

SIR JADUNATH SARKAR(Part-4)

सर जदुनाथ सरकार (भाग-4)

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Apart from these few instances there has been a good deal of vague and often uninformed criticism of the historian in certain circles in Calcutta and a few other places in Bengal, in Maharashtra and at Allahabad and Aligarh. The Bengal criticism was short-lived, as it had little to do with him as a historian. It questioned his knowledge of Persian and even of English. It was due to personal reasons and to party-politics in the Calcutta University. The Maharashtra criticism was the resentment caused by his intrusion into Maratha history, his merciless exposure of the comparative unreliability of the Marathi sources like the *Bakkars* and his incisive criticism of the new-fangled theories of the patriotic school of Maratha historian.

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The so-called Allahabad school of medieval Indian history, torn between 'academic rectitude' and 'civic duty', blames Jadunath for not omitting offensive details of temple destruction and putting down of Hinduism by force from his works. It feels that the mere mention of such facts of history is repugnant to Muslim feelings and drives a wedge between the two communities is naturally sore with the historian for his graphic and incontrovertible details of Aurangzeb's anti-Hindu policy in particular and the failure of Muslim rule in India in general, and charges him with bias against Islam and the Muslim community. This charge may be dismissed as a make-believe. Sir Jadunath's impartiality is attested to by Dr. C.C.Davis of Oxford

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who wrote, while reviewing his *Fall of the Mughal Empire* (Vol. I), that the readers of his account of the atrocities committed by Maratha raiders in Northern India would agree that the belief held in certain quarters that Sir Jadunath was biased against the Muslim rules of medieval India was groundless.

It is curious to note how some of these very critics of the historian treasure Sir Jadunath's appreciative words about themselves and repeat them on important occasions. Dr. Tara Chand, a great pillar of the Allahabad

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school of Medieval Indian history and probably the author of the theory of 'civic duty' versus "academic rectitude", recalled with pleasure at the annual session of the Indian Historical Records Commission at Chandigarh in 1961 Jadunath Sarkar's remark when he was informed that the learned Doctor had been entrusted with the project of writing a history of the Freedom Movement in India. The historian was reported to have said: "It [the project] has been entrusted to competent hands."

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Professor K. A. Nizami of Aligarh has quoted with approval Sir Jadunath's estimate of Najib-ud-daula's character as a general and strategist and as a statesman. Many such examples can be easily multiplied. But these few given above are enough to show that honest differences apart, Jadunath's conclusions and opinions could not be lightly disregarded.

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Sir Jadunath was unquestionably the greatest Indian historian of his time and one of the greatest in the world, naturally, therefore, his powerful personality and erudite works could not fail to exert great influence on contemporary scholars and historians. There was hardly any sensitive and honest worker in the field of medieval Indian history who could remain immune from this healthy influence in some way or other, directly or indirectly, such

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scholars may be divided into three groups, namely, (i) those who sought his help and guidance and came directly into personal contact with him; (ii) those who had no opportunity to meet him, but derived benefit from his numerous books of research and therefore felt indebted to him; and (iii) finally those who found fault with him and yet did not fail to be impressed by his extraordinary scholarship and unconsciously followed his example and his methodology. In short, most workers, if not all, in the field of medieval Indian history felt indebted to Sir Jadunath Sarkar, whether they had come into contact

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him or not and whether they were his disciples or friends or critics. Among his direct pupils and the latter's pupils there were some privileged ones like **Dr. K. R. Qanungo** and the supreme good luck of coming into close personal contact with the historian and receiving the benefit of his guidance. In their works is reflected the master's methodology and research technique, namely, the use of all available contemporary material in the original, meticulous care in collecting and sifting evidence and presenting their theme in direct and plain style. Then there were those -and their number was larger who were

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permitted, like Professor Shri Ram Sharma, Dr. Hari ram Gupta, Dr. S.N.Rao and others, to make use of his library at his residence and share with him afternoon tea and sometimes breakfast too, but who made their own lodging and boarding arrangements. But these too had the privilege of the master's guidance and their historical writings reveal the pattern set by Sir Jadunath Sarkar- honest and thorough research. A still larger group of workers received his help and guidance through correspondence in the form of

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suggesting suitable topics for research, giving an outline synopsis and supplying a list of original authorities in manuscript and print and modern works to be read. There was yet another group, the largest of all, of distant scholars who drew inspiration from the historian's published works and consciously or unconsciously imitated his historical methodology and his style and manner of presentation. It is not known to many that a very healthy influence of

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Sir Jadunath on his immediate students-researchers and historians of recognized merit- was the fear that if they slackened in their effort in the cause of historical research and gave up the pursuit after taking the doctorate degree, they would lose the guru's goodwill. Hence they would continue working even after having neared or reached their retirement on account of superannuation. His personal example of regular hard work, abstemious living and making full use of his time, though very difficult to be imitated, served as a living ideal for many who had the aspiration to walk in his footsteps. Nor has his influence died with his death. It is likely to continue to exert itself for a long time to come, for Sir

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Jadunath became, perhaps unintentionally, the father of a new school of medieval Indian historiography in the real sense. This school is functioning without the master. The main planks on which this school stands are:

(i) the necessity of a sound knowledge of all the contemporary languages of medieval India, besides Sanskrit, English, Portuguese, Dutch and French; (ii) a meticulous search and collection of all original contemporary source-material to be found in the above languages; (iii) a scientific study of this material in the original; (iv) sifting of evidence as

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carefully and impartially as may be humanly possible; and (v) presenting the conclusions in a sober and scholarly style. This school does not believe in sacrificing 'academic rectitude' at the altar of 'civic duty'. "Civic duty", important though it is, comes in only in the matter of presentation of facts and interpretation in temperate and balanced language and in the avoidance of excitement and passion.

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This school also believes that, like its founder, every member must be constantly on the lookout for fresh material on his special subject or period, and must revise his work or works in the light of that fresh material in the second and subsequent editions. Knowledge is not static. One must keep in constant touch with the ever-growing knowledge of one's subject.

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