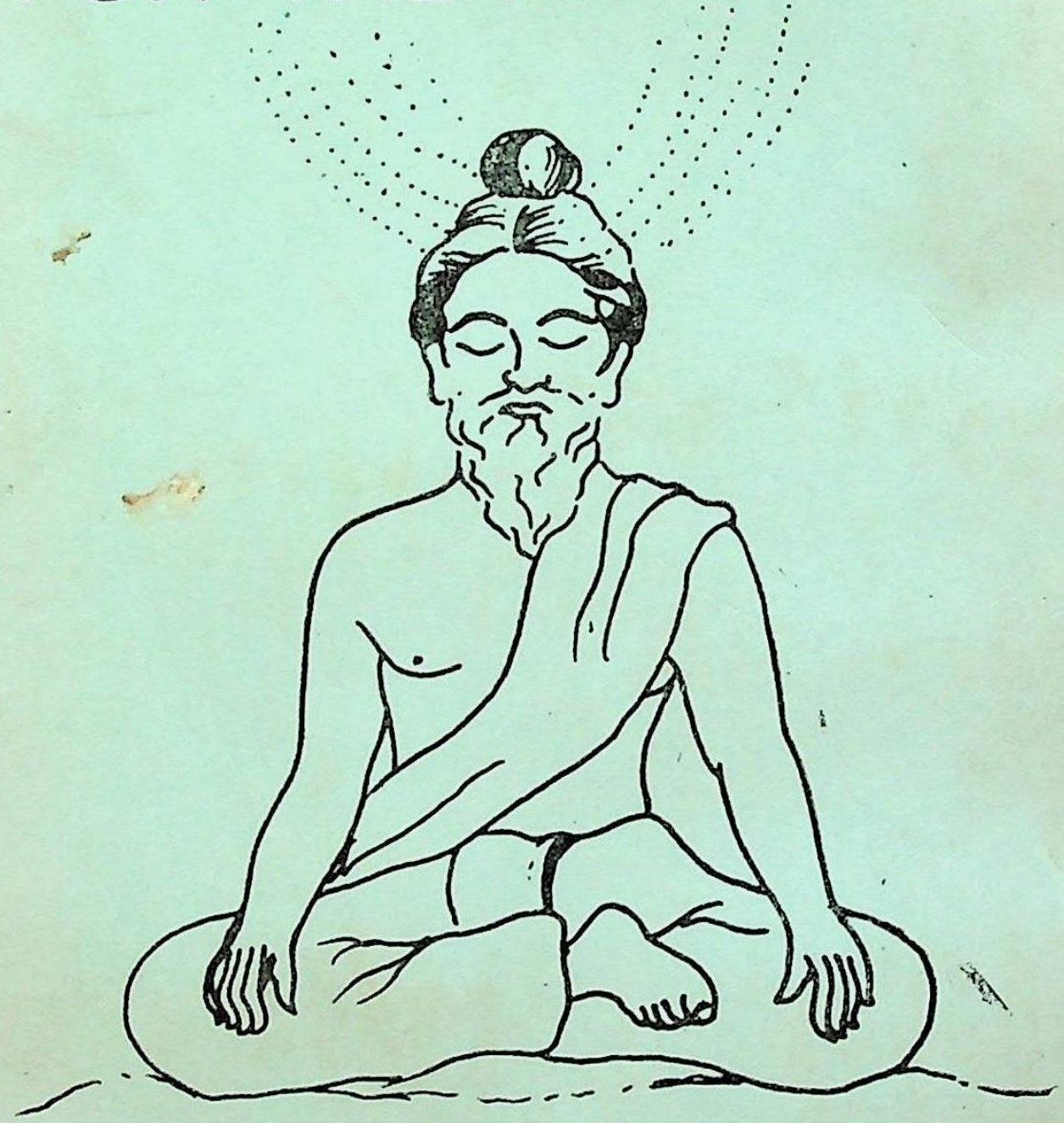
THE MYSTICAL SEARCH FOR THE ABSOLUTE



-MOTI LAL PANDIT

The Academy of Comparative Philosophy
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Publisher's Note.

This Public Trust was founded by Shri Gurudeo Dr. R. D Ranade, with the following aims and objects:

"To work for the spiritual unity of mankind and consequent peace and good-will upon earth, bringing together intellectual and spiritually-minded persons through [1] spiritual symposiums, [2] study and research, [3] lectures, [4] meetings and coferences and [5] religious and philosophical publications."

For implementation of these aims and objects, Seminars and Gurudeo Ranade Memorial Lectures are arranged by this Trust from time to time. Lectures are arranged on topics of philosophy and religion (Dharma) and some books are also published.

Shri Motilal Pandit was invited by us to deliver lectures on 'Mystical Search for the Absolute' and

he was good enough to accept our invitation. He comes from Kashmir and is M. A. in philosophy and also in Literature. An Indologist, he has travelled extensively in Western countries and in India. He is the author of six works also. He has been coutributing good articles for Pathway to God– a journal of this Public Trust, and to other philosophical journals. He is Director, Indology Department, Theological Research and Communication Institute, New Delhi. These lectures of this distinguished scholar will be found interesting and instructive by the readers.

These lectures are now published and we are happy to place this book in the hands of the public.

Belgaum.

14-1-1990 (Makar Sankrant)

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Reality appeareth to man's thought
as several links interdependent of a chain
that circling returneth upon itself, as doth
the coil'd snake that in art figureth eternity.

–Robert Bridges

THE MYSTICAL SEARCH FOR THE ABSOLUTE

By

Moti Lal Pandit

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Philosophy of the Upanishads

The Fundmentals of Buddhism

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For

Prof. Johannes Aagaard of Aarhus (Denmark)

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PREFACE

Since the dawn of human consciousness, man has been in search of such ultimates which would authenticate the purpose and meaning of life while caught up in the ambiguities of existence in a world of becoming. The ambinguities of existence express themselves in such *absences* in which an eschatological hope gets obliterated in the fires of time. It is this record of existential absences which compose, as it were, human history.

If history is taken as a guiding-principle concerning the meaning and puropse of life, we are lost in the web of becoming, in that process which, as becoming, never *is*. The meaning, therefore, must reside somewhere else - it must transcend becoming, and thereby absence. That which is beyond becoming or absence has been referred to as the ultimate reality. That which is ultimate has to be beyond time, beyond history and beyond causality. It is this ultimate reality, this final resting-place, which is the theme of mysticism. Mystics are the people who know, while living a finite or historical mode of existence, this infinite reality within.

As far as the interpretation of this reality is concerned, there are different viewpoints concerning its nature. These differences, although important do not obliterate the fact that beyond and behind this finite becoming there is an infinite reality which underlies all that which is finite and passing What the non-mystic should learn from mysticism is that ambiguities of existence can be transcended provided right perception, right intention and right attitude are developed.

The confirmation by the mystics of a transcendent reality establishes the fact that life is not a meaningless play that struts and frets upon the stage of history. The ultimate meaning of life is to realise and know this reality which is within us, that is, we can discover presence where there is absence provided we remove the evil of obscurity from our inner eyes. By having right perception of reality, there is peace within and without, and thereby the resonance of this prayer is heard everywhere :- Let there be peace everywhere .....

There is strife, conflict and hate in the world, among the people, among the countries because majority of people take that real which is but absence, which is but passing. They cling, in the words of the Buddha, to that which is pain-giving. This clinging gives rise to becoming, to the endless chain of pain and pleasure. This clinging obscures

the vision of man. Whether one clings to one's nation or race, it ultimately results in strife. That which is characterised by strife must necessarily result in pain.

The mystics have shown us the way and the path of peace They have shown how to eliminate the desire for clinging, and how to arrive at that herizon whereby inner harmony within and without is experienced. By attaining this state of harmony, freedom from that clinging is realised which tethers man to absence. And freedom lies just in right perception, that is, to perceive reality as it is. And this freedom is the ultimate goal and meaning of human life.

It gives me great pleasure to express my thanks to the Academy of Comparative Philosophy and Religion (Belgaum), and particularly to Sri. J. V. Parulekar, for asking me to deliver the Gurudev Ranade Memorial Lectures during the autmn of 1986. I chose the theme of mysticism precisely because Gurudev Ranade was not just an outstanding philosopher; he was a mystic of repute. In these Lectures an effort has been made to look at mystical spirituality from various points of view. I have not tried to answer the questions which mystical experience raises. I have tried to point out the problems which the non-mystics face when dealing with the subject-matter of mysticism.

Finally, I would like to thank Prof. Johannes Aagaard of Aarhus University. I have had the privilege of learning from him what he calls *religionskritik*. His dedication to scholarship, his love for man, and his ecumenicity of spirit have been an ideal to me.

New Delhi

Moti Lal Pandit.

1. THE ADVAITA VEDĀNTA AND THE ABSOLUTE

'It is generally believed by people, who have peripheral acquaintance with Hinduism, or who derive information from popular text-books on Hinduism, that Indian religious or philosophical consciousness is mainly oriented towards a monistic understanding of Reality. Such an understanding of

Indian religious life or of Indian philosophical systems of thought is not correct. Most of the traditional Indian systems of thought or religious traditions, whether Vedic or non-Vedic, have interpreted Reality in pluralistic terms. The reason for indentifying the Indian religious or philosophical vision with monism, that is, with the Advaita Vedānta (non-dualism) of Śaṁkara, is not far to seek. The Advaita Vedānta, being the most comprehensive system of thought, has appealed to the leading Indian intellectuals, and from the middle of the last century a concerted effort has been made to interpret the Indian religious vision and spirituality in terms of Advaita Vedānta. This has led to a picture of Hinduism as a religion of unity by relegating the other viewpoints to oblivion. The other reason for this state of affairs is the popularity of mysticism. Mysticism, in general, has been interpreted in terms of unity, and Indian mysticism, in general, has been seen as an exponent of a spiritual vision which adhers to the viewpoint of Śaṁkara. Because of such misinformation, people are made to believe that the entire gamut of Indian religious consciousness is oriented towards non-dualism. Such a view of Indian religious consciousness needs to be corrected at the outset.

There is another belief that Indian philosophy is basically characterised by a religious conciousness, and therefore it lacks the scientific temper. In order to grasp the significance of this viewpoint, it is

necessary that the meaning of the rerm " religion " needs to be clarified. The term " religion " is very complex, as *religion* in different cultural contexts is understood differently. In some cultural contexts, belief in God is the main foundation of religion, whereas in others it is not necessary. If, therefore, by religion we mean a dogmatic belief in a personal being who is other than oneself, then Indian philosophy, more or less, may not be said to be religious. Most of the schools of Indian philosophy, whether orthodox or non- orthodox, do not postulate such a being. The Sāṁkhya school does away with a belief which demands adherence and submission to such a being, whereas Nyāya and Vaiśesika do postulate such a being, but he is more a creation of the intellect than of faith. The Jains also do not affirm the existence of such a suppra - rationl being. As far as Buddhism is concerned, it may be said that in early Buddhism there is no such a being, whereas in later Māhāyana Buddhism we have an eternal Buddha, but he is more of a metaphysical construct than the out come of faith.

If, however, by " religion " we understand a way of life, then the context and vision of religion completely changes. It is a vision which seeks in and through religion a transcendent mode of existence, a mode of existence which is free from the conditioning of space and time, from causality, from unfreedom, from pain, etc. This vision is borne out of an ex-

perience in which the worldt is seen as a continous process of becoming, a constant flux, and life is viewed as a painful episode in the midst of this flux. The meaning of religion, in this context, is completely at varianee with a conception of religion in which belief in a personal being of a supra - rational character is a religious as well as logical necessity. But such a belief in a personal being is not a necessity for a view in which religion is seen as a means to liberation from pain and sorrow, a means to a new mode of being which is free from the contamination of time and change. From this perspective Indian philosophy in general is to be characterised as a philosophy whose orientation is basically religious. The only school of Indian philosophy, which may be termed as irreligious or non - eschatological, is the Materialist, Cārvāk, school. The general ethos of Indian philosophy, therefore, may be said to be religious in the sense that it is a salvation - philosophy. Although engrossed with the question of liberation of man from the trammels of *samsara* becoming, it does not mean that Indian philosophy has neglected the cultivation of the basic tools of human knowledge. This can be seen from the fact that Nyāya developed an elaborate logical system, whereas Vaiśeṣika contributed much to the realistic understanding of elements which compose the universe. The Sāṁkhya concerned itself with the cosmological questions. As far as epistemology is concerned, almost all schools of philosophy have given various theories of knowledge.

After these preliminary observations on Indian philosophy, our task will be to discuss the Vedānta system of thought as such. At the outset our attention will be drawn to the Advaita (non-dualism) Vedānta of Śaṁkara (A. D. 788-820) [1] Afterwards we shall discuss the other schools of Vedānta tradition, particularly that of Mādhvācārya, in relation to the Advaita of Śaṁkara. All the schools of Vedānta are orthodox, and therefore Vedic, in the sense that all of them consider the Vedic scriptures as the ultimate source of Truth. The Vedic scriptures consist of the Saṁhitās, Brāhmaṇs, and the Upaniṣads. The Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas mainly concern themselves with religious sacrifices and rituals. They do not, in general, speculate in the philosophical sense of the word. This does not mean that they do not contain philosophical ideas. They do contain philosophical ideas but in a potential form. The Upaniṣads, on the other hand, concentrate mainly, in meditational and dialogic form, on questions of human destiny. The Upaniṣads, in a word, may be said to be meditations on the human condition. The Upaniṣads, as the "end of the Vedas" (Vedānta), set in motion the potential philosophical ideas of the Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas.

