

**KRISHNA TRUST  
(ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024)**

The Calcutta Research Group (CRG) in collaboration with the Krishna Trust extended the work and recognition of the contribution and active participation of caregivers and grassroots activists in bringing forth welfare through the introduction of pioneering practices in urban, social and economic development, and fostering not only opportunities of educational growth, but also restructuring healthcare provisions, especially working through health crises. The Calcutta Research Group and Krishna Trust's work with urban caregivers and urban social activists continued this year with the visit to Sundarban in support to Bali Dhanamani Model High School, Balideep, Sundarban, together with the involvement of past awardees in other activities of the trust.

The Calcutta Research Group and Krishna Trust in 2022, had planned a compilation of the experiences of grassroots social leaders in the difficult time of the pandemic. The primary survey on the gendered experiences of COVID19 and social leadership that emerged during the pandemic was carried out by Sangbida Lahiri under the aegis of Krishna Trust, in collaboration with Calcutta Research Group, and with the support of the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna. The volume on "Covidkale Bipannata O Sanghati" has been published by Progressive Publishers, Kolkata (2023) in collaboration with and with the support of the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna.

The Calcutta Research Group and Krishna Trust organised the Annual Programme for the Eleventh Krishna Memorial Awards for Women Educationists, Students and Caregivers in 2024, and the Eleventh Krishna Memorial Lecture 2024, in Sojourn, Kolkata, on 15 March 2024. The programme began with the inaugural song by Sreetapa Chakrabarty (Assistant Professor, Rabindra Bharati University) and Sibaji Pratim Basu (Professor, Vidyasagar University and Member of CRG) recited the poem *Smriti* written by young Rabindranath Tagore. The Director of the Calcutta Research Group (CRG), Shyamalendu Majumdar gave the welcome address and chaired the session, while the President of CRG, Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chaudhury (Professor, Rabindra Bharati University) opened the ceremony with a brief introduction to the Krishna Trust.



Inaugural song by Sreetapa Chakrabarty.



Poetry recitation by Sibaji Pratim Basu.

Anwasha Sengupta (Assistant Professor, IDSK), spoke on *Chotoder Jonno Banglaye Itihas Lekha*, and the translation of the work in English and Assamese. Anwasha went on to elaborate the contribution in the series titled *Itihas-e Haatekhori*, with the objective of bringing out illustrious, colorful books of History for children, mainly for light reading. Six books in the series have already been published while work is in progress on three more books on textile, food and sports. She mentioned that this project is part of the work of the Institute of Development Studies Kolkata (IDSK) in collaboration with the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS). Debarati Bagchi (Senior Research Associate and the Deputy Head of the Max Weber Stiftung, Delhi) added that the need for a comprehensive understanding of public history encouraged the researchers and authors to take up the initiative. While working on ideas of workshops with children, discussion sessions with experts, writers and fellow academicians, the necessity of incorporating methodologies in History, especially for teachers who mentor and guide young children became evident, especially, easy reading of complex instances in history; and further planning for orientation materials for young adults in colleges.



Anwasha Sengupta (left) and Debarati Bagchi (right) speaking about *Chotoder Jonno Banglaye Itihas Lekha*.

Sabir Ahamed (Senior Researcher, Pratichi Trust, and Member of CRG) presented the Eleventh Krishna Memorial Award to Nabanita Bag and Manisha Dolui, students of Bali Dhanamani Model High School, Balideep, Sundarban. The Headmaster of the school, Sahadeb Mondol, received the award on behalf of the students, and shared the struggles of everyday life of students in the Sundarban. The islands of Sundarban that form the largest mangrove reserve of the world are constantly hit by storms and cyclones that raze school buildings to the ground, in addition to saline water intrusion in agricultural fields. Girl children in the schools are often trapped in the vicious cycles of early-age marriage, and on being reported to police, minor newly-wed brides are sent away to orphanages and after much effort are at times brought back to mainstream education. Teachers continuously work to encourage academically excellent performers and young scholars in the school and thanked Krishna Trust for the scholarship award to the girl children for their achievements despite dire circumstances.



