



Charles Moskey

SIR
ASUTOSH MOOKERJEE
A STUDY

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BY
PROBODH CHANDRA SINHA

With A Foreword By
PROF. C. V. RAMAN, D.S.C., F.R.S.
And An Introduction By
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TO MY
DEPARTED FATHER

Our best thanks are due to the Hony. Secretary,
Calcutta Review for permitting us to use some of their
blocks in this book.—Publishers.

PREFACE



The present work, as its title indicates, is really a study of the various aspects of the life and character of the great man who was universally regarded as the most powerful personality and the greatest reformer in the realm of higher studies and researches in the India of today. It is neither an ideal biography, nor has it any pretensions to completeness. But it aims at giving a glimpse of the great man in his many-sided interests and wide-ranging activities; it seeks to give an estimate of his complex character and his virile and versatile personality, to review his lifework and to interpret his life, indicating the part it played in our national life and in the forward march of our country to its higher and nobler destiny.

The work was originally begun four years ago; in the course of preparation and publication, it has passed through many vicissitudes, along with the author.

Messrs. R. Cambray & Co. had first taken up the task of publication; when it was nearing completion, by mutual consent, the task was transferred to the present publishers—Messrs. The Book Company Ltd.—to whom his thanks are due for the alacrity with which they brought it to a finish

PREFACE

in a short time ; he is also thankful to Mr. S. C. Kerr of Messrs. R. Cambray & Co, and Mr. N. C. Sen of Sakha Press for their courtesy and consideration.

It is the author's pleasant duty to acknowledge his deep indebtedness to the large circle of his friends and well-wishers, who have been good enough to extend their sympathy and help in this his first literary venture. From its very inception Mr. Panchanan Mittra, M. A., P. R. S. and his brother Mr. Pulin Krishna Mittra, M. A. have been an unfailing source of help and inspiration. Then at a critical period he received enthusiastic encouragement from no less a personage than Dr. C. V. Raman ; just before the book went to press, Dr. N. C. Ganguly, then Literary Secretary, National Council. Y. M. C. A. offered him enthusiastic support. Prof. Radhakrishnan, too, evinced the keenest interest in this work and gave him active help and advice, lately. He is also grateful to Sir Ewart Greaves and Sir P. C. Ray for their generous encouragement. He cannot, however, fail to mention his debt of gratitude to Rai Bahadur Dr. B. K. Roy, Civil Surgeon (Retd.), Purulia, who treated him and cheered him up in his protracted illness.

In conclusion, he must ask for the indulgence of his readers for the misprints and defects which he could not remedy in the present edition.

PREFACE

The author's task is now finished—at least, for the present. Most that comes rushing to his mind after four years of trials and tribulations, must now remain unsaid. He has striven and spared himself no pains, and the result?—the result he is content to leave in the lap of the gods.

*16-19, Beleghata Main Road, }
Calcutta, 17th September, 1928.*

P. C. SINHA

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FOREWORD

Few will question that a biography of Sir Asutosh Mookerjee is well worth writing. The extraordinary abilities and personality of the man commanded admiration and respect from all, and a record of his life and achievements cannot fail to prove an inspiration to his countrymen, young and old, both now and in future generations. Combining in himself the intellectual outlook of a great scholar with the Napoleonic vigour of a man of action, Sir Asutosh had few equals in his life-time, either in India or outside it. In attempting, for the first time, to collect the available materials concerning the life of Sir Asutosh and presenting them in a readable form, Mr. Sinha has rendered a distinct public service. It must have required no little courage for one not previously known as an author and possessing no resources or influence, to venture upon such a task. I plead for a favourable and indulgent consideration of his efforts and commend them to the notice of the public.

210, Bowbazar Street, Calcutta,

The 10th September, 1928.

C. V. RAMAN

INTRODUCTION

BY

Sir P. C. Ray

The sixties of the last century drew into Bengal some of the mightiest souls who were destined to leave their mark in almost every field of international culture. Vivekananda who carried the banner of Hinduism in the Chicago Parliament of Religion, Rabindra Nath Tagore who won the Nobel prize from Sweden, J. C. Bose who founded the Temple of Science in the India of today, were all born within a few years in the early part of the decade ; it was this decade which ushered in as well the mightiest academic organizer and builder in the domain of higher studies and researches and closed with the birth of that champion of national emancipation and freedom, that unflinching friend of suffering humanity—Deshabandhu Chittaranjan Das. It seemed as if the mighty spirit of Civa was astir in all the fields of thought and knowledge and was everywhere breaking down barriers for sowing the seeds of new creations. In a recent remarkable brochure 'The Dance of Civa' ('Today and Tomorrow' series) Collum points out to some of these heroic figures, "as a conveniently identifiable point from which to date the dawn of new thought, just as today we put our finger on Socrates when we wish to

focuss our view of the beginning of that new thought which inspired the West for centuries.”

Is it a mere coincidence that all these pioneering souls were stirred by the same spirit ; of each of whom could be said, as has been said by the author, of Sir Asutosh : ‘He worked for the ‘Return Movement’ in India ; he laboured to bring about a wide-ranging Indian Renaissance, an intellectual regeneration through a nation-wide progress of education ...he made it the mission of his life to blot out the stigma of India’s cultural inferiority, to explode the fiction of her intellectual defeat and raise her once more to her lofty pedestal of glory.” But it would be a gross misreading, a superficial estimate, a skin-deep interpretation, if only the forces of reaction are seen moving in any of these. Too deep and original, each was pulsated by a keen national instinct to create a new age, to bring forth a new life in the old *corpus* of India’s national heritage. The Hindu spirit of conserving the old forms as much as possible and yet transforming them out of all recognition by new leaven was always there.

