NBT Foundation Day Lecture

"Knowledge has great significance in our lives. One of its qualities is that it purifies us," said Prof. Kapil Kapoor. He was delivering the fourth NBT Foundation Day Lecture on 'Books and Reading in Today's India' organized at its premises, Nehru Bhawan in Vasant Kunj, New Delhi on 20 August 2015.

"In our country," Prof. Kapoor observed, "knowledge is perceived as a pathfinder, whereas in the west—knowledge is power." Even the way our knowledge system has evolved and its philosophy is unique. It is deep-rooted. It is reflected in our tradition, culture and even day-to-day life. For example, he said, 'time', in the modern sense as it is popularly defined, is 'money' whereas in our philosophy it is like a 'flow of a river'. Citing the examples of epics like Mahabharata and Ramayana, he said, "If we read our literature carefully, it has no tragedy; death is not the end but a new beginning because our philosophy is deep-rooted and knowledge comes through it. Indian philosophy has openness; it gives us a freedom to decide and think for ourselves."

Referring to the rich literary heritage of our oral literature, Prof. Kapoor said, "Oral literature has played a significant role in preserving tradition and culture of our country." UNESCO defines an educated person as one who can read and write. But Prof. Kapoor argues that even if a person who cannot read and write, still has knowledge within him/her, carried over from generation to generation through oral literature.

"Women have played a greater role in instilling moral values in their children and grand children. It is because of them that the tradition and culture of the country is preserved and remains intact since ages," he added.

Quoting from the Census of India, he figures that there are more than 1500 languages and among them only 28...
languages are scripted. He said that the western countries have the tradition of passing knowledge through scripted words but in our country, the knowledge is passed on through oral tradition. According to him, “Each and every language carries with it a rich repertoire of literature and the knowledge that comes with it, which is passed on through oral tradition in the form of songs, storytelling, plays etc. Nowadays, languages are being converted into scripts. We are overlooking the fact that most of the literature available in oral form gives us a certain freedom of expression to adapt it according to the times, and thus, widen our sphere of knowledge. But in scripting these narratives, we are freezing the text and limiting the knowledge in written words. There is a need to disseminate the knowledge and literature that these languages provide through various mediums especially audio books.”

Speaking on the significance of books, he said that “We value books through their cost and their outer appearance like the jacket covers, reviews etc. The book, which is easy to comprehend and gives concrete information, is a valuable book.” He added that the advent of computers and the English language, in a way, has resulted in the decline of the reading habit of the people.

He also emphasized on the need to preserve our manuscripts belonging to the past. He lamented the fact they are not preserved properly and are neglected even in libraries and the museums.

Shri Baldeo Bhai Sharma, Chairman, NBT in his presidential remarks observed that knowledge empowers us and gives a meaning to our lives. He also felt that there is a need to preserve the literature of India. He added that National Book Trust, India would continue with its efforts to promote books and reading amongst the people in the country.

Earlier, Dr Rita Chowdhury, Director, NBT welcomed the guests present on the occasion. She said, “Books and reading have been an integral part of NBT’s history. In fact, it is its mandate: promotion of books and reading. A vision of the institution’s founding fathers to foster a climate for love of books and to encourage reading. Twin necessities that put a young nation on the path of progress and development. But much has changed in the five decades that have followed.”

On this occasion, the employees of the Trust who completed 25 years of their service were also felicitated including Shri Debabarata Sarkar, Dy. Director (Art); Ms Neera Jain, Editor; Shri M L Bhatia, Asst. Editor; Shri Jasrath Singh, Assistant; Shri Kuldev Singh, UDC; Shri Manik R Patil, UDC (WRO), Mumbai; Shri Sukhbir, UDC; Ms Sandhya D Shukla, Jr. Steno (WRO); Ms Reena Vijay Kumar, Jr. Steno (SRO); Ms Dharitry Mishra, Jr. Steno (ERO); Shri Ishwar Singh, Peon; Shri Baljeet Singh, Peon (retired on 31 July 2015); and Shri Surinder Singh, Cleaner.

