



latter day Bengali mind, with its excessive play and preponderance of emotionalism and sentimentalism; though it must be admitted, to their lasting glory, that it is the peculiar genius of the Bengalis, it is the Bengali mind, which has given birth to a spirit of lofty idealism,—if not of intense emotionalism—a spirit that has grown into a religion with young India and supplies the foundation and plinth of today's freedom movement; this spirit seemed to have slackened its hold and lessened its influence on, the Bengali character and personality, on the average Bengali mind also, so far as outward acts and habits, manners and customs were concerned; in fact, a spirit of demoralization and denationalization—which could hardly be found in any other parts of India—seemed to have set in, as a reaction of the strenuous activities and manifold achievements of the second half of the last century. In the field of solid and sustained work and steady, independent and unostentatious actions, in trade, in commerce, in industry and in other enterprises—the Bengalis were left far behind by their fellow countrymen of other provinces; even in the land of their birth they have been ousted right and left; they have become ease-loving and easy-going; love of comfort and luxury, preference of inactivity, physical and mental, to exertion and labour, filtered down all sections of the community; the role of the armchair politicians, of armchair reformer, of fashionable critics and eloquent

speakers fascinated them; they generally shunned sustained work and protracted labour, onerous responsibilities, stern duties and real sacrifices; no doubt the anti-Partition Movement gave rise to a violent agitation and a militant 'swadesism,' a whirl-wind campaign of meetings and demonstrations swept the land from one end to the other; there was an outburst of intense nationalism and patriotism, of an exuberance of patriotic activities and collective labour, of a spirit of sacrifice and readiness to suffer; but these were more a passing phase, more or less, a temporary stage in the national evolution and struggle for freedom and for a fuller life, rather than a stable condition, or a permanent state. The stern, strenuous life of a Vidyasagar, glorious in his life-long striving, in his protracted struggle and shining in his solitary grandeur, the life of a gentle, meek and simple Piyari Charan Sircar living his unostentatious life leading the Temperance Movement and carrying on a vigorous crusade against the drink evil, the saintly life of a silent Sishir Kumar, one of the fathers of Indian nationalism and journalism, bluntly refusing to bargain or barter away the liberty of the native press and the rights of his people in exchange for a big share in the governing power and influence and this—at the instance of the ruler of the land—they no longer shaped, as they ought to have done, the course of their uneventful, easy-going day-to-day life or influenced or moulded their character or personality. At such



a critical period in the history of our country, there arose in our midst—as he must, for it is the destiny of India, and Bengal, for the matter of that, to march onward and onward to the promised land, and march through good report and evil, through sunshine and storm—there came a hero of sustained work and lifelong action, a hero as a reformer, a man among men, brave and active, strong and sturdy, simple and dignified, perhaps as an antidote to the prevailing moral degradation, perhaps as a bulwork against popular denationalization—a hero who was the embodiment of national energy and will to action and freedom; one who was the very spirit of independence in thought, words and work personified; a hero who, a living example of simplicity of living and loftiness of thinking, restored the real values of his country's manners and dress, literature and culture, of plain-living and high thinking! who literally died in harness, championing the cause of his country, the cause of truth, and the cause of learning, and died, a patriot to his very marrow, a nationalist to the innermost depths of his being, and died, too with the banner of progress in hand and the badge of dignity, simplicity and life-long service on his brow



CHAPTER XVIII.

Character and Personality.

Asutosh an impressive figure, outwardly—'the most powerful public character'—the complexity of his character—His greatness unlike Lokamannya Tilak's, Deshabandhu Das's, Mahatma Gandhi's or the great Rabindra Nath's—The unique synthesis in his character, its limitations and advantages—Asutosh and Tilak—His personality, like Disraeli's—its striking qualities—The Bengal Tiger and the British Bulldog—A rare and remarkable combination in his personality ; his intellectual ascendancy, his imagination and practical sense, his all-embracing emotionalism and intense spiritualism—His ambition, his love of power and pomp—his eagerness for effect—His spirit of independence—The secret of his success and of his popularity—The misunderstanding of, and paradox in, the great men, Chittaranjan and Asutosh, an explanation of popular misunderstanding—Asutosh, compared and contrasted with some pre-eminent personalities—Striking references by different eminent scholars and leaders to different traits in his character, different men stressed different characteristics.

We have now to deal with the character and personality of the man. In appearance, Asutosh was a Bengali of Bengalis,—but not like the pale, frail, feeble type of humanity, worn out and exhausted, old before his years, whose physical frame is the very dwelling place of disease, who embodies in himself, the negation of health and happiness, joy and glory of life, a type that one is accustomed to meet in the busy streets of Calcutta. But the massive bulk



of his body, his short stature, his rounded face, his strong arms and legs, his enormous moustaches, his very prominent nose, his broad shoulders and the majestic expanse of his breast, above all his fascinating, flashing and over-powering eyes, always, alert and active, probing into the core of things, piercing into the innermost depths of one's being—can not fail to strike an observer as not a very common enough specimen of humanity, as not exactly a man in the street; his looks, his manners, his engaging attitude and his more than ordinary earnestness, his seriousness and his humours, his affectionate tone, his frankness and charitableness, and his peculiar ways of speaking, betraying a familiarity to one and all, will at once impress upon one as a very powerful but gentle personality; strong, robust, bulky to a degree, he was the very embodiment of health and happiness and in his purely Indian costume—in his short dhuti and China coat, particularly—with his tanned skin and glossy hair, and a complexion neither very dark nor fair, he was the envy of his thin and imaciated fellowmen.

But from a respectable distance, it was difficult, nay impossible to find in the bulk of his body, the hidden source of his strength, the fountain-head of his ceaseless energy, the abode of his indomitable, undaunted spirit and the mainspring of his many-sided and superhuman powers; just as the serene expanse of a calm sea has none of the furious agitated surface and the pillowing waves of the stormy



weather; so sometimes, his enormous body and his simplest native dress—and specially his reposing and reclining posture on the Bench—would beguile a stranger into a belief that here was at last a very simple and innocent man. Nor can much fault be found with him; for, as we have said more than once, his was a most complex and majestic character, a versatile but illusive personality—a personality that is sure to impress upon a shrewd observer or any one in touch with him, the magnitude and intensity of its qualities, the wealth of its powers and potentialities, but can not be fully analysed. S. J. Bepin Chandra Pal truly says in his 'Character-Study' of Asutosh, "Sir Asutosh Mookerjee is the most complex public character that I have seen; and it has been my privilege to see, at more or less, close quarters, most of the men who have made the religious, social or political history of India during the last half a century. This complexity is, I think, responsible for the widely divergent estimate that diverse people has formed of him. He has enthusiastic admirers; he has persistent detractors—But there is one matter in which both his admirers and detractors seem generally to agree and it is that he is by far the most powerful public character of his generation." Another respected journalist and prominent leader, S. J. Shyamsundar Chakravarty said, "Like Nature's greatest elements, his greatness was synthetic and loses by analysis".



