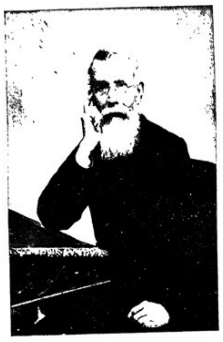
FROM THE READING ROOM / BIOGRAPHICAL DISCOVERIES

Beyond the Honours List

Sixteen more lives from Who’s Who in India, 1911–1914

When Natal’s Indian community presented Gandhi’s family with jewellery in 1901, the gift went into the directory. What Kasturba thought about parting with her necklace had to be found elsewhere. That is how to read this collection. Start with the detail the Press chose, then ask whose part in the story needs another source.


DADABHAI NAOROJI




SRIMATI PURNIMA DEVI,
(Mrs. Jwala Prasad) (56)

Archival details, from left. Dadabhai Naoroji · Jogendra Chandra Ghose · Purnima Devi

Three editions at the reading desk

1911 The original two-volume directory · 5 lives

1912 The first supplement · 5 lives

1914 The second supplement · 6 lives

In the exhibition, select a name to inspect the original page or keep the discovery in your own gazette. Open the museum reading room

1911 / PRINCIPAL WORK

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi

Barrister and organiser for Indians in South Africa · Kathiawar, Bombay and South Africa

at the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer war, Mr. Gandhi induced the Government to accept the offer of an Indian Ambulance Corps, which was favourably reported on; Mr. Gandhi was mentioned in despatches, afterwards receiving the war medal. In 1901, owing to a breakdown in health, Mr. Gandhi again returned to India, and, to mark their sense of his valuable services, the Natal Indian community presented him and his family before their departure with some valuable gold plate and jewellery. On his arrival in Bombay he once more resumed legal practice. In 1903, he with other leaders, founded the Transvaal British Indian Association, of which he has been the Honorary Secretary and principal legal adviser.

Detail of p. 143, recording the ambulance corps and the gifts presented to Gandhi’s family. View the plate

In 1911 the Press introduced Gandhi as a barrister. His South African work filled the entry. He helped organise an Indian ambulance corps during the Anglo-Boer War and helped start the newspaper Indian Opinion in 1903. When Natal’s Indian community gave his family farewell gifts in 1901, the biographer recorded them as a mark of esteem.

Gandhi’s later autobiography lets a visitor follow one object beyond that notice. A fifty-guinea gold necklace had been meant for Kasturba. She argued that her labour had made his public service possible too. Gandhi recalled that she eventually agreed to place the gifts in trust for the community. His account preserves her objection as well as his decision.

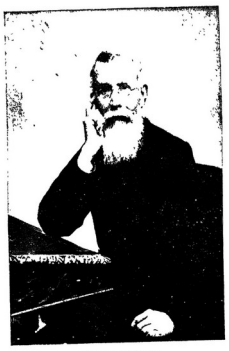
Volume II, Part VII, Bombay, pp. 143–144. Farewell gifts on p. 143; the newspaper’s name continues on p. 144. The necklace and discussion are from Gandhi’s later account. Read the original page

Gandhi’s autobiography · Return to India

1911 / PRINCIPAL WORK

Dadabhai Naoroji

Teacher, public-finance critic and parliamentarian · Bombay, Baroda and London



DADABHAI NAOROJI

Dadabhai Naoroji’s full portrait plate, placed immediately before his biography. View the plate

Years before he sought a seat at Westminster, Naoroji taught mathematics and natural science at Elphinstone College. In Bombay he worked for women’s education and started the Gujarati weekly Rast Goftar. In England he lectured and wrote about Indian affairs. His first parliamentary bid, in Holborn, failed. He stood again, this time in Central Finsbury.

Five votes took him into the House of Commons in 1892. Once there, he helped organise the Indian Parliamentary Committee with William Wedderburn and others. The directory also credits him with pressing for an inquiry into Indian expenditure. His old question about where India’s money went could now be put inside the institution that voted on it.

