

An Indic Gaze on the Spiritual Self in the Anthropocene: The stages of 'I' through Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Neo-Vedantic Hermeneutics in Wordsworth's *Tintern Abbey* and Tagore's *Gitanjali*

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Abstract: *Posthumanism and the Anthropocene have brought into prominence the existential crisis facing humanity, where the very essence of the 'human' is called into question. Today, debates continue about the Enlightenment's rational essentialism, the resulting 'alienation' and the ensuing modern 'split' of the human Self from the environment, due to it being decentred and fragmented. Multifarious postmodern 'performative' selves and posthuman cybernetic selves have further split what is 'human'. Vedanta however, has a unique perspective of the Self as "enworlded subjectivity"; with the human regarded as a physical embodiment with a spiritual core, as 'embodied Atma', which transcends the merely subjective. Neo-Vedanta, a modern re-interpretation of Vedanta, is in a unique position to reclaim the rich spiritual and scriptural value of ancient Indian philosophical thought. This paper explores the phenomenology of the emerging spiritual Self in selected English poems. The lens used would be the neo-Vedantic philosophy of Sri Sathya Sai Baba who assigns three stages to the emerging spiritual Self. This manifestation of the Self is explained philosophically and would be hermeneutically decoded in Wordsworth's 'Tintern Abbey' and Tagore's 'Gitanjali'.*

Keywords: Anthropocene, Neo-Vedanta, Posthumanism, Romanticism, Sathya Sai Baba, Spiritual Self, Tagore, Wordsworth

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Introduction

This paper presents a phenomenology of the spiritual Self in the context of the Anthropocene and the era of posthumanism, through a *neo-Vedantic* lens, exemplified in Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey", and Tagore's "Gitanjali". These poems are considered here as philosophic responses to the onset of *modernity*, a condition described by Max Weber as a collective 'turn' in human thought, whose origins lie in the European Enlightenment and led to many world crises, *alienation* being one of them. Weber (1918, as cited in Smith, 2008, p. 7) states: "The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world'", a world, he said was "robbed of gods", and from which, "the bearing of man has been disenchanted and denuded of its mystical but inwardly genuine plasticity."

The Challenges of Modernity

Humanity's encounter with 'modernity' had changed pre-modern/medieval human understandings of the world and the self. Stemming from this are the two major problems confronting humanity – the *degradation* of the environment and the *devaluing* of the human. We live in a world, where *anthropocentrism* has brought us to the edge of a climate and value precipice. Today, inhabiting a posthuman world, we also witness the onset of 'virtual reality', where technology simulates reality, social media creates 'virtual selves', the computer and the pacemaker replace brain and heart functions, and the reality of cyborgs and robots reflect *transhumanism*. This is attributed to the natural progression of the Enlightenment definition of the human as a "computing power" and the belief that the "complexity of the computer core will equal the human brain" (Banerji, in Mishlove, 2019). The very concept of what is 'human' is a matter of debate. The 'self' being decentred and fragmented, seems a mere adjunct to the body. With the spiritual and sacred becoming forgotten footnotes in the margins of life, the question confronting humanity is whether a *spiritual* quest for the Self is at all relevant?

Spiritual Quest in the Modern World in Philosophy and Literature

While this quest was problematic in the post-Enlightenment secular West, the twenty-first century is witnessing a subtle shift towards the spiritual, with studies on human consciousness gaining ground. Despite the ‘hard problem’ of consciousness (Lysenko, 2018, p. 215), this interest is witnessed in neurosciences, in resurgent religious and theological studies, and interdisciplinary domains like neuro-theology. But this shift is not that visible in literary studies due to its largely postmodern orientations. In order to situate the quest philosophically, and investigate it in literature, this paper adopts *phenomenological hermeneutics* as its underlying methodology. Lately, phenomenological and hermeneutic research have gained momentum in the social sciences, which deal with *meaning* in human experience. Therefore, it was felt that this mode could be adapted into literary studies too (Menon and Patel, 2024) and combine it with an interdisciplinary and intercultural approach through *Indic neo-Vedanta*, investigating the spiritual quest as applied to selected poems of two eminent poets from Europe and India, respectively.

