Annadasankar with his various literary contributions has succeeded in carving out a permanent niche in the temple of fame within the domain of the 20th Century Bengali literature. Major part of his near hundred years long life was devoted to literary activities. During this long period he evinced great talents in many fields -- composition of rhymes and poetry, writing of novels, reformation of society and above all in the field of essay writing on diverse and wide-ranging topics. We have endeavoured in this lengthy dissertation to focus our attention on and examine some of the heights of his career as an essayist. It is to be borne in our mind that only some parts of this career have been evaluated in this paper. As a matter of fact, going beyond these, he expressed manifold talents on many other things.

Perhaps the main thrust of all discussions throughout the vast range of his essays is aimed at saving society, country and mankind in general from crises. Perhaps Annadasankar desired to rouse in man his spiritual and intelectual planes. He wished to raise everybody from his petty feelings of enmity, anger, superstition and littleness, a wish which stemmed from his essential humanism and his idea of the religion of man, and which turned out to be the most treasured thing in his life. Annadasankar's imagination creatively appropriated the quintessence of great cultural wealth which through centuries accepted ideas of liberality and humanism.
In this research paper we have, first of all, shed light on the entire life of the essayist. We have seen that Annadasankar, although placed in a higher echelon of Indian Administrative Service, like a true connoisseur, examined every aspect of society, art and literature and articulated them by virtue of his beautiful writing skill. He, in his long life, came in close contact with many distinguished individuals. Some of these contacts were direct while many other were through letters. Among these contacts were Rabindra nath Tagore, M.K. Gandhi, Pramatha Choudhury, Rajsekhar Basu, Dilip Kumar Roy, Abul Fazal, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee, Manindra Lal Bose, Bibhuti Bhushan Banerjee and many others. Among the foreigners he met was Romain Rolland and it was her wonderful personality and influence that helped greatly expand Annadasankar's mental horizon, the imprint of which expansion is left among topics of his varied essays. In this respect it can be stated that Annadasankar was the last accomplished inheritor of the Renaissance brought about by the dedication and pursuit of men like Ram Mohan and Vidyasagar in Bengal.

We have endeavoured to evaluate Annadasankar's essays on literary principles and theories in the second chapter of this dissertation. We have observed that alongside his essay writing he also gave deep thought to various aspects of literary principles and gave expression to those concepts which were nourished by his intellect. Further, he shed light on various aspects of literatures of our country and foreign lands. In this respect he was, on one hand, influenced by rhetoric and phonetics of the Sanskrit literature and, on the other hand, the literary principles of the western literature helped enrich his mental world. There is no denying the fact that although he often deliberated on literary theories and principles in many of his
essays he could not add anything new or original to this deliberation. The impression of originality that Jibanananda Das, Buddhadev Bose, Sudhindranath Dutta, Nalini Kanta Gupta and others among his contemporaries left in their deliberations on principles of literature was not shown by Annadasankar, and hence he has not been able to secure a permanent place alongside them. The deliberations that he did lacked depth and contained repetition of much discussed subjects. In matters of contribution to deliberation on principles of literature in the context of the 20th Century, Annadasankar's efforts lack lustre.

In the third chapter we have discussed that driven by the same mental state he included the Western litterateurs in his own discussion. Among these discussions many figure merely as subjects of introduction or acquaintance. Discussions like these do not allow us to enter into and explore undiscovered and unknown areas in their works. Of course, discussion on Goethe is an exception. Annadasankar here has become successful in bringing to light the sublime intellect of the great German poet. Again, in his discussion on Tolstoy Annadasankar is second to none. In fact, influence of Tolstoy in developing the mental sphere of Annadasankar is the greatest. It is for this very reason that his thought, contemplation and deliberations on Tolstoy are marked by a wonderful breadth of vision as his manner of discussions on Gandhi and Rabindranath was marked. No other writer in Bengali has popularised Tolstoy as Annadasankar has done, and in this respect his contribution is undeniable.

In the fourth chapter we see that Annadasankar was one of the intellectuals who, nourished in Tagorean concepts and milieu in
Bengal, accepted the philosophy of Rabindranath and endeavoured to express it from the beginning to the end. He, everywhere during his entire literary life, referred to Rabindranath and while discussing the great poet became very articulate and eloquent. As a matter of fact, Annadasankar was a votary of Rabindranath. His mental sphere was filled with the ideas and concepts of Rabindranath. Added to it were the ideals of Gandhi, Tolstoy, Romain Rolland etc. Annadasankar wrote a number of essays on topics covering Tagore's personality, his literary works, his philosophy, the essayist's personal meetings with him and his exchange of letters with the great man etc., but we have observed in our dissertation that Annadasankar, more often than not, shed light on oft-repeated, hackneyed and conventional topics concerning Rabindranath. The essayist failed to bring new insights into many facets of the genius' personality, for his over-familiarity with him stood in the way of a proper and critical investigation. In fact, Annadasankar almost forgot that many aspects of Tagore still remained unexplored. Buddhadev Basu in his essay *Rabindranath and Uttarsadhak* wrote that number of readers of Rabindranath was rather few till his time and Annadasankar could not include himself as one of these few readers. Although Annadasankar kept on discussing Rabindranath Tagore through his innumerable essays on him, he could not reach that lofty critical height in assessment scaled by few intellectuals in their writings on Tagore.