Thus the very nature of his personality, the complexity of his character and the synthesis in his greatness forbid an elaborate analysis ; really, it is almost an impossible task to single out, and stress, any one particular aspect of his versatile personality or a particular trait in his complex character that will give the key to his whole being, that will enable us to lay it bare in all its native glory and grandeur, in its failings and faults. Most of the great men—most of the geniuses—win their unique position and pre-eminence to an unusual, uncommon and a most intensified development of some trait or traits, some definite quality or qualities in their character, as also to the mastery over them of some living, driving and powerful principle. Such has been the case with many of our greatest national leaders and heroes—with Lokamannya Tilak, Deshabandu Chittaranjan, with Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore. No one will deny—not even their most adverse critics—that these great representative men of our country have risen to an unsurpassed eminence, owing to an abundance of their intrinsic qualities, to the wealth of their intellectual powers and to the quality of their moral calibre. Tilak was one of the greatest scholars, historians and philosophers that his age has produced ;—he was a virile personality, an eloquent speaker and writer, a most powerful leader, and a politician of front rank ; but perhaps it will not be any the least disparagement to his greatness, if we



are to say that patriotism was the cardinal feature, the fundamental trait in his character, the one over-mastering principle of his life; the patriot predominated—and almost eclipsed—the man many times and gave a clue to his whole being.

Deshabandhu Chittarajan Das was one of the foremost lawyers of his time, a man of cultivated taste, and of uncommon luxuries and riches, a leader of leaders, a patriot of patriots, a public man of inexhaustible energy, a most commanding personality in the Council Chamber, on the Congress platform or Congress Executive, in his Mayoral Chair, in a social gathering or in an public meeting; he was, moreover, an eloquent speaker, an impressive and vigorous writer, last but not least, a poet of great excellence and originality that is sure to hand down his name to his posterity. But it will not certainly be doing him an injustice, if we are to say, that, above all, he was—in Mrs. Naidu's musical words—"the kingliest of dreamers", the greatest emotional idealist of his time; he was the most remarkable representative, a brilliant exponent, of the emotional idealism that is the peculiar heritage of Bengal and is ingrained in the very marrow of the Bengalis; this supreme idealism was the outstanding quality of his personality and it was what culminated in that emotional abandon, that unique self-sacrifice at the altar of his beloved but humbled motherland and suffering humanity—the crowning act of his life.



As a leader of men, as a patriot, as a writer and speaker, as a religious man and social reformer, as a man of profound and varied culture and attainments and as a student of human history or as a genius in self-effacement and as a moral force, Mahatmaji stands in a class by himself—shining—it seems a paradox—mostly in his solitary glory and grandeur ; but all honour to the Mahatma, the Man, the part and parcel of supreme Being, the image of God in him, rises and soars above and outshines the leader and patriot, the reformer and public man. His love of Truth, and his religious fervour, unique in the modern age, are the corner-stone of his character, and the regulating and controlling principles of his life, moulding his personality, shaping his course of action and beckoning him onwards. This manliness, this broader, greater humanity, this divinity is the secret of his pre-eminence ; it is the key to his whole being.

As regards Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore, it is no doubt his marvellous and matchless poetry that took the world by storm and laid it at his feet ; and as a hero as man of letters, as a novelist, as a speaker and as a writer, he has been assigned an honoured place in the front rank of world-renowned and world-respected men ; he also occupies a prominent position as a social and educational reformer ; but in all that he writes and says, he stands, before the modern nations intoxicated with material progress and power,



as the very genius of ancient India personified ; his speeches and addresses, his poetry, no less than his essays, breathes Oriental mysticism and Indian spirituality ; he is a living manifestation of the spirit of his ancient country and of its hoary culture ; and this is the secret of his phenomenal success, the fundamental fact in his life and lifework.

But the personality of Asutosh admits of no such clear-cut analysis, no such easy and precise simplification ; to say that he was a man of one absorbing passion, of a single obsession, is but to understate the truth ; to hold that this passion, this obsession was action and work, to particularise it as patriotism as love for his University, as his eagerness to further the progress of education among his countrymen as well as to advance the cause of higher and highest studies and researches, is nearly to miss the mark ; for, no doubt, he was the most active and energetic man, one of the greatest patriots, and the greatest educational reformer of his generation ; but as we have already seen, behind his ceaseless action, his tireless energy manifesting itself in his diverse and multifarious activities as a Judge of the High Court, as the President of the Post-Graduate Council or the Vice-Chancellor of his University or both, as a leader of his people and as a prominent public man, there was the widely read student of human affairs and human institutions,



the profound and versatile scholar, a remarkable man of culture, of higher thoughts and ideas. High above his unrivalled capacity for sustained labour and his infinite love of work, soared his surging and majestic idealism pervading his whole policy and programme, and leaving his compatriots and contemporaries below; besides his unparalleled patriotism—and his unique nationalism which was a regulating and guiding principle of his life, shone his superb humanity in equal grandeur; his untold love of Indian culture and civilization, of Indian Philosophy and ancient Indian history, his unmeasured zeal to promote their cause did not supersede, far less cast into shade, his admiration and appreciation of the progress of Science, of Politics, of Criticism and of Modern Thought that had their rise or their birth generally in Europe. Prominent as a mathematician and jurist, foremost as a Judge and as an administrator, pre-eminent as a practical man and an idealist, great equally as a pious, orthodox Hindu, and a social reformer, a man of cosmopolitan culture, as a leader of men and of thought though, not a professed politician, Asutosh was the living reputation of seeming contradictions in human personality, and the embodiment of complexities in human nature and character.

But the question still crops up. What are the characteristic features of his personality, what, the principal traits in his character? The most



striking feature in his personality and character was the synthesis of a cluster of diverse and divergent qualities of head and heart, that is seldom to be met with in a single individual. But this very synthesis, this range and number of qualities precluded the possibility of an extreme development, an unusual intensity or preponderance of one or more qualities, which is generally the case with the great who rise into the highest eminence, and attain an acme of power and glory. True it was that Nature showered upon him her choicest blessings in singular profusion, and the massiveness and range of his intellectual powers, no less than the quality of his moral equipments and physical stamina enabled him to shine in various spheres of activities, and labour in opposite walks of life, and made him, as Dr. Paranjpye said, the greatest intellectual giant of his day; but no man, however richly endowed by Nature and favoured by circumstances he might be, no one can attain the supreme, abiding and unique pre-eminence in life, whose qualities tend to be diffusive, to be extensive as well as intensive, whose thoughts and energies are not, in the main, confined to a principal department of human activity or thought but are scattered over so many fields, whose attractions and interests embrace so many, and so many divergent, objects. Hence it is that a great jurist and an eminent lawyer that he was, Asutosh fell short of the greatest and must yield the palm to his Guru—



