CHAPTER - III

ANNADASANKAR ROY ON WESTERN LITERATURE
Annadasankar Roy can undoubtedly be placed in a common row of a host of twentieth century Bengali intellectuals like Nalinikanta Gupta, Sudhindranath Dutta, Buddhadeb Basu and Bishnu Dey, who expressed a keen intellectual curiosity towards exploring and analysing the vast canvas of western literature.

The critical analysis of western literature occupies a major section of the entire corpus of his creative mind as an essayist.

Annadasankar's curiosity about western literature had its origin in his younger days. Along with Bengali periodicals and books he was also an avid reader of English books and journals. As a reader he had an early exposure to the life-writings of George Washington, Napoleon, Mascini, Gariboldi from his father's personal collections. He had a tremendous interest about the history and geography of different countries and their society and culture. The combined influence of Baisnaba religion and the religion of love of Christ shaped his childhood mind with an unique sensibility. He was drawn to Tolstoy even in his school days through his winning the prize of Twenty three Tales - a famous short-story collection. He even translated the
epilogue of the book into Bengali with the title ডিনটি প্রস্ত and sent it to প্রবাসী. It was published in 1920 and sixteen year old Annadasankar was surprised and overjoyed to see his name in print.

It was his reading of novels of Ibsen, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Bernard Shaw and Dickens during his college days which made him curious about European literature, its society and culture. This curiosity intensified with his coming to Patna College with a rich library collection of European literature, from Ravanshaw College of Cuttack. After reading Roma Rolland, D.H. Lawrence, Virginia woolf and Elan Kei he started cherishing the dream of going to Europe, the failure of which would make his life meaningless. As if Europe was his motherland where he has an emotional belonging. Later on he had a different sense of contentment after travelling Europe. As the day of his leaving for Europe finally approached, Annadasankar commented:

ইউরোপকে আমি না দেখতেই ভালোবেসছিলুম, দেখেও ভালোবাসব্যং। ইউরোপ আমাকে চিরকাল আকর্ষণ করে এসেছে- অন্যকথায় ভালোবেসে এসেছে

He further opined:

ভারতবর্ষকে রবীন্দ্রনাথ ‘মহামানবের সাপতীর্থের’ বলছেন। ইউরোপকে আমি কল্য মহামানবের মানসরোবরের। সাপতে যেমন সকল প্রবাহিনী মিলিত হয়, মানসরোবর থেকে তেমনি প্রবাহিনী নির্ভীক হয়। ইউরোপের মানস থেকে যুগে যুগে কত ভাবান্তর নিষ্কেট হয়ে পৃথিবীকে ভাবোপচার করছে। পৃথিবী নিজেইতো পৃথিবীর প্রতিই ইউরোপের দান, কারণ পৃথিবী ইউরোপের আবিষ্কার ...........

Annadasankar considered English a language of contemporary age, if not the language of common people. We have languages like Bengali, Marathi, Tamil, Telegu and Hindi to bind people together, but
keeping English out of this assimilative process will lead to an estrangement between man and society. People, fastidious about English, have the option of learning French, German or Russian but one needs the mastery over at least one European language to fly high with aspiration leaving the squishy ground behind. Maintaining a steady link with the West is a necessary precondition for self-development and throughout his life the author has tried to teach the Bengalees the art of flying with confidence and pride over the European literary-scape. His vast body of articles on western literature bears the mark of his passion for literature of the West.  

In his article titled বিদেশী সাহিত্য, which he sent to Sibnarayan Roy in the form of a letter, on 23 May, 1956, from Santiniketan, Annadasankar wrote that he was trying to write on Western Literature. He held foreign literature synonymous with world literature in general and stressed the need of inheriting its legacy as one's humble duty. A critical study of the vast world of Western literature could apprise one about the transformation of English, French or German literature, Renaissance, Romanticism or the Age of Stress and Strain. Annadasankar expressed concern over insufficiency of good translation in Bengali and suggested a switching over of reading habit to English books and journals for Bengali readers as an interim strategy to counter the crisis till the improvement of situation. 

During his College days, Annadasankar had the company of three friends cultivating similar interest in Western literature like him. However, in the matter of enlivening his mind he had his own visionary company-- Doickens, Flaubert, Ibsen, Emile Zola, Dostoyevsky and the
like. At the age of seventeen, his critical practice of contributing articles in the युगवीण section of the journal उৎকল साहित्य on Yeats, Meterlink, Kipling, Conrad, Shaw and others, helped shaping his mind with modern sensibility.

