



armchair patriots who, between themselves, occupies quite an enormous space in the public and collective life of the country ; and the great Ideal?—the Ideal of an India, great and glorious, more great and more glorious in a sense than India of yore, an India, vigorous and strong, free and flourishing—the Ideal which has enraptured her poets and patriots.—the Ideal which has been the dream of her philosophers and has haunted her statesmen of today, “the renovated India” of Madhab Govind Ranade and Gopal Krisna Gokhale, “with a liberated manhood, with a buoyant hope, with a faith that never shirks duty and with a sense of justice that deals fairly with all, with an unclouded intellect and powers, fully cultivated and with a love that overleaps all bounds”, ‘taking her proper place among the nations of the world’—the India of Ananda Mohan Ghosh which is, ‘though not like Japan the land of the rising sun but the land where the sun is rising again’,—that glowing charming, inspiring vision of our motherland, the common mother of us all, with a distinct mission in the modern world and a honourable place in the economy of the nations—the living vision that floated before and haunted Deshabandhu in his sleeping and waking hours—the picture of India standing on the morning of her resurrection that Dr. Besant saw in an inspired moment ? Some relegated it to the background; some left it severely alone or had too little courage for it; many were and



are indifferent to it, many could not reach it by the highest flights of their imagination.

To most men—and they are proud to be practical men—the ultimate goal of our country is a very restricted and narrow one, not only commensurate with their limited vision, hopes and aspirations, but also compatible with their and others' petty, little, selfish, vested interests; the demoralizing circumstances of a subject country where the promotion of petty self-interest of the individuals under foreign rule depends upon the pleasures and favours of the rulers, have brought about and aggravate, this sad state of things. But "stone walls can not a prison make", always; and in this land of ours—under foreign domination today, no doubt,—have appeared blessed souls who have risen superior to the soul-killing environment, who have soared above the sickening, deadening surroundings of the present, who have had a vision of the not too far off not too near by, promised land—a vision though it is, it carries with it the message and prophecy of its fulfilment. Among the politicians and public men, Dadabhoy Naroaji of revered memory was first in the field in recent times, to present before his countrymen an intellegible, comprehensive and lofty Ideal of national progress and prosperity—which ought to be the goal of our national work—when he enunciated and introduced the doctrine of Swaraj, for his country in the sense in which it exists in the free countries of the West. Lokamannya Tilak and



Sri Aurobinda Ghosh were also bold enough to raise the cry of freedom—freedom of thought and expression, of association and action, and the latter went so far as to base it upon his own political philosophy. Freedom, though the very idea would frighten many, though the very word would scare away others, freedom to him was the one indispensable condition of India's self-fulfilment and self-expression as a nation. And it was nothing but the self-expression, self-fulfilment and self-realization of their country which Aurobinda dreamed and works for and Deshbandhu lived and died for, that Asutosh had in view as the ultimate goal of his activities in the direction of its intellectual regeneration and educational progress he helped to bring about.

His ideal of India 'coming to the the front rank again' and taking 'her place among those nations which are justly regarded as leaders in the evolution of Humanity in modern time', was the ideal that was the source of his inspiration and urge and the secret of his faith and strength. And to be a leader and pathfinder in this evolution of modern Humanity, India must and will express, fulfil and realize her inner, higher and fuller self; she must attain a larger, fuller and greater life. This was the Ideal that fascinated Asutosh in his waking as as well as his sleeping hours—India expressing her innerself, her eternal soul in her literature and science and Arts, realizing her nobler and greater



self by rising to the full height of her powers and glories and fulfilling her God-given mission in the world as a teacher, leader and saviour of Humanity from the complexities, dangers and disasters to which modern civilization has dragged it. In all these, in this noble self-expression, in this glorious self-realization, in this accomplishment of the God-given mission by our dear mother land, our University, his University is to be her handmaid. Thus his ideal of the University, was also pitched in the highest key; it was not at all incompatible with, but conducive to the fulfilment of, the Ideal that he conceived of his country's future greatness. Hence he meant his University to be "a great storehouse of learning, a great bureau of standards, a great workshop of knowledge, a great laboratory for the training as well of men of thought as of men of action"; hence it was his ambition, "to bring the University into intimate touch with the nation;" because he was fully conscious "of the supreme part it must play in national consciousness". Just as he would not, and could not be satisfied with a halting, poor and petty goal, glorified into an Ideal, for his glorious motherland, he was not at all content with the degree-giving, knowledge-testing knowledge-rewarding functions and the accepted half-hearted Ideal or rather the absence of Ideal, of his Alma Mater; just as he conceived the highest Ideal for his country, his Ideal of his beloved University was also the loftiest.



Consistent with the high ideal that he conceived of his University, he defined its functions as the 'acquisition, conservation, refinement and distribution of knowledge' and imposed upon it 'the supreme duty, that of adding to the sumtotal of human knowledge'; it was as a practical idealist of the first water that he tried and succeeded in embodying "within its walls the learning of the world in living exponents of scholarship, who 'shall maintain in Letters, Science and Arts the standard of truth and beauty and the canons of criticism and taste'". And not only, in connection with his works and activities in his own 'Alma Mater' the great idealist was seen and shone, but in the remarkable addresses that he was invited to deliver at various Universities all over the land, the idealist came into prominent relief. Particularly, in his striking and impressive Presidential Address at the Bengalee Literary Conference, (at Bankipur) the ideal that he presented of the glorious future of his great and flourishing mother-tongue winning an honourable place among the world languages and literatures, was really worthy of the great idealist that he was to the innermost depths of his being. The highest value of the Ideal that he followed, the greatest merit of the idealist was this : this ideal is not impossible of realization in the near future, its beauty and loftiness, notwithstanding ; it is not, as is feared by a good many people, too high for all practical purposes ; it is not surely, an utopia, the product of a



heated brain or of an excited or unbridled fancy ; nor is it a vague, faint, shadowy ideal to be or not to be realized in some dim and distant futurity. No doubt this ideal loomed large in the political philosophy and activities of the advanced school of public men and patriots, branded as extremists ; but this does not, can not, take away from its intrinsic merit. That Asutosh's was not a false ideal, or one too high and too ambitious—that a glorious future awaits India has been admitted by many thinkers and statesmen ; one of Asutosh's predecessors, Mr. Reynolds, a greater idealist, than most of us, said in the course of his Convocation speech so far back as 1884, —

“The life of Keshav Chandra Sen is a pledge and an assurance that Providence has yet a great destiny in store for this land. The age and the country which have produced such a man may well look forward with hopeful anticipation to the next scene of the drama in which he played so distinguished a part.” “There is,” wrote Dr. Coomar Swamy years back—and we need not refer to what have been said by many eminent men more recently — “already abundant evidence of that permeation of Western thought by Indian Philosophy which Schopenhauer so clearly foresaw. The East has revealed a new world to the West.....already there are groups of Western thinkers whose purposes and principles are more truly Indian than are those of average English-educated Indians of today.”



