INTRODUCTION

From its very inception Bengali poetry has posed problems peculiarly its own. "Literature", Fichte generalised, "is the expression of a religious idea". This dictum applies wholly to old and mediaeval Bengali literature. Despite the growing demand for secularization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Bengali Mind has expressed itself mainly in terms of religious ideas. Girish Chandra Ghosh (1844–1911), the leading playwright of the 19th century, observed that a dramatist desirous of wooing the soul of the nation must develop a religious attitude. Rabindranath Tagore, the greatest artist of our Renaissance, insisted upon developing a somewhat synergistic outlook that has found its way in all his poetry.

An anecdote concerning Bhāratchandra, the 18th century court-poet, may lead us further. Bhāratchandra (1712–1760) was one of our very few deviators from the religious tradition in poetry. But he too had to put on a religious garb to please the popular taste of his times. The following account as given by Īśvarchandra Gupta (1812–1859), well illustrates the point:

"The lord of Navadvipa most gladly conferred the title 'Gunākar' on Bhāratchandra, the poet-laureate, and
said, 'Bharat, I am really very much satisfied with your poetry, but I no longer care for such short poems'. Bharatchandra asked, 'What sort of poetry, then, will be to your liking?' The lord replied, 'Do cling to the manner that has been shown by Mukundaram while composing his narrative poem in the Chandi-cult'. Thus instructed Bharatchandra began to narrate the Annadā-legend. A Brahmin was appointed a transcriber, and Nilmārī Samādār, a reciter, started giving recitals of these songs, classified into a precise story-sequence).

Two inferences can easily be drawn from the above extract. First, the short poem, i.e. the lyric, in old Bengali poetry, except in rare instances, could not stand on its own, but was more or less bound up with some sort of apologue. Hence, secondly, Form in old Bengali poetry never got the better of Content. Fichte's generalisation may here suit our purpose: Bengali poetry is always the expression of ideas. It never gets tired of Ideas, and that is why, even in its riddles or enigmas, it never permits that meaninglessness which at times can set Art free from jejune schematism. This preoccupation with ideas and an over-insistence on thematic transmission, not only engendered a deification of the ancients, but also impeded the freedom of the lyric. Dines Chandra Sen, the pioneer historian of Bengali literature, while accounting for plagiarism and mediocrity in a
great number of minor Bengali poets, termed this blindfold adherence to set forms exhausted by earlier writers as 'puchchhanugrahita' (blind adherence to the predecessor's trails).

The love of conventionality is not necessarily the outcome of the decadence of a particular phase. Apart from the fact that the same agrarian pattern in society remained undisturbed for centuries, some thematic conventions grew almost relentlessly around the Bengali people who reiterated those exhausted ideas. And those ideas, owing to their foreordained nature, hampered the birth of new images. This way of idea over individuality, of matter over mode, of content over form, is responsible for the relative absence of unprecedented shock or surprise in old and mediaeval Bengali literature. The whole thing tended to proceed like a stream which reverts again and again to its source.

The result, however, is not altogether discouraging. As a result of this undisturbed transmission of motifs, a story-telling tendency developed, which again, engendered an awareness of the listening audience on the part of the poets. In all our narrative poetry, beginning, say, from Vijay Gupta (the period of his composition being 1494-95) down to Dāsamthi Bāy (1806-1857), the poet is always consciously discovering lyrical devices for the sake of gaining the applause of his listeners who are not only interested in the story but also in the lyric. The former poet warned his singer against boring
Vijay Gupta advises the singer to avoid the monotony of the payar and to relate the story in the lächädi form of verse).

Dāśarathi Rāy, a popular poet of the 19th century, also adopted such a device for relief. It was called Basaprasanga. It had no apparent connection with the main plot and was chiefly concerned with gratuitous poetizing.

The above-mentioned tendency points to the converse process, i.e., the addition of the element of story in old Bengali lyrics. Even the Charyā-songs had a narrative element about them.