Annadasankar with his refined sensibility treaded cautiously in the complex world of Western literature to inhale the elixir of its living spirit and transfuse the same into Bengali literature with a stamp of his personal feeling and understanding. Connoisseur Bengali would be indebted to him for ever for this. As Annadasankar journeyed through the world of Western literature he was drawn to exciting works of Russian writer Tolstoy, German poet Goethe, French Roma Rolland, Irish Bernard Shaw, Russell, Thomas Mann, Pasternak and Schweitzer. Although Western literature as a subject of discussion frequently featured in most of the works of Annadasankar, yet Tolstoy had a special place in his artistic vision. A major portion of the entire gamut of his works is devoted to his critical appraisal of Tolstoy. Annadasankar participated in the 150th birth centenary celebration of Tolstoy and wrote a series of articles on him which was published in 1980 in the form of a book with the title Tolstoy. The book also contains some earlier writings of the author on Tolstoy. In this regard Annadasankar says: My apprenticeship as a writer began to Tolstoy only. His assessment of Tolstoy is a revelation of the writer's in-depth thought on western literature. Annadasankar's appreciative insight as a critic could rightly realize the fundamental appeal of Tolstoy's literary oeuvre.

In his life and writing, Annadasankar has placed Tolstoy in the pedestal of a guru. In fact he devoted maximum pages to Tolstoy among all other western writers. Tolstoy's life and personality was the
centre of Annadasankar’s attraction for him. He discovered in Tolstoy an
unflinching devotion to truth and an expression of holistic sympathy for
mankind. He despised the wrong but loved the wrong-doer. The Biblical
sermon *Hate sin, not the sinner* -- which is at the centre of Tolstoy’s
exceptional mindset has its own bewildering appeal on
Annadasankar.  

To Tolstoy we are all children of the God and so the ultimate of
life is love and not hatred. Annadasankar was also a believer in
non-violence and in this regard he shares same space with Tolstoy and
Gandhi. However, he was against any simplistic branding of him as
Tolstoyan or Gandhian, because of his serious dissension with them on
certain issues. He says:

अहिंसा नैराज्यवादी हिसाबे आमार आझाकेपेते गिये आचरित हिसाबे आमी
आमार आझाकेहाराते राजी नई।  

Like this Annadasankar specified his areas of dissent from
Tolstoy. For example, he has a belief that the intense life-query of
Tolstoy has adversely affected his stature as a writer. Annadasankar felt
that Tolstoy’s pen would have produced more masterpieces, had he not
been obsessed by writer’s idea of responsibility to recover self and
society. Tolstoy’s idea of artist was one who should not only indulge in
mere creation of work of art but also extend his creative mind to ponder
upon the problems of life. Annadasankar had a lifelong disagreement
with Tolstoy in this regard. According to the former, a section of people
must always devote themselves in the creation of the Taj Mahal. Amidst
the wailing of the faminestruck humanity a writer should actively indulge
himself in the arduous endeavour of his creation. Annadasankar
advocated artistist's unique idea of art and life as his religion.  

Annadasankar seriously reflected upon the subject-matter of Tolstoy's book *What is Art* but could not accept the latter's theory without difficulty. He put the same question differently to Rabindranath and Roma Rolland. Annadasankar's reading of Tolstoy's biography by Victor Shklovsky, published from Moscow, later on helped the essayist in his proper appropriation of Tolstoy by resolving contradictions. By reading *What is Art* Annadasankar realized the meaning of art as truth and wellbeing. Annadasankar faced the dilemma of observing life either through art or through ethics of religion. Tolstoy used art as the medium of spreading religion and morality but Annadasankar viewed it as an infringement of freedom of art. To him the spirit of Art cannot be confined to rules. He is convinced that the success of Tolstoy's literary creation is guaranteed not because of his blind adherence to the theory of art, but for his inner vision and sensibility as an artist. Tolstoy prioritized rules and morality over art, and art over morality. For Annadasankar art is always greater than morality.

The essayist's appropriation of Tolstoy began with his analysis of novels like 'Anna Karenina', 'War and Peace', 'Resurrection' and specially 'Twentythree Tales'.

However, Annadasankar's interest for these novels was a superficial on nature and he did not indulge in any indepth analysis of the same. For example regarding 'Anna Karenina' Annadasankar said:

anjeurina ma baaryac hynni bar karon sathyakar saron manuokho tansoty saron korete yovdni. buddh taraxana sahoke lohar chuch chaalai korenni.

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According to the essayist:

"अनाकारेनिना' आरक्षणी अभिलस्त न हलो एह उपन्यास मेणे आलेक
प्रेष्म उपन्यासेर अलोक ।

Annadasankar's comment on the novel has not been an outcome of his introspection and critical assessment of it. Each of his judgements expose a lack of seriousness of a dedicated critic. More such examples can be cited like his comment about the character Anna Karenina, —

एटी एकटी आश्चर्य चरित्र चित्रणे ये यष्मन से तेसम प्रतेकेइ विपिन।

Annadasankar termed *Anna Karenina* an analytical work of art which was an unconventional assessment considering the time period of its creation. He further informs us that after writing *Anna Karenina* there developed a sense of aversion in Tolstoy about life and family and he became familiar as Saint Tolstoy to the world.