Volume II, Part VII, Bombay, pp. 139–141. Central Finsbury and the Indian Parliamentary Committee are on p. 140. The five-vote margin is confirmed by UK Parliament. Read the original page

UK Parliament · the Central Finsbury majority

1911 / PRINCIPAL WORK

Dr P. Palpu

Vaccination officer and advocate for the Ezhava community · Trivandrum, Madras and Bangalore

> the Mysore Durbar and he joined the Mysore State service and started and worked the Vaccine Institute at Bangalore so efficiently that not only the Mysore State, but also several districts of Madras and other parts of India and Burma derived their supply of Vaccine from that Depôt. He also worked in St. Martha's Hospital, Lunatic and Leper Asylums and in the medical stores. In 1894 he was placed in sole sub-charge of these institutions. He was subsequently selected for the post of Superintendent of Plague camps in Bangalore

Lines from p. 154 that trace the Bangalore vaccine depot's reach beyond Mysore. View the plate

Palpu began at the Madras vaccine depot. Mysore recruited him the following year, and he helped establish and run the Vaccine Institute at Bangalore. Vaccine produced there supplied districts far beyond the city. The directory follows the doctor through plague camps, the city health office and the municipal council. It has much to say about who received his services.

In his native Travancore the question was who could enter government service at all. A study published by the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library identifies Palpu as the author of the Ezhava Memorial. More than 13,000 people signed the petition for access to education and government employment. That struggle is absent from the directory's otherwise detailed account of his public career.

Volume I, Part I, Officials, pp. 153–154. The supply destinations and municipal work are on p. 154. The Ezhava Memorial is documented separately. Read the original page

Udaya Kumar · study of Dr Palpu and the Ezhava Memorial

1911 / PRINCIPAL WORK

Dhondiba Hanumantrao Barade

Building contractor and specialist in Hindu architecture · Kodit, Bombay and Wanowri near Poona

> of instruction in the village school the Rao Bahadur began his career in the early sixties as a building contractor in Bombay, and soon won the golden opinions of Civil Engineers and architects by his urbanity, integrity, and capability. He has carried out numerous Government, Port Trust, and Municipal works of various descriptions and magnitude, including Tata's palace, with consummate skill and remarkable success. Rao Bahadur Dhondiba's proficiency and skill in Hindu architecture are to be seen in the excellent pile of buildings at Wanowri, near Poona, built for the Maharaja of Gwalior. Rao Bahadur Dhondiba is also a public-spirited citizen, rendering, unostentatiously, valuable services both to the Government and

The printed passage names Barade's government and Port Trust work and his commission at Wanowri. View the plate

Barade was born at Kodit and received an elementary education at a village school. By the early 1860s he had started work as a contractor in Bombay. He undertook government, municipal and Port Trust works. When the biographer wanted readers to see what his skill in Hindu architecture looked like, the example lay well outside the city, at Wanowri near Poona.

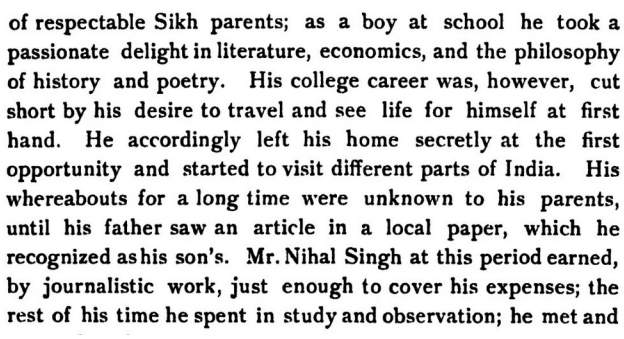
A second distinction came from the plague operations in Bombay in 1897. The government awarded him a certificate of merit two years later. The entry gives no detail about his particular duties in that emergency. What it does preserve is the builder's name, alongside the royal patron who commissioned his work and the public institutions he served.

Volume II, Part VII, Bombay, p. 100. Entry for Dhondiba Hanumantrao Barade. Read the original page

1911 / PRINCIPAL WORK

“Saint” Nihal Singh

Travelling journalist and advocate for Indian migrants · Punjab, Japan, Canada and the United States



of respectable Sikh parents; as a boy at school he took a passionate delight in literature, economics, and the philosophy of history and poetry. His college career was, however, cut short by his desire to travel and see life for himself at first hand. He accordingly left his home secretly at the first opportunity and started to visit different parts of India. His whereabouts for a long time were unknown to his parents, until his father saw an article in a local paper, which he recognized as his son's. Mr. Nihal Singh at this period earned, by journalistic work, just enough to cover his expenses; the rest of his time he spent in study and observation; he met and

Detail of the Punjab entry describing how the journalist’s family found a trace of him in print. View the plate

Nihal Singh left home without telling his parents and earned enough through journalism to keep travelling. He sought out merchants, manufacturers, engineers and missionaries as well as politicians. The Press says his father eventually recognised his work in a local paper. The young man’s writing reached home before he did.

