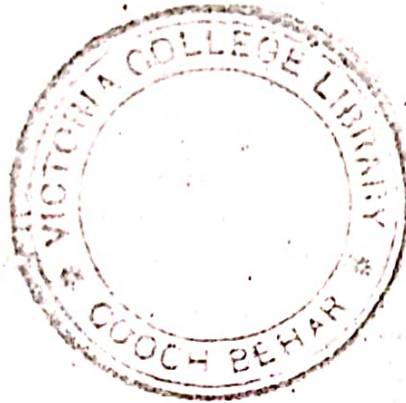


Homage
To The Hallowed Memory of



Acharya

BROJENDRA NATH SEAL

On the Occasion of His Birth centenary celebration, 1965
VICTORIA COLLEGE
Cooch Behar.

Published by
Shri Manab Kumar Gangopadhyay, M.A.
Lecturer, Victoria College, Cooch Behar.

On behalf of Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal's Centenary Celebration Committee
Victoria College, Cooch Behar.



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The Quest Eternal

FOREWORD

This Souvenir brochure, an humble tribute to the memory of Acharya Brajendranath Seal, is published in partial fulfilment of the programme of celebration of the birth centenary of this great savant, undertaken by the Victoria College, Cooch Behar, in cooperation with the members of the public. The association of Acharya Seal with this college, extending over a stretch of seventeen years (1896—1913) as one of its most distinguished Principals, marks a very significant era in the glorious tradition behind this premier seat of learning. This college had, therefore, a special responsibility, nay, a sacred obligation to celebrate the birth centenary of this illustrious son of India, honoured as one of the greatest intellectual luminaries of his age. His depth of knowledge in different branches of learning was fathomless and he stood in the glare of national spotlight with all the grace and vigour of Indian culture. The centenary celebration, which came off on March 5, 1965, under the presidentship of His Highness Maharaja Sri Sri Jagaddipendra Narayan Bhup Bahadur of Cooch Behar, gave us an opportunity to recall what he taught us and what he wished us to do. On this occasion, we had the privilege of having in our midst three eminent educationists in Sri Surajit Chandra Lahiri, formerly Chief Justice of the Calcutta High Court and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Calcutta, Sri Binayendranath Das Gupta, Vice-Chancellor of the University of North Bengal and Sri Amiya Kumar Majumdar, Principal, Krishnagar College, Nadia, all of whom paid eloquent tributes to the memory of Acharya Seal and dwelt on the diverse aspects of his contributions to human knowledge. The people of Cooch Behar, who responded splendidly to our appeal for contribution to the centenary fund, attended the celebration meeting in considerable strength and created an atmosphere surcharged with emotion and a feeling of reverence towards the great soul. It was an unforgettable scene.

The centenary celebration committee has been able to erect a marble bust of the Acharya within the college campus, and, thanks to the munificence of the Cooch Behar Municipality, has found it possible also to create an 'Acharya Seal Centenary Prize' to be awarded

annually to the best student graduating with Honours from the Victoria College.

On behalf of the centenary celebration committee, I take this opportunity to offer grateful thanks to the people of Cooch Behar, particularly the members of the staff of the college and the student population, who stood by our side with unflinching devotion in our endeavour to perpetuate the memory of Acharya Seal at this place. We place on record our appreciation of the valuable assistance rendered by the District administration in making available to us a number of old documents pertaining to Acharya Seal's appointment as Principal of the Victoria College during the former Cooch Behar State regime. We are also conscious of our deep indebtedness to the distinguished authors whose contributions have made it possible for us to bring out this publication.

In conclusion, let me hope that this Souvenir, which carries inspiring message and stimulating writings, will serve as a beacon directing the attention of generations to follow, to that shining monument of superb intellect.

U. R. Burman
Principal, Victoria College, Cooch Behar
&
Secretary, Acharya Seal Birth Centenary
Celebration Committee.

RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN,
NEW DELHI-4.

February 22, 1965

Message

The late Acharya Brajendranath Seal was an erudite scholar and a great writer on fundamental problems of philosophy. I am glad that the Victoria College, Cooch Behar, of which he was for some years the Principal, is celebrating his birth centenary.

(Sd.) S. Radhakrishnan

February 22, 1965

Message

I am glad to learn that the birth centenary of Acharya Brajendranath Seal will be celebrated in the first week of March, 1965 under the auspices of the Victoria College, Cooch Behar.

As a great philosopher and patriot and as a man of profound learning, Acharya Brajendranath Seal has left a glorious heritage for all of us. It is fitting that the Victoria College, Cooch Behar, should observe his birth centenary celebration in a reverential manner as Acharya Seal was associated with this institution for over seventeen years. I take this opportunity to pay my respects to the memory of this great savant of our country.

(Sd.) Padmaja Naidu
Governor of West Bengal

Calcutta,
February 20, 1965

Message

The Victoria College, Cooch Behar, is celebrating the birth centenary of Acharya Brajendranath Seal, who was one of the most distinguished Principals of this College from 1896 to 1913.

This distinguished scientist, philosopher, educationist and thinker of Bengal worked for a synthesis of eastern and western philosophies and science and technology for creating a world with common ideals and common purpose, progressing forward with mutual understanding, goodwill and co-operation.

If the world is to be saved from self-destruction we must ensure that with our material progress there is also spiritual awakening, which should give mankind faith and reason, poise and assurance with peace and prosperity.

I am glad the local Celebrations Committee in Cooch Behar has included in their programme publication of a commemoration volume on Brajendranath Seal and creation of an endowment for award of prizes annually in memory of this distinguished Scholar. I am sure this programme will receive full support.

(Sd.) Prafulla Chandra Sen

MINISTER-IN-CHARGE
Education Department
Government of West Bengal
Dated Calcutta, the Feby. 19, 1965.

মন্ত্রী
শিক্ষা বিভাগ
পশ্চিম বঙ্গ সরকার

Message

I am much delighted to learn that Cooch Behar is going to celebrate the birth centenary of Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal, the great son of India, under the auspices of the Victoria College.

The profound erudition of this versatile scholar was indeed matchless both in depth and breadth. And the Victoria College may rightly be proud of having had its Principal's chair once adorned by this great savant of revered memory.

I wish the Centenary Celebrations a resounding success.

(Sd.) Rabindralal Sinha

SENATE HOUSE
CALCUTTA-12

VICE CHANCELLOR

February 24, 1965.

Message

Dear Sir,

I was glad to hear that you are celebrating the birth centenary of Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal. We celebrated the centenary here a few weeks back. Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal was one of our greatest philosophers of modern times and had a reputation which had travelled far beyond our country.

I hope the celebration will bring him and his achievements to the mind of our young people and bring inspiration to them.

Yours faithfully,
(Sd.) Dr. B. Malik

VISVA-BHARATI

Founded by
RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Lal Bahadur Shastri
Acharya
Upacharya
Sudhi Ranjan Das
Ref. No. G/M. 8

Vice-Chancellor
Visva-Bharati
SANTINIKETAN
West Bengal, India
Phone :—Bolpur—21

February 19, 1965.

Message

Dear Principal Burman,

Many thanks for your D. O. letter No. 211 of 15 February 1965.

I am really very sorry that heavy pre-occupations stand in the way of my accepting your kind invitation to be present at the Birth Centenary Celebrations of Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal being organised by the Victoria College, Cooch Behar. Though I am unable to be in your midst on this important occasion, I take this opportunity to join you from here in doing homage to the memory of one of the brightest intellectual luminaries of renascent India. I wish your functions all success.

Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) S. R. Das

Vice-Chancellor

Phone : 34-1328

No. 6742

RABINDRA BHARATI UNIVERSITY
6/4, Dwarkanath Tagore Lane, Cal-7

March 1, 1955.

Message

Shri U. R. Burman,
Principal, Victoria College,
Cooch Behar

Dear Sir,

I am glad to learn from your D. O. letter No. 244 dated 24th February, 1965, that you are celebrating the birth centenary of Acharya Brajendra Nath Seal in your college. Endowed with a penetrating intellect and voracious appetite for knowledge in diverse fields he distinguished himself as a giant among giants in an age of great intellectuals. He still stands out as a legendary figure to inspire the present generation of scholars. It is in the fitness of things that the Cooch Behar Victoria College, with which he was closely associated over a long period, is celebrating his birth centenary. I send you my best wishes for a successful celebration.

Yours faithfully,
(Sd.) Hiranmay Banerjee
Vice-Chancellor,
Rabindra Bharati

শ্রদ্ধাঞ্জলি

মাননীয় ভদ্র মহিলা, ভদ্র মহোদয়গণ,

মহানর্ঘী আচার্য্য ব্রজেননাথ শীলের চতুর্দশ শতবার্ষিকী পালনের উচ্চ আজ আমরা এখানে কোচবিহার ভিক্টোরিয়া কলেজে মিলিত হয়েছি। কলেজের পক্ষ হতে শ্রদ্ধের অধিক মহাশয় এই অনুষ্ঠানে সভাপতি হবার উচ্চ আশাকে আমন্ত্রণ করেছেন। এ উচ্চ তাঁদের দলকেই আমার অশ্রব ধন্যবাদ। আচার্য্য শীলের গৌরবের স্মৃতির প্রতি শ্রদ্ধাঞ্জলি নিবেদন করে আমরা আজ ধন্য হব।

আচার্য্য শীল এই কলেজের অধ্যক্ষ ছিলেন সুদীর্ঘ সত্তের বৎসর। এই কলেজই ছিল তাঁর জ্ঞানসঞ্চয়ের এক বিশেষ তপস্কেন্দ্র। তাই আমার মনে হয়, আচার্য্য ব্রজেননাথ শীলের জন্মশতবার্ষিকী পালন কোচবিহার ভিক্টোরিয়া কলেজের পক্ষে এক বিশেষ অর্থপূর্ণ অনুষ্ঠান।

এ কথা স্মরণ করে আমি আজ গর্ব অনুভব করছি যে আমার পরম পূজ্য পিতামহ পুণ্যস্মৃতি মহারাজ হুপেন্দ্র নারায়ণ ভূপ বাহাদুর তাঁর অসীম জ্ঞানের কথা জেনে এই কলেজের অধ্যক্ষ পদ গ্রহণের উচ্চ তাঁকে সার্ব আমন্ত্রণ জানিয়েছিলেন। কোচবিহারের পরম সৌভাগ্য আচার্য্য শীল সে আমন্ত্রণ সানন্দে গ্রহণ করেছিলেন।

আচার্য্য শীল যে কত বড় জ্ঞানী ও বিদ্বান ছিলেন সে সহজে আপনারা অনেক কথাই জানেন বা শুনেছেন। সুধীজনের কাছে তাঁর জ্ঞানের কথা যা শুনেছি তাতে আমার বিস্ময় মনে হয়েছে, সে জ্ঞানের তুলনা একমাত্র সাগর। সাগরের মতই তার বিস্তার, সাগরের মতই সুগভীর। তাঁর রচিত গ্রন্থে ও ভাষণে দেশবাসীকে যে অমূল্য রত্ন তিনি দান করে গেছেন তার পরিচয় ও আপনারা কতটা পেয়েছেন। এট কলেজের অধ্যক্ষপদ গ্রহণ করে তিনি কোচবিহারকে বিশেষ করে কি দিয়ে গেছেন সে সহজেই বই একটা কথা আমি আজ বলব।

দিশের পণ্ডিতসমাজ আচার্য্য শীলের অসাধারণ জ্ঞানের পরিচয় প্রথম পেয়েছিল ১৮৯৯ খৃষ্টাব্দে International Congress of Orientalists র

রোমের অধিবেশনে। Congress এর আমন্ত্রণ লিপি পেরে মহারাজ নৃপেন্দ্র
 নারায়ণ ভূপ বাহাদুর আজর্বা শীলকে কোচবিহার রাজ্যের প্রতিনিধিরূপে রোমে
 পাঠিয়েছিলেন। যে অপূর্ব ভাবণ তিনি সেখানে দিয়েছিলেন তাতে তাঁর বশ
 দেশবিদেশে ছড়িয়ে পড়েছিল। বিশ্বের শ্রেষ্ঠ পণ্ডিতদের মধ্যে তিনি অসলু লাভ
 করেছিলেন। বিশেষে তিনি পরিচিত হয়েছিলেন ভারতের এক দেশীয় রাজ্য
 কোচবিহারের প্রতিনিধিরূপে, কোচবিহার ভিক্টোরিয়া কলেজের অধ্যক্ষরূপে।
 প্রভাত কূর্বীর নতই আজর্বা শীল নিজ প্রকাশিত হয়ে প্রকাশ
 করেছিলেন ভারতকে, ভারতের কর্মশীলা, সভ্যতা, সাহিত্যিকে। তিনি প্রকাশ
 করেছিলেন তাঁর নিজের সাধনার ক্ষেত্র কোচবিহারকে, একটি শ্রেষ্ঠ শিক্ষাকেন্দ্ররূপে
 এই কলেজকে। ১৯১১ খৃষ্টাব্দে আবার তিনি আমন্ত্রিত হয়েছিলেন লণ্ডনে
 Universal Races Congress এর প্রথম অধিবেশনে। সেদিনও কোচবিহার
 রাজ্যের নাম ও ভিক্টোরিয়া কলেজের নাম তাঁর গৌরবের নামের
 দৃষ্টে উদ্ভিত হয়ে দেশবিদেশে প্রচারিত হয়েছিল। তাই এ কথা নিঃসন্দেহে
 বলা যায় যে কোচবিহারের শিরে তিনিই পরিচালিত করতেন উৎসাহের
 গৌরব মুকুট। তাঁর এই নামের কথা কোচবিহারবাসী চিরদিন কৃতজ্ঞচিত্তে
 স্মরণ করবে।

আজ সেই মহাপ্রাণী মহানন্দাবী আজর্বা শীলের গৌরবের পবিত্র স্মৃতির
 প্রতি ভূগর্ভের শ্রদ্ধা নিবেদন করি। প্রার্থনা করি জ্ঞানবজ্রের যে হোমানল
 তিনি একদিন এখানে অবস্থে স্থানিয়েছিলেন তার আলোকে ছাত্রছাত্রীদের
 সাধনার পথ আলোকিত হোক।

(যাকর) শ্রী শ্রী উগদীপেন্দ্র নারায়ণ ভূপ বাহাদুর
 কোচবিহারের মহারাজ।

[আজর্বা ব্রহ্মেন্দ্র নাথ শীল সত্ৰপাঠিকী উৎসব সমিতির সভাপতির ভাবণ।]

Some Reflections on Acharya Brajendranath Seal's The Quest Eternal

By

Dr. S. C. Chatterjee M.A., Ph.D.

Acharya Brajendranath Seal's *The Quest Eternal* 'seeks to transcribe basic philosophical ideals in forms of pure poetry'. It comprises three separate but connected quests, the 'Ancient', the 'Medieval', and the 'Modern'. This threefold division does not, however, complete and exhaust the eternal quest of man. Rather, it goes on repeating itself endlessly in human history. It will be my endeavour in this article to bring out and clarify the basic philosophical ideals represented in Acharya Seal's *The Quest Eternal* as also to determine the nature of the Ideal which man is ever in quest of, but can never hope to realise fully and finally.