Like the great thinkers and philosophers, the great statesmen and idealists do not receive their due at the hands of their contemporaries ; more often than not, they are misunderstood ; and their worth, their works, their powers, under-estimated in their lifetime. The reasons are not far to seek ; the great statesmen and the great idealists, to be true to themselves, can not, do not, in very many cases, confine their attentions and activities to the living present ; their ideas and actions, their ideals and aims are influenced and moulded by their considerations of the needs and necessities of unborn future ; they have not only to look to the interests of their contemporaries ; they have also to champion, at times, the cause of the coming generations ; ordinary people have not the larger vision to see what the larger interests of the whole nation demand ; they can seldom see that their immediate interests are very often bound up with those of their neighbours and fellow-creatures all over the land — not less, with those of the future generations as well. A true statesman and a great idealist as he was, Asutosh could not minister to the needs and advance the interests of select groups or class of his contemporaries with his undivided attention and energies ; hence he had to pay the penalty of his greatness in this respect which eluded public gaze and escaped public recognition. His superior intellectual powers and force of character, his diverse interests and his manysided



activities, his brilliant achievements, particularly, the 'crowded hours of his glorious life' fascinated public opinion and commanded public admiration too much—and went so far as to dazzle his contemporaries; and the idealist was totally forgotten; he was too readily, too exclusively, too thoroughly identified with a particular course of action, with some scheme or policy, to let the idealist come into prominence. He was always criticised and condemned or appreciated and adored for one or other of his numerous public acts and addresses. And in the clash of opinions and interests, in the conflicts of ideas and principles, in the dust and din of controversies, no less in the admiration or criticisms of his activities and speeches that were freely showered upon him, it was often forgotten that here was a man—a superman; in truth—who, though he had united in his own personality, the most energetic worker, the most strenuous fighter and the most successful and brilliant individual of his generation, had, nevertheless, conceived a great Ideal, and had struggled, toiled and literally burnt his candles at both ends, in furtherance of the Ideal. Thanks to his life long labours, his fame and glory it is generally forgotten that the steady light that beckoned him onward to fulfil the mission of his brief sojourn in our midst, was nothing but the heavenly lustre of his great Ideal, that the secret of the strength and of the courage that sustained him in his darkest hours of worries and



anxieties, distress and difficulties and in the dreary days of trials and tribulations was the characteristic quality of his robust idealism ; that the Ideal that he championed through life and bequeathed to his posterity was also the source of his lifelong urge and inspiration. But this part of his mental constitution, this aspect of his character, eluded popular gaze and missed public applause but were nonetheless the redeeming feature of his personality. When the next generations will spring up, and the embers of the various controversies, the noise of the virulent criticism that gathered round him, and the glare of his activities as well as the brilliance of his career, will equally die down, they will have a clearer perspective and a truer view of the man. Then the great Idealist he was throughout his life, the lofty Ideal that he presented to his countrymen and the glorious dream of a golden future that he dreamt of his dear motherland—a dream it was, in the circumstances of the day, but it carried with it the secret of its fulfilment— all these will shine forth and shed an imperishable lustre upon the departed great.



CHAPTER XVII.

The Representative Man.

The great men like Asutosh constitute a class by themselves.—The secret of their advent and popular misconception—Emerson throws a flood of light on it—‘The river of thoughts and events’ and the ‘ideas and necessities that forced’ Asutosh onward—The great Renaissance movement in India and in the East—Ram Mohun Roy, the maker of modern India, his lifework—The impact of the West and its effects upon India—The great awakening, the clash of ideals, old and new and progress of new ideas—The rage of westernization and the need for a ‘Return Movement’—Asutosh, at once a foremost product and champion of this revivalism—Keshav Chandra Sen’s fame in Europe and Vivekananda’s achievements in America and their salutary effect upon the great Movement in India—Its religious, literary, cultural and social aspects—Ishwar Chandra also paved the way for Asutosh’s advent and work—The Bengalee literary genius and its singular output,—The political turmoil, the tense atmosphere and the virulent agitation (in the eighties)—Three pre-eminent Indians and their labours—Real nation-wide progress yet to come—Its first requisite—The educational advancement, educational reformer and worker—Asutosh’s advent, another necessity—His simple, strenuous, patriotic life, an antidote to growing donatsonalitsation and lethargy.

The greatness of some of the exceptionally great men, of some of the extraordinarily gifted personalities often presents a perplexing problem and an unusual phenomenon—easy to be impressed with but difficult to understand and explain; the tendency to explain this greatness, this rarity, by referring to, and emphasising, the immediate environment and



heredity is common enough; it is now a truism to say that environment and heredity are the greatest factors in life; but the difference is often improperly appreciated—the supreme, fundamental and abiding difference between a great, representative man of Asutosh's calibre and an ordinary common individual. These great men constitute a class, a kingdom by themselves where the ordinary laws of heredity, of inverted heredity seem to lose much of the ordinary force of their application. The broader, deeper and more outstanding, and not merely superficial, features of circumstances—the subtle, silent and salient time forces and time spirit with their impact and influences extending over several generations—and not the immediate environment only—are the determining factors in life. But there is a limit to their influence in case of the great like Asutosh; in the conflict and contact between the intrinsic worth, inborn greatness and the mysterious gifts of the men of this class—which always tend to assert influence, mould and sway men and things—and the accumulated forces and mighty onrush of the circumstances, the pendulum of victory and predominance of either over the other, swings to and fro, in such a way that each is partly and for a time, conquered, moulded and transformed by the other; this mutual interaction and interdependence of circumstances and human greatness are illustrated by, and in the lives of, various great men and heroes throughout history, ancient and modern; and the life



of Asutosh provided ample ground for the play and clash of environment or circumstances and human personality; hence he was not only and solely a creature of circumstances but also the master of his situation, and like other great men, a maker and shaper of his destiny and the destiny of his mother land.

Of the circumstances of Asutosh's life, much need not be said here; suffice it to say that few children in the contemporary Bengal could boast of better, and more affectionate, parents; few were better brought up, more minutely cared for, more vigilantly watched, more ably tutored, more intelligently trained and diligently educated; few had the good fortune to sit at the foot of, or come in contact with, more distinguished and brilliant men. But to state the circumstances of his boyhood, to indicate the course of his education and the trends and tendencies of thought and activities, or to dwell on the early manifestations of his genius is but to understate the truth; when all these are said, the secret of the advent of the great man remains untold; the mystery of his life-drama—at once remarkable in the many ramifications and range of its action and rich in its idealism and achievements, remains intact; what was the source of his extraordinary powers? What was the fountain head of his inspiration and idealism, of his lofty ideas and ambitions; of his singular strength and energy? Where was the main spring of his genius, his striking and varied



intellectual gifts and force of character, of his unabating thirst for knowledge and action? and above all, what was it that shaped the course of his life, lent character and complexion to his life-work, moulded his aspirations and his thoughts and directed his activities and energies into the channels in which they actually flew! What were the forces that made his life-history what it really was?