In his discussion of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* the essayist calls it the history of Napolion's era. However, he also adds that this is not a factual history but a novel with the essence of history ingrained within it. As he says:

इतिहासेर सत्यार बिषय यदि हय मानवभागा तुरे एह उपन्यास हलेह इतिहासेर
तत्त्यांदे एवं बिषये एर मेदिकालर्जित मानवभागा। एर आसंख्य पात्तात्री हलेह
मानव करताल रेखा।

He refers to many peoples' opinion of terming *War and Peace* as the *Iliad* of our age but himself has not provided much logic and reasoning in support of his view. He further opined that only Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* can be compared to *War and Peace*. 

The great quality of Tolstoy as writer of *War and Peace*, the essayist feels, is his ability to expose the inner truth of war with rare nonenchantment which contributes to the novel's timeless appeal.

It is the eternal mystery of life, which according to Annadasankar, has fervently appealed Tolstoy. Why to live? How to live? What is the real meaning of existence-- Tolstoy answered these questions through his different characters. In the entire gamut of Tolstoy's creation, not a single character can be ignored. One wonders if any other work has so many variety of characters. Tolstoy's range of imagination and all-embracing compassionate attitude have perhaps no parallel in the world literature, and this is the reason for Annadasankar's attraction for him.

The third great novel of Tolstoy, *The Resurrection* was written after the artist Tolstoy became saint Tolstoy. According to Annadasankar the Tolstoy of *Resurrection* is more a moral leader than an artist. To him *Resurrection* is not a novel of love. At the centre of its complicity is the lust of the powerful over the feeble, resolving in restoration of self-esteem of the weak and repentance of the strong. The novelist prioritized the virtue of forgiveness over anything else. The novel in the final assessment is partly christian and partly revolutionary.

Annadasankar acknowledged that as a writer his apprenticeship began with Tolstoy. The novel *Satya-Satya* is Annadasankar's *War and Peace* and his *Ratna O Srimati* is compared to *Anna Karenina* by many. However, the essayist also reminds us that both Tolstoy and himself
have been groomed in two different traditions as writers. With his poetic endeavour, Annadasankar comes closer to Rabindranath.

Tolstoy's *Twenty three Tales*, reached different corners of the world through its translation into different languages. At the age of sixteen, Annadasankar also translated the same. He thinks that these tales have an universal appeal to people in different stages of their lives, and various social strata. To Annadasankar, this is the mark of great artistry. The overwhelming appeal of these tales inspired in him a desire to write such stories. He attaches much priority to the quality of art; to him beauty is preferable to goodness. Tolstoy rather infused instruction with purport. Annadasankar preferred Tolstoy as writer of tales over Tolstoy the novelist. Although the author has a limited production of such tales, except the collection of tales, mentioned above, Tolstoy has few important stories to his credit like -- *The Death of Ivan Iitch* and *Prabhu-Bhrityo* etc. Annadasankar feels that in these two tales Tolstoy's art of creation reached its pinnacle. Among his tales, Tolstoy had personal preference for *God sees the Truth But Waits* and *The Prisoner of Canlihrous*.

On the threshold of writing the novel *Resurrection*, there occurred a radical change in the outlook of Tolstoy. From the realm of art his attention shifted to the study of *The Gita, The Vedas, The Bible, The Koran and the Buddhist scriptures*. During his lifetime only Tolstoy could cross the boundary of his nation. Annadasankar says:

तार मूल भर समय देखा गेल, अदेश पूजाते 'जार', टलक्कय यरब्र पूजाते।

More than Tolstoy's writing, it is his humanistic philosophy which
attracted the essayist. His pen worked ceaselessly to stop all sorts of exploitations and war. This great writer died in a rail station beside a road. Truth was Tolstoy's constant companion and in his mature years he became an apostle of non-violence. In this regard the essayist compared him with Gandhi since Annadasankar himself was a traveller of the same path of non-violence. The world lamented the death of Tolstoy and writer of different genre Maxim Gorky could not remain untouched by its effect also. Annadasankar found much food for thought in Gorky's *Tolstoy Smriti*. Annadasankar quotes from Gorky:

*Leo Tolstoy is dead..... The news hit my heart. I groaned from anguish and resentment and now, in a kind of half-madness, I imagine him the way I knew him and the way he used to look, and am rashed by the desire to talk about him.....*

In Annadasankar's analysis of Western writers, the great German poet Goethe (1749) has occupied a prominent place. However, Goethe is elder to Tolstoy. The creator of *Faust*, Goethe could draw the attention of the inquisitive minds by his huge creation and colourful personality. It was Rabindranath Tagore, at twenty four, who through his article, *Goethe O Tar Pronoyanigon*, published in the magazine *Bharati*, introduced us to the internationalist idea and personality of Goethe, on whom till then we cherished a dispersed curiosity. Tagore's comprehensive article on Goethe was the first of its kind in Bengali literature. However, Kazi Abdul Odud read out a long article titled *Goethe*, on the occasion of fourth annual conference of Muslim literary world of Dhaka in 1829. The same article was included in book *Samaj O Sahitya* in 1834. Later on Odud wrote two volume *Kabiguru Goethe* based on the great poet's life and writing. On the occasion of
bi-centenary of birth of Goethe the magazine *Visvabharati* under the editorship of Rabindranath, brought out a comprehensive volume on the poet containing a few analytical articles exploring different aspects of the poet's personality. Annadasankar's article *Goethe O Desh Kal*, published in 1968 deserves a special mention among four other contributions published in the journal.

