

HARIDAS MUKHERJEE

BENOY

KUMAR

SARKAR

(A STUDY)



HARIDAS MUKHERJEE

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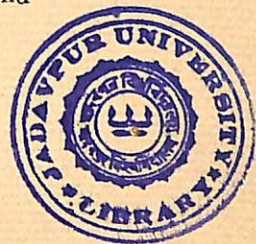
By

Prof. HARIDAS MUKHERJEE,

Author of *Viplaver Pathe Bangali Nari,*

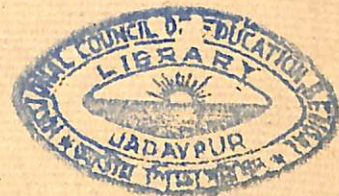
Mukti-Andolane, Abhedananda and

Benoy Sarkarer Baithake.



With a Foreword by

Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji, M.P.,
M.A., Ph.D., D. Litt.



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Dedicated
to
My Father
Sreejut Manasha Charan Mukherjee

Handwritten notes:
380
Presented by
Dr. H. D. Mukherjee
8-5-53

Handwritten notes:
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CONTENTS

	Page
AUTHOR'S PREFACE	vii
FOREWORD BY DR. RADHA KUMUD MOOKERJI	viii—xiii
I. LIFE-SKETCH	
Brilliant University Career—In the Swadeshi Movement (1905-1914)—In World-tour (1914-1925)—Encyclopaedic Scholarship—His Originality—Sarkarian Style—Impact of Sarkarism—Vivekananda, Tagore and Sarkar As Viewed by the West—Career in India (1925-1949)—Services to Bengali Literature—Last Days (March-November, 1949)	1—25
II. SERVICES TO BENGALI LITERATURE	
1905-1914—1914-1925—1926-1949	26—37
III. AS AN EXPONENT OF WORLD-CULTURE	
Theory of East-West Difference Challenged—Doctrine of East-West Equality—Evolution of Sarkarism—Sarkar's Message	38—53

IV. APPENDICES

Social Philosophy of a New Democracy (by Benoy Sarkar)—Death of a Pioneer (Leading Editorial, *Hindusthan Standard*, 26th Nov., 1949)—Professor Sorokin's Tribute—Dr. Beni Madhab Barua's Appreciation of Sarkar—Dr. Sri Kumar Banerjee's Tribute—Dr. Walter Leifer's Appreciation of Sarkar—My Reminiscences of Benoy Sarkar (by Hemendra Prasad Ghose)—Benoy Sarkar As I Saw Him (by Kedarnath Chatterjee, Editor, *The Modern Review*).

55—75

216
Bib

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The book has grown out of my several articles on late Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar, originally published in the Calcutta journals such as *The Nation* (Dec. 5, 1949 and Nov. 24, 1950), *The Statesman* and *The Hindusthan Standard* (January, 8, 1950), *Eur-Asia* (January, March, 1950 and Dec., 1952), *The Modern Review* (Feb., 1950 and Feb., 1953), *The Calcutta Review* (April, 1950) and *The Presidency College Magazine* (Feb., 1950). The book is to be appraised as a section of my complex of studies in the *Social and Cultural Dynamics of Bengal Since 1905*. In the preparation of this work I have frequently utilised *The Social and Economic Ideas of Benoy Sarkar* edited by Prof. Banervar Dass in collaboration with thirteen other scholars (Calcutta, 1940, second edition, pp. 690).

I am profoundly indebted to Advocate Atul Chandra Gupta, a class-mate and life-long friend of Benoy Sarkar, and Sreejut Birendra Nath Dasgupta, a pupil of Sarkar of the Swadeshi days, who have generously helped me to bring out this book. My sincere gratitude is also due to Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji for his kind Foreword to my book. Nor should I fail to convey my heart-felt thanks to Profs. Tarit Kumar Mukherjee and Ajit Kumar Ghosh as well as to Messers Ranajit Kumar Sen and Kalidas Mukherjee who have helped me in numerous ways. Finally, I must express my deep gratitude to all those scholars who have responded to my request to send papers on Benoy Sarkar for incorporation in this work.

HARIDAS MUKHERJEE

FOREWORD

Next in 1905 we left the Eden Hindu Hostel together and lived for some time at a mess with the famous name as Field and Academy under its guardian Swami Brahmabandhav Upadhyaya, a Roman Catholic Christian, who was a fearless patriot and an uncompromising critic of British rule whose doings he criticised in the Bengali evening daily known as *Sandhya*. In fact, in those stirring days following the Partition of Bengal in 1905, the country was passing through a regular Revolution known as the Swadeshi Movement and all students like ourselves were caught in its grip. The intellectual leaders of this movement were Bepin Chandra Pal, Satis Chandra Mukherjee, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Hirendra Nath Datta and Sister Nivedita, while its organisers were men like Rashbehari Ghose, Sir Gooroodas Banerjee, Ashutosh Chaudhury and Byomkesh Chakravarti, the then leading lawyers of the country.

But the real strength of the movement came from its youthful votaries of whom Benoy Kumar was one of the foremost in his uttermost self-sacrifice in the cause of National Education which was the most important manifestation of the general Revolution that broke out in the country, with its extreme expression in acts of violence and terrorism. National education as a movement was organised and consolidated, thanks to the strenuous exertions of men like Satis Chandra Mukherjee, in the National Council of Education by which as a parent-body the Bengal National College was started in Calcutta and national schools were established at several Mofussil centres in affiliation to it. Benoy Kumar took the lead in the extension of National Education Movement to the districts. The two national schools which he founded by his personal efforts and organising ability at Malda and his ancestral place at the village of Sanhati in Vikrampur, were models of such schools, combining literary education with manual training like the latter-day *Basic Schools*. Even in those days manual training was counted as a part of liberal education, the training of the hand being given equal value with the training of the mind. Benoy Kumar further contributed to the cause of National Education in the country and to Freedom's battle which thus first began in India, in Bengal, by his lectures,

FOREWORD

It is sad for a senior friend to survive his younger comrade and be called upon to introduce his life and work to the public. At the same time I cannot shirk what I consider to be my duty, however grievous, of responding to the request made to me by one of Benoy Kumar's devoted disciples that I should write a Foreword to his study of that fascinating personality. But I feel that I had been too near him to be able to present properly a view of him in its true perspective and in a spirit of detachment which marks the scientific attitude. I sometimes feel that I am too full of him to be able to do justice to his unique character and attainments.

I first saw Benoy Kumar in 1901 as a boy of thirteen who had established a record by standing first in that young age at what was then called the Entrance Examination of the Calcutta University as a student of Maldah Zilla School. After the result of the Examination was out, boy Benoy was led by mere accident in the summer of that year to Berhampore which is my native place and home where we first met and at once there grew up an intimacy between us as if it was a bequest from our previous lives. Benoy was at once admitted by my superiors as a member of our household at Berhampore where he practically spent with me the whole of the Summer Vacation. I was then a student of the Presidency College, Calcutta, and a resident of the Eden Hindu Hostel and Benoy also followed suit and so we were together for years.

Next in 1902 I fell under the charm of the personality of the late Satis Chandra Mukherjee, the founder-organiser of the Dawn Society which was located in a room at the Vidyasagar College, then called the Metropolitan Institution. The Society was founded in 1902 and I became very intimately connected with it since its very inception. Following my lead, Benoy also joined the Dawn Society and became a very prominent member of that institution.

writings, pamphleteering, journalism and books of which the number is legion. His enthusiasm for the national cause endowed him with an indefatigable energy which found its outlet in all forms of public activity.

It was left chiefly to Benoy Kumar and my humble self to give an unexpected impetus to the National Education movement by securing from one of our friends a substantial donation by which the promising students of the Bengal National College were to be sent abroad for higher education. I cannot but in this connection make a reference to a strange episode (1910) which ranks as romance in real life. It is the contribution made by a nameless friend of National Education of a substantial sum of rupees thirty thousand of which, unfortunately, Benoy Kumar and myself were compelled to name ourselves as donors. This sum was also paid to us in a most romantic manner. At about 1 P.M. in our mess at 62 Amherst Street the real donor came upstairs into our room on the second floor and delivered to us a steel trunk with its precious contents, and without tarrying a moment went away hurriedly down the steps saying: "Take here my promised contributions." We opened the box and found it packed with rupees thirty thousand in ten-rupee notes. We felt highly embarrassed at this unusual event showing how fact is sometimes stranger than fiction. In the course of our previous conversations with that nameless donor it was agreed that the best plan for doing good to the country in its present circumstances would be to send select youths of the National College for higher training, general as well as technical, to the U.S.A. in preference to the U. K. This plan was to be financed by the donor who at once implemented his promise by making the aforesaid payment. The detailed scheme was soon prepared by Hirendra Nath Datta, the Secretary of the National Council of Education, to the effect that scholars who would be selected for study abroad should after completion of their study have to serve the National Council of Education for a period of seven years on a certain salary which it could afford. Among these scholars sent abroad may be mentioned the following: Narendra Nath Sengupta, who stood first in all the examinations

of the Harvard University from Matric up to Ph.D., and became known as a most prominent Professor of Philosophy, and especially Experimental Psychology; Hiralal Roy, the distinguished Professor of Chemical Engineering, who, true to the agreement aforesaid, devoted his life to service in that national institution known as Jadavpur College of Engineering and Technology; Banesvar Dass, Prof. of Chemical Engineering; Hemchandra Das-Gupta, Superintendent, Jadavpur Engineering College; Bejoy Kumar Sarkar, Professor, Economics Department, Calcutta University; Birendra Nath Das-Gupta, the founder of the Indo-Swiss Trading Corporation; Hemendra Kishore Rakshit who is doing flourishing business in New York; Surendra Nath Bal who rose to be the Director of Botanical Survey of the Government of India and a few others.

Now, resuming the thread of the main story, both Benoy and I were faced by a difficulty and a dilemma as to the disposal of the large sum which was thrust into our pocket. We should not, as indigent students living in a mess, be found in the possession of the money except under very suspicious circumstances. We were at our wit's end as to what to do with the money. A plan then came to us suddenly in a flash that we should forthwith carry the money away from the mess to a safe person and keep it in his custody. That person we thought of was no less a person than Dr. Rashbehari Ghose, the President of the National Council of Education, then living on Theatre Road.

Dr. Rashbehari Ghose on hearing the details of the story—story of this donation—burst out saying: "Is it possible in this age that the left hand does not know what the right hand doeth? Does such a self-less person really exist in this world?" Then he importunately asked us "Can you not possibly reveal to me the name of this donor when I know personally most of the rich people of the country as my clients?" We were of course bound by a solemn promise to the donor that he should remain nameless. And that was a very condition of his donation. Then Dr. Rashbehari Ghose in an emotional outburst said: "I have been, through life engaged in the work of transferring Shyama's wealth to Hari and Hari's to Shyama as

my profession, but I can assure you that all my earnings from such an intrinsically meaningless profession will be ultimately devoted to the cause of the country. I would have served humanity much better if I had with all my brain devoted myself to a scientific discovery or invention like J. C. Bose."

When all the ebullition of emotions subsided, we settled down to business and Dr. Rashbehari Ghose readily accepted our humble proposal that he should at once appoint a committee to take charge of the fund with himself as its Chairman and Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandi of Cossimbazar, as its Treasurer. We then consigned the whole cash to the custody of Dr. Rashbehari Ghose, came away with our hearts completely at ease and undertook the task of implementing the purpose of the donation by selecting suitable scholars for their study in the U.S.A., as already stated.

Next, in 1914 Benoy Kumar went abroad accompanied by Babu Shiva Prasad Gupta of Benares, who latterly became one of the leaders of the Indian National Congress as its Treasurer. We thus became separated from each other after years of common life in a common home and I felt that is was now given to me to plough the lonely furrow. He spent more than a decade in his foreign travel which he utilised by learning several European languages. He was quite at home in French and German, Italian and Spanish. He had unique gifts for foreign contacts and counted some of the foremost statesmen of Germany, France and America as his friends. He was on very intimate terms with the German Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg with whom he discussed the possibilities and plans of an Indian Revolution and rising against British Power. A very intimate friend who was a source of inspiration to both Benoy Kumar and Shiva Prasad Gupta was Lala Lajpat Rai who sailed in the same boat with them from England to America.

I do not think it is quite fair to utilise the opportunity of a Foreword to give details of the life and work of Benoy Kumar Sarkar on whom Professor Haridas Mukherjee has carried on such a comprehensive study which will surely enable his readers to obtain a correct and concrete view of Benoy Kumar's versatile genius and saintly character. One could always feel in coming into close contact with him that

he was in the world and not of it. He hardly thought and acted in terms of the narrow self but always in the larger terms of the country as a whole with a distinctively cosmopolitan mind and international outlook as the fruit of his world-wide travel and experience gained by a study of western life and thought for a total period of fourteen years. When he finally returned to India, I got a vivid impression that he brought with him the German analytical mind, the French intellect for comparative study and the American spirit of methodical work with his varied talents and remarkable linguistic equipment. It is a pity that these were not properly utilised by the country and I feel sad to think that in a sense, like most great men of the world, he did not get his dues in life which was somewhat marked by a subdued sense of frustration. But that is of no consequence to his intrinsic greatness which is independent of outer public recognition. I take consolation from the words of truth uttered by the poet Taylor :

"The world knows nothing of its greatest men."

