CHAPTER ONE

PHILOSOPHY AND LITERATURE

Philosophy is a love of wisdom, implying thereby its pursuit rather than its attainment, according to Socrates. He believes that Philosophy is useful and indispensable to life.

A philosopher tries to see the whole order of the universe. Philosophy includes both the tendencies and the actualities of things and of the tendencies, the deeper and more permanent as well as the more superficial and temporary. According to Socrates the philosopher is 'the spectator of all time and all existence'. Philosophy looks at man not only as what he is at present, but as what he may be in the future. "Philosophy is a criticism of life -- it searches, and tries its parts by the test of their relation to that fuller and completer life which everyman at his best would live".¹ observes Muirhead.

Literature does nothing less as its prime business is to observe and interpret.²

Philosophy is a persistent attempt to gain insight into the nature of the world and ourselves by means of systematic reflection. It is an attempt to answer main perplexities by means of steady thought. Not only do the answers change, but the meaning of question undergoes transformation for it is increasingly deepened, clarified and refined. Philosophy seeks to correct partial views and complete fragmentary
experience by some vision of the whole.

Philosophy grows spontaneously out of life and its needs. Every one who lives, if he lives reflectively, is in some degree a philosopher. Percy remarks that such a person who lives reflectively is not only a potential philosopher, but a partial philosopher. It is a sustained thought of the devoted lover of truth.... Philosophy is neither accidental nor supernatural, but inevitable and normal.³

The general problem of philosophy is the fountain of all problems, little and great. Philosophy coexists with life.

Similarly literature is an offshoot of life. Great literature mirrors life and its problems and offers its own solutions.

Literature, as a concept, is regarded as an imaginative form of expression. It is not only one of the arts, just like music and painting but also a record of man's reactions to his experiences as well as the experiences of others. The novelists always create little worlds, little cosmoses into which all their characters fit, as all the ingredients of life fit into a philosophical system.⁴

The method open to the philosopher is the method of reasoned reflection: the method of observing facts and interpreting them through the use of hypothesis. Philosophy offers no short cut methods for truth. It attains its end
by the hard method of reason, by analysis and synthesis.

If literature presents life in general philosophy tells us how to live well. "If there is a science or art of human life, it would certainly be the queen of all the sciences and merit the concentration of every young and old man and woman." 5

Literature is the result of the observations of sensitive souls, it recognises the illogicality and irrationality of incidents that make up man's life, selects the salient ones and by imposing laws of its own, presents them with coherence.

To Socrates the unexamined life is unworthy of living. The philosopher is not a man who knows more facts about nature and humanity, but one who is more concerned with the reality which often eludes him but of the existence of which beyond the facts he is quite sure. An artist is a man who is fully conscious of the intricacies of life, and responds to them with an individual sensitivity that becomes a common property of the reader.

Philosophy presents beliefs that can be expressed. To express is to formulate a belief and it is the comprehension of what can be expressed that constitutes the theoretic consciousness. Such understanding may not be knowledge, but it involves beliefs in something as known or to be known.

"Philosophy is a self-evident elaboration of the self-evident it is not a body of judgements. The self-evident is spoken
it is viewed as a whole. Although what they say will in
the first place spring from a vision of things, they must
possess, an apprehension of perceptiveness which presents
their familiar scene under an entirely fresh aspect. The
philosopher must distil his discoveries in a form whereby
they can become a form and abiding possession of the human
mind. "Thus it is requisite that they should be laid out
and articulated in the seasoned and systematic language of
reflection."8

The aim of a literary men is to present human nature and
human condition with the utmost fidelity which engages the
attention of all the ages and regions.

Philosophy stimulates our thought and observations while
literature sharpens our sensitivity to the world around us.

There is a pleasure in philosophy, and a love in
the mirages of metaphysics, which every student
feels until the coarse-necessities of physical
existence drag him from the heights of thought
into the mart of economic strife and gain. Most
of us have known some golden days in the June of
life when philosophy was in fact what Plato calls
it, 'that dear delight', when the love of modesty and
elusive Truth seemed more glorious, incomparably,
than the lust for the ways of the flesh and the
dross of the world.6

Interpretations philosophers differ regarding the
meaning of life. But they all agree in one way or other that
life has a meaning.

A good work of literature preaches and pleases us at
once. It instructs us with its philosophy and entertains
us by its artistic skill.

It is man's desire to get what he wants that underlies philosophy and all philosophical systems. The whole man within us is at work when we form our philosophical opinions. Intellect, will, taste, and passion cooperate just as they do in practical affairs. It is men's desire to share with others what he has felt, seen and experienced that underlies all forms of literature. Similarly every man is a philosopher himself. We all philosophise irrespective of the nature of things and philosophy, unlike the so called 'exact' sciences, deals with all the commonplace problems of every one's life. In this sense, we could say, every good book, every painting, every symphony is philosophical. It conveys something to us on the questions we cannot help asking.