No emphasis on heredity or parentage, early education or immediate environment, will give us the key to the solution of these absorbing questions and unravel the mystery of the advent and work of the men whom Emerson would salute as Representative men. They come in our midst suddenly to all appearance, how and whence, it almost passes our comprehension to ascertain exactly. They seem to be beyond the pale of operations of the ordinary laws of Nature and society; they rise like a meteor and their rise appear to be an enigma, a contradiction to common experience; nevertheless, like meteor too, they obey the laws that govern their advent and their works on earth, they do not spring from mere nothing; they come invariably at an hour and in a place when the ground for their advent has been prepared, where the time for their work is ripe. But there is a good deal of popular misconception and loose thinking about the rise of great men in our midst. How far the people in general fail to account for the advent of an



Asutosh may be judged by a concluding passage in Mr. Atul Chandra Ghattak's excellent little book on Ashutosh's student life ; the author wonders how such a personality, so great a man of work—a fearless, forceful, ever-active character of uncommon intellectual powers—could be born amidst a people full of despondency, inertia and inactivity is an incomprehensible mystery. But that eminent, philosophic thinker, Dr. Brojendra Nath Seal said, in the course of a recent address on Raja Ram Mohan Roy, that there is a distinct law governing the advent of earlier great men—heroes of early history * Emerson is, however, much more eloquent and illuminating on this difficult point and throws a flood of light on the mystery of the rise of the great men. "There is no choice to genius" says he, "a great man does not wake up one fine morning and say, 'I am full of life, I shall ransack botany and find a new food for man, today I shall square the circle ; I have a new architecture in my mind ; I foresee a new mechanic power' ; no, he finds himself in the river of thoughts and events, forced on words by the ideas and necessities of his contemporaries ... every master

* Prof. Radhakrishnan, also said, "...Any human being is not an abstract entity, a mere mind or mechanism, but a product of history, with its roots in a long racial, social and ancestral past. History makes him what he is and determines his way of approach. The point at which the world presses on him varies with his geographical position and historical environment..." Address to the Sixth International Congress of Philosophy, Harvard University. 1st Sept. 1926.



has found his materials collected and his power lay in his sympathy with his people. nations, poets, artisans, women have all worked for him and he enters, into their labours ; choose any other thing out of the line of tendency, out of national feeling and history, and he would have all to do for himself ; his powers would be expended in the first preparations''.

In order to properly understand and account for the sudden advent, amidst an inveterate, ease-loving, emotional and inactive people, of a hero of action, of independence and patriotism, of a man whose life was, verily, the Ideal continuously realised, of some principles strikingly held to, of a faith incessantly acted upon, and of a mission steadily and strenuously worked out, we must ascertain 'the river of thoughts and events' in which Asutosh must have found himself floating, we must comprehend the 'ideas and necessities that forced him onword.' And we have to go not a little out of our way to find out the source and course of the great 'river,' and the root of the 'ideas and necessities.' The ultimate source of this great 'river' and the root of these 'ideas and necessities are to be found in the silent, bloodless revolutions that has been shaking and slowly but surely, transforming, the Indian society and civilization, as also those of the ancient peoples of the East. Not only India—and Bengal which, as it has happened, has been chosen by Providence to be the birth-place of the great movement and ordained to be in



the vanguard in the forward march of India in her new career of reform and renovation and readjustment, not only India, but also the whole of the old eastern firmament has been caught in the divine fire and has been sharing in the illumination of the subtle, profound and uplifting upheaval that has long began to transform the eastern countries ; with the breath of a new life born within herself, how and when, no one can tell, the East has been reviving her ancient spirit and regaining her soul lost in the slumber of centuries ; and India—the favoured child of the East, beloved by the very gods—has not been too slow to catch the spirit of the new age and begin a new epoch in her history,

All the great leaders, spiritual and religious, the intellectual giants and, the reformers, social and educational, the poets and the patriots, the authors and the orators, in a word all the pre-eminent persons as well as all the various movements of reform and revival that resulted in the rise and development of arts and literatures, as also social, educational and religious, institutions and in the abolitions of many evil customs and practices, are all products of the great movement that has come to India more than a century ago. The immediate and outer occasion of this movement has been supplied by the almost sudden and violent contact of India with a powerful, arrogant, dominant, materialistic civilization of the west ; and this, at a time when she was wellnigh lost in her century-old slumber, lulled into a sense of false



security and ignoble vanity, torn asunder by superstitions and mal-practices, orthodoxy and bigotry, sticking to the shadow of things, leaving the substance alone. But the impact of the West broke the spell of centuries and began to liberate her immortal spirit from her old enertia, false belief and abuses.

Of this movement, essentially creative, enlivening and rejuvenating in its nature, the first prophet and high priest—at once its product as well as the shaper and maker of its many ramifications, was Raja Ram Mohun Roy. Ram Mohun Roy is universally regarded as the father of modern India,—he had been more than a century in advance of his times ; almost all the trends and tendencies of our advanced thoughts and activities, all our modern ideas and ideals are traceable to, or have come through him ; he has been a most powerful medium through which light from the west has come to India. And just as, 'every ship that comes to America got its chart from Columbus', just as, 'very novel is a debtor to Homer,' so every subsequent reformer and pioneer, original thinker or worker in the realms of Indian social, political, educational reform, or in the domain of literature and criticism, is a debtor to Ram Mohun Roy ; Ram Mohun, "stands in history as the living bridge over which India marches from her unmeasured past to her incalculable future. He was the arch which spanned the gulf that yawned between ancient caste and modern humanity, between supersition



and science, between despotism and democracy, between immobile custom and a conservative progress, between a bewildering polythesim and a bold, if vague, Theism." Surely it is the greatest tribute to his life-work that all the reformers and pioneers, workers and thinkers that followed him bow to him as the mainspring of their ideas and idealism; at the first parting of ways in modern age, he really stands as the guiding star and first prophet of a new India and of a new humanity! The range and extent of his knowledge and activities, and the depth of his reforming zeal and creative powers, the searchlight of his criticism and thoughts, his all-embracing genius and his angelic vision, combined to make him the 'Universal Man' in modern Indian History; for he sought—and succeeded in some degree—to reconcile the claims of individual conscience and individual judgment with collective wisdom and authoritative verdict of the better mind of the people represented in the scriptures and in the codes; he initiated or fathered many movements of reform and rejuvenation that, in their turn, have ultimately given rise to the great freedom movement in the last quarter of the last century; he, thus, heralded the birth of the India of today and of to-morrow—a newer, greater, and more glorious India! it was his prophetic voice, which, more than any others', trumpeted forth God's Truth in modern India—the truth of the sanctity of human conscience and reason, the truth of the right to



life and an honourable life of the wretched widows and lower castes and subcastes, the truth of the inalienable and inborn right of a person or a people to rise to the full height of his or their possibilities, untrammelled by 'the pillars or the society' or the representatives of a foreign power. And in the babel of the conflicting creeds, and faiths and dogmas—each struggling to assert its mastery—in the encompassing gloom of orthodoxy, abuses and superstitions, he stood firm as an exponent of a highest philosophy and the founder of a rational faith, as a bold advocate of learning and enlightenment and reform in every department of our life.

