Preface

Literature in translation anticipates our inherent capacity to revive and rejuvenate our outlook of life. It guides us not only away from the photographic view of life, but also introduces us to a completely unknown, yet extremely genuine and essentially quintessential world of literature hitherto unravelled. It enables us to envision the enchantment of regional literature.

The Indian literature in translation extenuates a plethora of the teeming and bewildering natural life of a vast multi-faceted country like India. Life in the flora and fauna of Indian countryside, people in their common yet exceptional ways of life, the cultural and religious beliefs, customs and traditions form a rich and prosperous legacy of heritage – ancient yet modern.

Literature, when available in translation, facilitates a global cultural exchange through a universal perspective. We can relish the flavour of varied cultures without experiencing them directly. As regional literature is rooted to the native ground, the literature in translation provides readers with a broad spectrum of images, dialects, characters and ideas central to that region, at the same time transporting us to a long-cherished and truly nostalgic reminiscent past. The readers are mesmerized at being exposed to such a rich and diversified culture, the varied customs and traditions that lend a unique flavour to these writings.
By the tenth century, the older Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages and dialects had grown into full-blown languages. Each region also began to develop its own distinctive culture. As a result, regional literatures developed in each of the new regional languages, under the patronage of the local rulers. The literatures of the regional languages were as diverse as the languages and sub-cultures they represented. They sought inspiration in the older Sanskrit myths, epics, and Kavya poems which served as source for some of the best works in the new languages. At the same time unique versions of local myths, legends, romances and epics emerged in Indian literature.

The aim of this study is to make a detailed analysis and a deep quest into the multi-dimensional aspects of Bengali culture in the limelight of the translated texts of Bengali literature, including the retrospection and outlook of the respective translators of the texts included.

In order to facilitate this process, it is an attempt to delve into the Bengali culture and study its various aspects as reflected in the English translation of *Anandamath* by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838–1894), translated by Basant Koomar Roy; *Tasher Ghar (House of Cards)* by Tarashankar Bandopadhyay (1898–1971), translated by Sanchayita Chatterjee; *Pather Panchali (Song of the Road)* by Bibhuti Bhushan Bandopadhyay (1899–1950), translated by UNESCO (George Allen and Unwin, London); *Putul Nacher Itikatha (The Puppet's Tale)* by Manik Bandopadhyay (1908–1956), translated by Sachindralal
Ghosh; and *Evam Indrajit* by Badal Sircar (1925 – 2011 ), translated by Girish Karnad.

The study gathers in itself a probe into the rich, colourful and exquisite Bengali culture. It attempts to recapture the fresh, soulful fragrance of the soil and environment of Bengal, from the early years of Bengali fiction to the pre-independence struggle; the independence war to the post-independence era culminating in a crude and barren contemporary world.

It seeks to unearth the aroma of Bengali culture that lies hidden beneath the treasured hierarchy of our glorious literature and to provide the readers with the rich cultural heritage assimilating all the morsels of rural scenic beauty, customs, beliefs and religious practices, a host of cultural stereotypes and the problems confronting the modern age.

This thesis has been divided into eight chapters. In the Introductory chapter the works under study and the original authors along with the translators have been introduced.

The second chapter ‘Translation Theories’ deals with the different theories and procedures of translation. The texts included in the study are briefly analysed in the light of theories and procedures adopted by the respective translators.
‘Social Milieu – The ‘Decreed’ Backdrop’, which constitutes the third chapter discusses the social backdrop against which the aforesaid works have been based. How the social linkage affects the cultural heritage, remains the main point of discussion.

‘Cultural Ethos in Character Portrayal’ is the focus of the fourth chapter which is based on the relationship between the characters and descriptive techniques, such as verbal and non-verbal actions, flat and round characters, and their roles in the unfolding of the plots. Vivid characters like Shanti, Kalyani, Mahendra, Jiban, Maharishi Satyendra, Shaila, Indir Thakrun, Durga, Opu, Shorbojaya, Horihor, Sashi, Kusum, Indrajit, Mansi, and many more hold the true cultural essence being the chief protagonists of the works discussed.

The fifth chapter, ‘Customs, Traditions, and Religious Beliefs’, explores the manners and customs which affected the characters and also how they responded to the same. The religious beliefs and traditions of the literate and the illiterate, the rich and the poor, are closely linked to their concept of philosophical justification. These have the merits of creating an atmosphere of a real, vibrant, and pulsating India where mysticism and philosophy cast a unique spell on the characters.

‘Cultural Conflict’ as the sixth chapter seeks to analyse the real inner conflict ripping apart the souls of the ailing hearts bound by invisible chains of socio-moral values. The characters find themselves at the crossroad where they are unable to break away the rules of society. The more they try to free themselves, the more they are trapped in the web of complacency.
The seventh chapter ‘Bengali Dialect’ deals with the use of language quintessentially Bengali which reflects the true flavour of the culture. Dialect is an integral part of the literature. The use of dialect gives the first hand feel of the respective culture.

This thesis concludes with a summing-up of the foregoing discussions of the earlier chapters. The conclusion strongly proclaims the essential role of culture in enabling the generations, which have drifted from the path of moral values, to reaffirm a meaningful existence. Literature in translation paves the way for the rejuvenation of the glorious reminiscent past with strong values deeply entrenched in cultural backgrounds.

For the sake of clarity and convenience, the five texts form the further subdivisions of the afore-mentioned chapters.

The present work is a probe into a relatively new area of research that is unexplored since little work has been done in this field. Delving into this new study promises to be both interesting and fascinating. This study will be a meaningful contribution since comprehensive research has not been done in this area. This subject has a lot of potential in terms of academic viability.