Love-making of the hill tribes, hunting the deer, marrying on the boat immediately after a sudden piracy, the desperate tryst of the lady at night when the inmates are all asleep, these and many other glimpses of romance lent an air of narrative interest to the Charyā-songs. And stripped of these episodical embroideries, the poems turn into arid didacticism. In most cases Vaiṣṇava lyrics also depended enormously upon the variegated Kṛṣṇa-kathā which thus localized and enlivened the symbolic account of divine love.
through a dual transfiguration of the Lover and the Beloved in Him. The chequered love-affair of Krsna-Rådhå now and then replenishes the gaps created by the lyricists, and this brought the Pàdåvalî so close to the human heart.

This predominance of story over style, of content over form has not been an unmixed boon to our poets who remained unnecessarily reticent about their personal identity. What else could be the reason for putting their own names (bhanitå) rather quietly at the end of a poem? In this way of mentioning the author's name modesty amounts at times to humility which resembles the "veiled expression of the author's name" in the Middle High German poets. However, the whole problem becomes interesting because it compels us to seek out the somewhat suppressed personality of the poets from the contents of their poems which served as their "objective correlatives". To put it more precisely, it urges us to get at the subjective inner forms of early Bengali lyrics which are very much obsessed with the objective themes.

This monograph, therefore, is not only an analysis of the prosody of old and mediaeval Bengali lyrics, but also an attempt to find out their 'inner forms'. By the 'outer form' of a poem one understands its prosodic aspects; one looks for illustrations of rhyme, rhythm and metre, of stanzaic patterns
and so on. The 'inner form' of a poem, on the other hand, lies behind these visible arrangements; it is the intangible core, the cause that gets itself involved with the poetic personality under artistic urge, and finally results in the 'outer form'. It has been my endeavour to take both the forms into consideration so as to arrive at a total explanation of the word 'form'. I have, therefore, tried to discern some other issues connected with the lyric forms of the period under survey; for instance, to borrow I. A. Richards's phrase, 'the availability of the poets' experience'; the impact of traditions, indigenous and extraneous, to which they might have been exposed; the poetic forms —other than that of the lyrics which were in vogue or obsolescence; these and other relevant factors have been considered incidentally in this monograph. Thus, though the dissertation records the emergence and evolutionary growth of the Bengali lyric forms up to the seventeenth century, the subject under investigation has not been treated as an isolated phenomenon. But the lyric forms of the period referred to have been my chief concern and I hope that this justifies the title of this work. For my purpose, I have accepted F. T. Palgrave's definition of the lyric which implies that "each poem shall turn on some single thought, feeling or situation. In accordance with this, narrative, descriptive, and didactic poems, unless accompanied by
rapidity of movement, brevity, and the colourings of human passions, have been excluded.

In this work I have arrived at the following findings:

1. Music had a conspicuous bearing on the Bengali lyric forms, old and mediaeval. I have observed and verified the interrelationships between music, rhyme and refrain. The impact of music on the formations of stanzaic patterns has been dealt with in details. The tangible influences exercised by Indian Classical Music on the lyric genre has been given due attention. The origin of some of the important Apabhramsa metres from dance-rhythm and the accompaniment of instrumental music has also been explained in the second chapter entitled MUSIC AND POETRY. The third chapter on DANCE-MUSIC AND RHYME serves as a postscript showing intricate reciprocal relations between dance, music, rhyme, refrain and stanzas.

2. I have discussed the emergence of the end-rhyme and adduced illustrations as chief arguments, \textit{a posteriori} in nature, to establish that the device of the end-rhyme is neither of an extraneous origin nor has it sprung straight from the internal folk-stratum. The role of the religious reformers as craft-conscious poets has been substantiated in this connection.
3 I have discussed the derivations and deviations from the prosodical norms by our earlier major lyricists. The ninth chapter entitled THE PrAKRTH-PAIINGALA AND THE LYRICAL EMANCIPATION is particularly concerned with this issue. Incidentally, in the fifth chapter entitled CHARYAPADAS AND THEIR AFFINITIES I have adduced intrinsic evidence from the 'Svayambhuchchhanda' (Circa 10th century A.D.) to show the first use of the generic term 'Payar' along with its associates such as Paddhatika, Chhardanika and Ghatta.

