

Jasodhara Bagchi



Jasodhara Bagchi was born in the year 1937 in Kolkata. She was a leading Indian Feminist, Professor, Author, Critic and Activist. She is the **Founder President** of Gokhale Memorial Girls' College Alumni Association. She was the **Founder and Director** of the School of Women's Studies at Jadavpur University. Her books include *Loved and Unloved – the Girl Child* and *Trauma and Triumph – Gender and Partition in Eastern India*. She also founded the women's rights organization **Sachetana**. She did her intermediate from **Gokhale Memorial Girls' College**. She was educated at **Presidency College, Kolkata** (then affiliated with the **University of Calcutta**), **Somerville College, Oxford** and **New Hall, Cambridge**. She was married to the economist, Amiya Kumar Bagchi.

Jasodhara Bagchi began teaching English at Jadavpur University in 1964 after teaching English at Lady Brabourne College, Calcutta. After her retirement in 1997, she taught as an **Emeritus Professor** at the **School of Women's Studies**. Bagchi served as Professor in English department from 1983, was Head of the Department from 1986–1988, and coordinated, in some crucial early years, the **UGC Special Assistance Programme**, which later became the **Centre for Advanced Studies in English**. Her focus areas of research include women's studies, women's writings, 19th century English and Bengali literature, the reception of Positivism in Bengal, motherhood and the Partition of India. Along with co-editor Subhoranjan Dasgupta, she was one of the first scholars to research and collect the experiences of Bengali women during and after the Partition. She began the Bengali Women Writers Reprint Series, which is edited by the School of Women's studies, Jadavpur University. Professors Sajni Mukherji and Supriya Chaudhuri, her friends and colleagues at this department, edited for her a distinguished **Festschrift in 2002: *Literature and Gender: Essays for Jasodhara Bagchi***. Contributors to this included Bagchi's cherished teachers, friends, former students, and colleagues, such as Peter Dronke, Kitty Scoular Datta, Himani

Bannerji, Malini Bhattacharya, Sheila Lahiri Choudhury, Supriya Chaudhuri, Tanika Sarkar, Bhaswati Chakravorty, and Aditi Dasgupta.

Prof. Bagchi remained a regular and active participant in seminars and lectures at the department of English till her death, and was also a member of its Board of Studies for some years after retirement. In a short span of time, she came to be recognised for her immense dedication to her work and to her students. Promoting a culture of research is considered as her most significant contribution to the Department of English at Jadavpur University. After her retirement, she attended several conferences in India and remained in close contact with the English Department at Jadavpur University.

She is one of the founding members of the feminist organization **Sachetana** in Kolkata. She was also Chairperson of the **West Bengal Commission for Women** from October 2001 until April 2008. Bagchi died on the morning of 9 January 2015, aged 77. **Punarnaba**, a voluntary organization that Bagchi was closely associated with, has organized every year since 2015 a **Jasodhara Bagchi Memorial Programme**, including a lecture in memory of Bagchi. The **Jasodhara Bagchi Memorial Hardship Fund** was set up in 2019 with the support of the family of Bagchi at the Department of English, Jadavpur University, to help cases of individual hardship among the students of the Department.

Her notable works are -

- *Literature, Society, and Ideology in the Victorian Era* (edited volume), (1992)
- *Indian Women: Myth and Reality* (edited volume), (1995)
- *Loved and Unloved: The Girl Child in the Family* (with Jaba Guha and Piyali Sengupta) (1997)
- *Gem-like Flame: Walter Pater and the 19th Century Paradigm of Modernity* (1997)
- *Thinking Social Science in India: Essays in Honour of Alice Thorner* (co-edited with Krishna Raj and Suata Patel)(2002)
- *The Trauma and the Triumph: Gender and Partition in Eastern India*, 2 volumes (co-edited with Subhoranjan Dasgupta) (vol. 1 in 2003, vol. 2 in 2009)
- *The Changing Status of Women in West Bengal 1970–2000: The Challenges Ahead* (edited volume), (2005)
- *Interrogating Motherhood* (2016)