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Certain poetic movements in English literature, such as British *Romanticism* (Wordsworth, Coleridge) and American *Transcendentalism* (Emerson, Whitman), have attested to the validity of such a quest. These movements also countered the emerging ‘secular’ and ‘scientific’ narratives, with the privileging of instrumental Reason in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In colonized India too, there was the Bengal Renaissance in the nineteenth century, which saw the emergence of a ‘renewed’ Vedanta *philosophy*, responding to the challenge of European cultural imposition and through it, the Indic encounter with *modernity*. Indian literature, both in the vernacular and in English, reflected this cultural amalgamation, and English poetry with a distinct Indian flavour (Derozio, the Dutts, Tagore, Naidu, Aurobindo) was born.

The *neo-Vedanta* movement is a reinterpretation of the *Vedanta/Uttara Mimamsa* corpus, the *Prasthanas* – the three scriptural authorities of *Upanishads*, *Brahma Sutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita* (Mitra, 2020, p. 2), which condense the spiritual philosophy of the Vedas and are considered the “three fundamental texts . . . of the science of spirituality” (Baba, 2002, p. 2). *Neo-Vedanta* refers to the reinterpreted *Vedanta* philosophy by spiritual savants and contemporary Indian philosophers. While *Vedanta* has always been re-interpreted in a constant process of renewal, for this study, *neo-Vedanta* will refer to insights post the *modern* colonial encounter, specifically as enunciated by Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

The ‘Problem’ of the *Self*

Narratives across disciplines have defined the ‘human self’. Despite the various *essentialist* (rational/metaphysical) and *performative* (social-economic) definitions of the Self, the problems of *alienation* and fragmentation remain and seem accentuated by the postmodern trends of a disintegration of all beliefs in ‘grand narratives’, such as, the ascendancy of ‘reason’ over other faculties to foster ‘progress’ and to ‘know’ reality (Kuzniarz, 2015, pp. 8-9). What is witnessed is the *Anthropocene*, an “age of crisis”, which Quinn (2016) states, has arisen due to – “technological exploitation of the earth and a withering of faith in any order, natural or supernatural, that could serve as a guide to human affairs” (p. 43). The march of technology with the recent AI revolution has spotlighted the very question of human identity. What is the ‘human’ in a posthuman world and what can free the human from rootlessness and *alienation*?

The Problem of *Alienation*

The roots of modern *alienation* can be traced to the secular cosmology of European Enlightenment, with its ‘anthropocentric’ turn. Enlightenment philosophy generally stood for “humanism, rationality and universalism” (Solomon, 1988, pp. 9). Briefly, the *subject-object split* was accentuated by the “*cogito ergo sum*” (I think, therefore I am) of Descartes, and the rise of Newtonian empirical sciences, which privileged the rational faculty. The observation and abstraction of the phenomenal world and bringing it under universal laws, led to the European mind moving away from the Greco-Christian cosmologies – a belief in the Divine natural order. *Modernity* disrupted belief-systems and ecological crises of today can be traced to “*our intellectual relationship with the world and the practices that stem from it*”, observes Dobson (1995, as cited in Stone, 2014, emphasis added). There was a spiritual vacuum due to traditional Christianity failing to counter the rise of scientific

materialism or to defend beliefs in the Divine order, caused by a distancing from its original spiritual 'lived experience' of "interiority" (Chethimattom, 2000, p. 191). Nature became a mere *natural resource* and the human a *rational animal*.

