In the chapter on the mysticism of joy a poetic theory of Tagore was referred to. He propounds it in *The Religion of Man*. He writes, "Gladness is the one criterion of truth, and we know [the truth] when we have touched Truth by the music it gives, by the joy of greeting it sends forth to the truth in us. That is the true foundation of all religions." This is the essence of Tagore's poetic mysticism. Its connection with the mysticism of joy and the mysticism of suffering in *Gitanjali* is evidenced by the concluding words of poem no.84. They read, "... and this [the over-spreading pain that deepens into loves and desires, into sufferings and joys] it is that ever melts and flows in songs through my poet's heart" (LXXXIV, 56). This poetic theory is borne out in many of the poems of *Gitanjali*.

In *Gitanjali* the poet's pre-occupation, as has been
repeatedly emphasized, is with man and the Infinite. He studies man in relation to the Infinite. This relationship he presents as communion. One of the unique ways in which this communion expressed in *Gitanjali* is as the communion between man, the poet, and God, the Master Poet. This conception is unique in the whole gamut of mystical literature. But it is quite in line with the Hindu tradition. D.M. Datta in his book, *The Chief Currents of Contemporary Philosophy*, writes, "Its [of Indian thought] attempt to base philosophy on all aspects of experience and not simply on sense experience, deserves special attention, . . . as does its conviction that Ultimate Reality manifests itself, or can be conceived in different ways."²

Many of the poems of *Gitanjali* present before us the poet's yearning for God and his earnest desire to commune with Him, picturing himself as the poet and God as the "poet's poet". Tagore begins his poetic mysticism in *Gitanjali* comparing himself to a flute

made of reed. He confesses, "This little flute of a reed thou hast carried over hills and dales, and hast breathed through it melodies eternally new" (I, 1). Flute is symbolic of the poet himself. When the Master Musician touches the reed with His hand, i.e. when He inspires the poet, the latter sings with inexpressible joy and for the moment forgets his physical limitations, and loses his personal identity in his union with the Infinite. The protagonist affirms, "At the immortal touch of thy hands my little heart loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable." (I, 1).

Thus the mystical communion of the finite and the Infinite takes place. In moments of inspiration the poet's soul is one with the Divine. He enjoys a mystical bliss that illuminates his being as he sings of the Infinite. In poem no.2 he writes, "When thou commandest me to sing it seems that my heart would break with pride; and I look to thy face, and tears come to my eyes." (II, 2).

4 A Tagore Testament 4.
This universe according to Tagore is the finest poem written by the poet's poet. And He has made the poet's heart captive in the endless meshes of His music (III, 3). The sweet harmony of the Infinite constantly sounds through the universe and the poet is held captive by it. He listens to it with rapturous joy, in silent amazement and cannot free himself from its meshes. When God inspires him, the poet sings with inexpressible joy and for the moment forgets his physical limitations. He loses his personal identity in his communion with the Infinite and the mystical union takes place.

Through deep contemplation the poet-mystic realizes that ornate poetry will stand in the way of his mystical communion with the Divine. Ornamented poetry is mere rhetoric which will drown the soft, gentle whispers in which He speaks to the poet. He says, "Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between thee and me; their jingling would drown thy whispers" (VII, 5). So the poet decides to divest his poetry of all adornments. He affirms, "My song has put off her adornments. She has no pride of dress
Tagore also confesses that his poet's vanity dies in shame before God's sight. And he surrenders himself to God. He adds, "O master poet, I have sat down at thy feet" (VII, 5). Mystical realization becomes possible when the poet surrenders himself to the Almighty. He prays, "Only let me make my life simple and straight, like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music" (VII, 5). The poet is aware that God alone can fill the flute to its brim, i.e. God alone can inspire the poet perfectly. The Tagore of Gitanjali firmly believes that God will fill him with the music of the "life divine". He again asserts, "It is the most distant course that comes nearest to thyself, and that training is the most intricate which leads to the utter simplicity of a tune" (XII, 7-8).

Tagore the poet-mystic feels in some moments that the Divine is not yet a living presence or an immediate reality to him. This experience is quite in line with the mystical tradition. His realization of God is still vague and dim. God, yet, remains to him just a passer-by, whose foot-steps he does hear, but whose
face he has not yet seen, nor has he, as yet, listened to His voice. He yearns to be united with the Divine (XIII, 8).

The very same idea is expressed poetically when the poet affirms, "The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day. I have spent my days in stringing and in unstringing my instrument" (XIII, 8). All his life he has been preparing himself to meet his Maker, but still his preparations are incomplete. He is like a musician who keeps stringing and unstringing his instrument, but is unable to sing. His preparations have been life-long and are still incomplete. He is like a musician who is unable to find the right words for his song. The yearning for the Divine is in his heart, but he is not yet in a position to satisfy his yearning. Love of the Almighty is in his heart, but as yet it is merely a bud, and has not reached full flowering. The wind which should open and bring it to full bloom passes by without touching it.

