***GITANJALI*: AN EXALTED MANIFESTATION OF BUDDHIST AESTHETICS**

I envisage this project – that I'm pursuing during my tenure of Associateship at IIAS, Shimla – as a book that would tentatively consist of ten chapters. They are as follows:

(1) Philosophy and Literature

(2) The Universal 'Creed' of Buddhism

(3) The Mind of the East and Buddhism

(4) Literature as an Aesthetic of the Sublime

(5) The Manifestation of Buddhist Aesthetics and Modern Indian Literature

(6) Identifying Such Aesthetics in Modern Bengali Literature

(7) The Aesthetic Rabindranath

(8) Buddhist Aesthetics and Rabindranath

(9) The Ontological Rabindranath and the Literature of Man

(10) '*He it is, the innermost one'*: The Poet in Search of the Transcendental Essence Within/The Universal *Gitanjali*and its Buddhist Aesthetics

In my **first spell** of Associateship at the Institute, that is from 1st July, 2018 to 31st July, 2018, I intend to complete the first four chapters, in the **second spell**, that is from 1st July, 2019 to 31st July, 2019, I wish to write the three subsequent chapters, and in the **third** spell, that is from 1st July, 2020 to 31st July, 2020, I aim to do the rest of the three chapters.

This is to submit the first four chapters that I have completed in my **first spell** – 1st July, 2018 to 31st July, 2018 – that may well, at least so do I suppose, be taken as a full paper, entitled 'Philosophy, Literature, Buddhism and The Mind of the East', on which I have worked during the said period of time.

PHILOSOPHY, LITERATURE, BUDDHISM AND THE MIND OF THE EAST

I

PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE

I certainly feel myself to be in a perplexing condition of an angst given the fact that there already exists a sizeable oeuvre of writings on the philosophy of literature and a demonstration of such a relationship in varied literary and performative works and representations. Any attempt to begin a discussion on the very category of 'literature' is, more often than not, confounding since it has been looked at and approached in different ways that include conceptualizations like 'criticism', 'metacriticism', 'literary criticism', 'critical theory', 'critical philosophy', 'literary history', 'literary theory', 'poetics', 'hermeneutics' and so on. Again, literature has also been analyzed from multifarious vantage points including those of the social, sometimes the sociological, the historical, the political, the cultural, the psychological, the psychoanalytical, the linguistic, the rhetorical and the stylistic. Now, the question is, how do we identify the 'philosophical' amidst the interplay of these approaches. Is it a question of a hidden essence or an issue of methodology? Or, in other words, is it essentially metaphysical or architecturally formalist? It perhaps, beyond all the above-mentioned considerations, implies an attempt to comprehend and grasp the nature of reality around us and, in this supreme task, literature serves to somewhat reify nature in all its possible manifestations. Whether we talk about, science, history, the human mind and its functions, it is that intrinsic value that underlines everything.

Having said that, I would now try to look at the two distinctive categories here – the philosophy 'of' literature and the philosophy 'in' literature. The evident prepositional interpolations are sometimes more baffling than what they seem to be in actuality, since they could have certain implications that are not only different, but also wholly oppositional. Philosophy 'in' literature would largely encapsulate the philosophical explorations that any good piece of literature is expected to allow, for instance, it is not difficult to identify strains of existentialism in the literature of Sartre and Camus, mysticism and, sometimes, disillusionment in Blake's poetry, pantheism and the worship of Mother Nature in Wordsworth's work, a philosophy of human destiny in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* or a notion of divine providence and a celebration of eternal goodness in Milton's *Paradise Lost* and so on. On the other hand, when we speak of the other category, that is the philosophy 'of' literature, we usually mean the innate idea of universality that a creative piece of writing or, for that matter, any other imaginative form of representational art is grounded in or imbued with. It somewhat also entails a search for the 'ideal' through the 'reflectional'. As Albert William Levi, in his authoritative *Literature, Philosophy and the Imagination*, precisely puts it:

> Speculation about the ideal has its own rules. Like empirical research, it strives after unification, although it lacks the discipline of the principles of experience. Nevertheless, says Lange [F. A. Lange], only in "creation" in the narrower sense of the word, in *poetry*, is the ground of reality consciously abandoned. In thought form may have an edge over content, but in poetry it is completely dominant. "The poet in the free play of his spirit creates a world to his own liking, in order to impress more vividly upon the easily manageable material a form which has its own intrinsic value and its importance independently of the problems of knowledge."[1]

[1] Albert William Levi, *Literature, Philosophy and the Imagination*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962, p. 26.

In other words, a very important faculty of the mind, called 'intuition', is at work whereby the poet or, for that matter, any creative persona, brings his subjectivity to bear on this world of objects, that he seeks to give an expression to. Again, 'literary expression' demands a specialized faculty by which the objective of creative writing is achieved. It is, both semantically and stylistically, different from the 'expression' or the 'language' of other non-literary discourses. To put it simply, the former aims for a metaphysical perception of natural phenomena and the latter seeks to arrive at a materialistic understanding of the experience of man and the world. But, however dichotomous the standpoints may seem to be, it may admittedly be said that both endeavour to cognitively achieve not only a mere semanticity, that is often positivist, but also a significant point of ethicality, that is not only ideological but also irreducible, imperishable and universal appealing to the inner depths of humanity, whether through 'figurative representations of the entire truth'[2] or through positivistic experimentations of the material reality. The interesting note in this is that both entail imaginative freedom and epistemological formulations. Hence, when we are trying to identify the very idea of philosophicality in literature, in particular, we need to bear in mind the 'synthetic activity'[3] that the authorial mind undertakes. Also important here is to take a cognizance of the fact of what Aristotle meant by his theory of the tragic 'catharsis'. As Levi quotes in this regard:

