

BABA'S FAMILY INTRODUCTION

By Shri Himanshu Ranjan Sarkar

The family in which Shri Shri Ananda Murthijii was born has its roots originally in the Itawa district of the Uttar Pradesh. In this family was born an ancestry named Mr. Jaichand Asthana. In this dynasty of Mr. Asthana Shri Shri Anand Murthijii comes in ninth generation including Mr. Asthane.

Mr. Jaichanda Asthana was a great scholar of Arabic and Persian language. The radiance of his erudition was spread in distant lands. Influenced by his scholastic magnanimity the then Nawab of Dacca (now in Bangladesh) invited Mr. Asthana in his state to reside. The aim of the Nawab behind this invitation was to get the benefits of his scholastic expertise in his state. Nawab was willing Mr. Asthana to take the charge of Arabic and Persian education of the Royal family. On this invitation Mr. Asthana left his home district Itawa of Uttar Pradesh and migrated to Dacca and assumed his duty in Royal family.

Mr. Jaichanda Asthana had a son named Harshvardhana Asthana. Madhusudana Asthana was the son of Mr. Harshvardhana Asthana. Detail information about the both is not available; whatever is known about them is only that they lived in Bhanga sub-division situated on the border of Dacca and Faridpur districts.

Mr. Madhusudana Asthana had a son named Krishnanand Dev. He had changed his birth title (sur name) 'Asthana' and assumed 'Dev' instead. It is not known whether he assumed the surname himself or someone had honored him with the new title. Due to some unknown reason, Mr. Krishnananda Dev left Dacca and migrated to Calcutta. This was the period when British's were coming to Calcutta. Mr. Dev was posted in some govt. job in Calcutta. Later, he had strong dispute with British's over some important matter and was compelled to leave Calcutta.

He came to Burdwan. Burdwan too, is in West Bengal. The previous name of this place was Astiknagar. Some of the family members of Mr. Dev had sweet relations with the British's. Hence, British's rewarded them with the feudal-ship of Shobha Bazar. Shobha bazar is situated in the northern part of Calcutta. This family is yet living in Shobha Bazar. They still retain their surname 'Dev'. Dr. Radhakanta Dev Bahadur of Shobha Bazar as well belonged to this dynasty.

Mr. Ramananda Dev was the son of Mr. Krishnananda Dev. He was 'Chakladar' (Sub-Divisional Officer) of Chitrapur (now Chittapur) in Calcutta. In those days 'sub-division' was called 'Chakla'. He was officer of that sub-division. This post was equivalent to the sub-division officer (SDO) of today.

About three and a half-mile east to Burdwan is a place named 'Bamunpada'. It is a muhalla (village) in Belna 'mauza'. Bamunpada yet today comes under Belna post office.

Mr. Ramananda Dev was married to Madhumati the daughter of Mr. Mukunda Ghosh of Bamunpada. Mr. Mukunda Ghosh was a highly respected man. He was very wealthy and had a landlord like status. Mr. Ghosh had seven sons and one daughter. Mr. Ghosh had divided his properties into eight parts - seven for sons and one for the daughter. The distribution was in such a manner that the daughter's house was in the middle surrounded by seven houses of the sons. Still their family is enjoying the property Mr. Ramanand Dev had received in his marriage.

Mr. Ramananda Dev had a son named Mr. Gaurahari Sarkar. He assumed new title 'Sarkar' in place of the previous one 'Dev'. Possibly, this title was awarded by the king of Burdwan. We do not have his minute details. His son was Mr. Kunja Bihari Sarkar.

Mr. Kunja Bihari Sarkar comes in the seventh generation in the dynasty of Mr. Jaichand Asthana. His wife was Mrs. Kailash Kamini Sarkar. Her maternal house was in 'Amra' village located about two kilometers away from Burdwan. This village is situated on Grand Trunk (G.T.) Road. It is known that famous emperor Sherdhab had got this road constructed.

This couple bore two sons viz.: Mr. Lakshmi Narayan Sarkar and Mr. Nirmal Chandra Sarkar. When Mr. Nirmal Chandra was five Mrs. Kailash Kamini Sarkar died of labour pain. It is said that she was a beautiful lady. After a few years of the death of Mrs. Kailash Kamini Sarkar, Mr. Kunja Bihari Sarkar had a second marriage with Mrs. Veenapani Singh of Ajhapur (in Burdwar District). Mrs. Veenapani had no issue.

