Chapter I

Suniti Kumar Chatterji – Historical Background

An individual is a product of age and society. Any incident in his life is always preceded or followed by another. With all his thoughts and aspiration he becomes a part of a stream of actions. So in order to study the works of Suniti Kumar Chatterji, it is necessary to look into the age and environmental factors that acted together in the making of the linguist. A brief study is to be made of the development of linguistic science in India and abroad, dating from the speculations of the early Greeks, the Romans or the Indian scholars about language.

What is Linguistic Science? Since language is acquired by a human being almost automatically the term science of language baffles even an educated person. Unless a person knows what linguistics is, by the study of language he would mean grammatical study. Through ages scholars have attempted to study and explain the rules working in particular languages especially the classical ones, but the concept of ‘languages’ as a function of human brain and how language was related to society and social changes was comparatively new.

Here a question arises, when did the science of language develop and what were the differences between the old and the new approach. Most of the scholars hold the view that this new trend of studying human language as a branch of science started to develop in the later part of eighteenth century.
The discovery of Sanskrit by the Western scholars and famous declaration of Sir William Jones (1786) about the similarities between classical languages — Greek, Latin and Sanskrit marked the beginning of this new age of Linguistic studies. This statement opened to the scholars a new way to the world of historical and comparative study of languages. What existed before were the works of the philosophers, grammarians, rhetoricians and the scholars who studied the differences between the dialects. Such older works dealt with a particular language mainly with any one of the classical ones — Greek, Latin or Sanskrit.

The Greek Tradition of Linguistic Study: The Greek linguistic speculations started with the debate on the problem whether language was governed by nature or convention (4th Century B.C.). The importance of this debate and the subsequent development of grammatical theory is that it gave rise to etymological investigations which stimulated the interest of the scholars in classifying the relationships between the words. This was followed by a debate on regularity or analogy and irregularity or anomaly (Lyons, 1968).

The Greek philosopher Plato (428/427 B.C. – 348/347 B.C) expressed his ideas about language in his philosophical Dialogues. In the Sophist he says thought (dianonia) is the same as language, with this exception, that thought is the conversation of the soul with herself which takes place without voices, while the stream which accompanied by sound, flows from thought through the lips, is called language (logos). Plato classifies the Greek sounds as Voiced (phoneenta, vowels) and Voiceless (aphona). The voiceless sounds
are again classified into (a) Voiceless (but not soundless) (hemiphona, semivowels) and (b) True mutes (aphthonga). (Taraporewala, 1978: 438).

Aristotle (384 B.C. – 322 B.C.) laid the foundation of division of words into parts of speech and introduced the notion of case. Among the several schools of Greek philosophy that dealt with language it were the stoics who contributed mostly to the development of linguistic science. The importance lay in their belief that ‘knowledge’ consisted in the conformity of our ‘ideas’ with the real things in ‘nature’ of which the ‘ideas’ are, or should be the ‘image’.

The work of the stoics was carried on further by the Alexandrian scholars who in their search for regularities or analogy established ‘canons’ and ‘patterns of inflexion. The work of Dionysius Thrax (late second cent. B.C.) has been considered as the first systemic and comprehensive grammar.

Roman Tradition of Grammatical Speculations: The Romans were moulded by Greek tradition of learning and culture. The Latin grammarians were almost wholly dependent on Greek models. The influence of the Alexandrians and the stoics can be seen in Varro’s work on Latin language (first century B.C.).

In the medieval period Latin occupied an important and prestigious position in the educational system of Europe. Much advancement was made in the grammatical analysis of Latin. This gave birth to traditional grammar and speculative grammar. But these grammatical studies did not show any remarkable progress in the development of linguistic science.

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**Some important works of 17th & 18th centuries:** It is said that the interest in language study in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was very little. But the discovery and publication of texts in the Old Gothic languages particularly Wulfila’s Gothic translation of the Bible paved the way for the historical treatment of the languages in the nineteenth century (Jespersen, 1922). The scholars attached more importance to the study of spoken languages. They had their shortcomings – treatment of many languages was unequal and uncritical, the preponderance of lexical over grammatical information could be found and the use of Biblical Texts as their sole connected illustrations was another drawback. But still one should consider the works of the great philosopher Leibniz whose judicious utterances indicated the possibility of a universal language and who instigated Peter the Great to have vocabularies and specimens collected of all the languages spoken in his vast empire. Empress Catherine II took personal interest in these studies. Pallas’s Linguarium Totius Orbis Vocabularia Comparativa (1786-1787), Hervas’s Catalogo de las Lenguas de las Nazaiones Conocidus (1800-1805) were some of the works produced. The impact of these works on the linguistic thoughts of the time and their contribution to the development of linguistic science in the nineteenth century was of much value (Jespersen, 1922).

**Indian Linguistic Work of Earlier Times:** Indian Linguistic Work in ancient times was much superior to Western traditional grammar and exercised considerable influence on the development of comparative philology as well as modern linguistics. This Hindu tradition of language study was not only independent of the Greek or Roman traditions but also
presented much wider scope of study of language and was more superior in its achievements.

**Yaska (7th – 6th Century B.C):** Among the ancient Indian scholars we find the name of Yaska as a great etymologist. In his *Nirukta*, he worked in the field of Vedic etymology and his investigations were far more scientific than his predecessors, the writers of the Brahmanas, who had made an attempt to discover the meanings of some of the Vedic passages. Even in that early period, when the Brahmanas were written, the Vedic dialects had become obsolete and the Brahmanas interpreted the *mantras* in a manner which fitted with their own ceremonials and their legends and mythās. As a result of this, their explanations became faulty and fanciful. But Yaska's works bear that scientific insight needed for linguistic investigation. The *Nighantus* which are collections of rare and obscure words are also to be associated with the name of Yaska.

**Pre-Paninian Grammarians:** Between Yaska and Panini there were some grammarians. S.K. Belvalkar's (1881-1967), *Systems of Sanskrit Grammar* (2nd ed.,1976) speaks of Apisalali and Kasākritsna as founders of grammatical schools and one of the later writers Kaiyyata quotes certain passages from them. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang and the Tibetan Taranath mention the tradition of Aindra School of which the greatest name is that of Katyayana. The name ‘Aindra’ originated from God Indra who is mentioned in Taittirīya Samhitā as the first grammarian.
Panini (6th – 5th Century B.C.): Nothing definite is known about when this great Indian grammarian lived or in which century he lived in. In several of the works by Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji we find reference to Panini and his Astādhyāyī. Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji has come to this conclusion that Panini lived and composed his Astādhyāyī in the 5th century B.C. Panini is considered by the scholars as the greatest of the Indian grammarians. But in his works Panini too, mentions the names of his predecessors. So it is assumed by the scholars that Panini was following a tradition of grammatical study which started some centuries before his appearance. According to John Lyons, so great was the extent of ancient Indian linguistic thought that twelve different schools have been recognized in Indian tradition and about a thousand separate grammatical works have been preserved. Most of these schools of linguistics were to some degree dependent on Panini.

Astādhyāyī has been described as the ‘oldest systematic grammar’ (Das, 2004:66).

Patanjali: After Panini the great name that we find among the Indian grammarians is that of Patanjali. Patanjali’s fame lies in his great work Mahābhāṣya which according to I.J.S. Taraporewala ‘is in reality a defense of Panini against the criticism of Katyayana and at the same time supplements of the former’s work wherever he thought it necessary’ (Taraporewala, 1978: 431). The importance of Mahābhāṣyā lies in the treatment of the principles of grammar that had developed till then.
The later works which followed this tradition of Sanskrit grammar were chiefly commentaries on *Aṣṭādhyāyī*. We find the names two scholars Jayaditya of Kashmir and Vamana whose joint work is *Kāśi-kā-vyākrtti*, an important commentary on *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, written in a lucid style and enriched with numerous examples. Kaiyata’s *Pradīpa* on the *Mahābhāṣya* is important because it marks the end of an epoch in the history of Paninian grammar. By that time Sanskrit language had already ceased to be used as a living language. Muslim invasions had begun and the following five or six centuries were a period of chaos and political unrest. As a result no work of merit was produced till Mughal rule was firmly established and law and order was restored.

Long after it became a ‘dead language’, Sanskrit continued to be treated as the main subject of study by the Indian grammarians. It was found by the scholars that the arrangement of the *sutras* in Panini’s *Aṣṭādhyāyī* was not suitable and as the result of a demand for the rearrangement of the Sutras, a series of works known as the *Kaumudis* were produced. The most famous of these was *Siddhānta-Kaumudi* of Bhattoji Dikshita. This work is universally accepted throughout India as an authentic source for the study of Panini. Nagoji Bhatta’s *Paribhāṣendus’ekhara* is a commentary on the Panini ‘Paribhāṣas’ (Terminology) of Panini’s grammar.