> "The more freely synthesis exerts its function, the more aesthetic becomes the image of the world." The imagination turns even the shapelessness of fact and the uselessness of suffering into a world of art.[4]

We, therefore, may say that on the face of such apparent antinomies between scientific understanding and imaginative perception, both the 'cultures of the mind' entail

[2] *Ibid*., p. 28.
[3] *Ibid*., p. 26.
[4] *Ibid*., p. 27.

anthropomorphic as well as anthropocentric conceptualizations about the universe along with a search for truth, and both 'breathe the atmosphere of mutuality, of a magnanimity which envisages science and literature as a kind of dual monarchy jointly sovereign for men's minds and sensibilities'.[5]

Truly contextual to the discussion so far would be to talk, not so much in profuse details though since that does not presently constitute the general objective of this project, about Kant's *Critique of Judgment* being in a conceptual disagreement with his *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the latter work, Kant sounds to be paradoxically metaphysical when he claims a positivistic culmination of metaphysics itself, the feasibility of which is something that he himself is sceptical about. In the former, he envisages a 'logic of illusion', something that is starkly in contradistinction with 'pure reason'. While it is seldom possible to say whether Kant's formulations – concerning 'the scientific, the moral, and the poetic activities of the mind'[6] not to be independent and non-identical functions – could be considered as an outré generalization or not, we have to say that 'his general account of the imagination is too restricted, too confined in its position as a mere instrument in the service of scientific knowledge'.[7] The expression 'judgment' perhaps implies the only category by which a certain distinction between the realms of science and the literary arts can be discerned from the Kantian perspective. Two chief ideas that can get us somewhat closer, if not directly to the phenomenon of literature, but at least tangentially to the understanding and appreciation of literature and the arts, are 'pleasure' and 'purposivenes'. For Kant, 'intuition' was a very important idea since he felt that the 'purposiveness' of the world or, for that matter, nature originates from our 'Reflective

[5] *Ibid*., p. 3.
[6] *Ibid*., p. 15.
[7] *Ibid*., p. 15.

Judgment'.[8] This 'purposivensss' of nature, for him, was 'a transcendental principle of the faculty of Judgment'.[9] Of course, this is an instance of the signatorial Kantian terminology since another conceptual equivalent would be 'the myth-making faculty' in man, as was envisaged by Bergson and Cassirer.

The apparent contradiction between the claims and postulates of scientific understanding and judgmental perception, the former trying to 'make a connected and unified experience out of our perceptions of nature'[10] and the latter being about the power of 'Judgment' to read 'into nature' the same connections, leads to the antinomical objectivity-subjectivity supposition. What we derive from Kant, in this regard, is that the faculty of judgment lies deeply rooted in 'creative imagination' which is 'as worthy of respect as is the Understanding itself'.[11] Again, such imagination cannot be taken to perform a purely 'synthetic' function that seemingly leads to the unification of all perceptions, thereby constructing human experience from a cognitive stance. The formation of a structure of knowledge cannot only be brought about by cognition of the natural phenomena. Such cognitivism may lead to a scientific understanding of phenomena but may not be able to bring about an aesthetic conceptualization of nature and the world that potentially fosters in a moral awakening. In fact, it would not be proper to consider the first two Critiques, that is those of Pure Reason and Practical Reason, in separation from the third, that is that of Judgment, since the imagination on which the faculty of judgment rests is 'the capacity of a finite, discursive intelligence to work up the material of experience from its diverse elements into something which can be known or judged'.[12] It is an intrinsic human potentiality from which

[8] *Ibid*., p. 16.
[9] *Ibid*., p. 16.
[10] *Ibid*., p. 17.
[11] *Ibid*., p. 17.
[12] Sarah L. Gibbons, *Kant's Theory of Imagination: Bridging Gaps in Judgment and Experience*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 2.

not only is judgment produced, but also is literature generated. Literature, therefore, is the resultant of that 'productive' imagination which is transcendental in nature. Though ideas are drawn from the world of nature, they are synthesized not only cognitively, but also, more significantly, imaginatively, before an aesthetic understanding of nature and experience is achieved. Hence, literature needs to be productively conceived or 'imagined' and it is not, for that reason, a merely 'reproductive' formulation of the mind. The phenomenal world is, then, an ideological or an *a-priori* or a Platonic given which is, thereafter, brought to undergo the process of synthesis in order to conceive of a literary experience. A text draws its materials from the empirical conditions of man but this does not imply a non-existence of that transcendentality or 'the original unity of apperception'.[13] The author has to bring his intuition in to play on universal phenomena before he goes on to creatively interpret human experience. His writing is, hence, mediated by his own perception and interpretation of life and its situations. The imagination performs an activity that helps the author to create a supra-real world in which he often makes human subjects to participate, as in fiction. But, poetry may be more subjective and introspective so far as the poet's perception of an idea or a set of ideas is concerned. He often expresses the world through metaphors and metonymies – an activity that entails an intense sublimization of objects that are, at once, available to our direct or primary level of perception. This process of metaphorization results from the transcendentalizing faculty of poetic imagination that allows the poet to go beyond the limited nature of immediate perception and construct a new form of knowledge of the world and its objects. This creative mediation is of supreme significance for literature since it does not merely record experience, but rather attempts to develop a firm system of values that all humanity is universally tied with. What Crowther states about human creativity, in his *The Kantian Sublime*, is worthy to mention here:

[13] *Ibid*., p. 25.

