

A BRIEF HISTORY OF 'ULUBERIA INSTITUTE AND LIBRARY'

The Uluberia Institute and Library emerged in undivided India under the name '**Victoria Institute and Library**'. In 1902, it was established on the second floor of Uluberia High English School, in 'Victoria Hall'. The main organizers were the **subdivisional officers, magistrates, and munsifs of Uluberia**. Later, the **Civil Surgeon of Uluberia Hospital** was also granted membership. This institution was essentially a bureaucratic meeting point where local problems were discussed in addition to their own deliberations.

Due to the increasing number of students at Uluberia School, the need for additional classrooms arose. The then subdivisional officer, J.N. Banerjee, took the initiative to construct a permanent building for the Institute. With the help of **District Magistrate Gurusaday Dutt**, five cents of land were acquired near O.T. Road. The land was under the P.W.D. and adjacent to the Dak-bungalow.

On Sunday, January 6, 1929, the foundation stone of the **Victoria Institute and Library** was laid. Amalas (officials), lawyers, businessmen, mill owners, and joatdars-zamindars of the subdivision contributed financially. The authorities of Ludlow Jute Mills, owned by American industrialists, and Sheikh Nader Ali, the zamindar of Bakumi-Azangachi, made significant donations. The building was constructed under the supervision of local architect Manindranath Hazra. The simple box-patterned building cost approximately six and a half thousand rupees to construct.

Initially, only government officials could become members of this institution. Gradually, prominent local figures like Babu Rajkumar Ghoshal, Jogendra Nath Mitra, and other lawyers and pleaders were granted membership. However, it took a long time for ordinary local British subjects to gain access to this elite institution. A rich library is a valuable asset of this institution. Uluberia College was established in 1948. Infrastructure inspection was carried out before its establishment. Several books from the Institute were shown as the college library.

In the post-independence era, when the institution was permanently named 'Uluberia Institute and Library', opportunities for local interested individuals to gain membership increased. In this regard, presidents and secretaries like Shivaprasad Roychowdhury, Arun Kumar Hazra, Sukumar Basu and others played a significant role. From Sukumar Basu's tenure, the institution's mouthpiece 'Satta' began publishing as a monthly folder and an annual issue. The organization continues to play its unique role as a centre for cultural practice in the city.

Meanwhile, due to its age, the building gradually became more dilapidated. Yet, resources were scarce! Finally, local MP Sultan Ahmed came forward. With five lakh rupees from his MP quota, the tiled roof of the veranda was replaced with a concrete slab. The veranda was enclosed with grills. Later, with one lakh rupees from Uluberia Purba MLA Haider Aziz Safi's MLA area development fund, books were purchased, and the library was revived after a long time. However, as our habit of reading books hit rock bottom, the main objective was not achieved. Meanwhile, water started leaking from the roof of the dilapidated building. This time, the Uluberia Municipality Authority came forward. They built a tin shed on the roof, which temporarily stopped the water leakage. But due to an accidental fire, the building was severely damaged. Work stopped. Finally, through the efforts of all members and kind-hearted persons, MP Sajda Ahmed extended a helping hand. With funds from her MP quota, under the supervision of Uluberia Municipality and with everyone's help, the Uluberia Institute and Library has received a new lease of life.

Thus, for 125 years, this Institute has been providing its services in various ways, bearing witness to history. May this historic institution live long!