Among the other schools of Sanskrit grammar the names of the scholars like Chandragomin and Jainendra are found. These scholars were ‘sectarians’ in their outlook.
In his consideration of the history of linguistics in ancient and medieval India, the scholars have explained how the phonetic, phonological, etymological or grammatical works in the ancient times, centred round the study of Vedas, Indian oldest literary documents. The six ancillaries of the Vedas – the ‘Vedanga’s or the limbs of the Vedas were intended to help in the proper maintenance and application of the Vedic texts. Three of these Vedangas were related to S’ikṣā (phonetics), Vyākaraṇa (grammar) and Nirukta (etymology). S’ikṣā deals with the pronunciation of sounds and their proper pronunciation for various recitation traditions.

Here an analysis of the works based on the study of Vedas can be found. From a comment by John Lyons, an idea of the great development in the field of Phonetics and Phonology in ancient India can be formed. The Indian classification of speech sounds was more detailed, more accurate and more soundly based upon observation and experiment. The science of phonetics in Europe was strongly influenced by the discovery and translation of Indian linguistic treatises by Western scholars. In their analysis of words the Indian grammarians went well beyond what might be thought necessary for the original purpose of preserving the language of the sacred texts. Panini’s grammar is not only devoted to the language of the Vedic hymns, but to the language of his own day (Lyons, 1968).

Dr. Chatterji’s study of the Linguistic tradition: In the next chapter it will be observed that Suniti Kumar studied phonetics in London and the renowned phonetician Sir Daniel Jones was his Siksaguru. But we should
also mention the fact that Suniti Kumar had studied the Vedas extensively after completing his master degree course. He passed ‘Ādyā’ and ‘Madhya’ Examination of Vedic studies from Government Sanskrit Association. He attempted to study the Vedas in the light of linguistic science (Bhattacharya, 1995: 5). Thus he had connected himself to the ancient Indian tradition of language analysis and studied the works of Panini or Patanjali. So, before going to London or Paris Prof. Chatterji had already equipped himself with the techniques of Phonetic or Phonological study of language that the ancient Indian scholars had developed. Prof. Chatterji contributed mainly to Bengali and Sanskrit phonetic studies.

Prof. Chatterji had the idea of selecting Bengali as the main subject of his research work when he was a student of Calcutta University and was appearing for his M.A. Examination. In the preface of *ODBL* he writes –

‘The idea of systematically investigating the history of my mother-tongue first struck me over twelve years ago when I was at college in my native town of Calcutta reading for the Master of Arts examination in English with Old and Middle English and History of the English Language and a little Germanic Philology as may special subjects. The modern methods of linguistic investigation which I saw applied to English filled me with admiration and enthusiasm; and as the problem of Indo-European is equally connected with my own speech, my interests naturally began to turn wistfully in that direction. From Morris and Skeat, Sweet and Wright, and Jespersen and the rest, and from Helfenstein and Brugmann, – masters of Indo-Aryan philology like Uhlenbeck and Wackernagel, Whitney and
Pischel, Beames and Bhandarkar, Hoernle and Grierson and others were naturally approached and studied for guidance and light: and I began also to look round myself, to observe facts in the words as written and actually spoken' (Chatterji, 1993: xi).

So it becomes quite clear that the works of the Neo-grammarians and the masters of Indo-Aryan philology had inspired Prof. Chatterji to engage himself in the study of Bengali language. The result was ODBL and Prof. Chatterji's great contribution to Indo-Aryan and Indian linguistics. So it becomes necessary that a brief account of the works of these great philologists should be presented here in this context.

Development of Linguistic Science in the nineteenth century: The accounts given by Lyons, Jespersen, Robins and other scholars show that nineteenth century was a period when the facts of language came to be carefully and objectively investigated and then explained in terms of inductive hypothesis. By the end of eighteenth century there was a dissatisfaction among the scholars with 'logical' explanation of languages and so most of the scholars turned towards historical reasoning. This change of outlook and adoption of historical point of view was not confirmed to linguistic study only but affected all 'human institutions' as laws, customs and religious practices, economic and social affairs. As languages were continually changing, the scholars would not remain satisfied with description of languages at a particular state and with reference to a particular point of time.
**Discovery of Sanskrit and its impact:** The discovery of Sanskrit has been considered as the real turning point in the history of linguistics. But the study of Sanskrit language alone failed to give a scholar the true insight into the essence of language and linguistic science. On the other hand, a real genius could study the relationships and development of languages even without the knowledge of Sanskrit. Yet, it has been observed, that the first acquaintance with this language gave a mighty impulse to the linguistic studies and had a lasting influence on the study of history of languages.

**Sir William Jones: A turning point in Linguistic Science:** The Europeans had for a long time been ignorant about India’s glorious past. In the eighteenth century, after the settlement of East India Company in India, a mighty conflict started between the English and the French for the mastery over India’s wealth. This led the foreign scholars to study India’s history and ancient culture. In 1767 a French Jesuit Missionary Coeur dour drew the attention of the French Institute to the similarity of many Sanskrit words to Latin. In 1786 a British jurist in Bengal Sir William Jones made an epoch making statement –

‘The Sanskrit language whatever be its antiquity, is of a wonderful structure; more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin and more exquisitely refined than either; yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity, both in the roots of the verbs and in the forms of grammar, than could possibly have been produced by accident; so strong indeed that no philosopher could examine them all three without believing them to have sprung from some common source, which perhaps no longer exists. There is a similar reason, thought not quite so forcible for supposing that both the
**Gothic and the Celtic** had the same origin with the **Sanskrit**; and the **Old Persian** might be added to the same family.'

This statement of Sir William Jones started a new age of linguistic study for his successors. But he himself could not do much of linguistic work and the task was left to the linguists like Rasmus Christian Rask, Jacob Grimm or Franz Bopp to continue with.

Sir William Jones, besides laying the foundation stone of comparative philology, produced some valuable literary works. But his works were most notable in the world of Indological studies by the Western scholars. He translated ‘S’akuntalā’ in English in 1789 and this work drew the attention of the Western scholars to the beauty and richness of Sanskrit literature. Goethe sang of S’akuntalā – as one sweet name that can combine heaven and earth and has got all the power by which human soul is pleased, enraptured, feasted and fed. Humboldt gave to Kalidas a lofty place among the poets of all ages. Jones also published translations of ‘Gītā Govinda’ and ‘Mānavā-dharmāstra’.

‘Common Source’ and postulation of Indo European: After it was mentioned by William Jones that all the major languages like Greek, Latin or Sanskrit sprang from a common source, the scholars engaged themselves in search of this common source. The term ‘Indo-European’ was first coined and used by physicist Thomas Young in an article published in the tenth volume of the Quarterly Review. Then the term was used by scholars like
L. Beneloew but it was not popular as the name for a whole family of languages. Max Müller held the view that the languages like Greek, Latin, Celtic etc. had sprung from ‘an earlier languages’, which he thought was the mother of the whole Indo-European or Aryan family of speech. So according to Max Müller, the language family was ‘Aryan’ or ‘Arya’ and the Indo European people spoke languages of this family.

The term ‘Indo-Germanic’ for this ‘common source’ was claimed by the German group of scholars when they did not have much knowledge about the source of the Celtic languages. After the discovery of Tokharian language this term (Indo-Germanic) was discarded because a part of it indicated the name of a particular country.

Ferdinand de Saussure used the term Indo European for a family of languages in this book *Memoire sur le systeme primitive des voyelles dans les langues indo europeennes* (1878) and it was perhaps the first use of the word Indo European as a recognized name for a family of languages (Banerjee, 2001: 17-23).

Dr. S. R. Banerjee’s discussion (2001) on Indo-European background of Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji’s works and his contribution to Indo-European (IE) Linguistics will show how Dr. Chatterji connected himself to the study of IE Linguistics. It is stated by Prof. Banerjee that when Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji was in England (1919-21), he studied IE philology as deeply as his studies on phonetics in general. It was the age of Karl Brugmann and Berthold Delbruck – the two pioneers of IE philology. Their monumental
work — *Grundriss der vergleichenden Germmatik der indo-germanischen Sprachen*, was the pioneering work on IE philology. There is no doubt that Prof. Chatterji had all these books and authors at his back, when he talked about IE linguistics. The basic principles of IE philology introduced by these great masters have been his guide-lines throughout his life. Whatever things he has written, whatever equations he has made with other cognate languages, whatever cognate words he has postulated in his writings — be it literary, historical or even linguistic — Dr. Chatterji has shown his knowledge of IE philology at every point.

*The Nineteenth Century Linguists — Friedrich Von Schegel, Rasmus Rask, Jacob Grimm and Franz Bopp:* Now it is necessary for us to look into the process which was started by Sir William Jones and how it grew up into a definite science.