In the next chapter we see that in like manner he made forays into works of other Bengali litterateurs including his distinguished contemporaries and initiated discussions on them. It is also true that historical value of the essays written by him on these distinguished personalities of Bengal will certainly be acknowledged in days to come.
But it is a fact that major portions of these discussions and reflections are confined only to the essayist's mention of his personal acquaintances, meetings, exchanges of letters with them.

The sixth chapter of this discourse has evaluated his prose style. The lion's share of his nearhundred years long life was devoted to the service of Bengali language. Till his death his facile pen was engaged at creating a vast prose literature which helped greatly enriching Bengali prose literature. As a matter of fact, in the evolution of Bengali prose style Annadasankar's role was wonderful. One can easily notice the keenness and agility of his intellect while going through his literary essays. His effort was to resolve difficult issues in his discussions with the help of argumentation and easily intelligible sentences. His voice, though sharp, was not strident. He would speak from his conviction and with a sense of certainty. It is not exaggeration to describe him as an extra-ordinary personality. His essays are characterised by a wonderful searching light which comes from his perspicacity and clear-sightedness. In short, one does not fail to feel the presence of a life marked by intellect and scholarship behind all his creations. Artificiality of any sort is conspicuous by its absence in Annadasankar.

But in his essay writing we notice a little bit of exaggeration and repetition of the same subject. One finds discussions on various writers repeated in many chapters of 'Prabandha Samagra'. For example, one finds evaluation of those writers in the Fifth and Sixth Chapters who also figure in the Eighth Chapter. He has repeated the story of his own life in more than one Chapters. Subjects like communalism and Hindu-Muslim divide recur in his discussions. Titbits
and small details of our country and abroad have recurringly found place in his writings. But it is also to be emphasized here that he has minutely investigated and reflected on religion, rise and fall of races as also on manners and customs of various countries in such a way which astonishes us.

As his very name Annadasankar symbolises the union of Hara (God Shiva) and Gouri (Goddess Durga), his writing subsumes under it the symphony of a greater integration and unity among nations of the world. His efforts have been directed to establish eternal virtues of excellence, truth and beauty which find expression anywhere irrespective of races and religions. His writing absorbs the combined moods of urbanity and abstraction of rural life. This aspect perhaps has enabled him to become such a simple and spontaneous intellectual as well as a story teller. Annadasankar has regarded Tolstoy, Gandhi and Tagore as ideals of his conception. He has written various stories, novels, rhymes, travelogues, essays etc. He cannot be assigned to any definitive genre. He is the combination of all these and at the same time he with the light of his gracious and cheerful personality surpasses all other qualities. His lively curiosity and expansive generosity have addressed difficult problems facing countries, races and societies as he has made presentation of roles of love, friendliness and pity. His life spirit manifests itself through his writings. Sharing experiences with his kins and friends, raising questions, looking for tradition and at the same time searching for solution to racial enmity and disputes gave him abundant joy.

It is with an alert mind that Annadasankar made his entry into the vast world of creating Bengali prose. His essays are reflections of
his mentality characterised by an ability to judge, a refined taste and culture and also of a glow that emanates from his composed but perspicacious mind. There is congruity between his spoken and written languages. In his essay writing we observe a wonderful expression of prose art. After Bankimchandra, Rabindranath and Swami Vivekananda it is the truthful and patriotic Annadasankar who in the twentieth century remains in the forefront with the highminded and talented individuals who appeared on the scene to reform the ways of our country men and rouse their good sense. We have noticed his success in ever new experiment of using words and construction of sentences. Words of indigenous and foreign origins, not in common use, have crowded into his vocabulary and their uses are suggestive of his ever new musing and imagination. It is Annadasankar who is the successor of Pramatha Choudhury in matters of creating colloquial and current prose. He is second to none in the use of prose as vehicle of appropriate emotion. In fact, Annadasankar’s contribution to the evolution and history of the Bengali prose art is great. Prose written by him is the very quintessence of his personality. With the words of an admirer we bring this dissertation to its conclusion:

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NOTE AND REFERENCE:


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