

Volume 2, Issue 2, August 2014

## From the desk of the Secretary and Curator



#### Dear Friends,

It gives me great pleasure to be able to share with all of you the latest issue of the Victoria Memorial Hall Newsletter, in which we bring you up to date on what exciting things have been happening in the VMH campus over the past few months and what exciting events lie in store in the days ahead. In the few months since the last newsletter reached you, we have done some very unusual exhibitions, including one where we displayed stunning works of art created by inmates of correctional homes, and another featuring wildlife paintings by an early-nineteenth-century British hunter-engineer-

painter who found his way into the interior of Africa decades before David Livingstone and is regarded as the pioneer of the African safari. We also hosted many exciting lectures and film screenings, recounting – among other things – thrilling expeditions through turbulent rivers and steep mountains by differently-abled athletes, and a remarkable story that emerged in a series of photographs of Bengal taken in the 1940s by an unknown American soldier and discovered in a shoebox decades later. We worked with scores of schools and hundreds of children through our Activity Club, discovering unbridled joy on kids' faces as they lighted up the many creative workshops the VMH does especially for children. And, of course, we were thrilled to host the Kolkata Literary Meet, which brought to our campus a galaxy of luminaries from the literary and the artistic world. The following pages, I hope, will bring home to you the sense of fun and excitement all of us in the VMH family felt while these events were happening.

I am also very glad to share with you the happy news that the VMH has recently been accorded top-notch recognition as a tourist attraction by the world's best travel guidebooks and websites. Tripadvisor, the world's largest travel website, has awarded the VMH a "Certificate of Excellence 2014." The recipients of this Certificate of Excellence represent the top 10 per cent of the tourist destinations worldwide that are listed on Tripadvisor. Lonely Planet, the largest travel guide book publisher in the world, has recognized the VMH as a "Top Choice." Finally, Fodor's, the world's largest publisher of English-language travel and tourism information, has given the VMH a "Fodor's Choice" rating. The places that receive this rating are described by Fodor's as "the 'best in the best,' providing remarkable experiences in their price range, destination, or category." These are exceptional accolades indeed, and while we are elated to receive them, there is no mistaking the fact that they raise the bar for us. It is a great and exciting challenge to continue to live up to these ratings. With your support, we are confident of doing so.

Finally a word about our modernization. With the kind support of the Ministry of Culture, we have just started a programme of modernizing and upgrading our galleries and stores, which will continue through 2016-17. This involves not only long-term building conservation, but the upgradation of the entire spectrum of the visitors' experience, including new displays, lights, climate control, security surveillance, signage, and the like. Along with many of my colleagues, I have left the grand portals of the VMH building and settled in a new, smaller office block, in order to free up space for museum displays. Over the next couple of years, all of you will see a lot of construction activities in the VMH – including the temporary closing of specific galleries for renovation – as the 93-year-old museum prepares for a makeover. As always, we would hope that you would stand by and bear with us during this period, so that we can all look forward excitedly together to VMH 2.0 in 2017!

### Dr. Jayanta Sengupta



## Will Power

Where there is will power, handicaps and obstacles cease to matter. This was amply evident in the series **Beyond Belief** directed by **Abhijit Dasgupta**. A couple of episodes were screened on the occasion of **World Disability Day** on **3 December 2013**, highlighting two adventurous and successful expeditions undertaken by teams of physically challenged persons, some of whom were present to share their experiences.







## Freedom through Art

Works created by inmates of the Alipore Correctional Homes – including several serving life sentences – along with some mainstream artists as part of a two-day art camp held at Victoria Memorial Hall were showcased in an exhibition mounted in collaboration with the Directorate of Correctional Services, Government of West Bengal and Flight to Harmony Foundation on the occasion of **Human Rights Day** on **10 December 2013**.







## 109th Foundation Day of Victoria Memorial Hall

To mark the occasion on **4 January 2014**, an exhibition of *Artworks of Samuel Davis* (1760-1819) from Victoria Memorial Hall's own collection was opened in the Portrait Gallery. An in-house programme showcased various talents (singing, recitation, caricature, drama excerpts etc) by the staff members of Victoria Memorial Hall.





