*Friederich Schlegel (1772-1829):* In the first decade of nineteenth century, Friedrich Von Schlegel’s *Uber die sprache und weisheit der Indier* (1808) contributed greatly to the development of comparative grammar. Schlegel studied Sanskrit in Paris and inspired by the spirit of romanticism he expected that the study of Sanskrit would bring about a revolution in European thought and culture just as the revival of the study of Greek had produced in the Renaissance. He was interested in Indian religion and philosophy though we should confine ourselves only to his linguistic thoughts. He studied the similarities between Sanskrit and Western languages and found out words from Sanskrit which could be found in grammar almost without any change. According to him these similarities could be accidental or could be found due to borrowing from the Indian side.
He held the view that the proof of the original relationship between these languages, as well as the greater age of Sanskrit lies in the far reaching correspondences in the whole grammatical structure of these languages as opposed to many other languages. Thus Schlegel was the first to speak of comparative grammar. But he did not state any law for the comparison of the languages. So he deprived himself of the prestige of being the founder of a new science.

The greatest of the scholars who introduced linguistic science in the beginning of the nineteenth century were Rasmus Rask, Jacob Grimm and Franz Bopp. The works of these three scholars appeared almost together — Bopp’s *Conjugations System* in 1816, Rask’s *Undersegelse om det gamle Nordiske eller Islandske Sprogs Oprindelse* in 1818 and the first volume of Grimm’s *Deutsche Grammatik* in 1819. Bopp worked independently. Grimm was Rask’s pupil and was influenced by him. Rask’s linguistic speculations began same years before than those of his contemporaries and his chief work was completed in the manuscript from in 1814. The first work of Rask appeared in 1811. It was a study of Old Norse or Icelandic language — ‘*Vejledning til det islandske eller gamle nordisk sprog*’.

*Rasmus Christian Rask* (1787-1832): Rask applied his linguistic techniques in his search for the Old Icelandic language. He finds out the position of this language in the Gothic group and looks round to find congeners in other places. About Rask, the scholars hold the view that it was Rask who first showed true genius in the study of the origin of and the relationship between these languages.
It was Rask who was the pioneer in studying comparatively the sounds of the Indo-European languages with those of the languages of other families and the difference between the Indo-European sound systems and the sound systems of the non-I.E. languages (Shaw, 1996: 72-79).

In Dr. Satya Ranjan Banerjee’s explanations it is found that the next eminent comparative grammarian was August Schleicher (1821-1868) who in his Compendium der vergleichenden Grammatik der indo-germanischen Sprachen (1861-62) first postulated some Indo-European sounds, such as, a, a, i, i, u, u, e, o and so on for the common IE language. The first man who emphasised the significance of the laws of sounds was Rasmus Christian Rask (1787-1832). In his famous treatise, Undersogelse om det gamle Nordiske eller Islandske Sprogs Oprindelse (Investigation on the Origin of the Old Norse or Icelandic Language), written in 1811 but published in 1818, he equated certain Old Norse sounds with Greek for example, Gk p > ON f, Gk. pater, ON. faoir; Gk 0 > ON. d, Gk. Oura, ON. dyrr (door).

Jacob Grimm (1785-1863): The scholar who completely broke from classical philology and introduced new method of looking at grammar was Jacob Grimm. While he was making a critical study of Schlegel’s and Rask’s works he felt the need of a stricter method of comparative philology and engaged himself to a more exact study of the oldest stages of German language.

Jacob Grimm’s fame as a philologist is mostly related to his exposition of Germanic Sound Shift which has been named as Grimm’s Law. Scholars express view that it is better to call this Sound Shift Rask’s law for all these
transitions were already exposed in Rask's *Undersegelse* (1818). But it is also true that Rask only contented himself by stating only the bare fact and did not attempt to bring the complete series of changes under one single formula though he had seen the parallelism of the sounds clearly. So the credit was given to Jacob Grimm for systematizing the whole process in one formula and comprising also the second shift.

*Franz Bopp (1791-1867):* According to Jespersen, Franz Bopp is the greatest of the three founders of Linguistic Science. It has been a custom in the world of German linguistics to date the birth of comparative philology from the appearance of Franz Bopp's first work in 1816 – *Conjugation system of Sanskrit Verbs as compared to that of Greek, Latin, Persian and Germanic*. Bopp presented his greater work on the *Comparative Grammar of Sanskrit, Zend, Greek, Latin, Lithuanian, Gothic and Germanic* in the period between 1833 and 1836. These works were based on the methods of Comparative Philology. Bopp has been described as a Sanskrit Scholar as well as a comparative grammarian and his chief aim was to find out the ultimate origin of the grammatical forms. This led him to find out the origin of the flexional element and his classification of languages became identical with the discovery of comparative philology. But Bopp was too much under the influence of philosophical grammar and worked purely on logical grounds while presenting his notions of verb and other related forms.

A study of these works by the Indo-European scholars has greatly helped Suniti Kumar in his study of Indo-Aryan and Indian Linguistics. This topic has been discussed later.
Wilhelm Von Humboldt (1767-1835): One of the profoundest thinkers in the field of Linguistic Science who had appeared in the nineteenth century was Wilhem Von Humboldt. He described language as a symbol for the national character. He states that each separated language even the most despised dialect should be looked upon as an organic whole, different from all the rest and expressing the individuality of the people speaking it; it is characteristic of a nation’s psyche and attempts to realize the ideal of speech.

If we study the writings of Suniti Kumar Chatterji on Bengali and other Indian languages we will find an echo of the words of the Nineteenth Century Linguists as Humboldt. Prof. Chatterji actively took part in the language movement for writing ‘genuine’ Bengali grammar, when some of the Sanskrit grammarians had attempted to mould or analyse Bengali language in the model of its parent language Sanskrit. He stressed the fact that Bengali like its sister languages Oriya or Assamese had continued to maintain its separate existence and had been expressing the individuality of the people of Bengali. So the scholar should take into account the distinctive features of Bengali (Sarkar, 1997: 16-18).

The Neogrammarians and Study of Sound Changes: Fifty years after Rask’s, Grimm’s, or Bopp’s speculations, in the latter half of the nineteenth century appeared the works of the ‘Junggrammatiker’— the young Grammarians or Neogrammarians. The thoughts and speculations of the Neogrammian School centered round the works of three scholars— Hermann Osthoff, Karl Brugmann and Hermann Paul. Osthoff and Brugmann were close associates of each other and their joint research work— Morphologische Untersuchungen (1878) which appeared in five volumes,
became the pioneering work of this new School. Brugmann is considered as one of the greatest philologists of the modern age. His other important work — *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der indogermanischen Sprachen* (1886) served as a firm base for Indo-European studies. Hermann Paul's epoch-making work *Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte* (1880) presented the principles and philosophy of speech. The Neogrammarians introduced strict scientific outlook in the comparative study of the languages. Their purpose was to trace the origin of the Indo-Europeans their early settlement and their culture, through a comparative study of the linguistic changes. The Neogrammarians observed the sound changes in different Indo-European languages to achieve this goal. The scholars as Wilhem Scherer (1875) claimed that all sound changes could not be accounted for by fixed laws which suffer no disturbance except in accordance with other laws. Research work related to the investigation of sound changes in the different branches of Indo-European languages was rapidly progressing. Their efforts at the end of nineteenth century resulted to some brilliant discoveries which could account for some the apparently 'irregular' correspondences which the earlier scholars had observed.

Dr.Chatterji, in his Preface part of *ODBL* has spoken about the contribution of the Neogrammarians particularly of Karl Brugmann. Prof.Chatterji's study of Indo-European has been discussed separately. This section and some other sections will show how the works of these great masters of Indo-European helped Dr.Chatterji to study Indo-European and Indo-Aryan.
In 1875 Karl Verner published his articles which exercised great influence in the world of linguistic science. Verner’s Law accounted for the irregularities not accounted by Grimm’s Law.

Many such important sound laws were established by the end of the nineteenth century and these sound laws enormously helped the scholars to study the relative chronology of development of the different branches of Indo European and also helped to gain more confidence regarding the regularity of sound changes. The ‘loan words’ or ‘borrowed words’ were the exceptions to these sound laws. Though these words were the exceptions, they explained the socio-cultural impact of one language on the other.

*Interests of the Western Scholars and missionaries since seventeenth century:* Since the discovery of sea-route to India by Vasco da Gama (1498), the missionaries became interested in the study of Indian history literature and culture. They started mainly with a religious purpose and it was through the Christian priests, mainly Jesuits, the knowledge of Indian languages and Indian culture became known to the Europeans.

Among the earliest scholars the name of Abraham Rogers has been mentioned. He was chaplain at Pelican from 1631 to 1641 and translated Bhartrihari to Dutch in 1651.

