

## Report on seminar

Title: Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar at His Birth Sesquicentenary

Date: 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2026

Time: 4pm onwards

Venue: Sri Aurobindo Bhavan

Sri Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar a pivotal figure in Bengali children literature. A writer, folklorist, and composer of rhymes, he made an invaluable contribution in preserving the rich oral storytelling traditions of Bengal. Born in 1877 in undivided Bengal, his works continues to shape the cultural imagination of generations even today.

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of his birth, Sri Aurobindo Bhavan, in collaboration with The Institute of Social and Cultural Studies organized a half-day event *titled Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar at His Birth Sesquicentenary* on March 28, 2026, to celebrate his enduring legacy and contributions in Bengali literature.

The programme got initiated with the inauguration of an exhibition displaying books and memorabilia associated with the author, curated by Kolkata Koto Kotha. Simultaneously wood-carving workshop led by the artist Jyotirmoy Bhattacharya also got inaugurated. One of the main attractions of the porogramme was the Sit and Draw competition for school students inspired by illustrations from *Thakurmar Jhuli*. This competition saw students coming from more than ten different schools. In the competition Sudeshna Maity and Subhro Mondol of Sri Aurobindo Vidya Bhavan and Mohit Sarkar of Dakhin Kalikata Sevasram stood first second and third respectively in the senior section. In the junior section, Angshika Chowdhury of Rishi Aurobindo Memorial Academy, Priyadarshini Roy of The New Horizon High School and Roonica Chowdhury of Sakhawat Memorial Govt Girls High School stood first , second , third respectively. Beside this, Sanjana Bhunia , Aditya Roy and Ankita Mallick received special prizes for their art work.

The main attraction of the event was a discussion session titled *“The Relevance of Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumder’s Literature in His birth Sesquicentenary* took place featuring eminent writers like Sri Parthaajit Gangopadhyay and Sri Jaydeep Chakraborty, as well as academician like Professor Sumita Chakraborty and Dr. Sailendra Laha.

The discussion session commenced with an address by Sri Biswajit Ganguly, Trustee of Sri Aurobindo Bhavan. In his deliverance, he highlighted how eminent personalities such as Sri Aurobindo and Rabindranath Tagore had praised *Thakurmar Jhuli*, the celebrated work of Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar. He emphasized the enduring significance of children’s literature, noting its wide appeal and the important role it plays in shaping imagination and

values. He also referred to the contributions of The Mother (Sri Maa), highlighting her extensive writings on children's literature and education.

He thereafter requested Dr. Sailendra Laha to present his views. Dr Laha, discussed extensively about Mother ( Sri Maa's) writings on Children's Literature and education, highlighting how they positively impacted the children.

Dr Laha's speech was followed by eminent author Sri Parthajit Gangopadhyay. He initiated his discussion praising ISCS and SriAurodindo Bhavan for organizing such a programme. He said about the significance of Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar in children psychology. He briefly spoke about the concept of Rupkatha(folk tales). Sri Gangopadhyay elaborated on Dakshinaranjan's tireless efforts in collecting Rupkathas(folk tales) from the erstwhile East Bengal and modern Bangladesh. He also mentioned the crucial role played by Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen and Rabindranath Tagore helping Dhakinaranjan to publish Thakumar Jhuli. While Dr. Sen persuaded the publishers to publish Dakshinaranjan's manuscripts, Tagore wrote a wonderful introductory note for his book mentioning how this book reflected the rich cultural heritage of the nation. Sri Gangopadhyay thereafter spoke on the literary technique and the vast array of literature written by Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar also noting how it inspired people like Sri Upendra Kishore Roy Chowdhury to write stories based on Rupkatha (folk tales).

The next speaker Prof. Sumita Chakraborty in her detailed discourse mentioned about the diverse literary contributions of Sri Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar, which included compilation of Swadeshi song and publication like Arya Samaj, Sahaj Chandi etc. She also mentioned how Shri Mitra Mazumder translated folklore of foreign nations into Bengali. She thereafter spoke on how Takuarmar Jhuli became synonymous to the national pride of the country as it reflected the rich cultural heritage of the nation that its people feel proud about. She added that *Thakurmar Jhuli* being published during the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal in 1907 became somewhat of a flag bearer of our old traditional values deeply rooted in our indigenous culture and in a way, resurrected Bengali folk tales from obvious oblivion.

The last speaker of the session was eminent author Sri Joydeep Chakraborty. In his speech he mentioned about the multifaceted aspect of Dakshinaranjan's literature. He pointed out that although children's literature has often been undervalued in Bengali literary tradition, Dakshinaranjan chose it as his primary field of work. He also highlighted the challenges Dakshinaranjan faced while establishing himself in this domain.

Sri Joydeep Chakraborty further addressed the issue of gender representation in Dakshinaranjan's works. He noted that in Mitra Mazumder's works male protagonists are typically depicted as heroic and courageous, while female characters are often portrayed in

supportive or submissive roles. For example, princesses are usually shown as needing rescue, whereas princes are presented as strong saviours. According to Chakraborty, such traditional portrayals have drawn criticism and dissatisfaction from women readers.

He concluded by reflecting on the continued relevance of *Thakurmar Jhuli* in the contemporary era.

The programme ended with a vote of thanks from Sri Biswajit Ganguly, Trustee Aurobindo Bhavan where he thanked the speakers , the audience and the organizers for organizing such a programme.