He fought for the spread of western education and culture, for the popularisation of western criticism and science; by his heroic endeavour to purge our society, our daily life and our practised religion of the many ills and abuses eating into the vitals of life, by broadening our outlook, by crystallising our aims and ideas, by shaping our ideals, by championing our hopes and aspirations, and by assimilating all that the East and the West, all that Christianity, Islam or Hinduism could offer, Ram Mohun Roy really became the prophet of a new culture and the apostle of a new spirit and a new thinking that, in their turn, have given us a galaxy of great men—poets and patriots, authors and orators, reformers and workers—not the least illustrious of whom is our hero—Asutosh Mookerjee.



But we are not less concerned with movements than with men. The impact of the West—the British occupation of the country in particular—threw open the flood gates of European science and history, politics and criticism, with all their latest growth developments, and the result was a new quickening of the people's self-consciousness, an inward perception of their glorious past, and their vast potentialities and powers, a vague visualization of their destiny, a new outburst of reforming zeal and patriotic activities, accompanied by the emergence of a new ideal and a new standard of social and national progress and greatness—and what is equally important, a new criticism of 'what is in the light of what ought to be;' a new awakening to reality, a new spirit of creation, a new enthusiasm for social, political and religious reform and reconstruction possessed the advanced sections of the people. These great movements—when they come, they—bring in their train all sorts of healthy activities and lofty ideas, and plenty of geniuses and intellects to champion the new ideas and thoughts.

Such a movement came swept England in the Elizabethan period and there was an outburst of an unparalleled intellectual activities, an irresistible spirit of adventure and enterprise, an over-abundance of enthusiasm for new ideas and works, an absorbing taste for arts and letters and quite a host of actors and authors, poets and dramatists, soldiers and sailors, statesman and politicians, all of whom shed



a lasting lustre upon this period of English History and laid the foundations of subsequent national advancement. Such a movement also came to Germany, France, Italy, Japan and Russia; and the results, in the respective countries have been the vigorous rise and spread of the strong and rational Protestantism and the disappearance of the despotism and the tyrannies of the powerful Popes, the overthrow of the mighty and ancient Bourbons, and the enthronement of the principles of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, the unification, emancipation and prosperity of modern Italy, the establishment of Japan as a first class world Power, and lastly, the tragic, dramatic sweeping off of the all-powerful Tzardom of Russia at the surging onrush and the violent onslaughts of Bolshevism. Such a movement has come to Egypt and China, Turkey and Persia and the whole of the East is in the melting pot. But in India, which had been, up to the days of Ram Mohan Roy, verily, the citadel of blind orthodoxy and morbid conservatism, which, moreover, is the very breeding ground of multifarious classes, creeds and castes and their perennial clashes and conflicts, the progress of the movement must necessarily be slow and subtle; and it was not given to Ram Mohun Roy to witness such a complete transformation, as was the good fortune, of Peter the Great, to see in his Russia; but with his angelic ken, he had had a vision of the promised land; his unerring finger he laid on the plague spots of the body



politic, exposing them to the onslaughts of enlightened criticism and reforming zeal, newly born ; with his prophetic imagination and his seer's eye, he indicated the directions of national progress and left the torch that he lighted, to be taken up by a successive and thriving band of workers and reformers, thinkers and writers. authors and orators who came after him, carrying his message in some particular sphere of our life and thought.

Thus it was that Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore and then Brahmananda Keshav Chandra Sen stepped into his shoes into the leadership of the educated and advanced sections of the people generally, and the new society, or the sect (that he himself had founded) in particular ; both of these leaders took up the thread of his new message, in religion and practice, interpreting it in their own way, developing it in their own lights. Based as this new society was upon Western model and founded as this new creed was upon the ethical and democratic principles of the West and upon the subtle philosophy of Hindu Theism, it at once served as a bulwork against the mighty wave of westernization and provided, at the same time, ample ground for the play and stay of many western ideals and ideas. But the ascendancy and prosperity of the new class gave an additional impetus to the rapid progress of western ideas and thoughts, habits and customs, manners and modes of living—for the members of this class were by far, the more advanced, more



enlightened, more educated and most of their enlightened ideas and thoughts filtered down other strata of society*. But in the process of westernization, many were found to be outwardly more

* It must be mentioned, however, in passing, that whatever might be said and urged against the Brahma Samaj of the past or of the present, it has given through its eminent leaders, a very great stimulus to the movement of reformation and renovation—as also to that of political freedom—of the last century ; its leader in the early seventies, Keshav Ch. Sen, in the course of his European tour—and his lieutenant Protap Ch. Mazumdar in America—made the greatest impression upon the Christian world and raised their country considerably in the estimation of foreigners—which in its turn, did not fail to produce a salutary effect upon individual, social and national, self-consciousness and elevation. The fact was, Keshav Chandra, by dint of his unsurpassed oratory and his remarkable personality, took the civilized world by storm and received a world recognition as one of the greatest men of his times, and this recognition reacted upon the life of his people, upon the foreword movement in India.

As Mr. Bipin Chandra Pal rightly puts it,—"The Brahmo Samaj at that time under the inspiring leadership of Keshav Chandra Sen, stood at the zenith of its power and popularity and made, though indirectly, the greatest contribution to the movement of political freedom among us, in the seventies of the last century. Keshav Chandra leapt into universal recognition as a great moral and intellectual force by his lecture on 'Jesus Christ : Europe and Asia' in 1866. This remarkable lecture at once established his claim as one of the most powerful English orators of the day. This recognition of an educated Bengali had a very powerful reflex action upon our national self-consciousness at a time when we were used to weigh intellectual and moral excellence on the scale of European balance..."



westernized than the western people themselves ! westernization became order of the hour, the rage of the day ; the newly developed empirical philosophy, criticism and utilitarianism, the progressive science and the democratic politics, the outward glamour, and the pleasures and luxuries of the social life of Europe swayed and captured the minds of hundreds and thousands of people ; the fact was, everything with a veneer of western polish or of the western stock, acquired a new, and sometimes an irresistible, charm, and things purely Indian lost their attractions and their face value*. It was high time to cry halt, to curb down the excesses and put a brake on the popular tendencies running into extremes. The time was ripe for a return movement in the broader sense of the term, to hold back to things Indian, to build upon the bedrock of Indian culture assimilating the best in the West and the best in the East, and, lastly, to effect a reconciliation of the two opposing and conflicting civilizations and, at the same time, allow their mutual and proper play.

Asutosh may justly be said to be the finest product of this 'Return movement' of the last century —its brilliant apostle and silent and steadfast worker

* The late Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee says in its auto-biography, " Our fathers, the first fruit of English education, were violently pro British. They could see no flaw in the civilization or the culture of the West. They were charmed by its novelty and its strangeness Everything English was good — even the drinking of brandy was virtue. Everything not English was to be received with suspicion".