Man is a spiritual being living in, and apparently limited by, a body. He is not the mere body or mind, nor a complex of body and mind. The conception of man as a rational or social or political animal misses the essential nature of man. Man is an essentially spiritual being which lives in a body but always transcends the limitations of the body and seeks to soar high into a hyperphysical region and breathe the pure atmosphere of freedom. It is just this inherent urge in man for spiritual freedom that is at the root of his morality and religion, of his arts, sciences and philosophies.

In the primitive stage of human culture and civilisation, man's search for freedom takes the form of a magical and mystical religion and philosophy. Here man believes in certain uncanny powers in the objects of nature and performs certain religious rites and ceremonies in order to control the powers of nature and make them yield the desired things for his well-being.

But with the advancement of scientific knowledge of the laws and forms of different classes of objects of nature, man comes to believe in the reign of law and order in nature itself. But still he believes in certain transcendent powers as ruling over the different departments of nature and guiding the destiny of man. These he calls gods and goddesses and worships them for winning their favour. Thus in the second stage of man's culture, as in the first stage, the search for the freedom of spirit is directed outwards, to the world outside.

In the course of further advancement of knowledge and development of culture, the search for freedom is turned inwards and directed to the soul, the spirit within man himself. There is at first a concentration of attention on the individual soul and an upsurge of individualistic morality and religion. But the failure of individualism in man's social and cultural life brings home to him the need and value of the recognition of the universal soul in man, the universal spirit that does not separate man from man, or man from nature, but holds them all in one close embrace and deathless love. The search for the universal soul is, however, an endless search, it is a quest eternal.

In the light of the foregoing general observations on the evolution of culture, let us try to understand the basic philosophical ideals poetically portrayed in Acharya Seal's Epic poem—**The Quest Eternal**. The Epic is a highly imaginative treatment in a panoramic presentation of the Quest of Ages. It comprises three quests: (I) the Ancient, (II) the Medieval, and (III) the Modern. These three quests exhibit and explain the three stages in the evolution of culture in human history, though they do not terminate it, but are endlessly repeated. The three quests pertain to three ages and are taken to reveal three distinctive ideals. The ideals of the ancient and medieval ages at their passing explain the transition to that of the next succeeding age. These three ideals as represented in the Epic are, in fact, ideal constructions imaginatively made of materials drawn from the cultural history of different peoples in different countries. There are certain elemental concepts and motifs which

enter into these ideal constructions. To understand the ancient, medieval, and modern ideals, we are to consider the basic concepts and motifs which enter into the three ideal constructions.

The ancient ideal is represented by a blended or combined Eastern-Western culture, namely, the Greco-Indian. In depicting the ideal of any age, Acharya Seal has taken care to avoid mistaking sideviews for the world-view or the cosmic picture. He has, therefore, selected for imaginative poetic treatment that particular form of culture which served as the meeting-ground and fusion-point of different races and civilisations, Eastern and Western. It is in the fusion of Greek and Indian cultures that he finds the representative culture of the ancient age. The imagined background of the Ancient Hymn on The Passing of the Ancient Ideal is half Greek, half Oriental, such as the milieu or environment in which grew Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism with their presumably Indian elements. The hymn is supposed to be uttered by a Greek priest who had spent many years in India and had familiarised himself with Indian speculation, Indian mythology and Indian art. As such, he was well qualified to represent the blended Greco-Indian culture as the world-culture of the ancient age.

The ideal of ancient culture, i.e. the Ancient Ideal, according to Acharya Seal, is 'Greek naturalism transfigured in the light of oriental mysticism'. That is to say, it is a sort of mystical naturalism, a view of natural things as animated beings, of natural events and processes as divine actions and manifestations. Thus in The Ancient Ideal, Mother Earth is depicted as the Mighty Mother, 'Mother of gods and men' (cf. I, 11. 93-105). The birth of the Godhead is conceived as a natural cosmic process (cf. I, 11. 15-23). The cosmic process, the flux and flow of the world is taken to represent the appearance of God on earth. The Godhead is also the Siren of the Ancient Skies (cf. I, 11. 293-5, 304-6), and all is illusory sport. Similarly, in the Ancient Hymn, the vision of the Ideal is symbolised by the vision of Urania, the old Greek God, in the Milky Way (cf. I, 11. 63-72), or the Siren of the Ancient Skies (cf. I, 11. 304-9). So also all passions of life like those for joy,

beauty, bliss, beatitude, etc. are but modes of One Eternal Passion in the divine Mysteries (cf. I, II. 250-64) which, however, 'knows nor love nor hate', but is only 'a rolling, rolling mystic dream'. In the ancient age all passions of life seem to be centred in one eternal passion, namely, the feeling of the divine as the mysterious. In *The Ancient Ideal*, the problem of deliverance does not consciously arise in so far as man in the ancient age lives as the child of Nature, happy with Mother Nature. Still, a sense of incompleteness and imperfection troubles him from time to time. This is the reason why in the end the wailing of the human is heard above the Siren's song (cf. I, II. 325-9).

Thus ends the first Quest, viz. the Ancient. It is a part of the eternal quest of man for the soul, the free, immortal spirit. But it is a quest of the spirit in the world outside, the world of nature. As such it is a quest of the ideal in the form of mystical naturalism. It fails in its purpose to realise the soul, the indwelling spirit in man: and so the ancient ideal passes away.

In the second Quest, i.e. the Medieval also, Acharya Seal selects a blended Eastern-Western culture as the representative culture of the medieval age. This is the Syro-European culture. In *The Medieval Ideal*, the *Rime of the Wizard Knight*, the central figure is a knight-errant who is represented to be a disciple, not of the Catholic order, but of the Platonic, Syrian and Magian Mystical Brotherhoods. According to Acharya Seal, the great rationalistic movement from the Mutazilas of Islam in the eight and ninth centuries to the encyclopaedists of the tenth and eleventh centuries, together with the revival of Syrian Neo-Platonism and the old Magian Wisdom, made for a type of medieval culture in the borderlands of Europe and Asia, which was distinctly opposed to the medieval Catholic type. It is this medieval rationalistic culture that is restored as the background of *The Medieval Ideal*, the second division of *The Quest Eternal*. The second piece, the *Medieval Ballad*, seeks to portray, in brief outline, a central figure, the *Wizard Knight*, who embodies a whole culture now submerged and almost forgotten.

The Medieval Quest is a search for the transcendent spirit which is here conceived as supernature in the human. It is presented through a medium of Magian mysticism and Platonic Knight-errantry as opposed to the Catholic dogma and scheme of life. The Wizard Knight who is the central figure in *The Medieval Ideal* recounts his wanderings in 'desert Media' Mizraim, Rum and his acquisition of rich and varied lore from his Magian lovers (cf. II, 11. 130-43). He wanders from land to land in his search after the secret of life, and faces the curse pronounced of old on the seeker after Truth. He defies the church, the Empire and the Turks alike in the name of the Magian Commonwealth of Reason. Though he is accursed and doomed, Truth has still been his goal, his pursuit and passion of life. He has saved many a hapless soul from untruth; error and enchantment. But the dire curse follows him and all his quest of knowledge cannot save himself; this knowledge, free from illusion, loses life. He seeks Truth, he seeks Peace. But these he wants, not as rewards of blind faith and meek acceptance, but as achievements of rational knowledge. He would rather burn than be a renegade to rational Truth for the sake of Peace and salvation. He seeks the Peace of The Seers, of the enlightened ones, who have been conquerors of Destiny through clearness of vision, and are beneficent souls, ever remedying evil with good and guiding the destiny of mankind. The Wizard Knight has also been a student of Nature. But his study of Nature is not of the form of natural magic which characterises the Ancient Ideal. His study of Nature relates to the forms and species in things, and the interrelations in the mineral, plant and animal kingdoms of Nature. As a medieval Platonist, the Knight contemplates the Heavens and studies 'the cosmic order star-writ in Heaven'. He rends the veil which conceals the secret of Nature, the veiled Bride. But a curse has followed him ever after for rending the Bride's veil. He ever peers through the veil into the Soul's abyss, the bottomless depth of the soul, and everything turns to Naught or Void. He is thus perplexed, and he appeals to his Destiny to take him into the Deeps. Then he leaps into the glen to meet his Destiny and passes away.

