

RABENDARNATH TAGORE LITERARY & DRAMATIC CLUB OF SINDH.

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Twenty five years ago I wrote article for Monthly “ADYOON”, Karachi, on the history of Sindhi Dramas. In that article I gave list of 140 Dramatic societies of Sindh and Hind. My article was reproduced in India also. Out of all those Dramatic Societies, Rabendarnath Tagore Literary & Dramatic Club was important one, as it remained active for nearly twenty four years. It was established/formed in 1923 at Hyderabad with Karachi as its branch. This Club formed after the name of Dr. Rabendranath Tagore was inaugurated by him. Tagore visited Sindh for inaugural ceremony in April 1923 and on his arrival (on 21st of April), the Karachi Municipality invited him as Guest of Honour and on this occasion the Address was presented to him by Jamshed Mehta on behalf of the city and Municipality. As it is very rare document only available with Gul Hayat Institute and is about to be vanished, therefore it is reproduced here:

Dr. RABENDRANATH TAGORE

Respected Sir,

We the President and Members of the Karachi Municipality beg to offer you a hearty welcome on your visit to Karachi. We consider it a privilege to receive you in our city as we know every one here has been expecting you with joy ever since your intention to visit Karachi became known.

Though our city is at a great distance from your own home, Sir you are not unknown to our people as your heart and mind have been so well broadcasted through your writings, your speeches and above all your

actions. Your glorious work to give to the people of this country and of the world at large, that loving message of brotherhood of men and fatherhood of God, your invocation to work for the nation and love to it in order to unite the bonds of humanity by creating international links, your patriotism for your country, your efforts to unite the East and West through the culture and art of both, , your continued efforts to make the mystic and practical scientist one in feelings and actions, have made you well known every where. As representatives of the city therefore it fills us with joy to receive you, to offer you our respect and to know you in person.

Our Karachi is a city of modern growth and although has no ancient historical traditions associated with it. As a city it has grown to be the capital of Sindh, which played a great role in the history of India. Our city will, we hope, play a great part in the future history of our motherland.

We know you have arduous duties else here, and we also know that fulfilment of your duties is one of the many causes of your present tour. We know that the great and noble task of founding and guiding the International University "Vishwa Bharti" which you have undertaken requires every minute of your valued time and the constant exercise of your energies, and we understand that its accomplishment and firm establishment will be a time reward of your hard work, efforts and anxieties.

We pray, you may live long with peace to see the day of glorious culmination of your labour of love.

We beg to subscribe ourselves,

With great respect

Jamshed Mehta(president) and Members of the Karachi Municipality.

1. OFFICE – BEARERS: We have never researched anything with seriousness. Therefore most is missing in our history. Same is the position of the historical records of this Club. It is on the record that Hiranand Advani, Ramchand Takhtam, Moulchand Lilaramsing and Valiram Ailasing were active leaders of the Hyderabad branch of the Club. Whereas Khanchand Daryani, Mangharam Malkani, Bhagwan Ramchand, Chandomal Wadhwani and Pahlajsing played key role in its branch of Karachi. I have researched some office-bearers of the Karachi branch, and they are: Year 1928 -29. Tolasing Advani(president), C. Chaiterji (V.P), Pahlajsing Advani (Treasurer), Motiram L.Lalwani & Chandomal N. Wadhvani(Secretaries), Hatim Alvi, Ramchand Wasvani, B.R. Ramchandani & J.P.advani(All members of the Managing Committee)/ Year 1932 -33. All office –bearers were same, but the Managing Committee consisted on T.M.Advani, Acharya Gidwani, Mangharam Malkani & Chandomal Wadhvani./ Year 1933 -34. Tolasing Advani(President), Seth Jamnadas (V.P), Jamiatrai Lalchand (Treasurer), Chandomal Wadvani & Pahlajsing Advani (Secretaries), Mangharam Malkani, Khanchand Daryani & B.R. Ramchandani (All three Specialists), Dr. Awat shahani, Thanwardas Essardas, J.Z.Chandra (All three Members), M.C.Sitlani (Honorary Auditor).

2. TAGORE’S BIRTH DAY ANNIVERSARIES: right from the inception of the Club, Tagore’s Birth day anniversary was celebrated every year. I have details about such a two event.

