



# The Calling of History: Sir Jadunath Sarkar and His Empire of Truth

*Dipesh Chakrabarty*

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## **The Calling of History: Sir Jadunath Sarkar and His Empire of Truth** Dipesh Chakrabarty

A leading scholar in early twentieth-century India, Sir Jadunath Sarkar (1870–1958) was knighted in 1929 and became the first Indian historian to gain honorary membership in the American Historical Association. By the end of his lifetime, however, he had been marginalized by the Indian history establishment, as postcolonial historians embraced alternative approaches in the name of democracy and anti-colonialism. *The Calling of History* examines Sarkar's career—and poignant obsolescence—as a way into larger questions about the discipline of history and its public life.

Through close readings of more than twelve hundred letters to and from Sarkar along with other archival documents, Dipesh Chakrabarty demonstrates that historians in colonial India formulated the basic concepts and practices of the field via vigorous—and at times bitter and hurtful—debates in the public sphere. He furthermore shows that because of its non-technical nature, the discipline as a whole remains susceptible to pressure from both the public and the academy even today. Methodological debates and the changing reputations of scholars like Sarkar, he argues, must therefore be understood within the specific contexts in which particular histories are written.

Insightful and with far-reaching implications for all historians, *The Calling of History* offers a valuable look at the double life of history and how tensions between its public and private sides played out in a major scholar's career.

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