Tracing the Impact of *Alienation*

Broadly, *alienation* refers to "subjective experiences of estrangement, powerlessness, isolation and detachment, as well as to general processes of social fragmentation and disintegration" (Øversveen, 2022, p. 442), which correspond to the human condition of *angst* or anguish of Existentialism. The schism between the human being and Nature, was part of a larger conceptual opposition, "between individual and society, mind and matter, soul and body, reason and intuition, and between free humanity and causally determined nature" (Stone, 2014, p. 46). Hegel and Marx advocated a 'reconciliation' between the human and Nature to solve this 'estrangement' which could be achieved, through "a state of being 'at-home-with-oneself-in-the-world', (by) which we are entitled . . . to overcome anything that is alien to the human mind" (41). This meant transforming, adapting, or subjugating the causality-dependent, deterministic external environment through rational human agency, by "humanizing the natural world" and "transforming it through labour . . . so that it reflects the human self" (42). "Freedom" hinged on rationality and unhindered human agency. This onus on individual *freedom*, led to a 'displacement' of the transcendent God from Nature and human affairs (Lumsden, 2019, pp. 373). The human subject now replaced God: "Providence is superseded by self-determined freedom" (373).

The pursuit of power and 'progress' also justified the *colonial* enterprise with its exploitation and oppression of natural and human resources. This emerging worldview can be summarized as *the shift from a belief in transcendence to immanence*, "from an understanding of reality secured in the *transcendent*, where the meaning and truth of things ultimately resided with the supernatural, to an *immanent* understanding . . . against the transcendent, where meaning was grounded in the natural order" (Hampton, 2019, p. 1; emphasis added). This shift from a "theocentric" to an "anthropocentric" outlook (2), meant the extinction of belief in the world as sustained by Divinity. Heidegger calls it as Western man's "forgetfulness of Being" and the reduction of human existence to that of a 'technological being', "in which everything, including man himself becomes material for a process of self-assertive production, self-assertive imposition of human will on things, regardless of their own essential natures" (1971, p. xv). The 'forgetfulness of Being' has parallels with the Indic concept of '*alienation*'.

Alienation and the Literary

This split of the human from the Divine is reflected in European literatures where we see the progressive 'secularization' of world views. *Romanticism*, which emerged in the backdrop of the Enlightenment saw poets grappling with doubts raised about any spiritual or transcendent reality, in contrast with earlier epochs. Miller (1974) asserts, "Romantic poets start with . . . dualism. They must try through the act of poetry to reach the supersensible world by bringing together subject and object" (2). The Romantics had a non-traditional belief in the Divine and a self-belief that a poet could access the spiritual through the *imagination*; the Victorians, on the other hand – Tennyson, Arnold, Hopkins, Hardy, portray the withdrawal of God's presence and the Moderns and Postmodern poets start with "the death of God" (Miller, *Poets of Reality*, p. 2).

The Romantic Antidote

The German Romantics (Schlegel, Novalis) "perceived modernity to have estranged humanity from nature and "disenchanted" Nature by applying to it *a narrowly analytic and reflective form of rationality*" (Stone 2005, p. 4, emphasis added). Bowie (1997) concurs, "The process of secularization . . . is also a process of 'disenchantment' of reality . . . and does lead to the threat of complete meaninglessness and nihilism" (27). The Romantics considered 'disenchantment' as the direct result of assuming that reality could be made "completely intelligible through reason" (Stone, 2004, pg. 4). They then sought to restore the mysteriousness and unity of Nature, to "re-enchant" it, by recognizing and "acknowledging that we belong within and depend upon Nature, far from existing 'outside' Nature" (Plumwood, 1993, as cited in Stone, 2014, pg. 43). They are truly pioneering

of an ecological consciousness (Pinkney, 1999). Romantic poetry often expresses ‘wonder’ in their experience of Nature – a reaction to natural phenomena, “which do not conform to their habitual experiences of the world” (Economides, 2016, pg. 6). The Wordsworthian ‘surprised by joy’ points to the creative potential of ‘wonder’, and “is of paramount importance to Romantic artists, . . .(since) associated with renewal” (6).