The ideal of medieval culture, i.e. the Medieval Ideal, as depicted by Acharya Seal may be characterised as scientific rationalism. It is the ideal of Truth to be attained through rational reflection on man and nature, and not by blind faith or religious dogma. It is a rational search for Supernature in the Human and the **Natura** or the world of Nature. In **The Medieval Ideal**, the Godhead is conceived as a supernatural or transcendent phenomenon (cf. II, 11. 83-89). In the Medieval Ballad, the cosmic symbol for the vision of the Ideal is **Natura**, i.e. the world of nature. In it the ordinary world life is said to be blind and to be the dancing-ground for cold and hollow phantoms, i.e. the blind human passions (cf. II, 11. 100-6). But the World-Passion can be transcended by the Seer, who, 'poised on Peace's pinions' or wings, hears the music of the spheres, i.e. sees the harmony of the world (cf. II, 11. 321-26). In **The Medieval Ideal**, the Wizard Knight as the Knight of the Human delivers many souls, who were about to be lost, from error and allurements, but cannot save himself. We are told: 'But all his quest of knowledge blest, himself it cannot save! For Beauty and Love, and Pity above, are still with illusion rife!' (cf. II, 11. 189-94)!

The second, i.e. the medieval quest is a search for the soul or the spirit as a transcendent or supernatural principle beyond the human and the natural. It takes the form of a rational quest for the secret of life and of nature. It aims at the knowledge of truth regarding man and nature, and attains it through reason. But the truth attained through mere reason is not the truth of the self. Reason 'as analytic understanding analyses all life out of the self and reduces it to a lifeless being, a void—the Soul's abyss. But such an abstract being is not the soul, nor does it inspire and elevate the soul of man. Though the rationalist can therefore, expose and repudiate false views and save others from errors, he cannot realise the self and save himself. For, by mere intellectual understanding of the truth of the self without purification of the will and the emotions and sentiments there is no salvation, no deliverance from misery and death. Man's salvation ultimately depends on the purification of his whole being—intellect, emotion and will. This is why

with regard to the Wizard Knight we are told that 'all his quest of knowledge blest, himself it cannot save'.

In the third, i.e., the Modern Quest, no composite Eastern-Western culture is taken as the representative world-culture. Here Humanity has been sought in its universality, i.e. the universal elements of modern cultural history (down to 1913), have been taken as representing modern culture. **The modern Ideal : A Vision of Psyche, or the Quest of Life**, is a modern epic of the soul in the struggle against world-order. The hero of the Quest is a homeless wanderer who as a representative of modern Humanity, wanders from land to land and exhibits the history of ideas or the successive unfolding of the world's phases. The hero wanders in search of a Wisdom that is able to master Death, not physical Death, but Death as the evil power in life that frustrates all our ideal strivings, or as the blind tendency of life, the blind will-to-live that drives souls to their doom. In the Quest of this Wisdom he ransacks, one after another, the realms of the Soul, of Nature, and of Man in History, and finds everywhere the 'reign absolute' of the leagued Powers of brute Matter and blind Sense.

The leagued Powers, which are primeval forces, are sworn to abuse the God-in-man, i.e. the spirit in man. This is how in the hero's mind the conflict between the individual soul and the universal order in Nature comes to be symbolised as a war between Man and the Gods. The dimensions of the original problem of the hero are now enlarged. From the individual's Quest of Life and Wisdom, he passes to the problem of the redemption of Humanity as a whole. How to redeem Humanity from bondage is his dream. He broods over the myths and legends of a Universal Redeemer. He sees the Vision of the 'Just man militant', who, 'in soul-war against the iron Universe' seeks to win 'an inner Peace beyond the Fates'. He, the warrior of the Soul, is inspired by Psyche. For neither Force, nor Law and Justice can emancipate man, but only Psyche, the Soul's Vision of deathless Loves. The advent of a Liberator, a prophet of Psyche, is the hero's cherished hope. But soon his hope is dashed to the ground. In a dream he hears an oracular Voice revealing to

him the futility of all such hopes of an external Redeemer, and of the necessity of inner purification and illumination of each individual soul for achieving the Spirit's conquest over death. Psyche's curse, he is told, was to wander through Earth and Heaven and Hell in search of a deathless Love, and thus to be purged of mortality in Life's central fire; and this curse falls vicariously on every soul that seeks deliverance from bondage to death.

The struggle for deliverance is now turned from outside within; for the Evil is planted not outside in Matter and Force, but in man's own conscious self. The hero is in despair, for he thinks it impossible to end the feud between soul and sense, or between man's spirit and animal nature. In his frenzy he recapitulates in his person the the Passion of Humanity through the Ages, and it is this world-experience which makes him realise that the passion of his own individual life is a part of the drama of divine suffering, is but 'World-Passion of Creative Deity'. This is how the struggle in his life between the individual and the universal is set at rest. By vicariously re-living Passion of Humanity, he frees himself from his individual Passion. And so in the course of his wanderings, he acquires an attitude of cosmic acquiescence or reconciliation. He is on the road to Freedom and Immortality, At long last, he falls into a half-swoon, half-dream, sees the vision of Psyche in the Heaven, and hears a song of Life 'chanting the law of man's deliverance, wisdom to master death, the evil Power of Life'.

In the Modern Quest, the Vision of the Ideal is symbolised by the Vision of Psyche-Urania in the Heavens, ruling the starry dance (cf. III, 11. 947-60). The birth of the Godhead is conceived as an emergent evolution (cf. III, 11. 182-90). The Passion of Life is transfigured as 'World-Passion of Creative Deity (cf. III, 11. 817-23). In **The Modern Ideal**, there is a dual reign, and the Siren (variously called Maya, Dolour, will-to-live) is set over against Psyche as the Psyche's double and counterfeit (cf. III, 11. 649-66). In it the curse that falls vicariously on every soul, is Psyche's lot, it is 'the old, old search in Heaven and Earth and Hell (cf. III,

11. 539-41). While in the Medieval form of the curse, the world is negated, in the Modern form, the world is transcended through world-experience, i. e. universal sympathy. The limited individual self is dead, but the world-soul, the universal self in man is risen, i.e. awakened. In **The Modern Ideal** which has for its theme the conquest of Death through world-experience, it is the **Passing of Psyche** that delivers, when the individual's **Passion of Life** is transfigured as 'World-Passion of Creative Deity (cf. III, 11. 914-5), and Death is conquered by dying (Self-dead, self risen as World-soul', III, 1. 985).