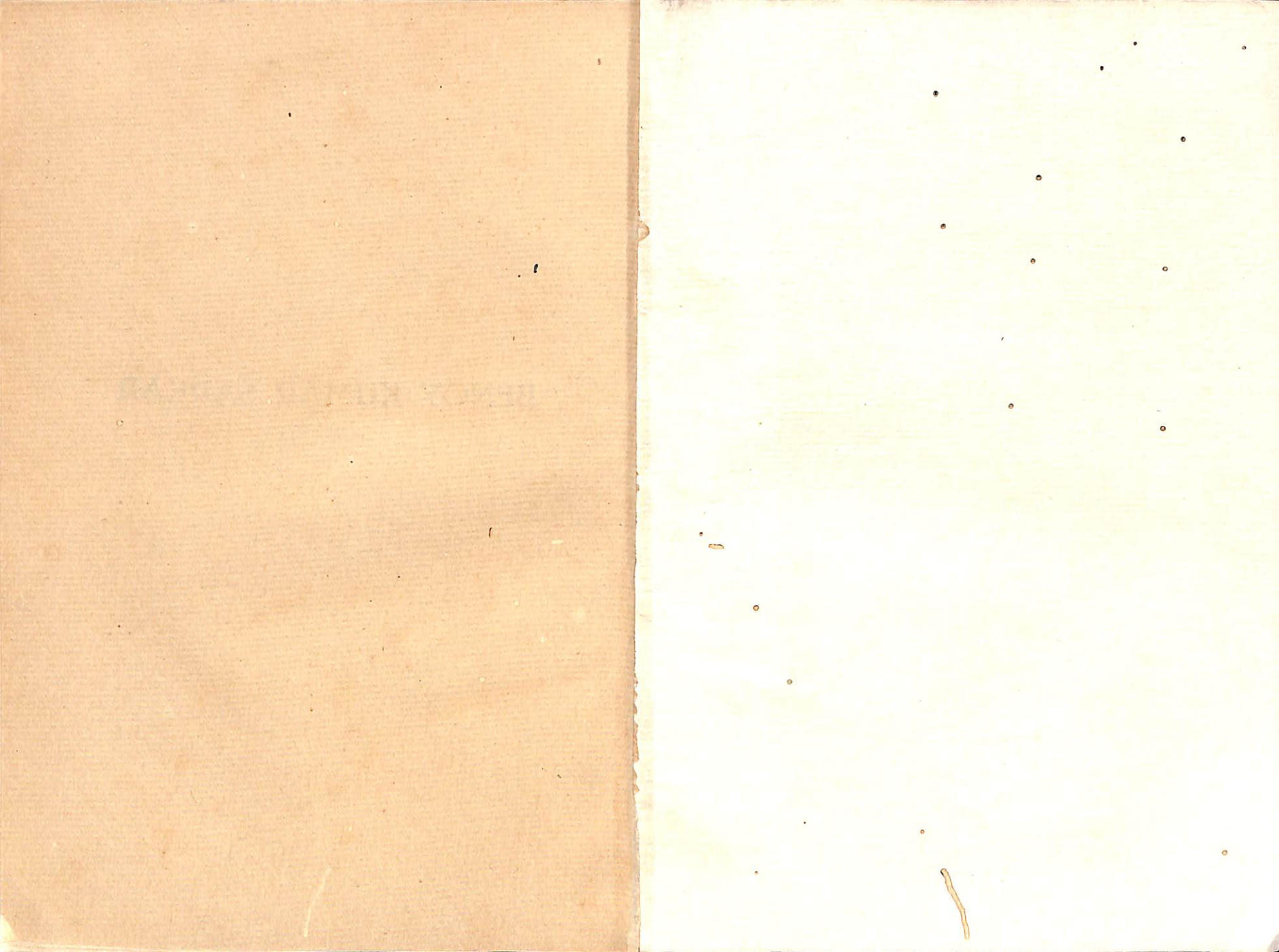
I pray that the spirit of Benoy Sarkar's life and work be embodied in a permanent form in some special institution, drawing together cultured youths to follow in his footsteps under the inspiration of his unique example in scholarly study and social service.

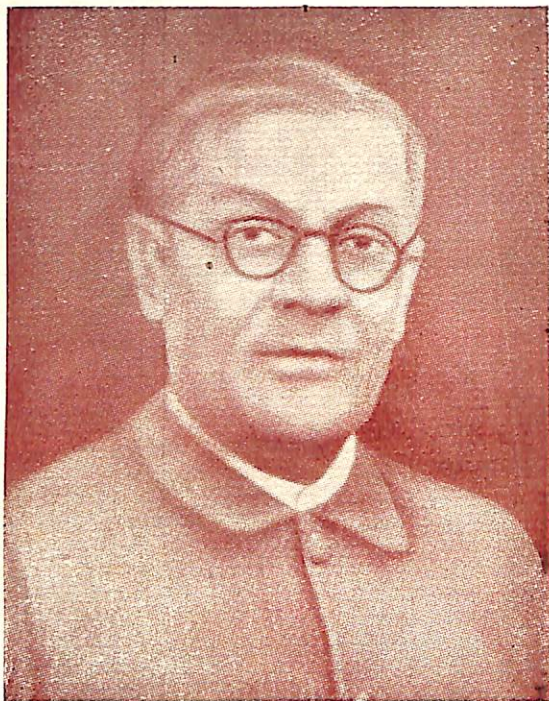
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21 January, 1953.

RADHA KUMUD MOOKERJI,
Member of Parliament

BENOY KUMAR SARKAR

(A STUDY)





Benoy Kumar Sarkar

BENOY KUMAR SARKAR

(A STUDY)

CHAPTER I

LIFE-SKETCH

Benoy Kumar Sarkar (December 26, 1887—November 24, 1949) was one of the most creative and original thinkers of our age. He was in the line of those Titans of Bengal whose creative vision and strenuous activities carved out for India an enduring address in the modern world. His creative career started with the initial year of the Glorious Bengali Revolution (1905-14) and persisted with all its freshness and vigour till his death in 1949. During this period the face of the earth has undergone tremendous transformations. At the beginning of the period (1905), we find the entire Asia being helplessly dominated by the 'alleged superior races' of the West. Again, it was since 1905,—the year of the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal and of Japan's victory over Russia at Portsmouth,—that the whole of Asia felt the stir of a new life and declared its will to independence. The inauguration of the Mao's Regime of New Democracy in China (October 1, 1949), the birth of republican Indonesia (December 27, 1949) and the establishment of the Sovereign Indian Republic (January 26, 1950) represent some of the latest and most important terms

BENOY KUMAR SARKAR

in the series of Asian emancipation from Western domination. In this period of storm and stress, India had changed almost in a revolutionary manner, both ideologically and institutionally. Himself being a product of this revolutionary change, Benoy Sarkar was in a very real sense a mighty factor in speeding up this change. If India is to-day politically free and if the Orient and the Occident have come to-day to a better and more reasonable understanding than before, it is not a little due to the persistent intellectual activities and cultural propaganda of Benoy Kumar. Few of our national leaders had worked in foreign lands with greater zeal and sincerity than Sarkar in order to gain for India a footing of equality with the Western races. In any study of Benoy Sarkar this bit of factual history deserves to be carefully noted. Writing about Sarkar's *Futurism of Young Asia* (Leipzig, 1922) and *Creative India* (Lahore, 1937), Dr. Karl Haushofer, a leading German thinker and father of *Geopolitik* observed :

"Benoy Kumar Sarkar has, in addition to his other activities full of overpowering capacity, twice had the good luck to render the best of his services to the millions of his struggling countrymen in order to obtain self-consciousness in the political world, the first time with the bold constructive conception of his *Futurism of Young Asia*, and now in the maturity of his life with *Creative India*. Two such works carry a great people further onwards in the culture-political front of the world than dozens of agitation-speeches and hundreds of brochures by demagogues. He is one of the rare but great cultural mediators between East and West and knows the actualities of Asia and Europe in their fundamentals as few."

LIFE-SKETCH

BRILLIANT UNIVERSITY CAREER

Born at Malda in Bengal in 1887, Benoy Sarkar received his early education there and stood first in the Entrance Examination of the Calcutta University at the age of thirteen. His college career at the Presidency College (1901—06) was equally brilliant. In 1905 he secured a First class First in double Honours (English and History) and obtained the renowned Ishan Scholarship of the year as the best Honours student of the University. Next year he took his M.A. degree in English. He was then a prominent figure in the academic world of Calcutta. He proved himself to be a student of exceptional gifts and veteran scholars of that time recognised in him a potential intellectual leader of the country in near future. As a student Benoy Sarkar kept lively contacts with diverse men, institutions and movements. Among his college associates and intimate friends of that time (1901—06) may be mentioned, among others, the names of Haran Chakladar (Anthropologist), Radhakumud Mookerji (Historian), Radhakamal Mookerji (Economist), Rajendra Prasad (Congress leader), Atul Chandra Gupta (Advocate and Litterateur), Upendra Nath Ghoshal (Historian), Girindra Shekhar Bose (Psycho-analyst), late Rabindra Narayan Ghose (Principal, Ripon College), late Nripendra Chandra Banerji (Educationist), and late Rakhaldas Banerjee (Archaeologist and Historian).

IN THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT (1905-14)

It is worthwhile to observe that the period (1905—14) was one of great storm and stress for Young Bengal.

The Swadeshi Revolution declared itself on 7th August, 1905 and swept over the country in no time. The call of service for the Motherland found a deep echo in young Benoy's mind. In that atmosphere of challenge and boycott he gave the first proof of his patriotism by rejecting the India Government's State Scholarship as well as the most covetable offer of the day of a Deputy Magistrate (1906). He had practically no charm for them. He was made of an entirely different stuff. The dream of country's freedom,—political, economic and cultural,—was the *elan vital* of him. Soon he was drawn into the heart of that epoch-making movement. The ideological foundations of the Bengali Revolution in its economic-cultural aspects were laid in the country by the late Satish Mukherjee (1865—1948) even before 1905. Satish Mukherjee was the pioneer of the National Education Movement (1906—10). He was the editor of the *Dawn* (1897—1913) and the founder of the 'Dawn Society' (1902—07). These were the two great instruments of S. J. Mukherjee for bringing about a revolutionary change in the country, particularly in the educational realm* (1). His saintly character and magnetic personality gathered round him a band of enthusiastic followers among whom Benoy Kumar was one of the most prominent.

Under Satish Mukherjee Benoy Kumar was initiated into the ideals of self-sacrifice, patriotism and social service. As a follower of S. J. Mukherjee, he soon joined the Swadeshi Revolution and actively participated

in the National Education Movement which was launched in 1906. He not only organised a number of national schools at Malda, but wrote a series of books for the learners on national education and on national lines (1906—14). Among these publications the following deserve special mention :

- (1) *Bange Navayuger Nutan Siksha* (1907)
- (2) *Siksha-Vijnaner Bhumika* (1910) available in English translation as
- (3) *Introduction to the Science of Education* (1913)
- (4) *The Study of Language* (1910)
- (5) *Science of History and Hope of Mankind* (1912)
- (6) *Sadhana* (1912)

The publications of Benoy Kumar in the Swadeshi period were no less than twenty volumes and they together covered nearly two thousand and five hundred printed pages. They dealt with a wide variety of subjects and the comparative method was constantly followed. The contemporary scholars, thinkers and savants of Bengal were struck with wonder by the prolific character of his literary productions. These publications unquestionably demonstrate his amazing grasp over facts and they are the visible symbols of the inner urge and integrity with which he served the National Education cause of his country. The College of Engineering and Technology at Jadabpur, Calcutta, is today perhaps the only living monument bearing on it the stamp of the National Education Movement of the Swadeshi period. It is the result of the gradual evolution and transformation of the National Council

* (1) Haridas Mukherjee : *Satish Mukherjee A Father of the Bengali Revolution* (Cal., 1948)

of Education (1906) of which Benoy Kumar had always been an important limb. With the history of the evolution of the Jadabpur College his life was intimately woven. Throughout its historical career he had been in the very heart of it and to its present moulding few after Satish Mukherjee had contributed so substantially as he.

Next we may call attention to Benoy Sarkar's introduction of new pedagogic theories into the field of Bengali scholarship through his diverse publications of the Swadeshi period. He developed the method of teaching a language, Indian or foreign, without grammar. For his revolutionary departure from the beaten track in educational theory and practice he was warmly acclaimed as a pioneer in the field by prominent scholars like Brojen Seal, Haraprasad Sastri, Mahamahopadhyaya Adityaram Bhattacharyya and others* (2).

Prof. Sarkar was also responsible during the Swadeshi period (1905-14) for training up Indian experts in foreign affairs. Firsthand foreign education was considered by him as an important factor in the remaking of the country, and thanks to his initiative, sixteen scholars were sent abroad for higher training in Western arts and sciences. These foreign-trained scholars later on rendered valuable services to the country in various capacities.

Again, it was Sarkar who was chiefly responsible for placing a solid fund with the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat (Calcutta) to encourage the Bengali transla-

tion of important Western works (1911). All these were the different aspects of his services to the Motherland during the period of the Swadeshi Movement (1905-14).

IN WORLD-TOUR (1914-25)

A completely new chapter of Benoy Kumar's life opened in 1914 and spread over till 1925. It was the first period of his world-tour and his cultural conquests on different fronts in the two hemispheres. It was also the period of his countless publications in a variety of modern languages,—English, Bengali, Hindi, French, German and Italian. He undertook a tour through Egypt (1914), England, Scotland and Ireland (1914), the U.S.A. (1914-15), Hawaii Islands (1915), Japan (1915), Korea and Manchuria (1915), China (1915-16), the U.S.A. (1916-20), France (1920-21), Germany (1921-23), Austria (1922-23), Switzerland (1923-24), Italy (1924), Austria and Germany (1924-25) and again Italy (1925). As a Visiting Professor he lectured in all those lands very extensively. There was hardly any important university in Europe and America in which he did not throw out his challenge as an exponent of Young India. In Germany he spoke in German, in France in French and in Italy in Italian, thus showing his remarkable mastery over three continental languages. This mastery enabled him to study French, German and Italian sources in their originals and he made free use of them in his speeches and publications. Through Benoy Sarkar India could know France, Germany and Italy better, more correctly and more realistically than ever before. And in their turn, France, Germany

* (2) Uma Mukherjee: *Benoy Sarkar in National Education Movement* (Advance, 24th Nov., 1952).

and Italy could also know India more adequately, more correctly and more realistically. This was also true in the case of Great Britain and the U.S.A. as well as the Far East. Previous to 1914, Indian scholars were used to looking at the world through Anglo-American spectacles. In comparative culture-study India was hardly placed in the perspectives of non-English and non-American worlds. But thanks to the Sarkarian methodology, India was always placed in comparative culture-study in the diverse perspectives of the world along with the Anglo-American.

The different publications of this period sufficiently bear out the validity of Prof. Sarkar's title to be the pioneer of a new methodology in comparative culture-study. His *Futurism of Young Asia* (Leipzig, 1922, pp. 410) constitutes a monumental proof of his methodological novelty. His publications of this period in Indian papers,—dailies, weeklies and other periodicals,—were legion. There was hardly any intellectual of India who had not read at least one or two of the countless writings of Prof. Sarkar at that time (1914-25). His big publications, apart from those in German, French and Italian, ran to about two dozen. Different aspects of world-culture,—ancient, medieval and modern,—constituted the fundamental theme of Prof. Sarkar. His published works of this period (1914-25) alone covered nearly eight thousand pages.

ENCYCLOPAEDIC SCHOLARSHIP

It is well to remember certain basic facts about these publications. First, they are diversified and they

serve as an adequate index to Prof. Sarkar's encyclopaedic scholarship. There was hardly a subject which he had not touched and enriched. His interest traversed through all the epochs of human culture and in each subject, whether Economics or Political Philosophy, History, Sociology, Literature or Anthropology, his knowledge was amazingly vast and penetrating. A celebrated German paper, viz., *Sozialwis senschaftliches Literaturblatt* once observed :

"Prof. Sarkar reminds us in many ways of our Oswald Spengler on account of startlingly many-sided erudition and intellectual flexibility with which this scholarship traverses in a powerful manner all the regions and epochs of human culture."

HIS ORIGINALITY

A second important fact to emphasise is that every time Prof. Sarkar wrote, he was capable of introducing a new technique of interpretation and of giving a new message of his own. He was, above all, original. He was nothing if he was not original,—original in style, original in technique, and original in message.