### Tribute to Maulana Azad on his 125<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary

The inaugural event of the **3<sup>rd</sup> Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival**, organised by Victoria Memorial Hall in association with the Oxford Bookstore and the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, paid tribute to Maulana Azad on his 125<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary. After the formal inauguration by H.E. the Governor of West Bengal **Shri M K Narayanan** on **8 January 2014**, noted film personality, education activist and a descendent of Maulana Azad **Shri Aamir Khan** spoke on **Maulana Azad: His Belief** *in Secularism and His Foresight*. This was followed by the release of the book **Maulana Azad, Islam and the Indian National Movement** by **Dr Syeda Hameed**, eminent Maulana Azad scholar and Member, Planning Commission. **Smt Maina Bhagat**, Director of the Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival and **Shri Sitaram Sharma**, Chairman, MAKAIAS, were also present on the occasion.





## Kolkata Literary Meet

Victoria Memorial Hall co-hosted the third edition of the Kolkata Literary Meet. The mood for the Meet was aptly set by the prologue session on **23 January 2014** with eminent author **Ms Jhumpa Lahiri** in conversation with **Shri Rudrangshu Mukherjee**, Editor of the editorial pages of *The Telegraph*. Spread over six days from **25** to **30 January 2014** with 40 sessions,



sometimes even parallel ones, the Meet, inaugurated by H.E. the Governor of West Bengal **Shri M K Narayanan** in presence of eminent poet **Shri Sankha Ghosh** and feminist activist **Ms Gloria Steinem**, was attended by large numbers of people on all days. The distinguished participants counted among themselves eminent authors, writers, poets, film personalities, actors, music directors and film makers, singers, activists, academicians, media personalities, journalists, historians from India and abroad, including Vikram Seth, Farida Khanum, Naseeruddin Shah, Javed Akhtar, Shabana Azmi, Sharmila Tagore, Aparna Sen, Soumitra Chattopadhyay, Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay, Sabyasachi Bhattacharya, Ramachandra Guha, Jawhar Sircar, Sugata Bose, Amit Chaudhuri, David Godwin, Mark Tully, and Shamsul Haq.





## A Modern Master unravelled

The reason why **Lalit Mohan Sen** (1898-1954) did not become a household name in art circles in Bengal lay perhaps in the fact that this extremely talented and multi-faceted artist spent the better part of his creative life either abroad or in other parts of India, particularly Lucknow, where he was for a long time the Principal of the Government College of Art. Discovering a wide range of his works stowed away with his heirs in Santipur and with the initiative of the artist's grand nephew Sri Prabartak Sen, Victoria Memorial Hall got the opportunity to showcase selected works of this great master. The introductory remarks by **Professor Tapati Guha** Thakurta and some comments by the curator Shri Debdutta Gupta at the inauguration of the exhibition on **17 February 2014** supplemented the information provided in the six-page folder brought out on the occasion.









## Artworks of Samuel Davis (1760-1819)

The artworks of Samuel Davis from the collection of VMH were displayed in an exhibition in the Portrait Gallery (4 January to 7 February 2014). Within the context of the exhibition, art critic **Shri Arun Ghosh** gave an illustrated talk on the artist – the first one to paint Himalayan landscapes – and his works on **3 February 2014**.





## Challenges of Heritage Restoration

An illustrated talk by **Dr Paul Meurs**, Chair of Restoration, Delft University of Technology, The Netherlands, on **24 February 2014** in collaboration with the Embassy of The Netherlands threw light on **The Chinsurah Initiative and the Cultural Value of a Place**. The talk was followed by a discussion of the scholar with conservation architects **Shri Manish Chakraborti** and **Smt Aishwarya Tipnis**.



## Following the Box

A joint illustrated talk on **3 March 2014** by **Mr Alan Teller**, noted photographer and Fulbright Senior Scholar, and **Ms Jerri Zbiral**, artist and Project Co-director titled **Following the Box: Exploring an Archive of Anonymous Photographs from India** unfolded the story of their research trip trying to revisit those original places in India that had been captured in photographs apparently taken by an unknown American soldier in 1945 and found in a shoebox decades later.







### The Place of Murshidabad in History

In a special lecture on **10 March 2014** under this title, **Professor Sushil Chaudhury**, Fellow, Royal Historical Society, United Kingdom, and former Professor, Calcutta University underscored the importance of this Bengal town in the historical context. A documentary film *Murshidabad – The Citadel of Bengal Nawabs* directed by **Smt Satarupa Sanyal** was also screened.





