

## Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, a Versatile Historian

Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, a leading historian of modern India passed away on 7 January 2018. He was 81 and suffering from cancer for over a year. He is survived by his wife and daughter.

He was a versatile historian who contributed to wide ranging themes from modern Indian history. His initial works were on aspects of economic and financial history of the British Raj. His renowned book on financial history *Financial Foundations Of the British Raj: Ideas And Interests In The Reconstruction Of Indian Public Finance (1858-1872)* came out in 1971. Some of his other important contributions are *The Colonial State: Theory and Practice* (2016); *Talking Back: the Idea of Civilization in the Indian Nationalist Discourse* (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2011); *The Defining Moments in Bengal 1920-1947* (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 2014).

He has extensively worked on different themes of labour history. Some of his co-edited volumes on labour history are: *Workers in the Informal Sector: studies in labour history, 1800-2000' (2005)*, *The Vernacularization of Labour Politics* (2016) and *The Past of the Outcast: Reading in Dalit History* (2017). His interests spanned theme of cultural and intellectual history as well. An interesting work related to this is *Vande Mataram: A Biography of a Song* (2013). He brought out a volume which contains the correspondences between Rabindranath Tagore and Gandhi, with an introduction, titled *The Mahatma and the Poet: Letters and Debates Between Gandhi and Tagore*. It is now in its seventh reprint.

As a student of history at the Presidency College and the University of Calcutta, he was taught by legendary teachers like Susobhan Sarkar and Barun De. His doctoral research was on the themes of economic and financial history of the British Raj. After completion of doctoral research, he held teaching and research positions at the University of Chicago and thereafter he became the Agatha Harrison Fellow at St Antony's College, Oxford.

He came back to India in the early 1970s and started teaching at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, which is one of the premier institutes for history in the country. He was one of the foundational members of the institute who made a lasting contribution to it. He was a well loved teacher and has influenced students for decades. He also made his mark as an administrator. He served as the Vice-Chancellor of Visva Bharati University and the Chairman of the Indian Council for Historical Research.

He has had a long association with the Calcutta Research Group. He delivered the first Jayanta Dasgupta Memorial Lecture titled "Mill Strikes in Bombay, 1928-29, and Munshi Premchand as Filmmaker" in March 2011. The Calcutta Research Group fondly remembers his association.