In his personality and character, in his private life and public career, in his speeches and in his actions, he represented and championed all the best that this return movement stood for. This movement, when it came to our country bringing in its train, this revivalism of Indian institutions, Indian ideas and ideals, it came to stay. It worked in different channels, assumed different aspects, and found different workers and pioneers. The religious side of the movement—naturally the most important and permanent in India—did not fail to exert a far-reaching influence but combated the tide of westernization, and the rage of conversion into Christianity, and even acted as a make-weight against Brahma Samaj with its enlightenment and democratic tendencies; it made a profound impression not only upon the promising and impressionable youths, but also upon all intellectuals, all the elite of the land, including the leaders of Brahma Samaj; surely it made a strong and stirring appeal to the young intelligent students and the future intellectual giants like Asutosh. And no wonder; for it had its apostle in Ramkrishna Paramhansa and a worthy and world-renowned exponent in his disciple Vivekananda who, between themselves, went far to revive and raise the faith of the multitude and masses; one, in his simple and singular personality, in his thousand and one inimitable, easy interpretations and explanations, brought the subtleties and complexities of Hinduism and the Hindu religious philosophy within the easy reach of the



commonest intellect, while the other, acquired for himself a world reputation and secured for his religion a world recognition, by his matchless oratory and his inspired eloquence, by his masterly expositions, in America and in India, of the glories, the beauties and intricacies of the Hindu religious faith and philosophy*. All these combined to give a new

* Vivekananda's American mission, his religious lectures and addresses, his challenge to the Christian world and his vigorous pleas on behalf of his religion form one of the greatest landmarks in the history of India of today ; like Keshav Chandra, he also took the world by storm and it was stirred, stupified and almost dazzled by his brilliant oratory, his matchless eloquence and his unsurpassed courage and ability with which he challenged the superiority of European civilization and philosophy and defended the religion and culture of his mother land ; and his words went home ; his argument was unassailable, his appeal irresistible and the whole super-civilized society of America acclaimed him as the hero of the hour ; in a word, the story of his American tour, forms a golden chapter of our modern history and lent a great impetus to the movement of renaissance and rejuvenation that come to stay in our country.

We will once more quote from Mr. Pal's eloquent article "... But while both Keshav and Protap (Mazumder) carried practically the message of a new and spiritualized Christianity and presented the gospel of Samaj practically in terms familiar to Christian thought and piety, Vivekananda, for the first time, delivered a new and strange challenge to Western Christianity in the name of the ancient culture and cult of the Hindus. No one had before so boldly and frankly questioned Europe's claims to superiority in thought and spiritual life as was done by this young Hindu monk... Like Keshav, in England 20 years previously, Vivekananda in America also suddenly leapt into continental fame, and almost convulsed not only American, but to some extent even the more staid and conservative



turn to, and began to control and influence, to a large extent, the conflicting currents and cross-currents of the religious thoughts and ideas of young Bengal; all these must have left their indelible impress upon the youthful mind of Asutosh; this Hindu revivalism moulded his faith and philosophy and explains his strongly orthodox bend in his character, and thanks to the spirit of the age this orthodoxy was neither itself diminished by, nor did it lessen, his sympathy with, or his assimilation of, the best of the West. But in its highest developments, this return movement stood for the healthy co-mingling, the harmonious fusion of the Indian and European cultures, for the reconciliation of the Western and Eastern ideals—which Asutosh lived and worked for and stroved to realize in his own personality and in the life of his people; and thus—following the beacon light lit by Ram Mohun Roy—he sought to involve a new type of Indian, a type of men drunk deep at the wells of Western knowledge

British and European society, by this challenge from a hitherto despised civilization. And the action of Vivekananda's mission in America was deep and strong. It at once more or less rationalized and liberalized the previous religious and social revival in our own home land bringing to that movement the inspiration of a new world outlook and the light of a new criticism which was modern in every sense of the term... Vivekananda's was thus a message of a New Youth and New Manhood to his people and it was a claim to equality, if not even to superiority, on behalf of India. And the natural result of his teachings was the creation of a new and aggressive spirit of patriotism among his people...



and science, but all the more, and none the less, lovers, workers and children of their own country, and champions of its culture and civilization—a type of which Asutosh himself was a most remarkable specimen.

We are, however, no less, concerned with this return movement, in its literary, cultural and social, aspects; the first resulted, in the foundation and development of a modern, living, thriving and assimilating vernacular language and literature, that, thanks to the Bengali literary genius, is fast making its way to the front rank of world's literature; the second kindled a spirit of idealism and enquiry, a love of knowledge and culture, that now forms the cornerstone of true Bengali character, and supplies the back ground, if not the back-bone, of the greater and larger movement—the freedom movement; and the third has brought within the range of the practical and the actual, the question of reform and remodelling of the Hindu society, not from outside like the Brahma Samaj, but from within the purely Hindu fold; and these different developments, these different ramifications of the movements, are tending to build the modern Indian humanity upon the bedrock of Indian culture and civilization with all the advancement and illumination that the West can offer and India can accept—a humanity that provides the meeting place of the East and the West, one of whom Asutosh was a glorious representative.



Of these aspects of the movement, the late Pandit Issur Chandra Vidyasagor was the foremost worker and pioneer, its bravest champion and most courageous reformer; and after Ram Mohun Roy the name of Vidyasagor, comes first, in the role of 'men, poets, artisans and women' who worked for Asutosh. The life and work of Asutosh, his character and personality, have a subtle and striking resemblance to those of Vidyasagor; one, in many respects, appears to be a fulfilment of the promise inherent in, a necessary corollary and a natural sequel to, the life and work of the other. It is not possible, as it will be a little beyond our scope, to estimate the greatness of Vidyasagor or the glory of his life and the value of his labours. Suffice it to say, however, that no one worked for his people with more self-sacrificing zeal and indefatigable energy; no one dedicated his life to the service of literature, to the reform of the society from within, to the purging of the body politic of the serious evils eating into its vitals; no one offered his great intellectual and moral powers and working capacities at the altar of his motherland, in such a way, with such a bulldog tenacity of purpose and undaunted courage of conviction, with such an unflinching devotion and benevolent compassion; and all these profoundly impressed his contemporaries, moulded and influenced the younger generations; the example of his lifelong service and sacrifice, his child-like simplicity and indomitable spirit, his love of truth, and love of his country, as also his love of its

culture, of its literature and of learning, which shines today and will shine in the days and years to come, guiding, like a star, the young and rising generations, in Bengal—did not surely fail to capture the imagination and appeal to the patriotism of young Asutosh who came in personal contact with, and was blessed by, him in his early years. It is rather a remarkable coincidence, that much of the work that Vidyasagor might have applied himself to, much of the task that he must necessarily leave to his posterity, was eagerly, enthusiastically taken up, developed and carried to its natural conclusion by Asutosh, without perhaps knowing it himself. Vidyasagor was one of the first to grasp the intimate relation between the rise of a people and the development and prosperity of their vernacular literature, between their intellectual progress and their abiding material advancement; he it was, who, with his prophetic vision, realized the great possibilities and a bright future that the Bengali race and Bengali language were destined to. While he worked all his life to rid the Bengali race of the many suicidal social customs and abuses that were grinding it to death, he had the supreme good fortune and satisfaction of actually liberating the then Bengali literature from its time-honoured bondage to Sanskrit, that was hampering its growth and development. By his courageous stand against the leaders of orthodox society who, with all their fury and bigotry, were blindly ranged against him, for his merciless expositions of the sore spots