## Activity Club for Young Friends

Around 50 students from seven schools participated in a workshop on **Creating Cartoons / Caricatures** conducted by **Shri Subhendu Sarkar** on **17 February 2014**.



## **Outreach** Activities

As part of its outreach activities, Victoria Memorial Hall participated in the **19th Agriculture-Industry-Tourism and Science Festival** at Baruipur, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal (6 to 12 January 2014) and **Sundarban Lokopriya Utsav** at Sonakhali, South 24-Parganas, West Bengal (23 to 30 January 2014).





### **The First Spark of Independence**

The travelling exhibition **1857: The First Spark of Independence**, from the collection of Victoria Memorial Hall, travelled to Allahabad, where it was inaugurated on **8 February 2014** at the Allahabad Museum by H.E. the Governor of Uttar Pradesh **Shri B. L. Joshi**. The exhibition was on display till **28 February 2014**. The next destination was the Gujarat National Law University Museum, Gandhinagar, where it was inaugurated on **18 March 2014** by **Air Marshal Daljit Singh**, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Indian Air Force. The exhibition was on display till **12 April 2014**.







## Workshops/Knowledge Sharing Programmes



Workshop on Textile Conservation with Ms Janie Lightfoot (2 to 14 December 2013)



In-house Hindi Workshop (20 December 2013 and 24 March 2014)



In-house Knowledge Sharing Programme on 30 December 2013 with Smt Joyee Roy Ghosh, Senior Technical Assistant (left) and Smt Shanti Majee, Restoration Assistant (right).

## **Important Visits**

- Mr Satish Mehta, Director General, ICCR, New Delhi on 13 December 2013.
- Mr Dino Caterini, Former Director of American Center, Kolkata along with his guests on 17 December 2013.
- Vice Admiral AG Thapliyal, AVSM, Director General, Indian Coast Guard on 22 December 2013.
- Dr P Y Rajendra Kumar, Director General, National Library, Kolkata on 28 December 2013.
- Parliamentary Committee on 14 January 2014.
- Shri Promod Jain, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India on 25 January 2014.
- H.R.H Princess of Oman, Ms Sayyida Suzan Al Said on 4 February 2014.
- Polish Minister and H.E. the Ambassador of Poland Prof Piotr Klodkowski, on 13 February 2014.
- H.E. the Dutch Ambassador to India Alphonsus Stoelinga on 12 February 2014.
- H.E. the Ambassador of India to Indonesia, Shri Gurjit Singh on 19 February 2014.
- Ms Helen LaFave, Consul-General of the United States in Kolkata, on 3 March 2014.
- Mr Roly Keating, Chief Executive of the British Library, on 25 March 2014.
- Mr LI Jiheng, Hon'ble Governor of Yunnan Province People's Republic of China accompanied by Mr Wang Xuefeng, Consul General, the Consul-General of the People's Republic of China in Kolkata, on 28 March 2014.



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## Staff Corner





Work on upkeep of Victoria Memorial Gardens





Preparation for an exhibition innauguration





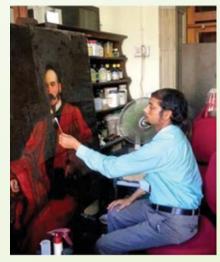
Work on Conservation



Work on Documentation



Work on Mounting of an Exhibition





Work on Restoration

## এই ভিক্টোরিয়া মেমোরিয়ালে

### এক

গেট খুলে দেখি দেবদারুগুলি প্যারেড করছে রাস্তার দুই ধারে।

### দুই

পাতায় পাতায় তরুণ রোদ্দুর লাফিয়ে এসে পড়ে রাস্তায় ঝুড়ো ঝুড়ো ছায়া করতালিতে মন্ত হ্যান্ডশেক করে এসে পড়ি ভিক্টোরিয়ার সিংহ দরজায়।

### তিন

এই পাথরের দেওয়ালে ভোর শরীর জড়ানো লতানো ফুল জীবন্ত হয়ে ওঠে চোখের পাতায়, রহস্য বুনে রাথে খাঁজে খাঁজে বিস্ময় তাই অটুট।