This is the fourth in the series of NBT Foundation Day Lectures. This annual lecture series was initiated in the year 2012. The lecture series aims to bring about the importance of books and reading in today’s context and bring in critical thinking by inviting eminent personality from among women and men of letters, scholars, intellectuals and others who have made significant contributions to the world of publishing.

Prof. Kapil Kapoor is one of India’s renowned Sanskrit scholars and linguist. He was the Rector (Pro-Vice-Chancellor), Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He worked in various capacities at JNU as Dean of the School of Language, Literature and Cultural Studies; Professor of English, Centre for Linguistics and English; and Concurrent Professor, Centre for Sanskrit Studies. He was also the Visiting Professor at the Irish Academy of Cultural Heritages, University of Ulster, UK. Currently, Prof. Kapil Kapoor is the Chancellor, Mahatma Gandhi International Hindi University, Wardha and Chairman, MHRD Expert Committee on Language for Comprehensive Language Policy.
In Memory of APJ Abdul Kalam

On 27 July 2015, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, former President of India also known as the People’s President, passed away. Dr Kalam had been an inspiration to the people of India especially young generation. He encouraged people to read books and advocated the importance of education.

National Book Trust, India was fortunate to have had Kalam at many of its book and reading related programmes. A writer, poet and voracious reader himself, he was a regular visitor to every edition of the New Delhi World Book Fair. Kalam was the first guest speaker in the series of the motivational lectures organised during the New Delhi World Book Fair.

In the interactive session on ‘Books, Reading and their Influence on My Life’ held at New Delhi World Book Fair on 3 March 2012, Kalam motivated a large audience of students and readers to make reading a part of life. In the memory of APJ Abdul Kalam, we present the excerpts of his lecture.

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“Books are great companions — intellectual and beautiful. I often come to World Book Fair to select some good books”, said Dr APJ Abdul Kalam.

Talking about the books that influenced him most, he mentioned Thirukural by Thiruvalluvar, Jalaluddin Rumi’s poem Want to Fly, the Code Named God by Dr Mani Bhaumick, Light from Many Lamps by Lillian Eichler Watson and his latest read The Grand Pursuit by Sylvia Nasar among many others.

Kalam read out a few lines from Want to Fly. He made the entire audience to repeat after him the lines. Kalam made the young and the old to take an oath of starting a library in their homes even if they start with twenty books in the beginning. “Dedicate at least one hour per day to reading”, he advised the young audience. At the same time he told the parents that reading habit begins from home so the parents need to read as well.

Exhorting the young towards the habit of reading Kalam observed that dedication and determination towards reading makes gaining knowledge and whatever you want quite possible. “Great books ignite imagination, imagination leads to creativity, creativity to knowledge and knowledge is what makes us great!”

In the interactions that followed, curious young children had loads of questions for Kalam which he answered patiently. Replying to one of the queries, Kalam said, “E-books can never replace real books”.

Earlier, in her welcome address, Ms Vibha Puri Das, Secretary, Ministry of HRD said, “Dr Kalam is a person who has fired the imagination of the nation. One gets ignited and empowered through his talk”. She was positive that “we would become a much more reading and learning society after we listen to Dr Kalam”.

Delivering a vote of thanks, Dr M.A. Sikandar thanked Dr Kalam for having spared time to share his reading experiences and encouraging all to develop a reading habit.

A True Inspiring Story

Referring to the joys of reading, Dr Kalam narrated a true story of his driver who had the inclination to read. Kalam helped him to study further and from passing his class 10 to attaining his PhD. Kalam said he was one day pleasantly surprised to find him as a professor at a university. “When he can do it so can you”, said Kalam emphasizing on what dedication and determination can lead to.
The use of Mercury in medicine goes back several centuries and spans several continents, civilisations and eras. Mercury has been used in medicine across the globe. Mercurous chloride, also known as ‘calomel’ has traditionally been used as a diuretic, topical disinfectant and also as a laxative. Mercuric chloride also termed as ‘corrosive sublimate’, along with other Mercury containing preparations, was once used to treat syphilis. It was also used as a disinfectant. Another reference to the prescription use of Mercury, throughout the nineteenth century, was ‘blue mass’, in the form of a pill or syrup, which contained Mercury as its main ingredient. Its indications reportedly included conditions as diverse as constipation, depression, gynaecological conditions and dental ailments. In the early 20th century, Mercury was even administered to children on a yearly basis, as laxative and de-wormer. Its use was not restricted even in infants, where it was used in powders used to alleviate their teething troubles.