The Upaniṣads, which form the bed-rock of the Vedānta tradition, do not represent one system of thought; rather they are a repository of various systems of thought. S. N. Dasgupta, in this context,

informs us that we must "turn a deaf ear to the absolute claims of these exponents (those who believe that the Upaniṣads represent a uniform system of thought), and look upon the Upaniṣads not as a systematic treatises but as repository of diverse currents of thought–the melting-pot in which all later philosophic ideas were still in a state of fusion" [2] The Upaniṣadic texts may be considered as meditational anthologies; and these mediations contain the most sublime insights on the question of freedom from the human condition and the nature of human bondage.

As the Upaniṣadic texts contain a variety of currents of thought, it became easy for a philosopher to develop his system of thought in the light of the scriptural support. This also meant that the philosopher interpreted the various currents of thought of the Upaniṣads in accordance with his own presuppositions. When, for example, an Advaitin philosopher maintains that the Absolute, Brāhmaṇ, cannot be spoken of in terms of discursive thought or concepts, he can easily appeal to the Upaniṣads in support of his assertion, and the scriptual support is easily available. But the Upāniṣads do not only propound the concept of Brāhmaṇ as envisaged by an Advaitin philosopher; they contain other viewpoints which do not easily fit within the framework of Advaita. So each philosopher interpreted, on the one hand, the Upanishadic doctrines in the light of his own presuppositions and, on the other, sought support for the legitimacy of his presuppositions from the Upaniṣads.

Śaṁkara's interpretation of the Upaniṣads is determined by his theory of the *degrees of knowledge*. Śaṁkara views the truth from absolute and relative viewpoints.[3] It is with this philosophic technique that Śaṁkara interprets the Upaniṣads, and thereby attempts to forge a unitary system of philosophy by dividing knowledge into two categories, that is, absolute knowledge and empirical knowledge. Those portions of the Upaniṣads which speak of non-dualism are interpreted in terms of absolute knowledge, whereas those portions which do not agree with Śaṁkara's interpretation, are relegated to the sphere of empirical knowledge. This is how Śaṁkara is able to unify the thought of the Upaniṣads in the light of the non-dualistic interpretation.

As and when the various schools of philosophy were established is difficult to tell. Before a school of philosophy came into existence, a number of texts were written, which were later commented upon. These commentaries usually gave birth to a particular schools of thought. In case of Vedānta, the first systematic effort at bringing coherence to the Upaniṣadic thought-systems was made by Bādarāyana (2nd century B. C.) in his *Brahmasūtra*. This text was later commented upon by the various thinkers, such as Śaṁkara, Rāmānuja, Mādva, etc. As far as Advaita is concerned, it is believed that its birth was hastened and facilitated by the Kārikā on the Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad of Gaudapada (8th century A. D). It is believed that Saṁkara's

teacher, Govinda, was the disciple of Gaudapāda. It may, therefore, be said that Gaudapāda is indirectly responsible for the birth of Advaita school of Vedānta which Śaṁkara, through his genius, systematised and developed on a proper metaphysical foundation. Till to this day Śaṁkara's genius has not been surpassed both in terms of thought and influence.

The popular understanding of Advaita Vedānta consists of inaccurate assertions, such as, that it is a system of thought based on negations in the sense that the world of empirical experience and perception is seen to be false and untrue. Such a popular assertion needs a good amount of rectification Śaṁkara in no manner denies the historical authenticity or reality, of the Many, that is, the world of our sence-perceptions, in so far as our daily and mundane lives are concerned. The world which we see and experience the world of relations and of things, the world of our waking conciousness is much more real and authentic than the world we perceive in dreams or imagination. If the world of our waking consciousness is absolutely false, then it would be, on the one hand difficult to distinguish a waking state of consciousness from that of dream state and, on the other, even in the state of waking consciousness it is not going to be possible to distinguish that which *appears* from that

which is. For example, if the world of our waking consciousness is said to be unreal, then we will not be able to differentiate the rope (which is real) from the snake (which is unreal).4

Since the world of our waking consciousness is not entirely false, it would mean that the perception of the rope is not a mere subjective projection; rather the rope is a datum, an object of experience. It is an irreducible entity in itself, and cannot be sublated or reduced to the subject. Even at the higher level of knowledge where the subject-object is transcended, there remains the fact that both the terms, that subject and object, are correlative. Śaṁkara is not a nihilist or idealist in the sence of Buddhist philosopher Nāgarjuna or Asaṅga. As Śaṁkara accepts the phenomenal entity as it is, it may be said that he is a realist.

Since the world presents itself to our conciousness in terms of the Many, the question: what is it that constitutes harmony and orderliness in the midst of diversity ? - is bound to be raised. Śaṁkara opines that the orderliness of the universe cannot be self-caused. An intelligent being is needed who can cause harmony in the midst of dis-harmony. This harmoniousness of the many is sufficient evidence for an intelligent Creator. The Many in the world cannot exist by themselves ; they need a source for their existence, as they cannot be cause of their own existence. The source has to be an intelligent being–and this being can only be Īśvara, the Lord[5]. Īśvara, therefore, is

said to be both the cause and preserver of the world. The Lord is not simply an efficient cause of the world; He is also its material cause. Since the Lord is both the efficient and material cause of the world and of its beings, it means that everything issues forth from the Lord and is re-absorbed in Him.[6] Thus Śaṁkara maintains that "the omniscient Lord of all is the cause of the origin of this world in the same way as clay is the material cause of jars and gold of golden ornaments."[7] "There is no other substance from which the world could originate."[8]

The concept of Īśvara in Śaṁkara's scheme of things, needs some amplification. We speak of Īśvara when we categorise the Absolute in terms of Subject-Object through the process of discursive thing.[9] Discursive thinking without the subject-object distinction is not possible. The moment we try to think of the Absolute, that very moment we try to objectify it. The objectification of the Absolute results in the subject-object differentiation, as we think of the Absolute as distinct from ourselves and from things around us, and thereby give birth to religious consciousness in terms of religious devotion. Thus the Absolute, when objectified, becomes God for religious devotion. God as an object of religious devotion is seen as Saguna-Brāhmaṇ (qualified Brāhmaṇ). Therefore, to accuse Śaṁkara of agnosticism is both unfair and false. God is but an objectification of the Absolute, that is, of Nirguṇa-Brāhmaṇ (unqualied Brāhmaṇ). In other words, it

seems that the Absolute, when seen from a religious perspective, becomes God in that the religious consciousness needs a subject differentiation for its devotion. The believer, while worshipping God, is not worshipping nothing.

In so far as man operates within the framework of the subject-object dichotomy, the highest reality human consciousness can conceive of is hat of Īśvara (God). But the Upanishads, particularly in the light of Śaṁkara's interpretation, maintain that Ātman (self) is incidental with the absolute. The Upanishads, as we have already pointed out, do not represent one line of thought. There are quite a number of passages in the Upanishads which maintain the identity of the Ātman with Brāhmaṇ. The statements, which express the identity formula, are known as the *Mahāvākyas*, that is the great sayings.[10] It is on such statements of the Upanishads that Śaṁkara builds up his doctrine of the identity of Ātman-Brahmaṇ.

Śaṁkara's conception of Ultimate Reality as differenceless Brāhmaṇ, closely resembles the Buddhist Nāgarjuna's idea of reality as Void (Śūyna) [11] The Void, like the Brāhmaṇ of Śaṁkara, is beyond the realm of discursive thought; it is a matter of supersensory intuitive experience. However, the difference between the two - that is, Nāgarjuna and Śaṁkara- lies in this: that for Nāgarjuna Ultimate Reality is purenegation, whereas Śaṁkara conceives of Brāhmaṇ

as consciousness and bliss.[12] From a logical viewpoint, Nāgarjuna may be more consistent in his analysis of Ultimate Reality than Śaṁkara. But, then, the aim of Śaṁkara is not to establish a logical consistency; he, while defining Brāhmaṇ as being - consciousness - bliss, is following the footsteps of the scriptures, namely the Upanishads.

There is another thinker (of course, from the West) who is very close to Śaṁkara, and he is Spinoza. When Śaṁkara speaks of identity of the self with Brāhmaṇ, he is not saying that the identity has to be achieved or accomplished, or that, before the realisation of identity, Brāhmaṇ and Ātman are separate entities. It is not an ontological identity which has to be achieved. The identity of Ātman - Brāhmaṇ is a given reality or fact. What is needed is its realisation. The realisation of identity takes place by transcending ignorance through the scriptural knowledge. The same is the case with Spinoza. For Spinoza man is already, although externally in a finite condition a mode of infinite Substance; there is no question of becoming an infinite Substance. The only thing needed is to become aware of existing ontological Reality, that is, man is a mode of infinite Substance. Both these philosophers are very close to each other in their understanding of Reality.

The theory of identity of Ātmaṇ and Brāhmaṇ needs little more clarification. Śaṁkara, while

commenting on the *Brahmasūtra* i. 1. 1, maintains that "everyone is conscious of the existence of (his) Self and never thinks 'I am not'". This means that the existence of the Self is self-evident, and therefore cannot be doubted. Even if its existence is doubted, this very doubt, however, indicates an implicit affirmation of the existence of the Self, that is, there is a doubter who doubts his doubt. The difficulty, indeed, arises when it comes to the question of the nature of the Self.[13] The self which is known to our normal and ordinary consciousness, the self which reflects and is reflected upon, the self which is under the influence of change, is not the true Self; it belongs to the realm of appearance. The true self is beyond reflection, change and appearance; it is not an object of reflection or for reflection, and it does not reflect. That thing changes which is ephemeral, whereas the Self, being eternal and permanent, is changeless. "Extra personal attributes", according to Śaṁkara, "are superimposed upon the Self if a man considers himself sound and entire, as long as his wife, children and so on are sound and entire. Attributes of the body are superimposed upon the Self if a man thinks of himself (that is, of his Self) as stout, lean, fair, as standing, walking or jumping. Attributes of the internal organs are superimposed upon the Self if he considers himself subject to desire, intention, doubt, determination, and so on. Having superimposed, the producer of the notion of the ego upon the inner Self . . . one superimposes again the inner Self upon the inner organs etc.

Thus is the nature of the original *adhyāsa* (superimposition), beginningless and endless (*anādirananta*), having the form of an erroneous notion (*mithyāpratyarūpa*), cause of the fact that the individual souls are enjoyers and agents, observed by everyone (*sarvalokapratyapakṣa*)".[14]

There are certain questions which need to be tackled. It is maintained that in the supersensory mystical experience the awareness of the subject-object distinction vanishes. If this be the case, it would mean that within the mystical intuition the awareness of the world of plurality too disappears. A self completely immersed in the Absolute is said to be in a state of experience in which there is no awareness either of oneself as an individual entity or of objects outside of consciousness. Does the non-awareness of oneself as well as of the world mean the negation of an individual and of the world? Or does it mean that the *awareness* itself ceases to be an awareness?

While confronting such questions, Śaṁkara maintains that the world of plurality does not cease to exist in the supersensory mystical experience. The world of plurality, as appearance of the Absolute, continues to exist as appearance. We cannot maintain the non-existence of external things precisely because "we are conscious of external things. In every act of perception we are conscious of external things corresponding to the idea, whether it to be a post or

a wall or a piece of cloth or a jar, and that of which we are conscious cannot but exist".[15] The existance of the world as appearance is not at all negated. The world continues to exist as an appearance of the Absolute. In so far as man is in ignorance, he thinks of the world as absolutely real. And ignorance is a state, in the words of Hiriyanna, in which "suppression precedes substitution".[16] The state of ignorance may be compared to that of a dream state. In so far as man is in a dream state, he thinks of dreams as really real. But when he comes to the waking state, the state of dream consciousness is negated. In like manner when a person gains knowledge of the identity of the Self with Brāhmaṇ, he realises the nature of the world as appearance of Brāhmaṇ. Thus we may say that Śaṁkara does no violence to empirical reality or experience. What Śaṁkara aims at is not to contradict the ordinary level of experience; rather his aim is to reach the higher point of knowledge. Hence we may say that, in the context of Advaita, the empirical world is real empirically, but appearance from a transcendental viewpoint.

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Although Advaita has had an upper hand in terms of influence on the philosophic scene of India, does not, however, mean that it remained unchallenged. The first systematic challenge came from Rāmānuja (A.D. 1017 - 1137). The strongest challenge, however,

did not not come from Rāmānuja, but from Mādhva (A.D. 1119 - 1198). Mādhva, being the strongest critic of Śaṁkara, has to be taken more seriously in so far as Advaita is concerned. It is for this reason that we shall begin our discussion with the critique of Mādhva.

Mādhva's school of Vedānta is called the Dvaita or dualist school. Mādhva's criticism against Śaṁkara mainly centres on the nature of experience.[17] Mādhva, in this context, writes that "perception is the flawless contact of sense-organs with their appropriate objects. Flawless reasoning is inference".[18] Mādhva is not ready to accept the Advaitin contention that their system of thought in no manner does violence to empirical experience. What Mādhva aims at is to prove that the experience of plurality directly stands against the Advaitin view of reality.[19] The main datum of experience, though not the only one, for Mādhva is sense-perception. Although mistakes may take place in our sense-perception, it is a fact that the subject, through perception, apprehends the object as a distinct entity.[20]

This kind critique of Mādhva has its own limitations. The Advaitins do not deny the fact that there is such a thing as the experience of plurality. What the Advaitins say is this: as the dream experience is sublated by the waking consciousness, so the experience of plurality vanishes in the one who has reached the state of supersensory mystical intuition. This kind of experience cannot be confirmed through the

use of empirical verification. The best testimony for its authenticity are the scriptures.