of the social structure and of the morbid self-interests and self-sufficiency of its custodians, by his masterly justification of his standpoint and his position; by his unabating efforts for the regeneration of his people and his ceaseless enthusiasm to lessen individual distress and difficulty, no less by the transparent simplicity of his character, of his modes and manners of living and the apparent purity of his motives, by his innate and unsurpassed love of ancient Indian culture and Ideal, by his numerous translations of Sanskrit and English works, by his monumental compilations, his voluminous writings and multifarious works, equally adapted to the needs of the smallest and subtlest of intellects and to the demands of the children as also of the adults, by all these and many other means, he it was, who more than any other individual reformer, created the atmosphere of, and prepared the ground for, social, educational and cultural, reform of his fellowmen, and scattered the seeds of learning and of love of learning and literature amidst his society! and these latter, have, not only been the proud heritage of every home in Bengal, but also constituted the materials upon which Asutosh worked. It was, moreover, his lifelong championing of the cause of truth and progress in the realms of learning, literature and in the domains of popular education and social reform, it was no less, his genial personality and manly character which stood like a rock in the midst of virulent scorn and derision of his fellow brothers,



that paved the way for his work ; and when Asutosh did come, he found 'his materials collected' in the growing love of learning as, also of literature, in the ever increasing demand and all too inadequate supply of a popular, liberal and higher education—thanks to the life and works of Vidyasagor—in the struggling tendencies and mute hankerings of the advanced Bengali mind for a higher, and highest form of literary and scientific studies and researches, for a lofty synthesis of western and eastern ideals, and European and Indian culture and knowledge.

Directly after the Bengali literature was laid on a secure foundation of its own, freed from trammels of Sanskrit, and the varied treasures of western literature and history were made accessible to one and all through the medium of English, the Bengali literary genius was roused, as if from an old enertia by a magic wand, to unparalleled activities and stirrings ; and the result was an unprecedented intellectual output, which is really remarkable in the history of world's literature and which has not been excelled ever since. This sudden and singular awakening of Bengali literary genius bursting out, as by a divine command, in epic and lyric, drama and novel, romantic and realistic fiction, various thoughtful writings and criticisms, has a striking resemblance to the unique intellectual outturn of literary genius of the English in the Elizabethan period, and the contributory causes of these outburst are also of the



identical nature ; while in England,—as in Europe—the renaissance movement was blowing all over the country, flooding it with the treasures of classical learning, enriching, invigorating and ennobling national life and literature, in India, under the impact of the West, a new life was born, a new spirit was abroad, ; Bengal, in particular, welcomed with enthusiasm and alacrity, and accepted and assimilated, the Western ideas and ideals, Western science and criticism ; and Bengal, as we have seen, and as is freely acknowledged all over the country, has been the birth-place of all the great movements of reform and rejuvenation ; for she easily grasped and profited by, the western illumination, more than any other part of India ; and this fact explains, to a large extent, the unique achievements of intellectual Bengal in the realm of literature, within so short a space of time. These literary activities, in their turn, brought about a new renaissance, a revolution in the realm of ideas and thoughts and breathed a new idealism and a new inspiration. The epoch making epic of Michael Madhu Sudhan—up to now an impossibility in the Bengali literature—the soul-stirring lyric of Hemchandra and the poetry of Nobinchandra, the achievements of Dinobandhu in the field of drama, and more remarkably, of Bankim Chandra in that of romantic and realistic fiction, portraying the real inner life of the people—the writings of Vidyasagar, and of Bhudev Mukhopadhyaya and the poetical works of Issur Gupta, all joined to give rise to a new



patriotism, preached a new nationalism and made an irresistible appeal to the young and intellectual Bengal—Bengal which was already drunk deep in the European literature and history and fed and almost intoxicated with the new ideas and new conceptions of liberty and fraternity ! And the advanced spirits, the pioneers and reformers, the idealists and practical workers—and Asutosh combined the essentials of all these in his own versatile personality—on whose awakened ears fell the clarion call of appeal, of patriotic service, of fighting forward resolutely, took up the country's cause and marched forward with the badge of their country's service. While all these remarkable deeds of his countrymen in the domains of literature, of social reform and religious revivalism, captured the imagination and stirred the souls of the sensitive, young intellectuals of Bengal, of whom Asutosh was so brilliant a representative, he was not a little moved by the memorable events in the field of politics, not a little swayed by the political movement and agitation resulting directly from political turmoil and stirrings.

A few years before Asutosh was born, the Mutiny had shaken the British Rule in India to its very foundations, and though the smouldering embers of that conflagration were fast dying, or had actually died down, Asutosh's childhood saw the newborn patriotism and newly developed political consciousness of the advanced section of the people,



seeking some outlets and expressions ; and the movement for political advancement—if not for emancipation—was also struggling for definite shape and form and for clear channel in the mid seventies of the last century ; during latter part of this period, a reactionary Viceroy ruled at the head of the Government in India ; under his auspices, the new patriotism and political awakening of the people were sought to be suppressed ; at his instance, the notorious Vernacular Press Gagging Act was hurriedly placed on the Statute Book to deal a death blow to the vernacular journalism and vernacular press ; but the newly enacted Act missed its mark so far as its immediate objective—The Amrita Bazar Patrika—was concerned ; for, this paper at which this new fangled weapon was pointedly aimed, was converted within a miraculously short time, into an English daily. Lord Lytton was, however, succeeded by Lord Ripon than whom no more liberal minded Englishman and sagacious statesman, came to control the destinies of this country ; curiously enough, matters were not smoothed by his advent, his pious intention and broadminded statesmanship, notwithstanding ; no doubt, he is justly regarded as the father of local self-Government in India—for it was he who tried to truly lay the foundations of civic and municipal administration in our land. But his now famous and historic attempt to tamper with, and snatch away, the undue privilege of his countrymen in the criminal Courts gave a signal,



and served as an occasion, for a most virulent and violent agitation launched by the Britishers and swelled by their Anglo-Indian kinsmen, that embittered and strained, to the very breaking point, the relations between the ruling class and the ruled; the whole country began to be ringing with sharp reparties and angry retorts, challenges and answers; there was enough of heat and animosity; vilification and bad taste were freely indulged in; but it may be said without fear of contradiction that Britishers and their Anglo-Indian allies did not certainly add to their fair name and reputation; many other acts of omissions and commissions, added to these, swelled the volume and extent of the popular discontent and resentment against the British bureaucracy; specially the forced retirement of Mr. S. N. Bannerjea—the most formidable leader, the great orator and renowned politician and statesman in after life—(from the Indian Civil Service) lent a great force to the native rank; and he gave a great stimulus to the national movement. And in the midst of these controversies and conflicts of interests and opinions, there sprang up a galaxy of politicians and patriots, orators and speakers, specially in Bengal, who were remarkable alike in their powers of expressions in a foreign and their native tongues, and in the gifts of eloquence and intelligence. They were themselves, to a no small extent, products of the political awakening and expressions of popular self-consciousness and popular passion for liberty and