In ancient India and China, Mercury was generally thought to maintain good health, in addition to possessing other healing powers. These included the power to heal fractures and increasing longevity. A rather high ranking victim of these Mercury myths is reported to be the first Chinese emperor, Qin Shi Huang Qi, who is said to have been driven mad and subsequently killed by the Mercury pills intended to give him eternal life. The ancient Greeks used Mercury ointments and the Romans used it in cosmetics. The use of Mercury in cosmetics continues in different parts of the world, till today, albeit with concerns being raised regarding its safety.

The ancient Indian and Chinese civilizations have a history of extracting Mercury from its natural form, and using it for medicinal purposes. Spanish civilisations too have been using Mercury in healthcare. Traditional healing methods in South America still comprise the use of Mercury in various forms, though this is a cause of concern for governments in these countries. There is extensive mention of the various Mercury preparations for various illnesses, in the Ayurveda and Siddha medicinal literature. The term ‘ras’ in Ayurvedic texts refers to Mercury and spans several preparations from Mercury. In allopathy too, its use for treating skin ailments, in treatment of syphilis etc. was prevalent until the very recent past.

Its other well known uses have included its use in Mercury containing medical equipment like thermometers, sphygmomanometers, oesophageal tubes, and other gadgets like hospital wall switches and thermostats. Several critical hospital equipments were powered by Mercury containing batteries. It has been used in dentistry since the last over 100 years.

The healthcare applications of Mercury in medicine have been immensely useful and historically have proved to be extremely cost-effective. Another common feature of almost all these applications, at some point in their history, is controversy regarding their safety. The controversy lately is on how soon Mercury should be phased out from these healthcare applications, without affecting community health and clinical outcomes. There are several arguments and historical debates which support this view. Mercury has therefore always been considered as a double-edged sword, and efforts needed to make its use safer, and replace it with safer alternatives, have always been recognised. In perspective, we are now trying to distance ourselves from a once close ally, whom we have recognised as dangerous long ago, but considered indispensable. Fortunately, with great strides in technology and material science research, this indispensability is under serious attack.

Thiomersal, a Mercury derivative, has been used in the manufacture of certain vaccines and other medical products since the 1930s. Concern about its use in this manner emerged after concern was expressed in the United States in 1999. There was genuine concern that the cumulative effect of the Mercury exposure in infants due to the immunization schedule set by the government, may potentially exceed the threshold for exposure to methylmercury. It was later clarified that thiomersal, the preservative in such vaccines, contained ethyl Mercury and not methylmercury.

To address these genuine and potentially grave concerns, the World Health Organisation set up the Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety (GACVS), who first assessed the issue in August 2000. This Committee derives advice from its members who are world experts in the fields of epidemiology, paediatrics, internal medicine, pharmacology and toxicology, infectious diseases, public health, immunology and autoimmunity, drug regulation, and safety. Considerable research has followed and policies have accordingly been formulated. The committee recommends continuation of the current WHO global vaccination policy. However it recommends encouragement of further research on the matter.
Lallubhai Samaldas represented a kind of person rare in our public life today. 2013 was his 150th birth anniversary. Only two of his grandchildren, Nikhil and I are left by now, and so felt that we should try and capture the fading personal memories that no one else could provide. Not only his great-grand children and their children, scattered all over the globe, should know something about their roots and heritage and his contribution to public life but so should a wider public. So here is our combined effort—I have written the text, while Nikhil has provided all the relevant photographs.

Lallubhai, whose original name was Tribhuvandas, was born in the princely state of Bhavnagar on 14 October 1863. He belonged to the Nagar Brahmin caste that held a leading place in Gujarat in the world of learning, politics and administration. His family had served as Dewans (prime ministers) to the Bhavnagar state for four generations and was largely responsible for the rise and growth of the state.