In the article *Goethe O Tar Desh Kal* Annadasankar judged Goethe against the backdrop of the contemporary political silhouette of his country and its neighbours. Goethe was unraffled by the unrest of his contemporary period-- this is the crux of Annadasankar's assessment of Goethe in the article. He wrote in this regard:

> জীবনকে তিনি দেখেছিলেন বাহির থেকে, ভিতর থেকে, উপর থেকে, তল থেকে।
> দেখেছিলেন সান্তুষের চোখে, প্রকৃতির চোখে, দেবতার চোখে। অর তার করে
> দেখেছিলেন, নেতি নেতি করে দেখেছিলেন। যেটি যেখানকার সেটি সেখানে রেখে
> দেখেছিলেন, তার আস্পদের সঙ্গে মিলিয়ে দেখেছিলেন, সম্পর্কের মধ্যে শাপন
> দেখেছিলেন। দৃষ্টির তপস্যা তার মতো আর কেউ করেননি সর্বোত্তমে।

Except the article under discussion, Annadasankar wrote three more articles on Goethe. During 1933-34, he wrote *Faust* which was incorporated in the book *Jibon Silpi*. The second one with the title *Kabiguru Goethe* found its entry in the book *Adhunikata*. His third contribution on Goethe was inspired by Annadasankar's reading of Surajit Dasgupta's *Dante, Goethe, Rabindranath*, which was incorporated in the collection *Disha*. Added to this we also find reference to the works of Goethe in his various works. It is worth mentioning that, in all probability, Annadasankar Roy was the first in Bengali literature to
initiate a critical analysis on Goethe's verse-drama *Faust*. Regarding this he said:

Regarding contemporary interpretation he said,--

In fact Annadasankar found in *Faust* a reflection of contemporary belief system of medieval age. However, the essayist has also mentioned that going beyond this limited sphere, Goethe's *Faust* was able to reflect a pan-humanistic appeal.

On the one hand he discovered in Goethe a tendency of treading in the past, on the other hand, with his scientific temperament, Goethe appears to him an out and out modernist. He says in this regard--

Annadasankar's curiosity for Goethe is confined to observing and reflecting upon various incidents in the poet's life in different articles. It does not appear that the essayist has anything new to offer us from his study of life and works of Goethe. In this regard, one can refer to the article *Mahamanishi Goethe* by Nalini Kanta Gupta, Annadasankar's contemporary, exposing new dimensions on the life and work of the
great poet. According to critics:

নীত্র অনুসারী আধ্যাত্মিক দৃষ্টি নিয়ে গোটে এ পর্যন্ত আমাদের সাহিত্য এমন করে দেখা হয়নি নবীনকালে যেমন করে দেখেছেন।

Articles like, *Goethe O Rabindranath* by Nirmal Chandra Chattopadhya, or *Goethe O Arbacin Kaler Bangla Sahitya* by Promothnath Bishi published in the same issue of *Visvabharati* journal, deserve special mention. Promothnath Bishi also uncovered various illumined aspects of genius of Goethe. One can mention here his comments on the greatness of Goethe:

গোটের গণ্ড ও পদ্ধ রচনা হীর্ণ মুহুর সতর্ক পূরীক অভাবেই যেন বিস্তৃত, আবার তাহার সমত রচনাই গোটের বাক্যকে দ্বারা আবিষ্কৃত। যে দুটি লক্ষণকে আর্বচিন কালের বিশিষ্ট লক্ষণ বলিয়াছি- গোটের কাব্যে ভাবাদেরও প্রকাশ আত্মিক। এ বিষয়ে গোটের রচনা আর্বচিন সাহিত্যের চরম দৃষ্টিত।

Compared to this, Annadasankar’s analysis of Goethe is mostly superficial, never serious in terms of depth. However, it cannot be denied that in his analysis of Goethe’s *Faust*, one gets glimpses of his originality as a critic and essayist. Regarding ‘Faust’ he wrote--

পোল্টর ফাউস্ট যেন একমাত্র মহাত্মতার।

It is from ‘Faust’ that the essayist has derived his idea of an ideal woman. The most attractive aspect of Goethe’s genius, according to Annadasankar, is his intense feeling of love and quest for truth. In his words:

ফাউস্ট-এর পরিণাম হলো চিরকালের সর্বমানবের অভিলাষিত।

In Goethe Annadasankar discovered an unique combination of romantic and classical spirit.
Henceforth, the western personality who attracted Annadasankar most is Bernard Shaw. He has discussed in brief the life and writing of Bernard Shaw. Shaw's different life-style -- his disinterestedness, his playing piano in the function, visits to art galleries to see paintings and sculptures-- all these attracted the essayist. He was instinctively humorous, the reflection of which we see in his speech and writing. Shaw began his writing career with an ardent desire to establish himself as a playwright. Annadasankar was moved by Shaw's passion for literature and tremendous self confidence.  