freedom, generated by the native literatures and western ideas ; they championed the cause of political advancement of their country, and with equal force, protested against, and pleaded for, the many injustices and inequities that fell to their country's lot under the British regime. Any one who has come in contact with, any Indian who has been treated to, this magnificent outburst of patriotism, to this striking flow of speeches and orations, any one who has been born when his country was really in the throes of a new birth, and brought up in an atmosphere, full of notable incidents and events in the domains of literature and culture, and surcharged with patriotic fervour and passionate enthusiasm, can not fail to be deeply impressed and profoundly influenced ; and Asutosh who was born and brought up in this creative age and in this period of transition, on whose devout head were showered profusely so many moral and intellectual qualities, must have had his innate patriotism and inborn nationalism roused, strengthened and ennobled by all that he saw, heard or read of his country's contemporary men and events. The fact was, his sensitive soul was deeply stirred and hurt at the inequities and injustices of the system of administration under which his countrymen had their normal growth stunted and their natural stature dwarfed ; his indomitable spirit which made him the 'Bengal Tiger' in latter years rebelled against the atmosphere and the unnatural law of inferiority that denied the native intellect and



ability their fair field and proper scope, and offered him who was a most energetic, versatile and brilliant scholar, only a back seat in the educational service; these did not daunt or damp his redoubtable spirit; but, on the other hand, he pitched his ambition and his ideals into the highest tune and dreamt the dream of his country's regeneration in which he should play a part, grand and glorious.

Once in his colleges days he was attracted to politics. The imprisonment of Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjea actually drew him into the political arena and he took part in the agitation that was launched in this connection, speaking at two different meetings after his release; but he was firmly convinced of the futility of barren agitation and did not any more waste the exuberance of his enthusiasm and patriotism on the political platform, but directed them into the channels towards which his deeper faith and inner light led him.

These were, generally speaking, the broad features of the circumstances, the outlines of the various movements and their ramifications, under whose vitalising, and invigorating influences was brought up Bengal's greatest man in the field of independent action and protracted, patriotic labour. Before he grew up into the man that he really was in after life, before he entered public life, the forces of reform and progress, as we have seen, were already abroad; the better mind of the people was asserting



itself in various ways; their higher tendencies and newer ideas were struggling for new outlets and channels; the genius of the race was expressing itself in the lives of its many poets and patriots, speakers and politicians, pioneers and reformers; and their immortal spirit was signaling its awakening by their bold attempt at the reformation and reconstruction of the society, by their remarkable achievements in the domain of literature, by an increasing stream of speeches and writings and by the notable activities of the first batch of English educated intellectuals, resulting in the establishments of schools and colleges, literary societies and libraries, in the starting and conducting of newspapers and periodicals, both in English and in Bengali, that courageously spread the gospel of liberty and diffused broadcast the ideas of freedom of thought and action, of progress and reform, throughout the length and breadth of the land and really became a power to reckon with.

But the activities and ideas of three eminent sons of Bengal—the three leaders of thought and culture of contemporary Bengal—stand out in broader relief and bear a close and intimate connection with the lifework of Asutosh; these illustrious sons of Bengal were no other than the late Dr. Rajendra Lall Mitra, the late Mr. Annanda Mohun Bose and the late lamented Dr. Mohendra Lall Sircar; they all anticipated the activities and ideas of Asutosh and might be said to have laid the foundation, in some way, of the



greatness of Asutosh's life and work. The first was not only one of the foremost leaders of public opinion at whose feet sat several prominent public men of latter days, but was the greatest antiquarian and the most versatile and profound scholar that India has produced since his time. With his encyclopedic knowledge and mastery of multifarious subjects, his unique services in the region of Indian antiquity, he was the forerunner of Asutosh who, with his varied and profound scholarship, strikingly advanced the cause of Anthropology, of Indian antiquity, of ancient Indian History, Culture and Civilization. While Dr. Rajendra Lall Mitra was the life and soul of the British Indian Association—the most influential public body in his days and was elected Chairman of the second Indian National Congress held at Calcutta under Dadabhoy Naoroaji, Mr. A. N. Bose, a brilliant graduate of the Calcutta University, a distinguished mathematician, one of the founders of Indian Association and sole founder of City College,—both of which became most important institutions afterwards—was installed in the Presidential Chair of the National Congress, India's non-official Parliament. It was Mr. Bose who led an unsuccessful movement set on foot to transform the Calcutta University, a mere examining body, into a regular Teaching University. As regards Dr. Mohendra Lall Sircar, an ornament of the then educated community and a remarkable product of the forces of progress and reform that were sweeping the land in the latter half of last century, we have had



occasion to refer at length to him and his services in the field of scientific studies and researches. Suffice it to say here that he was a pioneer, a steadfast reformer, a persistent, patriotic, untiring worker in the cause of his country, who devoted a lifetime and his great intellectual powers to the spread of scientific studies and to the promotion and popularization of scientific researches, by establishing and conducting the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science—an institution which has been the nursery of many scientists in Bengal. Thus all of them, Mr. A. N. Bose and Drs. Mohendra Lall Sircar and Rajendra Lall Mittra, anticipated the works of Asutosh; rather they were the pioneers who preceded him; their labours and example indirectly showed him his way, clarified his aims and object and focussed his attention on his goal; great as these eminent countrymen of ours were, each of them was 'an exhibition, in some quarter, of new possibilities' which all fructified and culminated in the advent and work of Asutosh who combined, in a great degree and was indebted to, the greatnesses of all the illustrious three. All these factors, all these tendencies and activities, joined, in their cumulative effect, to lend colour and character to the currents and under-currents of Asutosh's thoughts and aspirations, moved his heart and moulded his frame of mind and shaped his personality and his Ideal.