This kind of response of the Advaitins does not satisfy Mādhva. Whatever knowledge man has or is able to achieve, according to Mādhva, is (except the revelational knowledge) through the operations of sense-organs. It would, therefore, be fallacious and outright dishonesty to deny the witness of sense-experience as the source of knowledge. As far as scriptural knowledge is concerned, Mādhva accepts it to be of supersensory character. He, however, opines that it would be better to interpret the scripture in light of what everyone considers to be true.

The criticism of Mādhva does not square well with the Advaita analysis of Reality. The Advaitins do not deny the validity of sense-experience. Sense-experience has its own reality in so for as one operates within the empirical realm. But it is illegitimate to apply empirical analysis to that which is beyond empirical concepts or notions. As far as the relationship between the sense-experience and supersensory experience is concerned, the Advaitin finds no contradiction in his assertion that the latter supersedes the foremer, as it is a case of degrees of knowledge.

Mādhva reject the theory of degrees of knowledge outright on the ground that a proposition is either true or false; there is no such thing as degrees of truth, and falsity of a proposition. A proposition, therefore cannot be a mixture of both. Take, for example, the

proposition: there are many selves, and there are not many selves. One of the proposition is either true or false. It is fallacious to maintain that both the propositions contain degrees of truth and falsity. On the basis of his rejection of the theory of degrees of knowledge, Mādhva thinks that the Advaitic explanation contradicts the witness of sense-experience and of self-consciousness As far as the consciousness of oneness with Brāhmaṇ is concerned, it is, according to Mādhva, contradictory in the sense that the nature of consciousness is such that it cannot function without the subject-object distinctions.[21] It is, however, true that when consciousness reflects upon itself there is no distinction involved, as consciousness itself is both the subject, which reflects, and the object on which reflection is directed. "Though there is generally a difference between the agent and the object of the action, non-difference is also possible"[22] Even then there is no possibility of having self-awareness without an epistemological distinction of subject-object.

In this seemingly endless debate Rāmānuja's viewpoint is supportive of Mādhva's interpretation of consciousness. Rāmānuja maintains that consciousness cannot be "devided of objects, for nothing of the kind is ever known".[23] This analysis of consciousness by Mādhva confirms the modern phenomenological understanding of consciousness, that is, consciousness is always said to be conscious of an

object ,which means that consciousness is intentional Mādhva uses the idea of intentionality of consciousness as a means of attack on the Advaitin assertion that the Self is identical Brāhmaṇ. While using this concept, Mādhva is saying that there is no possibility of having consciousness of identity with Brāhmaṇ as consciousness involves the subject's distance from the object of consciousness. What Mādhva is aiming at is the refutation of the idea of "pure consciousness" in which the subject - object difference is transcended.

An objection can be raised with regard to the phenomenologicol viewpoint of consciousness. It can be said that it is one of the interpretations of consciousness. The term "consciousness" has various levels of meanings, and therefore to assert *a priori* that the word consciousness cannot be used in the manner of Advaitins as an invalid objection. If there is a state of mystical unity, it can be described only in terms of experience. Therefore, the assertions of Advaitins with regard to consciousness is as valid as that of a Dvaitin, because the term is used at different levels of meaning : one is on the level of mystical intuition and the other is at the empirical level.

The above discussion may seem to be very tiresome and hair-splitting. But the discussion throws some light on the kind of problems one encounters if a mystic or a philosopher assert that there is a state of experience which is beyond the realm of discursive thought. Whatever the nature of experience, it remains a fact

that the content of experience has to be expressed in terms of words and concepts. Both words and concepts operate at the empirical level. Śaṁkara realised this situation. He felt one with the Upaniṣads when they answered the question of Brāhmaṇ by maintaining silence : "Bhava, being questioned about Brāhmaṇ by Vashkalin, explained it by silence. He said to him, 'learn Brāhmaṇ, O friend,' and become silent. Then, on a second question, he replied, 'I am teaching you indeed, but you do not understand. Silent is the Self."[24]

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Although Māhva was the most outspoken critic of Śaṁkara Advaita, there were other thinkers who felt uneasy with the Advaita philosophy. Most of the critics came from the *bhakti* (devotional) background. They felt that the adherence to Advaita would lead to the negation of religious consciousness in terms of loving devtion and service is offered to God.

The earliest thinker who saw the possibility of negation of religious consciousness in Advaita was Rāmānuja. It was Rāmānuja who, within the Vedāntic tradition, gave a new life to the devotional religion by infusing new metaphysical blood into it. The Vedānta theory of Rāmānuja in contrast to Śaṁkara, postulates a theory of reality in which Brāhmaṇ is seen as a determinate character, and Īśvara is not

viewed as an appearance of the Absolute; rather the Absolute is viewed in terms of a personal God. As far as the entological status of the world is concerned, it is seen as permeated by the presence of God, and not as an appearance of the Absolute The personal nature of Absolute was later maintained by other Vedānta thinkers such as Nimbārka (13th century), Vallabha (15th century), Baladeva (18th century), etc. All these thinkers came from a *bhakti* tradition, and therefore felt the need of asserting, in opposition to Śaṁkara's differenceless Brāhmaṇ, the nature of Ultimate Reality in terms of a personal being.

This new challenge, witnin the Vedānta tradition, had its effect on the Advaita Vedānta philosophy, particularly in our own times. In medieval India Advaita and *bhakti* were wedded to each other by the mystics in such a manner that no opposition was seen between the two trends of thought. The mystics explained that without *bhakti* the Advaitic experience is not possible; and we find this line of thought clearly expreseed and advocated in such *bakti-poets* as Kabir, Dadu, Gyaneshvara. etc. In modern times it was the great Rāmakrishna (1834-1886) who combined in himself both the *bhakti* religiosity and the Advaitic vision of Reality. In our own times Radhakrishnan (1888-1975) interpreted God not as an appearance of the Absolute; rather God is seen as Absolute. Although Advaita has triumphed over the *bhakti* schools of Vedānta in terms of influence, it cannot, however,

be denied that the Advaita thinkers had to modify and develop their philosophy in the light of the criticism of *bhakti* inspired Vedānta thinkers.

Rāmānuja, although critic of Śaṁkara, remained very close to Advaita. He did not make a complete break with the Advaita school of Śaṁkara. His philosophical school of Vedānta is called the qualified non-dualism (*viśiṣṭadvaita*) although Radhakrishnan would like to refer to it as "the non-dualism of the differenced".[25] Rāmānuja conceives of Brāhmaṇ as a personal being, and of the world as the body of God. The sacred scripture, according to Rāmānuja inform us that Brāhmaṇ is "the highest person, or Nārāyana," [26] "whose nature is absolute bliss and goodness; who is fundamentally antagonist to all evil; who is the cause of the origination, sustention, and dissolution of the world; who differs in nature from all beings . . . .".[27] It is God, who therefore, is the creator and the sustainer of the world. After creating the world, God enters into it in the same manner as the soul enters the body. He also enter the souls of men as their inner Self. "The world, inclusive of intelligent beings, is the body of the highest Self; and the latter the Self of everything".[28] Although God is present in everything and everywhere, yet he is "different from all beings sentient and non-sentient." [29] When it is said that the world is the body of God, it does not mean that God undergoes modifi-

cation or is affected by change or by evil. The world is non-different from Brāhmaṇ in the same manner as cause is non-different from the effect. But this does not mean identity. The soul of man, like the world, is permeated by Bārhmaṇ. [30] Although the inner Self of the soul is Brāhmaṇ, the soul is not identical with Brāhmaṇ. [31] If the soul lives in accordance with the law of God, it will "attain to that supreme bliss which consists in the direct intuition of his own true nature."]32] It is a mode of existence in which freedom from *saṃsāra* is affected.

It appears that Rāmānuja wants both the cake as well as the plate. Although believing in Brāhmaṇ as a personal being, he is not ready to break the links with the Advaita completely. The reason for this state of affairs is simple, Rāmānuja realised that the transcendental knowledge of Ultimate Reality is entirely based on the scriptural testimony. As we have noted, the Upanishads do not give us one line of thoughts On the one hand, we have passages where the qualitie. of Brāhmaṇ are predicated, and predication is possible when subject-object duality is maintained. And on on the other hand, we have passages which maintain the differenceless character of the Absolute. But it must be said that the preponderance of the Upanishads is towards non-dualism, and Śaṁkara bases his system on such scriptural statements which affirm his non-dualism, whereas Mādhva develops his thought-system on statements which support his ideas. As far as

Rāmānuja is concerned, he has opted for a middle position between the two giants; Śaṁkara and Mādhva.

Mādhva's general disposition towards Advaita may be represented in terms of choice. If the Advaitins, according to Mādhva, accept the world as real and Brāhmaṇ the sole reality, then they have to give up the idea of Brāhmaṇ as transcendent. If they think the world is different from Brānmaṇ,and Brāhmaṇ the sole reality, then they have to accept, in the logical sense of the word, the falsity of the world. Advaitins contends Mādhva, cannot have it both ways. Mādhva is not content with Rāmānuja's interpretation of of reality. For Mādhva God as Brāhmaṇ is the ultimate reality, whereas the world and its creatures are ontologically dependent upon God. He thus tries to interpret scriptures theistically. Whether his interpretation and exegesis follow scriptures strictly is altogether a different matter.

The aim of Mādhva's critique is to establish that the *bhakti* religion is the highest road to liberation. Śaṁkara did not undervalue the importance of devotion, and his devotional hymns are a testimony to this [33]. But within the general framework of Advaita, Śaṁkara could not accord the same importance to *bhakti* which he bestowed upon the supersensory mystical intution. [34] For Mādhva devotion is a means of forging a close relationship with God as well as a means for attaining liberation Rāmānuja's thought too coincides with that of Mādhva on this point.

Mādhva's apprehension that Advaita is a threat for the existence of religion may be justified to some extant. If religion is seen in terms of belief in a personal God, then Advaita can be seen as a threat to religion in the sense that God is seen as a mere appearance of the Absolute. But Śaṁkara never aimed at the destruction of religion, nor did he undermine the role of *bhakti*. Śaṁkara recognises devotion as a valid means to salvation. Śaṁkara saw religion as a movement from God to God, that is, he desired to transcend the purely human conceptious of reality, and emphasised the need for a mystical intution of Reality. At the mystical level, language fails in experessing the depth of experience. It is in this context that Śaṁkara has to be viewed.

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References

1. S. N. Dasgupta, *A History of Indian Philosophy* (Delhi, 1975), i, p. 418.

2. Ibid., p. 42, of R. C. Zaehner writes that the Upanishads "neither give us a single consistent interpretation of the universe, nor do they claim to do so." *At Sundry Times* (London, 1958), p. 35.

3. Cf. Śaṁkara on the *Brahmasūtra* (henceforward *Ś* on *BS*), iii. 3. 1.

4. See Śaṁkara on the *Māndukya Kārikā* of Gaudapāda, ii. 1. 2, 7. It is well to keep in mind the following observation of Hiriyanna: "The primary aim of perception, like that of the other *pramāṇas* (means of knowledge), is according to Śaṁkara, to serve empirical purpose. It gives no guarantee for metaphysical validity, so that what we commonly hold real may not be truly so. Common knowledge is true so long only as the identity of oneself with Brahman is not realised, as dreams until one does not awake. In other words, the transcendental ideality of the world does not exclude its empirical reality." *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* (London, 1964), p. 358. Since there is no difference for the idealist Buddhist between the dream state and waking consciousness, and thus considered everything Void, Śaṁkara took very strong objection against this interpretation. While discussing the Buddhist nihilism, Dasgupta (*op. cit*, i, p. 7) writes: Nāgarjuna tried to prove the falsity of all appearance on the ground of their being interdependent and not having anything which could be pointed as their nature. The dialectic being applicable to appearances, there was nothing left which was not relative and interdependent, nothing which was self-evident by nature and which was intelligible by itself without reference to anything else. It is the interdependence and relativity of all appearances that was called 'nothingness' or 'Śūnyata' by Nāgarjuna. There was nothing which could be affirmed independently, by itself without reference to something else; nothing therefore could

be conceived of as having any essence by itself. All appearances were therefore only independent phantom creations; and it was precisely this interdependence that proved the essencelessness of their nature. There was no basis of truth anywhere."

5. It is necessary that we understand the difference between the Absolute and God, that is, Īśvara. "Brāhmaṇ (that is, the Absolute) is that in whose nature is permanent purity, intelligance, and freedom; it transcends speech and mind, does not fall within the category of 'object', and constitutes the inward Self of all. Of this Brāhmaṇ, our text denies all plurality forms; but Brāhmaṇ itself leaves untouched . . . the clause, 'not so, not so! negates not absolutely everything, but everything but Brāhmaṇ", *Vivekacūdamaṇi*, 108; *Ś* on the *BS*, ii.1.37. As far as Īśvara or God is concerned, this aspect of the Absolute represents "personal God who is supposed to be all-knowing, omnipresent, as well as the originator, destroyer and the sustainer of the world, whereas the nirguna Brāhman represents the ultimate reality, the Absolute", Hiriyanna, *op. cit*, 366-67; *Ś* on the *BS*, ii.1.27; ii.1.14; i.1.20; i.1.111; Vivekacūdamani, 110; Śaṁkara on the *Chāndogya Upanishad*, viii.1.1.