He began the first half of his life, as an officer of the Bhavnagar state specializing in administration for famine relief, revenue, railway, and education. He was compelled to resign in 1899 due to some differences with the Maharaja of Bhavnagar. Indian princely states were, in those days, hotbeds of intrigues and one required great political skill to survive. At the time he felt that his world had collapsed, as he had never dreamt of leaving Bhavnagar, or of a career outside state service. But in the long run, this was a fortuitous decision as Bombay, which was then the commercial and political hub of western India, opened up a whole new world for him. …

When he moved to Bombay, Lallubhai was young and full of ideas. He initially toyed with the idea of joining politics and went to meet Pherozeshah Mehta. Lallubhai having worked in the field of land revenue administration in Bhavnagar, knew the implications of the Bill and so he did not go along with Sir Pherozeshah. His brilliant note on the Bill, upset Pherozeshah and his followers, but established Lallubhai’s reputation in Bombay as an expert in revenue administration.

Lallubhai was interested in the cooperative movement and became a pioneer in this field. Together with Sir Vitthaldas Thackersey, he set up the Bombay State Co-operative Bank and the Land Mortgage Bank of which he later became chairman. He was also the chairman of the Bombay State Co-operative Institute.

Lallubhai wanted industries and financial institutions to be owned and operated by Indians. He had a distinct vision of India’s commercial, industrial as well as financial development. He thus began to take keen interest in varied activities of Bombay and immersed himself in them fully.

British banks, in those days, made it difficult for Indian entrepreneurs to get loans for their ventures. Lallubhai, realizing this constraint, decided to start an Indian bank. A group of Hindu, Parsi, Muslim, Jewish and Christian businessmen now got together and founded the Bank of India in 1906. Lallubhai was on its first Board of Directors. He then helped in drawing up the scheme for the Bank of Baroda of which he later became chairman. He was consulted also by the Mysore state for the founding of the Indian Bank of Madras.

Insurance was yet another sector under the exclusive control of Europeans. So, Lallubhai started the Swadeshi Life Assurance Corporation, later named the Bombay Life Assurance Company and became its founder director.

Lallubhai was also instrumental in beginning such new enterprises as the first Indian cement company at Porbandar (1913), Bhavnagar Electric Supply Corporation (still working today), and the first Indian sugar factory at Baramati. He held high positions, such as directorships of several companies (totalling more than 25), like Martin Burn’s Light Railway in Assam and Bihar, Tata Iron and Steel Co. at Jamshedpur, Tata Hydro-electric Supply Company, and the Tata textile mill situated at Ahmedabad. He was closely associated with the Indian Merchants Chamber founded in 1907. Thus within seven years of coming to Bombay, he had become a well known figure in the city’s commercial and financial circles.

Lallubhai, together with Narottam Morarji, Walchand Hirachand and Kilachand Devchand, was one of the founders of the Scindia Steam Navigation Company, the first Indian shipping company, established in 1919.

He was a member of the Indian Mercantile Marine Committee which recommended the setting up of Dufferin, the first Merchant Navy Training Ship for Indians. In 1926, Lallubhai travelled to England in order to purchase ships on behalf of Scindia Steam Navigation Company, and at this time he was knighted in Buckingham Palace by Emperor George V.

Lallubhai took an interest in politics as well. A liberal, and a ‘moderate’, he was a follower of his friend Gopal Krishna Gokhale. Narayan Desai in his speech on Lallubhai (Appendix III) spoke of two aspects of a revolution, ‘razing to the ground’ and ‘raising from the ground’ i.e. destroying an old order and building a new order. Gandhi represented both in as much as he wanted the end of British rule but he was clear as to what he wanted to replace it with. Lallubhai was more concerned with the second. He had a vision of India’s growth and development. He wanted India to be a free country but believed that the way was through constitutional means not non co-operation. He, therefore, accepted the membership of the Bombay Legislative Council as well as of the Imperial Legislative Council.

Lallubhai’s interests were not confined to business, industry and politics. He was associated in one way or other with almost all the social and educational organizations in Bombay in his time. He had an excellent library and read fiction, plays, poetry as well as books on philosophy, sociology and astronomy.
Training Course in Book Publishing

A week-long training course in book publishing was organized at the Tripura University, Suryamaninagar, Tripura from 7 to 14 July 2015.

