PREFACE

The work *A Critical Study of Early Bengali Prose Writings (16th to 18th Century)* is a humble attempt by me to bring to light the development of Bengali prose since the 16th century to the 18th. This subject has not been properly discussed so long. Most scholars did not go beyond the 18th century as the starting point of Bengali prose owing to absence of documentary evidences from earlier period.

I had developed an interest in the Bengali prose when I was a postgraduate student in Bengali Department of Gauhati University. Later I had the occasion to discuss the subject with Prof. S.S. Tunga, my teacher, who instilled further impetus in my mind about Bengali prose and asked me to study various source books from north-eastern region. As a result, I began to read at his advice the famous Buranjis of Assam which record the history of north-eastern states during the Ahom period of six long centuries beginning from the thirteenth. These Buranjis preserve a very large number of diplomatic letters some of whom were written in Bengali. These letters attracted me to a great extent and I felt that they should be the subject matter of my further study. Accordingly, I got my subject of the present work registered, under the guidance of Prof. Tunga, in the Gauhati University. That was in 1982.

After, however, some preliminary work such as procurement of source material from north-eastern region I had to
stop halfway due to some serious family troubles. I re-
started the work in 1989, after a gap of nearly four years.
This is the reason why it took me a decade to complete the
work. I had, however, all along been in touch with my guide
whose advice and instructions I have always tried to follow.
The result is the present work.

The work is divided into six chapters. The chapters
are self-explanatory. The first chapter is Introduction in
which I have made a thorough survey of Bengali prose from the
16th century to the Fort William College era of the 19th
century and dealt with all specimens, known to the scholars
and not known. The second and third chapters are devoted to
the prose style of the three centuries - 16th and 17th in the
Chapter II and 18th in the Chapter III. Structural analysis
of Bengali prose of this period has been made in Chapter IV.
Chapter V is given to discuss the literary value of the prose
during this period. The last chapter, Chapter VI, is a
comparative study on every aspect of the prose writings of
the two eras - 16th to 18th century on the one hand and the
Fort William College age of the 19th century on the other.
An word index giving a detailed list of uncommon words with
their derivation and meaning is given as a supplement to the
work.

I must first express my gratitude and indebtedness to
Professor S.S. Tunga, my teacher and research guide for this
work. Professor Tunga has given me his valuable advice, direction work plan and suggestion of all kinds necessary for such a work. He even brought books from Calcutta for me and lent his own possessions to me. He has gone through the text of this work very minutely and corrected it when necessary. It would not have been possible for me to complete the work without his help and guidance.

I am also thankful to my respected school teachers, Sri Amar Kanti Roy Choudhury, M.A., Ex-Principal, Bengali Boys' Higher Secondary School, Nagaon and Sri Sachindranath Sarker, M.A., Ex-Headmaster, Bengali Boys' High School, Nagaon for giving me valuable and rare books as loans.

I also express my gratitude to the authorities of National Library, Calcutta, Bangia Sahitya Parishad, Calcutta, Burdwan University library, Burdwan, Calcutta University Library, Calcutta, North Bengal University Library, Guwahati University Library, Guwahati, Guwahati District Library, Nagaon District Library, Nowgong Girls' College Library etc. for their help and co-operation at my works and also the U.G.C. for extending financial assistance to me in this humble endeavour.

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