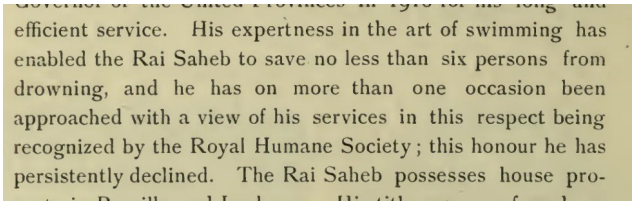
His route took him through Japan to North America. In Canada he spoke to clubs and wrote for newspapers and magazines about the situation of Indian immigrants. He later worked as a magazine editor in the United States. The sketch also records that his wife, herself an American journalist, travelled with him as his secretary and assistant. It leaves her name out.

Volume I, Part III, Punjab, pp. 154–156. The father’s recognition appears on p. 154, and the Canadian reporting on p. 155. Read the original page

1912 / FIRST SUPPLEMENT

Pundit Lachman Das

Prison department official and swimmer · Bareilly and Lucknow



efficient service. His expertness in the art of swimming has enabled the Rai Saheb to save no less than six persons from drowning, and he has on more than one occasion been approached with a view of his services in this respect being recognized by the Royal Humane Society; this honour he has persistently declined. The Rai Saheb possesses house pro-

The original lines on his swimming, the rescues and the proposed recognition. View the plate

The honour that put Lachman Das in this volume was for his long service in the Jail Department of the United Provinces. In 1912 he was head assistant in the inspector-general’s office. Halfway down the notice, the writer introduces a skill that had nothing to do with office work. Lachman Das was a strong swimmer.

The directory credits him with saving at least six people from drowning. It gives neither their names nor the places of rescue. It does record that he repeatedly declined approaches about recognition from the Royal Humane Society. A book compiled to commemorate honours has preserved the story of one he chose to do without.

First Supplement, June 1912, p. 152. Entry for Lachman Das, Head Assistant, United Provinces. Read the original page

1912 / FIRST SUPPLEMENT

Jogendra Chandra Ghose

Lawyer and organiser of technical education · Calcutta and Deoghur



Jogendra Chandra Ghose, the upper-right portrait on the plate facing his biography. View the plate

Jogendra Chandra Ghose was a practising lawyer. One of his concerns was how an Indian student might become a scientist or industrial specialist. At Calcutta University he helped establish a Bachelor of Science degree. Through the Association for the Advancement of Scientific and Industrial Education of Indians, which he founded and served as secretary, he also arranged study overseas.

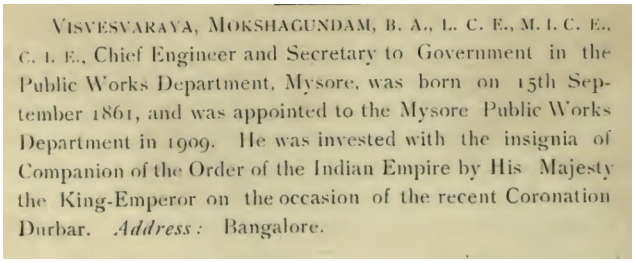
The association's students went to Europe, America and Japan. The directory, writing in 1912, credited returning students with starting industries in Bengal, though it did not name the firms. Ghose took an interest in who could get to a classroom at all. He founded night schools for young people who worked during the day.

First Supplement, June 1912, pp. 98–99. The educational work and the number of students are on p. 98. Read the original page

1912 / FIRST SUPPLEMENT

Mokshagundam Visvesvaraya

Civil engineer and designer of automatic floodgates · Bangalore and Khadakvasla



VISVESVARAYA, MOKSHAGUNDAM, B. A., L. C. E., M. I. C. E., C. I. E., Chief Engineer and Secretary to Government in the Public Works Department, Mysore, was born on 15th September 1861, and was appointed to the Mysore Public Works Department in 1909. He was invested with the insignia of Companion of the Order of the Indian Empire by His Majesty the King-Emperor on the occasion of the recent Coronation Durbar. *Address:* Bangalore.