"Raja Rammohan Roy, Keshab Chandra Sen, Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, Surendra Nath Banerjee, Swami Vivekananda, Chitta Ranjan Das, and Subhas Chandra Bose," once wrote the *Indian Social Reformer* of Bombay in its editorial columns, "are all typical of the free and independent spirit of Bengal which refuses to bend its knee to any individual or cult. An even more impressive example is Benoy Kumar Sarkar, who challenges practically every school of thought which holds the field in India to-day" (1940).

That clearly sums up the Sarkarian standpoint as a thinker and creator of values.

SARKARIAN STYLE

A third basic fact to note is that Prof. Sarkar's publications exhibit an astonishing clarity of thought with effectiveness of assertion. Judged by the Shavian dictum that effectiveness of assertion is style, it is needless to say that Prof. Sarkar had a style of his own, which may be best called the Sarkarian style. As regards his treatment of data he was almost mathematically precise and factual. As a patriot and social servant he aspired after India's greatness, but as a thinker and theorist he maintained a singular objectivity. Unlike others, his motive in speeches and writings was not to seek popularity, but to find out "truths" in human relations. He was never afraid of speaking out "truths" unreservedly. His unorthodox approach to life and study was often provocative. It was not for nothing that he was called a prophet by some and a crank by others.

IMPACT OF SARKARISM

A fourth basic fact that needs to be emphasised is the reaction of the intellectual world to the Sarkarian impact. Prof. Sarkar undertook a world-tour during 1914-25 with the central purpose of bringing about a closer, deeper and more human understanding between the East and the West. Since the Battle of Plassey (1757) down to the year of the Swadeshi movement (1905), the entire Orient was lying in a servile or semi-servile state, being helplessly dominated by the

Western Powers. This domination was both political and cultural. But since 1905 entire Asia entered upon a period of creative revolt and reconstruction. Few of the Asian leaders could represent that great revolt in the international forum more impressively and more adequately than Prof. Sarkar. During 1914-25 he served as one of the greatest unofficial ambassadors of India, nay of Asia, in foreign lands and strove most strenuously through countless speeches and writings for bringing about a better understanding between the two hemispheres. His central message was Eastern equality with the West. On the strength of his own comparative studies and researches in East-West ideas and institutions he came to the conclusion that a good deal of nonsense had so long been propagated about India's or Asia's role in the world—ancient, medieval and modern. He found world scholarship vitiated by the presence and propagation of what he called pseudo-science, pseudo-history and pseudo-sociology. The result was that the theory of fundamental distinction between the East and the West in culture, general outlook and scheme of life was loudly preached at home and abroad.

Prof. Sarkar broke away right from the traditional way of thinking and intellectually threw out his challenge to the combined scholarship of the occident on this point. His most memorable challenge was *The Futurism of Young Asia* (Leipzig, pp. 410 ; 1922) which was encyclopaedic in conception and struck at the roots of the popular theory of East-West difference in outlook and mentality. "Humanity," Prof. Sarkar preached; "is in short, essentially one—in spite of

physical and physiognomic diversities, and in spite of historic race-prejudices. The *elan vital* of human life has always and everywhere consisted in the desire to live and in the power to flourish by responding to the thousand and one stimuli of the Universe and by utilising the innumerable world forces." This was the Sarkarian standpoint in world-culture. In all his lectures and writings of this period of world-tour (1914-25), this point of view was emphasised, among others, most clearly, most unequivocally and most objectively.

Prof. Sorokin, the great contemporary American Sociologist, once commenting on Prof. Sarkar's dissimilarity with many Western sociologists, said that Prof. Sarkar's position seems to be more critical, more accurate and more acceptable. In this connection it is interesting to see that Prof. Norman Himes writing in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* observed that Prof. Sarkar's work "is far less provincial than 90 per cent. of Western social science books. Prof. Sarkar is far better acquainted with Western thought and social and economic conditions than are Western scholars with Eastern thought and conditions." All these tend to show that Prof. Sarkar's world-tour did not go in vain. Factually speaking, liberal scholars, thinkers and researchers of Eur-America were knocked out of their many old *idolas* and superstitions inherited from the 19th century and were convinced of the Sarkarian approach, method and message in world-culture. Prof. Karl Haushofer (Munich) wrote about Sarkar's *Futurism of Young Asia* that the book concerned "explains perhaps more expli-

citly than all others the relations of the national ideas of China and India with Pan-Asian currents of thought and their antithesis to the Eur-American tendencies. It may be regarded as a guide to the ideas of the leaders of the Asian movement. Everybody who undertakes a deeper and more intensive investigation of this problem, in so far as the exhibition of surging ideas is concerned, will have to begin chiefly by analysing Sarkar's philosophical fresco of awakening Asia. This is the most magnificent of all presentations from the Asian standpoint known to me."

At about the same time (1922-23) Sir Jadunath Sarkar, a leading Historian of modern India, acclaimed Benoy Sarkar's *Political Institutions and Theories of the Hindus* (Leipzig, 1922) as "a distinct and long step in our knowledge of ancient India in its *true* bearing on human thought. It is difficult to conceive of a man more fully qualified than he is to treat of ancient Indian political institutions comprehensively and correctly. He has deeply and widely studied European history, politics and economics, and, what is of priceless value, he has lived among the greatest and most progressive European thinkers on economics and politics, some of the makers of modern European history. But even more valuable is his fresh and independent outlook. Like the Hero-Prophet of Carlyle he insists on discarding all shows, all painted idols and laying bare the heart of things and reaching the bed-rock of truth. Such an honest physician, such a teacher inspired by love of truth, is needed by India to-day in the hour of her national awakening."

Benoy Sarkar produced a deep impression where-

BENOY KUMAR SARKAR

ever he delivered lectures in course of his world-tour. In the U.S.A. he was interviewed by the dailies of New York and other American cities on problems of East-West culture. Professors John Dewey and Edwin Seligman both of the Columbia University, took a special interest in Sarkar and issued in January 1918 a circular letter over their signatures to the different Universities of the U.S.A., asking them to arrange lectures of Prof. Benoy Kumar Sarkar, "so distinguished a representative of the intellectual life of the Orient." Prof. Hankins of the Clark University had already commented on Sarkar's lecture at that institution in the following words:—"The lecture was one of the most interesting and suggestive I have heard in a long time. The man's scholarship is very broad and exact. He has a strong personality and fine presence and will not fail to command respect." These words from Hankins were quoted by Dewey and Seligman in the circular letter in which they subscribed "from personal knowledge to the truth of these statements." Be it noted, John Dewey was the leading philosopher of America at that time and Seligman a distinguished economist. Instead of multiplying such foreign opinions as indicated above, this can be safely stated that Benoy Sarkar won the highest recognition as a scholar wherever he went,—in France, in Germany and in Italy. About one of his lectures in German before the Berlin University, the *Deutsche Allegemeine zeitung* of Berlin observed: "He spoke in fluent German and was warmly applauded on account of his interesting statements." In this connection it may also be noted that Sarkar's voice was recorded in the Imperial Library

LIFE-SKETCH

at Berlin. On that occasion he spoke on "The Message of Young India." He called pointed attention of the scholars to the fact that prior to the Industrial Revolution there was hardly any difference in ideas, ideals and institutions between the East and the West.

VIVEKANANDA, TAGORE AND SARKAR AS VIEWED BY THE WEST

In course of an extensive review in the *Modern Review* for March, 1920, of Sarkar's "*Bliss of A Moment*," Miss Alice Bird, an American authoress, observed:

"If this little volume of seventy-five poems, translations from the Bengali, represents the mind of Asia in any particular, then we have been not only imperfectly informed, but Asia has been misrepresented to us. Since Western scholars, such as Max Muller and Schopenhauer, followed even by Indians themselves, treated us to the spiritual glories of the Hindus, we have had enough and to spare of transcendental 'bliss.' We have been fed on it by India's great sons, such as Vivekananda and Tagore, as well as by sympathetic Western interpreters like Margaret Noble (Nivedita). Mr. Sarkar's message is one of materialism, aggressiveness and defiance, of which the West has been supposed to hold a monopoly. Yet Sarkar himself is an Indian, a scholar of ancient and medieval India, inferior to none of the historians or literary men who have informed us about the mysticism of Asia. He has given us, as in his prose, that side of the East which has been scarcely touched by interpreters of the East to the West."

Sarkar's books and publications were similarly discussed in this period in lengthy reviews by men like Prof. T. W. Rhys David (English Historian),

BENOY KUMAR SARKAR

Prof. A. B. Lamb of Harvard University, Nobel Prize-man, Prof. Masson-Oursel of Paris (French Historian), Prof. Sorokin (Harvard University, Sociologist), Prof. Rapson (British Indologist) and by Profs. Jolly, Geiger and Hillebrandt (German Indologists).

Thus Benoy Sarkar not only added laurel after laurel to himself but also enormously enhanced the prestige of the Indians, nay, the Asians, in the eyes of the Westerners.

CAREER IN INDIA (1925-49)

The third phase of his career started with Prof. Sarkar's return to India (1925) and his appointment as a Professor of Economics in the Post-Graduate Department of the Calcutta University (1926). This period extended right up to February, 1949, when he left for the U.S.A. for a new term of lectures.

During this period Prof. Sarkar impressed his countrymen, first, as a great teacher of uncommon genius, and secondly, as a great builder of India's intellectual life.

Throughout the whole period he stayed in India with a short break in 1929-31 when he had been in Europe as a Visiting Professor. Invited by the *Deutsche Akademie*, he delivered as a *Gastprofessur* 82 lectures before the Technological University of Munich. All the lectures were delivered here in German by Sarkar during 1930-31. World-economy and world-technocracy were the general subjects of his lectures under this series at Munich. He also spoke before another dozen universities of Germany, always in German. He contributed about

LIFE-SKETCH

two dozen papers in German on economics and technology to the leading journals of that country. Invited by the University of Geneva in Switzerland, he also delivered lectures in French on economic and social developments of India. He contributed several papers in French during this period. Be it observed that Sarkar was also invited by the Universities of Italy. There he delivered lectures in Italian and contributed several papers to Italian journals. On invitation he adorned the post of a President of the Economic Section of the International Congress of Population at Rome (September, 1931). About four hundred scholars,—Economists, Sociologists, Anthropologists, Physiologists, Statisticians and scholars of other categories—attended that gathering. About 300 papers were sent to that Conference by the invited specialists. Most of the scholars who attended that Conference spoke in their mother-tongues, but Prof. Sarkar as the President of the Economic Section spoke in Italian. His Italian paper contributed on that occasion was printed as a regular book containing 80 pages. Special mention was made of this paper by several Italian journals at that time. He returned home towards the end of 1931.

At home or abroad, Professor Sarkar addressed his mind most energetically to the enrichment and expansion of India's intellectual horizon. He became intimately connected with diverse men, institutions and movements. In very many instances institutions were formed and fostered under his creative leadership. He founded during this period (1925-49)



no less than nine Research Institutes in Calcutta, viz., (1) Bengali Institute of Economics (1928), (2) "International Bengal" Institute (1931), (3) Bengali Society of German Culture (1931), (4) "Malda in Calcutta" Society (1933), (5) District Council of National Education, Malda (1934), (6) Bengali Institute of Sociology (1937), (7) Bengali Asia Academy (1938), (8) Bengali Dante Society (1938), and last but not least, (9) Bengali Institute of American Culture (1946). With each of these Institutes a band of enthusiastic research scholars was connected. Prof. Sarkar guided no less than one hundred scholars in research lines in a wide variety of subjects with an astonishing ability. He constantly emphasised before the research-fellows and associates the need for linguistic equipment of Indian scholars. At least one European language other than English must be learnt by the research-workers on a compulsory basis. Besides, he also taught his associates and pupils two other basic lessons—first, to study everything in world-perspectives, and secondly, to study life and the universe in a thoroughly objective manner. As regards the method of handling and interpreting the data, he was never in the habit of inflicting himself on others. Philosophically speaking, Prof. Sarkar was an advocate of the "pluralist" view of life and he constantly employed the pluralist technique in handling and interpreting the data. He was perhaps the first to introduce the pluralist technique to the field of Bengali, nay, Indian scholarship on a vast and organised scale. Here is to be noticed another significant contribution of Prof. Sarkar to India's modern philosophical or scientific scholarship. Among

his publications, *Creative India* (Lahore, 1937; pages 725), *Villages and Towns as Social Patterns* (Calcutta, 1941: Pages 704) and *Political Philosophies Since 1905* (Madras and Lahore, 2 Vols., 1928, 1942; pp. 1698) may be easily singled out as a wide-flung, encyclopaedic application of the pluralist methodology.

SERVICES TO BENGALI LITERATURE

The enrichment of Bengali literature in serious historical, philosophical, economic and political thinking was a constant dream of Prof. Benoy Sarkar. He urged his pupils and associates to write serious articles, pamphlets and books in Bengali. Intellectuals with a businesslike temperament hardly appreciated this point, but he was ever insistent on it. During his period of first world-tour (1914-25) he kept constant contact with the Bengali-speaking world through the numerous Bengali periodicals of the time—dailies, weeklies and monthlies. His wide experiences, as acquired by travels in different lands among different peoples and races, were at once communicated to his countrymen through his countless writings. The most notable of the Bengali publications of Sarkar during 1914-25 was the *Vartaman Jagat* series which introduced a new tone into the academic and intellectual life of Bengal.

Its readers were thousands and they could know,—in very many instances for the first time too,—the thousand and one currents and cross-currents of the modern world understood in the widest sense possible. Besides this, Prof. Sarkar was also responsible for the Bengali translation of certain Classical books from French and German. Among his original Bengali

publications in the period of 1925-49, *Naya Banglar Goda Pattan* (2 Vols., 1932 ; pages 980) and *Badtir Pathe Bangali* (1934 ; pages 636) are to be specially emphasised because of their tremendous impact on the Bengali mind of that time. Again, it was Sarkar who was responsible for the publication of *Arthik Unnati* (1926), a monthly Bengali organ for studies in economics, theoretical and applied. Lastly, in the capacity of the Director of Researches in his Institutes, he was responsible for the publication of two important Bengali volumes dealing with economic theory and practice as well as sociological method and data. They were *Banglay Dhana Vijnan* (2 Vols. ; 1937-39 ; pages 1350) and *Samaj-vijnan* (1938 ; pages 600).

By his close personal contact and life's example Benoy Sarkar strove to infuse his own intellectual idealism into his pupils and research-associates. Not money or rank, not material prosperity or worldly benefit, but self-less duty as well as knowledge for its own sake was the never-failing urge of him. Idealism and Sarkarism were almost convertible terms, as it were. Intellectual idealism or the ideal of knowledge for its own sake had been harped upon by myriads of men in the past almost in every generation, but never perhaps was it so passionately pleaded and embodied as by him. In his unquenchable thirst for knowledge, life and light, he may be easily classed with Socrates, the greatest exponent of the Age of Illumination in Greece (450-400 B.C.). Like Socrates, he left nothing unquestioned and like his great predecessor, he was an unyielding challenge to his age. This challenge was manifest in all his writings, speeches and publications

in six modern languages. His English publications alone of this period (1926-49) ran to about fifty volumes and they covered more than ten thousand pages. His German, Italian and French papers and publications altogether ran to about eighty in number. All these constitute a permanent proof of his "unusual versatility," as Prof. Garner put it; as well as, his encyclopaedic knowledge, penetrating study and, above all, his revolutionary departure from the beaten track. Even the smallest article from his pen embodies the Sarkarian spirit of creative revolt and reconstruction.

