PREFACE

Specialised research studies on different aspects of the history of India in the eighteenth century are numerous. But there is no single work incorporating the fruits of such research in a handy volume. It is not, therefore, surprising that to the students in general and the average reader the period appears to be difficult, complicated and uninteresting. The present book seeks to unravel the tangled skein of the various cross currents of the eighteenth century history and to arrange the broken bits of the Mughal imperial mosaic of the period in an intelligible and clear outline. It is not strictly a research work in the usual sense of the term but it is based on the researches of other scholars. Before his death Sir Jadunath Sarkar, the grand old patriarch of Indian historiography, had distinguished between two types of research,—the general type based on an intensive and exhaustive study of a particular subject and the synthetic type, based on ‘new grouping and interpretation of facts’ (Bengal Past & Present, Jubilee No. 1957). The present book is an humble attempt to write such a synthetic history of the eighteenth century. The general structure of the book rests on the synopsis of lectures delivered by me to the post-graduate students of Jadavpur University since 1963. But some modifications have been made in planning so as to cover the syllabi of the post-graduate courses of study in many universities in India. It is hoped that it would meet a long-felt need of the student as well as the general reader. It is for the latter to judge how far the attempt to supply flesh and blood to the dry bones of the period has been successful.

Since the book is intended to serve as an introduction to the history of a complex and fateful period of our country’s history, specific references and footnotes have been avoided. Mention has, however, been made of the original
sources along with the standard modern works on the period, so that the book may also be used as a work of reference for more detailed studies. It is planned in 3 volumes. The first volume covers the period from the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 to the Third Battle of Panipat in 1761. The Mughal Emperors continued to adorn the throne for nearly a century more. The reader will witness here the death pang of the old order. This volume is divided into three parts. Part I traces the dismemberment of the Mughal Empire due to internal and external factors, with due emphasis on the problem of personal equation. Part II describes the struggle of various suppressed nationalities for independence. Part III indicates the birth of virtually independent states on the ruins of the empire. For the sake of analysis and understanding some repetitions have been allowed to exist and the lower date limit has been altered in some cases. The second volume will deal with the birth pangs of a new order, the foundation of the British power in India, illustrating the deep influence of external events in Europe on Indian history during 1740 and 1803 i.e., from the time of Alivardi in Bengal to the British capture of Delhi in 1803. The third volume will deal with socio-economic and cultural developments of the eighteenth century.

The manuscript of the book in its present form was handed over to the publishers by middle of November 1974. Therefore, it has not been possible to utilise all the works that came out since then. Some of these have, however been included in the bibliography. It has also not been possible to maintain uniformity in spellings of proper names and in use of capitals, italics or otherwise in terms like wazir, bakhshi etc. Notwithstanding sincere efforts, numerous printing mistakes have crept in, for which I offer unqualified apology to my readers.

It is now my pleasant duty to express my sense of gratitude to those who have helped me in writing this book. Dr. P. C. Gupta, formerly Professor and Head of the Department of History, Jadavpur University, ex-Vice-
Chancellor of Viswa Bharati, Santiniketan, and now Vice-Chancellor of Rabindra Bharati University, deserves my sincere thanks for entrusting the teaching of subject to me in the M. A. classes of Jadavpur University in 1963. I have to record my indebtedness to all scholars, dead or alive, whose works have been utilised by me in the preparation of this book. I am deeply beholden to Dr. K. K. Datta, former Vice-Chancellor of Magadh and Patna Universities, and Dr. S. H. Askari, Ex-Director, K. P. Jayaswal Research institute, Patna, and Sri Amalendu De, Lecturer in History, Jadavpur University, who went through the book at a great strain on themselves and sacrifice of their valuable time for their useful suggestions for improvement. Dr. Ashoke Bhattacharya and Sri Bibhas Bhattacharya of Saraswat Library have laid me under a deep debt of gratitude for undertaking the publication of the book. Sri Chitta Ranjan Lahiri, M. A., Career Master in Bangur Higher Secondary Multi-Purpose School and a former post-graduate student of mine (Evening Section) in Jadavpur University and at present a research student of mine, has performed the arduous task of preparing the Index and the Errata. Sri Arun Kumar Roy has corrected the proofs with great care and strain on himself. Sri Alok Kumar Bhownick, Sri Phanindra Nath Chakravarty, M. A., a research scholar of mine and Sri Somendra Nath Chakravarty have also helped me much in expediting the correction of proofs. My former research pupils, Dr. Pinaki Ranjan Mahapatra, Lecturer in History, Karimpur College and Dr. Kumud Ranjan Das, Lecturer in History, Raj College, Burdwan, deserve my thanks for helping me in various ways. Constructive suggestions for improvement of the book will be thankfully received.

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