The complete short entry for Visvesvaraya at the bottom of printed page 64. View the plate

The 1912 notice gives the chief engineer of Mysore a handful of lines. It says when he joined the Public Works Department and records the honour he received at the Delhi Durbar. It gives no example of an engineering problem he had solved. For that, turn from the honours list to a reservoir near Pune.

In 1903 Khadakvasla acquired the automatic floodgates he designed and patented. They allowed the reservoir to hold more water while letting excess water escape at flood level. The Government of India's engineering account traces the idea from there to other dams. That extra source supplies the mechanism behind the job title printed in Lucknow.

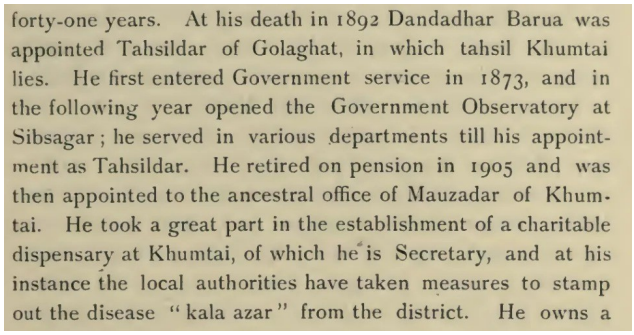
First Supplement, June 1912, p. 64. The entry records his Mysore appointment and distinction. Engineering details come from the linked Government of India account. Read the original page

Government of India · how the Khadakvasla gates worked

1912 / FIRST SUPPLEMENT

Dandadhar Barua

Administrator and dispensary organiser · Sibsagar and Khumtai, Assam



forty-one years. At his death in 1892 Dandadhar Barua was appointed Tahsildar of Golaghat, in which tahsil Khumtai lies. He first entered Government service in 1873, and in the following year opened the Government Observatory at Sibsagar; he served in various departments till his appointment as Tahsildar. He retired on pension in 1905 and was then appointed to the ancestral office of Mauzadar of Khumtai. He took a great part in the establishment of a charitable dispensary at Khumtai, of which he is Secretary, and at his instance the local authorities have taken measures to stamp out the disease "kala azar" from the district. He owns a

Detail of Barua's notice linking the Sibsagar observatory, his career in revenue administration and the Khumtai dispensary. View the plate

In the account of Dandadhar Barua, public work in Assam changes scale several times. Members of his family had supervised gold mining under the Ahom rulers. His own career began in government service in 1873. A year later, while still a young man, he opened the Government Observatory at Sibsagar.

After retiring on a pension in 1905, Barua held the local revenue office his family had occupied at Khumtai. He helped establish a charitable dispensary and served as its secretary. The directory also credits him with pressing the local authorities to act against kala-azar. It records the intervention, rather than a claim that the disease was eliminated.

First Supplement, June 1912, p. 149. Entry for Dandadhar Barua, Golaghat and Khumtai, Assam. Read the original page

1912 / FIRST SUPPLEMENT

Kanjivakkam Rangachariar

Archivist and editorial collaborator · Madras and Pondicherry



K. Rangachariar, the upper-left portrait on the original plate, identified by its caption for p. 167. View the plate

The supplement gives Rangachariar's life one of the least flattering shapes that print can give a biography. His notice starts at the foot of page 167, and the reader must turn the page to learn what he did. A clerk since 1884, he was assigned in 1901 to assist Frederick Price with the diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai.

Pillai had served as an interpreter to Joseph François Dupleix at Pondicherry in the eighteenth century. The 1904 English edition, translated from Tamil, credits K. Rangachari beneath Price's name. By 1908 he was superintendent of the Madras Record Office. His own small entry provides a way into a much larger book that his work helped make available.