> … we feel an authentic astonishment at what human creativity can achieve. This harmonious tension between what is perceptually overwhelming and what is nevertheless known to be artifice provides … the basis for one aspect of a specifically artistic sense of the sublime …[14]

Literature, perhaps, then seeks to provide that 'unbounded expansion of the concept'.[15] This is perhaps the greatest 'cognitive' benefit to be derived from nature, since our aesthetic delight is derived not only from 'instruction' but from that expansion of our mental horizons. Hence, the philosophy lies in the birth of a hitherto unconceived vision that leads the reader to have 'a juster, clearer, more detailed, more refined understanding'[16] of life and the world. The reader comes to perceive the author's compassionate view of humanity and has a glimpse of that truth which is wholly different from the 'truth' of the scientist. Different authors may have different means to reach that truth, but it is essentially that point of sublimity that they aspire to achieve. This truth may best be understood by an empathetic involvement with a certain text, since the text is no longer a mere source either of information or of 'inferential knowledge about something',[17] but rather becomes the source of knowledge that can be acquired only by means of a realization of 'living through'.[18] This very process of 'living through' develops a 'refined awareness' and a 'moral insight' perhaps no other experience can offer, and therein lies the philosophical worth or value of a creative work of literature:

> The value of a work of art as a work of art is intrinsic to the work in the sense that it is (determined by) the intrinsic value of the experience the work offers …. It should be

[14] P. Crowther, *The Kantian Sublime*, Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1989, pp. 153-154.
[15] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. C. Meredith, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964, pp. 314-315, quoted in Gibbons, *Kant's Theory of Imagination: Bridging Gaps in Judgment and Experience*, p. 141.
[16] Peter Lamarque, *The Philosophy of Literature*, Malden, MA, Oxford, UK and Victoria, Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2009, p. 240.
[17] *Ibid*., p. 245.
[18] Dorothy Walsh, *Literature and Knowledge*, Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1969, p. 101, quoted in Lamarque, *The Philosophy of Literature*, p. 245.

> remembered that the experience a work of art offers is an experience *of the work itself*, and the valuable qualities of a work are qualities *of the work*, not of the experience it offers. It is the nature of the work that endows the work with whatever artistic value it possesses; this nature is what is experienced in undergoing the experience the work offers; and the work's artistic value is the intrinsic value of this experience. So a work of art is valuable as art if it is such that the experience it offers is intrinsically valuable.[19]

II

THE UNIVERSAL 'CREED' OF BUDDHISM

Buddhism, traditionally thought to be a religion, in actuality hails the religion of man. It is a concept that seeks to overthrow 'authority', 'convention' and 'social sanction'[20] and to hail the 'creed' of humanity. The social dogmas, concerning Brahmanism, and the much-too-practised religious rites found little place in the entire discourse. This a-ritualistic and a-Brahmanic philosophy served to disavow all 'speculative meanderings'[21] concerning the doxological rubric of religion. It distances man from the 'discouragement' and 'despondency'[22] of his life-experiences and leads him to the path of happiness and the final *nirvana*. One has only himself to recline to in order to reach the highest point of spiritual attainment. The distinctive features that mark the philosophy are its empiricality, its scientificity, its pragmatism and its psychologism. Its undeterred postulation of 'direct validation'[23] and experientiality aim to keep the highest faith in man. Hence, the Buddha's enlightenment may neither be taken to mean 'a

[19] Malcolm Budd, *Values of Art: Pictures, Poetry and Music*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Press, 1995, pp. 4-5, quoted in Lamarque, *The Philosophy of Literature*, p. 266.
[20] Sanghamitra Sharma, *Legacy of the Buddha: The Universal Power of Buddhism*, New Delhi: Bhavana Books and Prints, 2001, p. 40.
[21] *Ibid*., p. 41.
[22] *Ibid*., p. 41.
[23] *Ibid*., p. 42.

flourishing of political freedom, [an] artistic innovation, [a] scientific development and philosophical progress',[24] as it does in Western intellectual history, nor be considered as 'a mere liberation from the oppression of a particular ideology, but a liberation from cyclic existence,[25] in accordance with a Buddhist interpretation of the concept. It was perhaps a supreme attempt to awaken man to discover his inner divinity, inner strength and inner poise, an attempt to redeem man from the suffering universe, and an attempt to appeal to the inmost nobility in man so that a unified world may be ushered.

Buddha's time could not adequately perceive and inculcate the values his teachings intended to imbue man with and to enlighten him to the ideals of 'liberation' from his 'tedious confines, where we identify enhanced awareness of our inner strength, where we actualize our potential, where we articulate our article of faith and where mental journey moves on our psychological path'.[26] We can, also, at this point bring in the idea of 'self-transcendence'[27] here from the *Gita*, which offers us the realization that the notion of the 'I' or the 'I-ness' in us is 'verily the product of the mind'.[28] Man can rise beyond his situational prescriptions only by dint of his psychological freedom from the 'discord and disharmony, division and disintegration and delusion and deceive'[29] of his physical surroundings. It is the mind of man that the Buddha uplifts trying, in the process, to liberate him and bring about moral fortitude. Hence, I would like to see this phenomenon as being rather 'anthropo-centric' than being 'theo-centric'. It consists of

[24] Jay L. Garfield, 'Enlightenment and the Enlightenment', in *Buddhism, World Culture and Human Values* (ed.) Pabitrakumar Roy, Sarnath, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 2009, p. 34.
[25] *Ibid*., pp. 34-35.
[26] M. K. Pandey, 'Fine-tuning Inner Space for Value-Added Vision', in in *Buddhism, World Culture and Human Values* (ed.) Pabitrakumar Roy, p. 264.
[27] *Ibid*., p. 265.
[28] *Ibid*., p. 265.
[29] *Ibid*., p. 265.

a theology of man that, in its turn, shows him the 'path of deliverance that was for the first time accessible to all'[30]:

> It is intended to enable his followers to evolve into a different kind of human being, cured of carrying in perpetuity the burden of life's unchanging laws of existence.