The Problem of *Alienation* in *Vedanta* and its Solution

In *Indic Vedantic* terms, *alienation* is spiritual “Self-alienation” (Bhajananda, 2000, p. 95). It is *ontological* and *the state of human existence itself*, accentuated by *modernity*. It is termed as ‘bondage’ (*bandhana*) wherein the soul of man is bound and subject to suffering, due to the separation of the individual souls (*jivas*) from the universal Soul or *Brahman*, at birth. Indic philosophies make a **distinction** between the **mind-*Manas*** and **Consciousness-*Chaitanya*** unlike in Western philosophies, which conflate the two. The cause for *alienation* becomes the **mind**, which gives rise to the ego-sense or the limited sense of ‘**i-ness**’/ *ahamkara*. Uniquely, the mind is not just the cause of *alienation*, it is also the means for liberation from it.

मन एव मनुष्याणां कारणं बन्धमोक्षयोः । बन्धाय विषयासक्तं मुक्त्यै निर्विषयं स्मृतम् ॥

mana eva manuṣyāṅām kāraṇaṃ bandhamokṣayoḥ ।

bandhāya viṣayāsaktaṃ muktyai nirviṣayaṃ smṛtam ॥

Translation: “The mind is the cause for bondage and liberation; immersed in sense experience the mind is bound; the desireless mind is liberated” (Brahmabindu Upanishad, n.d., Verse 2).

Literature Review

The two *research questions* guiding this paper are, what is the spiritual Self and whether it is knowable, and how can this Self be expressed through poetry?

Several studies have interpreted Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” and Tagore’s “Gitanjali” through a *Vedantic* lens with some references to the spiritual Self. Theses, books and articles reviewed over a span of the last fifty years deal with the poets’ relationship with Nature, the Divine Presence in Nature, transcendence and mysticism, modes of devotion, evolution of Vedantic thought and so on. However, what constitutes the spiritual Self, the journey to the spiritual Self or its *stages* have not been clearly traced, and no studies from a specific *neo-Vedantic* perspective were found. This is the ‘gap’ that I seek to address.

Methodology

In this interdisciplinary study of *Romantic* poetry applying *neo-Vedanta*, the methodology used is *phenomenological hermeneutics*, a bridge between two cross-cultural perspectives, combining phenomenological principles of Husserl with the hermeneutic insights of Heidegger as a basis for interpretation. Following are some grounds of comparison of the three streams of thought:

	Grounds of Comparison	Phenomenology and Hermeneutics	Neo-Vedanta	Romanticism
1	BEING	Heidegger’s Phen. Hermeneutics believes in the ontological reality of Being , which is the basis of <i>ontic</i> phenomena	Brahman is the Supreme Consciousness that is both transcendent and immanent with respect to the phenomenal world	Blake and Wordsworth, detail the experiencing of a supersensible reality in Nature, underlying empirical reality
2	‘modernity’	‘Modernity’ is the ‘forgetfulness of Being’	‘Modernity’ in the context of colonization is a spiritual and cultural subjugation of the Indian mind	‘Modernity’ is a threat to the harmonious relationship between man and his world
3	Consciousness	Ordinary consciousness is ‘intentional’ ; consciousness	Distinguishes between mind and Consciousness ; mind is	The concept of Imagination , which is the intuitive,