6 See, for example, *Chāndogyopanishad*, vi. 12; iii. 14. 1; iii. 18. 1, 2; *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*, i.4.1-6; *Muṇḍaka Upanishad*, i.7.

7. *Ś* on the *BS*, ii, 1.1.

8. *Ibid.*, i.4.23. "The phenomenal world is neither

praised nor despised by Śaṁkara. He accepts the world for what it is. The pheomenal world has its ground in Brāhmàn, but Brahman, as ground, is neither separate from, nor identical with the world. Samkara, does not look for God above nor does he identify God with the world. He sees God in the world. "Moti Lal pandit, *Śaṁkara's Concept of Reality* (New Delhi, 1981), p.21.

9. *Ś* on the *BS*, i. 1. 11; i. 1. 20.

10. The *mahāvākyas* are the following :
Chāndogyopanishad, vi. 87; v. 9. 4 (*tat tvam asi*); *Brihadāranyaka Upanishad*, i.4.10 (*ahàm brahma asmi*); *Aitareya Upanishad*, v. 3 (*prajñanam brahma*). See for further details *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, ii 4.14; *Chāndogyopanishad*, viii.4; *Kātha Upanishad* iv. 10.

11. See S. N. Dasgupta, *op cit*, i, p. 141.

12. When When the Absolute is spoken of as being - consciousness - bliss, it does not mean that Brāhmaṇ is predicated. Consciousness of Brāhmaṇ differs from ordinary oonsciousness in that it is neither subject nor object. The same is in the case with bliss. Bliss is not predicate of Brāhmaṇ; in it there is neither feeling nor an object of consciousness involved. Therefore, the expression that Brāhmaṇ is bliss is simply an indicative term. "Moti Lal Pandit, *Philosophy of the Upanishads*. (Delhi, 1978), p. 25.

13. *Vivekacūdamṇi*, 254; *tvam - ahàm - idam iti iyam kalpana buddhidoṣàt prabhàvat.*; *Ś* on the *BS*, iii. 1. 8; *Brihadàranyaka Upanishad*, iii. 9. 26.

14. Ś on the *BS*, introduction.

15. *Ibid.*, ii. 2. 28; ii. 2. 18.

16. M. Hiriyanna, *op. cit.*, p. 353.

17. *Anuvākhyana* (Sarvamula ed., Belgaum), p. 3.

18. See *Pramaṇa Lakṣana.*

19. *Tattvodyota* (Sarvamula ed., Belgaum), p. 7; "Sense knowledge is its own standard of truth. It cannot be stultified by inference or scripture. The moon's limited size and such other defective perceptions are accountable as being due to distance and other abnoral conditions. But, so far as the most rigorous tests could go, there is nothing to warrant a wholesale rejection of the evidence of sense-perception regarding the existence of a world outside our minds".

20. *Anuvyakhyana*, p. 3.

21. *Visnu-tattva-nirnaya* (Sarvamula edition), p. 21: "Difference is the nature of things. It cannot be argued that difference cannot be viewed as the nature of things, as it is apprehended only relatively to the perception of a given object and that from which it differs. Just as identity of *jiva* and Brahman....is apprehended only in relation to the term *jiva* and Brahman, similarly is the case with difference". "In most cases the nature of things is revealed in perception, as difference from all else, in a general way".

22. *Anuvyakyana*, i. 2. 3.

23. Rāmānuja on the *Brahmasutra* (hence forward *R* on the *BS*), i. 1. 1.

24. *Ś* on the *BS*, iii. 2. 17.

25. Radhakrishnan, *The Brahmsūtra* (London, 1960), p. 46.

26. *R* on the *BS*, iii, 21.

27. *Ibid.*, iv. 4. 22.

28. *Ibid.*, i.4.13.

29. *Ibid.*, i.2, introduction.

30. *Ibid.*, i. 1, 4.

31. *Ibid.*, i. 1. 3.

32. *Ibid.*, iv.4. 22.

33. On the *bhakti* of Śaṁkara H. Zimmer writes; "The shining Śaṁkara, to whom we owe Advaita, was not only a supreme scholastic but a remarkable religious poet as well. His stanzas praising the goddess (Shakti - Maya - Devi) are among the most celebrated examples of Indian devotional verse. They reveal a surprising aspect of his spirituality for though he dismisses Maya in his philosophical writings and goes relentlesely beyond to the ineffable transcendency of Brahman, the one- without- second, here he gives devout praise to the second-Māyā, Mother of the world-and with all sincerity;expressing the mode of divine dualistic experience on the plane of *bhakti*, where the the devotee regards and understands himself as the creature and servant of the deity - in - human - form". *Philosophies of India* (New York, 1953), p. 460.

34. Ninian Smart explains mystical intuition (*anubhuti*) "as an immediate awareness of the existance of the self, . . . the Self is thereby recognised as being implicit in all experience, though it cannot be an *object* of experience, but only the subject. Hence this immediate intuition is distinguished from all cognitive experience, which involves a subject - object distinction". *Doctrine and Argument in Indian Philosophy* (London, 1964), p. 226.

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1. THE ABSOLUTE IN WESTERN PHILOSOPHY

The vision of Greek philosophy, in its earliest phase, was more oriented towards what one may call an objective analysis of the world. The religious ethos of the Greeks did not get incorporated in to the philosophical search for truth to the same degree as it happened in India. Philosophy for the Greeks remained an intellectual pursuit for objective forms of knowledge. Religion and philosophy pursued their respective chosen routes, without transgressing each other's realm. It is because of this trend and outlook that the ethos of Greek, and thereby of Western, philosophy has generally been analytical. Philosophy, as in the case of Indian thinkers

has not been seen from an existential viewpoint, that is, philosophy has been treated as a dispassionate search for objective modes of knowledge. Having such an attitude, it is but evident that most of the Greek philosophical thinking does not lay emphasis on religious experience, that is, on intuition. In the context of India, philosophy and religion have had, more or less, identical goals, and therefore have walked together concerning the search for truth. Religious experience has provided the basis datum of reflection for philosophy. Since religious experience is the base for philosophy, it is but evident to find that the general orientation of philosophy has been towards a religious vision of truth. It is the basic link between philosophy and religion which we do not find in the Greek philosophy.

The earliest western attempt in which philosophy has been seen in terms of religious vision, and in which mysticism plays a major role, is that of Plotinus of the third century A. D. Plotinus, like the thinkers of the Upanishads, speaks of the One, the Absolute, as that reality which does not, being transcendent, undergo any change or modification in the process of its manifestation, and on the other hand, there is a movement of ascent of the spirit towards the Absolute. This ascent of the spirit towards the Absolute results in the mystical experience of identity. This mystical experience is spoken by Plotinus as "the flight of the alone to the Alone".[1] The mystical experience, which is of a supersensory nature is not an object of

intellectual curiosity. Plotinus himself seems to have enjoyed the mystical experience of unity several times. [2]

As to whether Plotinus' mystical thought received some external influences, particularly from India, is difficult to tell. The mystical thought-system of Plotinus may be seen, as further developement of Platonic and Hellenistic traditions. However, as far as the Indian influence is concerned, it cannot be ruled out. Close contact developed between Greece and India as early as 4th centnry B. C. Magathenes (4th century B. C.) was a Greek ambassador to the court of King Chandragupta. The influence of Indian thought upon the Greek thought-system cannot, therefore, be entirely ruled out. Both Plato and Plotinus come very close to the Upanishadic vision of reality. Thus the possibility of Indian influence upon the mysticism of Plotinus may not be an improbability. Whatever be the truth as far as Indian influence is concerned, it is however clear that Plotinus, like the Upanishadic thinkers, thought of philosophy as a means towards a religious vision of reality. It is because of this vision that Plotinus made mysticism a base for his theoretical understanding of reality.

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The Medieval Christianity presents a different picture from that of the Greek world, in that an organised religion, namely, Christianity, had come

into being. There was a centralised authority, namely the Church. The Church, as a devine institution, interpreted the religious truths in the light of its understanding. The Church believed that it received the *depositum* of faith in terms of revelation, and its task was to preserve and interpret this revelation for the spiritual upliftment of its adherents. In the Greek world, on the other hand, no such centralised religious authority existed. Thus there was scope for the development of religious thought in terms of expression, whereas Christianity held that religious truths, being of divine character, had been received once-for-all, and therefore there was hardly any scope left for further search for truth.

This, however, does not mean that Medieval Christianity did not take philosophy in to serious consideration. Having received the ultimate revelatory truths about Reality, Christianity thought of philophy as a natural means, based on the principle of ratiocination, at arriving to a point whereby a correct intellectual conclusion, in conformity to revelation, could be formulated in the form of propositions. Thus philosophy played a secondary role to theology. It was the task of theology to interpret the depositum of revelation. In this sense the Medieval Christians thought of philosophy as an intellectual search for God in so far man's knowledge was not based on revelation. St. Augustine had already envisaged a role for Greek philosophy in terms of knowledge

of God. He considered that the Greek philosophy in general, and Platonic tradition in particular, presented a picture which foreshadowed the Christian vision of Reality – a vision ultimately disclosed in and through revelation. Thus Greek philosophy was considered as preparation for the ultimate truth which found its final expression and culmination in the Christian revelation. In this sense the Medieval Christian thinkers found phylosophy to be useful tool for interpreting and undersatnding the religious vision of Reality. Thus phylosophy was made to play a subservient role to theology in the sense that philosophical reasoning was employed in the advancement of theology.

Christianity, being the religion of revelation, could not afford to give the same status to philosophy which it accorded to theology for the simple reason that theology was seen to be the only medium and means of interpreting the deposit of faith. The datum of faith was revelation was ultimate and final. That which is final and ultimate cannot but have the final say concerning the religious mysteries of life. It was theology alone which was considered to be the only competent science in so far as interpratation of revelation was conceraed. Philosophy, therefore, had to subject itself to the norms of theology on questions of religious truth. This understanding of religious vision led the Medieval Christian thinkers to position whereby both religion (theology) and philosophy were accorded different roles. Philosophy by itself could

not attain to the knowledge of God. It could, with the help of reason, have some kind of glimpse of truth; it could provide necessary tools of methadology to theology. Understood thus, the role of philosophy was finally reduced to mere analysis of propositions, that is, the task of philosophy was, in the light of reason, to find out the truth of a proposition. The concern of religion, that is of Christianity, was to safeguard the truths of revelation, and this task was handled, in the light of the Church's self-understanding, by theology. The revealed truth were mediated in and through the Church.

The Church as the ultimate authority concerning religious knowledge of God understood itself, firstly, as the final arbiter of religious truth, and secondly, as the final authority, it considered itself as the ultimate receptor of the deposit of faith. This self-understanding of the Church stems from the belief that it sees itself as the divine creation of God. Having the deposit of revelation in its possession, the Church sees itself as a concrete and historical medium of salvation through revalation. The Church, as an act of God, is said to be speaking to us the word of God. The Church, therefore, is both the hearer and the speaker of the Word. In this way the believer is enabled to hear the Word of God. Since the Church is considered to be realm of grace, man thereby has no claim or power over the Church. Hence the Church is seen as a realm where the salvific grace of the hidden God, in terms

of revelatior, is made accessible to man. This is how Vactican II understands the meaning of the Church :

> All the elect, before time began, the Father 'foreknew and predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren' (Rom. 8:29). All those who believe in Christ, he planned to assemble in the holy Church, which already prefigured from the beginning of the world, prepared in a remarkable way in the history of the people of Israel and in the Old Testament, established in the last times, was made manifest in the outpouring of the Spirit, and at the end of time will be gloriously consummated . . . .
>
> The Son, therefore came on mission from the Father . . . . To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, revealed to us his (the Father's) mystery, and by his obedience brought about redemption. The Church, or the Kingdom of God now present in mystery, by the power of God grows visibly in the world . . . . As often as the sacrifice of the cross in which 'Christ, our paschal lamb, has been sacrificed' (I Cor. 5:7) is celebrated on an alter, the work of redemption is carried on. At the same time, in the sacrament of eucharistic bread, the unity of of all believers who form one body (of. I Cor. 10:17) is both expressed and brought about. All men are called to union with Christ, who is the light of the world, from whom we proceed, through whom we

live towards whom we tend. When the work which the Father had given the Son to do on earth (of, Jn. 17:4) was accomplished, the Holy spirit was sent on the day of Penecost in order that he might forever sanctify the Church, and thus all believers would have access to the Father through Christ in one spirit (of. Eph· 2:18). He is the spirit of life, fountan of water springing to life eternal (of. Jn. 4:14; 7:39). Through him the Father gives life to men who are dead from sin, till at last he revives in Christ even their mortal bodies (of. Rom. 3:1–11). The spirit dwells in the Church . . . . The spirit guides the Church into the fulness of truth (of. Jn. 16 : 13) and gives her a unity of fellowship and service.

Thus the universal Church shines as 'a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy spirit'. [3]

With such an understanding of the Church, the Medieval Christianity would not engage in a kind of search for religious truth which would contravene the Church's vision of Truth. Although the scope of philosophy was restricted in so far as religious search of man was concerned, the medievals however allowed philosophy to undertake the logical studies of propositions. In this sense the scope of philosophy was somewhat comprehensive and extensive. Thus philosophy included such subjects as mathematics, and mathematics does not concern itself directly with religious questions. But this range of philosophy got

restricted during the late Medieval period to mere logical studies. This we see in the case of the Ockhamist movement. The Ockhamist engaged themselves, like the contemporary positivists, with the logical anlaysis of metaphysical propositions of earlier thinkers by reducing the already restricted range of philosophy to mere logical studies, the Ockhamists removed totally the religious concern from the domian of philosophy. It is a paradoxical situation in the sense that the Greek philosophical tradition, whose origin was basically empirical culminated in the mystical philosophy of Plotinus, whereas Medieval philosophical thinking, which was closely associated with theology, got restricted and reduced to mere logical analysis of metaphysical propositions. The situation does not seen to be different from the contemporary philosophical scene in the West which, under the influence of scientism, speaks of non-empirical propositions as useless.