### চার

গুণমুগ্ধ হাওয়া ছুটে আসে চোখ ফেলে রাখে সমস্ত শরীরে উড়ন্ত চিলগুলি গা-ঝাড়া দিয়ে ফেলে সন্ধ্যা, যাবার দিক নির্দেশনে ব্যস্ত চূড়ায় থাকা ঐ পরী।

তপন অধিকারী



# VICTIM

The sun was shining in its full glory, piercing through his skin like a dagger. But that had little effect on him. He was lying, almost lifeless, on the hot desert sand. He tried to shift. His whole body ached like an open wound. His tongue was dry like paper because of thirst. He did not remember how long he had been in this desert. All he remembered was that he was running behind one mirage after another for what appeared to be an eternity. He opened his eyes with much effort. Far away, he could see an oasis, palm trees, greenery and pools of water. His lips twitched only in an attempt to smile. 'Another mirage', he murmured. 'I will rather die here peacefully than fruitlessly chase another figment of my imagination', he thought. He closed his eyes, waiting for the inevitable.

'Come on dear, it's an oasis. It's not a mirage'. He could not believe his ears. He could recognize Maya's voice from among millions of voices. He could not remember Maya was with him on this journey. He opened his eyes. Maya's ever smiling face was in front of him.' Get up, dear. Let's go to the oasis and quench our thirst,' Maya said. 'No, I can't. I am tired of running after mirages. I am left with no energy now,' he replied. 'You can do it. That's not a mirage. That is real. Try.' Maya insisted. He tried to move his limbs. They did not respond to his effort. Maya's beautiful, soft voice encouraged him again. He garnered all his energy and tried to crawl towards the destination. Maya kept egging him on.

Gradually he felt regaining his strength with Maya's persistent encouragement. He could stand up on his feet now. He took a first step and then a second. He found himself walking slowly and then briskly, in no time. Maya was on his side, matching her pace with his, encouraging and cajoling him. He was running now. The oasis was drawing near. All his weakness, pain and disappointment evaporated. He was feeling full of energy. He could run for years in this hot sun in this vast desert.

The oasis was only a few metres ahead. He increased speed. 'Oh, no. There was no oasis'. He was running after another mirage. He closed his eyes and then opened them slightly. He could see another oasis at a distance in the bright, shining sun. He now had the strength and energy to chase this mirage too. 'Come on, Maya', he called with excitement, 'let's go to this one'. He got no response. He turned towards the direction where he thought Maya was. Maya was not there. He looked back in the direction from where she came. No trace of Maya. 'Where is she gone?' He tried to remember. And suddenly it dawned upon him, 'Maya was never really there. She was also a mirage'. He collapsed instantly. The killer desert had another victim.

Shakil Ahmed



## New additions to VMH Library

Some of the new arrivals in the VMH library are:

- Parker, Ann: Haji paintings: Folk art of the great pilgrimage. 1995
- Lal, U. Shankar: Ancient Bronzes: History, metallurgy corrosion and conservation. 2012
- Edwars, G.M., ed.: Raman spectroscopy in archaeology and art history. 2005
- Mookerjee, S.: Sentinels of Calcutta: Evolution of the Calcutta Police 2013.
- Pande, Alka: Masterpieces of Indian art. 2004
- Silva, Kapila D.: Asian heritage management. 2013
- Wells, M.: Interpretive planning for museums. 2013
- King, T.F.: Cultural resource laws and practice. 2013
- Kumar, P.: Indigo plantations and science in Colonial India. 2012
- Daniell's India: Views from the 18th century. 2013
- Guha, A.: Unpublished letters of Vidyasagar. 2011
- Szczepanowska, H.M.: Conservation of Cultural heritage. 2013
- Talboys, G.K.: Museum educator's handbook. 3rd ed. 2011
- Sarkar, Sandip: Jamini Roy: His life and art. 2013
- Singh, K., ed. : Indian landscapes: The changing horizon. 2012
- Losty, J.P.: Mughal India: Art, culture and empire. 2012
- Chakrabarti, R., ed.: Dictionary of historical places Bengal 1757 1947. 2013
- Biswas, A., ed.: Bangalir Battala. 2013
- Halder, S.: Colonial architecture of Kolkata. 2013
- Sharma, D.V.: Kos Minar in history and architecture. 2013
- Katz, N.: Indian Jews: An Annotated Bibliography 1665 2005. 2013
- Singh, J., ed.: Bhagat Singh Aur Unke Sathiyon ke Dastavez. 3rd rev. ed. 2010
- Pal, Pratapaditya, ed.: Something old, something new: Rabindra Nath Tagore: 150th Birth Anniversary Volume. 2011
- Hardgrave, Robert L.: A Portrait of the Hindus: Balthazar Solvvyns and the European image of India 1760 -1824. 2004