Annadasankar's essay *Bernard Shaw* is not a critical appraisal of the personality of the playwright. It is rather a brief account of transformation of Shaw as a writer and as such does not reflect the intellectual probity of the essayist.

In 1968, Annadasankar wrote a letter with a title *Dante, Goethe, Rabindranath* to Surajit Dasgupta. In the letter he refers to the subject of the great poet Dante. It is worth mentioning here that much before Annadasankar, Dante with his epic had been familiar to Bengali readers—

The writer who has maximum contribution on Dante in Bengali is Rabindranath Tagore. Later on other writers showed similar interests on Dante like Sankho Ghosh (*Chandidas O Dante*), Rabindra Kumar Dasgupta (*Dante O Amader Atmaprakriti*) and the like. The great poet
was even eulogised in Bengali verse like in the poem of Bishnu De.

In the context of a vast and wide spread awareness on Dante in Bengali literary history, Annadasankar as a critic of the poet cannot claim any special place. He has no important observation to his credit on the genius of Dante. His assessment is amateuristic, superficial and is limited to passing some general comments only.

The name which we can reckon with as the epitome of humanism in the history of the world is the French writer Romain Rolland (1866-1944). She especially meditated and cultivated on Indian mystical philosophy and involved herself with Indian mindset. Her books on the life-philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi (1924), Sri Rama Krishna (1928) and Vivekananda deserve special mention. With an intention to introduce this sagacious woman to common Bengali milieu Annadasankar wrote an article *Romain Rolland* in 1941. Infact before his meeting with Rolland in Switzerland in 1927, the essayist had an imagined idea of this great personality from his observation of her photograph in 'Jacques Chistopher'.

Annadasankar in this regard commented-

> এঁদের দেহ এঁদের মনের আঁশে পুড়ে রাই হয়ে গেছে ও আঁশকে চেঁকছে,
> স্বাধীন পায়ের বিজ্ঞতি যেমন তার আঁশের তপস্যাকে ঢাকে।

Regarding his meeting with Rolland, in his travelogue *Pathe O Probase*, Annadasankar wrote that in the post-war world the phrase- *the consciousness of Europe* had a significance of depth. In the war torn Europe duped in earthly pleasure and luxury, it is interesting to find this
great European woman condemning war and embracing Indian idea of renouncement and spirituality. With her books *Gandhi*, *Rama Krishna*, *Vivekananda Charit*, she introduced Indian soul to the European consciousness. She had special acquaintance with Rabindranath. She used to study in depth the religion, literature and art of contemporary Indian with all seriousness. She was truly in love with India. With her reverence for humankind, artistic universality and lofty humanism she as an artist, was a kind spirit of Tolstoy. Being highly fascinated by Romain Rolland, Annadasankar wrote in *Pathe O Prabase* --

इतिहास के सत्य ारक ज्ञात करके हर, यात्रा के सत्य इतिहास के। देश देश जातिते जातिते महाकले लगा अासबें

The essayist's sense of surprise knows no bound when he discovers an affinity of Rolland-- the noble laureate *Murtiman Bibek* (embodied consciousness) for the sub-alterns. He wrote in this regard-

रोल्लन को दुर्लभ प्रतिभा अधिकारी के पक्ष में नोबल प्राइज जीतने के साथ विश्व थे के नेमे चाही मजुबेरे के साथ काध जेलानो इतिहास अपूर्व।

In assessing Rolland's novels *Jean-Christophe* and *Mantramugdha Attma* (Hyptonised soul), the essayist said his idea of epic was first derived from his reading of *Jean-Christophe. Mantramugdha Attma* on the other hand was full of concentrated flavour touching the innermost feeling. In both the novels she has the same query-

केमन करे बीचब

followed by the same answer-

निष्ठार कंडे जापर्य सिंध नाम, सत्य करे बीचबो। एर दरुपन यदौ दुःख पेते हय, दुःख पाब, एडाब नाम।
According to Rolland, among hundreds of sorrows, it is the expression of lust and love for life which constitutes true heroism. Two cataclysmic wars constitute the background of Rolland's novels and two epics, which made the essayist term them as war-epics. Both the books created permanent impression on the poet's mind. He is of the opinion that in the 20th century Europe Jean-Christophe is unparalled. However, in the 19th century it has other equipotentials. For example, both Dostoevsky and Tolstoy have better novels in their credit to that of Rolland. In literary history Rolland indeed shares the same space along with them. Jean-Christophe and Mantramugdha Atma are for those who are engaged in life-quest. Tolstoy's War and Peace and Brothers Karamazov are of interests both for common readers and forthe serious ones.