Sir Rash Behari Ghosh, a reputed and versatile scholar as he was, he can not be said to have surpassed Dr. Rajendra Lall Mitra; a mathematician who won an European reputation and would have, under a little more favourable circumstances, earned a foremost place in the front rank of world mathematicians, he did not actually excel his young country man of Southern India—the first Indian F. R. S.; as a speaker, as an idealist, as a public man, as a successful man, he has had to share his glory with some of the great and gifted men of his country. But there still remained untold and unexplored, some central facts about him, something grand and glorious, something magnificent, reaching, one might say, the region of the sublime; when all is said and done, what a career, what a life of work and activity, a life lived to a purpose, a life lived in the light of an ideal, conceived at the dawn of youth; what a personality, what a character—and these in a subject country, very atmosphere of which is polluted as it were—in an unprogressive society and deadening environment which seek to stunt the growth, dwarf and degrade the character of the man.

Here was an intellectual giant who was a veritable walking encyclopedia of knowledge and scholarship, equally well versed in Mathematics, Philosophy, History, English, Sanskrit and Bengalee, in Science, Politics, Criticism and the general

trends of advanced western thought, fully conversant with the ancient culture and civilization of his own country ; here was a man of whirlwind action who, in sheer capacity for, and solid record of, heavy and diverse intellectual labour, as well as dull and dreary routine work, was a marvel and mystery to all observers ; here was an idealist who soared into the highest peaks of idealism but would not leave any stone unturned to fulfil his aims and accomplish his objects ; here was a man of incessant work and ideas who held fast to the lofty principles but thoroughly mastered—and never neglected—the least and minutest details ; here was an official holding a very important and responsible position under, and serving on various Commissions and Committees at the instance of, a foreign Government, who was one of the foremost nationalists and patriots of his country throughout his life ; here was an Indian who never crossed the seas, not to speak of visiting Europe, but was perfect master of the fundamental concepts and ideals that have built the great European social and political systems and various other institutions, the notably educational, and tried to implant and adapt some of them to his own country. Above all, here, was a man who was a born leader—almost a superman—a ruler of men and leader of thought—who, as Sir Michael Sadler said in London—might have easily ruled an empire ; here at last, was an individual, who by the force



and vigour of his character, by his intellectual powers and moral calibre, by dint of the bulldog tenacity of will and supreme single-mindedness of purpose, by its dauntless courage and stubborn spirit, was sure to cut its own way to lead, to rule and predominate over men and things. His extraordinary stamina, moral, physical and intellectual, his soaring idealism, his redeeming practical wisdom, his unparalleled independence of spirit and thought and his unsurpassed powers of expression, all combined to make him a most powerful leader of men, one of the most forceful personalities of generation; his rare constructive statesmanship, his organizing faculty wedded to his unrivalled capacity to take infinite pains for the furtherance of his object, gave him an immense advantage over his compatriots, and enabled him to fulfil his mission in life; and while, others hesitated and doubted, feared or faltered no danger could daunt his calm courage, no distress could damp his enthusiasm, no difficulty could arrest his step, no disadvantage could shake his iron will; rather so far as he was concerned, the more difficult the task, the more attractive its performance, the more dangerous the path, the more enthusiastic he was in the journey.

There are not many men in our generation whom we can point to as his equals in public life of our country; perhaps we are not far from truth when we say there was but one man in the India of today with whom Asutosh should be compared as a leader

of men—as a public man fighting his way forward and struggling all his life—with Lokamanya Tilak. Both Mahatmaji and Deshabandhu have been the very greatest and foremost leaders in the heyday of their glory in the public life, but for a short period; and there were some dissentient voices, some murmuring tongues, some difference of views and opinions even in their own party; but not so in Tilak's and Asutosh's; both of them had to create their own army; both led their men in many a stormy weather and in troublous times; the latter followed them through thick and thin; through good report and evil; and they adored, worshipped—nay, they heroworshipped them; theirs was not an impulse of the moment, a fleeting fancy of the hour, a fashion of the day; nor even a whim or a passing mental phase; but the abiding, unshakable and paramount faith in their leaders,—a faith that endured through life and outlived their death.

And his personality? It was simply unique; it was the determining and outstanding factor in his life and lifework; such a personality has scarcely a parallel in the public life of Bengal leaving aside Ram Mohun Roy and Vidyasagar. Asutosh's remarkable personality may well be compared with the one that rose and shone and dominated, with the late Mr. Gladstone, the public life of England in the last century with Disraeli's. Like Asutosh, Disraeli was a much misunderstood, much maligned man; and even today his principles and policies



and his public activities are the subject matter of controversy and criticism; but amidst this difference of opinions and conflicts of views, emerges the undisputable facts that it was his personality that ruled his men and he shaped the trends of events and things in his country, with almost dictatorial powers; that his personality swayed and even dazzled Europe and moulded the world politics and world policies of the European powers at a critical stage—the personality of the man made him one of the greatest personal forces of his times; to quote Lord Bryce, “It was by this... serene surface with fathomless depth below, that he laid his spell upon the imagination of observers in Continental Europe, and received at his death, a sort of canonisation from a large section of the English people.” Such was also the case with Asutosh; he had more than enough of his share of admiration and adoration, criticism and misunderstanding. Born in a subject country, belonging to a conservative society, by dint of charming and commanding personality* he influenced, fascinated and swayed

* “My first recollection of his personality”, wrote Sir, P. J. Hartog, in the course of his ‘remiscences’, “is vivid: the massive form swathed in chaddar and dhoty, the powerful head and neck, the brilliant eyes, the ready and good humoured smile (I never saw him smile ironically), the clear and rapid speech, generally low, but rising with intensity with his feelings. He spoke to us for some thing like an hour with eloquence, with passion, with humour on the great problems before us. The speech was masterly.” “Today



all sorts and conditions of people, rich and poor, high and low, Indian and European, Viceroys and Governors, Members and Ministers, Judges and administrators, scientists and literary men, lawyers and laymen, as well as many great scholars and and savants of the West.

There were few powerful personalities and despotic characters—the autocrats at the hills or the bureaucrats in the plains, not excepted—who could resist the force and charms of his magnetic personality; most of them yielded to him; all their wrath melted and their heart softened—as in the presence of a wizard. Either at the Vakil Bar—early in his career—or on the Bench, in the Council Chamber or in the Senate House, specially on the Government Committees and Commissions his was a presence to reckon with, his personality was always a dominating factor.