Shri Baldeo Bhai Sharma, Chairman, NBT inaugurated the programme. He urged the participants to develop reading habit as it will not only help them in gaining knowledge but also employment.

Shri Bhanu Lal Saha, Hon’ble Minister, Information and Cultural Affairs, Government of Tripura, was the guest of honour on the occasion. He said, “NBT is playing a significant role among the students and youth to develop the habit of reading across the nation by organizing several book related programmes.” He hoped that through this programme the participants would be able to make it to the publishing industry.

Prof. Barin Kumar Dey, Director, Internal Quality Assurance Cell, Tripura University and Dr Ashes Gupta, Head of the English Department were also present on the occasion.

Over 120 participants from different parts of Tripura attended the programme. During the programme, the experts provided valuable insight into various aspects of book publishing like editing, copyright, production, marketing to the participants.

The valedictory function was held on 14 July 2015 during which Prof. Anjan Kumar Ghosh, Vice Chancellor, Tripura University interacted with the participants and distributed the certificates.

Besides giving an overview of the publishing scenario, the course content included editing, production, design, sales and marketing. It also discussed the role of technology particularly QR codes, mobile applications etc. in the context of reading.

Shri Narender Kumar, Production Officer coordinated the event.

Books Received

Encountering Modernity: Situating the Tangkhul Nagas in Perspective; R. Vashum (ed.); Chicken Neck, C-127 Sarvodaya Enclave, New Delhi – 110017

This book is the first of its kind published on the various aspects of the Tangkhul Nagas and contributed by the native scholars. It essentially engages on four broad areas: the engagement on the articulation of the discourses of tradition, modernity and emerging issues and trends; the inclusiveness of the various inter-disciplinary aspects and perspectives on the Tangkhul Nagas; the elements of critical analysis of the conventional tradition and knowledge of the community; and the attempt to open up discourses on the various aspects of the Tangkhul society. This book will be of interest to scholars of social sciences, humanities and natural sciences including general readers to understand the Tangkhul society in a holistic way.

Legal Drafting: Do It Yourself; H.L. Kumar; Universal Law Publishing Co., A-73/1, G.T. Karnal Road Industrial Area, Delhi-110033; 978-93-5035-540-4; Rs. 525

Drafting of any legal document like legal notice, agreement, plaint, written statement etc. is not like a simple letter since it requires in-depth imagination, relevant facts, legal implications; hence utmost precaution is required to be taken lest it should be mis-represented leading to unavoidable litigation. It requires sound and up-to-date knowledge. The introduction in each chapter of this book will hold the readers to assess the authenticity of the documents. This revised edition is for those who are concerned with legal drafting, and provides models of almost all types of legal documents.
In India, the museum movement started a century later than the European countries. At the end of the 18th century or more definitely in the early 19th century, the Europeans set up the first museum in India. They were very much interested in India’s natural wealth and realized the importance of preserving those. Thus, gradually different museums were set up as custodians of materials of cultural, historical and scientific importance. It can be observed that during the 19th and 20th centuries, there was a stable growth of museums all over India.

It is notable that there was not a very long interval between the inauguration of the British Museum in 1759 and the inception of the first museum collection in India in 1796. Sir William Jones, the Puisne Judge of the Supreme Court at Calcutta took initiative in founding the Asiatic Society in Kolkata (then Calcutta). Sir Jones congregated a group of enthusiastic antiquarians. He, in association with thirty men of the elite Europeans on 15 January, 1784, gathered in the Grand Jury Room of the Supreme Court at Calcutta. Here a resolution was passed to form an organization named ‘Asiatick Society’ for the development of Oriental Research. It covered numerous subjects like geology and pure mathematics, ethnography and mechanics, geography and religion, mineralogy and politics, grammar and rhetoric, music and agriculture, architecture and medicine. Sir William Jones spread out the area of the collection of the Asiatic Society to the geographical limits of Asia—whatever is achieved by man or produced by Nature. The Asiatic Society came to a decision in 1796, that all curiosities it had gathered should be housed in a fitting building in Calcutta. Nevertheless, the Society had to wait until 1814 to set up the first museum in India—the Indian Museum. In that year the Society accepted the offer of a Danish botanist, Dr. Nathaniel Wallich, to act as Honorary Curator and to give duplicates from his own collection provided the Society would furnish a suitable building. The Society, however, agreed with Dr. Wallich and determined to adjust the hall on the ground floor of its building as a museum and to employ him as the ‘Superintendent of the Oriental Museum of the Asiatic Society’. The Society established the museum in two sections—the first dealing with archaeology, ethnology and technology, under the care of the Society’s Librarian; and the second dealing with geology and zoology, under the charge of Dr. Wallich. The scope of the museum was defined as “the illustration of Oriental manner and history, and to elucidate the peculiarities of art and nature in the East”.