In the last part of her life Rolland engaged herself in the practice of music. Beethoven, Goethe and Tolstoy -- all three were her soul companion. Although Tolstoy's influence can be seen in her creative works but from the beginning till the end it was Beethoven who was Rolland's ideal. Rolland's painting Ja-Frestok has similarity with Beethoven. Rolland had a lasting influence on the writer Annadasankar. It was Rolland who told him to write not for money but for self-contentment. After the death of Tolstoy, the right of succession of conscience of Europe fell upon Rolland, as in India it depended on Gandhiji. The same is applicable to conscience-artist Annadasankar.

It can be mentioned here that in contemporary period, Dilip Kumar Roy, by including a long essay on Rolland along with other four great souls in his book Tirthankar, enriched Bengali literature.
At the time of discussion of Annadasankar's essay on Romain Rolland, one is reminded of Dilip Kumar Roy's essay *Romain Rolland*. Annadasankar's essay has a limited aim of merely introducing Romain Rolland to common Bengali readers. Dilip Kumar Roy's article on the other hand, has not only brought the renowned personality of Romain Rolland to Bangladesh, but also transmitted the life-pulsation of Romain Rolland the singer, writer and appriciator of art into Bengali language. Annadasankar offered his tributes to Rolland by discovering him as the successor of Tolstoy. However, if he could be as introspective and critical as was Dilip Roy, he would have discovered that in Romain Rolland a critical mind was operative regarding her appropriation of Tolstoy. For example, Tolstoy the lover of humanity commented that it is meaningless to measure the movement of planet and stars-- any work which is not aimed at alleviation of distress of the hapless, is a misdeed. To Romain Rolland, this is an irresponsible and disrespectful comment. Dilip Kumar, attempts an explanation for this--

In fact, nowhere we find Annadasankar using his analytical mind in appreciating Rolland. In this connection, one recall Annadasankar's another essay- *Bertrand Russell*. In this piece the essayist had the same superficial approach in estimating Russell's personality. Like a spectator, he presented in his essay the eventful like of Russell. Nowhere did, he make any comment on the personality of Russell which...
could help situate the thinker and creator Russel in Bengali. In truth, Annadasankar was influenced by Russell and there was a similarity in their thought. Both of them were active rebels. In their prose style also a marked similarity is seen. Another similarity with Annadasankar is the fusion of intellectuality with conviction. Both of them were at the same time intellectual and mystic. From Russell he got a sense of direction and in turn one day he had to show the same sense of direction to his countrymen. Russell’s activities in the last part of his life weakened him considerably for a certain period of time. In this regard he shares a common ground with Gandhi. It is worth mentioning that Dilip Kumar Roy wrote a long essay on Russell in his book Tirthankar much before Annadasankar's essay was written. Dilip Kumar's was a remarkable piece in illuminating the inner-personality of Russell not only in Bengali but also having the potentiality of claiming its place in any language of the world. Already his book Tirthankar has been translated in Gujarati and English. In this regard, written much after Dilip Kumar's piece, Annadasankar's article on Russell cannot claim any credit from any angle.

One after another, Annadasankar analysed lives and works of western writers. On the occasion of the birth centenary of Thomas Mann, he wrote an article titled Thomas Mann Satabarsiki. In this essay he wrote that from mother's line Mann inherited an all-devouring interest for art and beauty, and from father's line an unperturbed trust on all hard-working and controlled ideal of life based on Puritan values. Mann chose writing as his profession. After publication of the voluminous novel Buddenbrooks, Mann fame as a classic writer in Germany was established. When he was almost 50, the novel Magic
Mountain was published. After five years, this was followed by his receiving the Novel Prize for literature and associated fame all over the world. He is the second German writer of his time to get such fame and prestige.

Much before receiving his noble prize, Mann's consciousness was raised from its German Nationalistic preoccupation to embrace the sensibility of European civilization. That is why the essayist refers to Magic Mountain as the summit of German as well as European literature. The novella Death in Venice is another wonderful creation of Mann. Mann attempted a rewriting and re-interpretation of the excellent segment-- the story of Joseph is one of the famous books of human civilization, The Old Testament of the Jews. Although this book, stretching in four volumes, written in an epic mode, is related to the past and present of Europe, but in its appeal it transcends time and continent. Annadasankar considers it as the greatest work of Mann. His Doctor Faustus is an allegorical representation of the rise and fall of modern Germany. Mann, who himself possessed a great healthy body, frequently used diseased imagery in his writing to drive his point home. As Annadasankar says:

Written in his younger days, Mann raised the issue in Tonio Kroiger.

Regarding his literary activity, Mann was a perfectonist and worshipper of beauty. This attitude of Mann attracted Annadasankar. As a critic also Mann was famous as was Annadasankar. One must reckon with gravity, Mann's essays on Tolstoy, Goethe and Schiller. They were his masters in literature. Like Ekalaybya, he had an inherent desire of
becoming their disciple, equal and an inherator of their legacy. To Annadasankar, although Mann could not be their exact equal as a writer, yet among the contemporaries of his own country, he was the supreme. It may be mentioned here that Annadasankar's assessment on the work of Mann is the appreciation of an admirer, not the outcome of an analytical mind.

