Renaissance, Translation and Poetry

Essays in Criticism

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Bibhas Chand

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Dedication

To
My Mother,
the living incarnation of tolerance
in the face of all sufferings.

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Preface

The present book has been developed out of some critical essays which were written at different times. Hence, it covers a wide and variegated range of subjects. The first essay "The Spirit of Renaissance" observes Derozio's philosophy of life and his works as a driving force of Bengal Renaissance. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, there occurred in Bengal an enlightenment in education and culture which was similar to the European Renaissance. This phenomenon is widely known as 'Bengal Renaissance'. Henry Derozio (1809-1831), the first Indian English poet, contributed significantly to the growth of Bengal Renaissance through his influential teaching and writings. The second essay "Diverse Aspects of Translation" upholds the theoretical aspects of Translation and its significance in Indian context. The world of literature is multilingual. Translation is the only way for dissemination and discussion of literature written in different languages of the world. English plays the role of the link language not only in the field of literary translations but also in many non-literary professional arenas. The year 2014 has been globally commemorated as the centenary of

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the First World War (1914-2014). My third essay which is a close study of Ruport Brooke's *War Sonnets* was written in 2014 to celebrate the centenary of World War-I. The fourth essay examines Chaucer's *The Nun's Priest's Tale*, a beast-fable, from the angle of feminist critique. The rest of the book includes some papers on the writings of Rabindranath Tagore, Jayanta Mahapatra, Jibanananda Das and Sri Aurobindo. Hope, the reader will enjoy this book.

—Bibhas Chand

21 February, 2021

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"The Spirit of Renaissance: Reflections on Derozio's Mind and Work" was published in *Anudhyan: An International Journal of Social Sciences* (Vol.1, No.1, August 2016).

"Diverse Aspects of Translation in Connection with Indian Context" was published in *The Atlantic Literary Review* (A Peer Reviewed Quarterly Journal: Vol.19, No.4. Oct-Dec 2018).

"Celebrating the centenary of the First World War: A Study of Rupert Brooke's *War Sonnets* (1914)" was first published in *World Journal of Gender and Literature* (Vol.3, No.1, June 2016).

"Chaucer's *The Nun's Priest's Tale:* A Feminist Reading" was published in *Labyrinth: An International Refereed Journal of Postmodern Studies* (Vol.7, no.2, April 2016).

"Emancipation from Regionalism: A Reading of Jayanta Mahapatra's "Hunger" and "Dawn at Puri", "Jibananda

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Das's "Banalata Sen": A Study in Interpretation"and "Synthesis of Philosophy and Poetry: A Study of Sri Aurobindo's *The Golden Light*" were published in RNLK College Magazine *Sanhita*.

"*King and Rebel:* Tagore's little-known Original English Play" has been published recently in the magazine of Vidyasagar University Alumni Association in 2021.

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1

The Spirit of Renaissance: Reflections on Derozio's Mind and Work

Historically the Renaissance is the period of fresh growth and enlightenment in the field of art, culture, literature and ideas in Europe, especially Italy, during the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. The word 'Renaissance' generally denotes the revival of learning, culture and the arts. In the beginning of the nineteenth century, there occurred in Bengal an enlightenment in education and culture which was similar to the European Renaissance. This phenomenon is widely known as 'Bengal Renaissance'. The period from 1825 to 1845 is marked by the historians as the first phase of Bengal Renaissance. Henry Derozio (1809-1831), the first Indian English poet, contributed significantly to the growth of Bengal Renaissance through his influential teaching and writings. The present essay aims to study Derozio's philosophy of life and his works as a driving force of Bengal Renaissance.

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The word 'Renaissance' generally denotes the revival of learning, culture and the arts and it acts as an indicator of new growth of activity and interest in literature and culture, philosophy and ideas. Historically the Renaissance is the period of fresh growth and enlightenment in the field of art, culture, literature and ideas in Eur-ope, especially Italy, during the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries. According to *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (6th Edition), Renaissance is "the great flowering of art, architecture, politics, and the study of literature, usually seen as the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern world .... It began in Italy in the late 14th cent., culminated in the High Renaissance in the early 16th cent, (the period of Michelangelo and Machiavelli), and spread to the rest of Europe in the 15th cent, and afterwards. Its emphasis was humanist: that is, on regarding the human figure and reason without a necessary relating of it to the superhuman .... The word Renaissance has been applied in the 20th cent, to earlier periods which manifested a new interest in and study of the classics ..." (Drabble 846). The same idea has been found in Alfred von Martin's *Sociology of the Renaissance:* "the typological importance of the Renaissance is that it marks the first cultural and social breach between the Middle Ages and modern times: it is a typical early stage of modern age" (Martin 3). It is often said that during the Renaissance, the literary, philosophical and artistic works of the ancient Greeks came to be rediscovered and studied and taught a new. This Renaissance has been described as the revival of ancient learning. This is the common view about European Renaissance. But Prof. Sibnarayan Ray has termed this view as a 'narrow' one. To him, "the main feature of the Renaissance was not revival, but creativeness. ... The

spirit of Renaissance affected all aspects of human life and individual pursuits in science and philosophy, in religion and morals, in social and political thinking, in literature and the Arts, in education and institutional life" (Ray 14).

In the beginning of the nineteenth century, there occurred in Bengal an enlightenment in education and culture which was similar to the European Renaissance, although the context was much different. This phenomenon is known as 'Bengal Renaissance'. This enlightenment in the area of darkness was the result of the establishment of the Hindu College (later Presidency College, now Presidency University) in 1817. This college developed Western education, logical learning and culture in the place of prevalent Brahminical social system, orthodox rituals and superstitious beliefs. Bengal Renaissance is the result of the encounter between the Bengali elite and Western civilization and culture. David Kopf called this enlightenment 'New Intelligentsia' (Kopf 253). Although Bengal Renaissance is still a controversial subject, eminent historians and scholars of nineteenth century Bengal like Sir Jadunath Sarkar, Binoy Ghose, Susobhan Sarkar, David Kopf, Nimai Sadhan Bose, Ramesh Chandra Mazumdar firmly believed that there was a Renaissance in Bengal having its birth in the early period of 19th century. Jadunath Sarkar wrote, "It was truly a Renaissance, wider, deeper, and more revolutionary than that of Europe, after the fall of Constantine" (Sarkar 491). Nemai Sadhan Bose preferred the term 'awakening' instead of "Renaissance'. According to him, "This historic and fascinating phase has variously been described as the Indian Renaissance, the Indian Reformation, the Indian