INTRODUCTION
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The *Mahabharata* was the first ever epic that mirrored the ocean of humanity that emerged in ancient India after the co-mingling of the Aryans and the Non-Aryans, along with reflecting the happiness -sorrow-emotion- pain-jealousy and its religious feelings too. This epic is not only a versified composition reflecting the colourful romancing of the poet, but it also acts as the backdrop of his contemporaneous History, Literature and Philosophy. This epic is thronged with different characters. In this train of characters, each and every character appears gloriously effulgent– be it the prominent ones like Bhishma or Drona, or be it an insignificant one like the hunter. It may be mentioned in this context that since we are going to dwell on the characters of the *Mahabharata*, then preference should be given on the role of characterization in the epic while deliberating on this topic.

Characterization is one of the prominent components of a drama or an epic or a novel. A character hinges upon the plot. Of course, the plot is the pivotal component in a tragedy, the position of the character is secondary. When the speaker desires something or wants to renounce something, that connotes the character and may be defined as the intrinsic attribute endued with an individual.\(^1\)

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A protagonist expresses his feelings of joy and sorrow sometimes through the dialogues, or sometimes using the device of soliloquy, or sometimes through his demeanours. But, a character is concomitant of an action or an incident.

Characters can be of various types. In the annals of the origination of characterization, it is noticed that an author of solemn nature used to emulate the activities of a great and virtuous person and consequently ended up composing the hymns dedicated to the deities known as *Devastuti* and glorifying the great men known as the *Mahapurusha Stuti*—while the authors of frivolous nature used to mimic rather the activities of the people belonging to the lower strata of the society and they ventured to compose satire. A character is endowed with the ability to express his view sounding feasible and in accordance with a particular situation. While the ancient poets used to attribute the character with conventional and colloquial language, the modern poets articulated their characters with flowery and rhetorical language.

In regard to the perspective of characterization, four points should be taken into consideration, such as (i) A character ought to be good, i.e., his or her motive or intention should be good; (ii) A propriety ought to be there in his or her intention; (iii) A character should be factual and (iv) There should be some congruity in the
character. During the portrayal of a character, the poet should be conscious of the feasibility or probability of it.\textsuperscript{2}

In India, the \textit{Mahabharata} is known as a religious treatise to the common people. During the Medieval times, eminent poets from Bengal, namely, Srikar Nandi, Kashiram Das etc. offered the Bengali renderings of the \textit{Mahabharata} although they failed to evoke any creative outlook and response. None of them could add any novel dimension to the epical characters. In fact, at the moment it was not possible to treat the epical characters with a novel interpretation in addition to a new dimension, since at that time, the characters of the \textit{Mahabharata} were being interpreted with a devotional outlook. Only the varied traits such as the firmness or tenderness of nature, were attributed to the characters and differentiated according to the diversified regional interpretation. The poets from Bengal who rendered the \textit{Mahabharata} into Bengali, were guided by the aforementioned trend at the time of portrayal of the epical characters. As a result, all the epical characters of the Bengali renderings had a typical mellow touch and flavour distinctive of Bengal.

The Nineteenth Century witnessed the intellectual awakening that illumined the realm of consciousness of the Bengali literati, after being triggered by the nation's encounter with Western education.

\textsuperscript{2} Sadhankumar Bhattacharya, \textit{Aristotler Poetics O Sahityatattva}, P. 66.
and culture. This impetus claimed the revolution of the epical protagonists of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*—as Sri Aurobindo puts it: 'back to ourselves'.\(^3\) Exactly at that period, the eminent intelligensia as well as the sagacious stalwarts of contemporaneous Bengal started a good deal of rethinking over the epical protagonists of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, since one of the prominent features of the Bengal Renaissance was to re-assess the characters of both the epics (the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*) which was triggered by the coeval eminent thinkers of Bengal who were free from religious superstitions and bigotry.

In fact, Nineteenth Century witnessed the impetus to revivify that image in the current of thought which had never been envisaged by the great poet. Before dwelling on the backdrop of that animating zeal, it is essential to highlight the facets of the Bengal Renaissance.

In the late fourteenth century, Italy, a European country beheld the advent of Renaissance—which had liberated the archaic garner of Greek Philosophy and Greek Classics from the regimentation of the Medieval Theological discipline of 'Old Learning' that lorded over the populace by the Institutionalism of the Roman Catholic Church, and thus harboured the European people on the emancipated base of New Science, Rationalism and Humanism. This novel concept

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\(^3\) Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry and letters on Poetry, Literature and Art*, P. 39
came to be known as the Renaissance. It can be said that the Emancipation is another name of Renaissance that marked the emancipation of the spirit enkindling the unfettered intellectual faculties – 'চিত্তের মুক্তিসাধন বা স্বাধীন বুদ্ধির উদ্বোধন'[^4]

Both the cultural as well as the political outcomes marked the Nineteenth Century Renaissance. Our literature betokens the cultural outcome while the political outcome is imaged in Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. Besides, Western Civilization triggered all three components such as Western rule, Western education and Western law or legislation.

French Revolution is the successor to the historic evolution marked by Renaissance, Counter Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment- which sparked off the enlightenment; and Rammohan Roy was the pioneer in India in this aspect to imbibe that sparkling legacy. Thanks to the influence of Western education that had enabled the people of India with the rediscovery of the worthy and glorious Indian Classics and the Vedas, the Upanishads, the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, Sanskrit literature, the *Bhagavata* and the *Gita* etc. Rammohan had drawn our attention to the Vedas and the Upanishads; while Rabindranath, apart from imbibing the view of Rammohan, made us allured to the glorious treasure-trove of Sanskrit literature.

As some critic puts it:

[^4]: Prabodhchandra Sen, *Bharatpathik Rabindranath*, P. 161
In-fact, our Renaissance is the abridged and admixed pursuit of centuries. However, it is not a mere act of imitation. We accepted some good aspects while at the same time rejected some other aspects as well. Neither the era in pre-Christianity Greece is our source of inspiration, nor is it the pre-Islamic India. It was the quest for new knowledge, new science.] But this is partially true, since the awakening that had explicitly mirrored itself in the coeval social backdrop through the reformatory spirit and consciousness of Rammohan. In fact, as the prime inspiration of the Italian Renaissance was the discovery of the Ancient as well as Neo-Greek culture, similarly, the New Awakening in India owes its inception to the revivification of the almost-forgotten Vedic and Post-Vedic Buddhist Culture. India discovered her long-forgotten golden past in the fields of religion, society and literature; re-established its resplendent creative genius. Hence, it can be summed up that the fundamental feature of the Renaissance in the Nineteenth Century was the re-

(5) Anndashankar Roy, Banglar Renaissance, P. 5
(6) Prabodhchandra Sen, Bharatpathik Rabindranath, P. 165
valuation and re-interpretation of the classic literature. According to Sri Aurobindo, 'The national mind turned a new eye on its past culture, reawoke to its sense and import, but also, at the same time, saw it in relation to modern knowledge and ideas. Out of this awakening vision and impulse the Indian Renaissance is arising and that must determine its future tendency.'

This cardinal strain of Renaissance was reflected in the writings of the three prominent writers in the Nineteenth Century. They are Madhusudan, Bankim Chandra and Nabinchandra.