

SYNOPSIS

Submitted along with the Ph.D thesis titled

“Representation of Medics in British and Bengali Literatures (the 1850s- the 1950s) : A Comparative Study”

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This dissertation looks into the different ideas behind the “doctor’s dilemma” of securing a role within the text, explored from the Western or especially “Victorian” perspective on the one hand, and the Indian perspective on the other. A comparative approach has been used to explore the primary texts, some of them representing the troubled role of the doctor in Victorian literature, and the rest reflecting the roles of some doctors in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Bengali literature. Issues like social doctoring, psychiatry and metaphysical healing, bioethics, imperial doctoring and its counter-discourses, medicine and gender, and the doctor-patient relationship viewed against a larger vision of life and death have been discussed in the chapters of the present dissertation. Texts in English range from Dickens’ *Bleak House* and George Eliot’s *Middlemarch* to Aldous Huxley’s science-fictional works like *Brave New World* and *Ape and Essence*; whereas in Bengali literature, doctors or medical characters have been represented in texts as varied as Tagore’s *Dakghar*, Manik Bandyopadhyay’s *Putul Nacher Itikatha* and Banaphul’s *Agniswar*, to name a few. Throughout the research, there has been an attempt to explore certain questions, one of them asking how far the philosophical or spiritual pursuit of cure can contradict or qualify the worldly notions of failure and success concerning the curative role of the doctor, in a pathological sense. Another important question, which is rather embedded in the comparative nature of the research-topic can be framed thus: Is it possible to

find any point of reconciliation between the two traditions (Western and Indian), concerning the doctor's role within the text? Thus the present research seeks to deal with a relatively less explored area of comparative medical humanities through an intercultural study of doctors, disease and cure represented in the chosen texts.