LAST DAYS (March-Nov. 1949)

The last phase of Prof. Sarkar's career begins in March, 1949. On the 28th February, 1949, he started for the U. S. A. on an extensive lecture-tour programme and was staying there till his death on 24th November, 1949. His lecture-tour was arranged by the Institute of International Education, New York, in collaboration with the Watumull Foundation, Los Angeles. As a Visiting Professor he lectured in the diverse American universities, academic institutes and culture-centres on an astonishingly large variety of subjects. But his fundamental theme was *The Dominion India in World-Perspectives*, which is also the topic and title of his last publication during his life-time. There was hardly any other man in India of to-day better fitted than Sarkar to undertake this task. This time also Prof. Sarkar exhibited his youthful vigour and worked with his characteristic enthusiasm for bringing about a closer and more reasonable understanding between the East and the West.

The two pamphlets, *India in America* edited by Dr. Tarak Nath Das and *The Peoples and Cultures of India* edited by Miss. Wood, (1949), give us a glimpse of the startling work done by Prof. Sarkar in the U. S. A. within a short period of six months only (March 7-August 10, 1949). Miss. Grace Wood, Secretary of the Department of Anthropology, University of Michigan, wrote in her Preface to *The Peoples and Cultures of India* :

“As a member of Prof. Sarkar’s class and as a participant of the colloquia held by him, I believe that Prof. Sarkar has succeeded admirably in attaining his goal, that of presenting his subject-matter, India, in a most realistic manner and from every possible point of view. Those of us who had occasion to be associated with him were constantly struck by the range of his factual knowledge and by the diverse methods at his command for handling and interpreting the data. It has been a great pleasure, having him on our campus, and I feel that his being here will bring great rewards to both our countries in terms of greater understanding and friendship.”

Since his arrival in the U. S. A. Benoy Sarkar had a very full programme. His lecture-tour started with the Harvard University on Monday, March 7, 1949. He gave a talk, as Dr. Tarak Nath Das informs us, on the prospects of Indian agriculture and industry in the background of world-economic developments and Indo-American commerce. Then continued his lecture-tour almost in a hurricane speed in different centres, institutes and universities of the U.S.A. In less than six months he had delivered more than one hundred and fifty big public lectures in intellectual circles, business associa-

tions and political centres.° His topics of discussion ranged from the folklores of primitive man to the latest developments in world-culture, world-economy and world-politics. Everyday he had to meet several dozens of American experts, attend lunch meeting, deliver lecture in University classes, inspect some technical institutes or social work centres, occasionally speak over the Radio, meet the journalists and the interviewers and finally write articles for the press. With Herculean energy he was thus carrying on the cultural propoganda of Dominion India in world-perspectives in that distant land. Those who know him are aware how buoyant and spirited, active and determined he was in his works. The defying spirit of youth was surging in him even in his old age. But his physical frame grew weak from within, although there was no visible expression of it even on the day of his final breakdown (27th October, 1949).

As Miss Florence Martyn has recorded : “The day he became ill he had a session in the American University in the morning and a luncheon meeting at the Howard University. Coming out of the hall after his meeting he complained of not feeling well and a pain in his chest. He then collapsed.”* (3)

This took place on 27th of October and he died in the Freedmen’s Hospital on 24th November early in the morning.

Some of the last words of Prof. Sarkar clearly show the man. His wife, Mrs. Ida Sarkar, writes in a letter to an Indian friend (November, 1949) that while

* (3) Miss Florence Martyn’s letter on *The Funeral of Prof. Benoy Sarkar* (*Hindusthan Standard*, 5th Dec., 1949).

Prof. Sarkar was hovering between life and death and could not sleep, she enquired if he was thinking about her and their daughter Indira (in Paris). Prof. Sarkar's significant reply was : "No, I think of my Motherland and the work I have still to do." To quote the words of Miss Martyn :

"Though Dr. Sarkar is physically lost to India, his great work will live on in the contributions of devoted students, and the large number of books, articles, etc., which he has left to posterity. He is not only a great Indian figure but a world influence."

Prof. Sarkar's untimely death was widely mourned by scholars not only in U.S.A., but also in different European countries. The *Washington Post* spoke of Sarkar as "India's leading researcher in sociology and economics." Prof. Harlow Shapley, *Nobel Laureate*, Director, Harvard Observatory, Harvard University, observed that in Prof. Sarkar's death "India has lost an important force." Prof. F. H. Hankins, President, American Sociological Society, lamented Sarkar's death in the words quoted below :

"Prof. Sarkar will be missed all over the world. He was not only a colourful figure, and he was this both in his personal presence and in his writings, but he stimulated currents of thought in areas far removed from his native India. I am very glad to have known him personally. I have often recalled his visit with me at Clark University in 1919-20, where I had invited him at the suggestion of Prof. Seligman, one of my teachers at Columbia. His eyes flashed fire as he lectured in those days."

It may be noted in this connection that in high appreciation of Prof. Sarkar's work, Benoy Kumar Sarkar Memorial Lectures were instituted in the

American University, Washington, D. C., since 1950. The main initiative for this was taken by Dr. Tarak Nath Das. It was arranged that Benoy Kumar Sarkar Memorial Lectures would be delivered annually under the direction of the authorities of the American University. For the year 1950 the main lecture was delivered by Dr. Pitman Benjamin Potter, Prof. of International Law at that University. Dr. Tarak Nath Das in his *Opening Remarks* in connection with the inauguration of Benoy Kumar Sarkar Memorial Lectures observed (May 3, 1950) :

"Professor Sarkar was undoubtedly one of the foremost thinkers of Asia, of our time, and one of the pioneers of the movement for Asian independence and at the same time an advocate of intimate co-operation between the East and the West"* (4).

* (4). *Calcutta Review*, July, 1950.

CHAPTER II

SERVICES TO BENGALI LITERATURE

1905-1914

Writing in *The Modern Review* for January 1947, the late Prof. Nripendra Chandra Banerji observed about Benoy Sarkar that "he is justly admired for his original ideas and novel methods of expression and presentation." There was hardly a subject which Sarkar had not touched and enriched. A "free-lance and non-conformist in political and economic theory and practice," as Nripen Banerji puts it, Benoy Sarkar also made a signal contribution to Bengali literature.

Throughout his life since 1905, Benoy Sarkar had always made conscious attempts to enrich Bengali literature and to enhance its prestige. A mighty stimulus to the cause of Bengali language and literature was furnished by the glorious Bengali Revolution (1905-06). The dream of the country's freedom, both economic and political, certainly belonged to the ideological complex of the Revolution. But it is absolutely nonsensical to characterise the Swadeshi Revolution as a mere politico-economic movement. The spirit of Swadeshi once roused made itself manifest in the sphere of education and culture too. "We," wrote Surendra Nath Banerjee, "must be Swadeshi in all things, Swadeshi in our thoughts and ideals and aspirations—Swadeshi in our educational methods and development" (*The*

SERVICES TO BENGALI LITERATURE

Dawn and Dawn Society's Magazine, March, 1906). The foundation of the National Council of Education (March 11, 1906) was the visible expression of the victory of the Swadeshi spirit in the domain of education. Born in and through the protest against the Universities Act of 1904, the National Council of Education laid broad and deep the foundations of a National University. Its basic ideal was to promote national education, technical, scientific and literary, on national lines and under national control. The adoption of Bengali as a medium of instruction as far as practicable in all classes was a striking feature of the educational scheme of the N.C.E. Satish Chandra Mukherjee, the founder-organiser of the famous Dawn Society (1902-7), was the chief ideological father of the movement for educational autarchy.* Hirendra Nath Datta (1867-1942), Sir Gooroodas Banerjee (1844-1918), Ramendra Sundar Trivedi (1864-1919), Aurobindo Ghose (1872-1950) were other makers of the movement. Benoy Sarkar as a student of the Dawn Society and a lieutenant of Satish Mukherjee (1865-1948) threw himself heart and soul into the National Education Movement. In the milieu of the Dawn Society (1902-7) and in the National Education movement, young Benoy Kumar had imbibed from Satish Chandra Mukherjee a vigorous passion for the enrichment and expansion

* Sreejut Hemendra Prasad Ghose in his book *Aurobindo* (Calcutta, 1949, pp. 9-10) wrongly attributes to Aurobindo the credit of chief leadership in the National Education Movement. If a single leader of that movement can be marked out, it was Satish Chandra Mukherjee of whom Aurobindo himself said that he was the real organiser of the Bengal National College (Vide *Sri Aurobindo's Speeches*, Calcutta, 1948, p. 15).

of the Bengali language and literature. His Bengali publications alone run to about forty in number and cover approximately twelve thousand printed pages. These publications constitute an eloquent testimony to his profound love for the Bengali people and Bengali literature.

Benoy Sarkar's earliest writings in Bengali go back to the beginning of the present century. His first writing *Bangalar Jatiya Siksha Parishat O Banga Samaj* was published in the *Maldaha Samachar*, Malda, June, 1906. This was followed by his brochure on *Bange Navayuger Natun Siksha* (1907). The first six or seven years of his literary life (1906-1913) were chiefly devoted to discussions on problems of education or *pedagogics* which was included by the National Council of Education in its scheme of studies. Among his books on *pedagogics* in Bengali the following deserve special mention :

- (1) *Siksha-Vijnaner Bhumika* (1910)
- (2) *Prachin Griser Jatiya Siksha* (1910)
- (3) *Bhasa-Siksha* (1910)
- (4) *Siksha-Samalochana* (1912)
- (5) *Sadhana* (1912).

In these works on education, Benoy Sarkar introduced a world of ideas, drawn from far and near. The range of discussions was exceedingly broad and comprehensive. He was a pioneer in grasping and formulating the principles for teaching a language, Bengali or non-Bengali, without Grammar. In his own *pedagogic* system, it was the sentence, not the word, that is conceived as the smallest unit of a language. The logic is simple. A word can hardly express an idea. Idea or ideas are expressed only in a sentence, be it

however short. Therefore, it was undertaken by Sarkar to start language-lessons not with isolated words, but with short sentences. The method was applied to the teaching of languages—English, Bengali and Sanskrit, and was highly appreciated by competent critics. Sir Brojendra Nath Seal observed in 1910 :

“Prof. Sarkar's programme is certainly an ambitious one, but he is fully qualified to carry it out, and there is no doubt that it will be found to be a healthy and stimulating force in the Indian educational world of today.”

His novel method for teaching Sanskrit without Grammar was so impressive as to win for him the title of *Vidya-Vaibhava* from the Sanskrit scholars of Benares (1912). Mahamahopadhyaya Pandit Adityaram Bhattacharyya, M.A., Prof. of Sanskrit Literature, Muir College, Fellow, Allahabad University, wrote to Sarkar :

“I write this in my appreciation of your efforts to facilitate and popularise the study of Sanskrit. Your method to teach Sanskrit without the learner's going through a first course of Grammar merits trial. At the very outset the attempt looks somewhat revolutionary. But in other fields it is such revolutionary departures from the old track that have hastened the advance of arts and sciences” (1912).

In his application of this quicker method of learning languages, Sarkar was continuing and developing the tradition of Bohemian pedagogue Comenius of the 17th century.

A second line of services of Sarkar in the period of Boycott-Swadeshi-Swaraj Movement (1905-1914) was the formulation as well as propagation of a conscious and systematic policy for the promotion of Indian mother-tongues. In 1911, he moved a resolution before the

North Bengal Literary Conference, held in Malda, for considering the case of Bengali as a medium of instruction in the schools and colleges of the country. His resolution was accepted in the same year by the literary men of Bengal at the Bengali Literary Conference, held at Mymensingh and presided over by Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose. His scheme for the adoption of Bengali and other Indian mother-tongues as the medium of instruction was published originally in *Prabasi* (1911) as *Sahitya-Sevi*. It was also published in English in *The Modern Review* for April, 1911 and subsequently also in Hindi and Marathi. It was an immense joy to Sarkar to find the authorities of the Calcutta University to introduce Bengali as a medium of teaching and examination in 1940 up to the Matriculation Standard and still later (since 1947-48) up to the B.A. Pass standard.

A third line of service of Benoy Sarkar to Bengali literature during 1905-1914 was his strenuous effort to enrich Bengali literature by a systematic policy of translations from recognised Eur-American authors. Thanks to the initiative of Sarkar, a fund was raised and placed at the disposal of the Bangiya Sahitya Parishat for publishing Bengali translations from European standard books on science, philosophy, history and so on. Be it noted in this connection that out of the fund placed by Sarkar with the Sahitya Parishat in the year of Tagore's fiftieth birth anniversary (1911) was published Guizot's *History of European Civilisation* from French into Bengali. The translator was the late Principal of the Ripon College, Rabindra Narayan Ghose, a pupil of Satish Mukherjee in his Dawn Society. The Bengali translation was published in 1926

under the title of *Europiya Sabhyatar Itihash* (pp. 399). Again, Benoy Sarkar himself undertook translation work and published in 1914 his *Negro Jatir Karma-ujir* which was a translation from Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery*, originally published in New York in 1901. This translation was widely read by young intellectuals of Bengal with great avidity in the period of World War I and for many years since then. It has become a classical book in Bengali literature.

1914—1925

The years between 1914 and 1925 were a period of world-tour of Benoy Sarkar through Egypt, England, Scotland and Ireland, the U. S. A., the Hawaii Islands, Japan, Korea, Manchuria, China, France, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy. This is the most brilliant chapter of Sarkar's life, and constitutes the Sarkar's Era of Bengali history. In this period he was equally active in diverse branches of human scholarship. On invitation by the foreign scholars, he had to deliver lectures before the great Universities of the world, whether in the East or in the West. He had to write articles, books and brochures in English, German and French, to mention only a few. His English publications alone ran to ten volumes. He lectured in German and in French respectively before the Berlin and Paris Universities. Besides, his papers in German and French were also considerable in number. In this period of world-tour, he also enriched Bengali literature in a manner not done by any Bengali previously. His travels and tours in different countries and among diverse races and cultures of mankind were brought

home to the Bengalis by his series of publications under the general title of *Vartaman Jagat*. His travel-accounts were refreshingly different from the traditional travel accounts, diaries or books of his predecessors. Originally published serially in the Calcutta monthlies like *Grihastha*, *Pravasi*, *Bharatvarsha*, *Bharati*, *Navya-Bharata*, *Sahitya*, *Banga-vani* as well as in the weeklies like *Sankhya*, *Bijoli*, *Sarathi*, *Sisir*, *Atmashakti*, etc., Sarkar's articles were later published as books which ran on to thirteen volumes covering about 5000 pages. As many as five volumes of the *Vartaman Jagat* series were also published in book-form in course of his world-tour during 1914-25. These volumes are chronologically indicated below :

- (1) *Kavarer Deshe Din Panera* or Egypt (1914).
- (2) *Vimsha Shatavdin Kurukshetra* (1914).
- (3) *Ingrajer Janmabhumi* (1916).
- (4) *Cheena Shabhyatar a, a, ka, kha* (1922).
- (5) *Yankeestan* or the U.S.A. (1923). The rest was published between 1926 and 1935.