It is too early in the day to judge of Sir Asutosh’s achievement by the stability of the measures carried out by him ; but it is quite clear that his life and activities were, as has been nicely put by the author, of a piece with those of other great nation-builders of India who are the direct products of the movements destined to herald a higher,

holier, deeper humanity to come. It is in this sense that each of the mighty personalities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in a land with scarcely a political being of her own, has a world importance. It is quite true that their comparative worth would be appraised more or less by the depth and intensity of their inner ideas, by their breadth and universality of culture, as also by their success in the field of action; it is in the last category that Sir Asutosh would figure along with many a national hero.

A mere slavish imitation of the dazzling glories of the resplendent West would not have entitled him to the gratitude of posterity. Had not the things he fought for somewhere, somehow—deeper roots within the very heart of the nation, had they not been quick with the pulsations of a new life of the nation, nay of the new world-age slowly but surely coming into being, even a fraction of his success could not have been achieved by him and his words and actions could not have become the mottoes and models of his contemporaries.

Alas! when India herself is still but an object of ridicule and pity, it is hardly the time to judge her great men; but when the faint glimmering dawn of today bursts forth in the glory of her midday sun and the ideas for which our national heroes worked receive their fruition, contemporary records will be eagerly canvassed by the historian of our period.

Posterity will judge Sir Asutosh, and rightly too, as the greatest reformer, 'a creative force,' in the realm of education and research—as the author has eloquently said. Indeed, the vital problem of a nation—particularly of a nation, in the firm grip of a foreign power and weighed down with many age-old customs and usages, yet destined and determined to come into her own in the world of nations—its problem is mainly in the field of education. Its educational methods indicate its sincerity and fitness in the preparation for the achievement of that goal. When the Indian ideal of life as the seer K. C. Satyasrayi points out, is accepted to be the building-up of a perfect body for a perfect mind and the perfect mind for the highest spirituality, it will be recognised that we need scientific, vocational and economic education; secondly, culture of the highest thoughts; and thirdly, spiritual meditation. India, when she finds her own, would not stop short of any ideal which does away with this tripartite system of education—material, mental and spiritual. Perhaps to Sir Asutosh was not given the task of creating a new world of his own and to forge a new system which would be at once the admiration and despair of the world; but to him was surely given to work out the miracle of naturalizing a plant of temperate zone in a tropical region on which it was languishing so long under artificial conditions; so that it could burst forth in the open

air with the grandeur of tropical foliage. Here again, as the biographer has very rightly pointed out, what Dr. Rajendra Lall Mitra tried to do by refusing to sail abroad, yet beating the best Western savants in their own fields by personal achievements, what the Science Association of Dr. Mohendra Lall Sircar and Bengal National Council of Education were trying to give shape to with indifferent results, —thanks to the non-co-operation of the Government with the people—Sir Asutosh brought about with great success.

Nationalism and internationalism in culture are problems of the deepest moment today. Sir Asutosh tried to sink his fountains of education deep into the wells of national traditions with the help of a foreign machinery and at the same time took care that the fountain provided the most delicious beverage to all nations. He tried to rise above parochial patriotism which is eating into the very vitals of the body politic and his curricula in Vernaculars and History would show how much anxious he was to bring about a synthesis between Bengal and the other Provinces of India; all these indicate his healthy enlightened and intense nationalism.

Asutosh would be recognised as one of the greatest of Indians —one who tried to build up a nation, to force her pace and to bring her up to the level of the advancing nations of the West, by rousing her sense of past glory as much as by trying

to evoke national self-respect and quicken national self-consciousness and self-confidence by her present achievements. Indeed he fondly dreamt of making Calcutta a centre of Indian culture before the transfer of Capital gave a rude shock to his cherished desires ; but he did not try to create a new centre like Benares or Aligarh around the aspirations of newly growing communal currents.

Veteran fighters and workers, redoubtable leaders and patriots—men who had grown grey in the service of their country, men who had been in the thick of the fight—all looked to him to guide and lead the nation on to victory in the wider fields as he had done in the academic sphere. For it was recognised that he had the unbounded self-confidence and unique moral and intellectual equipments and resourcefulness to work out the salvation and uplift of his country with the conditions imposed by history; and it was nothing short of a grim national calamity that he was taken away from us too early to begin and to bring this work to fruition.

*University College of Science,
92, Upper Circular Road,
Calcutta
Dated 7th August, 1928*

P. C. RAY

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ootnote	and he received	he received
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23	just	jest
13	coga	choga
2	as	us
16	after the words	‘can not’ put ‘be’
5	madding	maddening
20	শক্রসংহিতা	শক্রসংহিতা
26	Kaylay	Cayley
4	unwitten	unwritten
28	is	it
30	relavent	relevent
30	asprise	apprise
6	deciplinary	disciplinary
15	petiont	petition
22, 27	rub	rob
5	disclosses	discloses
26	ordians	ordains
20	omit	‘their’
14	ther	their
14	famework	framework
23	Lylvain	Sylvain
27	unwary	unweary
3	emitate	imitate
3	emultate	emulate
2	tireless	tireless

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