Man's quest of life is a quest of the soul as an ideal to be realised. This quest first takes the form of a search for the mysterious in man and nature. This is the theme of the first piece of **The Quest Eternal**, i.e. **The Ancient Quest**. Then, the quest of life becomes a search for a supernatural principle that transcends man and nature. This forms the theme of the second quest, i.e. **The Medieval Quest**. The last quest, i.e., **The Modern Quest** is a search for the Psyche or the Soul in man as an individual self with his base passions and animal impulses of life. Man as the individual soul is, however, subject to misery and death. He seeks deliverance from misery and mortality with the help of an external Redeemer and he cherishes the hope for the advent of such a universal or external Redeemer. But then he realises the futility of all hopes of an external Redeemer, and the necessity of inner purification and enlightenment of each individual soul for achieving the spirit's conquest over misery and death. Each individual soul is to be a light unto himself and work out his own salvation through world-experience and universal sympathy. He is to transcend the limitations of his individuality and realise the universal soul or the Spirit in humanity. When man realises the universal soul as his real self, there is a transformation of his being, a transfiguration of his worldly passions, and a reformation of his outlook on life and the world. The history of the world is then read and revealed as the history of the evolution and emergence of Spirit in the world. The sufferings of man's life are now found to be travails or pangs or birth of the

spirit; and the mechanism of nature, the operations of the blind forces of the material world are recognised as the framework or stable structure for the fluent and dynamic life of the universal spirit. The passions of man's worldly life turn out to be the Creative passions of the Divine Life, of the universal spirit. But the quest of the Divine Life is a never-ending quest of the Ideal which cannot be made real and actual in any span of time. Of the infinite, eternal life of the Spirit, man's quest is ever-repeated and can never be ended. It is Quest Eternal.

This brief exposition of the basic philosophical ideals poetically depicted in **The Quest Eternal** is just a tentative attempt to catch glimpses of Acharya Seal's mind as reflected in this epic poem. It is based, I must confess, on my limited and imperfect understanding of his profound thoughts and progressive ideas which are difficult to grasp. I have tried my level best to make them intelligible as far as it lies in my capacity and ability to do it. It is, however, hoped that my humble attempt will arouse the interest of more competent scholars who may give a better interpretation and exposition of **The Quest Eternal**.

Acharya Brojendra Nath Seal (1864-1938)

By

S. C. Lahiri

The Nineteenth Century, particularly the Second half of it may be said to be a golden age in the history of our country inasmuch as this period witnessed the birth of several great men who have shed lustre not only on this province but on the whole of India. Recently we celebrated the birth Centenaries of many of them, amongst whom I may mention the names of Rabindra Nath Tagore, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Prafulla Chandra Roy, Swami Vivekananda, Ashutosh Mookerjee and Ramendra Sundar Trivedi. To-day we have assembled in this hall to celebrate the Centenary of the birth of another great Savant of India who by the incredible width and depth of his knowledge attracted the admiration of many eminent scholars of the world.

To the ordinary public Acharya Brojendra Nath Seal is known as an erudite philosopher who used to take delight in solving abstruse and abstract metaphysical problems relating to God, and Man and the Universe. Very few know that he was not only a great philosopher, but also a great mathematician, a great chemist, a great physicist, a great literateur, a great historian, economist and statistician and also a great physiologist and artist. In fact the versatility of his interests was such that it used to be said that his knowledge ranged from the Sea-gull to the Sun. The great English Scholar Sir Michael Sadler who was the Chairman of the University Commission of 1917 of which Acharya Seal was a member, said about him "I know of no one either in the East or in the West to equal Sir Brojendra Nath Seal in point of width and depth and Originality of Scholarship."

Some idea of the range of his interests may be obtained from his unpublished autobiography which he himself describes as

“An Auto-biographical Record (In an Analytical Form)” which he wrote after his return from Mysore in the thirties. In this book he wrote amongst other things, on the following subjects (a) Indian Wheat and Flax (b) Prohibition of Cow Slaughter among Hindus (c) Experience and experiments as an amateur hypnotist (d) Janmastmi and other rituals—the beginning of the Krishna Cult—Vaishnavism (e) Catholic and Protestant Christianity (f) the question of immortality (g) the question of linguistic division of the Provinces in India (h) Evolution of Pure thought (i) Fundamental Administrative Reforms (j) Historic Chain from Egypt to Mahenjadaro (k) The Sumerian Culture (l) The Cretans, the Phoenicians, Mongolians, Buddhist and Tibetan Commentators—Lamas. (m) Chance, Probability, Causality, Statistics (n) The dimensional theory—Transition from quantitative to qualitative distinctions—Protons, Electrons, Neutrons—Faraday and Maxwell to Rutherford—Formation of the elements by the bombardment of Carbon and Colloids—Heisenberg and Dirac—Einsteinian and Planckian Schemes—Ninety and odd Chemical elements (o) Aesthetic Satisfaction (Rasa). Imagism, Scintileism, Cubism, Naturalism, Religion, Religion as Occultism? Nature Religion, Religion as mystical realisation, Religion as worship of a Universal Principle, Pluralism and Monism (p) The League of Nations, the Problem of War—How to end war.

The above list is by no means exhaustive. I have taken the liberty of choosing the different subjects at random to illustrate the staggering width of his knowledge. His book on the Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus was published in 1915. Besides this he wrote three Articles on World Culture, ten articles on Indian Culture, seventeen articles on Philosophy and Religion, including two on Paramahansa Ramkrishna, showing the religious development from Ram Mohon to Ramkrishna, three on Ram Mohon Roy and two on the mental development of Narendranath (later known as Vivekananda) and one on the Comparative Studies in Vaishnavism and Christianity ; five articles on Politics and Constitution including one on Hindu—Muslim Unity (1925), two on Mysore Constitutional Reforms (1925) and two on Indian States : four Scientific articles

including one on Hindu and Greek Contributions to Mathematical Sciences.

Acharya Seal was born in 1864 at a time when Young India had begun to drink deep of the heady wine of western education under the influence of which the metaphysics of quiescence and the philosophy of fatalism could no longer drug her into a life of Somnolence. Young India was no longer prepared to bow low "before the blast in patient and deep disdain," while she "let the legions thunder past and then plunge in thought again." The Spiritual unrest caused by the pouring of the new wine of western education into the old bottle of Indian Culture produced several Cultural, political, intellectual and religious leaders two of whom are Vivekananda and Brojendranath both of whom were almost contemporaries, the former being older than the latter by only one year and both of whom were intimate with each other.

Brojendranath's father Mahendra Nath Seal (Born in 1838) was a reputed Scholar of the Calcutta University and practised as a lawyer of the Calcutta High Court. He was a contemporary of Rash Behari Ghose and Sarada Charan Mitra ; but he died early at the age of 32 his wife having predeceased him, leaving Brajendranath a child of seven years. Thereafter Brajendranath received his early training in the school of adversity at his maternal uncle's house under the guidance of his elder brother who was older than he by only two years. "When nature fastions a genius" "Says Emerson" She breaks the mould. A Caesar does not follow a Caesar, nor a Shakespeare a Shakespeare, nor a Cromwell to Cromwell" Mahendranath's son Brajendranath was not destined to be a lawyer like his father ; but he gave early evidence of his remarkable talents, While a student of the fourth class (Class VII) of the General Assembly Institution (subsequently known as the Scottish Church Collegiate School), young Brajendranath acquired mastery in Binomial Theorem of higher Algebra and also in the Theory of Numbers. The celebrated mathematician, Gouri Sankar De, who was his teacher, was so much struck by young Brajendra's proficiency in mathematics that he insisted on his (Brajendra's) taking Mathematics for his higher

studies. Principal Hasty of the General Assembly (Scottish Church) Institution however, being influenced by Brajendranath's ability in Mental and Moral Philosophy insisted on his taking that subject. In the end Principal Hasty won the battle and Brajendranath took his B.A. degree with "A" Class Honours in 1883 and was appointed professor of the college of which he was a student. In 1884 he took his M.A. degree standing first in the first class and was appointed a professor of City College, Calcutta. Between 1885-1887 Brajendranath was a professor and later Principal of Morris College Nagpur. From 1887 to 1896 he was the Principal of Krishna Nath College, Berhampore (Bengal) where he became acquainted with Satish Chandra Mukherjee (Founder of the Dawn Society), Janaki Nath Bhattacharya, Lalit Kumar Banerjee and Hiralal Halder. From 1896 to 1913 he was the Principal Cooch Behar College from where he was appointed George V Professor of Phylosophy of the University of Calcutta which post he held with great distinction till 1921 when he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the Mysore University. At Mysore Brajendranath took an important part in framing the Constitution of the Mysore Government and was appointed Chairman of Mysore Constitutional reforms in 1922. In 1924 he became a member of the Executive Council of the Mysore Government