We have seen that a comprehensive, uplifting and enlivening movement has to come to stay in our country ; we have also seen that in consequence, the genius of the people, as if with the touch of a magician's wand, has risen from its century-old slumber pouring forth a torrent of energy and intellectual activities in various spheres of life. But the mere awakening of the people, specially of the intelligentsia, to a vague sense of their powers and potentialities, the individual achievements of their advanced spirits and the solitary visualization by the latter only, of the destiny of their country, are not sufficient, in themselves, to uplift the people in general to the necessary higher plane so as to enable them to reach their ultimate goal. But then, when the sun rises in the east, his rays first fall upon the housetops and the lofty trees and afterwards flood everything below ; such has been the case with the great movements that have swept many lands and uplifted many races ; the advanced sections, the intellectual classes are first caught in divine light ; then it goes down and permeates the lower strata of society. Hence it is that in Bengal, the sleeping genius—the dormant creative spirit of the people—in the chosen few—roused to action, launched and carried out various reforms and reconstructions, and burst forth in such a brilliant literary output, and intellectual and reforming activities—the first landmarks in the national progress and national greatness. But the nation—the national life



of the people—is, like an organism, an undivided whole, nor is it susceptible to, or capable of, division into watertight compartments into the life of the more advanced, intellectual classes, and the life of the backward, lower classes; national progress is not isolated, independent advancement of some classes or sects; national life can not shine in solitary grandeur in the select few; the real national prosperity is certainly not the stray progress of an infinitesimal portion of the population in some sphere of life. The very first and most important step in the direction of true national progress, real and abiding prosperity, of a people as a whole, is their education, taken not in a narrower but in the broader and broadest sense of the term. The people in general, irrespective of caste, creed or colour or even sex, must, in tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands, be educated—not necessarily in some colleges; they must have a working knowledge of things, and a smattering of culture; they should be enlightened as far as possible; they ought to be uplifted from the mire of ignorance and prejudice and elevated to a higher region; they ought to have their outlook broadened, their views liberalised, their character strengthened and their powers developed. But the process of imparting education and instruction to the increasing portions of population must not preclude the possibility of, but will stimulate, and call forth, people's contribution, by their ablest intellects, by their elect and select few, to the



national progress and prosperity as well as to the common stock of human knowledge, to the forward march of human thought, to the onward, journey of humanity to its predestined goal; and this latter consummation, this great contribution of the people, requires, in its turn, the very highest stage of studies and researches, an atmosphere of intellectual stimulus and intellectual advancement; an equal opportunity of knowledge and learning and investigation to be thrown open to one and all, along with a widespread diffusion of a liberal, popular education. Bengal, as we have seen, has provided ample ground for new ideas to grow and thrive in; she has been the birth-place of various movements; she has, moreover, produced numerous eminent men and quite a galaxy of intellectuals and geniuses in various spheres. But these men and these movements alone could not make for the fulfilment of her destiny, for the accomplishment of the mission that India, by the grace of God, is out to work out; for this purpose, as we have just said, the people must be educated and enlightened; a vigorous public opinion, an atmosphere of culture, a spirit of social service must be created, by a diffusion of various kinds and degrees of education, by the spread of knowledge and of sound, and original, thinking as far as possible. There is something of the inevitable in this important step, in this essential stage in the national progress. If India is destined to have a great future worthy of her glorious past, she must



have her requisite reformers in the region of education, she must have her own effective and elastic educational systems and educational institutions that will impart all grades of education to one and all and at the same time, help in the development of the highest intellects and brightest parts in the gifted youths of the country and encourage their original thinking and intellectual activities; she must have, by the efforts of the reformers or the Ministers of state, her centres of higher and highest studies and researches in various branches of letters and sciences, so that many of the best brains, the select few, and budding geniuses of the nation, might be engaged in extending the bounds of knowledge and Truth, in widening man's outlook and broadening his horizons of thoughts, in adding to the common stock of knowledge, to the common heritage of the nations and in earning their motherland a sure right to an honourable place among the nations of the world.

The throwing open of the flood gates of knowledge and scholarship together with the imparting of a liberal education to hundreds and thousands of his countrymen by building a glorious temple—and opening its portals to the ablest and best intellects of the land—wherein are carried on the highest stages of studies and researches, investigations and original thinking and intellectual works by the most advanced students and teachers—these constitute the most important part of Asutosh's life work, and sum up his chief, but



not, only title to rank among the greatest representative men of his time and his country. In an independent and progressive country where the children of the soil control its resources and its finances and guide its policies, it is a primary function of the Government of the land to diffuse education in all its stages. To dispel the darkness of ignorance and superstition by the spread of light and culture, to encourage, and afford amplest opportunities to the best brains and best intellects to be engaged in the highest form of researches and studies with a view to extend the bounds of truth and knowledge, is the proud privilege of the custodians of public funds. But such, surely, can hardly be the case with a country like India, whose policies and destinies are sought to be controlled from afar, across the seas, by an autocrat—generally without any first hand knowledge or experience—and sometimes without any understanding sympathy of her affairs and wants, a country which, moreover, has to maintain, by her heart's blood, a very costly and extravagant bureaucracy in all the pomp and grandeur, comfort and luxury that modern age can minister to ; the more so, when both the former individual and the latter body have the supreme interests of their own country, their own self-interests, their own personal ambitions to look to, when they have their own ideas and notions, their own principles and foibles to care of. No wonder, more than a century and a half of British rule found only an infinitesimal portion of the



vast population literate—and a still lesser portion, educated—only a drop in the ocean! As for the Post-Graduate studies and researches of the highest form—they were conspicuous by their absence in the Indian Universities till the beginning of this century; so it was only natural for Sir Sankaran Nair, to say, in the course of his historic Minutes of Dissent (to the Despatch of the Government of India to the Secretary of State), that ‘the governing classes opposed political and sound educational progress.’ But if our country has a future in the wise dispensation of Providence, if she is destined to have an honourable place in the economy of nations of the world, and not merely continue to be a byword of contempt, merely a hewer of wood and drawer of water—there must come in our midst, some great man who, reflecting the lofty idealism, the dormant and high constructive and organising powers of his people, would give their struggling literary and scientific tendencies, their intellectual and imaginative faculties, their growing striving and hankerings after education and culture, a proper channel along which to develop and flow to fruition. And to accomplish this, was the mission and meaning of Asutosh’s life and work.

Apart from this prominent—and perhaps principal—aspect of his life, his advent and his work in which he interpreted and championed, like Emerson’s Representative men, some of the inner and higher longings, some of the strong tendencies and necessities, many of the thoughts and aspirations of



the Bengali mind, by meeting the ever growing demands of a cheap, popular liberal education—demands of knowledge and culture of various stages—Asutosh's strenuous, struggling and eventful life may be viewed from another standpoint and has another, and no less important, aspect.

The people of Bengal, as we have already said, are an emotional people, with a backbone of idealism and a veneer of sentimentalism. But the better mind of the people, their creative spirit seemed to have been exhausted in the intellectual output and other activities of the last quarter of the last century; such also seemed to be the case with the momentum of progress in various movements of reforms and in the various attempts at reconstruction, under the impact of the West, and under the invigorating influences of the play and clashes of Western ideals and ideas. The Bengalis seemed to have been suffering from the defect of their qualities, from a reaction of their many and momentous, healthy and humane, activities.

Unlike other progressive, practical and active races of India, such as the Parsis, Marathas, the Gujraties and the Marwaris, the Bengalis seemed to have lost or have been lacking in that true initiative, that courage of conviction, that strength of character, that aptitude and capacity for sustained work and action—which are the characteristics, of strong, sturdy and successful peoples of the world but which could not have such congenial soil in the