> Living as we do in a highly complex age, dependent on technology, buffered by possessions and swamped by a sea of media information, it is hard for us to imagine the towering influence this extraordinary man, who opted to live a life of those who live on the margins of society, had upon his time, and indeed upon all of subsequent history. At home in the wilderness and on the road, living a life of stark simplicity, dedicated to spiritual striving and teaching, his power and spiritual authority was immense.[31]

III

THE MIND OF THE EAST AND BUDDHISM

In Eastern philosophy, the soul is considered to be supreme and the 'fundamental reality' and the site for an 'identification of God with the world-soul, or soul of universal Nature'[32] – a belief that is 'the outcome of a movement of thought which is at once natural and logical'.[33] The soul is that essential divinity that is envisaged as the unique truth, which implies that other extraneous ideas are equally 'shadows' or are only 'unreal' reflections of that truth. Thus, this theology consists of the metaphysics of one unified soul that is indestructible, irreducible and imperishable. This 'soul' or the 'consciousness' is the ground or the *tabula rasa* on which the impressions of our experiences are recorded. The experiences are momentary and fleeting,

[30] Sharma, *Legacy of the Buddha: The Universal Power of Buddhism*, p. 36.
[31] *Ibid*., pp. 36-37.
[32] *The Creed of Buddha*, by the author of *The Creed of Christ*, Delhi: Seema Publications, First Indian Edition, 1975, p. 3.
[33] *Ibid*., p. 3.

impermanent and transitory, and, therefore, it is the soul that is eternal and all other things compared to it are but physical and, hence, mortal. The universality of the soul can, thus, be understood as the point of centrality of all experience. According to the author of *The Creed of Buddha*:

> The Soul, which is at once One and Many, is the real bond of union among men; and all communal sentiments, such as attachment to country, clan, or family, are ultimately rooted in the sense of oneness in and through the Universal Self.[34]

The philosophy of the East has always been underpinned by this metaphysics of anti-materiality and anti-individuality. The ideological incarceration of the soul within the confines of the body is but a corporeal materialization of the soul that is eventually united with the Universal Soul on the mortal effacement of the body. The process can no better be explained than by what I quote here:

> Beginning its individualized career as a spiritual germ, it passes through innumerable lives on its way to the goal of spiritual maturity. The development of the germ-soul takes the form of the gradual expansion of its consciousness and the gradual universalization of its life. As it nears its goal, the chains of individuality relax their hold upon it; and at last, – with the final extinction of egoism, with the final triumph of selflessness, with the expansion of consciousness till it has become all-embracing, – the sense of separateness entirely ceases, and the soul finds its true self, or, in other words, becomes fully and clearly conscious of its oneness with the living Whole.[35]

The 'psychology' of the East has always embraced this idea of a consummate unification with the Universal Soul which is also envisaged as the 'absolute truth'. Such an experience would be transcendental, transpersonal and emancipatory. There is a complete negation or disavowal of the

[34] *Ibid*., p. 11.
[35] *Ibid*., pp. 15-16.

individual self that seeks to or, at least, should seek to unite with the 'Universal Self' – something that is considered to be 'the highest imaginable type of knowledge'.[36]

It is here that the Eastern domain of thought was greatly contributed to by the Buddhist ideology. It was perhaps that knowledge which the former was waiting for. As Dr. J. Parthasarathi says in his 'Preface' to the book *Buddhist Themes in Modern Indian Literature*:

> It was ancient India's unparalleled privilege to get Lord Buddha as its first Emancipator-Reformer. He came into this land centuries before the Christian era, preaching a message of deliverance for suffering humanity, flowing from the depths of his untold penances. The irresistible enchantment of the personality of the Master and the appeal of his teachings of compassion, non-violence and brotherhood won over vast populations to his new faith called Buddhism after him.[37]

It was a difficult task to accomplish since it is perplexing to teach the masses about the nature of reality and the perception of truth in an ordinarily perceivable way. The primary reason for this is that knowledge of philosophy and truth is not within the grasp of plebeian comprehension. Any attempt to explain the metaphysical nuances of these ideas would seem to be esoteric, undecipherable and, hence, unreal and even preposterous. Thus, such seemingly recondite formulations may seem to be sometimes awry, sceptical, incredulous and dogmatic.

It is for this reason that there was a necessity for 'the real apprehension of ultimate truth …. The actual expansion of the soul, in response to the forces in Nature that are making for its development …'.[38] As the soul grows, the consciousness also does. It is the vision that needs to

[36]*Ibid*., p. 41.
[37] Dr. J. Parthasarathi, 'The Response to Buddhism in Modern India: An Editorial View', in *Buddhist Themes in Modern Indian Literature* (ed.) Dr. J. Parthasarathi, Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, April 1992, p. XIII.
[38]*The Creed of Buddha*, p. 51.

expand and grow wider and man needs to see things clearly. Horizons remain limited unless are explored with an unimpeded perspicacity.

