



Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar: Champion of Humanity

The Progressive Utilization Theory (PROUT) was first put forward by Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar (1921-1990). Sarkar was a philosopher, social reformer, and spiritual teacher dedicated to the task of planetary transformation. Through his actions and teachings he inspired many people to develop their potentialities and to take on active responsibility for humanity's welfare.

Sarkar made a wide range of contributions human upliftment. In the realm of human services, he established a global disaster relief agency and inspired diverse community service projects, including rural development schemes, medical clinics, group homes, and food distribution programs.

To help preserve the genetic diversity of Earth's plants, he established a network of botanical gardens. Through his initiative, an animal sanctuary for endangered species

was set up in West Bengal. He condemned the destruction of wildlife habitats and the cruel treatment of animals used for human food and service.

Sarkar was committed to the upliftment of women. He spoke out against dogmas, social customs, and injustices that oppress women, and he inspired women to work together to increase their economic, psychic, social, and spiritual power. He also affirmed the significance of women's contributions to human history, including the matriarchal origins of civilization and women's important role in the development of spirituality.

Sarkar recognized the importance of cultural creativity and established an association for the development and expression of the arts, giving it the mission to create "art for service and blessedness". He composed 5018 songs, known collectively as *Prabhat Samgiita (Songs of the New Dawn)*, which express noble and uplifting sentiments in lyrics that appeal to common people.

A philosophy of education developed by Sarkar, which emphasizes humanist values and nurturing the human spirit, is being used in hundreds of schools around the world. Among his last projects was laying the groundwork for Bhagavad Dharma University, an institution of higher learning that will include research into spiritual practices.

Sarkar spoke over 200 languages. His discourses on language are used as texts in several universities. He extended the expressive range of Bengali and other Indian languages by adding thousands of Sanskrit-derived words to their vocabularies. He also wrote grammar texts for English and Hindi.

In the field of medicine, he authored a book of natural remedies that combines herbal, yogic, dietary, and naturopathic treatments for common diseases. He also gave a process for formulating a new type of medicine, based on potentizing herbal remedies.

Sarkar was a master of yoga and meditation. He trained nearly two thousand meditation teachers, who have taken practices for inner development to people throughout the world and offered them at no cost to all who have interest.

Sarkar's extensive writings on philosophy resolve the contradictions between science and mysticism, idealism and materialism, action and detachment, monism and dualism, relative and absolute views on ethics, development and sustainability, and personal and political approaches to liberation. His body of published philosophical works fills many volumes.

Sarkar's socioeconomic philosophy, PROUT, has inspired community economic development and regional populist political movements. In Togo and Far East Russia, PROUTist development plans were drafted which give programmatic approaches for revitalizing depressed economies. PROUTist views have been put forward in international gatherings on the issue of sustainable development.

During his lifetime, Sarkar faced much opposition, as his criticisms of religious, cultural, and political dogmas challenged powerful groups in his native India. He spent most of the 1970s in jail, held without bail on charges for which he was eventually acquitted. While in prison he was target of an assassination attempt, which led to his undertaking a fast that lasted over five years.

Sarkar's personal life was devoid of showmanship, spiritual exploitation, or moral lapses. He lived a life of simplicity and conducted all his affairs in a manner consistent with his beliefs. Despite his powerful personal presence, he refused to become a public personality, avoiding contact with the media or the curious public.

Mentor of Greatness

Sarkar was motivated by a single-minded mission: to promote liberation in its fullest expression. He typically worked twenty hours a day, seven days a week, to advance the welfare of humanity and other living beings. His dynamic commitment to a noble ideal attracted many high-minded followers.

Sarkar recognized that humanity is at a critical juncture, poised between intensifying crises on the one hand and an emerging planetary renaissance on the other. He urged people to be active, to struggle against the forces that are fragmenting, oppressing, and exploiting humanity; and that are violating the natural world. He called on those inspired by universal love to end humanity's degradation and develop its higher potential.

Cultural values are changing. Materialism, narcissistic individualism, and religious dogmatism are being deeply questioned. There is a diminishing infatuation with glitter and gluttony, power and prestige, doctrine and dogma. Many are now aware that ecosystems are losing resiliency, that the global economy is on shaky ground, and that materialism cannot fulfill humanity's aspirations.

As this reorientation of values unfolds, Sarkar's vision is likely to find increasing appeal. For it is a vision that affirms powerful and perennial sentiments: to live a life of meaning, to struggle for a high ideal, to act out of compassion, to protect the life of the community, and to free the mind of dogma. These are sentiments that take human life beyond mundane desires and existential emptiness, imbuing it with spiritedness, purpose, and depth.

Commitment to Living Beings

Sarkar was holistic in his approach. As a spiritualist he taught that human fulfillment ultimately comes from inner connection with the Divine. But he combined the orientation of the mystic with a commitment to the need for social development: to further social progress, he challenged dogmas that stifle the human spirit, he encouraged struggle against tyranny and exploitation, and he sought to bring human existence into harmony with the natural world.

Sarkar made great efforts to develop moral, loving, and dedicated individuals. Through his example, his teachings, his spiritual practices, and his sacrifice, he sought to cultivate human greatness in those he inspired. It was not his intent to gain fame and glory for himself, but to empower others with the stamina, dedication, and purity of mind needed to create a better world.