

Please find below the synopsis of the Memorial Lecture delivered by Dr Devajit Bandyopadhyay on "Kolkata through the Prism of Theatre Songs" (Mancho Ganey Kolkata) on 29th November 2019.



Since its inception in 1795, theatre in Calcutta has been a powerful conveyor of socio-political views to the masses as well as the ruling classes. Music, specifically songs of the Calcutta theatre, changed its style and course, often to suit the changing times and to be in tune with the period and political preferences of theatre-lovers. Calcutta theatre gave birth to the different genres of entertainment, whose moorings lay in the red light areas and the ballrooms of Calcutta's nouveau riche. Theatre-songs of the nineteenth and the twentieth century Calcutta --- the era of baboos, nautch-girls and the colonial influences --- is an evergreen subject for the socio-cultural study. Drawing ponderously from the political history, the satirical overtures in the socio-literary thoughts of colonial Calcutta, folk culture and the reigning musical trends of the times, the presentation of Dr. Devajit Bandyopadhyay highlights the day-to-day existence under the Raj and independent India.

The songs, selected from path breaking skits and plays like Hutom Pyanchar Naksha by Kaliprasanna Singha (1862), Surendra Binodini by Upendranath Das (1875), Prafulla by Girishchandra Ghosh (1889), Macbeth, an adaptation of Shakespeare, by Girishchandra Ghosh (1893), Sirajuddaullah also by Girishchandra Ghosh (1906), Chirakumar Sabha by Rabindranath Tagore (1925), Janani by Sachindranath Sengupta (1933), for which the lyrics were lent by Hemendrakumar Roy and the music was created by Sachin Dev Burman, Nabanna by Bijan Bhattacharya (1944), Tin Poysar Pala (1969) and Bhalomanush (1974), adapted from Brecht, by Ajitesh Bandyopadhyay, Kallol by Utpal Dutta (1966), Narak Gulzar by Manoj Mitra (1976) and many others.