He could fight—as he did on various occasions—against enormous odds and he would invariably come with flying colours; he would confront mightiest of men, he would encounter the most powerful

with appalling suddenness,” said Sir Dawson Miller, “he has passed away from us for ever, but the memory of his great personality remains so strongly impressed upon us all who have so intimately associated with him in these last months of his life that it is difficult to believe that he is no longer with us...his loss after those months of close association with him I almost feel as if I had lost a personal friend...”



opponents but would never shine as second best, not to speak of cutting a sorry figure; in his purely Indian dress, in his own familiar way, he would stand erect, speak out straight and move on with unfaltering steps, in presence of autocratic rulers, all-powerful officials and men, not at all friendly or favourable to him; overwhelming forces of opposition—popular and Governmental—of reaction and of retrogression, the wrath of officialdom, sweeping criticism and insurmountable obstacles—all these and many others were hurled on him as against a stern and stubborn rock; and he stood mighty and majestic, formidable and unmoved—like a mountainous peck; without swerving an inch from his position, without yeilding an iota of his principles, he would scatter the opposing forces into fragments and reduce his opponents into insignificance. Few men of his time, perhaps no other Indian of his generation, so much impressed or charmed, or bound, in such a manner, to himself with ties of affection, of gratitude and friendship, so many eminent men of different religions, of different communities and of different nationalities as Asutosh did; specially various eminent personalities, men of light and leading, from foreign lands were charmed by his singular personality in such a way that they went away with impressions never to be effaced from their memory; and no wonder; for “nothing so fascinates mankind as to see a man equal to every fortune, unshaken by



reverses, indifferent to personal abuse, maintaining a long combat against apparently hopeless odds with the sharpest weapon and a smiling face"—Asutosh did all these and more. In his own necessarily restricted field and humbler sphere—unlike Disraeli in the bigger and greater domain of British and European politics—Asutosh was equal to every situation and every complication, unmoved by apparent failures and virulent criticism and malice; he also had to carry on a lifelong fight against the forces of ignorance and prejudice and of reaction not only in the bureaucratic citadel but also in the market place and in the popular parlour. And like Disraeli, too, he had in abundance, his 'serene surface with fathomless depth below'; below his serene countenance, his calm composure, and his never-failing self-control, in the innermost depths of his being, dwelt his indomitable, irresistible, independent, active and creative spirit; and his whole career—his whole public life—was simply the progress of his ideas, the triumph of his principles and his personality.

He was generally called the Bengal Tiger; and certainly he had this fearful animal's quickness of decision, promptness of action, sureness of grasp, resoluteness of will and doggedness of purpose; but perhaps it was more because of the fight in him—and he was hard to fight with—and of the Tiger's delight in, and Tiger's inevitableness of vanquishing his opponent—because of the characteristic feature



of his nature that would urge him to smash all opposition and lead him to pursue his object, at all cost, to a successful issue—it was because of these, that he was called the Bengal Tiger.

Indeed, there was almost a superhuman strength in his character, an inexorable firmness in his will and a grim determination in his resolution which have few parallels in human nature; and this strength, this firmness and this determination were not by any means, passing mental phases, or impulses of the moment lashed into fury by peculiar or even extraordinary incidents; no, these traits in his character—which are also characteristic qualities of the Bengal Tiger—were the part and parcel of his mental and moral constitution. No one in Bengal—few in contemporary India—was faced with such grave crisis; few had, to grapple with such difficulties and disabilities, financial, administrative and statutory; few have braved the storm in such a manner as Asutosh did, on many occasions; the bold stand which he took against the mighty, sweeping onrush of the non-co-operation movement in the heyday of its power and glory was beyond any other man in Bengal, and in India, for the matter of that; it is of course common knowledge and is appreciated by all; but the tragic circumstances in which he carried on his grim fight with the Government and Legislature in Bengal, undaunted, single-handed, and with exhausted resources are not known to the world; few people know that his dear widowed



daughter for whose sake, he faced fury and wrath of orthodox society was actually at death's door when he penned his historic and ever memorable letter to Lord Lytton and made some of his striking speeches in defence of his University.

But Sir Michael Sadler would compare him to a British Bulldog; and "certainly he had", said Dr. Sadler in the course of a speech in London "the bulldog's fidelity to his friends, the bulldog's sensitiveness of feeling and iron tenacity of will"; Sir Michael seems to be on firmer ground; for Asutosh was the most faithful and devoted of friends; the cause of his friends and proteges, of those whom he took under his protection was sacred to him to a degree; under his fostering care and affectionate attention they—most of them were scholars and students, and researchers and teachers of all grades—would be left to their normal and peaceful vocation. as secure and safe as could they be under the sun; here we come across, another side of his nature which is hardly less striking, less remarkable and less manly; in his personality, in his manysided nature, one finds a vivid, living and magnificent illustration of the beautiful sanskrit ephithet (বজ্রাদপি কঠোরম্ মুহূনি কুমুদাদপি) firm and inexorable as thunder but gentle and sweet as flower. It was, as Dr. Radha Kumud Mukherjea pointed out in the course of his appreciation in 'Calcutta Review', the easiest thing in the world



to establish a touch with him through private joys and sorrows that would appeal straight to his heart and touch its tenderest cords; it was indeed a far cry from a stern and strong antagonist giving no quarter to his powerful but misguided—and often, mischievous—adversary, to the man of infinite tenderness of heart, and of unbounded compassion and kindness of spirit; this humane side of his nature—this humanity in his personality which is a rare enough quality nowadays—is all the more remarkable because we find, in quite a large number of cases, an intellectual ascendancy or a successful intellectual growth wedded to an emotional depravity; more often than not, specially in our hapless country, is to be met with, the fact that material prosperity and worldly success deaden, or lessen, to a considerable extent, the humanity of the individuals—their humane element. Elated with success, intoxicated with power and pride, world's successful men forget themselves when they roll in wealth; they have none-the-less to pay the penalty of their worldly success and vanity by the stultification and perversity wrought in their nature; they are often subjected and fall an easy prey, to a dehumanizing process. But with Asutosh the case was different; neither the brilliance of his academic career, nor the unparalleled success that greeted his public activities and crowned his public life, nor even his unique



intellectual supremacy could blind him to the suffering humanity or make him indifferent to the ills that flesh is heir to ; his keen interest in, and sincere solicitude for, the ever increasing student population and the teachers of, and under, the University, sprang from his feeling and sympathetic heart, from the profound emotionalism of his nature ; no one identified himself more thoroughly with their cause, than he did ; for he shared their joys and their sorrows, appreciated their difficulties, felt for their miseries and contributed to their happiness ; it was out of the depths of the emotional side of his nature, that his heart went forth to and was in unison with, the nation in its prosperity and in its glory, in its distress and its agony, in its struggles and its troubles ; his rare and redeeming emotionalism failed to narrow his sympathies, restrict his interest or even confine his love and his attention, to the members of his own community ; and his heart overflowed with the milk of human kindness and charity that knew no barrier of caste, creed or colour but embraced people of all nationalities, and religions ; there are innumerable instances of his kindness and compassion outstripping the barrier of class or creed ; much of the virulent criticism of, and opposition to, the high percentages of passes at the University examinations misses the mark ; for the critics do not take into account, a principal and one might say, a basic



fact; they overlook the prime factor that it was Asutosh's compassion and pity for the widespread hardship, poverty and privations of the majority of the middle class boys in Bengal, to whom a degree or a certificate may hasten the much-needed relief, that were often responsible for the large number of successes at the University examinations.