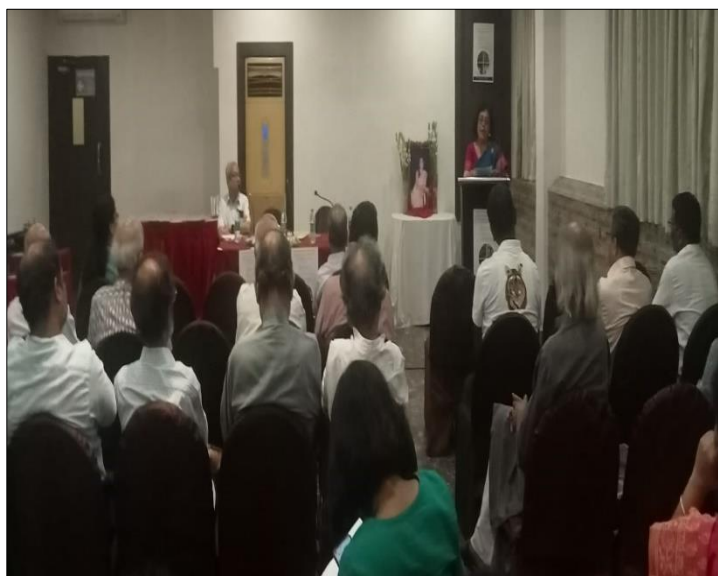
Sabir Ahamed presenting the Eleventh Krishna Memorial Award (2024) for Nabanita Bag and Manisha Dolui to Headmaster, Sahadeb Mondol of Bali Dhanamani Model High School, Balideep, Sundarban,

Sabir Ahamed, presented the second award to Beauty Chatterjee (Social Activist, Maya Foundation, West Bengal) for the relentless efforts and inspiring work in helping with mid-day meal supply in 38 schools, out of which in 11 schools, Maya Foundation leads in running the school kitchens. The organisation also supplies cooked meals to hospitals and supports the livelihood of a number of women working with the kitchen services, as well as providing expense-free night shelter facilities for women. Beauty Chatterjee briefly outlined her experiences of learning, and strengthening Maya Foundation, an organisation that supports the health, well-being and financial independence of more than 100 women today. She emphasised the changes in society that such organisations have helped extend, with children's orphanage and old age homes supported by the foundation, and ended with a note of encouragement that the award helps to foster.



Sabir Ahamed presenting the Eleventh Krishna Memorial Award (2024) to social activist Beauty Chatterjee.

Dr. Meenakshi Gangopadhyay, eminent health activist and Secretary of Bengal Social Service League, delivered the Eleventh Krishna Memorial Lecture on “Health of Women, Particularly Girl Children.” Her discussions veered around women’s right to health, access to affordable healthcare practices, especially health problems of adolescent girls. As a health activist and gynaecologist by profession, Dr. Gangopadhyay often comes across cases of teenage pregnancy. Being victim of rape, domestic abuse these vulnerable adolescent young girls live on the edge policy faultlines and have barely any say or take decision about their own health care. Many girls end up with the mushrooming rickety health clinics that put these girls through the risk of abortion without sufficient care. Adolescents are neither minors nor are adults to access the full rights to voice their opinions. Although 10 years of age is considered as the formal age of being considered adolescent yet in normal standards in India girls enter puberty at the age of eight years. Health and sex education in schools are inadequate to prepare the child through this transition to understand their own body. The lack of clarity in sex education, especially reproductive practices result in teenage pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. It is important to take active engagement with school children on accepting the different traits of sexuality and awareness of sexual behaviour. Preference for male children in South Asia has resulted in malnutrition, stunting, anaemia and other health problems among girl child. Newer lifestyle expectations of achieving size zero have increased the chances of adolescents developing erratic eating habits and becoming anorexic. Amidst the urban poor there has been an increase in juvenile delinquency. The National Programme for Youth and Adolescence Development funded by the central government and various other programmes run by the state government like Kanyasree, Sabujasathi etc., aim to create an inclusive society and incorporate youth in the socio-economic structure of the society. It is essential to change the attitude of parents, society and state from an inspectorial judgemental role to preparing young adults with adequate knowledge about health practices and involve more grassroot activities and prepare them as active agents for social change.



Eminent health activist, Dr. Meenakshi Gangopadhyay delivering the Eleventh Krishna Memorial Lecture on “Health of Women, Particularly Girl Children.”



Guests, previous years' Krishna Memorial Award recipients and Members of CRG in the audience.

The lecture was well received by the audience comprising former awardees, members of the Calcutta Research Group, friends of Krishna Trust, activists, academicians, and journalists who always enrich such events. The event ended with a formal vote of thanks by advocate and CRG Member, Uttam Kumar Roy. The Trust's web portal ([http://www.mcrg.ac.in/krishna\\_trust/index.html](http://www.mcrg.ac.in/krishna_trust/index.html)) hosted by the CRG as part of its website ([www.mcrg.ac.in](http://www.mcrg.ac.in)) continues functioning with new material being added. As in previous years, the Trust acknowledges the generous help of the Members of the Calcutta Research Group, the collaboration and support of the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM), Vienna, as well as the help and support of CRG staff members, in organising the Annual Krishna Memorial event, and hosting Krishna Trust's web-based material.