In 6th-centry India was born the momentous Buddha who took up the challenge to illumine the suffering minds of the teeming millions who were hitherto unawakened, ignorant, uninstructed and were incapable of 'mental discipline'.[39] He strove to discover the path of deliverance from the present cyclic order of life and offer a clear vision of the fact that an 'unenlightened soul'[40] would have to pass through a multiplicity of earth-lives the objective of which is to lead the soul through the various stages of its development. With the ideals of 'kindness, gentleness, unselfishness'[41] and 'compassion',[42] he appealed to the highest form of nobility in man so that he can reap the seed of universal love and sympathy to cast away his desire for earthly and material accomplishments. The teachings aimed to inspire man to seek spiritual freedom by engaging in compassionate deeds as well as to awaken him to act in accordance with the inner moral law of self-transcendence. The element of experientiality in such teachings also brings to our mind the law of *Karma* which influences the realities of the subsequent births – something that man cannot but be circumspect about. This should not be considered as an attempt to generate a sense of fear – particularly so far as a set of teachings, that aims to give birth to individual freedom, is concerned – since injudicious and inconsiderate actions, in accordance with the natural law, are certain to 'affect the material conditions of our own and of other lives; … produce social consequences which have a wide circle of disturbance; … affect, for good or for evil, our own characters of those with whom we are much in contact'.[43]

[39] *Ibid*., p. 69.
[40] *Ibid*., p. 72.
[41] *Ibid*., p. 87.
[42] *Ibid*., p. 87.
[43] *Ibid*., p. 98.

The primary objective, hence, of all action is to bring any form of individual desire, that seeks to serve 'the lower self'[44] and that 'proves itself to be evil by causing ceaseless suffering to mankind',[45] to a complete extinction. Any action, again, that impedes the process of the struggle of the self to identify with the 'Universal Self', is unworthy, unwholesome, undesirous and iniquitous. Man should be able to unchain himself from the fetters of the 'self',[46] 'delusion',[47] 'sensuality'[48] and 'ill-will'[49] and cultivate such a virtue that 'rewards itself by strengthening the will, by subduing unworthy desire, by generating knowledge of reality, by giving inward peace'.[50] The nurturance of such a virtue constitutes the ethical philosophy of the Buddha, who was perspicacious and wise enough to raise the human mind to the level where it can know the phenomenal world with every freedom that is needed but, at the same time, was circumspect enough not to contradict the natural law that begets suffering, in some way or the other, through a conscious or even unconscious choice of a wrongful action. Hence, freedom here does not imply a rise above the natural law or a choice that could lead to a form of disharmony with the basic element of inner goodness and foster, instead, indignity, evil, dishonor and impiety, forbidding man to know his 'Real Self'[51] that is hidden in him and that comprises the very essence of his existence as a human.

Thus, the Buddha through his long journey as a Teacher-Meditator-Mediator appealed to man's better being and preached on the inward journey that needs to be undertaken in order to attain the highest goal of wisdom. The fundamental sense of reality was to be cultivated and the

[44] *Ibid*., p. 80.
[45] *Ibid*., p. 80.
[46] *Ibid*., p. 89.
[47] *Ibid*., p. 89.
[48] *Ibid*., p. 89.
[49] *Ibid*., p. 90.
[50] *Ibid*., p. 108.
[51] *Ibid*., p. 100.

Master attempted to do just that. Self-seeking and carnal desires are not only preposterous but also fruitless, since the very objects of desire are impermanent and are, for this reason, unreal or are mere 'shadows' or 'reflections' of the real. Hence, if the transcendental divine cannot be envisaged, this 'unreal reality' shall ever lead to the path of fallacy, delusion, dilemma and unfulfilment. Perceptibly here, a Platonic idea of 'mimesis' seems to be at work, and the soul and the body remain, forever, only metaphysical conceits without any possibility of self-actualization or self-emancipation. We do, at this point, also feel, and that too very importantly, that the Buddha's ideals concerning the highest spiritual attainment come to meet the Upanishadic perception of the Universal Soul and the individual soul. The two psychologies intersect where we find the Buddha conceptualizing a rise above one's materialistic desires and subjective considerations, and an absolute 'subjugation'[52] and 'extinction of desire'[53] (so that the soul is not kept in darkness about its own 'true nature and destiny'[54] and is freed from this 'whirlpool of birth'[55]), an inculcation of self-control, sympathy, kindness, compassion and good will, an attempt to dispel 'the last taint of egoism and the last shadow of ignorance'[56] and an attainment, that is how, of an 'imaginable bliss',[57] an awareness about the consequences of one's action and also about the fact that 'character is destiny', the fruitlessness of 'ceremonial observances',[58] and an investment of 'a tremendous burden on the human will'[59] in the sense that 'it rested with them [men], and with them [men] only, to determine what course the process of their [men's] development should take, and how long their pilgrimage on earth (from life to life) should

[52]*Ibid*., p. 113.
[53]*Ibid*., p. 113.
[54]*Ibid*., pp. 113-114.
[55]*Ibid*., p. 114.
[56]*Ibid*., pp. 114-115.
[57]*Ibid*., p. 115.
[58]*Ibid*., p. 115.
[59]*Ibid*., p. 101.