In 1785 a young English Merchant Charles Wilkins translated the *Bhagavad-Gītā* into English and in 1787 he brought out a translation of *Hitopades’ā.*
In 1794 the most famous missionary centre was set up by William Carey at Sreerampore in Bengal. Carey's purpose was mainly educational and the East India Company did not like his efforts as they considered this attempt to educate the Indians as a risky and harmful step, so William Carey chose Sreerampore as his safe refuge.

With the introduction of Sanskrit to the Western World many of the European scholars became keenly interested in knowing India's rich heritage of ancient literature. On the other hand, a completely new world revealed itself when the scholars felt that most of the important languages are linked with each other through one common parental source. What was born was comparative philology and at the same time study of Indian literature history and other cultural aspects was continued by the scholars.


_**Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765-1837):**_ The name of Henry Thomas Colebrooke has been mentioned as one of last Sanskritists. He was an ardent student of Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian and Arabic and also studied the plants and animals and geology of India. Hindu Astronomy and Mathematics were his favourite subjects.
Alexander Hamilton (1757-1804): The Germans played an important role in the advancement of Oriental learning and especially philological studies. Schlegel was among the earliest scholars to start this movement. He was in Paris in 1803 and there he met Alexander Hamilton, a young British Soldier. Hamilton had become a prisoner of war when he was returning home from India. He studied Sanskrit while he was in India. Though he could not build up his own career as a philologist he helped to start the movement by teaching Sanskrit to Schlegel. Schlegel was the first to point out the importance of Sanskrit to the students of linguistics. He also stressed the need of a right direction in comparative study of the languages and in his book On the Language and the Wisdom of the Indians (1808) he first used the term 'Comparative grammar'. He expressed the view that Comparative grammar was likely to give information regarding the genealogy of languages just as comparative astronomy has helped in the study of natural history.

Adolf Schlegel (1767-1845): Friederich Schlegel’s brother Adolf Schlegel was also an eminent Sanskritist and is regarded the founder of Sanskrit Philology in Europe by some scholars. Delbrück in his Studium der indogermanischen Sprachen (1904) has mentioned Adolf Schlegel’s wise advice to the scholars, that Sanskrit language must be studied with the reverence of the Brahman and at the same time with the critical and scientific spirit of the Europeans.

Eugene Burnouf (1801-1852): Eugene Burnouf was the scholar who first introduced the original teachings of Lord Buddha to the European scholars
through his work *Essai sur le Pali*. His other great work *Commentaire sur le yacna* which was the first accurate work on the Avesta Texts was published in 1833.

_Friederich Max Müller (1823-1900):_ Friederich Max Müller contributed largely in making the Sanskrit language and literature popular to the scholars of the West through his great and voluminous work. These works include a valuable edition of Rig-Veda with Sayana’s commentary (1849-1875) and fifty volumes of the *Sacred Books of the East*. He was the founder of Comparative Mythology. Max Müller worked on the languages of India. In 1854 he established the existence of the Munda languages as distinct from the Dravidian.

The great *St. Petersburg Dictionary of Sanskrit* (1852-1875) which was compiled by Roth and Böthlingk was a work of immense importance to the students of Sanskrit language. Roth established the fact that Sanskrit has a great value in understanding Avesta. He rejected the view of studying Avesta, based on the Pahlavi tradition which Anquetil had got from Parsi priests and which was also followed by Burnouf. Roth made a comparative study of Sanskrit and Avesta.

The missionaries as Fr Manoel da Assumpcam (1734, 1743), Nathaniel Brassey Halhed (1778), William Carey (1801) greatly contributed to the study of Bengali language and their contribution will be discussed in a separate section.
Some Valuable Works on Bengali and other Indian Languages: In the 19th century some brilliant works on Indian Languages and comparative study of the languages appeared. Most of these were produced by the European scholars. These philological works helped in the development of Linguistic Science in India to some extent. These works also served as a sound base for Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji's works and led to the development of Comparative Grammar for Indian Languages.

John Beames (1837-1902): A brilliant young member of Bengal Civil Service John Beames, contributed greatly to the study of Indian languages when he appeared in 1867 with his booklet – 'Outlines of Indian Philology'. This was his first attempt to prepare a scientific general account of all the language then known to be spoken in India. After the demise of John Beames on 24th May 1902 as Grierson wrote on the Life and Works of John Beames, he commented on his pioneer work and explained that much of this work was of course out of date, but parts of it, notably the chapter entitled ‘Hints on Observing and Recording a New Language’ were as valuable till then, as they were when first published.

The first volume of Beames’ magnum opus the Comparative Grammar of the Aryan Languages of India appeared in 1872 and he dealt with the ‘Hindi, Punjabi, Sindhi, Gujarati, Marathi, Oriya and Bengali languages. Through the earlier work and particularly through the four volumes of his magnum opus Beames won the honour of being the founder of Modern Indo-Aryan Linguistics. Many of the other scholars were working on the same line. Ramakrishna Gopal Bhandarkar delivered his Wilson Philological lectures before the University of Bombay in 1878-1880. Among the others were
A. Rudolf Hoernle, Dr. Ernest Trumpp, Rev. S.H. Kellogg, and finally George Abraham Grierson. Grierson compares the major work of Beames to the works of Dr. Hoernle and Dr. Trumpp for their works also appeared in 1872 with the first volume of Beames' magnum opus. Grierson states that all these three scholars, working independently, were following more or less the same path. All the three emphasised the importance of the Prakrts in the development of the modern languages and studied systematically the laws of that development. But Dr. Trumpp's Grammar was confined mainly to Sindhi language and as far as comparative philology is concerned, it remained only a brilliant fragment. Dr. Hoernle's Essays 'In Aid of a Comparative Grammar of the Gaudian Languages' were 'essays' in the strict sense of the term and were published as an admirable collection in 1880,

In 1891, Beames compiled his *Grammar of the Bengali Language*, a work based on the excellent grammar of the Bengali language written many years ago by Shyama Charan Sarkar and written with the assistance of Babu Priyanath Bhattacharya of Calcutta. Shyama Charan Sarkar's work *Introduction to the Bengali Language adapted to students who know English* was published in 1850. In Grierson's words this was the first book which attempted to deal, not only with the inflated language of modern Bengali literature, but also with the altogether different spoken tongue.

While Beames work was reprinted in 1960, Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji wrote on John Beames, the Founder of Indo-Aryan linguistics. Prof. Chatterji describes Beames' work as a thin mountain stream which later
became the source of a mighty and ever expanding river of Indian Linguistic study and research.

Dr. Augustus Rudolf Hoernle (1841-1918): Dr. Hoernle’s *Grammar of Eastern Hindi compared with other Gaudian Languages* was published in 1880. His original plan was to write a book on Eastern Hindi which would be accompanied by short notes pointing out its Gaudian affinities. But the notes on Gaudian matter grew to such an extent that it became almost a comparative grammar of Gaudian Languages. The result of Hoernle’s research work was *Comparative Grammar of Gaudian Languages with reference to Eastern Hindi* (1880).

Bishop Robert Caldwell (1814-1891): Bishop Caldwell’s Grammar of Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages’ showed the way to many of the Indologists like John Beames who were working on Indian Languages to study a particular language under the light of comparative philology. Bishop Caldwell observed that much work had been done on the South Indian Languages taken separately especially on Tamil and Telegu. Beschi’s (Costanzo Giuseppe Beschi (1680-1746) also known as *Veeramamunivar*) Grammar of the Shen-Tamil and Mr. C. P. Brown’s Telegu Grammar attained a much higher level than that of the ordinary grammars of the Indian Vernaculars. But according to Caldwell the works on the languages could not be ‘scientific and progressive’ for they did not follow the track of comparative philology and the science of ‘inter-comparison of grammars’ was still in its infancy. His views will be clear from his statement – ‘as the old East, after the sleep of centuries, has begun to wake up and to clamour for the supply of its many material and moral wants and as the majority of
Anglo-Indian, whether they are engaged in the work of the government or in educational and Missionary labours, find they have a world of work to do, but little time or strength for doing it, this department of comparative philology, through peculiarly promising has hitherto lain almost entirely uncultivated’ (Caldwell, 1856: Preface - iii). The study of South Indian languages had been neglected by the scholars for many years.

Caldwell felt that much light could be thrown on the grammar of the Tamil language, by comparing it with that of the Telegu, the Canarese and other sister idioms. He speaks of the intrinsic general value of the research work done by Dr. Stevenson, Max Müller and Login but at the same time feels the necessity of the work like his own – ‘The Dravidian Languages still require to be compared and their relationship to other languages investigated by some one who has made them his special study for an adequate space of time’. (Caldwell, 1956: Preface-vii).

