

NOTE

Shashibhusan Dasgupta

A B writes :

AN INTELLECTUAL WIDELY respected for his immense and variegated learning passed away at the age of only fifty-three, and after his death the newspapers and journals published a good deal of reports about his life and work. This is the year of his birth centenary, but this has gone almost unnoticed, except for an advertisement on the part of his family members in a leading Bengali daily. The distinguished professor, namely Shashi Bhusan Dasgupta, was not entirely an academic, although he, during the last seven years of his life, decorated the prestigious Ramtanu Lahiri chair of the Bengali Department of the University of Calcutta. It may be mentioned that this was the first professorship in Bengali language and literature in the University of Calcutta, created after the introduction of the MA course in Bengali at the initiative of Asutosh Mukherjee. The first incumbent of the post was the illustrious Professor Dinesh Chandra Sen, the grandfather of Samar Sen. The post was next occupied by Raibahadur Khagendranath Mitra and Professor Srikumar Bandopadhyay in succession. Professor Dasgupta was the fourth to join this post.

A list of the oeuvre of Professor Dasgupta's writings would betray an astonishing versatility of mind. One of his major works is *Obscure Religious Cult*, a study of the various less conspicuous ritual customs of the Bengalis, particularly Bengali subalterns. This is probably the only book he wrote in English. Again, he wrote a treatise named *SriRadhar Kramabikash- Darshne O Sahitye* (The Evolution of the Concept of Radha in Philosophy and Literature). It goes without saying that such a work demanded a firm grasp of the concept of Krishna and Radha, as well as a thorough acquaintance with the *Vaishnava* literature and philosophy. The reader may be a little surprised to learn that he wrote another treatise that dealt with a different subject altogether. It was entitled *Bharater Sakti Sadhana O Sakta Sahitya* (The Worship of the Cult of Sakti and Sakta Literature in India). Professor Dasgupta also wrote a book entitled *Upama Kalidasasya* (Analogies of Kalidasa), which indicates his profound grasp of Sanskrit poetry. He also made an elegant study of the influence of the Upanishadas on Tagore. Professor Dasgupta's creative energy and imaginative faculty were not however exhausted by these writings. He wrote two pieces for children in verse, *Chhutir Dine Megher Galpa* (the Tale of Clouds Told on Holidays) and *Shyamla Dighir Ishan Kone* (In the North-west Corner of the Green Tank). Both were extremely popular among children. Professor Dasgupta was a scholar extraordinary, and had his career not been cut short by premature death, he would have risen much higher in the world of scholarly as well as literary creation. But he was not only an academic, but had a highly perceptive mind as well, contributing articles to the special issues of the *Swadhinata* (Freedom), the Bengali organ of the Communist Party of India, edited by Somnath Lahiri. What must be said about his personality that throughout his career he remained above the generally fractious attitude prevalent among the common run of professors. It is really a matter of shame to educated Bengalis, and also an indication of their cultural degeneration that his birth centenary is going to pass almost imperceptibly. □□□