The thirst of the quester for the object of his quest is expressed in another beautiful image too. The
protagonist laments, "The livelong day has passed in spreading his seat on the floor; but the lamp has not been lit and I cannot ask him into my house. I live in the hope of meeting with him, but this meeting is not yet" (XII, 8-9). Full realization of God is yet a remote reality because of the lack of the required wisdom and purity of soul. He acknowledges, "The time has not come true, the words have not been rightly set; only there is the agony of wishing in my heart" (XIII, 8). Of course, in this poetic experience there is every hint of the approach of the Divine. Here is the tension in the mystic between the "not yet" and the "already" of his mystical experience. This tension, too, becomes the source of many of the poems in Gitanjali.

Nevertheless, the poet-mystic is here to submit his "Song Offerings" to God, though still he occupies only an insignificant corner in the "hall of meeting" (XLIX, 30). The poet expresses his laudable humility, proper to a mystic, and the very essence of his mysticism in Gitanjali when he says, "My useless life can only break out in tunes without a purpose" (XV, 9-10).
But, by all means he wants to commune with his Master through his song. Hence he prays, "When the hour strikes for thy silent worship at the dark temple of midnight, command me, my master, to stand before thee to sing" (XV, 10). Singing has ever been looked upon as an essential ingredient of worship. And he is quite optimistic that "In the morning air the golden harp" (XV, 10) will be tuned. And hopefully he pleads with God, "honour me, commanding my presence" (XV, 10). He is sure to join the heavenly choir and sing his songs at the appointed hour.

In the very next poem the poet declares, "I have had my invitation to this world's festival and thus my life has been blessed. My eyes have seen and my ears have heard" (XVI, 10). And he affirms that his role in this "world's festival" (XVI, 10), is that of the musician. He affirms, "It was my part at this feast to play upon my instrument, and I have done all I could" (XVI, 10). The mystic of Gitanjali is quite happy and contented that he has done his very best as a poet and that he would always be in communion with God through his poetry. And he asks Him in right
earnest: "Has the time come at last when I may go in and see thy face and offer thee my silent salutation?" (XVI, 10). Now the poet feels that he has passed his life in spiritual discipline and self-purification and the only thing he now longs for is re-union with the Master Musician and to sing with Him, i.e., to be united with Him through his music.

In spite of his eager and prayerful waiting, God, his lover, has not yet fully answered his prayers. God has not spoken to him. Nevertheless, the poet-mystic will endure his master's silence and continue to wait patiently till He is moved and speaks to him. He is all optimism, "The morning will surely come, the darkness will vanish, and thy voice pour down in golden streams breaking through the sky. Then thy words will take wing in songs from everyone of my birds' nests, and thy melodies will break forth in flowers in all my forest groves" (XIX, 12).

He feels that the waves have become clamorous, that they call upon him loudly to launch his boat. And he would do so soon for he hears the sound of sweet
music coming to him on the cloud from the other shore. It is the song of the Eternal Musician who ever sings from the other shore. The poet asks his inner soul, "Do you not feel a thrill passing through the air with the notes of the far-away song floating from the other shore?" (XXI, 13). What the poet underlines in these words is his poetic-mystical experience.

Poem no. 42 presents an experience of a prompting from his Divine Lover. He writes, "Early in the day it was whispered that we should sail in a boat, only thou and I, and never a soul in the world would know of this our pilgrimage to no country and to no end" (XLII, 25). And together they will cross the ocean of eternity. Then he will offer to his Poet-Beloved his songs. Under His inspiration, and free from all bondage of words, his songs will swell in sweet melodies, such as he has never sung before. He is quite confident that in that shoreless ocean, at God's silently listening smile his songs will swell in melodies, free as waves, free from all bondage of words.

The poet-mystic continues to muse. He patiently
waits for that happy moment of reunion with the Divine. He sings and smiles with joy as the air is being filled with perfume, fore-shadowing the approach of the Divine Lover. In poem no. 44 he suggests, "In the meanwhile I smile and sing all alone. In the meanwhile the air is filling with the perfume of promise" (XLIV, 26). Poetry, thus, becomes a consoler to the poet during his restless mystical longing for communion with the Divine.

God, the Master Poet, is the inspirer of all the songs of the poet-mystic. In and through song they are ever in communion. He confesses, "Many a song have I sung in many a mood of mind, but all their notes have always proclaimed, "He comes, comes, ever comes" (XLV, 27). All his songs proclaim divine influence and inspiration. And the poems in Gitanjali reveal mystical communion as well. Poem no. 49 is ecstatically mystical. It presents the All-Powerful as a king with a court of master musicians. It opens, "You came down from your throne and stood at my cottage door. I was singing all alone in a corner and the melody caught your ear" (XLIX, 30). There are many master
musicians in His court, who always sing to Him sweet songs and delight Him. But "the little strain" (XLIX, 30) of the humble poet-mystic, singing in a corner of his humble cottage, does not escape His notice. He, the King of Kings, comes down from His throne and stands at the poet's cottage door. He is quite delighted by the poor song of the poet, a mere novice and He has brought a flower as prize for him. The poet's petty tune charms the Divine Musician as it mingles and becomes one with the great music of the world. The poet is overjoyed.