Sir Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar (1837-1925): In connection with the discussion on the introduction of philological studies in India, the valuable contribution of Sir Ramkrishna Gopal Bhandarkar must be mentioned. His Wilson Philological Lectures (1877) is said to be the first significant work of an Indian scholar in the western style. A great scholar of Sanskrit, Bhandarkar inspired the teaching of Sanskrit in purely western methods and gained much popularity and fame among the scholars and the students. In 1917, on the eightieth birthday of Bhandarkar, Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute was founded at Poona. This institute has now become a
famous centre of Oriental Learning and Culture not only in India but among the learned men from all over the world.

*Linguistic Tradition and Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji:* Some eminent Indian scholars as Dr. Paresh Chandra Majumdar have talked about the position of Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji as a philologist and a humanist (Majumdar, 2011b: 24-26). If language is to be considered as an autonomous science of communication then Dr. Chatterji is not to be considered as a 'linguist' in a very strict sense. To understand the nature of Prof. Chatterji's works one needs to study the views of –

- Ferdinand de Saussure-Leonard Bloomfield-Zellig Sabetta Harris.
- Noam Chomsky and Chomskians (Though Chomsky's work appeared much later, in 1957, his views on Transformational Generative Grammar may be studied and compared to the linguistic concepts of Dr. Chatterji. The comparative study of the synchronic and diachronic view on language can lead us to a better understanding of Dr. Chatterji as a linguist).

There are differences in the linguistic philosophy, methods and tradition followed by these three groups of scholars. Dr. Chatterji preferred historical and comparative methods and believed in the theory of Evolution. So it may be said that like John Beames, Augustus Rudolf Hoernle, G.A. Grierson, Jules Bloch, Dr. Chatterji was a successor to the linguistic tradition established by Rask, Grimm, Bopp and also the Neogrammarians. (Yung-grammatikers). The linguistic philosophy of these scholars had its root in the
works of August Schleicher and Wilhelm Von Humbolt, who were, in turn, inspired by Darwin’s Theory of Evolution and Natural Selection.

The scholars as Leonard Bloomfield had accepted the Empiricist view of linguistics of John Locke (1632-1704), George Barkley (1685-1753), and David Hume (1711-1776) (the leading British Empiricists) and ‘Behaviourist Theory’ of John Broadus Watson (1878-1958) and Ivan Petrovich Pavlov (1849-1936). The Empiricists hold the view that knowledge must be empirically based on the evidence of senses. This view is commonly contrasted with Rationalism. ‘Language’ is seen by the Behaviourists as a reflection of physical and psychological behaviour. The Behaviourists put emphasis on the external behaviour of the people and their reactions on given situations rather than the internal mental state of those people.

Noam Chomsky (1957) introduced his theory of Transformational-Generative Grammar and the Chomskians view ‘Language’ as a ‘Creative Faculty’, a ‘Concept’ or an ‘Intuition’ which is expressed as percept and linguistic expressions. (Majumdar, 1990, 2011).

It has been further explained by Dr. Majumdar, that in scientific study of language, it is ‘attitude’ and not ‘terminology’ which becomes more important. It is true that Dr. Chatterji could not be a theoretician as Saussure or Chomsky. To Dr. Chatterji language was not merely a ‘structure’ or ‘behaviour’ or a ‘stimulus-response relation’. Language is an evolutionary, varied and creative expression of human mind and soul. Dr. Chatterji revealed this nature of human speech in almost all of his works.
In his preface to *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* Prof. Chatterji gratefully remembers his teachers and supervisors who had helped him in his early training as a linguist and in the preparation of his *Magnum Opus*. With deep reverential gratitude he repeatedly mentions the names of Sir George Abraham Grierson, Prof. Jules Bloch, Prof. Antoine Meillet, Prof. Daniel Jones, Dr. L.D. Barnett, Dr. F. W. Thomas, Sylvain Levi. We may have a quick look at the works of these scholars while studying the historical background of Suniti Kumar Chatterji’s works.

**Sir George Abraham Grierson (1851-1941):** Sir G. A. Grierson, the main supervisor of Dr. Chatterji’s work *The Origin and Development of the Bengali Language* was himself a great surveyor in the field of Indo-Aryan Linguistics. He is known for his voluminous work *The Linguistic Survey of India* (1894-1928). This work published in XI volumes, intended to describe the language families and the descendant language spoken in the Indian subcontinent with reference to the history of socio-linguistic relationship that existed between India and other countries.

Sir George Grierson spent many years in Bihar as an administrator and with his rare linguistic capacity he studied the various dialects of Bihar. During this period, his works on comparative grammar of the dialects of Bihar were published. For his major work – the Linguistic Survey he enlisted the collaboration of some of the able and trained philologists of his time. The scholars like Sten Konow supported him enthusiastically. But the credit goes entirely to Grierson for planning such an outstanding work and every volume of this book bears his impression.
The first part of volume I of Linguistic Survey begins with a short history of the development of Linguistic Science and the study of Indian Languages by the western scholars. The other two part of this volume deal with Comparative Vocabulary of Indian Languages and Comparative Dictionary of Indo-Aryan languages. In the Volumes II to XI Grierson goes on surveying the languages families and languages and ends with a discussion on the Gipsy languages. The Indo-Aryan languages in India have been divided into five groups – (i) Eastern Group, (ii) Mediate Group (Eastern Hindi), (iii) Southern Group, (iv) North Western Group, (v) Central Group.

The Linguistic Survey was a much ambitious project. When Prof. Sukumar Sen, in his 'The Scholar and The Virtuoso' (1980), speaks of Dr. Suniti Kumar's achievements, he comments that Dr. Chatterji did not discuss exhaustively the dialect variations of Bengali. Grierson in the Linguistic Survey of India had done it for all Indian languages including Bengali. It would have required at least ten to fifteen years of strenuous research in order to go beyond Grierson and make out and exact linguistic map of India. Dr. Chatterji could have done it but unfortunately he did not, perhaps because of his rather heavy teaching load in the University. But the opportunity missed would never appear again. After the partition of India and later of Pakistan into two countries there has been heavy and repeated exodus – which has not yet stopped altogether the historical set up dialectal areas have been hopelessly disturbed, especially in West Bengal' (Sen, 1980: 32).
Sir Daniel Jones (1881-1967): It becomes clear from Chatterji’s ODBL and other works that Daniel Jones had a very high place of honour in Dr.Chatterji’s intellectual world. Sir Jones is considered as the greatest phonetician of the early twentieth century and Prof. Chatterji considers himself lucky to have him as his ‘S’ikṣāguru and as a warm friend and advisor.

Phonetics Studies – Sir Daniel Jones, Henry Sweet, Paul Passy and others: The British Phonetician Daniel Jones was born on September 12, 1881 in London. He was first introduced to phonetics in 1900 when he was studying at William Tilly’s Marburg Language Institute in Germany. From 1905 to 1906 he studied at Paris under Paul Edward Passy (1859-1940) who was one of the founders of the International Phonetic Association. He also took private lessons from another distinguished phonetician of the time – Henry Sweet (1845-1912). In 1912, Jones became the head of the Department of Phonetics of University College London and in 1921 he was appointed to a chair which he held till his retirement in 1949. from 1906 onwards Jones had become an active member of the International Phonetic Association and was its Assistant Secretary from 1907-1927, Secretary from 1927 to 1949 and President from 1950 to 1967.

Indian linguistics had often discussed the sound systems pf Sanskrit language but phonetic description of vowels had been a problem to the scholars for a long time. In the nineteenth century two British phoneticians made some valuable contributions. Alexander Melville Bell (1867) devised an ingenious iconic phonetic alphabet which included an elaborate system of
symbols for vowels. Alexander Ellis had also suggested vowel symbols for his phonetic alphabets. Henry Sweet aimed at systematic description of vowels but his vowel description was over-elaborate and involved a multitude of symbols. Daniel Jones greatly succeeded in the solution of this problem as he presented his scheme of 'Cardinal Vowels' which according to the scholars is a relative by simple system of reference vowels which for many years has been taught to the students within British tradition.

In 1909 Daniel Jones wrote *Pronunciation of English*. He later revised this book. *The Outline of English Phonetics*, Daniel Jones’ great contribution to phonetics, came out in 1918. This work is considered as the first truly comprehensive description of British Received Pronunciation and also the first such description of the standard pronunciation of any language.

Jones has used simple quadrilateral diagram for vowels. He has explained the articulation of Cardinal Vowels with the help of a dual-parameter system involving the supposed height of the tongue and the shape of the lips. Tongue-height which leads to the production of open and closed vowels is represented on the vertical axis. The position of the vowel – front and back on the horizontal axis indicates the position of the tongue (raised) on the horizontal axis. In this system lip-rounding is also represented, so that the front vowels such as [i,e,a] have spread or neutral lip postures, but the back vowel such as [o,u] have more marked lip rounding as the vowel height increases. Following this system Jones presented a set of eight ‘Primary Cardinal Vowels’ and recorded these on gramophone disc for H.M.V. in 1917. After modifications to his theory he described an additional set of
eight secondary cardinal vowels. He also devised symbols for central vowels and positioned these on the vowels diagrams.