The *Vartaman Jagat* is indeed a land-mark in Bengali literature. The volumes in this series concerned themselves with the most diverse aspects of human culture of the modern world. The accounts were realistic and objective and drawn mostly from the dailies and weeklies of the foreign countries. Through these volumes the entire modern world was forcibly opened up before the cultural forum of Bengal. The Bengalis were initiated virtually in the cult of world-forces of modern times. The readers of the *Vartaman Jagat* serial articles were thousands in Bengal during 1914-25 and it appears from the records of Nalini Pandit of Bangiya Sahitya Parishat that thought-leaders like

Akshoy Kumar Sarkar, Haraprosad Shastri, Ramendra Sundar Trivedi, Brojen Seal, Gurudas Banerjee, Hiren Datta, Suresh Samajpati, Nagen Basu, Jaladhar Sen, Dinesh Sen, Amulya Vidyabhushan and others looked forward with great eagerness to the publications of Sarkar's writing on *Vartaman Jagat*. Among the youths and budding scholars of the period of 1914-25, the impact of Sarkar's articles, books and brochures were remarkable. In fact, as the author of *Vartaman Jagat* Sarkar influenced and dominated the intellectual and scholarly world of Bengal so profoundly that the entire period of 1914-25 may be significantly called the *Age of Vartaman Jagat* for modern Bengali culture. It is not to be denied that no other man, institution or movement was as powerful at that time as Sarkar. By the *Age of Vartaman Jagat* it is to be simply understood that during 1914-25 Benoy Sarkar represented a very prominent intellectual force among other forces in the cultural pattern of Bengal. In any case, Sarkar's name will always find an honoured place in the history of Bengali literature of the period of 1914-1925.

1926-1949

A new phase of his services to Bengali literature opened with Sarkar's return to the country after his first term of world-tour in September, 1925. He addressed himself most energetically to enrich and expand Bengali literature by first class historical, economic and sociological publications. In 1926 was published his *Parivar, Gosthi O Rastra* which was a free translation from a German book by Engels. Next, was published *Duniyar Abhawa* (1926), which deals

with a factual narration of world-developments in culture and education as well as economics and politics during 1921-24. This was followed by his celebrated historical book entitled *Hindu Rastree Gadan* (1926), which discusses on the basis of original sources the morphology of Hindu State with his customary novel outlook from the 4th Century B.C. down to the 13th Century A.D. It is doubtful if a Bengali historical work of a superior quality has ever been published by any other Bengali scholar in course of the quarter of a century following 1926.

To promote serious economic and sociological writings in Bengali, Sarkar next started a monthly called *Arthik Unnati* in 1926 in collaboration with Narendranath Law, Satya Charan Law, Tulsi Charan Goswami and others. Throughout its career from 1926 to 1949, Sarkar was the editor of the journal. Hardly any scholar before Sarkar tried to carry on economic researches in Bengali. In Sarkar's *Arthik Unnati*, descriptive or historical economics did not loom large in the journal, which was principally addressed to the problems of applied economics. Secondly, Indian problems were constantly placed in the perspective of world-developments. Thirdly, political bias was hardly visible in the pages of the journal which stood for autarchy for economics as a science, free from political shackles. In this journal, Benoy Sarkar personally wrote several hundreds of pages on world economic data and problems. Again, it was an integral part of his policy to invite young intellectuals to contribute economic articles to the journal. Altogether, by editing and publishing the *Arthik Unnati* (1926-49), Sarkar

gave a fillip to the drive for enrichment and expansion of the Bengali literature in serious economic writings.

To promote economic researches Sarkar also founded in 1926 the Bangiya Dhana-Vijnan Parishat which was a Bengali seminar for studies in economics, theoretical and applied. Sir Brojendra Nath Seal was the President of this economic Seminar from 1930 to 1938, and from beginning to the end of his life, Sarkar was the Director of researches. Since its inception a band of young scholars was associated with it as Research-Fellows whose number in 1949 rose to about forty. Most of them are authors of one or another publication in Bengali bearing on economics. For discussions, Bengali was generally resorted to as the medium of expression, although English was not wholly boycotted. Among the economic publications in Bengali by the Research-scholars of the Bangiya Dhana-Vijnan Parishat the following deserves mention :

- (1) *Dhana-Vijnane Shakreti* by Shib Dutta,
- (2) *Takar Katha* by Naren Roy,
- (3) *Taka-kari* by Rabi Ghose,
- (4) *Desh-Videsher Bank* by Naren Law and Jiten Sen Gupta,
- (5) *Arthasastrer Ruparekha* by Kasturchand Lalwani.

Benoy Sarkar himself wrote several important books on economics such as :

- (1) *Dhana-Daulater Rupantar* which is a Bengali translation from a French work by P. Lafargul (1928).
- (2) *Ekaler Dhan-Daulat O Artha-Shastra*, 2 Vols, (1930-35).
- (3) *Swadeshi Andolan O Samrakshan Niti* which is a translation from a German book by Frederich List (1932).

- (4) *Banglay Dhana-Vijnan*, 2 Vols. (1937-39) by Sarkar and other collaborators.

Thus Benoy Sarkar pioneered serious economic studies and researches in Bengali. Equally mentionable is his impetus given to sociological studies and publications in the mother-tongue. To promote sociological researches Sarkar founded in 1937 *Bangiya Samaj-Vijnan Parishat* and drew round him a band of enthusiastic young scholars. His own sociological works in Bengali were (1) *Naya Banglar Goda-Pattan*, 2 Vols. (1932) and (2) *Badtir Pathe Bangali* (1934), while he edited and published a volume on *Samaj-Vijnan* in 1938 in collaboration with 13 reseachers. These were all pioneering attempts to study sociological problems in Bengali. Prof. Hiranmay Ghoshal, while reviewing *Samaj-Vijnan* in the *Polish Bulletin of Oriental Studies*, Warsaw, observed :

“This extensive volume of nearly six hundred pages contains matter worth filling a whole Library.”

In the opinion of Dr. Sushil Kumar Dey :

“The present work is not only a pioneer attempt to study directly the sociological and economic problems in relation to Bengal and India at large, but also to popularise the study through the medium of Bengali.”

Few of our countrymen made such an organised attempt as Sarkar to promote Bengali literature, particularly in economic and sociological writings.

CONCLUSIONS

From the foregoing discussions it is quite evident that Sarkar took a conscious vow to enrich Bengali literature and spared no pains whether at home or abroad in fostering it. He not merely started pioneer-

ing works in sociology and economics, but also was responsible for the development of a forcible literary style which was his own. If style is life, it is perhaps cent per cent true of Benoy Sarkar. His style was popular rather than one of literary aristocracy. Short sentences were an important feature of his style. Long sentences were deliberately avoided. He had a marvellous power of diction. His frequent blend of colloquial words with sophisticated literary words was characteristic of his writing. What is generally condemned or ridiculed as a *Guru-Chandali-Dosha* became a positive merit of his literary technique. Sarkar has demonstrated in a very convincing manner how to write forcible sentences by the proper juxtaposition of colloquial Bengali words with literary as well as Bengali words with Pharsi, Urdu and Hindi. True to Sarkarism, he made a revolutionary departure from the beaten track even in respect of his literary style. “*Benoy Sarkarer Baitake*” written by the present author in collaboration with five other scholars unmistakably reflects what a profound love Prof. Sarkar cherished for Bengali literature.*

* Prof. Tripura Sankar Sen's paper on “Benoy Sarkar and Bengali Language” (*Sonar Bangla*, December 24, 1949) and Mr. Kalidas Mukherjee's article on “Benoy Sarkar in Bengali Literature” (*Prabasi*, February, 1950) may be consulted by the readers with advantage.

CHAPTER III

AS AN EXPONENT OF WORLD-CULTURE

Notwithstanding certain deeper ideological differences with Herder (1744-1803), Benoy Sarkar can easily be classed with his German predecessor as an exponent of world-culture. One of the most original, creative and epoch-making contributions of Sarkar is in the domain of comparative culture-study,—ancient, medieval and modern.

THEORY OF EAST-WEST DIFFERENCE CHALLENGED

At the time of Max Muller's publication : *India : What Can it Teach us* (1883) the theory of alleged difference in *Weltanschauung* or world-view between the East and the West was perhaps stated for the first time and since then grossly exaggerated. The second half of the 19th century witnessed in Europe the formation of a vast Germanic Empire under the leadership of Prussia (1860-70) and her bid for colonial and commercial expansion in the backward regions of Asia and Africa (1870-1900). It was also the period of the colonial penetration of other Western races into the heart of the East, particularly India and the Far East. It was a time when the Western Powers, thanks to the impact of the Industrial Revolution, were busy in carving out Asian lands and territories into their colonial or imperial zones, mandated regions or spheres of influence. The entire Asia gradually crumbled down

AS AN EXPONENT OF WORLD-CULTURE

before the organised onslaught of the Western races. Almost every bit of Asian territory became to all intents and purposes a whiteman's domination-centre. Culturally also Asia collapsed. Her time-old traditions and *mores* broke down in helpless confusion. The Asian foundations were thus violently shaken and she soon lost her self-confidence—confidence in the past traditions or a new faith in the future. Lack of self-confidence and inferiority-sense springing from downright political-cum-cultural enslavement soon invaded the Asian psychology and, of course, the Indian mentality too. Inferiority-sense gradually developed into a deep-seated complex and began to seek its natural compensation in a kind of superiority-complex. The patriotic scholars and natural leaders of Asia took shelter in a theory of spiritual superiority to the West in a setting of political shocks and defeats, social breakdown and cultural confusion. The Oriental scholars unthinkingly assumed the correctness of their stand and felt doubly assured of it when a tribute came from the "alleged superior races" of the West to their special spiritual genius.

Max Muller was perhaps one of the pioneers of the theory of alleged difference—the theory that states that the East is spiritual and the West is secular. And every Indologist or Orientalist who followed his suit almost invariably accepted it as an axiomatic truth or a first postulate in thinking. As exponents of this theory we may mention, among others, such names as Paul Deussen, Bloomfield, Vivekananda, Kropotkin, Abhedananda, Whitman, Rolland, Gandhi, Sylvain Levi, Okakura, Huntington, Dickinson, Smith, Huxley, Jawaharlal, Satish Mukherjee, Brojen Seal, Nivedita,

Sorokin, Richard Gregg, and Radhakrishnan. It is still to-day advocated by numerous scholars of the two hemispheres.

DOCTRINE OF EAST-WEST EQUALITY

Pragmatically speaking, Benoy Sarkar (1887-1949) was perhaps the first modern philosopher to challenge the entire basis of the theory of alleged fundamental difference between the East and the West in mentality and outlook. While translating the *Sukraniti* into English from a Sanskrit source which dealt at length with Sukra's politics, economics and sociology (1912-13), he felt for the first time that the traditional picture of Indian culture was wholly opposed to historic truth. The positivistic creations or secular strands of Indian culture became a theme of his research in 1913-14. The results of his studies and researches were embodied in the publication entitled *Positive Background of Hindu Sociology* (Allahabad, 1914; Vol. I). This publication constituted a frontal attack on the traditional treatment of Indian culture as but identical with the philosophy of soul, ethics of the other-world, mysticism and so forth.

EVOLUTION OF SARKARISM

Sarkar's next publication *Chinese Religion Through Hindu Eyes* (Shanghai, 1916) embodied a more intensive investigation of Asian and Eur-American mentalities item by item, i.e., idea by idea and institution by institution in a time-series. In his Preface to that book he declared :

"Neither historically nor philosophically does Asiatic mentality differ from the Eur-American. It is

only after the brilliant success of a fraction of mankind subsequent to the Industrial Revolution of the last century that the alleged difference between the two mentalities has been first stated and since then grossly exaggerated. At the present-day science is being vitiated by pseudo-scientific theories or fancies regarding race, religion and culture. Such theories were unknown to the world down to the second or third decade of the 19th century.

"Comparative Chronology and Comparative History will show that man, as an economic, political and fighting animal, has displayed the same strength and weakness both on the Asian theatre as well as on the extra-Asian.

"Comparative Literature and Comparative Art will show that man, as 'lover, lunatic and poet,' has worked upon the same gamut of passions from Homer to Maeterlinck as from the Pharaonic *Book of the Dead* down to *Gitanjali*.

"Comparative Philosophy and Comparative Metaphysics will show that man, as positivist and mystic, has attacked the 'problems of the sphinx' in the self-same way and with almost similar results under the guidance of intellectuals from Confucius to Swami Vivekananda as from Socrates to Bergson.

"Comparative Anthropology and Comparative Psychology will show that man has everywhere and always been fundamentally a beast, and that beneath a superficial varnish of so-called culture 'the ape and tiger' hold their majestic sway,—giving rise to superstitions, prejudices, *idolas* and *avidyas* under different guises and conventions. The brute-in-man is a fact—the *datum* : but the god-in-man is only an idea,—the ideal to be realised.

"Comparative Religion and Comparative Mythology will show that man in his desire to have 'something afar from the sphere of our sorrow' has everywhere had recourse to the same *modus operandi* and has achieved the same grand failure which in his vanity he

always chooses to call success. It would be found that, after all, divinity is but an invention of human imagination, in fact, the first postulate taken for granted. And on a broad view of *all* the forces that have inspired and governed *elan* and activity, some of which are mis-called religion, and some not, man has ever been essentially a pluralist and an idolist."

Benoy Sarkar came to these conclusions after laborious studies and researches in world-culture conducted in a thoroughly objective manner and on a sound comparative basis. He proceeded with his investigation not from a preconceived dogma, but with the technique of pure "logical analysis" which repeatedly drove him to conclude that the East and the West are basically identical or similar in deeper spirit, life's motives and world-conceptions. On the strength of positive achievements in ideology and institutions (item by item) the leading historical forces, processes and stages are found to have been in the main, more or less, uniform in the East and the West. His most memorable and challenging document to this effect is furnished by his *Futurism of Young Asia* (Leipzig, 1922) known in its second edition as *The Sociology of Races, Cultures and Human Progress* (Calcutta, 1939). It is a wide-flung encyclopaedic treatise in which Sarkar has exhibited in bold relief the identities, similarities and uniformities between the East and the West in a most conspicuous manner. In it he has mercilessly analysed the psychological foundations for making out an alleged fundamental difference between the East and the West and has demonstrated with convincing logic that

"Humanity is in short essentially one,—in spite

of physical and physiognomic diversities, and in spite of historic race-prejudices. The *elan-vital* of human life has always and everywhere consisted in the desire to live and in the power to flourish by responding to the thousand and one stimuli of the universe and by utilising the innumerable world-forces."