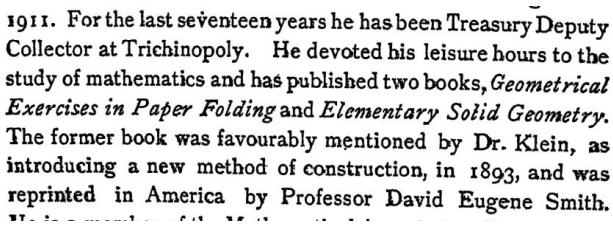
First Supplement, June 1912, pp. 167–168. The assignment and appointment are on p. 168. The published diary credits him as K. Rangachari. Read the original page

Roja Muthiah Research Library · the 1904 diary

1914 / SECOND SUPPLEMENT

T. Sundara Row

Treasury official and mathematical author · Trichinopoly, Madras Presidency



1911. For the last seventeen years he has been Treasury Deputy Collector at Trichinopoly. He devoted his leisure hours to the study of mathematics and has published two books, *Geometrical Exercises in Paper Folding* and *Elementary Solid Geometry*. The former book was favourably mentioned by Dr. Klein, as introducing a new method of construction, in 1893, and was reprinted in America by Professor David Eugene Smith.

The lines on Row's treasury work, the two geometry books and the American reprint. View the plate

Try his starting material. Mark two points on a sheet and fold the paper so that one point falls exactly on the other. Unfold it. Every point on the crease is equally far from the two marks. One ordinary sheet has given you the perpendicular bisector of a line.

Row spent seventeen years as Treasury Deputy Collector at Trichinopoly and pursued mathematics in his spare time. His 1893 Madras book took this way of working to readers beyond his own city. The supplement notes an American edition. Read it and the little experiment opens into an entire course of constructions.

Who's Who in India, Second Supplement, June 1914, p. 180, entry for T. Sundara Row. Read the original page

Open Row's own illustrated geometry book

1914 / SECOND SUPPLEMENT

Purnima Devi

School founder, author and estate owner · Shahjehanpur and Muzaffarnagar



Srimati Purnima Devi, (Mrs. Jwala Prasad) (56)

Purnima Devi, upper left on the original four-person plate facing her biography. The crop retains her printed caption. View the plate

The first half of Purnima Devi's notice sounds like an exhibition catalogue. It lists medals for needlework and tapestry, musical training and skill on horseback. Turn the page and her handiwork has acquired a readership. The United Provinces textbook committee had adopted her Hindi primer on knitting for use in schools.

In 1911 she founded a girls' school at Shahjehanpur in memory of her husband, Pandit Jwala Prasad. She also helped establish a girls' school in Muzaffarnagar and founded clubs in both towns for women observing purdah. Her portrait is captioned with both her own name and her married style.

Who's Who in India, Second Supplement, June 1914, pp. 56–57, entry for Srimati Purnima Devi (Mrs. Jwala Prasad). Read the original page

1914 / SECOND SUPPLEMENT

Moti Lal Ghose

Editor and newspaper proprietor · Amrita Bazar near Jessore and Calcutta



B. MOTI LAL GHOSE (82)

Moti Lal Ghose is the left-hand subject on the original plate. The caption supplies his name and points to p. 82. View the plate

Amrita Bazar Patrika was already printing in Bengali and English when the Vernacular Press Act of 1878 threatened its freedom to publish. The Press's 1914 account says Moti Lal Ghose and his brother Shishir Kumar borrowed type and produced an all-English paper in a day. The language in which the news was printed changed which law could reach it.

Ghose remained a critic whom senior officials sometimes consulted. In 1912, the supplement records, Bengal's governor acknowledged at a conference in Darjeeling that Ghose had pressed him to take up village water supplies and sanitation. The same newspaper biography leads from a printer's case to the question of what a household could drink.

Who's Who in India, Second Supplement, June 1914, pp. 82–84, entry for Moti Lal Ghose. The borrowed type and water-supply conference appear on p. 83. Read the original page

Explore the surviving newspaper collection

1914 / SECOND SUPPLEMENT

Shivgauri Gajjar

Co-founder and superintendent of Vanita Vishram · Surat and Bombay

SHIVA GAURI GAJJAR, Mrs.—Superintendent of the Vanita Vishram, Bombay and Surat, Bombay Presidency. She was awarded the Kaisar-i-Hind medal of the second class in January, 1914, in recognition of her public services.

The complete four-line 1914 notice for Gajjar, including her role and the date of her medal. View the plate

The supplement gives Shiva Gauri Gajjar four lines. They identify her as superintendent of Vanita Vishram in Bombay and Surat and record a medal for public service in January 1914. The notice leaves out another name that matters to this story. The institution itself remembers two founders.

Gajjar and Bajigauri Munshi were both widows. In May 1907 they used Rs 2,000 of their savings to establish an ashram in Surat for women who needed support and access to education, including widows and divorced women. The university credits Munshi with administering the ashram and Gajjar with looking after its finances.