There was nobody to look after the family after the death of Mrs. Kailash Kamini Sarkar so both the sons were brought up in their maternal uncle's house till the second marriage of Mr. Kunja Bihari Sarkar. Sometimes after the second marriage, the two boys once again went to the maternal uncle's house for their studies. My uncle would tell the stories of 'how the two brothers used to go to their school by horse riding. Their father had bought them two horses in Bamunpada. Mr. Lakshmi Narayan Sarkar was born in 1890 and Mr. Nirmal Chandra was in 1895.

Although both of them were stepsons of Mr. Veenapani Sarkar and moreover she was just a few years elder to Mr. Lakshmi Narayan Sarkar, they would regard her as mother. She, too, would love them as her own sons. Though she had no child, she did never let herself feel issue-less; rather she would shower her entire affection upon these children.

Mrs. Veenapani Sarkar had a fair complexion. But she was too beautiful in spite she had knowledge of English language besides Bengali. I have seen myself she would look after the family with great care. Once, Baba told that she was dexterous in culinary art. Baba was telling that she had special affection for him in particular. Male members would often remain absent from the house. These two boys as well would remain out in connection with their works. So, she would manage all the burdens of the family herself in their absence.

Mr. Kunj Bihari Sarkar was a businessman and he often used to travel to Burma in that connection. Those days, the only route to Burma was maritime. Once he was returning home from Burma in ship when cholera broke out unfortunately he passed away.

Mr. Lakshmi Narayan Sarkar joined Indian Railway Service after his matriculation from Burdwan Municipal High School (near Kurzon Gate). He was posted as accountant in the Railway Workshop of Jamalpur in the district of Munghyer (Bihar, India). In those days my family came to Jamalpur for the first time. He had good knowledge of homeopathy. He used to attend his dispensary for the whole day on Sundays and half-day on Saturdays. For the rest days of the week he used to sit in the morning before and in the evening after his office hours. A large number of patients used to come to him. Many British officers of the railway workshop used to come to him for treatment. Most of his time after the office hours was spent in social service and welfare. It was he who was in charge of "Relief Operation by Government in Jamalpur in the dreaded 1934 Earthquake, which had caused massive destruction in Munghyer. Moreover he was in charge of distribution as well.

He had command over English and Bengali languages. His handwritings were excellent. He used to attend public meetings and was rewarded as a good orator. He was married in 1912 to Abharani, the fourth daughter of Dr. Upendranath Basu of Vaidyabati in Hoogly Dist., of West Bengal. Mrs. Abharani Sarkar was thirteen and Mr. Lakshmi Narayan Sarkar was twenty-one at the time of their marriage. In fact, Dr. Upendranath Basu was the resident of Bashirhat in Bengal.

He used to live in Vaidyabati, Hoogly in arrangement with his occupation. This couple (i.e. Mr. Lakshmi Narayan Sarkar and Mrs. Abharani Sarkar) had four sons and three daughters.

Let me clear one thing here that his dispensary was run in the front room of our residence in Keshavpur muhalla (village) of Jamalpur. Mr. Lakshmi Narayan Sarkar died of Kale Azar at 11 p.m. on 12th February, 1936. He had not completed even forty-five at the time of his death.

After the death of her husband, the whole responsibility of the family falls on the shoulders of my mother Mrs. Abharani Sarkar. My uncle Mr. Nirmal Chandra Sarkar used to live in Jamalpur in those days. His quarter (no. 35) was in Queen's Road, far from ours. After my father's demise he used to visit us on every Sunday in order to monitor the well being of our family. He used to give us proper advice and guidance. After my father's death no one was left earning in our family and hence my mother used to manage the family very intelligently.

Mrs. Abharani Sarkar was a lady with milky white complexion and normal stature. She was slightly bulky. She had studied in Christian school from her maternal house before marriage. She had fair knowledge of Bengali and English languages. She was a good hand at songs and music. She was generous, charitable and religious lady. She did not tolerate injustice. Her memory power was of par excellence. Being a discipline-loving lady, she used to nurture us in the same environment. The way she cherished us in such difficult situation was highly appreciated by everyone. Remembering those days we used to draw inspiration still today. At 11.45 on 2nd July, 1972, at our Jamalpur quarter no. 317, she left us forever. This residence is located in Rampur colony. At the time of her death, Kanai Dada and Manas Ranjan were (present there) by her side.

Mr. Jaichand Asthana

Mr. Harshavardhan Asthana

Mr. Madhusudan Asthana

Mr. Krishnananda Dev

Mr. Ramananda Dev

Mr. Gaurahari Sarkar

Mr. Kunja Bihari Sarkar

Mr. Lakshmi Narayan Sarkar