By 1899 when Brajendranath was barely 35 years old the reputation of his scholarship spread not only throughout the length and breadth of this country but also beyond its shores. In 1899 he inaugurated the International Congress of Orientalists in Rome. In 1905 he was appointed a member of the Simla Committee for University Reforms where he worked in close collaboration with Lord Curzon and Sir Asutosh Mukerjee. 1906 he visited Europe and in 1911 inaugurated the Universal Races Congress in London. In 1914 he again visited Europe on the eve of World War No. I. The University of Calcutta honoured him by conferring the Ph. D. and D. Sc. (Honour's Causa) Degrees in 1915 and the Government of India Knighted him in 1926. After his death the Calcutta University farther honoured him by renaming the George V Chair of Philosophy after Brajendra Nath Seal. In 1917 he was appointed

a member of the famous Saddler Commission on University Reforms. In 1922 he presided over the Ninth Panchama Conference, Mysore and in 1926 he presided over the Mysore Economic Conference. The Maharaja of Mysore honoured him by conferring on him the title of "Rajtantra Porabin" in 1930 and the All India Philosophical Congress honoured him by holding "Jayanti" Celebrations on the occasion of his 72nd birthday in 1935. The last public appearance Brajendranath was in 1937 when he presided over the Parliament of Religions at the Town Hall, Calcutta and delivered an address at the Indian Cultural Conference in the same year. His glorious life came to an end on December 3, 1938 at 78 Lansdowne Road when he was 74 years old. His wife, Indumati, whom he married in 1884 predeceased him in the year 1900 leaving four sons and one daughter.

I have already said Brajendranath was a contemporary of Narendranath (Vivekananda) and was intimate with him. In 1882 Brajendranath visited the sage of Dakshineswar on several occasions. This meeting left a lasting impression on him and inspired several articles to which I have referred. An interesting side light is thrown on the spiritual realisation of Acharya Brajendranath by an account of an interview with Dr. Dhirendranath Datta, M.A. Ph. D. Professor of Philosophy, Patna College and Professor Rash Behari Das of the Institute of Philosophy Bombay and later appointed a professor of the Calcutta University (Prabashi—1338 B.S, Chaitra—Page 848—1931—1932 March—April—A.D.). In the course of the interview Brajendranath reported to have said "Although this is an age of specialisation, India was never satisfied with a partial outlook on Reality; Jagadish Chandra Bose started with researches in Physics, but he was able to discover in the end, a link between Physics, Botany and Biology and Professor Raman has also been able to develop a synthetic out look." Scientists are apt to miss the wood in the trees, just as abstract thinkers on metaphysical problems are prone to miss the trees in the wood. For hundreds of years philosophical thought has oscillated between monism and pluralism, the Universal and the particular, the Infinite and the finite, the 'ब्रह्म' and the 'एत' as the ultimate essence of Reality, till it was realised

that both are the two opposite poles of existence of the same Reality. The Infinite manifests itself in the finite and the finite loses its identity in the infinite. As was expressed by Rabindranath. “অনীন নে চাহে মীনার নিবিড় রস : মীনা চার হতে অনীনের নামে হারা ।” Oriental mysticism is a movement from the finite to the Infinite and occidental empiricism is a movement from the Infinite to the finite. Different Sciences Study different facets or Cross-Sections of Reality, but it is important to bear in mind more particularly in this age of specialisation, that there is a golden thread which unites the conclusions of the different Sciences into one organic whole. It is this aspect that was emphasised by Brajendranath when he said that India was never satisfied with a outlook but insisted on as synthetic view of Reality as a whole. It is true that the conclusions arrived at by the different branches of Science are extremely important so far as they go and are invaluable for the progress of mankind but that is no reason why they should be held in watertight compartments and each paraded as the ultimate truth.

This discussion leads me to a detailed consideration of one of his remarkable books “The Positive Sciences of the Ancient Hindus” which was his thesis for Ph.D. degree. It was a matter of regret that this book has not received the attention that it deserves. It consists of Seven Chapters (1) The mechanical, physical and chemical theories of the ancient Hindus (2) Hindu ideas on Mechanics (Kinetics) (3) Hindu ideas on Acoustics (4) Hindu ideas on Plants and plant life (5) Hindu classification of animals (6) Hindu Physiology and Biology (7) Hindu doctrine of Scientific method. It therefore deals with Physics, Chemistry, Botany, Zoology, Physiology and Biology as understood by the ancient Hindus. Certain Chapters of this book inspired Prafulla Chandra Roy’s History of Hindu Chemistry, but thereafter it has not received any attention from our scholars. Students of Philosophy avoid the book, because it bristles with technical scientific terms. Students of the different sciences are afraid of it because it contains discourses on ancient Sanskrit texts and discussions on the Sankhaya, Vedanta, Nyaya, Vaisesika and other philosophical systems. We talk glibly of our ancient heritage and take pride in living in the past yet

we make no attempt place over ancient wisdom upon modern foundations. Some of the conclusions of a book written in the year 1915 may have been out moded by later discoveries research ; but no serious attempt has ever been made to bring the different Chapters on different subjects upto date by incorporating the results of later discoveries. As in this age of specialisation we cannot expect any individual to combine in himself the wisdom of ancient texts and the knowledge of progressive Sciences, each Chapter of the book requires the combined effort of a Sanskrit philosopher and a scientist to place the conclusions on a modern foundation. The best way in which we can offer our tribute to the memory of a great man who is no longer with us is to continue the research on the lines indicated by him and if we are sincere in our homage to Brajendranath I would invite the scholars of our country, both of Science and Sanskrit philosophy to undertake the work. To allay the apprehension of the Scientists I may say that all the Sanskrit texts quoted in the books are explained in English. From this point of views further research on the different Chapters is more a matter for the Scientists than for the philosophers who have no knowledge of science. To quote the words of Brajendra Nath himself.

“It is one of the cherished ambitions of my life to found in this country a School of Philosophical Research which will not merely carry on its work in accordance with age-long. ‘Tol’ Erudition but will, by means of the critio-comparative method avail of and add to the world’s Stock of knowledge”.

While he was the Vice-Chancellor of the Mysore University he wrote in 1924 a small booklet of 44 pages which he described as “Syllabus of Indian Philosophy.” The then Registrar of the Mysore University V. Subrahmanya Iyer succeeded in overcoming the natural shyness of Brajendranath and induced him to publish it. With regard to this booklet, the monthly journal named “Review of Philosophy and Religion”—December, 1938 makes the following comments “A glance at the Syllabus of Indian Philosophy would easily show the vast sweep of the erudition as well as the depth of the insight into the varied aspects of Indian Philosophy.”

