

ABSTRACT

THE TRANSFORMATION OF EUROPEAN ROMANTICISM IN ABANINDRANATH:

A STUDY OF HIS IDEAS AND WORKS

While defining his aesthetic principles, Abanindranath Tagore (1871-1951) notes that the artistic world which is not alive with imagination is fallacious. It is unreal and fragile like the reflection of the world on a bubble. Such an aesthetic formulation, where art refuses to act as reflector, derives its essence from specific notions about imagination, originality and a certain quality of thought that Abanindranath considers as major determinants of an artistic as well as literary creation. In evaluating the creative principle, adopted by the author (the identity particularly to be explored), we find that it clearly resembles what we term as 'romantic'. This thesis attempts a study of such 'romantic' bent in Abanindranath's writings. It tries to understand Abanindranath's reception of the ideals of European Romanticism and analyse how the author-artist transforms these ideals to suit his own idiom.

While locating the romantic principles in Abanindranath, the questions of why Abanindranath's aesthetics can be read in terms of the 'romantic', in what way can his identity as a 'nationalist' be termed romantic, if the author-artist can be labelled as propagator of Oriental art and aesthetics and how does Abanindranath, with his 'romantic' inclination, enter a 'modernity' of 'Indian' aesthetics by transforming European Romanticism have been addressed. In exploring the 'romantic' in Abanindranath's literary works, *Baageswari Shilpa Prabandhabali* has been used as a theoretical framework for valuable insights into the 'romantic' in the author-artist.

By trying to interpret Abanindranath's '*kalpanar hystiria*' (hysteria of imagination) as the language of a 'literature of contact', a 'creole' that 'lacks in structure' this thesis depicts how the author-artist uses the tenets of Romanticism to define a colonial realm. In thus

considering Abanindranath's employment of 'romantic' aesthetics, as an avenue to understand a number of other critical aspects, an attempt is also made to reaffirm what Northrop Frye means when he declares— "Our art has passed beyond Romanticism, but our criticism is still largely in it".