In 1840, the Asiatic Society requested the Government of India to establish an imperial museum to preserve and exhibit its growing collection. The proposal was sanctioned in 1865. In the next year, the first Indian Museum Act No. XVII of 1866 was enacted. The Oriental Museum of the Asiatic Society was given a new name, i.e. the ‘Indian Museum’ under this act.

During the early era of the museum movement in Indian subcontinent, enthusiasm spread over the area of botanical studies. Consequently, in 1787, Col. Robert Kyd established the Indian Botanic Garden (Sibpur, West Bengal) under the East India Company’s patronage. The “Company Bagan” served as a platform for introducing and subsequently exporting horticulturally and economically important plant species of this region like tea, jute, cotton, chintona, hemp, flax, rubber, vanilla, coffee, cardamom, pepper, nutmeg, indigo, sago, etc. and plant products like timber, spices, etc. to England. In 1857, the East India Company’s affair was taken over directly by the Crown. Since then, the “Company Bagan” has been titled the ‘Royal Botanic Garden’. A new herbarium building was constructed in the Garden in 1882 proposed by G. King. In 1950, the Garden was renamed as ‘Indian Botanic Garden’.

In 1800, Rev. William Carey had developed a Garden at Srirampur (West Bengal). He converted it into Royal Agricultural Horticultural Society of India on September 14, 1820. Though the Society was established in 1820, until 1872 it had no garden of permanent nature. The Society set up a museum for exhibiting types of seeds, corns, agricultural implements in the then Metcalfe Hall. It was transferred to Alipore in Calcutta in January 1872. Now it is known as Agri-Horticultural Society of India.

In 1851, Sir Bartle Frere, the then Commissioner in Sind, established the Victoria Museum at Karachi, in the Frere Hall. At about the same time, the Grant Medical College (Mumbai) established the first medical museum in Asia.

In 1857, the Government Museum, Trivandrum was inaugurated. It is also known as Napier Museum. From the outset until 1898, a Committee administrated the Museum and after 1898, the first director for the Museum was appointed. The collection included specimens of natural history, arts and industry of the state.
Farewell

Shri Umesh Chander, Assistant, retired from the Trust after serving for 36 years. He joined the Trust on 20 May 1979 as Lower Division Clerk and has worked in various departments including Establishment, Accounts, Subsidy and Sales.

Shri Satya Pal, Attendant, after serving the Trust for 34 years, retired from the service. Shri Satya Pal joined the Trust in 1981 as sweeper and served in the Production and Accounts section.

Shri Baljeet Singh, Peon retired from the Trust after rendering 25 years of service. He joined the Trust on 30 April 1990 as sweeper. He has worked in departments including Despatch, Administration, Exhibition and Sales Coordination.

We at NBT wish them a happy retired life.

International Book Fairs
- Indonesia Book Fair: 2-6 September 2015
- Seoul International Book Fair: 7-11 October 2015
- Frankfurt International Book Fair: 14-18 October 2015
- Sharjah International Book Fair: 4-14 November 2015
- Cairo Book Fair, Egypt: Jan/Feb 2016

Domestic Book Fairs
- Dehradun Book Fair: 12-20 September 2015
- Udaipur Book Fair: 3-11 October 2015
- Patna Book Fair: 21-29 November 2015

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