In his "*Futurism of Young Asia*" he also exposed the fallacies of the comparative method as generally used by anthropologists, culture-historians, criminologists as well as moral and political philosophers. Their fallacies fall within three classes :

"In the first place, they do not take the same class of facts. They compare the superstitions of the Orient with the rationalism of the Occident, while they ignore the rationalism of the Orient and suppress the superstitions of the Occident. They compare the thoughts and activities of the higher intellectual and economic grades of the Occident with those of the illiterates and paupers and half-fed masses of the Orient. But intellectual fairness demands that mentality and morality should be compared under 'the same conditions of temperature and pressure.'

"Secondly, the Eur-American sociologists do not apply the same method of interpretation to the data of the Orient as to those of the Occident. If infanticide, superstition and sexuality for instance have to be explained away or justified in one group of races by historical criticism or by anthropological investigations and so forth, these must be treated in the same way in the other instances as well.

"In the third place, the Occidental scholars are not sufficiently well-grounded in comparative chronology. They do not proceed to the work of striking a balance between the claims of the East and the West, age by age, *i.e.*, idea by idea and institution by institution in a time-series."

These three fallacies which Benoy Sarkar indicates above, are very largely vitiating world-scholarship

in the present century. These fundamental fallacies are committed in comparative culture-study not only by the Eur-American scholars and intellectuals, but also by the general run of Indian and Oriental scholars and researchers on an extensive scale.

SARKAR'S MESSAGE

In his *Futurism of Young Asia* as well as in his *Economic Development* (1926, Vol. I) and *Greetings to Young India* (Calcutta, 1927) Benoy Sarkar declared that the East and the West ran almost parallel to each other down to the middle of the 18th century.

On the strength of his own investigations and researches Prof. Sarkar draws the following equations to indicate the approximate socio-cultural identities and similarities between the East and the West :

(1) East (down to 1300 A.D.) = West (down to 1300 A.D.) institutionally as well as ideologically.

(2) Renaissance in the East (1400-1600 A.D.) = Renaissance in the West (1400-1600 A.D.).

(3) 1600-1750. The new physical or positive sciences in the West constitute a special feature of the European Renaissance. The Asian Renaissance produces fine arts, but no new positive science worth mentioning. All the same, no genuine societal differentiations between the East and the West are perceptible as yet. We may then insitute the following two equations : (a) Asia in positive science (1600-1750) = Europe in positive science (1400-1600), but (b) Asia in socio-economic life (1600-1750) = Europe in socio-economic life (1600-1750).

(4) 1750-1850. The Industrial Revolution in the West creates a new civilisation, the "modern mind." East and West differ substantially for the first time. Thus Asia (1850) = Europe (1750).

This difference that was then visible between the two sections of humanity, i.e., the Asians and Eur-Americans—was not then a pointer to their difference in the previous centuries of history. Besides, this temporary difference between the East and the West was not indicative of a fundamental difference in mentality or life's view-points. The difference was not only temporary but also superficial and was due to the difference in economic or material development between the two. Since 1905 Asia had entered on a creative period and had been continuously struggling to catch up to the advanced West in technocracy, industrialism, municipal efficiency and political administration. The time is not distant when the East and the West will meet each other on almost the same ideological and institutional platform. His conclusions run thus :

"The Asians are not more moral and more spiritual than the Eur-Americans and the Eur-Americans are not more militaristic, more power-loving and positivistic than the Asians. And therefore the philosophy that is to-day very popular in India and elsewhere, the metaphysics by discussing which we can get recognised overnight as brilliant philosophers, the *ism* which says there is a fundamental difference between the East and the West in regard to outlook on life's view-points and world-conceptions are entirely fallacious" (*Vide* : B. K. Sarkar's *India's Epochs in World-Culture : Prabuddha Bharata*, July-Sept., 1941).

Pragmatically speaking, there have been and there are philosophies and philosophies both in India and Europe. Mysticism and other-worldly attitude have flourished as much on Indian as on extra-Indian soil, along with the development of positivistic and materialistic leanings on both the theatres. Generally the West is

identified with violence, militarism and positivism. But in Sarkar's critical philosophy and comparative culture-analysis, this traditional attitude to Western culture is absolutely fallacious. Mysticism of diverse denominations has flourished very luxuriantly on the Occidental soil. The cult of the Infinite, the Absolute and the Eternal has indeed a formidable tradition in the Western world. Let us take a few instances from the history of the West.

The very first mystical speculations on the European side were embodied in the teachings of Pythagoras. He believed in the transmigration of the soul and preached the esoteric doctrine of numbers. He was a vegetarian and believed in general abstinence and ascetic mortification of the flesh. Plato's idealism also was mystical as much as was the monism of contemporary *Upanishadists* of India and *Taoists* of China. Thirdly, the other-worldliness and pessimism of Jesus are undeniable. His political slogan was: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." Such extreme "non-resistance" was probably never preached in India. In India Gautama the Buddha could simultaneously function, and actually did function, as a religious organiser and a great statesman. Most of his followers were energists and active propagandists. There are many instances of Buddhist monks organising themselves into military orders in the medieval history of China, Japan and India.

Fourthly, Plotinus (third century A.C.), the greatest neo-Platonist, was a mystical pantheist. Next, the monasticism, celibacy, nunnery, notions about "the world, the flesh, and the devil," "the seven deadly sins," etc.,

of Christianity had been practically universal in the Western world throughout the Middle Ages. A slight acquaintance with the religious history of Europe will immediately drive us to the conclusion that the other-worldly passions and practices in the West had too deep and extensive sway to be explained away as accidental, imported or unassimilated overgrowths. Spiritualistic "self-assertion" was the creed of many a transcendentalist denomination in Europe during the Middle Ages. In Europe the priestly organisation was more unified and more powerful than its counterpart of the then India. If we are absolutely ignorant of European history, we can deny this bit of factual tradition of the West. To the English Puritans, even music and sports were taboo. The painters of the romantic movement in Germany fought shy of women and preached that all artists should be monks. Hartman, the philosopher of the *Unconscious*, is an inveterate woman-hater, and a confirmed pessimist. His pupil, Mainlander, in the *Philosophy of Redemption*, has outdone the master. According to him, the movement of all beings is not the will to live but "the will to die." The guide of them both, Schopenhauer, had propounded "the denial of the will to live." The race of Emersons and Thoreaus is not yet a thing of the past in Eur-American tradition.

"Even the 'international Jew' of the twentieth century," says Prof. Sarkar, "is almost universally sticking to the old *mores*, folkways, *sitten*, customs or *acharas*, no matter under what geographical, climatic, political and economic conditions he may be functioning. The Jewish priest exercises his sway as mightily in the urban pattern as in the rural. The Christians

of Eur-America are no less subject to this despotism of customs and ceremonies than are the Jews. The most scientific and the most capitalistic Christian families of the world have not yet been able to bid adieu to their most primitive birth-death-marriage *samskaras* (ceremonies). No dose of hyper-urbanisation has succeeded in serving as an effective solvent of the old and medieval *mores* in the Christian world. The Christians of no denominations, Roman Catholic, Greek Church or Protestant, have yet renounced the *samskara* of baptismal ceremony in order to demonstrate their modernism and acculturation to the industrial economy or the scientific attitudes to nature and the universe. Italian like other Catholic boys and girls at the age of 7-9 still observe the *samskara* (ceremony) of the holy communion. This is as common in America as in Europe. Marriage continues still to be a religious ceremony among Christians and Jews in spite of the almost universally introduced legal compulsion as regards civil marriage. Either before or after the registration of marriage at the government or municipal office church marriage is solemnized in every decent family. No amount of modernisation in capitalistic *mores* has succeeded in militating against the survival religious marriage even among Protestants. Among the Roman Catholics of France, Italy, Spain, Austria, Rhineland, the U.S.A. and Latin America the feeling continues to prevail that a mere civil marriage is abominable like companionate marriage, trial marriage and so forth, and is alleged to imply virtually prostitution."—*Villages and Towns as Social Patterns* (1941, pages 339-342).

How is it possible, asks Sarkar, to maintain, in the face of these solid bits of factual history, that pessimism and mysticism or transcendentalism is the product exclusively or distinctively of the Orient, specially of India?

At this stage one might easily suggest that Occidental mysticism and other-worldliness are the result of her contact with Eastern countries, specially India. But again Prof. Sarkar argues :

"This is not necessarily due to the migration of ideas or institutions from the East to the West, and *vice versa* ; because this cannot be proved by positive historical evidence in many instances. Most of these identities are really independent growths or accidental convergences and point to the fundamental unity of the human make-up. Indebtedness can undoubtedly be traced to foreign sources in certain incidents. But the very fact of their naturalisation and assimilation to the conditions of new habitat indicates, again, the essential psychological uniformity of mankind."—*Futurism of Young Asia* (Leipzig, 1922, page 108)

Let us now critically examine the other side of the shield. Usually India is associated with other-worldly leanings, pessimism, mysticism and so forth. But Prof. Sarkar at once challenges this fundamentally wrong estimate about India which is to him as much materialistic and spiritualistic as the West.

The wars of the Rig-Veda are too well-known to every student of India's socio-religious history. In that celebrated Indian work a substantial portion is devoted, among others, to the discussion of the various means and methods of war and aggrandisement. The *Rishis*, pragmatically viewed, were the last persons to preach or cultivate *Ahimsa*.

"If the *Rishis* of ancient India," says Prof. Sarkar, "knew anything, they knew burning, killing and fighting."

This heightening way of saying things should be taken, of course, not in a mathematical, but human manner.

The first Indian Napoleon, Chandragupta Maurya (4th century B.C.) had a regular standing army of 60,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 9000 elephants, and a multitude of chariots. A race which can organise such a vast fighting machine and beat the mighty Hellenic forces was not certainly over-religious or unpractical mystics. Such vast armies have not been exceptional in Indian history. According to a Portuguese observer, Krishna of Vijayanagar (1509-30 A.D.) in South India commanded an army of 703,000 foot, 32,600 horse, and 551 elephants, besides camp-followers. One of the smallest armies of the Hindus has been that of the Andhras in the Deccan. It had only 100,000 infantry, 2000 cavalry, and 100 elephants. India has been active through the ages in her militaristic and positivistic career which is discussed at remarkable length in Sarkar's *Political Institutions and Theories of the Hindus* (Leipzig, 1922, pages 270).

In the power of political organisation the Indians would appear from an objective analysis of comparative history to be more brilliant than, or at any rate, as brilliant as the Europeans.

"It is true," observes Sarkar, "that on various occasions *pax-sarabhaumica* (peace of the world-empire), the Indian analogue of *pax Romana*, was achieved within the boundaries of India. In fact, only once did Europe witness the formation of a unitary state with the size and area of the Maurya Empire (322-185 B.C.). This was the Roman Empire at its zenith, during the second and third centuries A.C. Neither the heterogeneous conquests of Napoleon acquired the dimensions of the Tuglak Empire of the fourteenth century or of the Mughal Empire of the eighteenth. In terms of population and area, even the

less extensive Gupta Empire of the fifth century, the Vardhana Empire of the seventh and the Chola Empire of the eleventh were barely approached by the Empire of Charlemagne."

Wherein do Indian ideals then differ from European?

Let us proceed to analyse Hindu secularism or positivism a little more deeply in the light of objective history. All through the ages the Hindus have been famous to foreign nations principally as materialists. As discussed at considerable length in Sarkar's *Creative India* (Lahore, 1937, pages 725), the dawn of human civilisation finds the Hindus (Dravidians and Aryans), captains of industry and entrepreneurs of commerce in touch with the Pharaohs of Egypt. The mummies of the Egyptians were wrapped in muslin imported from India. It is also believed that the textile craftsmen of Egypt dyed their cloth with Hindu indigo.

Secondly, Hindu commerce with the land of the Euphrates was more intimate and direct. As early as about 3000 B.C., the Hindus supplied the Chaldaean city of Ur on the Euphrates with teakwood. The Assyrians also, like the Egyptians, got their muslin from India. From the tenth to sixth century B.C. the Assyro-Babylonian trade of the Hindus seems to have been very brisk. It was through this Indo-Mesopotamian trade that the Athenians of the sixth century B.C., came to know of rice and peacocks.

Thirdly, Hindu soldiers joined the ranks of their Iranian fellow subjects when Xerxes led the memorable expedition against Greece (480 B.C.), and the bones of many a Hindu must have been mixed with the dusts of Europe at Thermopylae. This was probably

the first direct contact between the Hindus and the Greeks.

In international politics the Maurya Emperors of India were the "allies" of the Hellenistic rulers of western Asia, Europe and Africa. They succeeded in giving a unified administration, financial as well as judicial, to extensive areas of India in that distant past. Under them centralisation marked every department of governmental machinery as sufficiently evidenced by Megasthenes and Kautilya.

During the first two centuries of the Christian era, the Kushans of northern India promoted trade with the Roman Empire by land, and the Andhras of southern India had touch with Rome by sea. The balance of trade was in favour of the Hindus, leading to considerable "drain" of gold from Rome to India. The *Periplus of the Erythraean Sea* constitutes a permanent proof of the highly commercial and materialist genius of the Hindus.

In fact, with the fourth century A.C. really commence the foundations of a "Greater India" of commerce and culture, extending ultimately from Japan on the East to Madagascar on the West. The romantic story of this tremendous expansion of India has found its proper place in Dr. Radhakumud Mookerjee's *History of Indian Shipping and Maritime Activity from the Earliest Times* (London, 1912). The heroic pioneers of that undertaking were certainly not metaphysical dreamers, intuitionists or unpractical idealists. The same process of India's secular "acculturation" went on right up to the eighteenth century in a most prominent manner.

The long-continued international trade of the Hindus points to their thoroughly commercial and practical capacity. Some of their ancient ships could accommodate 300, 500, 700, 800, and even 1,500 passengers. In the fifteenth century A.D., the Hindus, according to Nicolo Corti, could build ships larger than the Europeans, capable of containing 2000 butts and five sails and as many masts. One of the Hindu ships on way to the Red Sea, in 1612, was 153 feet long, 42 feet beam, 31 feet deep, was of 1500 tons burden. The English ships of that date were 300 or 500 tons at most. The city of Murshidabad was brighter and more sanitary than the London of those days according to Clive. Baltazar Solvyns, the French observer, wrote even in 1811 that the Indian sea-going vessels were more durable and elegant than those of the English and the French.

Thus it is quite evident that the Hindu or Indian civilisation has been all through the fleeting centuries of history highly materialistic, practical and positivistic.

"If Hindu civilisation," questions Sarkar, "has not been materialistic, one wonders as to what is materialism. In what particulars did the 'Greek view of life' differ from that of the Hindus? Let the Dickinsons and Huntingtons answer."