Seeing the general scene of philosophy during the Medieval period, it would seem that philosophy did not relate itself to mysticism. As philosophy approached the religious questions in terms of reason, it seems that the climate must have been quite unfavourable to mysticism precisely because mysticism, basing itself on supersensory intuition, does not attach much value to rational methodology. However, there may be some truth in this kind of conclusion about the tenor of philosophy during the Medieval period, but this is not the whole truth. The Medieval

theologians developed, although under the influence of Platonism, a number of theories with regard to spirituality. Quite advanced theories on spirituality may be found in the writings of Richard of St. Victor (12th century) and that St. Bonaventure (13th century). Generally speaking, the Medieval philosophers did not consider the mystical writings in terms of philosophical vision. They developed a separate branch, namely, that of ascetical or mystical theology. It is in the context of this development that Johan Gerson (1363–1429) attempted to integrate the mystical doctrines of prayer and praxis with theology, that is, ascetical theology. The purpose of this integration was based on the belief that the ultimate goal of Christian life was not so much in learning the theological proposition as much in the vision of God. It is said that St. Thomas Aquinas, when he had the mystical vision at the end of his life, asserted that what he had written so far was a straw in comparison with the vision of God he had.

While speaking of Medieval Christianity, it is well to remember the contribution of Meister Eckhart (1260-1327). Meister Eckhart's mysticism could not be understood by the medievals who were mostly concerned with a rational approach to religious questions. It was the Aristotelian outlook which dominated the entire breadth of Medieval period. In the context of Aristotelian vision everything, each question and problem, had to be tested on the touchstone of reason. Supersensory intuition as a mode of knowledge was not

given its due importance. It is because of this climate that the medievals were not able to comprehend the vision of Eckhart. His statements, for example, that "All creatures are a pure nothing", [4] or "Outside God there is nothing", [5] have led many thinkers to compare him with Samkara and Nagarjuna. His emphasis that God alone is the sole reality and apart from him everything is naught, may also resemble the Persian mysticism. whatever the nature of his mystical statements may be, they basically stem from his own personal experience. The fundamental concern of Eckhart's mysticim was to pave the way for the realisation of God as the sole reality. It is not Eckhart only who emphasised that God alone is the sole reality and everything else is naught. We find this assertion in the famous Flemish mystic, namely, Ruysbroeck (1293-1381). Both these mystics-Eckhart and Ruysbroeck-were not simply Platonists or speculative; their mysticism had its roots in their personal experiences. Later St. John of Cross would affirm this assertion of Eckhart. However, this kind of mysticism, as advocated by Eckhart and Ruysbroeck, hardly falls within the general Medieval ethos, which is basically characterised by the belief in the transcendence of God. Moreover, both theology and philosophy had become arid and academic, and were far removed from the spiritual concern of Christian life. The mysticism of Eckhart and Ruysbroeck has to be seen as a strong reaction against the dry and unintelligent theological and philosophical theories of the Universities.

The question of the One and the many was not one of the most important and central aspects of Medieval philosophy. Most of the 13th century thinkers maintained that the existence of the Many cannot be established apart from the existence of the One, namely, God. This question of the one and Many remained a burning issue from) the time of John Scotus Erigena (9th century) to that of Nicholas of Cusa (15th century), provided we accept Nicholas as a Medieval thinker. Although the question of the One and Many remained alive, the preponderance of most of the medievals was towards reason rather than towards supersensory intuition. This bent of mind has to be seen against the common background of the Christian belief-system. Almost the entire Western Christianity shared a common outlook in terms of religious vision and belief, and the Church was responsible for maintaining this commonness among its adherents. This commonality of outlook does not mean that no arguements for or against this or that theological theory took place. Arguements occurred in favour of this or that theological theory, but they were based on propositions rather than on mystical intuition.

As we pointed out, the medievals thought that existance of Many depends on the One, that is, God. They further envisaged this God in terms of infinity. The Ockhamists included infinity as one of the attributes of God. The Ockhamists believed that faith alone could lead to the knowledge of God, whereas philoso-

phy was incapable of this task. Since the One-God-was seen as infinite, it was inevitable to think of creatures as finite. This understanding of Reality led to a hiatus between God and man which has been difficult to bridge to this day. Both man and God, in this scheme, stand on opposite poles : on the one hand we have God who is infinite, and on the other, we creature who is finite. That which is infinite cannot have any kind of commerce with that which is finite. It is a problem which has mystified the who issue God's relationship with man.

If, however, God is conceived of as infinite, it would mean that God alone is real, whereas creatures, being of finite nature, are not really real or authentic. Their contignecy turns out to be pure vacuity. That which is sole reality, and therefore infinite, must contain everything within itself. If so, then it mould mean that the finite creatures are but the states or modes of infinite reality, which is God. The assertion of Eckhart–everything outside of God is not-being-is thereby justified and validated. It is against this understanding that we find the Reformers protesting. Most of the Reformed churches of Protestantism have tried to established, with an unmatched vigour and zeal, the otherness of God at the cost of man ; and in our own time Karl Barth is the best representative of this stream of Protestantism.

Deriving their inspiration from the Ockhamists, the Reformed churches were against any kind of

philosophy, even theology, which thought of reason as a natural ally in the search of God. The assertion of the Reformers consisted in upholding the fallenness of man to such a degree that man was incapable of knowing God. The only cognitive tool available to man was faith - and the source of faith was but revelation. The reformer saw man in terms of deprivation, that is, man, due to fall, is not oriented towards God (*a Deo*). If man is not basically oriented towards God, then how can reason be relied upon? The reason or the faculty of understanding must inevtably be also of a fallen nature. It means that man's entire being - if taken to extreme logical conclusion - is not only full of distortions, but is anti - God. This extreme fallenness of man is seen by Reformers in that fact that man's so-called spirituality is nothing but an attempt at self-glorification and self sanctification. This Ockhamistic hostility towards reason runs through the thinking of most of Reformer, and a quite number of contemporary theologians have carried this tradition without any hitch.

The Thomists, on the other hand, tried to rectify this situation. They upheld the position of reason. They did not believe in the assertion that was totally and absolutely fallen. They believed that reason is a gift of God, and it can lead to a partial knowledge of God. It is revelation alone which can give us the full knowledge of God, because revelation is a means whereby God discloses himself to man. Reason, on the other hand, is a human attempt at understanding

as to what constitutes the being of God. Reason tries to understand God in terms of Concepts. What are the tools which man employs in understanding the infinity of God? The Thomists, for this purpose, postulated the theory of analogy. The purpose of this theory is to maintain the ultimate ontological status of God. The theory of the analogy of being, in simple terms, states that the being of creatures has not to be seen in the same light as the being of God. If God is the ultimate Being, then the finite creatures are not seen as the states of the infinite Being. Even before the analogy of being was propounded, Duns Scotus had spoken that the existence of God cannot be proved unless the concept of Being is viewed as univocal, and that the order of Being is thought of in terms of analogy. Scotus accepted the analogical predication, if based on the universal predication. The analogical predication is, according to Scotus, meaningful in so far as it is based on the universal predication. If this universal predication is missing from the realm of the analogical predication, then the talk of God is simple and pure waste of time. We can speak of infinite and finite belonging to different orders of the universal predication.

If the theory of the analogy of being is rejected, then it would be difficult-nay impossible-to maintain that infinite and finite belong to different orders of Being. It would have to be conceded, then, that the One, being infinite, is the sole reality, and therefore nothing exists apart from the One. In this scheme

there is a natural and inevitable movement from the One to the Absolute. This movement we see clearly manifest in the thinking of Spinoza, who thought of Reality as an infinite Substance and creatures as its modes or states. From Spinoza onwards Hegel and Bradley, for example, continued this tradition, that is, there is a clear movement from God (Isvara) to the Absolute.

By the time of Hegel, Reformation had taken place in the West. The common outlook in terms of belief had been shattered. Philosophy had freed itself from the control and dominance of the Church, and thus did not play a subservient role to theology. The Church, was in no position to dictate its religious or doctrinal norms on an unwilling populace. It is in such an atmosphere that Hegel wrote his philosophy. Hegel, after Spinoza, may be considered to be the philosopher of the Absolute *par excellence*. Hegel's approach to philosphy was comprehensive and extensive. He included in his philosophical reflection both religion and art, and considered them as expressions of truth in the context of the historical condition. A particular religious doctrine expresses an in sight into the nature of truth in the context of the particular historical development of human consciousness. The apprehension of truth, whether in terms of religion, art or philosophy, depends on the level of historical development. In other words, it means human understanding is determined by the historical situation. It

is a kind of historical determinism. The most primitive religion, for example, expresses as much truth as the most advanced religion in their respective historical contexts. Further Hegel did not disengage philosophy from the religious quest; rather he thought their subject matter coincided, as both concerned themselves with "God and nothing but God and the self-unfolding of God." [6]

Hegel's assertion that philosophy and religion have identical concerns may be viewed from many sides. However, we shall ascertain what kind of relation Hegel thinks there exists between philosophy and mysticism. Hegel's philosophy, as we know, has many dimensions. It depends from what aspect an interpreter desires to approach Hegel's philosophy. The determining factor in one's approach to Hegel is the interest one has in mind. One of the approaches could be to find out whether the infinite and finite are antithetical, that is, opposed to each other, or whether they are seen as complementary to each other. If it is said that *Y* is infinite, it would mean that *Y* is not finite. That which is infinite cannot be said to be finite, and therefore it may be concluded they are antithetical to each other. In the words of Duns Scotus, both these terms-infinite and finite-are "disjunctive attributes" of being. What it means is this: that beings are either finite or infinite; they cannot be both simultaneously. If beings are infite, then we cannot speak of them as finite. For a mystic there is no such opposition between the infinite and the finite.

The mystic transcends this quality or hiatus in his upersensory intuition. A mystic, through his intuition, does not attempt to reduce one to the other. It is the mystic synthesis or reconciliation between the infinite and finite which Hegel desires to achieve in his philosophy of the Absolute, and for this purpose he quotes Eckhart's famous statements: "the eye with which God sees me is the I with which I see him; my eyes and his eyes are one . . . . If God were not, I should not be; if I were not, he would not be either" It is in the light of Eckhart that Hegel would relate the infinite with the finite. In other words, finite is but the expression of the infinite. It is this visicn which would lead Hegel to assert that the mystic - theologians of the past had for better grasp and understanding "of this depth" than his contemporory philosophers.

Our way of interpreting Hegel in this manner is not the only way. One can justifiably claim that the central concern of Hegel's philosophy is to overcome the duality over thought and being. The most striking feature, to our mind. in Hegel's thought is characterised by an orientation in which the concept of God is completely transformed into a new understanding. There is a movement from God to Absolute, and this movement expresses itself in and through the particular. The One, the Absolute, is said to transcend the particular in the sense that it cannot be identified with any set of determinate objects, that is, particulars. Although the Absolute in

terms of abstraction, can be said to be distinct from particulars, it does not mean that the Absolute exists by itself. The existence of the One depends so much on the particulars as much the particulars depend for their existence on the One. In other words, the Absolute exists when it manifests itself through the Many, that is, in terms of Nature and its history. It is through the human mind that the One comes to know itself. "God", in the words of Hegel, "knows himself in the human spirit" [8]. It is because of this vision of Reality that Hegel finds himself in agreement with the mystics like Eckhart. Hegel views Reality in terms of essence. As essence, Reality expresses itself in terms of a process or development. The One, in the process of its development, cognises itself as the One in and through the human spirit.

Our interpretation of Hegel in terms of mysticim may not be agreeable to everyone. There are people who have interpreted Hegel in terms of theism. Those who follow this line of thought think that the Hegelian God, being self-conscious, is independent of the human mind, that is, as a conscious reality, God does not depend for its self-cognition or knowledge upon the collective human sprit. But, as we have pointed out, Hegel conceives of God as the totality of particulars, and thereby moves from the God of thesim to the Absolute of mystics. The Absolute as Sprit (*Geist*) is a self-thinking thought. The Absolute as essence realises itself as Absolute in and through the process. The extent of actualisation of the essence of the Absolute

in terms of self-knowledge is determined by the kind of degree of the development of human consciousness, that is, the realisation of the Absolute is determined by the level of development of human consciousness in the context of historical development.

The Hegelian view of Reality closely resembles that of Nagarjuna and Samkara, in that the Absolute is seen in terms of the totality of the particulars. Like Advaita, Hegelianism believes that the real penetration into Being takes place through thought, and thereby the realisation of unity is actualised. Hegel is one with Samkara in thinking that the idea lets itself go into space and time. The idea determines itself "as an external Idea". "The absolute freedom of the Idea consists in this, that it resolves to let the element of its particularity go forth freely from itself as Nature" [9]. It is like saying with an Advaitin that the Absolute projects itself through the power of *maya*.

However, there are certain differences between Samkara and Hegel. The Absolute, for Samkara, transcends thought, and that which is beyond thought inevitable indeterminate. Hegel, however, sees the Absolute as that reality which is knowable, that is knowability of the Absolute actually means the Absolute's self-knowledge. As a philosopher, Hegel attempted to give a firm philosophical foundation to such mystical intuitions which upheld the theory of identity-in-difference, that is, the One is seen as existing in and through the Many. What Hegel attempted was to conceptualise the mystical intuitions of Reality in terms of philosophical apprehension.

