

P R E F A C E

To feel liberated, one needs to seek freedom out of the shackles of the cage and open the prisoner in oneself. We cannot live in the quantum interconnected global village unless our hearts embrace the marvels of the infinite minds. Captivating prodigious intellects, endless contemplation and unfulfilled verses painted on the canvas of literature have always been incredible gifts to this global village. This freedom is the fascinating and remarkable essence of poetry and prose through the minds of the bards who chose to think and sail beyond the course of their solitary exiles.

The publication of Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *Meghnadbadh kabya* in 1861 heralded a revolution, a renaissance and a paradigm shift that permeated the first wave of modern Bengali literature, liberating as it did Bengali poetry forever from the bondage of the medieval poetic fashion known as 'payar' (the self-contained rhyming couplet) as well as opening up the boundless and marvelous possibilities of the blank verse. The epic poem is still hailed as a solitary peak in the entire landscape of (modern) Bengali literature. Its subversion too, of the canonical *Ramayana*, was entirely a subject unattempted yet in prose or rhyme in any Indian language. Bengali critical literature, obviously, teems with studies on Michael's life and works; overseas Bengali departments niche him in their syllabuses; William Radice undertook his PhD on Michael's life and masterpieces at the University of Oxford in the late 1980s. The classic *enfant terrible* of the early Bengali Renaissance is still an incandescent into the spectrum of every gleaming eyes of Bengali poetry lovers.

Meghnadbadh kabya has till date been translated into English five times since 1926. But although Translation Studies is now more popular than ever the world over, these translations have not yet been adopted for comparative studies. The present thesis is a humble pursuit along that untrodden path as well as a homage to such a classic.

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