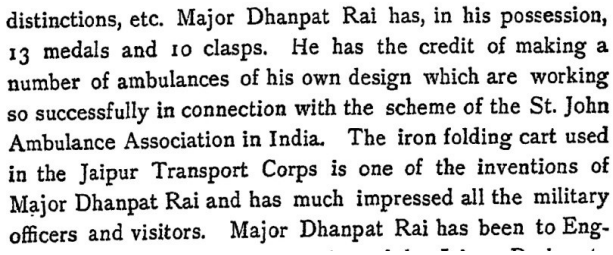
Who's Who in India, Second Supplement, June 1914, p. 136, printed as "Shiva Gauri Gajjar, Mrs." The university's history supplies the founding details. Read the original page

Vanita Vishram Women's University · the two founders

1914 / SECOND SUPPLEMENT

Major Dhanpat Rai

Transport commander and vehicle inventor · Peshawar and Jaipur



distinctions, etc. Major Dhanpat Rai has, in his possession, 13 medals and 10 clasps. He has the credit of making a number of ambulances of his own design which are working so successfully in connection with the scheme of the St. John Ambulance Association in India. The iron folding cart used in the Jaipur Transport Corps is one of the inventions of Major Dhanpat Rai and has much impressed all the military officers and visitors. Major Dhanpat Rai has been to Eng-

The paragraph distinguishing his own ambulance designs from the iron folding cart used in Jaipur. View the plate

Dhanpat Rai moved men, animals and supplies long before his name appeared in this book. In 1890 he was lent to Jaipur for five years to command a transport unit then being organised. He stayed on. The directory lists mule purchasing in Persia, famine relief in Jaipur and service at the Delhi Durbars among his assignments.

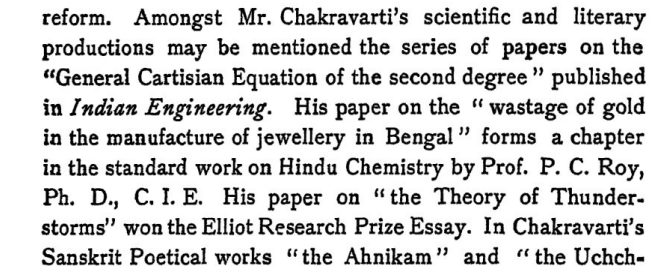
At the foot of the list is the detail the medals cannot convey. He designed ambulances used in connection with the St. John Ambulance Association in India. The Jaipur Transport Corps also used an iron folding cart of his invention. The printed notice records both devices. It gives no drawing from which to reconstruct either one.

Who’s Who in India, Second Supplement, June 1914, pp. 194–195, entry for Dhanpat Rai. The two vehicle designs are on p. 195. Read the original page

1914 / SECOND SUPPLEMENT

Jnan Saran Chakravarti

Mathematician and financial secretary to Mysore · Lucknow, Calcutta and Bangalore



reform. Amongst Mr. Chakravarti's scientific and literary productions may be mentioned the series of papers on the "General Cartisian Equation of the second degree" published in *Indian Engineering*. His paper on the "wastage of gold in the manufacture of jewellery in Bengal" forms a chapter in the standard work on Hindu Chemistry by Prof. P. C. Roy, Ph. D., C. I. E. His paper on "the Theory of Thunderstorms" won the Elliot Research Prize Essay. In Chakravarti's Sanskrit Poetical works "the Ahnikam" and "the Uchch-

Detail from p. 80 naming his research on mathematics, jewellery manufacture and thunderstorms. View the plate

Chakravarti taught at Canning College in Lucknow and then taught mathematics at Hugli College. Government accounts came next. In 1908 he went to Bangalore as comptroller and financial secretary to Mysore. Under his charge were civil, public works and railway accounts. He also served the committee overseeing state life insurance.

Among his publications the directory names an investigation into gold lost in the making of jewellery in Bengal. It also records a prize for his work on thunderstorms, followed by poetry in Sanskrit and a play in Bengali. His contribution to the chemistry of the goldsmith’s workshop survives in the same entry as his life at the treasury.

Who’s Who in India, Second Supplement, June 1914, pp. 79–80, entry for Jnan Saran Chakravarti. Gold, thunderstorms and public accounts appear on p. 80. Read the original page