

**BENGAL IN THE  
SIXTEENTH  
CENTURY, A. D.**

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Bengal in the Sixteenth Century, A. D. by J. N. Das Gupta

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**J. N. DAS GUPTA**

**BENGAL IN THE  
SIXTEENTH  
CENTURY, A. D.**



**Calcutta University**  
**READERSHIP LECTURES**

**BENGAL**  
**IN THE**  
**SIXTEENTH CENTURY, A. D.**

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# Bengal in the Sixteenth Century, A. D.



BY  
**J. N. DAS GUPTA**

BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD,  
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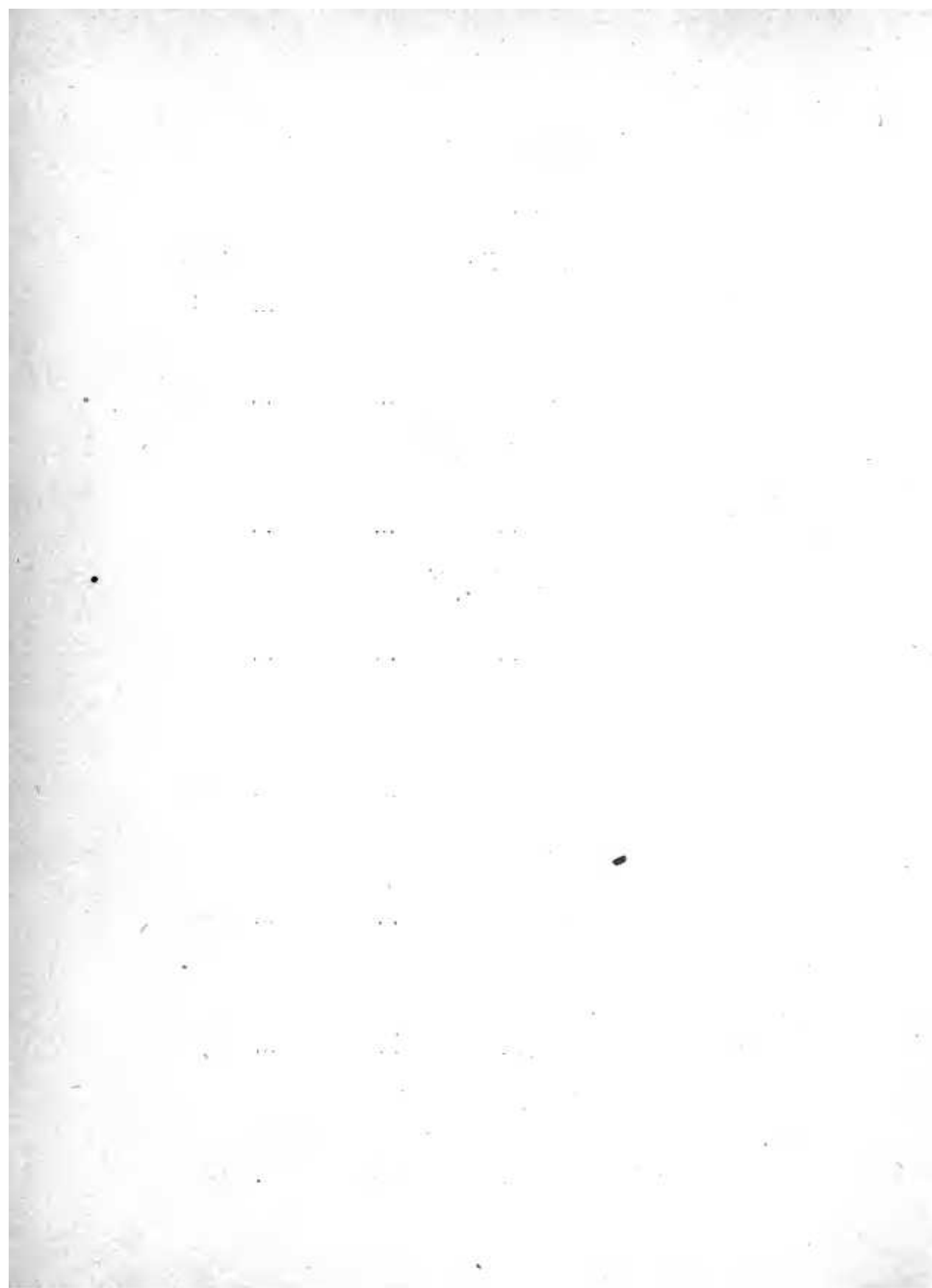
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## INAUGURAL THE STUDY OF HISTORY

MR. VICE-CHANCELLOR, AND FELLOW-STUDENTS:

Comte has told us that the growing passion of modern times for historical studies is a happy symptom of philosophical regeneration. But before dwelling on the importance of these studies and entering on an examination of the subject or rather subjects which I have undertaken to talk over with you, I beg in the first place to express my thankfulness and deep sense of gratitude to you especially, Mr. Vice-Chancellor, and to the Senate and Syndicate of our University for giving me this opportunity of appearing before you as University Reader in History. For I deem it a high privilege to be thus called upon, in however humble a capacity, to indicate new lines of study and methods of research to our younger generation at this critical juncture in the intellectual history of our land. To me this is ample recompense for whatever I may have tried to do during the last few years as one of the band of teachers attached to the constituent colleges of our corporate body, as an unworthy member of that company of devoted workers who have given their best, and who are ever striving even under great discouragements to serve the cause which is your cause as much as theirs, *viz.*, that of diffusion of true knowledge in this ancient and once famous home of learning.

Under the stimulus of the new regulations of our University, there are visible signs of an intellectual awakening throughout Bengal. New ideals have arisen in our academic world, and earnest endeavours are being made for their realisation, as far as one can judge, not without a fair measure of success. This consideration, coupled with the fact that I am addressing my fellow-students in Bengal has largely determined

the choice of the subject of my discourses. For it seemed to me, under the circumstances, not altogether inappropriate to try to study the past of Bengal, and there is a special fittingness in the task if that past can be elucidated with the help of materials derived and evidence gathered from some masterpiece of Bengali literature. If we have had in the past successful examples of the economic interpretation of history, we have no less successful examples of historical interpretation of literature. I have hence ventured to invite you to study the social and economic condition of Bengal in the 16th century of the Christian era with the help of a few Bengali poems whose names are household words with the gentry as well as the peasantry of this province.

Moreover, it has always seemed to me that the old vernacular poetry of our land deserves more respectful consideration at the hands of our scholars and historians than it at present receives. If the reconstruction of the past of our home-land is to be a successful undertaking, part at least of the materials for that reconstruction should be sought in the moth-eaten and perhaps rotting palm-leaf pages of old *Puthis*, the manuscripts in the possession of the managers and organisers of our indigenous *Tols*. One of the first steps in this process ought to be the preservation, the deciphering and a correct rendering of these ancient heirlooms of our race. One of the charges which at one time it was the fashion to bring against Indian Literature as a whole is that it is weakest on its historical side, —that there is no true *Itihas* in its department of *Itihas*. It used to be said that Indians are lacking in the instinct of historical research, and that unlike Egypt, unlike Crete, the scenes of some of the noblest achievements of the archeologist and the excavator, India offers no monument for the study of the antiquarian and the historian. The work done by the Imperial Archeological Department in India during the last few years, however, has to some extent disabused the public mind of this latter idea, and while it is true that India presents