There were two traits in his character, two very marked features in his personality, which were at once the secret of his success and made him the butt of all attacks and criticisms—ambition and love of power; it is not our present purpose to judge how far he was within the limits of reason and fairness in the abstract or how much and how often did he outstrip them; we would only add, ambition and love of power, not in the vulgar and common acceptance of the terms but in a higher sense, have well nigh been the overmastering principles guiding, controlling and regulating the lives and activities of almost all the great men of the world who have achieved success in the domain of action. The life of Napoleon affords the most brilliant example of the working of these principles in the modern age; Asutosh's was no exception to the general rule; from his very earliest years, he was under the sway of ambition—ambition to make his life sublime, ambition to attain prosperity and win success—to reach the pinnacle of prosperity and success—and lead a great and glorious life. The



atmosphere of his home, the surroundings of his boyhood, the encouragement of his father, the sight of eminent persons, the contact with well-known personalities, the training under illustrious teachers, all combined to kindle and fan the fire of ambition in his infant mind, which burned with increasing vigour in course of years; the fame and wishes of his father as well as the promptings of his prodigious mind urged him to pitch his ambition in the highest key and he aspired to the very highest; throughout his crowded life, in midst of his manysided interests and multifarious activities this marked characteristic of his, this predominant trait in his character never left him and he was never content with second best; he never did, nor could do, things by half; and this ambition, ingrained in his nature and roused to intensity from his childhood held him, sustained him and urged him onward and onward till he attained the very zenith of fame and glory and was the most virile personality, the most powerful public man in Bengal, if not in India. But thanks to the innate greatness of his nature, thanks moreover, to the extraordinary synthesis in his character as also to his mental and moral equilibrium, this ambition never swept him beyond his depths; seldom if ever, did it land him in very great danger and difficulties, as it generally does in the case of lesser individuals; his



intellectual and spiritual nature was always at his beck and call and never allowed him to give unbridled reins to it so as to rush him head-long into disaster. But it was his lofty ambition to rise to eminence and attain pre-eminence that captured his impressionable mind, kindled his infant fancy and became a supreme principle in youth, that enabled him to break one barrier after another till he was at the height of his power and prosperity.

Once he was installed in power, he would not give up the vantage ground that he had strenuously fought for and won. His love of power took the place of his ambition once he was in the acme of power and glory; it then became a powerful principle. But this love of power which was a predominant trait in his character was different from the morbid craving for power that sways the common run of men; the love of power that possessed Asutosh when he was secure in his lofty position had little of the sordid, selfish pettiness that characterise many people established in power and authority; he loved power and stuck to it, not much for power's sake; nor to advance his petty, selfish interests; but he loved power because it gave him an undoubted advantage over his fellow men—lesser men—and offered him a vantage ground from where he could serve the greater cause of his country and herald the dawn of, and labour for, that greater, better and



fuller life of his people, of which he dreamt in his prophetic mood. It is not our purpose to shut our eyes to the benefits which incidentally or directly resulted from his power and authority and fell to the lot of his immediate friends and relations; it might perhaps be said that it was but a part of the plan of the consolidation of his position which he was anxious to retain in order to fulfil his mission and work out his programme for the greater good of his fellow creatures; but his worst critics could not deny that he had his eyes fixed on, and his attention and energies directed to, the realization of his Ideal, the accomplishment of his object in life—to the working of the salvation of his country through an intellectual regeneration and educational progress. This love of power has been, all the world over, the driving force and the one compelling principle as well as the redeeming feature of almost all the active workers and successful reformers; no doubt in the lower nature, in baser mind, it tends to degenerate and degrade; but Asutosh's intrinsic greatness, his moral and spiritual elevation and the loftiness of his ultimate Ideal, were proof against any corrupting and corroding tendencies gaining better of the man. The love of power that held Asutosh fast and gave him an undoubted ascendancy and supremacy over his compatriots was thus one of the principal characteristics of all strong, active,



eminent personalities who have worked their way to abiding success and enduring fame in the world; and thus far he must plead guilty to the charge that is commonly brought against him; yes, ambition and love of power, though not in the narrower and baser construction of the terms, were among the driving forces in his life.

The stubborn, strict, almost rigid, simplicity of his dress and manners, notwithstanding, Asutosh had a little of the theatrical in him; his preference and liking for pomp and grandeur, his eagerness for effect illustrate the curious complexity in his character and are among the marked characteristics of his nature. Brave, active, ambitious, he fought his own way through, and achieved pre-eminence and power in the world; he was not a man to give up his well-earned position and hard-fought power; but in order to retain it, to consolidate his position and to use his vantage ground, he would often get himself surrounded with pomp and grandeur; he would not suffer the world to forget or ignore his high official position and his unique pre-eminence in public life; he liked and required all the glory, and all the pomp, all the spectacular and the luxurious that he could command, thanks to his exalted office and important position. No doubt it would be going too far to say that he liked luxuries and splendours for their own sake; his patriotic soul and his humane and simple nature



never hungered inordinately for, nor made them the be-all and end-all of his being; but he was a man, a successful man of the world—not a saint or a recluse like Mahatma Gandhi; Gandhi's abhorrence for luxurious saloons and beautiful cars, his dislike for sumptuous parties and brilliant receptions, his indifference of effect and disregard for display, we must not look for in Asutosh; while the one shunned lime light, and popularity, not to speak of pomp and grandeur; Asutosh would shine and show off his conspicuous figure clothed in the simplest and purest dress of his country amidst a blaze of colour and glory, in the midst of dazzling brilliance and gorgeous scenes. The splendours of the 'gorgeous East,' the magnificent Court of a foremost Prince, the pomptuous parties and receptions of a Governor or a Viceroy, though he never went out of his way to seek and seldom shunned like the Mahatmaji, he would use as a befitting background to set off his commanding personality.