Brajendranath's deep insight into human physiology was manifested in an article on Rejuvenation which was published in the British Medical Journal named Lancet. It attracted so much admiration of the British medical world that a representative of the Lancet came over to India to meet Brajendranath for further materials.

Although not a practising lawyer Brajendranath had a deep insight into legal principles. When Bepin Chandra Pal with whom Brajendranath was intimate was placed on his trial before a Court at Alipur, Brajendranath came down from Cooch Bihar and wrote out the entire defence argument.

Such was the man Centenary of whose birth we have assembled here to celebrate. It is said that he was a great philosopher and a great Scientist and a great literateur—So indeed he was but his greatness was greater than the greatness of a scientist or a philosopher or a literateur. I repeat what was said by C. R. Das about Sir Ashutosh—his heart was with the Indian nation and his mission was to place the Cultural heritage of India on Scientific foundations and to enhance the the glory of India by a historical, critical and comparative study of the different currents and cross currents of thought which have swept the world. It is too much to expect any individual of this age to have “the vast sweep erudition” of Brajendra nath, but a concerted attempt by Scholars of different branches of knowledge may yield fruitful results.

With these words I join with you in offering my respectful homage to this great son of India.

Before I conclude I desire to express my gratitude to Shri Bibhuti Bhusan Sarkar, the indefatigable Secretary of the Centenary 'Committee' : for the materials he has kindly placed before me to show the manifold activities of Brajendranath.

Acharya Brajendranath Seal

—My Acharya as I saw him and knew him—

By

Ambika Charan Ray

Introductory

It is 27 years ago that Acharya Brajendranath breathed his last. He was a super-man, a scholar of inestimable profundity and a teacher of unapproached perfection, the universality of whose genius drew the admission of the world of letters. Of him the eminent educationist Sir Samuel Sadler had said that he knew of no one, either in the East or in the West, to equal him in point of width, depth and originality of scholarship. Another educationist Sir Patrick Gidds more curtly expressed that his was the best brain functioning in the planet. Rabindranath lamented saying that so big a ship of learning ever stayed at anchor and did not launch itself in open seas. It is however no wonder that he should be so little known. There are not many to boost his name and fame. His two sons although given the best of training in England, spent their lives in eking out their livelihood far away from West Bengal. He left a daughter, Saraju, who, while quite young, shot like a meteor in the field of Bengali literature, expended her energy as she grew in age. Acharyadev's life as a teacher closed with the year 1920 and his memory, though worshipped devoutly in the tabernacle of the hearts of his students, faded away as they joined the majority. The small number of them that are now left feel themselves unequal to the task of trumpeting forth the glory of their great teacher. It is a pity that Brajendranath loved to remain contented with teaching only and did not care to engross his original thinking in any systematic writing. The fragmentary writings of his, which saw the light of print, were hardly reprinted and now practically unavailable to the reading public.

Yet Acharya Brajendranath had fit appreciators though few. His fame as a student was well known. Though a student of Mathematics he chose Philosophy for his subject in the M.A. Examination and he was taken in as a professor in English literature in the City College, Calcutta, before the result of his M.A. examination was out. He joined the Nagpur College as its Principal in the year following. His earliest publication—"A Memoir on the Co-efficient of Numbers, A Chapter on the Theory of Numbers"—won for him the admiration of the scholars of the West as a valuable piece of original thinking. His dissertations on the History of Bengali Literature under the caption "Neo-Romantic Movement in Bengali Literature", composed in his college leaving days and first published in the Calcutta Review about the year 1890 and incorporated in his "Nouvex Essais or New Essays in Criticism" (1903), is regarded as a lasting monument of comparative study of literature. Maharaja Sir Nripendranarayan Bhup Bahadur of Cooch-Bihar, himself a patron of learning, made it possible for Brajendranath, by bearing all costs of his journey, to worthily represent India as a delegate to the International Conference of Oriental Religions held in Rome in the year 1899, where his paper on "A comparative Study of Christianity and Vaishnavism" opened out new field for philosophic thought to the occidental Topolars and assured for him an honoured seat among the thinkers of the world. The same munificence of the Maharaja of Cooch-Bihar gave an incentive to Brajendranath to attend as a delegate to represent India at the Universal Races Congress convened in London in the year 1909, where he was honoured with the place of the 'First Speaker'. This coupled with his interviews with men like Max Muler and others won for him the-international reputation of a great thinker.

His alma mater, the University of Calcutta, did not lag behind in honouring Brajendranath. While only an examinee the University conferred on him the M.A. degree in Philosophy In the first Class waiving the rules of examinations. When 'King George V Chair of Mental and Moral Sciences' was founded it lost no time to snatch away the Acharya from Cooch Bihar to fill the Chair. With the publication of 'The Positive Sciences of the Hindus' by

by Brajendranath in 1915 the University bestowed on him the degree of Ph. D. which was followed in the same year by conferment on him of the degree of D.Sc. (*honoris causa*). Last but not the least even after his death in order to perpetuate his memory and to commemorate his connection with the University, it renamed after his death in the year 1951 the Chair that he so eminently filled, as 'Acharya Brajendranath Seal Chair of Mental and Moral Science'.

Rabindranath in the year 1921, had his life's work "Visva-bharati" formally inaugurated by his friend Acharya Brajendranath and in the year 1935 in response to an invitation to the International Conference of philosophers held in Calcutta to honour Acharya Brajendranath he sent his homage in verse, which is now so widely read and reproduced. On a vacancy occurring in the Vice Chancellorship of the Mysore University in the year 1920, offer was made to Sir Michael Sadler, who refused it on the ground that when one better fitted for the post was available in India he need not come and Brajendranath may be invited to fill the post. At Mysore fresh honours were showered on Acharya Brajendranath. The Government of India, in appreciation of his learning, had him honoured with the British dignity of a Knighthood, which he accepted in the year 1926 though he felt it as nothing better than a simulacra. The title of 'Rajtantraprabin' was conferred on him by the Mysore Durbar in the year 1930.

I. Myself and my Acharya.

I am an old pupil of Acharya Brajendranath and possibly the oldest living student, who not merely sat at his feet, but also had the rare privilege of having intimate contact with him in the B.A. honours class (with only 2 fellow students) and as the only student in the M.A. English class, which he taught in the Victoria College, Cooch Behar.

2. Brajendranath's Birth and Education.

Brajendranath was born in Calcutta on the 3rd September, 1864 at his ancestral dwelling house at Rammohan Saha Lane. off

Duff Street, running by the west of the Scottish Church College, which then went by the name of the General Assembly's Institution. His father Mohendra Lal Seal in the prime of his life rose to eminence as a Vakil of the Calcutta High Court, but his career was cut short by death in the 34th year of his life. Brajendranath was a student of the General Assembly's Institution both in the school and college classes. He passed his B.A. Examination in the year 1883 in the First Division, there being no honours classes then, and was a student of Mathematics in the M.A. class, but being advised by Professor William Hastie (a philosopher of great repute) of the same college, he sat for the examination in Philosophy and answered only one question from each paper, each being a thesis by itself. The rules of examination were relaxed in his case and he was the only student who got the M.A. degree in Mental and Moral Philosophy that year and was placed in the First Class.