		is always ‘ consciousness-of ’, always aware of something, internal or external	functional and analytical. Consciousness is the <i>Sakshi</i> or the Eternal Witness, which is the Source of the mind and world, and is reflected by the Buddhi (intellect)	unitive, creative, synthetic part of the mind that is beyond mere rationality; the mediating power between mind and world
4	Phenomena	The phenomenal world is an ‘ appearance ’, structured through consciousness, which phenomenology investigates. Objects ‘appear’ /reveal their eidetic essence to the receptive (pure) consciousness (Hamlin, 1974, 175)	Phenomena exists as long as the <i>mind</i> functions; phenomenal nature of the world constituting of names and forms are imposed by the mind to make the world intelligible; with the dawning of <i>Atmic</i> awareness the empirical world dissolves into the Light of realization.	The essence of objects is cognized by the <i>imagination</i> , which sees beyond the ‘appearance’, “into the life of things”.
5	Focus	Experience of phenomena	Experience and its transcendence	Experience that reveals subject-object unity
6	Language	Language is ‘ disclosure ’ of Being and not a mere sign (Heidegger, 1971, 73)	Sabda (word) is the sole <i>pramana</i> (proof of truth), that can reveal transcendental truths (Baba, 2002, 43)	Language, not merely represents, but embodies Reality,
7	Poetry	Highest poetry is revelatory of Being	<i>Vaak</i> , poetic utterance is the medium for revealing <i>Atmic</i> Reality	Poetry is the affirmation of transcendental vision

Table 1: Grounds of Comparison

The Spiritual Self and Stages: Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s Advaitic Philosophy

The fine subtlety of Indian philosophy can be understood from the **four-fold** functionalities/classification attributed to the **mind** or the mental apparatus, termed as *Anthakaranas* /instrumentalities (Baba, 1990, p. 76) – *manas* (thought), *buddhi* (higher intellect), *citta* (memory-sense) and *ahamkara* (ego-sense or “i-ness”).

Here, the mental sense of *ahamkara* or ego or ‘i-sense’ is the limited sense of the Self. The true Self, the *Atmic* awareness (*Brahman*), which bestows the primordial sense of ‘**I-ness**’ on everything in the universe is called *Aham* (Baba, 1990, p. 64) in the individual context. The limited sense of self or *ahamkara* comes from false identification, termed as “enworlded subjectivity” (Balasubramanian, 2011, p. 57) of the *Atma* identifying with the mind (or body). Just as “the clouds that are formed due to the Sun’s heat hide the Sun itself . . . the mind, which is the offspring of the *Atma*, hides the *Atma* itself” (Baba, 1993, p. 59). This happens when the mind aligns with its *ahamkara* aspect, instead of with the *buddhi*. Baba also cautions that the Sanskrit *ahamkara* is often translated as English ego/pride, which is incorrect; *ahamkara* in *Vedanta* refers to identifying oneself with the body or mind, which obscures one’s identity with the *Atma* (Baba, 1993, p. 48). Hence, in order to realize the true Self, the mind has to be transcended. For this, the *buddhi*, which is a direct reflection of the *Atma*, is the key.

Advaita Vedanta provides a *genealogy* for the arising of the mind from Consciousness with a *hierarchical* explanation, which explains the experiencing of both the empirical (*Vyavaharika*) as well as the transcendental (*Paramarthika*) realities. The former is dependent on the latter (Indich, 1980, p. 4), while knowledge (*vidya*) of these is called *apara* and *para vidya*. The *buddhi* (as a mental component) is the intermediary between the transcendent *Atman* and the empirical world, a reflector of *Atmic* Consciousness, as well as holding within it the images and ideas that make the world intelligible (Bhattacharya (1992/2004, p. 57). The poetic **Imagination** of the Romantic poets comes very close to the *Vedantic Buddhi*.

Baba (1993, p. 46) says, “The *buddhi* (intellect) is very close to the *Atma* and therefore well located to receive 90% of the *Atmic* energy and illumination. The **mind** derives its power from the *buddhi*, the **senses** from

the mind, and the **body** from the senses. In this process of the flow of power from the Atma to the body in stages, there occurs a gradual quantitative and qualitative diminution of the power”.

Baba (1998/1999, pps. 44-45) has further said that the heart (spiritual), the **Hridhaya** is the centre of the *buddhi* where the *Atmic* ‘I’ principle manifests – “The Universe has originated from where the ‘I’ principle has originated. That is *Hridhaya* . . . the origin of the ‘I’ principle. This ‘I’ is all-pervasive. There is no place or person without this . . . *Hridhaya* is not limited to body alone, . . . ‘I’ is the name of *Atma* It is associated with *Buddhi* (intellect).