Diagram illustrating the Tongue-position of the eight primary Cardinal Vowels

(Jones, 1979:36)

A more accurate form of vowel diagram

(Jones, 1979:36)
Prof. Antoine Meillet (1866-1936): Paul Jules Antoine Meillet was one of the famous masters of French Linguistics of 20th century and he may be called a leader of the modern movement in linguistics. Born on November 11, 1866, Meillet began his studies at Sorbonne. There he was influenced by Michael Breal, Ferdinand de Saussure and the members of Année Sociologique and continued with the trend of comparative grammar. In 1890, Meillet set off for a research trip to Caucasus and there he studied Armenian. When he returned, de Saussure had gone back to Geneva and Meillet succeeded the Swiss Linguist to continue with his lectures about comparative grammar.

Meillet had his doctorate — Research on the use of the Genitive Accusative in Old Slavonic in 1897. In 1902 he was appointed at a chair in Armenian at the Ecole des langues Orientales. In 1905 he was elected to the college de France where he taught on the history and structure of Indo-European languages with noted linguists Paul Pelliot and Robert Gauthiot.

A. Meillet dealt with various aspects of general and Indo European linguistics. Two of his main works are Linguistique historique et linguistique générale (1921), Introduction à l'étude des langues Indo-Europeennes (1903). He also wrote many monographs on almost every branch of Indo-European linguistics. In collaboration with J.Vendryes he published a Comparative Grammar of the classical languages. Meillet made some valuable contribution to the study of Iranian languages.

Prof. Sylvain Levi (1863-1936): A great and popular Indologist was Sylvain Levi, one of the beloved teachers of Shantiniketan who came there
as a visiting professor from France. Born in Paris on March 28, 1863, Sylvain Levi acquired knowledge of different unconnected languages as Sanskrit, Tibetan, Chinese, Nepali, and Iranian and so on. To him all these were part of one great whole – the cultural heritage of Asia. An important work of Sylvain Levi is *Theatre Indien* (1890). He also engaged himself in the earliest analysis of Tokharian fragments discovered in east Turkistan.

_Prof. Paul Pelliot (1878-1945):_ Paul Pelliot, a French Sinologist was a pupil of Sylvain Levi. He is better known to the scholars for his archaeological expedition to central Asia, where, after facing much trouble he returned to his country with valuable manuscripts. Pelliot was working at Ecole Francaise d’Extreme Orient in Hanoi and from there he started for Beijing in 1900, to search for Chinese books for Ecole’s library. During this mission, he was caught up in the boxer rebellion and trapped in the siege of foreign legation. Pelliot faced this situation with much boldness and courage and for his bravery he received the Legion d’honneur. He returned to Hanoi and at the age of 22 he was made a Professor of Chinese at the Ecole. Chinese was one of the 13 languages that Paul Pelliot spoke fluently. Pelliot was later elected Professor at the College of France.

On June 17, 1906 Pelliot started his expedition to Central Asia. He formed a three man team including Dr. Louis Vaillant, an Army medical officer and Charles Novette, a photographer. This team arrived at Kashgar in August and stayed with the Russian Consul-general. Here Pelliot impressed the Chinese official by speaking Chinese fluently. This relationship helped him greatly in his work.
From Kashgar the team stopped at Tumchuq. From Tumchuq they proceeded to Kucha. In Kucha, documents of the lost language of Kuchean were discovered by Pelliot and his associates. These documents were later translated by Sylvain Levi.

At Dunhuang, Pelliot could gain access to Abbot Wang’s secret chamber where many ancient manuscripts had been preserved. These were already observed by Sir Aurel Stein. Here also, Pelliot’s knowledge of Chinese language played an important role. Finally, he could convince Abbot Wang, by analyzing the manuscripts, and the Abbot agreed to sell to him a selection of the most important of the manuscripts. With these manuscripts Pelliot returned to Paris on October 24, 1909.

This great sinologist died of cancer in 1945.

Prof. Jules Bloch (1880-1953): In his preface to ODBL Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji mentions that Prof. Jules Bloch acted as a helpful guide and advisor while the work was being prepared in London in 1920-1921. The main scheme of Prof. Chatterji’s work follows the plan of Bloch’s *Formation de la Langue Marathe* (1915), *(1926)*

Prof. Jules Bloch was a French Indologist and a professor of Sanskrit and Indology in the College de France. He worked on Indian language families, especially Indo-Aryan. His deep and clear understanding of the growth and nature of Modern Indian languages enlightened the later scholars to a great extent. Prof. Jules Bloch’s work was interrupted by the Second World War when he had to leave his home in Sevres and spend his years in Germany as
he came from a Jewish family. After the end of the war he returned to Paris to continue with his work.

The Formation of Marathi Language (*Formation de la Langue Marathe*, 1915) was Bloch's finest and the most important work. According to Sir Grierson, *Langue Marathe* was no doubt the most important book dealing with the modern Indian languages that had appeared since the publication of Hoernle's Grammar of the Gaudian Languages in 1880. Among the other notable works of Jules Bloch are the monographs on Indo-Aryan and on Dravidian.

*The Study of Bengali Language and Grammatical Tradition in Bengal:* As Bengali Language was Dr. Chatterji's main subject of research, it becomes necessary for a scholar to have a glimpse of the history of Bengali Language study and grammatical tradition.

The study of Bengali Language and Grammar became the main interest of the Christian Missionaries in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The missionaries thought it necessary to use this language as a medium for spreading Christian ideals among the people of Bengal. So in order to meet the religious needs and for training the Portuguese missionaries, the first grammar of Bengali language was written.

The study of Bengali language by the Missionaries started in Bengal and its neighbouring areas in the eighteenth century when the missionaries of Portuguese origin came from Goa, the main religious centre of the Roman Catholic Church in India, and settled in the different places of East and West.
Bengal. Since missionaries aimed at promoting Christianity and Conversion to Christianity, they felt the need of studying Bengali language.

The book which is considered as the oldest grammatical work on Bengali language appeared in 1734. It was titled *Vocabulario em idioma Bengalla e Portuguez dividido em duas partes* – ‘The vocabulary of Portuguese and Bengali language’ was divided into two parts. It was written by Fr Manoel de Assumpcam. The first part of the look contains the laws related to Bengali grammar and the second part is a Bengali-Portuguese, Portuguese-Bengali dictionary. This book was not much appreciated by the later missionaries who worked on Bengali language and few of them knew about it. For this reason Nathaniel Brassey Halhed’s *Grammar of the Bengali Language* published from Hooghly in 1778 has been considered by the scholars of the nineteenth century as the first grammatical work on Bengali language. Halhed in his introduction to his grammar did not mention Assumpcam’s work and Halhed remarked that few of the Europeans who studied Bengali language did not care to find out the relationship of Sanskrit language with Bengali. So he considered their system to be imperfect. It is also notable that William Carey, too, in the introduction to his grammatical work (1801) considered Halhed to be the pioneer in this field of Bengali grammar. (Das, 2000: 15-16).

The name of Fr Assumcam is associated with two other books. Fr Assumcam translated a religious text from Portuguese to Bengali in 1734; it is titled *Creper Xaxtrer Orthbhed*. The second one is a Christian religious *Dialogue*, written by Dom Antonio de Rozario a Christian prince of Bhusana for the purpose of promoting Christianity.
Dr. Chatteji went to London in the year 1919 and with great interest he saw and copied the portions of this book. Two copies of the book have been preserved in the British Museum. George Abraham Grierson in his *Linguistic Survey of India* (Vol. V Part I, p.23) had mentioned the name of this book. Dr. Chatterji returned with the copy and photographs of the work for he was interested in translation of the work from Portuguese to Bengali. Later, the work was translated by Prof. Priyaranjan Sen. The translation work was edited by Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji and Priyaranjan Sen and it came out from University of Calcutta in 1931. (Chattopadhyay, 1989:263-264).

Dr. Chatterji has remarked that Fr Assumpcam deserves the admiration and respect of the people of Bengal, as the author of the first Bengali grammar. His translation work also marks the beginning of modern Bengali Prose. Fr. Assumpcam was very much devoted to the Latin ideals of writing grammar. But he only discussed Morphology and Syntax of Bengali Grammar and did not deal with Bengali Phonology separately. It was perhaps because he faced problems regarding dialectal variations in the pronunciation of Bengali words. He admitted that due to these variations it was not possible for a foreigner to frame general phonological rules for Bengali. To serve his purpose, Notably, Fr Assumpcam followed Portuguese methods of pronunciation and used Roman letters to represent Bengali sounds. (Das, 2000:27).