3. His Life as a Teacher.

On the result of the M.A. examination his college (the General Assembly) offered a fellowship to Brajendranath, but he could not accept it as he had been acting as a professor at the City College, where he was teaching English literature. He joined the Nagpur College as its Principal in the year 1895. It was here that he compiled his researches in the theory of Numbers, which was subsequently published as a booklet in the year 1891. In the classes however he taught English. In the year 1887 a call from Berhampore (nearer home) lured him there. He liked the place, had congenial company there and built a house for himself just outside the college compound. When in the year 1896 the offer of the Principalship of the Victoria College came from the Cooch Behar State with a much higher salary, he became hesitant, but as the then Governing Body of the College could not for want of funds grant him an increment of pay by even a hundred rupees, he decided to accept the offer from Cooch Behar. It was during his life at Berhampore that his "Memoir on the Co-efficient of Numbers" was published in the year 1891 and about the same time he contributed certain essays to the Calcutta Review including the

one "Neo-Romantic Movement in Bengali Literature". As it has been subsequently revealed the first two cantos of his poetical epic "The Quest Eternal" were composed at Berhampore.

The loss to Berhampore was a gain not merely to Cooch Behar, but also to the world of learning as a whole. For it was from there that the talents of the versatile man of letters gained international reputation by getting direct contact with the West. The cultivation of personal acquaintance with the European savants in fact made him one of them. His tall figure, wide chest, long beard, dressed in a long black coat with an Indian choga on and coupled with his fluent tongue and stentorian voice, drew the attention of every body where-ever he went. His addresses at the International Conference of Oriental religions at Rome in the year 1899, specially 'A comparative Study of Christianity and Vaishnavism' and his message of the East to the West delivered at the Universal Races Congress in London in the year 1909 proved in effect an intellectual conquest of the West by the East. It was from Cooch Behar that he published in the year 1903 his "Nouvex Essais or Essays in Criticism", which, amongst others, contained his wonderful dissertations on "The Neo-Romantic Movement in Bengali Literature". It was from here too that Acharya Brajendranath wrote his 'Introduction to Sir P. C. Roy's 'History of Hindu Chemistry', which, owing to its learned length was first published as Part I of the original volume and then in 1915 as a separate volume under the caption "Positive Sciences of the Hindus".

In the year 1913 the call of the University of Calcutta took away Acharya Brajendranath from Cooch Behar to grace the newly founded 'King George V Chair of Mental and Moral Science'. It was here that the degrees of doctorate, Ph. D and D. Sc. were conferred on Acharya Brajendranath. It was here that he got as his students men who in their turn held or are still holding glorious places in life. It was here too that Acharyadev's life as a teacher was closed with the year 1920, when he accepted the offer of the Vice Chancellorship of the Mysore University.

4. His Life as Vice Chancellor.

The new leaf turned in the Acharyadev's life as Vice Chancellor of the Mysore University was as eventful as it was variegated. The Maharaja of Mysore harnessed his versatile knowledge also to fields other than education. While functioning as the Vice Chancellor he was, in the year 1922, appointed Chairman of the Mysore Constitution Reforms Committee and in the year 1934 he was made a Member of the Executive Council of the Mysore State, in both of which his brilliance in matters administrative was eminently displayed. During his stay at Mysore he delivered Convocation Addresses, besides at his own University, at Madras, Bombay and Travancore Universities, which were not merely learned but full of advice of practical utility. In the year 1924 he prepared 'A Syllabus of Indian Philosophy' for the Mysore University, which is a volume by itself. The presidential chair at all important meetings and conventions was always kept open for him at Mysore. A Knighthood was conferred on him in 1926 and before he laid down his office for ill health and failing eye sight, the Maharaja called a durbar, in which the title of 'Rajtantraprabin' was bestowed on him in the year 1930. This practically closed the active life of our Acharyadev.

5. His depth of Knowledge.

I have been asked times without number as to the depth of knowledge, the family life, the temper and so forth, of Acharya Brajendranath. Though having had the rare fortune of coming in close contact with him for about four years I could not pry into the bounds of his knowledge and had only some preparation for receiving his tuition, of which I used to keep extensive notes. Brajendranath is generally known as a philosopher. Excepting at the Calcutta University he only taught English literature wherever he served. His earliest publication was the result of researches on an untrodden ground of Mathematics. He contributed to the Calcutta Review his celebrated article on Bengali literature. Among languages, he knew Bengali, Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Latin, Greek, Italian,

English, French and German. I saw him reading some hieroglyphs even. He did not know Arabic when he went to Cooch Behar and engaged the Moulvi of the College for three months to teach him Arabic. After a fortnight's teaching the Moulvi (who was a First Class M.A.) wanted to be relieved saying that he had nothing new to impart. The story runs that once when his wife was seriously ill in Calcutta certain leading doctors were called, but as Brajendranath could not take part in their consultations he engaged himself in studying the relevant medical books and in a week's time he was found surprisingly fit to take useful part in the consultations of the doctors. We never found him using any book of reference while teaching. The only book that lay on his table was Hayend's Dictionary of dates, a huge tome, the pages of which he used to turn over at times. We knew him as a living encyclopaedia and the references that he gave were always found correct. No one knew that he ever played cards. but while lecturing on Pope's 'Rape of the Lock' he used to explain the various card tricks referred to therein as a veteran card player. So also with music. He never taught Shakespear's dramas in the classes, yet when I met him off hand with certain lines from 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' for explanation, he off hand gave the folio reading and told me that it was the quarto reading given in our edition that had troubled me. As this happened when my M.A. Class was being closed I left my college with the impression that we only wondered at the depth of his knowledge, but could not gauge it. He deprecated what he called knowledge by compartments. To him knowledge lay in one plane and it had to be approached all at once. He found no meaning in acquiring knowledge separately in Arts (Literature), Sciences, Mathematics or Philosophy. He himself was a master not of this or that branch of knowledge, but of all. At Cooch Behar he was a teacher of teachers. He regularly held night classes at his home with most of the professors, in which literary-minded high state officers joined, and lectured on Shelley, Browning, Swinburne and still later English poets, not omitting Hegel and Kant. Such students were also lost in admiration of the profundity of the knowledge of the savant.

6. His family life and temper.

Brajendranath was married to Indumati Debi in the year 1883 and became a widower on her death in the year 1900. His Calcutta household was run by his elder brother Ramlal Seal. At Cooch Behar he lived with his wife and children and a widowed sister of his was the guardian of the family. He hardly meddled in domestic matters and was always self-forgetful. He had to be tuned to time in matters of his bath, food, dress and engagements by this sister of his. He drove to the College in his carriage with eyes on a book in hand and had to be reminded by his coachman every day that the carriage had arrived at his office door. He was, however a pink of courtesy. If any one was to be given a lift in his carriage he would at once change his place to the back-seat leaving the front seat for the guest, irrespective of the place in life that the guest held. There was hardly, if ever, any case of serious breach of discipline in our college. I remember only one occasion when information reached the Principal that the students of a particular class, being dissatisfied with the teaching of a professor, had left the class in a body. Acharya Brajendranath, though he felt wounded, did not make a fuss of it. Next day 15 minutes before the commencement of the class hour he quietly took his seat on the chair in the empty class. As the students were entering the class his commanding voice burst forth chiding them that they had insulted their professor and had forfeited their right to enter the class. Loud shrieks of cries arose and the students in a body begged to be pardoned adding that they would never again follow the wrong path. After thrashingly reprimanding them for some time when the Acharya found that the students were really repentant, passed his order that he would permit them to enter the class only on condition that the professor, whom they had insulted leads them into the class. As the students approached the professor he was kind enough to pardon them and took them to the class. The matter was dramatically concluded as the Principal then left the chair without a word and the professor resumed his lectures saying simply 'All's well that ends well'. The Acharyadev was against the practice of