

Medical History

A Glimpse of the Medical History of Kolkata

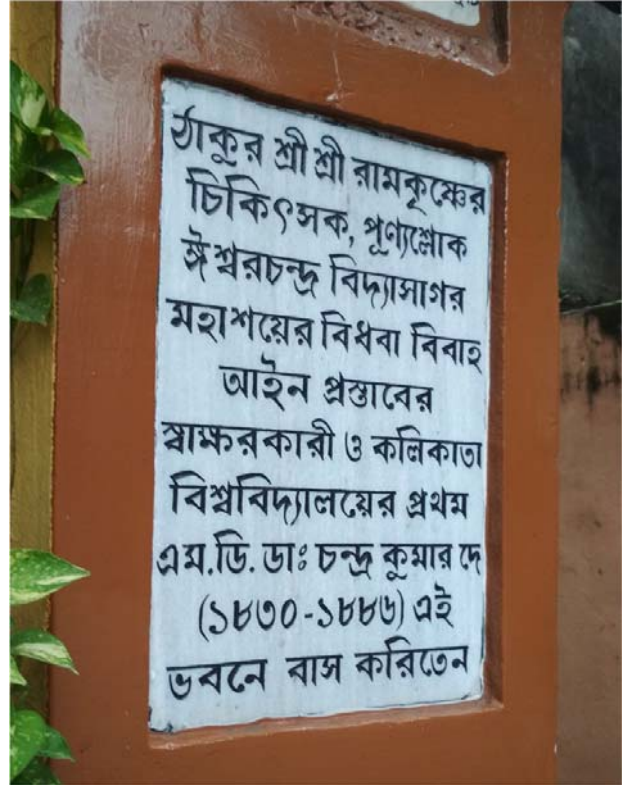
Rudrajit Paul

If one walks down the Amherst street of Kolkata, just opposite the famous Lady Dufferin Hospital (where Dr KadambiniGanguly once worked), one can see this plaque on the sidewalk.

Dr Chandra Kumar De is a forgotten figure in the medical history of Bengal. Most people have not even heard about him. The author (Rudrajit Paul) noted this plaque only accidentally in between the hovels and illegal street-side shops. A brief enquiry in the area revealed that the local people were completely unaware of the history of this illustrious doctor from nineteenth century. For the readers who are not Bengali speaking, this plaque reads as: -

“Dr Chandra Kumar De (1830-1886), the physician to the sage Sri Ramakrishna, one of the signatories of the landmark Hindu widow remarriage proposal and the first MD from the Calcutta University, lived here.”

Dr Chandra Kumar De got his MD degree in 1862. IswarchandraVidyasagar was fighting for the rights of Hindu widows in 1856. Thus, Dr De participated in this landmark social movement during his student days only, even before he got his MD. He went on to become a successful practitioner in Kolkata. He was one of the doctors treating Sri Ramakrishna although during the final days of the sage, the responsibility of treatment fell mainly on the shoulders of Dr MahendralalSarkar (second MD from Calcutta University).



The highest powers in our nature are our sense of moral excellence, the principle of reason and reflection, benevolence to our creatures and our love of the Divine Being.

— Edward Jenner