When the mind (*manas*) is aligned with the intellect (*buddhi*), one’s identification with the body gradually reduces, and non-dual *Atmic* awareness dawns. The seat of the intellect or *buddhi* is the **spiritual heart**, where the *buddhi* manifests as the **conscience**. In fact, the quest for the spiritual Self, could be defined as the journey from the mind (*Manas*) to the Consciousness (*Atma/Chith/Chaithanya*), through the *buddhi* (the heart/conscience), whereby ontological ‘alienation’ can be overcome.

The **spiritual journey of the Self** is to become aware of this underlying transcendental Consciousness, which is the substratum for all experience – subjective and objective (Indich, 1980, pg. 2), where duality finally ceases. Baba also refers to the three levels of waking awareness as – “**conscious, conscience and Consciousness**” (2001, pg. 148). The table below brings out the differences:

Levels of WAKING Awareness/Stages of Selfhood	Cognitive Faculty / Self and Identity	CHARACTERISTICS
CONSCIOUS	The Senses, Body and Mind (<i>Manas</i>)	Sensuous, rational
CONSCIENCE	The Intellect (<i>BUDDHI</i>) / The IMAGINATION	Intuitive, imaginative, Visionary
CONSCIOUSNESS	Beyond Duality of perception / non-dual Experience	State of Transcendence

Table 2: The Three Levels of Self

Similarly, the definition of the **individual** also points to the spiritual Self: He who manifests his *Avyaktha* (unmanifest) Divinity through his conduct is a **Vyakthi** (individual). This latent Divine principle is . . . conscience. The *Chaitanya* (Consciousness) latent in every human being is his true individuality. (Baba, 2001, p. 172).

And what would be the *outcome* of such a spiritual Self? Again, Baba (1998/1999, p. 46) affirms, “When the mind and the intellect (*buddhi*) unite, humanness reaches a state of freedom, which is referred to as *Moksha* (Liberation)”. **Freedom**, therefore, is not an imposition or a subjugation of anything external, but the growing awareness of the unity of underlying Consciousness, which is seen in “Tintern Abbey”.

Sathya Sai Theory of Self and “Tintern Abbey”

The absence of any mention of the actual ruined abbey in Wordsworth’s “Tintern Abbey” (1798, pp. 415-420) is emblematic of the change from a spirituality represented by the Church to that which the Romantics sought in Nature (Barbour, 1993, pg. 150). Wordsworth and the Romantics paved a new path to counter the Enlightenment’s rational deadening of Nature, through re-investing it with life and significance. A hermeneutic decoding of the poem reveals the poet’s awareness moving from the first stage of ‘conscious’ to the third stage of ‘Consciousness’, through the intermediary stage of ‘Conscience’.

We see the period of *childhood*, “*the coarser pleasures of my boyhood days/And their glad animal movements*” (lines 75-76) and *youth*, “*a feeling and a love/ That had no need of a remoter charm/ By thought supplied*” (lines 83-85), corresponding to the stage of “CONSCIOUS” – the stage of senses and sensation. The next part of his life is when he confronts life with its uncertainties, pain and tragedies and experiences *alienation*, very understated in the poem but highlighted by these lines, “*in darkness . . . / and the fever of the world*”. However, on turning to Nature, he hears “*the still, sad music of humanity*” (line 94), the human condition of *angst* and also, “*Not harsh nor grating, though of ample power/To chasten and subdue*” (lines 95-96). “*Still, sad*”, as Wu

(2012) suggests, could allude to the ‘still, small voice of God’ (Notes, p 418). This is the stage of CONSCIENCE, which leads the poet to contemplation and refines his sorrow through subduing his passions and lifting him with the transcendental vision that follows.

