

500 Words Report on

New Scholar Research Award Scheme

Awarded By: Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry (SHAC)

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Period of Research Work Conducted in London, UK: From 11th July – 3rd August, 2011.

Title of the Project: Science, Colonialism and Indigenous Pharmaceuticals: Case Studies of Three Pharmaceuticals in Kolkata

Background of the Project:

Like several other ancient civilizations of the world, Indian civilization is also one of the prime civilization. Along with several enriched traditions, India had its own glorious tradition in the field of science, specifically in the field of alchemy. However, the history of Indian alchemy can be traced to Pre-Vedic period, which got momentum to a large extent from Tantric cult. Initially, alchemy in India started for the preparation of an elixir of life for imparting immortality, which in course of time were put into something more practical and in tangible manner. But this enriched traditional medical system lost its scientific spirit, with the advent of the Europeans in India. People were easily attracted by the new system of medicine due to its quick recovery. In such a socio-political climax when swadeshi fragrance was blooming in the air of colonial Bengal, Bengali intelligentsia was instilled to take up business and industry with new objectives. Among several other industries, pharmaceutical industry was one such example. These socio-historical and socio-political backdrops inspired the present researcher to think over this and finally this project got its shape and has been taken as PhD dissertation. Three indigenous pharmaceuticals in Kolkata (erstwhile Calcutta) have been chosen as the subject of study.

Keeping in mind the historical backdrop and present socio-economic situation of these three pharmaceuticals, the present researcher has purposively selected - Buttokrishna Paul & Co. at Sovabazar, Kolkata (1855), Bengal Chemical & Pharmaceutical Works Limited at Eastern Metropolitan Bye Pass (1891), and East India Pharmaceutical Works Limited at Behala, Kolkata (1936). Here it should be mentioned that the present researcher has restricted the time period from 1855 to 1947. Because the three indigenous pharmaceuticals were established in three different time periods. That is why the present researcher has restricted the time period up to the end of the colonial period, i.e. 1947.

However, the present dissertation aims to understand the scientific discourse of these three indigenous pharmaceuticals under the debates of hegemonization or counter

hegemonization between colonial science versus national science under the then socio-political milieu.

In connection with the present PhD dissertation, the present researcher rigorously worked at different libraries in India. But in this context, so far as development of Western Pharmaceutical industries are concerned, the availability of resources are very limited. In this respect, SHAC provided the golden opportunity under its 'New Scholar Research Award Scheme'. By this Scholarship, I have fulfilled my desire to work at different esteemed libraries of London like, University College of London (UCL), Wellcome Library, British Library etc. In these libraries the research materials, which have been collected related to the historical genesis of pharmaceutical industries in different civilizations, early 18th and 19th century development of Pharmaceutical industries etc. This research material has helped the present researcher to gain in depth and thorough knowledge about the research subject.

Finally, this cannot be an over statement that, this kind of research will create a new horizon, so far as the History of Science's research is concerned. Thus `SHAC's assistance has enabled the present researcher to fulfil her unfulfilled desire, and will also help to incorporate a cross-cultural dimension in her future Post Doctoral research.

Keeping in mind the above backdrop, the present researcher has purposively selected three different types of Pharmaceutical industries, namely Buttokrishna Paul & Co. at Sovabazar, Bengal Chemical & Pharmaceutical Works Limited at E M Bye Pass and East India Pharmaceutical Works Limited at Behala (in three different locations of Kolkata). Besides, historical backdrop and present socio-economic situation of these three pharmaceuticals have been considered as major factors for selecting these three different categories of indigenous pharmaceuticals in Kolkata. Here it should be mentioned that the present researcher has limited the time period from 1855 to 1947. Because the three indigenous pharmaceuticals had been established in three different time periods. That is why the present researcher has restricted the time period up to the end of the colonial period, i.e. 1947.