If literature builds a macrocosm from the microcosm of this world, philosophy builds a system. The latter has a set of ideas, derived from observation, wisdom and deep thought, while the former takes its material from the living organism of society. Ultimately both deal with human predicament and human life. Literature is organic and presents life in a concrete form rendering it as it is but charged with a truth of imagination.

In one way or other the problem of philosophy and literature are perennial and never come to an end with an answer or
solution arrived at in one age. For example, much of what Aristotle wrote is centered around issues which are alive even today. So also are most of the issues raised by Homer, Shakespeare, Milton and Hardy - whose works are the manifestations of human problems and sufferings.

A school of thought in philosophy changes from age to age or from one generation to another like idealism, realism, materialism, positivism and phenomenalism and so on depending on inquiry of the mood of the age. Literature also has been subject to a variety of influences: classicism, romanticism, realism, naturalism, expressionism, symbolism, existentialism etc.

According to Walts Cunningham "We are curious about ourselves and our world. Each one of us is a centre of activity struggling to attain the satisfaction of wants and interest, and this activity and these wants are the manifestations of that within us which call the urge of life."

An introvert and extrovert tendency is the idiosyncrasy of an artist. What he sees and feels fills him with such an urge to express that he will bust in he does not do so.

Philosophy embraces in its fold enduring human values. It distinguishes two chief kinds of human values. First, instrumental values, which are of use as means to realize ends. The second, intrinsic values, realized within the self experiences, valued in themselves or for their own sake. The
good life is the life which realizes intrinsic or satisfying values. Thus ethics deals with intrinsic values. There is also a third form of human value which is religious value, only in the religious relation or experience men enjoys such values as peace of mind, harmony of will, spiritual joy and communion with God. For the religious men these are the highest values and the best life is controlled by such values. These same enduring values underlie all great literature.

A serious and comprehensive expression of the essence of the world is philosophy; it dwells usually on very general concepts, through which we get a view of that whole essence and which will everywhere be adequate and applicable. Literature too contains an image of reality, but it differs from philosophy which attempts to present the ultimate nature of the world in an explicit form. One common unifying factor of the two is that both use the points of their teachings to make man feel certain things which lie beyond the grasp of his purely intellectual faculties, and in order to perform their function they use whatever imaginative resources that are essential. Literature depicts the relation between man and man, and his universe. The relation between all things is ever subject to subtle change.

It has been the business of literature to present this changing fact and human predicament
in their totality. As such everything in literature is true according to its own time, place and circumstances.

If we say that philosophy has only fixed ideas, literature breathes life into them and makes it presentable, realisable in our day to day life. The uniqueness of life is its fourth dimensional quality. The object of both philosophy and literature is to enable man to realise this fourth dimensional quality in him and utilise it to better life. Literature can help us to live better or enable us to understand life and live accordingly better than a didactic scripture possibly can.

The argument that literature is ab initio meant for aesthetic delight is also true of philosophy. This is the character of ancient philosophy or Greek philosophy. The Greeks hold beauty and truth closely knitted and inseparable. 'Cosmos' is their common expression for the world and for ornament. The universe appeared to them as a harmony, an organism, a work of art—before which they stood in admiration and awe. The philosophy which began in aesthetic contemplation slowly gave way to intellectual exuberance of the modern philosophers who became laterly philosophers in general. But the modern period can show no one philosophic writer of the literary rank of Plato, even though it includes such masters of style as Fichte, Schelling, Schopenhauer, and Lotze, not to speak of lesser names, is an evidence how
noticeably the aesthetic impulse has given way to one purely intellectual.

Life is greater, stronger, infinitely more interesting than books, be they of philosophy or poetry. The question of the where, whither, the why—will ever be the topics of philosophy and or literature alike. Philosophy, politics, finance, science, almost any subject may think, may enter literature, as long as it enters by way of men's feelings.¹²

Whatever may be the significant relevance of philosophy and literature, one inherent factor in the study estimates is that in later ages philosophers began to influence the literature of their respective ages. In fact, the scholarship in philosophy gave an impetus for literary excellence. In the vast spectrum of English literature, one could find the influence of Greek philosophers, German philosophers and Indian philosophers.

The reflections of philosophers reverberated in the works of great literary masters. This has been true of every age. To quote but a few, we have Bacon's frank acceptance of the Epicurean ethic. In England, the influence of Spinoza rose on the tide of the Revolutionary movement and young rebels like Coleridge and Wordsworth were attracted by his writings. "Coleridge filled his guests with Spinozist table talk and Wordsworth caught something of the Philosopher's
thought in his famous lines about

some thing
whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
and the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man
A motion and a spirit, which impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought
And rolls through all things'13

observes Will Durant. Similarly Walt Whitman in his Leaves of Grass justifies his sense of joy as Aristotle's exaltation of a purely intellectual happiness. So also Nietzsche's impact on Yeats.