The poet-mystic has one final gift concealed in the depths of his heart, a precious gift, which he will offer to his Maker. This gift is personified as a virgin and like a virgin it remains hidden in the citadel of his soul. It is his last song. The poet confesses, "I have roamed from country to country, keeping her in the core of my heart, and around her have risen and fallen the growth and decay of my life" (LXVI, 44). His rise and fall have centred round her. Like a beloved she has ruled over the poet's heart and soul and has, yet, remained apart, pure and untouched.
He affirms that she, the muse, who ever had remained in the depth of his being, hidden in the darkness of his heart and who never opened her veils even to the morning light, will be his last gift folded in his final song, to his Divine Lover. This is a graphic representation of the real mystical experience of a born poet.

The poet's life is the cup from which the Infinite drinks, as the cup overflows with the nectar of love and devotion. The poet is the instrument on which He plays sweet melodies and then listens to His own music with delight. Love and devotion for the Divine bring the poet into harmony with the Eternal Musician and consequently divine bliss and divine inspiration flow into his soul and they break out into sweet, noble, celestial music. He asks earnestly: "My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation through my eyes and to stand at the portals of my ears silently to listen to thine own eternal harmony? The world is weaving words in my mind and thy joy is adding music to them. Thou givest thyself to me in love and then feelest thine own entire sweetness in me" (LXV, 44).
In poem no. 71 the poet declares: "With the tune of thee and me all the air is vibrant, and all ages pass with the hiding and seeking of thee and me" (LXXI, 48). This is a great conviction with the poet-mystic of Gitanjali, that he is, somehow or other, fully or partially, eternally in communion with the Divine and that the communion is achieved through his poetry.

Tagore extols poetry to mystical heights as perhaps none has done before or since. He concludes poem no. 75: "From the words of the poet men take what meanings please them, yet their last meaning points to thee" (LXXV, 50). This, again, is a great affirmation and a salutary lesson to the so-called poets. Poem no. 89 begins, "No more noisy, loud words from me -- such is my Master's will. Henceforth I deal in whispers. The speech of my heart will be carried on in murmurings of a song" (LXXXIX, 59). And he is quite sure that the evening star will come out when his voyage is done and the plaintive notes of the twilight melodies will be struck up from the King's gateway.
The poet of Gitanjali concludes his poetic-mystical pilgrimage confessing that all through his life he has sought the Divine, his Maker through his songs. He has used them all in His service. Whatever he has learned, and whatever experience of pain or pleasure he has acquired, has been acquired through his songs. It is through them that he has seen into the heart of things and experienced the Lord of his life. And he hopes that at last his songs will lead him to the gate of the palace beautiful, which is his destination.

Tagore, the poet, aspires to have his mystical communion with God through his songs. He pledges: "Ever in my life have I sought thee with my songs. It was they who led me from door to door, and with them have I felt about me, searching and touching my world" (CI, 66). He also affirms: "It was my songs that taught me all the lessons I ever learnt; they showed me secret paths, they brought before my sight many a star on the horizon of my heart" (CI, 66-67). Finally, he is extremely thankful because they guided him all the day long to the mysteries of the country of pleasure and pain. He is extremely happy and quite
contented too that his songs have brought him to the "palace gate", in the evening at the end of his journey.

Speaking at the mango grove at Santiniketan on his seventieth birth day, Tagore underlined his self-image in a simple phrase -- Ami Kavi -- I am a poet. What is singular about Tagore the poet is this -- he truly believed that it is at the immortal touch of God's hands that his little heart "loses its limits in joy and gives birth to utterance ineffable" (I, 1).

He writes: "Residing in the innermost me, You snatch words from my lips. With my words you utter your own speech, mixing your own melody."⁶ Again he admits: "What I wish to say I seem to forget; I only say what you want me to say. In the stream of songs I lose sight of shore, drifting into a far unknown."⁷ We have another revealing fact when he writes, "Every puff of breath produces a note, it is true, but that is not playing the flute. The flute is played by One

who has control of all melodies and tunes; outside whose knowledge nothing exists."  

Tagore further admits, "You purified that language, burning it in fire, drowning it, setting it on the flow of my tears. With a skill unknown, you built a new image fashioned after your own heart."  

At a further stage of the same essay the Bard says: "Here is the Poet, the King of poets, who, taking all the ingredients that are good and bad in me, all the probabilities and improbabilities that exist in me, is ever busy composing my life -- it is He whom I have recognised in my poems as God of my life." With this Lord the poet-mystic of Gitanjali is constantly in communion. This poetic mysticism is intimately linked with aesthetic mysticism in Gitanjali. Hence the next chapter is on aesthetic mysticism, the essential ingredients of which are longing, waiting and the realization of beauty, sunderam, as the Sublime.

8 A Tagore Testament 5.

9 A Tagore Testament 5.

10 A Tagore Testament 7.