Like his likeness for pomp and grandeur, his eagerness for effect was also very pronounced and persistent; with an eye for effect, which few people can rival, far less excel, Asutosh, managed most of his important movements and his parts in the momentous events he shaped and moulded; his poise would always be the perfect, and his blow, the most effective; he seldom moved or spoke carelessly, he had a singular faculty to judge the right



time, the mode and manner of his acts and addresses ; and he always aimed at a desired and desirable effect. This peculiar knack of being invariably and deadly effective brought the greatest succour to him, it prostrated his opponents and made and marked him out as the man of the moment, as the hero of the hour ; if he seemed a little theatrical, in his effectiveness, he captured the imagination and received the applause of his people thereby. His manner of receiving the relics of Buddha at the hands of Lord Ronaldshay at the Government House, bare-footed and nearly bare-bodied, his disclosure of the historic correspondence with Lord Lytton on the former's 'humiliating offer' of office, his addressing the graduates at the Convocation of 1922, his repeated and barren requests to the Government of India for financial help in connection with the Science College, which elicited the curt negative replies one after another, exposing the hollowness of their pretensions of their sympathy for scientific studies and laying them bare in their true colours—all these and many other acts and speeches of his, displayed his yearning for effect and his capacity to be deadly effective.

Another and a most striking and important characteristic of his nature was his unique independence of spirit—his love of freedom, freedom of thought and action ; as we have already seen, either as a Judge or as administrator, as a scholar or as a man of



action, he was the spirit of independence incarnate; he would strike out his line of action or thought and would stick to his path with all the tenacity of his nature; he would brook no haughty interference or dominating influence even from the highest in the land and in the face of overwhelming odds, in the midst of enormous distress and difficulty assuming gigantic proportions, he would not climb down or yield his ground, but would take his stand on the bed-rock of his principle and ideal and would 'brave the storm'. A member of a subject race, no doubt, he was; but freedom to him was the breath of his nostril; he was, above all, a free man, free to think, free to act and speak in the light of reason and Truth; he never feared, or cared an iota for the frowns or favours of men, however high and powerful; and nothing on earth could goad or force him into bargaining his freedom. This independence of spirit and love of freedom quickened and raised his sense of self-respect to a high pitch and never in his protracted public life would he barter away his self-respect or lower himself by an inch by trimming his sails to suit the passing fancy of the powers that be; even his strong love of power could not get the better of his love of freedom and self-respect and independence of spirit which urged him to refuse the offer of Vice-Chancellorship at the hands of Lord Lytton—an offer which he thought to be 'insulting'.

There were some characteristics of him which are very rare in a man of his intellectual calibre and



pre-eminent position in life—his social qualities—his invariable courtesy and accessibility, his unfailing affableness and amiability; nothing impressed men of all classes and creeds so much as this side of his nature; seldom—if ever—is to be found so brilliant and successful a man who is so much courteous and considerate, so much tolerant and social; no wonder, this aspect of his nature appealed readily to all sorts and conditions of men—however high and low, rich and poor—who came in contact with him. The Hon'ble Sir Dawson Miller (C. J. Patna) truly said, "...but perhaps of the qualities which most impressed itself upon me—was one which is not always conspicuous in a person of great intellectual power and strong character. I refer to his unfailing courtesy and kindly feeling which he has exhibited on all occasions." No one could be more easy of access to the poorest and humblest; no one could be more courteous and considerate to the lesser men and younger generation, no one could be more affable and amiable to foreigners and strangers, no one could be more social and kindly. It is this side of his nature that won him innumerable friends and admirers in men of outstanding position and fame—in the great scholars and men of light and leading and commended spontaneous admiration and adoration in life and canonization at death at the hands of his country men.



The present day ascendancy of a depraved 'aristocracy' of intellect and wealth, which places itself on a pedestal of its own and looks down upon the world from on high, stunts the emotional side of our nature; and it is a rare enough phenomenon in life to find a profound, all-embracing emotionalism in a great intellectual giant who has attained an acme of power and glory; but a man of Asutosh's imaginative insight and long vision, with his supreme, redeeming practical sense, is a rarer spectacle; for a man of imagination and vision will naturally tend to be out of touch with the living present, will lose sight of the stern and hidden realities, and will love to live in, and stress, the glories of the future, or of the past. But Asutosh was a true constructive statesman and a great builder, who had—as Rabindra Nath pithily said—'the courage to dream' for he had the ability to accomplish it. No other man in the India of today, possessed—and in a greater degree—the imagination of Asutosh and his unique practical instinct which is the cornerstone of constructive faculty. Like more than one aspect of his personality and character, this side of his nature has escaped popular gaze and popular applause. But none but a man of supreme imaginative gifts could plan and scheme so gigantic an institution, chalk out so bold and far-reaching a policy, none but a man of rarest long vision could conceive and present so grand, so majestic, an Ideal, so peculiarly suited to the culture and tradition of his country, so singularly fitting.



in with the genius and potentialities of his people, as Asutosh did ; with his imagination, he had not only to live in the dead and distant past, pass through the glories achieved, and reverses, sustained by the India in years and ages gone by ; with his vision, he had also to live in, and anticipate, the future, probe into its secret and lift its veil. But a constructive statesman and builder as he was, he had the unique practical gifts not only to scheme and work out such a huge and elastic organization but also so ably to run it, with its innumerable ramifications as to make it the most thriving and flourishing in the land. A progressive, ever expanding institution like the Calcutta University, required the highest imagination and boldest vision to plan and the rarest practical instinct and practical qualities to conduct on safe and successful lines. And it can be safely asserted that no other man in India could have attempted and carried it through ; as Lord Carmichael said in an eloquent and significant speech, on the occasion of unveiling his marble bust in the Darbhanga Library Buildings, no one combined in him so great imaginative insight and imaginative faculties with so uncommon, so singular a practical nature, a nature so full of constructive and active faculties, so full of the obsession of work, and so much abounding in the qualities necessary to carry it out.

But there was still another—and a very important—side of his personality, hidden from the public view, from the glare of the multitude—serene, tranquil,



bright as the rays of the rising sun ; it was the intense religious nature and spiritual side of the man. It, really, seems a paradox that a man who won so unique and brilliant a success in so many different walks of life, one who rose to such an eminence in the material world, who was, perhaps, the greatest man of action of his generation, was blessed with such a profoundly religious and spiritual nature ; and this, in the present age when the scientific discoveries and inventions and the march of advanced thought—with which he was fully conversant—have demolished age-old beliefs and faiths, ancient theories and dogmas. But, then, he was the representative man of his country in the truest and broadest sense of the term ; he reflected in his personality, and upheld in his daily life, the innate religious nature and spiritual leanings of his people. Just as, besides his over-crowded and over-worked public life, he lived another life—the life of the eternal follower of truth in the temple of knowledge—the life of the student, and of the scholar—he had a still inner, and to him, deeper and greater life—the life of the religious and spiritual man. Strange as it may seem,—but none-the-less was it true—his spiritual nature, his many regular religious observances and practices, instead of acting as a stumbling block in his way, helped him forward in his difficult uphill, journey on earth ; they enabled him to bear with a calm composure and resignation, the bitters of life, the inevitable evils, the sorrows and disappointments



that fell to his lot, as also to beat back the 'arrows of an outrageous fortune' which, fortunately, he had comparatively few. In brief, as we have already said, he was a pious, orthodox Brahmin, strickly observing the rites and rituals of his forefathers - and deviating from the century-old social customs and traditions when and where his conscience and his enlightenment urged him—and finding in the contemplation of his God, solace and consolation as well as occasional relief from, and increased strength and energy in, the troubles and turmoils, struggles and conflicts, distress and disappointments of life.