last'.[60]The significant strain of identicality may be found in the spiritual idealism that runs through the veins of the teachings of the Buddha and the 'highest expression[s]'[61] of the Upanishads. Both have the philosophical grounding of the suppression of all forms of 'egoism',[62] 'all the desires and delusions on which it feeds, and breaking, one by one, the fetters of the surface life and the lower self'.[63]

The fact that accounts for the tremendous impact of Buddhist philosophy on not only the spiritual, but also the cultural, literary and intellectual, atmosphere of India is the element of pragmatism that it brought to transform the conduct of men to whom the Upanishadic ideals appeared to be esoteric, too far-fetched and too exalted to be realistic and practicable. This 'chasm' was awaited to be filled by a positivist manifestation in the everyday life of man. The innermost essence needed to be given an expression to or, in other words, be translated into ethical action. The lofty metaphysicality, intuitionality, poeticality and symbolicality of the Upanishads and the profound empiricism of the Buddhist 'creed' have, nevertheless, served to enrich Eastern thought in ways unparalleled in the history of philosophy of the world. Whether the 'austere inwardness'[64] of the Buddhist metaphysical system follows directly from the philosophy of the Upanishads or not is something that cannot be wholly serendipitous, since we can barely be in disagreement with what is encapsulated in the following:

> Even if the age in which Buddha lived had been separated by a thousand years from the age which gave birth to the stories of Brahma and the Gods, and Nachikêtas and Death, we should feel justified, on internal evidence, in concluding that Buddha had somehow or other come under the influence of the ideas which those stories enshrined. But we need

[60]*Ibid*., p. 101.
[61]*Ibid*., p. 112.
[62]*Ibid*., p. 112.
[63]*Ibid*., p. 112.
[64]*Ibid*., p. 110.

> not trust to internal evidence only. We know that the spiritual atmosphere of India in Buddha's day was impregnated with the ideas of the Upanishads. We know that those ideas must have appealed with peculiar force to a thinker of Buddha's exalted nature (whether he ended by emancipating himself from their influence or not).[65]

These metaphysical, yet authoritative, expositions of the Buddhist 'creed' and Upanishadic wisdom also had an overpowering influence on modern Indian literature – another aspect of this study that I shall deal with in its subsequent part.

IV

LITERATURE AS AN AESTHETIC OF THE SUBLIME

Any attempt to consider literature as a philosophical, a cultural, an artistic and an ideological artifact would entail a corresponding consideration of a literary text as an 'aesthetic' product that is able to disseminate manifold kinds of pleasure quintessential to the underlying value that the work is imbued with. By dint of this artistic worth – though here I am not going into what exactly comprises such a worth – a piece of work and, more particularly, a piece of text, does intrinsically allow for an aesthetic assessment that, in its turn, is a test of its worth. I would, here, bring into context what BerysGaut says in his article 'The Ethical Criticism of Art':

> In the narrow sense of the term, aesthetic value properties are those that ground a certain kind of sensory or contemplative pleasure or displeasure. In this sense, beauty, elegance, gracefulness, and their contraries are aesthetic value properties. However, the sense adopted here is broader: I mean by "aesthetic value" the value of an object *qua* work of art, that is, its artistic value.[66]

[65] *Ibid*., pp. 116-117.
[66] BerysGaut, 'The Ethical Criticism of Art', in *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition: An Anthology* (eds.) Peter Lamarque and Stein Haugom Olsen, Oxford: Blackwell, 2003, pp. 283-284, quoted in

What perhaps is more significant in such an aesthetic assessment of a work of art is the content or, to be precise, the nature of employment of a specialized use of language within a textual structure, and not necessarily the form, of a given text. A certain level of internalization or, in other words, a close association with the value of the text is, more often than not, demanded. A kind of an identification on the part of the reader or the literary critic or the art critic is necessary for him to see into a work of art. This identification may not only be limited to an appreciation of the aspect of performativity of the language, that may be constitutive of rhetorical figures of speech, poetic imagery, rhyme patterns, uses of metre or any other nuanced linguistic feature, but also of the 'holistic grasp of its achievement'.[67] Holism is especially true in the perception of artistic works since there are no pre-determined or explicitly definable categories by which a definitive standpoint can be taken when we go on to analyze the aesthetic value consisting of categories that are neither generalizable nor, for this reason, universal, since they do not possess an 'intrinsic aesthetic value'.[68] They rather need to be put to a kind of an 'aesthetic use' by means of artistic expression that lends them the perceivable quality of aestheticity. The only, somewhat general, terms that can be used would be the 'depth' and 'breadth' of a work of art:

> The profundity of any artistic interpretation and evaluation must, in turn, be regarded as a function of the "depth" and "breadth" we predicate of the artist's normative insight …. The greatness of a work of art can be determined only by reference to *both* of these complementary criteria.[69]

Artistic imagination that is able to bring about a human import in a work is, in the most obvious sense, able to give birth to a humanistic piece of writing with a potential aesthetic

---

Lamarque, *The Philosophy of Literature*, p. 18. Originally published in *Aesthetics and Ethics* (ed.) Jerrold Levinson, Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 182-203.
[67]Lamarque, *The Philosophy of Literature*, p. 21.
[68]*Ibid*., p. 22.
[69] Jerome Stolnitz, *Aesthetics* (as a part of *Sources in Philosophy: A Macmillan Series* [General Editor] Lewis White Beck), New York: The Macmillan Company and London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1967, p. 75.

efficacy. Such a kind of writing would, for certain, be mediated by the artist's own sublime interpretations of the human condition. But, somewhat contrarily, we also do realize that 'Whatever the world of aesthetic contemplation may be, it is not the world of human business and passion: in it the chatter and tumult of material existence is unheard, or heard only as the echo of some more ultimate harmony ….'[70]