· 71th Birthday was celebrated in Karachi on 8th of May 1932. First of all Rupchand Bilaram – Additional Judicial Commissioner in Sindh – performed unveiling ceremony of the portrait of Tagore. After that

excellent programme of Music, Songs, dramatic scenes & elocution competition took place in which boys & girls both participated. Mrs. Dadibha C. Mehta distributed prizes. Ram Samitani (1st prize) & Mehta Cyrus Piroze Shah (2nd Prize) both of N.J.V. High School earned "Tagore Education Cup". The same Cup for girls was earned by Miss Laila Kundanmal (1st) & Miss Hassi Rewachand (2nd). S.C. Shahani Music Cup was snatched by Tulsio Hoondraj student of City High School and Miss Mohani Rewachand of Indian Girls' High School. Khubchand Rewachand Minature Cup went to Miss sarwati Motiram and Club singing prizes were earned by Miss Gopi, Miss Noni Thadhani, Miss Chaturi Jagatrai, Miss Mohani Chandomal, Miss sarwati Motiram, Miss Rukmani Motiram, Miss Sushila Partabsing, Miss Hari Sipahimalani, Miss Tirath Sipahimalani & Miss Agna Ramchand.

· 72th Birthday was celebrated on 16th of July at Freare Hall, Karachi with Rupchand Bilaram as its President. First of all Gurdyal Mallick gave short sketch of the poet, then N.D. Mallick presented translation from "Gitanjali" and it was followed by an other translation by Mangharam Malkani and a song by Miss N. Thadhani. The programme consisted of so many items. In the end prizes were distributed. Tagore Elocution Cup for Boys was earned by B.L. Jagtiani (1st) student of N.J.V. High School & J.R. Irani (2nd) of P.V. School. Same Cup for Girls went to Miss Indru A. Advani (1st) of the Indian Girls High School & Miss Hassi Thadhani (2nd) of same school. Music Cup was earned by Tulsidas Hunomal (1st) of City High School, Dharamsi Patel (2nd) of the Gujrati Vidyala, Miss Lila K. Gurbuxani (1st) of Shahani High School & Miss sarwati Motiram (2nd) of same school. Dastur Fancy Dress Challenge Cup prize was equally earned by Mr. C.C. Shahani & Mr. P.L. Tejwani.

· On the eve of the 76th Birth Day anniversary, C.N.Wadhvani was the Secretary of the Club. In reply to his letter of Birthday congratulations, Tagore replied on May 20, 1936, as under:

Dear friend

Your best wishes and remembrances on the occasion of my 76th birthday have touched me deeply and I convey to you my heartfelt gratitude for kindness. R. Tagore.

Tagore wrote so many letters to Sindh and I have reproduced some of them in my Column, that was published in Daily Hilal – I – Pakistan of Karachi under “ Tagore writes to us”.

3. LECTURE PROGRAMMES: Apart from conducting fortnightly “ Tagore Classes”, the Club arranged lecture programmes. Some of them were: On 4.8.1928 by A.T.Gidwani (“Kalidas”), On 15.9.1928 by Hathi Alvi (“Rabindranath Tagore”), On 4.10.1928 by Mangharam Malkani (“something new to Dramatise”), On 23.11.1928 by E.L.Price (“Ambition as Tragedy & Comedy”), On 1.12. 1928 by Prof. A.L.Duarte (“Doctors in Moliere’s play”), On 16.1.1930 by Dr.JAMES H. Cousins (“The future of Drama”), On 9.2.1930 by Prof.A.L.Durate (“George Guynemer – Knight of the Air”), On 20.2.1930 by S.C.Shahani (“Our life essentials with special reference to Gitanjali”), On 6.6.1932 by S.Rama Kumar (“Film Industry”), On 7.12.1933 by Rev. Johan Yule Rennie (“The New Era – Economic, Social & Religions”), On 6.1.1934 by W.V.Venkateswaram (“Art & Life”), On 16.1.1934 by Pandit Onkaranath (“ Rag & sentiment”), On 7.12.1935 by Mangharam Malkani (“Theater & Cinema”).

The important spots/places for these lectures were: D.J.Sindh College, Shahani High School, Amil Panchayat Hall (Burns Road), Young Amil Association office & Theosophical Hall etc.

3. Dramas Staged: This Club staged handsomenumer of Dramas at both Karachi and Hyderabad. On the eve of the inaugurationof the Club by Tagore, A part from Drama “Neki Ain Badi” was staged atHyderabad. Some of other staged Dramas were: “Mulk Ja Mudabar” by KhanchandDaryani (1923), “ Ghalatfahmi” (1924), “Ratna” (1924), “qismat” by MangharamMalkani (1927), “Desh Sadqay’ (1927), “Zamanay Ji Lahar” (1929), “Eikta JoAalap” (1930), “Olad” (1932), “Anarkali’ (1937) and “ Ladies Club” (1939) etc.Khanchand Daryani, Mangharam Malkani, ahmad Chagla, Lalchand AmardinomallJagtiani were Drama writers for this Club. Khanchand Daryani and ChadomalWadhvani left the Culb and Sindh to join Film industry in Mumbai and elsewhere.However, Mangharam Malkani remained with the Club till partition.