In 1734, Fr. Assumpcam wrote a small book on Bengali grammar in Portuguese. This book came out from Lisbon. The language described in this
book was not the general standard Bengali speech. It was the spoken language of the people in and around Bhawal, near Dacca, which was the main centre of Assumpcam. The spelling of the Bengali words, too, did not follow the standard Bengali script. The words were spelt according to the Portuguese pronunciation of the words spoken in the Bhawal area. Prof. Chatterji comments that Assumpcam did not care for the history of or the rich heritage of Bengali language. He thought it to be a mere spoken language of some uneducated folk.

In 1778, Nathaniel Brassey Halhed’s book on Bengali Grammar was published. This was the first grammar book written in Bengali script. It was published from Hooghly. The work revealed that Halhed had a good knowledge of Bengali language. He was aware of Bengali literature to some extent and had read some of the contemporary literary works. Not only that, he also knew that Bengali language had a long history and a rich heritage of grammatical study. Many of the later Indian and Western scholars followed the same track as that of Halhed.

In the period from 1801 to 1845 came out William Carey’s Bengali grammar, which was written in English. This work contains an elaborate discussion on Bengali language that was much helpful to Raja Rammohan Roy while he wrote his Gaurīya Vākaraṇ.

*Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833):* Raja Rammohan Roy was one of the first Indian scholars who seriously attempted to write a true grammar of Bengali language. Rammohan’s *Bengalee Grammar in the English*
Language came out from Unitarian Press in Calcutta in the year 1826. Rammohan Roy himself was the owner of this Press. The manuscript of Rammohan's *Gaurīya Vyākaran* was prepared in haste as Rammohan himself was making preparations for his trip to England. The School Book Society took the responsibility of revising and modifying the manuscript. Probably under the careful supervision of Raja Radhakanta Deb, who was one of the chief directors of the School Book Society, *Gaurīya Vyākaran* came out in 1833. Seventeen years later, another valuable work, Syamacharan Sarkar's *Brihadākār Bāṅglā Vyākaran* (1850) was published.

Raja Rammohan Roy analysed Bengali language from new angles. He had a sound knowledge of both Sanskrit and English. He studied some other languages as Persian, Arabic, Latin and Hebrew. The study of Sanskrit enabled him to find the similarities and differences between Bengali and its parent language Sanskrit. Earlier some scholars had totally accepted the rules of Sanskrit grammar for studying Bengali language and as a result of it they had failed to write Bengali grammar. On the other hand, Rammohan's knowledge of Western languages prompted him to accept Bengali as a modern (or New) Aryan language like English. The idea that Bengali language has a separate identity and it follows its own nature of development was first introduced by Raja Rammohan Roy. This idea was developed and established with stress in the philological works by Rabindranath Tagore. Finally, the task of scientific study of Bengali language, by placing it on the scales of time and space, was efficiently performed by Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji. In his article on Raja Rammohan
as a grammarian, Dr. Chatterji has discussed the significant contribution of Rammohan to the study of Bengali grammar.

While writing Bengali grammar, Raja Rammohan Roy has used many new terms and definitions for explaining Bengali phonology, morphology and syntax. As an example, we may find that he has used the Sanskrit term for ‘case’ but he has not accepted the meaning of the term completely. Instead, he has accepted the meaning of the Latin term ‘Casus’ and has used the Bengali word ‘parinaman’ (পরিমাণ) to represent this meaning. Following the view of the Greek grammarians, Rammohan has described the Nominative Case as standing straight or having an erect position (casus rectus) and the other cases as having inclined or oblique position. He followed the Gilchrist system in describing Bengali sounds. He also pointed out some differences between Sanskrit morphology and Bengali morphology.

With the appearance of Raja Rammohan Roy in the field of Bengali literature there was a remarkable change in Bengali Prose style. Earlier, Bengali prose was limited to text book writing. Later on Ramnam Basu’s Pratāpāditya Carit (1801) and Mrtyunjay Vidyalankar’s Batris’ Simhāsan (1802) showed some improvement in Bengali prose style, but here, too, Sanskrit words dominated over the Bengali words. In 1815 Rammohan Roy’s Vedanta Grantha was published. This work, much free from the fetters of Sanskrit, showed remarkable advancement in the development of Bengali Prose and it was Bengali language in the truest sense of the word. It is said that the foundation stone of Bengali Prose, which reached its highest
rank of excellence under Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore, was laid by Raja Rammohan Roy.

**Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891):** During this period of transition Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar greatly contributed to the development of Bengali prose, as well as to the study of Bengali language and grammar especially for the children and the new learners. Though in the translation works Vidyasagar could not go beyond the rules of translation, his creative genius unveiled itself in the works as *S’akuntalā* or *Sītār Banabās*.

Of Vidyasagar’s style of Bengali prose writing Ramgati Nyayratna commented that it was almost the first attempt to start the journey from darkness to light. Dr. Chatterji has quoted the words of Rabindranath Tagore to describe the wonderful style of Vidyasagar’s prose. (Chatterji, 1990:11-12). On one side there was the conservative Sanskritists’ culture with its prejudices and superstitions, on the other there was European education with its rationalistic views. In the midst of these two opposite currents, Vidyasagar prepared the mind of the Bengalee readers to accept their mother tongue as prestigious way of communication, as the speech of learned and refined people.

Vidyasagar’s *Varṇaparicay* Part I may be considered as the first scientific attempt to teach Bengali vowel and consonant system to the young and new learners. In the alphabet chart presented by the scholars as Madanmohan Tarkalankar, in his *S’is’usikṣā*, (Part I & II 1849, Part III 1850) there were
16 vowels and 34 consonants in the Bengali alphabet. But Vidyasagar in his *Varnaparicay* Part I (1855) presented 12 vowels and 40 consonants. Long ř and long ļ were dropped as they were not practically used and Anuswāra (a nasal letter) and Visarga, (unvoiced h-sound) were included in the list of consonants on the basis of pronunciation. Another nasal letter Chandrabindu (‘) was considered as a separate consonant and was placed at the end of the consonant chart. Thus Vidyasagar deviated from the blind imitation of Sanskrit grammar and freed the language study from being overburdened by irrelevant linguistic items borrowed from Sanskrit. His modifications made the language easy and more acceptable to the new learners. In part I and II of *Varnaparicay*, Vidyasagar introduces the language through logically arranged meaningful sound units – short rhythmic sentences. The first part of the book is divided into 25 different lessons on vowels, consonants, words, phrases, sentences etc. The second part is split into 10 lessons and teaches conjuncts, phrases and sentences with conjuncts - phalās (dependent consonant forms ) numbers, enumeration and exhortative essays. These are the simple steps which would gradually lead the young learner to the fascinating world of Bengali prose – its dramatic sequences, humour, the romance and thrill of story telling. (Saha, 2009:274-281).

In the later half of nineteenth century some Indian scholars presented grammatical works which had a very deep impact on the scholars who studied Bengali language in the twentieth century. The earlier missionaries as Nathaniel Brassey Halhed, William Carey, Graves Chamney Haughton
(Rudiments of Bengali Grammar, 1821) concentrated on the relationship of Bengali with Sanskrit. As a result of this, Bengali grammars produced by these Europeans became completely dependent on Sanskrit grammar. The Indian scholars attempted to present modified grammatical works in order to guide the language learners.

Shymacharan Sarkar’s *Introduction to the Bengalee Language adapted to Students who know English* appeared in 1850, and this book was divided into two parts. The purpose of the author was to teach ‘genuine Bengali grammar’ to the learners. This work served as a model for the scholars as Beames, Hoernle, Kellog who followed the methods of Comparative Grammar for the study of Indian languages.

Chintamoni Gangopadhyay brought out his *A Grammar of Bengali Language for the use of the Vernacular and Anglo-Vernacular schools* (1881). The work is significant because the author has introduced some new aspects of grammar to show the true nature and characteristics of Bengali language. The arrangement of grammatical items, as well as the treatment of these items is based on the contemporary linguistic studies. (Das, 2000:276). The author has drawn our attention to the heterogeneous nature of Bengali vocabulary – Sanskrit-based words, the indigenous or the ‘desi’ words and the loan words. Chintamoni Gangopadhyay’s work has been described by Suniti Kumar Chatterji as a bold attempt to write a systematic or true grammar of our mother language (Bengali). (Chattopadhyay, 1989: 12)
Nakuleswar Vidyabhusan’s *Bhāṣābodha Bāṅglā Vyākaran* appeared in 1898. It is an important milestone in the study of school grammar. The author did not accept or depend on the popular models of English or Sanskrit Grammars of his time. His *Bhāṣābodha* shows a free and liberal outlook in the treatment of grammatical items. Vidyabhusan’s linguistic speculations were inspired by Haraprasad Shastri. Tagore appreciated this work in his essay ‘Bhāṣār iṅgit’ (1904). The subjects of Bhāṣābodha were divided into three parts – the first part deals with phonetics, the second part with morphology the third part is a discussion on Bengali Syntax. This kind of arrangement was something new in the tradition of school grammars written in Bengali. Nakuleswar Vidyabhusan’s contribution has been mentioned by Dr. Chatterji in his discussion on the grammatical tradition of the Indian scholars in the Preface of *ODBL*. The treatment of Bengali gender system, the discussion on formation of words, prefixes and suffixes, Bengali syntax and such other items give the impression of the author’s greatness as a grammarian.