The Hegelian philosopy of the Absolute, it may be said, undermines the role of religion. A philosophy which conceives of the Absolte as a totality of particulars, is in no need of a God who is to be worshipped or prayed. Bradley, another philosopher of the Absolute, clearly recognised this point when he said: "Short of the Absolute, God cannot rest, and, having reached that goal, he is lost and religion with him" [10]. Bradley's statement is quite logical, and if we follow his logic, it would mean that the God of religion, in an absolutistic philosophy, loses his position. In other words, the God of religion, being personal in nature, has to be transformed into an all-inclusive Absolute. Once this transformation is accomplished, the need for religion disappears for the simple reason that worship and prayer to that which is non-personal.

This understaning of Bradley is true if religion is understood in terms of Judaeo Christian terms. In the Semitic framework God is seen as transcendent, and as transcendent, he is other than his creation. That which is totally other cannot be spoken of as all-inclusive. It is to this transcendent that worship and prayer is offered. This is one understanding of religion. But if the scope of the religion is widened, then Bradley's statement may not be seen as frightening. If religion is seen as a mode of life which aims at finding solutions to human mysteries, then Buddhism, Jainism and, to a large extent, Hinduism have to be considered as religions. In this sense religion may not

be restricted just to prayer and worship. The kind of religiosity which is undermined by an absolutistic philosophy is such in which belief in a personal God is the pivot of religious life. The theistic religions may find an attack in the philosophy of Hegel or Bradley, but for Buddhism or Advaita Vedanta the question of undermining does not arise.

The value of religion, even if understood in Semitic terms, is recognised by Bradley when he says that if religion is seen as an "attempt to express the complete reality of goodness through every aspect of our being;" [11] if religion is looked at in this way, then it is "at once something more, and something higner than philosophy." [12] Bradley feels a need for a kind of religion which is "founded otherwise than on metaphysics, and a metaphysics able in some sense to justify that need." [13] From an ultimate sense, the term *religion*, which presupposes belief in God, is seen, in the absolutistic context, as an appearance. If religion is but an appearance, that it has to play a secondary role in so far as the apprehension of truth is concerned, whether mystically or philosophically.

Bradley seems to be attempting an interpretation which is based on the mystical intuition in which "the subject, the object and their relations are experienced as elements or aspects in a One which are there from the start". [14] This mystical vision, according to Bradley, is even available at the primitive level of consciousness, that is, at the pre -

logical or pre-reflective stage when consciousness, as it were, is "raw" and apprehends things in totality. It is a level of knowledge in which the distinction of subject-object does not arise;it is holistic. It is an experience of a "felt totality". This primitive state of knowledge or experience, which is totalistic in its orientation, is to be found among all the human beings before the emergence of logical knowledge. It is not only, contends Bradley, mystical intuition which confirms reality in terms of the Absolute, but even the primitive state of knowledge is holistic and comprehensive.

Bradley's philosophy concentrates on the Absolute, because "Incompleteness, unrest and unsatisfied reality, are the lot of the finite. There is nothing which, to speak properly, is individual or perfect, except only the Absolute".[15] "The plurality of souls in the Absolute is, therefore, appearance and their existence is not genuine". [16] The ultimate aim of the soul, therefore, is to be transmuted into the Absolute.

If the aim of the soul is to be absorbed in the Absolute, then what about the individual, his moral endeavours, and so on? This is as old a question as theism itself. To this kind of objection Bradley tells us that if, flying from the discord, religion keeps its thoughts fixed upon harmony it tends to suffer once more. . . . The truth that devotion even to a finite object may lift us above moral laws, seduces religion into false immoral perversions. Because for it all reality is, in

One sence, good alike, every action may become completely indifferent. It idly dreams its life away in the quiet world of divine inanity, or, forced into action by chance desire, it may allow every practice, however corrupt, by its empty spirit of devotion".[17]

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The aim of both eastern and western philosophers of the Absolute is almost identical: it is to realise the state of infinitude, a state in which the threat of finitude as no-being does hover around Being. It is this commonness of goal which unites them with mysticism, in that the mystic's concern, too, is to transcend the finitude. However, there are certain differences between the eastern and western philosophers of the Absolute, and these differences basically stem from the fact that their respective cultural and religious melieus are different. The cultural and religious melieu of both Hegel and Bradley is largely, if not exclusively, influenced by the Judaeo-Christian ethos. Their vision of religion or religious truth is coloured by their vision of Judaeo-Christian religiosity.

The religious vision of God of both Hegel and Bradely is nourished by Christianity. When they speak of God or religion, it is the Christian concept of God or religion which they have in mind, which means they view religion in terms of historicism. Being bound by their historicism, they tried to go beyond Christianity and the Christian

vision of God, so that they could apprehend the Absolute conceptually. In so far as the eastern philosophers are concerned, they do not have to confront such a problem. Their cultural religious melieu is quite diffferent from that of Hegel or Bradley. Samkara, for example, operated in a religious melieu in which religion is not viewed in terms of historicism. Rather religion is seen as a mode of apprehending eternal truths. This vision was provided to Samkara by the Upanishads, and on the basis of the Upnishadic insights he tried to build up a structure of metaphysical thought for an absolutistic viewpoint of Reality Samkara, therefore, had no need to undermine religion precisely because the seeds of Absolutism were found in his religion. Hegel's or Bradley's philosophy, on the other hand, poses a threat to the Christian concept of God because they do not have such a framework within Christianity which would enable them to formulate a philosophy of the Absolute. For this reason, they have to operate outside of Christianity, and therefore outside of religion.

Both Hegel and Bradley conceive of the Absolute as Spirit, "Outside of Spirt there is not, and there cannot be, any reality, and, the more that anything is spiritual, so much the more is it veritably real".[18] If, however, the Absolute is viewed as the totality of the universe, then how can we think of it as spiritual? But the way Hegel or Bradley look at the universe is quite different from the way ordinary people understand the universe.

However, if the Absolute expresses itself in terms of a process, it would mean that the preceding stage of manifestation is apparent. It is difficult to explain as to how the Absolute is identical with that which is apparent.If it is argued that the tranformation of the universe into an Absolute is not improbable, and therefore there is Absolute, we are entering into an area which modern science concerns itself with.In other words,it means that it is difficult to explain the relation between that which is real and that which is apparent, then people will recognise the world as world in so far as science explains it in terms of unity.In so far as the Absolute is concerned, it is then better for metaphysics not to engage in this onerous task. The task of metaphysics seems to have stealthily slipped from the hands of philosophers into those of scientists. In recent time Capara, the author of *The Tao of Physics*, seems to have realised this situation. According to Capara, the western structure of thought is incompatible with modern science because the western assumptions are based on the principle of diffierence. A thought-structure which sees everything in termsof difference is of little help to science which looks at the universe as a inter-related unit. The cosmic vision of eastern thought, on the other hand, according to Capara, is holistic, and therefore compatible with modern science. What modern science is saying about the universe is basically the confirmation of insights which the eastern thinkers and mystics have accomplished through intuition. In other words we are

arriving at a paradoxical situation: since the world and the One of the mystics are one, and science confirms the unity of the world, it is but natural to say that the kind of metaphysics cultivated in the West is inappropriate in the context of modern science.

The philosophical thinking in the West has been moving away from the religious questions, and metaphysics has received a serious blow from both the positivists and existentialists. Against this background quite a number of thinkers, even some theologians, spoke of the *death of God*, and therefore of religion. The orthodox theologians revolted against this situation, and their revolt expressed itself in terms of extreme orthodoxy. The best representative of this reaction is Karl Barth. These orthodox theologians assert that Christianity is not a religion, in that Christianity is seen in eschatological terms. In the revelation of Christ man's opposition to his creator and his sinfulness is manifest. Religion is seen as nothing more nor less than the human possibility of rebellion against God. Thus religion is said to be the sonsummation of all human possibilities. It is, therefore, easy for these theologians to maintain that religion is the child of human imagination and pride. As such religion is the loftiest flight of human possibilities in the land of sin precisely because temporality is transformed into eternity by pushing the possibilities beyond the realm of death. Man, by pushing himself into the realm of the divine, brings God down to his own

realm, and, through self - deification, makes himself into a god. Hence religion *per se* is nothing but actualisation of human projections and possibilities , and thereby man tries to redeem himself through himself.

If this be the case, then what is the position of religion in the context of revelation? Barthnians, for example, believe that in Christ religions are negated for the simple reason that, being the revelation of the Word of God, Jesus' life possesses the incomprehensible and infinite actualities, for he is the realisation of those divine possibilities which surpass all human thinking. As the event of revelation is once-for-all, so the death of religion took place once-for-all at that point in history when revelation occurred in terms of Incarnation. As Christianity is nothing but the way of salvation or redemption in Christ, it cannot be identified with religion. Christianity is the expression of God through the Word, and no religion or philosophy can be compared to the Word, as the Word is the total and final revelation in terms of Incarnation. Hence God cannot be known in himself as he is in himself except through his own self-disclosure.

This line of thought tries to explain that Christianity has not to be understood in terms of mere historicism , but in terms of revelation. What it amounts to is that Christianity is affirmed as the affirmation of the revelation of God in Christ. The God of religion , on the other hand , is seen to be incompatible with the God of revelation. The revolt of these ortho-

dox theologians in a way coincided with those thinkers who opposed religious conceptions of God. Their viewpoints seem to be indentical in the sense that both feel that the God of philosophers or that of religions is false: therefore we must kill both religion and its God. In the death of God theolgians maintain that the God we speak about is a God borne out of primitive superstitions of man, and these superstitions have been codified in the form of religious doctrines. Christianity, in so far her religious assumptions are concerned, is the victim of these superstitious doctrines to the same extent as any other religion. Since man has come of age, he can live with a God who is supposed to be living in an upper storey. As we do not need such a God any more, Christianity must dis-engage itself from all the religious assumptions, and thereby transform itself into a religionless Christianity. It is at this point that both orthodox and death of God theologians meet with each other as well as with positivists and existentialists.

In the midst of this upheaval we find Karl Jaspers speaking of reality in quasi-religious terms. The One for Jaspers is Comprehensive, and sometimes this comprehensive is identified with God. The so-called Jasperian "philosophical faith" hovers between agnosticism and religious faith. Having rejected the analytical approch of western thought, Jaspers attempts to transcend the movement of the mind in terms of subject-object distinctions. Through finitude and

contingency, or what Jaspers calls the limit-situation, man realises the ground of all finite existence not in concrete or tangible terms, but in terms of presence. This awareness, in and through finitude, is not that of the One, but of the phenomenal world as a "cipher" The awareness of the cipher is the symbol of Ultimate Reality. It is not an awareness which is direct and immediate; it is an awareness in terms of philosophical faith. Philosophical faith, for Jaspers, has to be understood in the sense that the existence of the One can neither be proved nor disproved, and therefore has to be distinguished from the religious articles of faith which need assent. Religions, like metaphysical systems, have to be considered as symbols of Divine Reality.

Jasper's philosophical thinking comes very close to Advaita, in that the Absolute is said to transcend the dichotomy of subject-object distinction. It is because of this fact that Jaspers has been much admired in the East, particularly in Japan, than in the West. His philosophical methodology does not follow the general pattern of the West, which is analytical in orientation. Jasper's philosophical reflection concentrates upon the human experience the orientation of which is towards transcendence, that is, of going beyond the discursive modes of thought. Jaspers' philosophy does not say so much about the nature of Reality as much it maintains that Reality is unsayable. That which is of the nature of mystery, cannot be spoken of in terms of words, or analysed in terms of logical

deductions. The Absolute is not an empirical datum of sense-experience; it is not an object of thought. Jaspers' philosophy has tried to point out that the way western thinking has been moving on is a path which is self-destructive. His philosophy represents a movement towards transcendence.

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The state of metaphysics in the West has been dismal for quite some time. The greatest blow it received was from science-inspired philosophers, particularly from the positivists. The positivists declared a war on metaphysics by reducing the role of philosophy to mere logical analysis of empirical propositions. It were not only the positivists who fought against metaphysics, but there were also a number of Christian theologians who debunked the role of metaphysics as worthless.

Quite a number of Christian theologians feel that metaphysics is not a helpful tool in so far as the knowledge of God is concerned. This concern basically stems from the attitude of philosophers themselves towards metaphysics. Theologians are also unhappy over he fact that metaphysicians have interperted Christianity from the wrong side. Hegel, for example,considered Christianity as an exoteric manifestation of the Absolute. It means that Hegel interpreted Christianity in the light of his own philosophy, neglecting the

fact that Christianity does not allow iteslf to be interpreted in this manner. If both – Christianity and Hegelianism – express the same truth in different historical contexts, it would amount to saying that affirmation or rejection of Hegelianism is identical with the affirmation or rejection of Christianity. In other words, the rejection or the affirmation means the affirmation or rejection of the other. It is against this background that some theologians have revolted against philosophy as such.