But the secret of his singular popularity, of his remarkable hold over the affection of his countrymen—as well as of the universal esteem that it was his lot to enjoy at the hands of numerous prominent men and various well-meaning friends of different nationalities and religions—was indeed no secret at all; the people of his country and of his community have, as Fate would have it, a sad experience of the men who rise into eminence in their midst; these latter, these fortunate few, as soon as they achieve some substantial success, as soon as they fight their way to a vantage ground or are somehow pitchforked into a position of authority or wealth, they estrange themselves from their common brethren and form a select class by themselves; they generally live their lives apart and away from their less fortunate fellow beings; they



cease to be easy of access ; in their dress, in their manners, in their modes of living and in their standards of life, they are as poles asunder from the common run of their fellow men ; hence theirs are not the spontaneous homage and unqualified popularity ; people in general find out that, though they are in their midst, they are not of them. But it was not so with Asutosh ; he liked to live the proverbial patriarchal life of an orthodox but enlightened Hindu ; he was a Bengali of Bengalis ;—an Indian of Indians in all that he spoke and felt and did. His fellow countrymen, the fellows members of his community, found in him none but one of themselves attaining an acme of power and prosperity ; they flattered themselves that Asutosh who achieved so brilliant a success in such diverse spheres of human activity, was no other than a member of their own society, of their own community and circle ; that he was almost of their own kith and kin ; and they, his countrymen, naturally enough, enthroned, in their hearts, a man who, though so great intellectually, so high morally, so prosperous materially, never considered himself too exalted and never teared himself away from his native fold. This, besides his social virtues, his courtesy and affableness, was really what might be called the secret of his popularity. And the eminent members of the ruling class as well as great scholars and men of light and leading from the



West could not help loving, liking and respecting an Indian who, in spite of his manysided pre-eminence, prosperity and glory, ardently loved his own country, his own community and his own society, who never forget his, or his country's identity, who never merged his individuality in the western customs and practices, western ways of living—who, at the same time did, not fail to appreciate or esteem the true greatness, of western civilization and culture or their contribution to the common heritage of mankind; for patriotism, learning and excellence, moral and intellectual, are great levellers and bring strange bed fellows; so patriots, learned and eminent men of western world could not but be attracted to, and respect, him.

But what was the secret of his great success in life? so far as human factor was concerned, it was really the synthesis—the harmonious development in his personality—of such rare, varied and complex intellectual gifts, moral faculties and physical powers; the extraordinary massiveness and range of his intellectual gifts enabled him to acquire an unrivalled mastery in so many different departments of knowledge and Truth, his inborn powers of eloquence and of expression, his innate sense of dignity and of proportions, his firm grasp of the guiding principles and lofty ideals, his strong grip of the actualities of the present and of the requirements of the future enabled him to shine and make



his mark in diverse spheres of human activities and thought; while his rare moral calibre, his fearless, and sometimes, reckless disregard of the dangers and difficulties of a situation, his uncommon courage of conviction, his native idealism and his robust optimism, his supreme self-confidence and self-control, his single-mindedness of purpose and stubbornness of resolution—helped him, enabled him to make his presense felt, in various walks of life; his great physical powers—his powers of endurance, his capacity for work and aptitude for various kinds and degrees of labour sustained him in his heroic endeavours, in his herculian tasks and his monumental achievements in the public life of our country; above all, his was the typical sound body—with a sound mind within—that was the prop and pillar of his hardworked and weary existence; his was an iron constitution which was a proof against storms and rains, cold and heat, and with which he braved many an inclement weather.

It is necessary, however, to clear some popular misconceptions and some widespread misunderstanding that such forceful, active, complex characters on the border land of the paradoxical, give rise to and suffer from, even when they are dead and gone; circumstanced as we are, constituted as men and things are from time immemorial, almost all great men—great not simply in the possession of negative, but in the wealth of positive, qualities—present some paradox, some contradiction.



to common experience, some enigma, real or apparent; some amount of misunderstanding seems to inhere in the very nature of greatness, specially positive, active and creative, greatness. It is indeed a strange irony of fate that the great should be misunderstood. "It is so bad, then, to be misunderstood?" asks Emerson, 'Pythagoras was misunderstood, and Socrates, and Inesus, and Luther, and Copernicus, and Galileo, and Newton and every pure and wise spirit that ever took flesh; to be great is to be misunderstood.' There are, however, certain characters who are paradoxical in themselves—such as Plato who 'has said one thing in one place and the reverse of it in another place' from whose works 'admirable texts can be quoted on both sides of every question.' There are others, again, who inherit and parteciple in, the paradoxical trends and contradictory tendencies of the age and manifest these in their life and lifework, such as the lives and works of Moore, Bacon, Raleigh, Sidney, Spencer and Shakespeare—'the great Englishmen of the Sixteenth century'—illustrate. There still arise, some personalities who, though they are not the children of a paradoxical age, are yet an enigma for a long time—such as Disraeli, Parnell and others. But the case of Asutosh—and with him, of Chittaranjan—stands on a different footing.

There is a striking parallel between the lives of these two great and illustrious sons of Bengal, a world of outward difference notwithstanding.

Both were applauded, admired worshipped and even hero-worshipped, for the transparent sincerity of their purpose, their unique patriotism, and for their lofty and all-pervading idealisms; and idealists they were of the first water; no doubt, there were a difference of degree and—it may be conceded—of kind in their idealisms; both of them conceived, according to the lights that were in them, the highest and most glorious ideals for their motherland and boldly presented them to their people exhorting the latter to follow the steady radiance of their ideals, which they strove and struggled all lives to realize in their own lives and lifeworks; but the misunderstanding, the paradox and the contradiction crop up when they descend from the celestial altitude of their ideals and busy themselves in the humdrum, ordinary things and petty practical politics and plod their weary way through the dust and din of controversy and the noise and bustle of living present; the man in the street can not easily arrive at a reasonable explanation of the apparent contradiction and of the paradox involved in, or brought into prominent relief by, many of their actions and attempts; they wonder how could a person who had such a fascinating vision of so glorious an ideal, who, more over, had bathed in the sunshine of pure idealism and lofty ideas, who, generally, used to inhabit a higher plane of thought, how could he bring himself to do the many petty acts