Hrishikesh Shastri’s *Bāṅgālā Vyākaran* was published in the year 1900. The book was divided into eight chapters. The grammatical items as gender number, adjectives etc. have been explained with numerous examples from Sanskrit and Bengali, The definitions and explanations of the rules followed the grammatical models of Sankrit. In some cases this work shows the author’s broad outlook in his treatment of a modern language, the speech and pronunciation as in the treatment of gender (Das, 2000:286). But the scholars have also pointed out the limitations of Shastri’s grammar. In order
to explain the impact of Sanskrit on Bengali, Shastri has become much dependent on Sanskrit rules and definitions.

*Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941):* In his preface to *ODBL*, Prof. Chatterji mentions an interesting fact. He speaks about the study of Bengali language in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and points out that it is a fascinating idea for the Bengalee scholars to find in Rabindranath Tagore, the great World Poet, a keen philologist as well. In Rammohan Roy’s work and in the works of Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar we may find good examples of modern Bengali prose, Rammohan Roy’s *Gaurīya Vyākaraṇa* may be accepted as one of attempts to write scientific grammar of Bengali language but it was Tagore, whose works showed much advancement in the analysis of the nature of Bengali language as a modern language of India. Tagore’s *Śābdatattva* (1909) and *Bāṅlā Bhāṣā Paricay* (1935) recorded his views on Bengali language.

In 1901 Rabindranath Tagore and Haraprasad Sastri played a vital role in initiating the movement related to the study of Bengali grammar. The ‘Sādhhu’ and ‘Calit’ controversy among the scholars was one of the main obstacles in the study of Bengali language and the forms that were closer to Sanskrit were given undue importance while some genuine Bengali words were rejected as ‘asādhhu’ or slang. The rules of Sanskrit grammar were applied for analysing Bengali. Through the publication of articles, debates and discussions in Bangiya Sahitya Parisad seminars, the leading scholars as
Rabindranath Tagore, Haraprasad Sastri, Hirendranath Dutta and others stressed the need of considering the language as a product of the intermixture of races through centuries – how this interaction had given the language certain characteristic features and a separate identity. The changes that the speech of Bengal suffered due to the changing political or socio-economic scenes and how this language had been enriched by Muslim rulers and Sufi saints, Vaisnab scholars and poets. Bauls, Fakirs, Kirtaniyas, different religious and cultural sects, must also be taken into account. Mahamahopadhyay Haraprasad Sastri expressed his valuable opinion on the history of Bengal – origin of the place names and appearance of Bengali words in the old manuscripts and records. Tagore explained that the close relationship between Bengali and Sanskrit must be studied carefully. A scholar with a sound knowledge of Sanskrit would certainly be in an advantageous position if he intended to study Bengali language but the differences between the two languages should always be kept in mind.

Tagore attracted the young learners to the beauty and grace of Bengali prose and poetry as he wrote his *Sahaj Pāth*. Interesting short lessons were composed for introducing the vowels, consonants and conjuncts. In the poems as ‘Hāṭ’ we find realistic scenes of a village market, while the other poems present the beautiful natural scenes of the villages or an imaginary funny picture of the city of Kolkata.

Tagore made an appeal to his associates for the collection and categorisation of ‘genuine’ Bengali words. In his essay on Bengali
Onomatopoeic words (part of S'abdatattva) Rabindranath Tagore presented lists of sound-based words which had not been included in Bengali dictionary, but without which discussions on Bengali vocabulary would ever remain incomplete. Tagore showed how these words not only represented different sounds of the natural world or our everyday life, they are often used as adjectives and adverbs to indicate the realisation of something abstract, to evoke a sense of fear, loneliness, sorrow, anger or discomfort. On the other hand the sound based words, when used as adjectives, gave exact description of an object – its size, shape, weight or colour. Some of these onomatopoeic words, when used as adverbs, gave clear images of how the action took place. The action words in English as ‘throbbing’, ‘gnawing’, ‘crawling’, ‘cutting’, ‘tearing’, ‘bursting’ etc are often used to describe physical conditions or feelings of a person. In Bengali such physical condition or feelings can be well represented by using onomatopoeic words.

The eminent Sanskrit scholar Ramendrasundar Trivedi (1864-1919), too was on the same track. His valuable contribution was an essay on Bengali Onomatopoeic words – ‘Dhvani Vicār’ (1907) published in Sahitya Parishat Patrika.

Tagore’s essay on Bengali pronunciation is not less interesting. He begins with some examples showing irregularities in the pronunciation of English words and explains in a humourous way how those irregularities affected the Bengalee children when they started their first lessons of English. He further tells us that he had a long cherished idea that such irregularities never existed in his own language, but his beliefs were shattered when he went
Deeper into the study of Bengali Language. Thus by collecting words from dictionaries he showed us how the vowel ‘a’ (অ) of Bengali varies in pronunciation in different words as ‘hari’ (Krishna) and ‘hara’ (Shiva) and pronunciation Bengali ‘j’ as Eng ‘j’ in ‘jahaj’ (ship) and as Eng. ‘z’ in the words as bhājte (to fry). He formulates some laws to account for these occurrences.

Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterji considers the essays of S'abdatattva as the first scientific attempt to study Bengali language, for these findings and research based works threw light on the language from all the four spheres of modern linguistic thought – Phonology, Morphology, Syntax and Semantics. Here he studies pronunciation, spellings, word formation – prefix and suffixes, word order in sentences, metrics, meaning, definition and origin of Bengali words.

Tagore’s Bānlabhāṣā Paricay is another modified and valuable collection of essays on the study of the characteristic features Bengali language. In the Preface of this collection Tagore explained that the mysterious relation that exists between Man’s psychological world and the world of human language fills his mind with wonder. An indomitable desire to solve this mystery drives him to linguistic analysis. But he describes himself as a traveler who can only kindle the interest among the other scholars regarding this study. But Suniti Kumar comments that the extraordinary and valuable findings of Tagore on Bengali language bear the impression of a linguist with deep scientific insight. Not only that, Tagore was well aware of the grammatical
and linguistic studies that had been carried out and were still going on throughout the world. He dedicated his Bāñlâbhäśā Paricay to Suniti Kumar hoping that this keen scholar would be the most ideal person capable of fulfilling Tagore's dreams by the pursuit of his linguistic studies related to Bengali.

*The new features of Dr. Chatterji's works*

The linguistic traditions of the East and West in different ages have so far been discussed. In Dr. Chatterji's works a wonderful assimilation of all these linguistic trends may be found. His study of the Vedas and the works of ancient Indian scholars greatly helped him to know the history of Indo-Aryan languages in India, to trace the development of the NIA languages like Bengali or Hindi. It also guided him in his understanding of the linguistic and cultural intermixture in India.

Prof. Chatterji studied the works of the missionaries who attempted to discover the relationship of Bengali with Sanskrit. He appreciated the works of the later Indian Grammarians who helped the scholars to understand the true nature of Bengali language. The models of Comparative Grammar of the Indian languages — the works of Beames, Hoernle, Kellogg, Bhandarkar, Bloch and Grierson served as the sound base for Dr. Chatterji's work, when he compared the forms of Bengali language to those of other Indian languages.

Prof. Suniti Kumar Chatterji's approach to the Indian Languages was more matured and modified than the approaches of his predecessors. He was
devoted scholar who engaged himself to the study of language as a strict 'discipline'. His historical and comparative studies helped him to discover many new aspects of language. On one hand he has connected a New Indo-Aryan (NIA) language as Bengali to Old Indo-Aryan (OIA) and Middle Indo-Aryan (MIA) languages and traced the development of Bengali. On the other, in the treatment of Bengali language, the Bengali forms have been compared the forms of other Indian languages. A perfect balance in the methods of writing grammar has been maintained. While the Sanskrit forms have found their proper place, study of 'pure' Bengali forms, their nature and characteristic features have been considered as more important. Thus in the works of Suniti Kumar Chatterji 'a harmonious combination of the Old and New' (Chatterji, 1993, ODBL, Epilogue: 111), or the perfect agreement between the diachronic and the synchronic methods may easily be discovered. Dr. Chatterji's training as an Indian Linguist and his achievement as a scholar and a Humanist will be our object of discussion in the following chapters.