If a number of theologians have reacted strongly against metaphysics, it is because they feel that metaphysical problems are pseudo-problems, and in this way they have the company of the positivists. Moreover, these theologians believe that man, being fallen, is not oriented towards God. It is only revelation which can save by lifting him up from the realm of sin into the realm of redemption. It is not knowledge, whether metaphysical or mystical, which can lead man to the presence of God. Even faith is not said to be in the power of man. Faith is said to be itself a gratuitous gift of God. Further, these theologians contend that faith, being a pure divine gift, appears folly to most people, particularly to those who pride in their human knowledge. These theologians would prefer, by using the Wittgensteinian theory of autonomus language games, to assert that the Christian language of faith has its own realm of operation and it would be understandable only to those who participate existentially, wholly and completly in the Christian life. Thus these theologians, in an extreme fashion, would deny he assertion that the human spirit is basically oriented

towards God. This denial amounts to saying that outside of Christianity all expressions concerning God and salvation are not true. Whatever judgement these theologians may pass on religion or metaphysics as such, they would have, however, to accept the fact that man's spirit is basically oriented towards God. If it were not, then man would not even engage himself in the God-talk It is immaterial whether this search expresses itself in terms of mystical experience or cognitive knowledge. The philosopher reflects on the main datum of religious experience which is shared by humanity in general. However hard one may try to eliminate philosophical reflection, it would be difficult to do so in so far man engages himself in the search of meaning.

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3. CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM

The text of Christian mysticism has to be seen in the context of the relationship between God and man. God, as ultimate reality, is conceived of as the basis and source of existence. As the ultimate source of existence, he is the ground of existence. This is so precisely because the existents are said to " live and move and are " in God, Having its source in God, man reflects the image of God, that is, man, as *image of God* (*image Dei*), participates in the divine life of God, As the reflection of the One, man necessarily participates in the nature of God, and in the words of the St. John of the Cross : " All that is set forth here is in God eminently in an infinite way, or rather, every one of those grandeurs is God and all of them together are God . . . . . "[1] A mystic, in the depths of his being, experiences " all things to be God "[2]. Creatures, as creative reflections of God, manifest in their temporality that infinite reality (that is, the Absolute) which is beyond temporality, and therefore " inconceivable ", " incomparable ", and "unthinkable"[3]. Whatever positive good there is in the created existence, it is said to be from God. Man as a reflection of God

means that his actual being is nothing but the fruictification of the divine Idea. The divine Idea externalises itself, and thereby expresses itself in terms of created existents. The divine Idea is not a concept; it is identical with the Being of God. As such, it constitutes the being of creation. If this be the case, it means that man is what he is in terms of his being in God. There is, therefore, no unbridgeable hiatus to be bridged between God and man, that is, that man is not apart from God to the extent that no possibility of communion exists. Man is related to God in the same manner as a wave is to the ocean. St. John of the Cross expresses the nature of this relationship is these terms

As St. John [that is, the Apostle]. tells us, all things in him [i. e God] are life, and in him they live and move and are, ... Hence it is, that when this mighty Emperor moves the soul ..... all things seem to move together, even as in the earth's motion all the natural things thereon move, as if they had nothing ..... Nor do they only move. They also disclose the beauties of their being, their virtue, beauty and graces, *and the root of their duration and life.* The soul now sees how all creatures both on high and here below have their life, force and duration in him [God]. ... Although it is true that the soul sees things distinct from God, in that their being is created, and sees them in him with force, root and strength, she also knows that God is in his being in an infinitely pre-em-

inent way . . . . . [4]

The soul, as the creative reflection of God, looks at the very form of existence from the eyes of God, that is, the soul finds God in creatures, nay, in the world itself. As the being of man is constituted by the Being of God, the fundamental orientation of the soul is towards that vision in which everything is seen and perceived to be permeated by the presence of God. It means that the soul's basic movement is towards God [*a Deo*]. And when consciousness reflects and contemplates upon the mystery of the world, it experiences, in the cavern of the heart, that the creation is but the externalisation or projection of the divine Idea. Through this vision the soul is enabled to experience the divine participation in creation. Man experiences a gap between himself and God in so far as he is bound by space-time structures. To be a creature of space-time means to live within the limitations. However, the moment space-time structure is transcended, there is a perception, which, in the words of Ruysbroeck, affirms the fundamental vision of the soul that the source of the created existence is God's Being. Since it is God who is the source of existence, it is evident that God's will alone activates the soul towards that which is positively good and beautiful. The goodness within man stems from the centre of the soul, which is constituted by the divine presence of God. "God," says Dame Julian, "doth all things, be it ever so little...."[5] Every positive act of man is an act of God precisely because man's existence is grounded in God. As Crea-

tion is but an externalisation of the divine Idea, it is but self-evident that creation or creature in itself is *nothing*. Creation is not absolute; it is contingent; it is dependent;it is limited; it is not autonomous. When compared to the Absolute, creation turns out to be nothing. This nothingness of creation is explained by St. John in these words:

. . . the bride says that he, the Beloved, is all things,both in himself and for her. For in that which God is wont to communicate in such ecstasies the soul feels and knows the truth of the saying uttered by St. Francis : *My God and all things*. Since God is all things to the soul and good of them all, therefore . . . the communication received in this ecstasy is explained by the similitude with the goodness of things . . . It must be remembered that everything . . . is in God in a most eminent way,or better stated: each of the glories spoken of God is, and all of them together are, God. For since the soul in this state is united with God,God is all these things in one simple being [6.]

Since the creatures owe their existence to God, they have no value in themselves. They derive their existence from God. "All things of the earth and heaven, compared with God, are nothing ... ... " " . in this sense all creatures are nothing"[7] "All the being of creatures, compared with the infinite being of God, is nothing ".[8] The nothingness of creatures stands stark naked when compared to the infinite being and fullness of God.

The mystical understanding of the creatures as nothing does not spring from a moral–ascetic propensity,or from an existential attitude.When the mystic opines that creation in itself is not absolutely real,he is passing a theoretical judgement in the sense that everything, when compared to the majesty of God, is nothing and therefore fall short of the glory of God. The mystic is not saying that creation or creature is *not*. He does not deny the reality of creation or creature. They are something because their positivity comes from God.

The things of creation in themselves are imperfect and temporary. It is unjustifiable to make a comparison between God,who is perfect and full,and creatures, who are imperfect and transient. God as a transcendent reality stands, moreover, beyond comparisons. It is not true to say that comparable things have to be dissimilar. Things, as we shall see later, are identical with God in a certain sense. Since whatever is positive in creatures is from God, there is, therefore, no possibility of comparison. If things are compared with God-then we have to have a relational term. This nothingness of creatures has not to be understood in a negative sense. It has a positive value in the sense that, that which is nothing will not resist God, for "nothingness resists not at all"[9]. Moreover,things being nothing in themselves, will not oppose the man to desires to see God in them, because "In order to possess God in everything,one must possess nothing in everything"[10]

When we speak of God,we can speak of him only in terms of unity, that is,absolute unity. That which is not Absolute cannot be source of anything;therefore Absolute alone can be source of creation. From our own experience we realise that the more a creatureo the more unity is to be found in it. In the ascending order of being, there is a corresponding scale of unity of being. In other words, the higher the movement of consciousness, the higher is the unity of being. As God, in the order of being, is Absolute, he must of necesssity possess the absolute unity. The nature of the absolute unity, in the words of Bradley, " would consist in an all-comprehensive content, unified with full consequence and harmony into a whole" [11]. This is what the Christian mystics desire to realise. Bradley as a philosopher thinks that man, in so far as he is a creature of temporality, may not be able to realise the content of the absolute unity. However, Christian mysticism maintains that the knowledge of absolute unity is not merely a cognititive knowledge which informs that the world is apparent; rather it is a knowledge which enables the soul to realise its essential nature. Empirical knowledge, on the other hand,being confined to the sense-image, can never reach the level of absolute knowledge of Reality. It is in this context that the concept of the divine grace plays the most important role in mysticism. As empirical knowledge is unable to lead man to the absolute knowledge of God, it is God's grace alone which elevates the soul to the level of supernatural knowledge. Through grace the soul is sanctified and thereby it is enabled to experience the divine unity of God,

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The created being, no doubt, is the projection or reflection of the divine Idea of God. But being placed in the space-time continuum, the threat of finitude threatens the very existence of the created existent. It is the threat of finitude or non-being which distinguishes the creature from the infinity of the Absolute, that is, God God, being infinite, transcends finitude, Finitude is the negation of Being, Human existence. faced with the non-being of finitude, hovers between that which *is* and that which is *not*. To put this problem in another way is to ask how we are to locate reality-in-itself which is free from finitude and space-time structure. That which is finite cannot be said to be really real. The finite being, being dependent and contingent, can be explained only in reference to being-itself. The being of the finite being,being at the borderline of non-being, is, in relation to its empirical character, nothingness (i.e;in terms of phenomenality) and being-itself (i.e; in terms of groundedness in the being of God). The reality of the finite being cannot be that which we know and experience. If we take finitude to be real,then we can never know that which is absolutely real, because that which *is*, must by its very nature be outside of space-time. Since finite being is contained in and by the finitude, its reality cannot be explained in terms of that which is a given existence, The answer to this question must be outside the phenomenality in terms of which empirical exisence itself can be explained.

The problem can be tackled only from the point of being-itself. Being-itself is grounded in-itself. Since being-itself is its own ground, it is free from the historical causality. Further being-itself is transcendent, as it is outside of space-time, and therefore the only reference point for the finite being.As Absolute, being-itself does not suffer from the defects and limitations which history imposes upon the finite being. It is this aspect of being-itself which makes it to be above every mode of the given existence.

God, as being-itself , transcends finitude because he is infinite. As infinite, God relates himself to the finite as its cause and ground. God's relation with the finite is not to be understood in terms of interdependence, that is, God in no manner is dependent on the created existence. Dependence is possible only if there is a *lack*. Human beings depend upon each other as well as upon God because they are incomplete. God is full and perfect, and therefore without any lack. If God's relationship with the created existence is understood in terms of dependence, then it would mean that God is limited and conditioned. But this is not the case. It is man who, being on the borderline of finitude, finds himself dependent upon God. Man as a limited being needs God as his ground and base.

Since God is transcendent, beyond the flux of history, beyond the process of becoming, our knowledge of God can only be limited, or to put it in

mystical terms, it will be sheer "ignorance" or "darkness". In other words, our knowledge of God can only be negative. From pseudo-Dionysius onwards there is a consistent refrain in Christian mysticism that God as Absolute can be spoken of only in negative terms. Being inconceivable, beyond the scope of discursive thought, we can speak of God only in terms of what he is not. In other words, we can never know what God is in himself. Dionysius, while explaining the order of being, speaks of the negative in these words :

> We say that Cause of all, which is above all..(has neither) shape, nor form, nor quality, nor quantity, nor bulk-nor is in a place-nor is seen-nor has sensible contacts-nor perceives, nor is perceived by the senses, nor has disorder and confusion as being vexed by earthly passions...neither is It, nor has It, change or decay, or division, or deprivation, or flux-or any other objects of sense...It is neither soul, nor mind, nor has imagination, nor opinion, nor reason, nor conception, neither is expressed, nor *conceived*: neither is number, nor order, nor greatness, nor littleness; nor equality, nor inequality; nor simplicity, nor dissimilarity; neither is standing, nor moving; nor at rest; neither has power, nor is power, nor light; neither lives, nor is life; neither is *essence*, nor eternity, nor time; neither is Its touch intelligible; neither is It science, nor truth; nor kingdom, nor wisdom; neither one, nor oneness,

neither sonship, nor paternity; neither Deity nor Goodness, nor is It Spirit according to our understanding; nor any other thing of those known to us or to any other existing being; neither is It any of non-existing nor of existing things, nor do things existing know It as It is;. .neither is there expression of It, nor name nor knowledge [12].

It is a mistake to interpret the negative way as a way of agnosticism. God, being Absolute, cannot be predicated. That which is transcendent and beyond the realm of thought, cannot be spoken of as "this" Or "that". The negative knowledge of God stems from the realisation that God is a transcendent reality, and that which is beyond "this"or"that" cannot be reduced to mere ideas, concepts or images. If we do so, we enter into the world of reductionism and thereby imprison God in words and ideas. A mystic is not an agnostic, in that he has a positive understanding and experience of God. An agnostic, on the contrary,does not affirm the reality of God; he swings between the two poles of affirmation and negation; he remains non-committal. The mystic, however, knows in the inner depths of his being that the cause of creation can only be God, and as the ultimate cause, he must necessarily be transcendent. When God is viewed from the perspective of immanence, we have positive knowledge of God : that it is the being of God which constitutes the being of creation. This fact is reflected in creation in the sense that any positive thing there is in creation, must have its ground in God. That which is

particular, and therefore limited, cannot cause itself; it can only come from the infinite. The higher the order of existence the lesser is there lack in the created being. God,being unlimited and inclusive of all being, is unlike the created existence, in that he does not share any lack with creation. As he is unlike created existence,he is beyond the grasp of concepts. Whatever formulations and definitions we may formulate about God, they are always clothed in human language, in empirical concepts, which by definition are limited and finite.Professor Hoffding rightly points out that the "fundamental law of all our concepts is that they express relations...and therefore no concepts be formed of something which stands in no relation to any other something[13]. God,being unconditioned, is unrelated to anything except to himself. As unrelated reality, God is beyond the scope of discursive thought.