Although Annadasankar did not indulge in critical assessment and scholarly analysis of western writers, yet his credit lies in introducing them to Bengali readers. One specially remembers in this regard the name of Albert Schwetzer. Through his article Schwetzer, based on the life of Schwetzer, Annadasankar could familiarize the extraordinary life of this noble laureate for peace who dedicated himself to the service of the oppressed. This essay is important inspite of its being merely a description of some external incidents of the life of Schwetzer. Schwetzer will achieve immortality for his exposition of true spirit of Indian soul in his book on Indology--Indian Thought and its Development. Although in his essay Annadasankar did not highlight anything about Schwetzer's attitude to India but in his own life he did imbibe the very Indian intellectual spirit as explored by Schwetzer wrote--

...... Indian thought in its very nature is so entirely different from our own because of the great part which the idea of what is called world and life negation plays in it. Whereas our modern European world-view (Weltanschauung), like that of Zarathustra and the Chinese thinkers, is on principle world and life affirming.

The difference of life between Indian and Western civilization as
reflected in the piece *Pracchna Jadabad* of Annadasankar's collection of essays *Tarunyo*, is exactly similar to the difference as pointed out by Albert. Annadasankar wrote:

दुःख इत्यादि आছें, आमादेखौं रहे बिन रहै कम नय। या जल्द हाओंर अंक दें वह नता हलामज संपर्क। ...........भु मानुषौ एवाने चक्रवंती सरस। से ये केवल पक्रवृत्तेंट फल अधर खरम रेखे दृश्येंगे टाैं नय, से बझी

**बाबाजांड़े**

Viewing from this perspective, Annadasankar considered Rammohan and Rabindranath as exceptions in the context of Indian pattern of life, because in their philosophy of life *world and life affirmation* became important. In the Mahabharata era, in the Gita or in the Upanishadas, one finds a strong presence of affirmative spirit of life. This fact is endorsed by Albert Schweitzer also --

*In modern times then, ethical world and life affirmation is Hinduism becomes more and more significant. This development is associated with the names of Rammohan Roy (1772-1833) ........ Rabindranath Tagore.......*. 

Regarding Rabindranath he says:

*Tagore the Goethe of India, gives expression to his personal experience that this is the truth (life affirmation) in a manner more profound, more powerful and more charming than any man has ever done before him.* 

Thus it is seen that Annadasankar's idea of life and the world is exactly similar to that of Schweitzer. It is difficult to say whether Annadasankar was influenced by Schweitzer or not since. Annadasankar's essays in
Tarunyo were written before Schweitzer's publication of *Indian Thought and its Development*. Observing similarity of thought between them, some people have referred to Schweitzer as the literary teacher of the essayist. It may be mentioned here that through his article on Schweitzer Annadasankar has performed his responsibility of introducing this great Western scholar to Bengal.

Annadasankar's article *Boris Pasternak*, based on the life and literature of this controversial Noble laureate Russian writer, is a remarkable contribution in the history of Bengali essay. Strongly condemned and neglected in his own country Russia, when Pasternak received Noble Prize in October, 1958, the world became curious about this literary personality. Westerners accepted him as one of our century's finest poets; however, to his own countrymen his status was lower than a pig since—

*He was afuled the spot where he ate and cast filth on those by whose labour he lives and breaths.*

Contemporary Bengali intelligentsia were also touched by the waves of this praise and condemnation, Excepting Annadasankar, other important writers who discussed Pasternak and his works between 1958-1962, were Nalini Kanta Gupta, Amiyo Chakraborty, Buddhadeb Basu, Bisnu Dey. Among them, Bisnu Dey's essay was aimed at intentionally maligning the achievement of Pasternak. The whole essay is full of negative criticism of Pasternak's brilliance.

In his two letters, Amiyo Chakraborty attempted a neutral
assessment of Pasternak's quality following his artistic self. He expected from Pasternak to--

Instead he got--

As a response to Amiyo Chakraborty's assessment, Buddahadeb Basu highlighted an overall positive side of Pasternak's creativity. A set of adjectives like "'আর্কেডিক', 'চৈতন্যাসাধক', 'আপেক্ষিক', 'জটিল'," with which Amiyo Chakraborty criticised and condemned Pasternak helped Buddhadeb Basu to appreciate the writer. Elsewhere he said that after Yeats and Rilke, it was Pasternak whose Poetry had the power to affect our senses with their intensive depth and mystery. While the history of Bengali essay, following a western tradition, involved itself in approaching Pasternak in either condemnatory or appreciative spirit, it was exactly at the same time we discover Nalini Kanta Gupta sitting aloof from the uproar of the critics and devoting himself to searching suggestions of life's mystery in Pasternak's words. In Pasternak's works he found a picture of totality of human life where--

This sense of unity is the source of ultimate delight. The essayist quotes from 'Doctor Zhirago'--
However, in Nalini Kanta's analysis, another aspect of Pasternak's writing, his personal vision about the life and universe finds entry.