4 Throughout the dissertation stress has been laid on the inseparability of form and content in the lyric genre. The problem of poetic personality, if not personal mythology, in its social, temporal or traditional context, has been given due weight. The latter issue has been accorded equal importance on chapters I, V, VII and VIII entitled THE BENGALI MIND AND ITS AFFILIATIONS, CHARYAPADAS AND THEIR AFFINITIES, JAYADEVA AND THE ZEITGEIST and THE VAISNAVYA LYRICISM respectively. The esoteric idiom of Charyā-lyrics has been thoroughly discussed. Also the philosophy of the Brajabali language has been traced particularly in the light of the writings of Rūpa Gosvāmī and Jīva Gosvāmī. The tension and unison between idea and image, between
didacticism and lyricism in poetic diction have been discussed in the sixth chapter entitled CHARYĀ AND DOHĀ.

5. Finally, I have ventured to employ the principles of comparative criticism to arrive at the root of the problems I have explored. It is interesting to note that Tagore made in connection with Western influences in Bengali literature the following observations which apply as well to its pre-modern phase:

"Sufficient emphasis however has not been laid on the fact that it is this power to assimilate cultural influences from outside which proves the creative vitality of Bengali literature. Originality in literature lies in the capacity to absorb the universal in all literatures and arts and to give it a unique expression characteristic of its particular genius and traditions. Then again, the human mind being one, parallel developments along similar lines can be traced in different literatures suggestive of mutual influences but denoting independent pursuits of truths which are universal (The Calcutta Review, Jan, 1933)."

The two approaches referred to have not been lost sight of in this monograph. Hence to define the uniqueness of the Bengali mind it has been useful to gauge the latter's widening
divergences from, as well as its debt to, the Sanskritic Mind. At the same time, the question of Arabic infiltration into Indian poetry has not been overrated. The former's contributions to the West has however not been overlooked. To lay undue stress on parallelism may also lead to too rash a postulation. To say, for instance, that the simultaneity of Poem and Music, as initiated by the Troubadours, Trouvère, Minnesingers, and continued through Ronsard down to Mallarmé is simultaneous with the Indian continuity from Charyā-songs, Jayadeva, Vaiṣṇava poets down to Tagore is thus too hasty an analogy. But one can take an issue in isolation and then look for analogy. Accordingly, I have compared, with certain reservations, the trobar clus of the Troubadours with the Charyā-diction; the select terminology of Charyā-poets with the Nirguna school of Hindi poets; Martin Opitz with Jayadeva; the Ballad form with the Gitikā, and so on. I have also drawn legitimate parallels between Mediaeval European and Indian traditions, e.g., the genesis of the lyric form out of the choral compositions. The theory that the Indian choral strain (i.e., Kīrtana) sprang from individual compositions has also been developed in course of this treatise. In this way I think I have taken into account both the oriental and the occidental tendencies behind the
emergence of the lyric form, and coordinated the two points of departure in comparative criticism, i.e., the dual problems of "Parallelism" and "Influence" in literature.

The subject under treatment, it hardly needs emphasizing, has not been sufficiently dealt with before. The stray treatises on the subject are, indeed, lamentably scanty. I have however, made use of materials furnished in this field by distinguished critics and scholars, such as Rabindranath Tagore, M. Winternitz, Dr. Suniti Kumār Chatterji, Dr. M. Shahīdullāh, Rāhul Samkṛtyāyan, Dr. S. K. De, Dr. Nihārranjan Ray, Dr. Sukumār Sen, Prof. Prabodh Chandra Sen, Dr. Ḥāzāripasad Dvivedī and H. D. Velankar.

One word may kindly be noted. A chronological method does not alone suffice to do justice to such a survey. I have not always followed the chronological principle in the distribution of chapters. For instance, the point made in connection with Tagore in chapter X is not confined to any particular time. This is also true of chapters III, IV and X. Had these chapters been arranged otherwise, they might have impinged upon the general plan. That, on the other hand, they have not been treated as mere appendices, testifies to their essential relevance to the work. The last chapter entitled GĪTIKĀS AND ŚAKTA SONGS also invites attention. That small chapter is in the nature of a postscript that does not apparently fall within
the range of the subject under treatment. Yet it had to be included for the sake of completeness.

The translation of the excerpts given in the dissertation, unless specified otherwise, is by the present writer.