The topology of a work of art is, thus, metaphysical and complicated since the artist might have 'imagined everything and projected it into the painting'[71] and, equally diverse, are the forms of subjectivity of the literary critic and, hence, he comes to see the truth that constitutes the fundamental essence of the work in inconceivably and indiscriminately heterogeneous ways:

> One person is more pleased with the sublime; another with the tender; a third with raillery. One has a strong sensibility to blemishes, and is extremely studious of correctness: Another has a more lively feeling of beauties, and pardons twenty absurdities and defects for one elevated or pathetic stroke. The ear of this man is entirely turned towards conciseness and energy; that man is delighted with a copious, rich, and harmonious expression. Simplicity is affected by one; ornament by another. Comedy, tragedy, satire, odes, have each its partisans, who prefer that particular species of writing to all others. [It is plainly an error in a critic, to confine his approbation to one species or style of writing, and condemn all the rest. But it is almost impossible not to feel a predilection for that which suits our particular turn and disposition. Such preferences are innocent and unavoidable, and can never reasonably be the object of dispute, because there is no standard, by which they can be decided.][72]

[70]Stolnitz, *Aesthetics*, p. 60.
[71] Meyer Schapiro, 'The Still Life as a Personal Object – A Note on Heidegger and van Gogh', in *The Bloomsbury Anthology of Aesthetics* (eds.), Joseph Tanke and Colin McQuillan, New York, London, New Delhi and Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2012, p. 404.
[72] David Hume, 'On the Standard of Taste', in *The Bloomsbury Anthology of Aesthetics*, p. 196.

The aesthetic in art is, in essence, indicative of a silent appraisal of its beauty – a form of appreciation that needs a specialized training and perspicacity. The critic discovers meanings, from a work, that do not remain confined to seemingly limited textual contours. He constructs a world for himself – a space that is not only the dwelling place of his subjectivity but is also a trans-semantic ideality where he, in his turn, comes to create an onto-theology of his own that perhaps helps to posit a better world. The necessary element of ethicality, therefore, lies in these refined perceptions, in a Kantian sublimation of immediate sensations. It comprises the experience of the critic – the result of his distinctive confrontation with the text and the corollary of a unique synthesis between his 'empirical consciousness'[73] and his intuitive apperceptions. The work, then, allows for a spontaneous receptivity in developing an epistemological urge to see beyond 'empirical circumstances of individual[s] or social life'[74] on which the work primarily bases itself. The critic comes to cognize beyond his 'finite consciousness'[75] and 'the peculiarities of human thought'.[76] The work enables the creation of a new world in which an aesthetic contemplation transcendentalizes into a moral and ethical consciousness. Art enables, in this way, a 'categorical imperative', 'starting from primitive animism up to theological supranaturalism or mystical ineffability',[77] to be enacted by the practical, aesthetic and 'cultural human being'.[78] Art becomes a domicile for a multiplicity of 'transcendent functions of reason', by way of the critic's 'spiritual activity'[79] in search of 'the inconceivable mystery'[80] of all conscious phenomena. All art, therefore, have a teleological implication, in the sense that it is the implied 'telos' that counts for the hermeneutic urgency of a text along with its ontological, yet

[73] Sebastian Luft (ed.), *The Neo-Kantian Reader*, London and New York: Routledge, 2015, p. 319.
[74] *Ibid*., p. 319.
[75] *Ibid*., p. 320.
[76] *Ibid*., p. 320.
[77] *Ibid*., p. 321.
[78] *Ibid*., p. 320.
[79] *Ibid*., p. 323.
[80] *Ibid*., p. 323.

metaphysical, reality. The aestheticity lies both in the mind of the critic and at the core of the artist's work, that only seems to have a corporeal boundary to it. It may also be taken to liebeyond, perhaps sometimes not evenin the work itself, but somewhere outside or beyond its spatio-temporal reality – somewhere in the consciousness and in the psyche. In this sense, a work of art may not be a conscious reflection of the psyche, but a rather subconscious one. But, the work comes to possess a mind of its own consisting of the subconscious reflections of the artist and, hence, the artist himself becomes his work. It is this event of 'becomingness' that lends the work its life, its organicity, its ontology; the aesthetic is its theology – the 'transcendental essence'. The work evolves to take the shape of an aesthetic phenomenon after it has been conceived, represented and, thus, reified. But, its value lies in the negation of its reification, its tendentiality to impel, or even compel, the critic to remain in pursuit of the very sublimely concealed imaginaries that, when perceived, may usher in a 'cultural consciousness',[81] in a new world-view and a new 'ideal of humanity'.[82] Hence, the 'inner life forms'[83] are no longer the Kantian 'thing in itself', but rather are metaphysical illusions which the 'logos' cannot capture, incarcerate and perform. But, again seemingly contradictory though it may be, the ontology of the 'logos' – however elusive – cannot not be considered before 'seeing' or 'knowing', or coming to 'know', the metaphysics at work. The 'well-tempered whole'[84] of the work is rendered corporeally insubstantial, but is rather heightened by enlightened thinking to be the site for the formation of discursivity. Hence, the transcendentality of a work lies in its future discursivity as well or, in other words, in the epistemological alleys and avenues it leads the critic to traverse, in the very element of its beyondness in relation to the conditions that