### Did You Know?



Did you know that the Victoria Memorial Hall possesses the world's third largest painting in its collection? Yes, the painting is "The State Entry of King Edward VII into Jaipur in 1876," by the famous Russian Artist Vasili Vereshchagin, Acc. No. – C 37. The dimension of this painting is 274 inches by 196 inches. In fact it is known to be the largest oil painting in India and the third largest in this medium in the world. It was originally the property of Edward Malley of New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A., from whom it was acquired by the Maharaja of Jaipur and presented to the Victoria Memorial in 1905.

The painter Vereshchagin was one of the most famous Russian battle painters and one of the first Russian artists to be widely recognized abroad. The graphic nature of his realist scenes led many of them to never be printed or exhibited. He departed for an extensive tour of the Himalayas, India and Tibet, spending over two years in travel. He returned to Paris in late 1876. This masterpiece is a highly intricate one, and one of the prized collections of the Museum.

The painting magnificently explains the richly decorated elephants seen to be proceeding majestically with horses and footmen in a procession. The scene behind illustrates the Royal Palace of Amber in Jaipur. The Prince of Wales and Maharaja Ram Singh of Jaipur are seated on the first elephant. At the back of them on the same elephant is Sir Alfred Lyall, the political Agent of Rajputana at the time. Sir Henry Bartle Edward Frere, who accompanied the Prince of Wales in his Indian tour, is on the next elephant and General Sam Brown is on the third. Two other elephants behind these carry members of the Prince's personal staff as well as some officials of the Jaipur State.

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## Son-et-lumière

The Son-et-lumiére (Sound and Light) shows are held for visitors from October to June, with two shows, every evening, except on Mondays.

### **Show Timings:**

October to February:	6.15 p.m. to 7.00 p.m. (Bengali) 7.15 p.m. to 8.00 p.m. (English)
March to June:	6.45 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. (Bengali) 7.45 p.m. to 8.30 p.m. (English)

The *Son-et-lumiére* shows will be suspended during the monsoon period from **July – September 201**4.

**Entry tickets:** Rs. 10.00 and Rs. 20.00 Ticket counter and entrance: East Gate (opposite St. Paul's Cathedral)



## Information for Visitors

Very recently the VMH has started, with financial assistance from the Ministry of Culture, Government of India, a three-year programme of modernizing its galleries and storage areas. This will be the first comprehensive scheme of modernization in the history of the Memorial, and it will involve addressing issues of conservation of the historical monument in terms of a long-term building plan; modernizing the display systems, the illumination, climate control, security surveillance, the storage systems, the laboratories and the library in tune with the current best practices; rationalizing and optimizing the space within the monument to provide for an enhanced experience for visitors; branding, promotion, and sale of merchandise through creation of a modern museum shop, and many others. In connection with this project, construction activities will impact visitor movement inside the museum and access to certain galleries through 2017. We hope for the understanding of our visitors during this period.

### Location

Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata is located at 1, Queen's Way, Kolkata – 700071. It is on the western side opposite Birla Planetarium, St. Pauls Cathedral and Academy of Fine Arts (on Cathedral Road), with S.S.K.M. Hospital (on A.J.C. Bose Road) to its south, the Maidan to its north and the Race Course to its west. Ticket counters are situated at the north and south gates.



### **Transport**

The Museum is well connected to the nearest bus terminus at Esplanade and Railway Stations at Howrah (on the west bank of river Hooghly) and Sealdah (in central Kolkata). Both are at a distance of about 7 (seven) Km. The nearest metro stations are Rabindra Sadan and Maidan – within a walking distance of 7 (seven) minutes to both. The distance from the airport (Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport) is about 30 Km.