THE PROBLEM OF TRUTH

Whenever I find two persons trying to agree with each other I feel inclined to suspect that there is a chance for some moral or spiritual injustice happening in the world.

Truth is individual, personal, concrete, not universal, general, abstract.

Not "Truth," but *truths* constitute the objective verdict of philosophy.

—BENOY SARKAR

(From *The Political Philosophies Since 1905*. p. 1).

APPENDICES

I

THE SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY OF A NEW DEMOCRACY

In modern times the illiterate has hardly anywhere in East or West been treated by the "cultured" classes even of democratic countries as of any worth whether as an intellectual person or as a moral agent. World-War II which compelled the hyper-civilized peoples to march "back to the caves" in which the palaeolithic races had flourished furnishes us with an occasion for re-examining the foundations of this traditional view of science and philosophy regarding the illiterates.

The psychological and ethical values of the human personality deserve to be transvalued in the light of objective realities about men and women based on statistical and comparative investigations. The students of science are called upon to realize that both in East and West,—even in those regions which are used to universal, compulsory and free school systems,—the railway coolies, plantation labourers, mine-workers, factory labourers, peasants, in other words, those occupational groups which constitute the majority of the "gainfully employed" do not necessarily possess an intelligence and moral character inferior to those of the persons who academically, professionally and economically belong to the upper ten thousands.

We are speaking here of those men and women who happen to be "unlettered." It is to be noted that we are not using the word "uneducated." By the word "unlettered" is to be understood a person who cannot read and write. The distinction that we make here is of profound significance in regard to the appraisal of human "values." A man who is unable to read and write is not necessarily uneducated or uncultured. Literacy is an essentially modern phenomenon, but culture and education have been going on in the human race for thousands of years. There were millions of cultured and educated men and women during the primitive, ancient and mediaeval epochs of history even in those regions and among those races where reading and writing

were unknown. In other words, human intelligence is not, as a rule, dependent very much on book-learning and school-going. The natural intelligence as well as practical experience of the teeming millions among the illiterates are, therefore, very valuable intellectual assets.

We may now institute a comparison of these illiterates with those who have acquired "education" in schools and colleges. In other words, let us compare the peasants and mechanics with school-masters, lawyers, magistrates, doctors, journalists and political leaders. There is hardly anybody among the so-called educated classes who would venture to assert that as intelligent persons, that is, as men and women of common sense, the cultivators and mistris (artisans) do not understand the problems of their daily life, their family requirements, their village surroundings in the same way as do the school-masters, lawyers, religious preachers and so on. Those who know the illiterates intimately admit, as a rule, that the fact of being ignorant in regard to reading and writing does not render them incapable of comprehending the interests of themselves, their families as well as their neighbours. On the other hand, it is also necessary to observe that a school-master, a lawyer or a medical doctor is after all an expert in one, two or three things of life. These alleged "educated" persons can claim proficiency only in a very limited sphere of interests. The medical man is not an authority in problems connected with engineering, the engineer in questions involving a knowledge of botany, the chemist in questions of astronomy, and so on. The highest that one can possibly claim for these intellectual classes is that some one is a specialist in a particular line and a certain person in another.

Now, agriculture is also a profession of very great importance. Those men and women of India therefore who are experts in agriculture, that is the illiterate cultivators, therefore, deserve the same consideration from the other members of the community as a lawyer does from the engineer and an astronomer from the chemist. Professions are to be respected as professions. The agricultural profession does not demand less intelligence, less dexterity, less shrewdness, less

commonsense, less organizing ability than do the so-called learned professions. The same remarks hold good in regard to the profession of the blacksmith, weaver, potter, and so on. The mistri (artisan), the cultivator and others in the so-called manual professions are as educated and cultured, although unable to read and write, as are the lawyers, doctors and the professors.

We are prepared to go a step beyond and assert that as a "moral person," that is, as one who as a free agent discharges the duty of his life in regard to himself, his family and his neighbours, the lawyer, the doctor or the professor is not necessarily superior to the *chashi*, coolie, *majur*, *mistri* and all other manual workers. Let the members of the so-called "educated classes" place their hands on their breasts and compare their character as sons and daughters, as parents, as uncles or aunts, as guardians, as nephews and nieces with those of the cultivators, factory workers, independent handicraftsmen. It is impossible to assert that the peasant as a class in his moral obligations and sense of duty towards relatives and kinsfolk as well as to neighbours, is on a lower plane than members of so-called educated class. In regard to other functions of moral life also we can institute a comparison and we shall come to the conclusion that in regard to the activities involving money matters, the engineer, the contractor, the school-master, the land-owner, the factory-director and others do not, as a rule, enjoy an enviable position such as might give points to the members of the unlettered classes. We can take other items of private and public morality and we shall find that in criminal statistics, the cultivator, the artisan and the industrial workers do not figure oftener and in larger numbers proportionally speaking, than do men and women of the so-called superior classes.

These discoveries, based on the experience of a very large number of public workers and scholars, lead us inevitably to the proposition that the illiterate is not a person who deserves to be differentiated from the so-called educated as an intellectual and moral being. And on the strength of this discovery we should be prepared to formulate a doctrine which is well calculated to counteract the superstition that has

been propagated in Eur-America and later in Asia as well as of course in India to the effect that literacy must be the basis of political suffrage. Our observations entitle us to the creed that political suffrage should have nothing to do with literacy. The illiterate has a right to political life and privileges simply because of the sheer fact that as a normal human being he has factually demonstrated his intellectual strength and moral or civic sense. The rights of the illiterate ought to constitute in social psychology the foundation of a new democracy. A universal suffrage independent of all considerations as to school-going, ability to read and write or other tests should be the very first postulate of social economics. It is orientations like these that democracy needs today if it is to function as a living faith.

—BENOY SARKAR

[Extracted from *Dominion India in World-Perspectives*,
Calcutta, 1949, pp. 166-168.]

II

DEATH OF A PIONEER

The mournful news of Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar's sad death in a hospital in far-off America must have come as a rude shock to thousands of his friends, admirers and pupils all over India and Pakistan. Communications from the U.S.A., which he had been touring since February last as a cultural ambassador of resurgent India, lately indicated that he had been ailing for some time past and this had caused deep anxiety among his friends in this country; few, however, suspected that he was so perilously near the journey's end. It had been all so tragically sudden and agonisingly quick.

At the time of his death Professor Sarkar was more than sixty. Reckoning by standards in our country that was ripe old age. But it was only in terms of years that he was old and there was nothing in his activities and deportment which even remotely suggested that he was aging. Years indeed had touched him but lightly and when he left for the United States some eight months back with the weight of more than sixty winters on his shoulders he looked as youthful as ever. Few youths are more enterprising or more spirited than the great sponsor of Young Bengal had been on the wrong side of sixty. Six strenuous decades failed to sap his vitality, depress his spirits or drain off his exuberance. He never grew old which does not mean that he never learnt from experience. As a matter of fact, he remained a seeker of knowledge till his last days; but despite his encyclopaedic knowledge he symbolised even in the twilight of life that defiant and restless spirit which is Youth's own.

As an erudite scholar Professor Sarkar's reputation had spread far beyond the narrow frontiers of this country. Students of sociology, economics and political philosophy all over the globe hold his name in great respect. He was in a sense a linguist and was equally at home with half-a-dozen modern languages apart from English and his mother-tongue. The result was that his was a revered name not only in the English-speaking world but equally outside it. For years he had faithfully discharged his self-imposed duties as an unofficial ambassador-

at-large of India in bondage struggling to emerge out of the stranglehold of a humiliating exotic rule. And when towards the fag-end of his life, to his immense joy, India broke her fetters and emerged as a free member of the comity of nations he once more took up his roving commission and sailed for the U.S.A. as a messenger of the peace-loving East to the war-weary West—eventually to lay down his life in the cause of his mother-land which he loved so passionately.

His death in a manner was on a par with his intensely active life which knew no rest and scorned at inaction. His normal term of office with the University of Calcutta was ended and he could have easily retired to a secluded corner for the rest of his life to enjoy his well-earned rest. That however would have been unlike his dynamic personality which loved nothing more dearly than a life of action. Though the spirit was yearning for action the flesh apparently was weak and the great Professor died much as he had lived—a bundle of energy till the end.

Professor Sarkar's career as a teacher dates back to the beginning of the century. His was a mission and not a profession. He was among the small band of pioneers who in the early part of the present century demanded a national outlook in education and led the movement for creating a National University in Bengal which still survives in the famous College of Technology and Engineering at Jadavpur in the suburbs of Calcutta. It was not the fault of Professor Sarkar if the National University of the Swadeshi days did not survive to become the mighty seat of culture and learning that it deserved to be. But Professor Sarkar never gave up the endeavour to build up a New Bengal in the broader perspectives of a new India. He had been a challenge to the age—a minority of one as he was never tired of repeating. His unbounded enthusiasm however never waned even though he had to plough a lonely furrow.

As a teacher the distinguished Professor, to use a cliché, had few equals. There was in him a fund of good-humoured geniality that was indeed infectious. His exposition was marked by such a limpid lucidity that it was often mistaken as a lack of depth as if profundity is synonymous with obscurity. Only

a thorough mastery of a subject could make possible that clarity in exposition which was the late Professor's forte. His connections with the University began rather, late—it was only in the mid-twenties that he joined the University of Calcutta—but during the decade and a half he had been with the University he had built up a Sarkarian tradition—a tribute to his varied scholarship, deep erudition and creative genius. His unorthodox approach to socio-economic problems would often sound like daring heresy and nothing would please him more than to raise his solitary voice to a Stentorian pitch to hurl defiance at widely accepted orthodoxy. It was not just a balderdash; it was the full-throated battle-cry of a mighty dissenter.

The greater part of Professor Sarkar's life had been spent abroad, yet, he remained a true Bengalee all his life. He was in the line of those Titans of Bengal who had flung their challenge to current orthodoxies in different ages. "Raja Rammohan Roy, Keshavchandra Sen, Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, Surendranath Banerjee, Swami Vivekananda, Chittaranjan Das and Subhas Chandra Bose," a Bombay periodical once wrote, "are all typical of the free and independent spirit of Bengal which refuses to bend its knee to any individual or cult. An even more impressive example is Benoy Kumar Sarkar who challenges every school of thought which holds the field in India today." That neatly sums up the Sarkarian spirit. More often than not his was a solitary voice crying in the wilderness. Posterity will judge whether he was just a heretic who always went off at a tangent to the accepted path or his was the vision of a true thinker who could see beyond the barriers of tradition. That controversy however need not detract from his vast scholarship and wide range of knowledge. Truly he was a genius—an uncommon man who combined to an astonishing degree energy in action with boldness in thought.

—THE LEADING EDITORIAL,
The Hindustan Standard,
November 26, 1949.

III

PROF. SOROKIN'S TRIBUTE

As to Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar, I have been in correspondence with him for many years, and not long before his death I had the pleasure of meeting him personally here at a lunch organised by Swami Akhilananda. It goes without saying that I value highly all of his main works, and from these works I have learned a great deal about various aspects of Hindu society and culture. In my own works I make a number of references to his books and studies. In brief, if I had the privilege to be thought of highly by Professor Sarkar, this high estimation was mutual. I enormously regret his passing away. His death interrupted his creative life at the moment of full development of his creative activities.

PITIRIM A. SOROKIN

Head of the Department of Sociology,
Harvard University.

[Extracted from Prof. Sorokin's letter dated Nov. 25, 1952, to Uma Mukherjee, Lecturer in History, Lady Brabourne College, Calcutta.]

IV

DR. B. M. BARUA'S LETTER TO SARKAR

Ashutosh Building,
Calcutta,
27th May, '44

My Dear Dr. Sarkar,

I am much grateful to you for your kind words about me, and your sincere wishes which I wish I had really deserved. Let me say that you have excelled us all in your wide knowledge of men and things, the depth of your knowledge and the breadth of your vision. There is hardly a second man in India of to-day to properly evaluate all nations and their contributions to the Commonwealth of Culture.

Kindest regards,
Yours sincerely,
B. M. BARUA.

[In early 1944 Dr. Beni Madhab Barua visited Ceylon and delivered a series of lectures on Buddhist culture and Indo-Ceylonese cultural relations at the University of Colombo and at other learned institutes. In appreciation of his valuable work in the field of Buddhist culture, he was awarded the title of *Tripitak-Acharya* by the Buddhist scholars of Ceylon. On his return to Calcutta, a reception was accorded to him at a public meeting at the Mahabodhi Society Hall with Prof. Benoy Sarkar in the chair. Prof. Sarkar in course of his presidential speech stressed the distinctive role that Dr. Barua was playing in promoting our interest in Buddhist culture and compared him in his own characteristic way with the legendary *Hanuman* who stands out as a symbolic figure in the promotion of Indo-Ceylonese cultural relations in ancient times. The lines quoted above were addressed to Prof. Sarkar immediately after this meeting.]

LATE PROF. SARKAR

I have learnt with great satisfaction that my pupil, Sreeman Haridas Mukherjee, is going to publish an historical work on the late Professor Benoy Sarkar's life and activities. The publication throws into relief the high devotion to his memory and the unique hold that he had upon the affections of his large number of pupils and friends.

Prof. Sarkar was in every way an extraordinary personality. His scholarship embraced diverse fields of study and was by no means confined to narrow specialisation. Above all, he had a magnetic personality radiating charm and energy and casting an unforgettable spell upon those who had the good fortune to come into intimate contact with him. In the matter of scholastic studies he did not follow the beaten track and the routine-syllabus. He opened up new lines of study and research which are being followed with fruitful results by his pupils.

In Prof. Sarkar the human element was always predominant. The dry husks of scholarships were always filled by him with a kernel of sweet and infectious humanity which made study a love and an inspiration. His deep patriotism gave a meaning and purpose and a glow and colour to his scholastic pursuits as they were meant not merely for himself but to exalt the glory of Bengal all over the world.

SRI KUMAR BANERJEE
Professor, Calcutta University.

ON THE SECOND DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF
BENOY KUMAR SARKAR

November 24, 1951 •

This day will always remain a cause of grief in the lives of many people. Thus I want to write these few lines. I wish to think today on all our friends throughout the universe, on all that is beautiful and on all that is great in life, and on the efforts required to attain these things.

It is two years today, that Benoy Sarkar departed from a life of work and duty into an eternity of worship. It is strange, that so often we find that men who have died live clearer and stronger in our thoughts and imagination than ever before. And this is how I have met Benoy Sarkar. He whom I have never seen in life-time, I have however fully visualized and clearly understood through his works. He revealed himself as a "Great Man" who understood the problems of the day, of the year and of the future. He was alert to all the questions of the hour and simultaneously had the strength to fulfil the great mission, which only those men can do, who draw inspiration from the greatest spring of human understanding and whose visions lead them on to forecast prophesies and so they can create from their deep comprehension of the world.