Annadasankar's essay *Boris Pasternak* draws critical attention to Pasternak's life and writing against the presence of a broad analytical spectrum in the field of Bengali essays. In his assessment of Pasternak, Annadasankar focussed on those minute incidents of the writer's life which helped him to try enriching his own life. Pasternak had the desire to be versed in music, where as he turned out to be a poet. In his essay Annadasankar documented this tune over of Pasternak’s life-purpose with a sense of commitment. In the process of deliberation the essayist brought in the issue of Pasternak's quality as a poet and made some original observations like--

*সমাজের বা রাষ্ট্রের প্রয়োজনের কথা ভেতরে পাস্টের্নাক কবিতা লিখতেন না। তাঁর ভাবনা বাজির জন্য, রূপের জন্য, রসের জন্য, উদ্ভিজ্জির জন্য, জীবনের ও জীবনের তাপ্তর্থের জন্য।*

Regarding Pasternak's controversial novel *Dr. Zhivago* Annadasankar said that the writer wanted to disgorge here all his pentup and accumulated feeling of angst in the form of a novel. Here he laid bare all the secrets of his life in a straight forward language. *Doctor Zhivago* is about a feeble person; his creator, however, is a man
of strength. With his body, mind and soul he conquered devastating epidemic. In the essay on the novel Dr. Zhivago he said—

Annadasankar quoted from the English translation by an American Professor, or an unpublished Russian poem:

- The air is heavy with the passing storm,
- The earth lies calm and free and glad again,
- Through all its pores the following lilac bush
- Drinks deep and pure cool freshness of the plain ........

Annadasankar adds after this—

Observe this mentality, Annadasankar calls Pasternak a follower of Christianity. Here is a slice of the essayist’s use of language for Pasternak—

Few lines of a poem of Pasternak, as the essayist thought, could be considered as epitaph:—

So that he’d master well his life in bondage,
In famine, in defect, without a fault,
And thus abide a model through the ages,
A man in sturdiness as plain as salt.
In a letter to Buddhadeb Basu, in English in 1958, Amiyo Chakraborty commented:

Annadasankar's essay on Pasternak could not match the standard established by Nalini Kanta Gupta's essay, considered a bold exception among all critical scholarships on Pasternak in Bengali. This is because Annadasankar filled his essay with facts and figures on the writer's life rather than passing original critical comments on the poet Pasternak.

In this long analysis we have seen that Annadasankar with his intellectual probity and an enquiring mind has introduced great poets and artists of the world in Bengali. In this way he responded and contributed to the spirit of enquiry of the 19th century Bengali mind regarding literature of the West. However, it must be mentioned in this regard that in Annadasankar Roy we donot find that depth of scholarship which was a feature of some of his contemporaries, specially writers like Buddhadeb Basu, Nalini Kanta Gupta, Sudhindranath Dutta, who with their knowledge of western literature, could transmit their thought provoking analytical attitude into the Bengali language, and literature. Leaving a few exceptions, one of them being the essay Pasternak, in most cases, Annadasankar's assessment of western writers was limited to a superficial approach of introducing them to readers with biographical snippets from their lives.

However, this is also true that Annadasankar with his inquisitive mind and rare sense of responsibility as a true ideologue, introduced to Bengali readers the works of western writers with novelty of vision whenever he came across them in this free and liberal world. In
maintaining his responsibility as a literary ambassador of introducing foreign writers to Bengali connoisseurs, Annadasankar with his Tagorian vision chose those writers in whom he heard a voice of protest against all sorts of stagnation of thought and regressiveness. A corroborator of affirmative life, Annadasankar, throughout his life, worked tirelessly to bring fresh air in Bengali life and to enliven their consciousness. In his diligent writing one marks a powerful expression of such ideal. In this regard one can refer to the words of one admirer of Annadasankar--

阿达桑卡尔 একদিকে তাঁর বিভিন্ন জিজ্ঞাসা নিয়ে বিভিন্ন সময়ে গেছেন নানাদের মহাসাঙ্গের কাছে ও তাঁদের কাছে যে উত্তর পেয়েছেন তার সাহিত্যিক বর্ণনা রেখেছেন বিভিন্ন গ্রন্থে যা নিবদ্ধ যার ফলস্বরূপ তাঁদের প্রত্যেক থেকে লেখক তাঁর দীপ জ্বালিয়ে নিয়েছেন সময়ের স্বীকৃতি, অন্যদিকে প্রচু নিজের আলোক জ্বালানোই নয়, অনেক আলোক দেখানো তিনি নিজের এক অবশ্যক রূপে গ্রহণ করেছেন, উদারচরিত্র এক স্নিহীর লক্ষ্য যা। অর্দ্ধায়নের মধ্যে এই ভাব উদার ও স্নিহীর মিলন ঘটেছে।

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