

## Listening / শ্রবণ

This piece is made up of seven separate soundtracks.

1. Mainadal. We have taken Bake's Mainadal recordings of kirtan to Mainadal. 12 min 35 sec
2. Supriyo Tagore. We have taken a recording made by Arnold Bake of Indira Devi Chaudhurani in 1956, to Supriyo Tagore. 12 min 32 sec
3. Haimanti Dutta Gupta. We went to Haimanti Dutta Gupta and showed pictures of her mother, Jaya Sen and her father Motru Sen. 3 min 48 sec
4. Bithika and Priyam Mukherjee. We shared Bake's recordings of Tagore's songs with Bithika Mukherjee and Priyam Mukherjee. 11 min 22 sec
5. Shivaditya Sen. We took Kshitimohan Sen's photographs and letters to Shivaditya Sen. 13 min 37 sec
6. Seema Acharya. We went to kirtan singer Seema Acharya, student of Chhabi Bandopadhyay, who was in turn a student of Nabadwip Brajobashi, we have taken recordings of Brajobashimahashay. 7 min 39 sec
7. Mongoldihi. We took the Mongoldihi footage to the family of the Thakurs who organise the kirtan for Balaram during Ras Utsav. 5 min 26 sec.

Of all these people Bake had recorded or taken pictures of, perhaps it was with Kshitimohan Sen that he shared the deepest bond. In his letters to his mother, Bake wrote the following about Kshiti:

'But the most important thing I have to write about happened last night. Because the Hennys badly wanted to know more about the true form of religion among the people of the country, I asked Ksiti (pronounced as Khiti) babu if it would be alright if we visited him sometime. He is the man to talk about these things, though he is a medical doctor by profession. He is of an old Brahmin family, born in Benares, and since he was 15 years old he has travelled with several begging mystical sects, the kind that exist outside of any community and are the bearers of a living mystique. He used his vacation time for this when he was a student, and later on he has journeyed with these people for years through the United Provinces, Bengal, and in the Himalayas. While he was on the road he wrote down their poetry, which his of enormous beauty and depth.' (17 February 1926, page 4)

'He is a remarkable man, both of a scientific mind (he loves philology, for example, and even grammar – it is a pleasure to have language lessons from him) and incredibly well-read, so that he can provide the historical context with everything he talks about. At the same time, he keeps this treasure trove of beauty as a living possession; he is one with his knowledge, so that, when he talks about this things, it flows out of him naturally and incessantly, from stories to poetry and always in such a way that nothing he says is ever redundant. [...] In addition to that, he has a jolly sense of humour and is entirely the opposite of a fanatic, a healthy living human being through and through. I imagine him the kind of person Kabir must have been, the great mystic, who never gave up his household and job but regarded everything as part of the greater whole.' (24 February 1926, page 1)

'You should see him when he reads, with his head cocked and wearing his large, black glasses. When he talks he does just like you: he'll look over his glasses, especially when he says something funny. I plan to try and relate some of what he told me, but it is so incredibly difficult, so I doubt I will succeed. A number of the mystics never founded a particular sect, and their products were lost, except among those groups of freethinkers (Khiti always refers to them as non-conformists) in which the tradition was kept alive.' (24 February 1926, page 1)

'Most of the great mystics are from the lower castes, even today. The bauls of Bengal, who say the most wondrous things, are almost without exception from the lowest of the low.' (24 February 1926, page 4).

Bake's letters translated from Dutch by Jan-Sijmen Zwarts