I have missed one of the greatest things of my life, without being aware of it, by not meeting Benoy Sarkar personally, but I wish to be able to stand once on the banks of that Ganges, where Sarkar also stood and thought. And the Ganges of my longing is called "India," that great sub-continent, where spirituality remains ever young in the hearts of the people.

Today on this lamentable occasion, when our beloved Benoy Sarkar, the great intellectual giant of Bengal (India), died in Washington, the metropolis of America, we in Germany commemorate the Sunday for Departed Souls. On this day, our thoughts wander to graves, where dear ones are resting. They wander to great men, who have done so much for their respective countries and for humanity at large. When I shall today

be going personally to the cemetery to lay a wreath on the grave of the Unknown Soldier, then I shall think of the great spirit of our beloved Benoy Kumar Sarkar and of the momentous work he has done for his own country and for Germany, at a time, when he found himself to be in the minority of "One" as he was so often in his life. But the seeds that he has sown have sprouted and he will live on for ever and ever and his work will bear fruits in the generations to come. I shall think of that great, noble soul, who could have done so much more, had he lived, but for the Eternal Call, that took him to his everlasting abode. From those highest spheres he will still be seeing us and his light will shine down on many dark roads in diverse countries and lands.

DR. WALTER LEIFER,
Editor of the
"Norddeutsche Zeitung"
Hanover, Germany.
Hanover, 24 November, 1951

[Extracted from *Eur-Asia* monthly for December, 1951,
edited by Prof. P. K. Ray]

VII

MY REMINISCENCES OF BENOY SARKAR

My recollection of the late Professor Benoy Kumar Sarkar carries my memory back to the glorious days of the beginning of the Indian independence movement—euphemistically called the Swadeshi movement. He was a member of that band of brilliant young men who had been collected by Satis Chandra Mukherjee whose services to the cause of Indian independence have been seldom equalled and never surpassed. Among the members of this band were the late Rabindra Narayan Ghose, Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Rajendra Prasad, Haran Chandra Chakladar and many a *clarum et venerabile nomen*. Satish Chandra had realised the shortcomings of the system of education adumbrated, advanced and accomplished by the British in India to denationalise Indians and create a vast clerky class trained up without discipline, without contentment and without religion. He, therefore, established with the help and co-operation of Gooroodas Banerjee, Nagendra Sath Ghose, Sister Nivedita, Rabindra Nath Tagore and others, the *Dawn Society* with a view to usher in the dawn of a new day for India beckoning India to a greater day than had ever yet come to the country.

The policy adopted by Satish Chandra was different from that of Aurobindo Ghose—the policy of triumph through terror. But their respect for each other was abiding because both had a deep faith in the spiritual heritage of India, both were proud of her past and both were confident of her glorious future.

To Satish Chandra came young Benoy Kumar—a brilliant student from Maldah who could have secured any post under the Government then open to Indians. But he remained true to the ideals of sacrifice and patriotism to which he was initiated by his *guru*. And like some of his colleagues, Benoy Kumar was determined to pluck personality from a laborious career—personality—that mysterious complex of qualities whose citadel is never stormed by industry alone, and without whose gates brilliancy often clamours in vain.

Benoy Kumar gave expression to his ideas on education in

a number of books written in the Swadeshi period and I remember him as a young author who came to me with two of his books for review in my monthly journal *Aryavarta*. The books had the stamp of clear thinking and originality and revealed his unusual capacity for research-work. One of the two books—that on education, viz., *Shiksha-Vijnan*, was reviewed in my magazine in 1910. It is a pleasure to me to find that what I had said about him at that time has proved a prediction—the author had fulfilled the promise I discerned in him when he was rather a young man and a novice.

The promise contained in those earlier writings was amply fulfilled in his later and maturer works on bewilderingly various subjects. It is no exaggeration to say that he was the founder of a new school of economics—realistic economics—in Bengal, nay, in India—a school which was wedded to the principle of comparative or world-economic research. His scholarly publications on economics and sociology as well as on political philosophy have drawn the admiring notice not only of Indian scholars, but also of foreign experts. He has enormously added to the prestige of Indians among the intellectual circles of Europe and America.

Benoy Kumar was not only a great scholar, but also a born teacher. The education he sought to impart was not education of the ordinary type and certainly not the education stamped with official approval by our alien rulers. The education he gave was well calculated to foster in the students the innate sense of dignity, manhood, and individuality. He encouraged free thinking among the students in a manner not common in our age.

To popularise his ideas for our countrymen Benoy Kumar created in Bengali a style all his own—at once graceful, vivid and lucid. In this matter he followed the opinion of Bankim Chandra that the aim and object of the author should be to render his writings easily understandable and with that end in view he should not hesitate to use words coined from other languages or adopted from them.

Another very remarkable feature of Benoy Kumar's character was its catholicity of mind and the proneness to learn even from his juniors. He was never a bigot and intolerant of

others' opinions. Goethe said that nothing is more frightful than a teacher who only knows what his scholars are intended to know. Benoy Kumar was not a teacher of that type; and that is why he was most successful as a teacher. Truly he was a man of uncommon gifts and singular attainments whose memory one loves to cherish as a treasure.

HEMENDRA PRASAD GOSE

BENOY SARKAR AS I SAW HIM

I came in contact for the first time with the late lamented Professor Benoy Sarkar in 1906 or thereabouts. He was a Collegemate and a dear friend of my revered cousin the late Sukumar Chatterjee who was another of those noble spirits who gave a life-time of devoted service to the cause of the motherland. Benoy Sarkar was regarded, even in those days, to be one of the bright hopes of a resurgent nationalism that was flooding Bengal of Swadeshi movement. I was only a young student then and therefore looked up with awe and admiration to the small band of young men who had dedicated themselves to the cause, and Benoy Sarkar's name was in the forefront amongst them.

In 1908 I came to Calcutta from Allahabad, after the forcible expulsion of my father from the United Provinces, under the Act of 1818. Here I got caught up in the turmoil of nationalistic endeavour that was slowly gaining ground, and had more frequent opportunities to contact the aforementioned group that included Benoy Sarkar. But, as I have said before, I was only a young student and as such did not have the opportunity to come closer in contact with the shining lights amongst the elders of our generation.

That opportunity came in 1910. My father had taken a house in Darjeeling for the summer season and I was there with the family, when a group of friends and relations came in a party for a short holiday, to the hills. In that party were two of my cousins, the younger brothers of Sri Sukumar Chatterjee, Prof. Radhakumud Mukherji and Prof. Benoy Sarkar. They all put up at the Louis Jubilee Sanatorium at Darjeeling.

It was decided by this group, after a few days of idleness at Darjeeling, to go on a trip to the Sikkim border on horseback, as far as Kalimpong. In those days such trips were not so easy as now, and one had to go through dense forest tracks on the banks of the Rangeet and the Teesta. The tracks were

mere ledges cut in the overhanging cliffs in some places and most people were asked to dismount by the syces and to walk along the rockside until the track widened. The journey was not quite free from danger as it is now, as the tracks were mere tracks, with wooden temporary bridges over the smaller streams that flowed into the roaring torrents of the Rangeet and the Teesta. Wild animals roamed in the primeval forests and it was not an infrequent occurrence to come across an wild elephant herd.

I was asked to join the party, and having secured the necessary permission and money from my father I accompanied the group on its tour. This was one of the happiest adventures of my life and even after the lapse of over forty years I still carry vivid memories of that trip.

I came in closer contact with Benoydada on that occasion as I was his constant companion, in camp and on horseback, for little over a week.

It is then I came to know of the hopes and yearnings that were passing through the minds of the earnest workers in the cause of Nationalism, and also had a glimpse of reasoning behind the forlorn-hope attempts of the revolutionaries. The few that I had contacted before then were more active-workers than thinkers, with the exception of two, one of whom was a striking mixture of mysticism and Spartan courage and the other a fearless devotee of the 'do or die cult'. Both bore the first name of Jatin, and both have left their indelible marks on the pages of the history of Nationalism in India.

But even to my immature mind it was apparent that in Benoy Sarkar there was working an intellect tuned to a far higher pitch and a much wider scope, though the outward shell was nowhere so impressive as in the case of the Sannyasin Jatin ("Narayananda") or "Bagha-Jatin". Benoy Sarkar's mind was engaged in the solving of problems reaching out to the dim future and in developing an all-embracing plan for the upsurge of Nationalism. The two Jatin, on the other hand, were preparing for action, regardless of consequences, as fast as possible. But this is no place to indulge in comparisons of the policies of the noble departed.

I remember on that trip, when, after crossing the Rangeet

by the suspension bridge at Badamtam, we were proceeding to Teesta Bazar, we came on to a gigantic landslide on the Sikkim side of the river. We had to dismount and proceed slowly on foot as the ground was broken and treacherous underfoot.

I was admiring the magnificent landscape of the Rangeet gorge, with its combined view of river, mountain and virgin forests, when a shout from Benoydada brought my thoughts down to earth. He was holding up a lump of some glittering mineral in hand and he told me to take a look at the mineral and also to memorise the location. The mineral was argenteiferous galena, a combination of lead, sulphur and silver. I laughed and asked him why did he want me to remember the place, was he going to leave the college and take to mining? He replied gravely that he might have to stay in college or go out of the country, but he might have occasion in future to look up hidden resources of the motherland. Later in the day he told me more about what the nature of such occasions could be.

Two years later in 1912, I went abroad to study Chemistry and Geology at the Royal College of Science, London. New surroundings, the evidence of temporal power and wealth, the advancement of learning and the strenuous attempts by skilled men and entrepreneurs of industry to keep abreast of world progress, all deeply impressed me, particularly in comparison of what I knew to be the condition of my own fatherland. I will not pretend that I devoted all my time and energy to these thoughts, but I had imbibed enough nationalism from crystalline pure sources to be alive to those facts and also to the deep humiliation of belonging to a subject and backward race.

In 1914, just on the eve of the first World War, a party of Indians came to London, of whom the three were known and proved champions of Nationalism in India. The eldest was that revered name in the annals of India's struggle for liberty, Lala Lajpat Rai, and the other two were Benoy Sarkar and Babu Shivaprasad Gupta. Lalaji I knew and respected from my boyhood as a beloved friend and associate of my father, Benoydada was as an elder brother, Babu Shivaprasad Gupta

I knew by name and repute and had also seen him in India at the Benares Congress and later. The others of the party were just well-to-do men, out sight-seeing and holidaying abroad.

Crowds of visitors, mostly Indian students, went to visit them at the house in Finsbury Avenue where they were staying. The British had not succeeded as yet in widening the breach between the Hindu and the Moslem and there were many Moslems amongst the visitors, who were all lavishly entertained by Babu Shivaprasad. Amongst the most frequent visitors were Syed Hasan—our late Ambassador to Egypt—the elder of the Suhrawardy brothers,—now the head of the Pakistan Public Services Commission—and the late Tasaduq Ahmed Khan Sherwani. I was, of course, given a far more intimate welcome and I often dined and stayed late, whenever I had time.

I had long talks with Benoydada, who was then alternating between hope and despondence and learnt far more about the political problems facing India than ever before. This is not the place to put forward the subject-matter of all those talks, but I could make out that the more advanced groups in India had made up their mind to resort to extreme measures in revolutionary tactics, as they had decided that Britain's slippery and perfidious tactics meant no good for India of the Indians.

Benoydada gave me books to read, some of which treasured possessions of Babu Shivaprasad, in order to impress in full on me and my friends, the needs and justifications of the hour, and sometimes even Lalaji came and joined in the earnest talks. The conviction was forcefully put forward that our only hope lay in the cult of revolution by blood and iron and hopeless though it seemed, there was no other way but to venture all and to hope for the best.

In later years I understood what linked that reasoning with tradition of the *dharma* of the *Kshatriya* as clearly put forward in the *Gita*. But at that time, to my callow youthful mind, it seemed to be a curious mixture of Western realpolitik and Eastern faith in complete renunciation and self-devotion, as in the *Anandamath*. I was puzzled by the apparently illogical arguments in favour of meeting force by force, where our attempts were foredoomed to failure. The replies were given in terms of Eastern faith and devotion,

which also puzzled me as being not in keeping with the cult of force. Once in the course of such a talk, Lalaji remarked that the difficulty in correlation of the two cults was due to our transformation into eunuchs through the system of English education that was imposed on us. "No Rajput, no Sikh in the past argued like this" he said, "but we have been made into Bails by the British to act as beasts of burden, and that is why our intellect is incapable of grasping the absolute truth."

The time came for the departure of the party for the United States. I received a blessing from Lalaji, with an exhortation to learn, as much as possible, the methods of modern arms production. From Benoydada I got as a parting gift a '38 calibre automatic pistol, a beautiful weapon with two spare magazines and a box of cartridges, and also a handful of gold sovereigns, which I knew came from Babu Shivaprasad. I was also told to be constantly on the alert. "We must venture all, but not as careless fools, there is no point in making the supreme sacrifice, without the enemy being hit."

The War became intense, and the hopes of those who believed in the revolution by force rose. I got one or two letters from Benoydada from the States, and also some news from Mr. Rakshit who was associated with the Indian revolutionaries in the U.S.A. I also got some money from the American party for use in England.

Later came an Indian to England from Argentine, with an assumed name and false passport, who was given my address. From him I got the guarded information that an arrangement was being made for the large-scale supplies of arms to the revolutionary group in Bengal, and that it was hoped that a powerful uprising would result. Alas, for those hopes, the whole attempt ended in tragedy, with the death of Bagha-Jatin, Chittapriya and others of that devoted band. It also resulted in the arrest of many Indians in the U.S.A. on the charge of conspiracy with the enemy (German) for an armed revolt.

The story of that futile attempt to land German arms in

British India is a chapter in the history of Indian Revolutionary Movement. The full details of that scheme and the failure thereafter, will perhaps be never known to the world. A history of the Revolutionary Movements is being planned, but there is little hope that a full and complete account of all the major incidents will ever be put on record.

In U.S.A. that attempt had many repercussions. But that is another story. Suffice it to say Benoydada had to leave the country, as did Babu Shivaprasad Gupta. Benoydada left for Japan and thence, *via* Hong Kong or Shanghai, for Peking. I received a letter in London from Peking, informing me that he was staying in the servants quarters of a third class foreign hotel in Peking. But even though in dire straits economically, he had not given up hopes and therefore exhorted me in guarded language to inform friends in India and in U.S.A. that he was carrying on and that he hoped to keep touch.

Babu Shivaprasad was arrested in Singapore and thereby the biggest source of monetary aid was denied to Benoy Sarkar. Even then the dauntless soul did not give up hope and went on with his plans, though disappointment loomed at every corner.

I leave the record here, as my correspondence was broken at this stage, and I did not get any communication from him until his return to the homeland after long years of a heart-rending exile.

In the meanwhile we had established strange values in Nationalism. "Jail-degrees" were regarded as the hall-mark of devotion to the Motherland. Perhaps this was right, but most probably it was not. In any case tens of thousands of rogues got fame cheaply thus, together with a few great ones, and a good few great souls were denied recognition.

KEDARNATH CHATTERJEE



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