### **Visiting Hours**

### **Museum Galleries:**

Tuesday to Sunday from 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. (ticket counters close at 4.30 pm)

Museum Garden: Open on all days round the year.

### **Garden timings:**

March – June	5.30 a.m. to 6.15 p.m.
July – September	5.30 a.m. to 7.00 p.m.
October – February	5.45 a.m. to 5.45 p.m.



### The Museum Galleries remain closed on the following national holidays:

- Republic Day
- Holi
- Independence Day

- Id-ul-Fitr
- Gandhiji's Birthday
- Dusserah

• Christmas Day

### **Entry fees**

For Garden only: Rs. 4.00

For Garden & Museum: Rs. 10.00 (Indian nationals) : Rs 150.00 (Foreign nationals) Free for challenged visitors, school children in uniform and military personnel in uniform

## New Facilities for Visitors





## Museum Shop

### List of available items

### **Prints**

1.	India as seen by Simpson (set of 5 prints)	
2.	2. India in the Eyes of the Daniells (set of 6 prints)	
3.	. Select Views of India (set of 5 prints)	
4.	Charles Doy'ly's Calcutta - Album one (set of 4 prints)	Rs. 40/-
5.	Charles Doy'ly's Calcutta - Album two (set of 4 prints)	Rs. 40/-
6.	Natural History Paintings: series – 1 (set of 4 prints)	Rs. 90/-
7.	Natural History Paintings : series – 2 (set of 4 prints)	Rs. 90/-
8.	Natural History Paintings: series – 3 (set of 4 prints)	Rs. 90/-
9.	Picture Folio No 1 (one large print)	Re. 1/-
10.	Picture Folio No 2 (one large print)	Re. 1/-
11.	Picture Folio No 3 (one large print)	Rs. 2/-

### **Publications**

1.	Modern Masters	Rs. 35/-
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2.	India: Land and People	Rs. 500/-
3.	Catalogue of exhibition on Mother Teresa	Rs. 500/-
4.	Charles Doyly's Calcutta – early nineteenth century	Rs. 300/-

### **Souvenir items**

- 1. A set of 10 picture post cards on Mughal Miniatures
- 2. 3 different key chains with motifs from the Victoria Memorial collection
- 3. 3 different coffee mugs with motifs from the Victoria Memorial collection
- 4. Spiral note pads with motifs of Kalighat Paintings
- 5. Pen with VM Logo
- 6. 2 sets of picture post cards with paintings of Jamini Roy
- 7. Jute Bag
- 8. Juco Bag
- 9. Cloth Bag





VICTORIA MEMORIAL HALL



তলোতি গী ৪ গী হারবিনীতবনকা ধ্যেননা মাহু নির্কিননানি দুতে দী পিতন্ট গী ছারেনি সম্থনিন যান্ড বিশেন রী খেঠ ক্রিভিবিত নি মার্থনি যে নি ও বাত গী ও গী বরারিরো নক্ষ কতা দাখে গী ন্যস্থতর সম্যু তর সম্যু তর সে হে বি না জানে । ত্র বিশানান্থে মারব মনী সে মিহ্বিন না বতি রতা স হা সিত বি না বত ব জ লো ক জন শয় না না বর মনী সে মিহ্বিন না বত ব জ লো ক জন শয় না না বর বি শ্ব বিশ্বা বে মার্ব সনী সি মিহ্বিন না সত ক না স্তর না হা বি গী ২ গী ক মুন স্যার বি স্ববিশ্বা বে মার্ব সনী সি মিহ্বিন না সত ক না স্তর না হা বি যা ২ গী ক মুন স্যার বি স্বরিশ্ব বি না বি ব সি মার্ব সনী সি মিহ্বিন না বর্ব বা হ গী ২ গী ক মুন স্যার বি স্বরিশ্ব বি না বি ব সি মার্ব সনী সি মিহ্বিন না বর্ব বা মার্ব মার্ব সমি সি মিহ্বি না বর্ব স্যার্ব সনী সি মিহ্বিন না বর্ব স্যার্ব মার্ব সনী সি মিহ্বিন না বর্ব বা মি স

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Illustrated page from *Gitagovinda* from the collection of Victoria Memorial Hall

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