and things, mostly in furtherance of their ideals. Here the enigma is complete; for there is no doubt of their sincerity, no mistaking of their idealism, no belittling of their patriotism; but there remains the fact of people's failure to reconcile many of their actions with the loftiness of their idealism and the excellence their own nature. It is not difficult—far less impossible—to point to many public actions and works of Asutosh and Chittaranjan, which might not be commensurate, or on a line, with their high idealism and exalted character; hence arose a good deal of misunderstanding, misrepresentation and even calumny, from some quarters. The fact was this: both, Asutosh and Chittaranjan were two of the greatest idealists of their generation; both of them were baptised in the holiest fire of idealism and patriotism; only in the former, the urge of the ideal, the force of idealism failed to destroy the practical side in his character; while in the latter the urge of the ideal—the force of idealism—reigned supreme and swept everything aside, overpowering and overwhelming the man; but they were not simply idle, impatient, and dreamy idealists; what is greater, they were men of action, it was through their life-long activities and sustained efforts that they sought and strove to realize their lofty ideals; to their idealism, they joined an extraordinary single-mindedness of purpose, a reckless passion for work, and singular obsession for the fulfilment of their dreams, in the advancement of their country; once they conceived



and set before themselves their ideals, they were fully possessed and captured by them; once they were out on their onerous journey on the road to the realization of their ideals, there would be no going back, no giving up, no shirking of trouble or difficulty; nor even any counting of cost; completely charmed and even consumed by their ideals as they used to be, nothing could arrest their course, nothing could daunt their spirit or damp their enthusiasm; they would discard a plan or would reject a line of action, if it would prove unworkable or unsuitable; they would again think out another programme, chalk out another course of action—as if nothing had happened; and they would apply themselves, devoting all their energies and enthusiasm to the furtherance of their cause, in the light of their ideas; so long as they remained true to themselves and true to their country and to their ideals they might not stop to consider the quality of some of the means or of the steps which might may be rightly or wrongly regarded as unworthy of themselves; but they would go forward in their difficult journey on the path that is, to put it mildly, extremely perilous to all but themselves. People are afraid—they are anxious—that the lure of their heavenly ideal, the frenzy of their idealism, the apparent wrong course of their action and their mad, restless, active spirit, would hurl them head-long into disaster sooner or later; but men of this way of thinking are mistaken, as they fail to take proper measure of those



who are really giants ; they forget that these men, these princes among men, are made of sterner, purer and higher stuff ; their native strength of character, their force of personality and the innate greatness of their nature come to their rescue and stand them in good stead in the hour of trial and peril, but it is true—and it is no serious disparagement to their intrinsic excellence or to their lifework—that they are some times guilty of grave errors of judgments or of miscalculations ; some times, again, they seem to or do take morally wrong steps or adopt measures not worthy of, or up to, themselves ; in this connection the central fact, the cardinal point and the sure standard is generally lost sight of ; and judgment goes by default against them ; the most important factor, the principal fact to be taken into proper consideration when one sits in judgment upon the acts of omissions or commissions of Asutosh and Chittaranjan is this : the sin is not in the act, but in the sinner ; assuming that both of them have committed not only many indiscretions but also what was positively wrong or immoral, it goes without saying that they have done so under the peculiar exigencies of circumstances, under the irresistible urge of their necessities, with the firm conviction that by that course of action they were furthering their sacred cause—the cause of their country ; moreover human beings and human nature being what they are, some failings and some foibles, some failures and some shortcomings, no human being can avoid ; but men of



their calibre, of their obsession for patriotic work, of their passion for the realization of their ideal—men of their driving energy, of their doggedness of purpose and single-mindedness of action, men who harness themselves to incessant work and are drawn into whirlpools of multifarious actions, can not but fall into some pitfalls or errors; as they lose themselves, merging their whole being in their selfless, self-imposed and noble work, as they are always carried away and fired by their surging and all-embracing idealism and patriotism—the idealism and patriotism which are the overmastering principles of their life and never leave them in any sphere of activity, rather beckon them onward and onward like the guiding star in an encompassing and gathering gloom—the immorality, the sin or the wrong that is generally attached to the act and resides in the actor seldom touch them, far less possess them; such was the case with Asutosh and Chittaranjan. Their noble souls always soared high above, and far beyond, the limitations of the present; in the innermost depths of their being they were wedded to their ideal and bound to their country. Their gaze were always fixed on the dim and distant horizon, on the far off but not too far off promised land—invisible to all but eyes inspired like theirs.

But the comparison between these two great Bengalis goes thus far and no further; for, in the personality of Asutosh, as we have already seen, an intense idealism blended with his rare practical



wisdom; Asutosh was essentially active, predominantly intellectual and eminently successful man of the world in so far as he accomplished his life's object and ambition; pitching his idealism as he did in the highest tune, he would not aim at an utopia or ideal excellence, but would content himself with the best he could by his hand on, utilizing and working upon the materials that were handy, he would thus become the master of the situation. Chittaranjan, was, above all, an uncompromising idealist—sometimes a mystic; there was something majestic, dynamic and unbending in his nature that would break the impossible or be broken by it; he knew no halfway house; in fact, he spent his life's energy and vitality in pursuing the policy and treading the dreary path that, he considered, would ultimately—but not in the immediate future—land his country men on the promised land, and would in the long run, lead to the future realization of his glorious dreams, rather than accept the unsatisfactory state of things as the base of his activities and work the existing materials—bad as they undoubtedly were—to raise his 'beautiful mansion' of national greatness and glory.

Asutosh has been compared with many of his countrymen, pre-eminent in some sphere of life or other; a comparison is often sought to be drawn between Asutosh and Sir Asutosh Chaudhuri, and another, between him and the late Mr. Justice Telang of Bombay. There are of course some points



of resemblance between our hero and his namesake, both were ornaments of the same High Court, but Sir A. Chaudhuri rose into eminence as a brilliant counsel, as a prominent public man, as an eloquent speaker and as a political leader who might be said to have given a new turn to the prevailing political thinking and political activities, with his famous dictum—(a subject nation has no politics); but Asutosh was not simply a great Judge, he was a greater jurist, not only a powerful public man and speaker, but an eminent and highly successful administrator, not a political leader, nor even a professed politician, Asutosh had the makings and imagination of a statesman, and the creative inspiration of a great builder and he was statesman and reformer and builder all combined.

His comparison with Telang goes much deeper. Both of them belonged to the same class of jurist-Judges—alas, almost extinct—who would treat Law just a research scholar treats History today, going deep into the very bottom of things, giving masterly interpretations of, or otherwise throwing new light, upon ancient customs and usages, laws and principles; and to both of them, Law was something not only majestic but growing and continuous; both of them were associated, for long period, with their respective Universities intimately and prominently, both were masters of their own vernaculars, as also of English, Sanskrit and History; but Telang was pre-eminently a Sanskrit scholar and Translator, and Asutosh was