The unfolding of the *spiritual* vision is witnessed in the mystical experience detailed in Stanzas 2 and 4, as in “*that serene and blessed mood/ In which the affections gently lead us on*” (lines 42-43, emphasis added) and (lines 97-102)

*a Presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts, a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns*

.....
... and in the mind of man.”

The alienated and sorrowful mind of the poet is restored through experiencing unity and harmony with all of life and it is love (‘affections’), that heart-emotion which brings him here. “*Almost suspended we are laid asleep/ in body and become a living soul*” (lines 46-47) and “*We see into the life of things*” (line 50) are indicators that his awareness has momentarily at least, merged with all-pervading CONSCIOUSNESS, which gives him the vision to experience the *eidetic* essence of the phenomenal world (*para vidya*) and the existence of his Self as a spiritual being, a Soul (Atman).

Sathya Sai Theory of Self and *Gitanjali*

Three distinct strains blend in Tagore’s poetic “life-world”/*lebenswelt* in the “*Gitanjali*” poems. They would also correspond with the three stages of the spiritual journey of the Self. in “*Gitanjali*”. Tagore describes his spiritual experiences as “an uplifting of the cover of triviality from the everyday world” (1917, as cited in Mirza, 1977, p. 5), in which he experienced “a radiance” that pierced through his sorrow and flooded his heart with an unusual light. Significantly, this awareness of oneness stayed with him throughout his life and is reflected in the many moods and nuances of the *Gitanjali* poems.

In the *Romantic* wanderer on a mysterious voyage of the Spirit (Chakravarthy, 2010, p. 62) and the longing of the traveller caught between two worlds, “one has to wander through all the outer worlds to reach the innermost shrine at the end” (Tagore, 2002/1912, poem 12, p. 13), and “I have had my invitation to this world’s festival. . . has the time come at last when I may go in and see thy face?” (poem 16, p 19), unfulfilled yearning for the Divine coexists with the joys of life. This is the stage of CONSCIOUS.

The second stage is that of the *Existential* poet trapped between the “antinomies of existence, life and death, time and the timeless” (S. Ghosh, 1961, as cited in Chakravarthy, 2010, p.113), yet aware of and listening to the higher Self, “I shall ever try to drive all evils away . . . knowing that thou hast thy seat in the inmost shrine of my heart (poem 4, p. 4) and “My desires are many and my cry is pitiful, but ever didst thou save me by hard refusals” (poem 14, p. 17), depicting the stage of CONSCIENCE – a turning away from the senses to the heart. There is also the ‘dark night of the soul’ as in Poem 40: “The rain has held back for days and days, my God, in my arid heart” (p. 45) and in Poem 39: “When the heart is hard and parched up, come upon me with a shower of mercy (P. 44).

Tagore is the modern *Upanishadic* poet-seer, who through the *simple* lyricism of his verse embodies the unitive vision of transcendental CONSCIOUSNESS: “In this playhouse of infinite forms I have had my play *and here have I caught sight of him that is formless*” (Poem 96, p.112, emphasis added) and death has lost its sting (Poem 103, p. 119): “Like a flock of homesick cranes flying . . . to their mountain nests let all my life take its eternal voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee”.

In conclusion, I quote from Tagore’s “Personality” (1995/2017, p.98), “the whole object of man is to free his personality of self into the personality of soul . . . from the contraction of self in desire into the expansion of

soul in love". This is the healing philosophy of *Vedanta* that can restore the world from rupture and fragmentation.

Conclusion

In a simple and lucid manner, *Vedanta's* ontology of the Self and Sri Sathya Sai Baba's *Neo-Vedantic* explanation of the practical realizability of the Self, assert a path towards the healing of the fragmented psyche of the modern human being, separated by many differences but united in the experience of *modernity*. The message of *Romanticism*, which strove for the unifying of faculties through the poetic imagination against the analytic dissections of discursive reason is also upheld through the *Neo-Vedantic* doctrine of the spiritual Self.

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