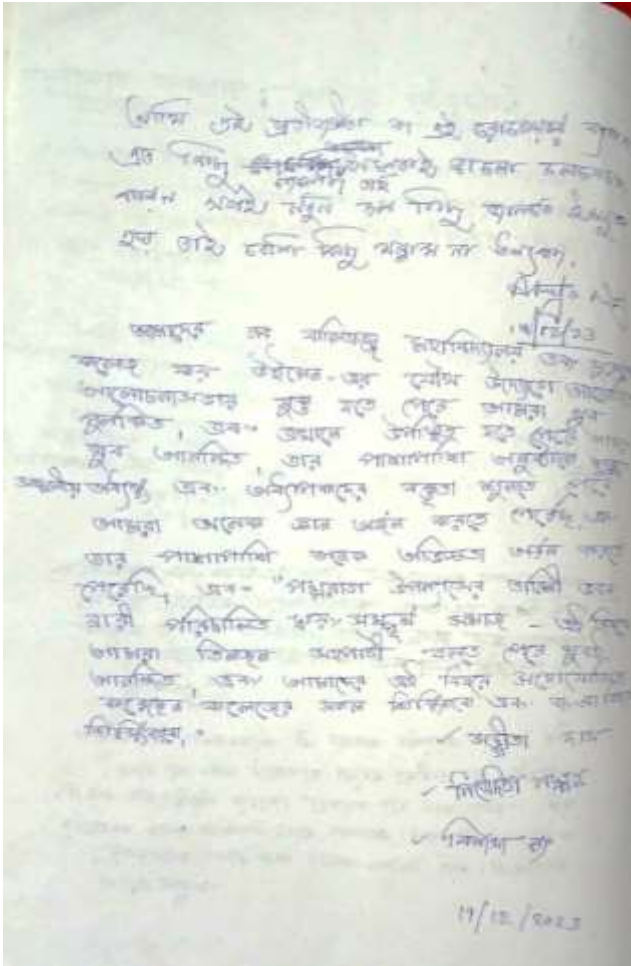
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FEEDBACK FROM THE STUDENTS

Original Feedback in Bangla

Translation in English



I knew very little or nothing about Rokeya. In my effort to write a paper for today’s presentation and from today’s discussion, I have been enriched. I cannot say much beyond this. Thanks to the organizers.

---Atufa Naz, Student of Education Honours, Surendranath College for Women

We are elated for being able to participate in this seminar jointly organized by Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya and Surendranath College for Women. We have been able to know a lot from the speeches delivered by the principals of both the colleges and from the esteemed professors. Simultaneous, we three classmates are excited to write and present a paper on “Padmarag Upanyaser Tarinibhavan: Nari parchalito Swayang-sampurno samaj” (Tarinibhavan of Padmarag: a society solely made and run by women”). For writing this paper, we are indebted to our professors.

---Sangeeta Das, Nivedita Naskar, Bishakha Rong, students, Surendranath College for Women

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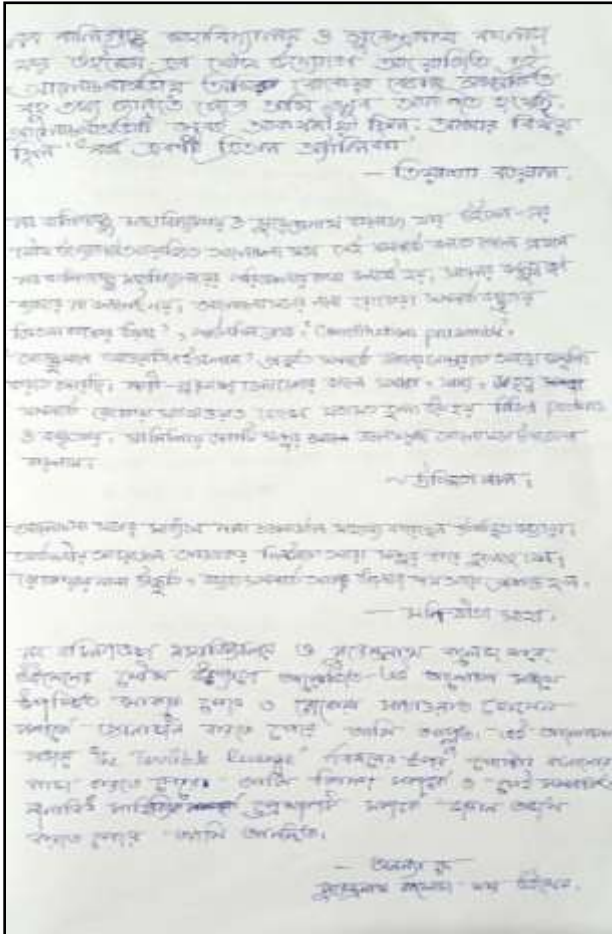
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FEEDBACK FROM THE STUDENTS

Original Feedback in Bangla



Translation in English

This brilliant seminar organised in the joint effort of Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya and Surendranath College for Women has been motivating in the true sense of the term. My storehouse of knowledge has been enriched from the discussions of the speakers and the papers presented by my fellow mates. My paper was on "Dharma ekti trital Attalika" (Religion is a three storeyed building).

--Tiyasha Kayal, Student, Surendranath College for Women

Regarding this seminar organised jointly by Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya and Surendranath College for Women it must be said that every body in the host college, that is, Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya have been very friendly, kind and helpful. It is because of this seminar on Rokeya that I have been able to enrich my treasure-house about the three storeyed building in Padmarag, the convention of Purdah, constitution preamble, Anjuman-e-Khawateen-e- Islam and so on. The lifelong endeavour Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain to eradicate the discrimination between man and woman deserves special credit and this has come up repeatedly in today's discussion, in posters and papers. All in all it was an enriching seminar that I enjoyed.

--Usmita Paul, student, Surendranath College for Women.

In widening the horizon of my knowledge about Rokeya, today's seminar has been a key factor. I have been able to know many perspectives regarding Rokeya's life and works through many quotations, posters and other things.

--Manishita Saha, student, Surendranath College for Women

In being able to be present in today's seminar organised jointly by Naba Ballygunge Mahavidyalaya and Surendranath College for Women, I am elated. I am also overwhelmed in being able to be a part of it for the poster that I have made. In the process of working for the poster, the realm of my knowledge has increased.

--Ananya De, student, Surendranath College for Women

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