Among the replies which approach an answer to this question is that good poetry seldom drives home a unilateral point of view, while philosophy usually does. Art which pictures only one aspect of a situation becomes "sheer didactic philosophy"14 to use the words of Otto Buhmann. Art attains immortality whatever may be its form. As D.H.Lawrence says of the novelist, when he "puts his thumb in the scale to pull down the balance to his own predilection, that is immortality,"15

While establishing the relevance of literature and philosophy, it will be worth quoting Patrick Gardiner, who observes "in the context of literature the term's meaning derives from the way in which the writer takes from life something quite particular and individual and yet so presents it that it
becomes revelatory of human existence in general. Thus it might be claimed that with a great novelist like Tolstoy or Thomas Hardy, as well as with dramatic poets, Schopenhauer constantly alludes to Shakespeare and Goethe; single incident, possibly even a mere gesture or passing thought may be portrayed in a fashion that lights up in a momentary flash a range of truths about ourselves and our relations to others; truths to which, viewing things as we normally do in the perspective of purpose, cause and consequence, we have previously been blind.  

Poets and dramatists viewed their works as parts of philosophical treatises. "No man was ever a great poet", says Coleridge, "without being at the same time a profound philosopher." Poetry presents the concrete and the universal, or the individual and the universal, or an object which in a mysterious and special way is both highly general and highly particular. The doctrine is implicit in Aristotle's two statements that poetry imitates action and that poetry tends to express the universal — according to the observations made by Wimsatt. What Wimsatt says of poetry is equally true of literature in general.

"The great poets", says Emerson, "are judged by the frame of mind they induce." In this sense a poet or a novelist is expected to instruct and guide, to stir and inspire, to energise and delight. This vital distinction is implied in everything that has been said about the specific
characteristics of that interpretation of life which literature affords.

The touchstone of great literature has been the philosophy ingrained in it and how it serves as a vehicle of philosophic truth without sacrificing anything of its essential literary qualities and graces. W.H. Hudson observes that "We care for literature—primarily on account of its deep and lasting human significance... Literature is a vital record of what men have seen in life, what they have experienced of it, what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have most immediate and enduring interest for all of us. It is thus fundamentally an expression of life through the medium of language".20

Literature embraces in its fold any form of knowledge and its boundary line extends far and wide. Even the books of the Vedas are also literature. The word 'Veda' is the collective designation of the ancient sacred literature of India.

So whatever yardstick one may apply to the relevance of philosophy in literature, a judicious critic will admit that literature must reflect the interests of its time or lose its vitality; to retain that it has to have explicit tenets of its own. There are certainly eternal laws of beauty, which cannot be evaded, there are just as certainly eternal laws of life which cannot be neglected, and the ever-insistent
If life gives us the raw material, literature gives us the finished product. From time immemorial philosophy and literature have busied themselves with the eternal questions of life and predicament of life. Each has become the flesh and bone of the other. The classic literature of every age of a country contains in itself the best philosophy of that age and country. Whereas philosophy preaches directly literature preaches by pleasing us. It concerns itself with a subtle and appealing way of conveying them.

As literature is coloured by the period in which it is produced so also philosophy, to some extent, is coloured by the period. For example in the case of Descartes and Spinoza, their thinking was influenced by the mathematical and physical discoveries of their day. In the case of Bergson his system was based on biology. Yet, whether so influenced or not, the great philosophers were far ahead of their time, and when their ideas became generally understood they went far in influencing the popular outlook of the next generation. Thus their study is important not only because their systems are typical insights of the ages in which they wrote, but also because they influence the development of the social history of later times.

Philosophers have consistently displayed a disposition to bring about some kind of fusion of literature, art and philosophy with the consequence that they have carried over
and sympathy produces saintliness. The artist and
the ascetic escape from the world into a momentary
and paradisal vision of eternal quietitudes of the
arts. A saint escapes by reducing the world to
nothingness..... Schopenhauer offers us the choice
of two ways out of the sufferings and disillusions of
life. One, the amiable transient way of the
time arts; two, the sanctified and eternal way of the
saint. 22

Both literature and philosophy inspire our lives
towards virtue and truth. In the case of philosophy
its objective itself is 'truth'. Hence it comes out
with logical analysis and methods and inferences.
As Russell observes,

In the world of conflicting fanaticisms, one of the few unifying forces is scientific truthfulness, by which I mean the
habit of basing our beliefs upon observation and inferences as impartial and
as much directed by facts as experimental bias, as is possible for base beings.
To have insisted upon the introduction of this virtue into philosophy one to
have invented a powerful method by which it can be rendered fruitful. F. E. C. the
chief merits of the philosophical school.
The habit of practical verity required in the practice of this philosophical
method can be extended to the whole sphere
of human activity, producing wherever it
exists, a lessening fanaticism with an
CHAPTER II
ASPECTS OF PESSIMISM