[81] *Ibid*., p. 322.
[82] *Ibid*., p. 322.
[83] *Ibid*., p. 322.
[84] *Ibid*., p. 322.

occasioned its existence. The text becomes the site for the 'totality of all values of reason in an absolute unity',[85] whereby 'empirical consciousness' is transformed into a 'cultural and aesthetic consciousness'. The text is a piece of 'enlightened reason' and we, as critics of literature, can see it only by means of 'our little world of knowledge, willing, and formation'.[86] There is no fixed or definite law that can guide us to a formulaic proposition concerning the aesthetic value of a text which is a complex and heterogeneous structure within the domain of which various kinds of cognition are at work:

> … like the world of art, the world of empirical, spatio-temporal existence, and likewise the world of ethical values, is not "encountered" immediately, but rests on principles of formation that critical reflection discovers, and whose validity critical reflection demonstrates. Thus, art is no longer isolated among the kinds of consciousness; rather, art is that which presents the "principle" of these kinds and their relationships in a new sense.[87]

****

[85] *Ibid*., p. 270.
[86] *Ibid*., p. 270.
[87] *Ibid*., p. 232.

A Select Bibliography

Bhattacharyya, N. N., *Buddhism in the History of Indian Ideas*, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 1993.

Budd, Malcolm, *Values of Art: Pictures, Poetry and Music*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Press, 1995.

Chakrabarti, Shirshendu, *Towards an Ethics and Aesthetics of the Future: Rabindranath Tagore 1930-41*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2015.

Chakravarty, Chandrava and SnehaKarChaudhuri (eds.), *Tagore's Ideas of the New Woman: The Making and Unmaking of Female Subjectivity*, New Delhi: Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd., 2017.

Chatterjee, Bhabatosh, *Rabindranath Tagore and Modern Sensibility*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

The Creed of Buddha, by the author of *The Creed of Christ*, Delhi: Seema Publications, First Indian Edition, 1975.

Crowther, P., *The Kantian Sublime*, Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1989.

DasGupta, Uma, *Rabindranath Tagore: An Illustrated Life*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Datta, Swati, *Exploration in Tagore Translation*, Kolkata: K. P. Bagchi& Company, 2009.

Davids, T. W. Rhys, *Buddhism: Its History and Literature*, Third Edition Revised, New Delhi and Madras: Asian Educational Services, 2000.

Gibbons, Sarah L., *Kant's Theory of Imagination: Bridging Gaps in Judgment and Experience*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.

Heidegger, Martin, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. and introd. Albert Hofstadter, New York and Toronto: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1971.

Kant, Immanuel, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. C. Meredith, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964.

Lago, Mary and Ronald Warwick (eds.), *Rabindranath Tagore: Perspectives in Time*, Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: Macmillan, 1989.

Lamarque, Peter, *The Philosophy of Literature*, Malden, MA, Oxford, UK and Victoria, Australia: Blackwell Publishing, 2009.

Lamarque, Peter and Stein Haugom Olsen (eds.), *Aesthetics and the Philosophy of Art: The Analytic Tradition: An Anthology*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.

Levi, Albert William, *Literature, Philosophy and the Imagination*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962.

Levinson, Jerrold (ed.), *Aesthetics and Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Luft, Sebastian (ed.*), The Neo-Kantian Reader*, London and New York: Routledge, 2015.

Marks, Joel and Roger T. Ames, with a discussion by Robert C. Soloman, *Emotions in Asian Thought: A Dialogue in Comparative Philosophy*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995.

Newman, Karen, Jay Clayton and Marianne Hirsch, *Time and the Literary*, New York and Great Britain: Routledge, 2002.

Parkes, Graham (ed.), *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987.

Parthasarathi, Dr. J. (ed.), *Buddhist Themes in Modern Indian Literature*, Madras: Institute of Asian Studies, April 1992.

Ross, Stephen D., *Literature and Philosophy: An Analysis of the Philosophical Novel*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Division of Meredith Corporation, 1969.

Ray, Mohit K., *Studies in Literary Criticism*, vol. 2, New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers & Distributors (P) Ltd., 2010.

Roy, Pabitrakumar, *Mapping the Bodhicaryāvatāra: Essays on Mahāyana Ethics*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 2011.

Roy, Pabitrakumar (ed.), *Buddhism, World Culture and Human Values* (ed.), Sarnath, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 2009.

Sen, Amiya P. (trans. from the original Bengali with an Introduction), *Religion and Rabindranath Tagore: Select Discourses, Addresses, and Letters in Translation*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014.

Sharma, Sanghamitra, *Legacy of the Buddha: The Universal Power of Buddhism*, New Delhi: Bhavana Books and Prints, 2001.

Singh, Ajai Singh, *Rabindranath Tagore: His Imagery and Ideas*, Ghaziabad: VimalPrakashan, 1984.

Stolnitz, Jerome, *Aesthetics* (as a part of *Sources in Philosophy: A Macmillan Series* [General Editor] Lewis White Beck), New York: The Macmillan Company and London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1967.

Tanke, Joseph and Colin McQuillan(eds.), *The Bloomsbury Anthology of Aesthetics*, New York, London, New Delhi and Sydney: Bloomsbury, 2012.

Walsh, Dorothy, *Literature and Knowledge*, Middleton, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1969.

Wolfreys, Julian (ed.), *The Derrida Reader: Writing Performances*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998.

Woodhead, Linda, Christopher Partridge and HorokoKawanami (eds.), *Religions in the Modern World: Traditions and Transformations*, Third Edition, London and New York: Routledge, 2016.

****