God can be spoken of only as Absolute precisely because that which is Absolute cannot be reduced to a limit. The Absolute is beyond relations, and therefore beyond limits. That which is related is limited by its relations. As concepts express relations, they are thereby bound by limits. God as Absolute is beyond limits, and therefore is unlimited. Being unlimited, concepts cannot express the being or essence of God. Our knowledge of God will allways be about God and not of God. We derive our knowledge about God from God's presence in the world.As it is difficult to understand our own selves, then how can we comprehend

the being of God? St. Augustine aptly points out: "By What understanding shall man understand God when he comprehends not his very intellect whereby he would fain comprehend him (God)" [14]

The negative way of the mystic does imply the absence of knowledge about or of God. The *agnosis* of the mystic is not the irrational and negative viewpoint of an agnostic. The Unknowable (i. e., God.), who is known through non-knowing [*agnosis*], is unknowable precisely because it can be known only in terms of *mystery*. God is not unknowable in the sense of agnosticism. The mystic's positive knowledge of God is characterised by "non-knowing" in the sense that he knows that God's immensity cannot be known through more rational tools. The mystic's positive knowledge of God stems from the fact that the positive being of creatures is established in God. It is well to remember, in this context, these words of the great mystical Doctor :

> The whole creation, compared with the infinite Being of God, is nothing.... All the beauty of the creation, in comparison with the infinite beauty of God, is supreme deformity. All the goodness of the whole world together, in comparison with the infinite goodness of God, is wickedness rather than goodness. All the wisdom of the world, and all human cunning, compared with the infinite wisdom of God, is simple and supreme ignorance. [15]

The way of negation or privation is characterised by an orientation in which we deny all such attributes to God which we find in creation. The created attributes function within the realm of limitations. God as unlimited being cannot be spoken of in terms of atributes which are anthromorphic in orientation and scope.

> We say that God is not being, because he is more than being, not wisdom, because he is more than wisdom, not goodness, because he is more than goodness, and more than any other perfection. In fine, we come to understand him (God) as something that exceeds all the sensible, all the imaginable and all the intelligible, that is indeed above everything, that has being [15].

The negative way of the mystics has not simply to be interpreted in terms of existential attitudes without any metaphysical bearings. It is false to maintain that the negative way is true in so far as it is a lived experience. To try to make a distinction between existential attitudes and metaphysical statements does not hold good for the simple reason that the so-called scientific theology is caught up in its own limitations. The mystics despise this kind of theology, because it is of little help in the growth of spirituality, or in leading the soul to the vision of God. The mystics are anti-intellectual, not in the fidelistic or irrationalistic sense. Their anti-intellectualism stems from a

higher order of concern. The insistence of the mystics that creatures are nothing in comparision to God does not stem from moral-ascetic reasons or from an existential *angst*. The negative knowledge is a theoretical judgement in the sense that everything, when compared to God, is nothing, and therefore of little use in leading one to the knowledge of God. The mystics are saying that the things are *not*. They do not deny the relative autonomy of things. What is implied is the fact that the created things, having their existence in God, are something; and as something they are finite and passing. There is no possibility of arriving at the knowledge of God through the means of created objects, because God is "inconceivable", "incomparable" "unattainable", and "unthinkable" [17]. It is, therefore unjustifiable to attribute the qualities of things to God, since God is beyond all comparisons. We can compare with God only *no-thing*. It is not true to say that comparable things have to be dissimilar. Things are identical with God in the sense that they participate in God's being. Since there is a certain identity of things with God, there is no possibility of comparison. If we compare things with God, we have to have relational terms. The nothingness of things has a positive value in the sense that that which is nothing does not oppose or resist God [18].

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Man's relation to God differs fundamentally from that of the lower forms of life, in that man, being a

rational and intelligible creature, is not, like the lower forms of life, totally subservient to his instincts ar impulses. As a rational being, man transcends the limitations of objects. Being able to transcend to a certain extent the barriers of space-time, man is there. by able to view things in a cosmic dimension. Furthermore man, as a reflecting being, reflects upon his deficiencies and shortcomings. This process of self-reflection allows man to choose his own way of life, to determine his relationship with others, and so on. It is through the process of self-reflection that man comes to know the nature of finitude. However man's reflection is of the nature of finitude, and therefore is not able to comprehend the nature of the infinite. His conceptualisations of the infinite operate within the realm of the finite. Therefore, man's knowledge of the infinite can only be negative,that is,a knowledge in terms of silence. Although reason may not enable man to know the infinite, the *will* has the capacity to accomplish this task. As the good of the objects is limited and finite, the *will* within man does not rest unless it reaches the infinite, and unlimited will. The will, thus,forms the core for the union of the soul with God. Emphasising the importance of the will, the author of *The Obscure knowledege* (chap. x) points out that

> In this life the union of the will is far more excellent and of higher worth than the union of understanding, and it is better to God than to

know him, because that which we can love with the will is much more than that which we can attain with the understanding. The reason of this may be gathered from a consideration of the respective modes of operation of the understanding and the will. They are completely different. When the understanding understnds, it attracts to itself the object understood and forms an idea within itself, which idea it contains within itself. Since its capacity is finite, it reduces within its own limitations the object understood, even if in itself that object be infinite, even as the ocean is reduced and narrowed when it enters the straits of Gibraltar. The will, on the contrary, when it loves goes out of itself and is transformed into the object loved and is one with it. The object loved is not therefore limited by it. From this we can see how different is our understanding of God in this life from our love of him. We understand him according to our own capacity; we love him as he is in himself.[19]

Man's spirit will not rest unless it rests in God. Whatever satisfactions man may derive from the finite things of the world, there will still be thirst for more joy precisely because the joy of objects is passing and finite. In each act of man there is an underlying desire for the infinite. It is a movement from the less to the more. Human knowledge begins from practical facts of life and moves towards general principles of

knowledge. This very same process is involved in the process of love. The love of an object will never satisfy the soul because it is both limited and passing. Therefore the anguished cry of St. Augustine: "Thou madest us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it repose in Thee." (20) The ultimate happiness is in God alone, and God therefore is the ultimate end and goal of life.

God is not only the transcendent end of life, he is also, as the ground of existence, immanent in the centre of the soul. Human existence, belonging to the higher order of being, is much more deeply rooted in God because it participates more deeply in the being of God. The centre of the human existence is God, and through the surrender of the will, Union with God is relised. Union through the will is possible because the will transcends the particular, and thereby reaches the state of innermost centre of the soul. The mystical Docter speaks of the presence of God in the centre of the soul in these terms

> We must remember that the Word, the Son of God, together with the Father and the Holy Ghost, is hidden in essence, in the inmost being of the soul. That soul, therefore, that will find him, must go out from all things in will and affection and enter into the profoundest self-recollection... (21)

The moment the soul, through the will, realises its union with God in the centre, that very moment the soul begins to taste and understand

the power and love of God. Through this union the ultimate relationship between the self and God is realised. The experience of this union is so intense that the mystics feel that the self is its own ground. If God is the centre and ground of the soul, then why does man experience the absence of God in life? Man experiences God's absence because of sin, and sin signifies the absence of presence. It is because of this negative aspect in man that he experiences the absence of the sanctifying grace, that is, it is that aspect of divine love of God which elevates the soul to the supernatural union of the unlimited Godhead. Sanctifying grace liberates man from the creaturely limitations. Sin, on the contrary, is that movement within man which leads him away from God. In other words, man through sin gets converted from God to finitude, to non-being. Sin is a deliberate act of man for that which is characterised by darkness and fallenness. Making a wilful choice for the finite, man turns away from God towards that which is of the nature of bondage. Thus man seeks good in that which is limited, finite, and passing.

Since the centre of the soul is God, it is but inevitable that man, however hard he may try to turn away from God, must search for the unlimited good, that is, God. Even in the midst of absence, that is, sin, the craving of the soul is always God-oriented. It is a craving for Reality which will fill the void in the heart. This craving for the infinite expresses itself in terms

of intuition of the divine presence of God in the World. This intuition is a perception of Reality as unlimited and infinite. Man begins his search for the unlimited when his finitude reduces him to despair. The search is actualised when there is an apprehension of Reality. The internal progress of this journy, of this perception of God, is beautifully described by Lucie Christine in these Words:

The first glimpse of the sea from the cliffs grew tears from my eyes. I often remained whole hours contemplating its immensity without being able to express what I felt.

Further:

> I sought thee, my God, in all things beautiful and in all things I found thee. I asked of thee of the sea... thou wast reposing in its depths... I met thee in the impenetrable gloom of forests. I have felt thee in the hidden travail of nature.

Again:

> As the stars fade away in the light of the sun, so everything grew pale in the grace of God upon my soul; *I gazed on sea and saw only God.* (22)

There are intense moments, or crisis points, in life when man experiences the divine presence of God. It may be a blazing light or the scorching heat of the summer sun, or it may be the ordered activities of nature which overwhelm the soul, and thereby allow the soul to penetrate the divine mystery of God

in terms of his immanence. Although the soul may apprehend God's presence in the world, it however does not satisfy the soul. The cares of life snatch from man the moments of deep contemplation. It is this tragic aspect of life which we find, for example, in Neitzsche who desired to find the infinite in the finite, that is, in nature. Nature, being in the process of becoming, can never afford to give us the satisfying glimpse of the perfect and infinite Good. The attempt to find the unlimited Good in that which is limited is bound to end up in deep frustration and despair. Neitzsche's desire to realise the Superman in nature was bound to end up in tragedy, and his own personal life furnishes us with the best illustration of this tragedy. The real superman is to be found in the Supernatural mode of life; it is a mode of existence which, through the sanctifying grace, transcends the naturalness of existence, and thereby participates in the divine presence of God. To glory the natural man is a contradiction in terms. What Neitzsche tried to do was to glorify the natural man. Nature, however, becomes a means to the supernatural form of life if nature is seen as a reflection of God. It is by contemplating on the positive aspects of nature that the divine presence of God is apprehended, and thereby, through the sanctifying grace, the soul arrives at the state of the supernatural vision of God. St. John of the Cross beautifully points out that

In the contemplation, and knowledge of created things the soul beholds such a multiplicity of graces, powers and beauty wherewith God has endowed th m, that they seem to it to be clothedwith admirable beauty and natural virtue, derived and communicated from the infinite supernatural beauty of the face of God, whose beholding of them clothed the heavens and the earth with beauty and joy. Hence the soul, wounded with love of that beauty of the Beloved which it traces in created things, and anxious to behold that beauty which is the source of the visible beauty, sings:

Oh, who can heal me ?
Give me prefectly thyself.
Send me no more
A messenger
Who cannot tell me what I wish

As created beings furnish to the soul traces of the Beloved, and exhibit the impress of his beauty and magnificence, the love of the soul increases and consequently the pain of his absence .... As it sees that there is no remedy for this pain except in the personal vision of the Beloved ... it prays for the fruition of his presence, saying 'Entertain me no more with any knowledge or communication or impressions of

of thy grandeur, for these do but increase my longing and pain of thy absence: thy presence alone can satisfy my will and desire. [23]

The sacramentalism of nature is a movement of the soul whereby an artist or a poet is able to apprehend that there is some incomprehensible and ineffable Reality behind this phenomena. The artist, in the words of Ruskin, is able to apprehend, through his penetrative imagination, the nature of spiritual Reailty. Through the penetration of imagination, the artist gives a corporeal frame and shape to the intuitions he has had during the process of penetration or contemplation. The artist, out of the vast and complex multitude of impressions, selects such aspects of his experience which are suggestive of spiritual Reailty. It is because of the suggestive power that the poet's description, for example, of a blazing sunset moves the sun. Hence art, in whatever form and shape, communicates the higher forms of truth.

The artist, however deep his penetration may be, moves in the realm of the limited, the finite, and material objects. The artistic symbols and images have to have a material form. The artist has to clothe the purity of divine presence in such images and symbols which, by definition and nature, are perishable. The artist is unable to transcend the limited and material forms of his suggestions. The artist will remain bound to materiality unless, through grace, he is united with

the Unlimited and the Infinite. Even though limited by materiality, the artist indeed removes the veil, through intuition, from the eyes. He is able to view the spiritual space in the universe. The spiritual space is filled by and bathed in the sunlight of God's caritative love. It is the final culmination of art. It is not in the power of art to realese the soul from the bondage of matter. The ultimate freedom does not lie in art; it lies in God alone. The will of man is still tied to the ego. The artist may experience the Infinite in so far as he is in the process of creation; and in moments of creation, the artist may forget himself, his ego. The moment creation comes to end, that very moment the artist experiences anguish. Thus the experiences of beauty transforms itself into pain.

We are not saying that the heightened experience of nature is of no significance. What we are saying is this: whatever the nature of artistic experience may be, it is limited in its scope because it has to operate within the realm of the limited. Through art, radical union with God is not possible; it is only through the sanctifying grace that the soul is elevated to the supernatural union. In so far as we remain tied to the finite, it is impossible for the soul to realise freedom, to be united with God. An existence tied to nature is finite, sense-conditioned, and superficial. If consciousness is oriented towards the external, it is not

in a position to go inward, to gaze at the centre of the soul. The real freedom is realised at that moment when the soul wills nothing except the will of God. The moment there is a total submergence of the will with the will of God, that very moment the process of beatific vision begins to be actualised. It is the end-goal of a mystic. Mystical union is characterised by an orientation in which there is a movement in the soul from the sanctifying grace to the beatific vision of God.

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In what does the mystical union, or mystical marriage, or transforming union consist of? The mystical union is a state of the soul in which God habitually possesses the centre of the soul, that is, the soul experiences the continuous presence of God. Once the habitual union is realised, there is a continuous divine flux of love in the soul. The result of this flux is that, while the soul is in the process of the transforming act, the activities of the soul (that is, memory, understanding, will, etc.), which are under the influence of divine flux, manifest the divine activities. Whatever voilitions take place in the soul, they are but the manifestations of divine activities. As the process of transformation of the soul heightens, there is a simultaneous increase in the union of the soul with God. Before the process of transforming union, all the activities of the soul are

external. But now the soul acts in and through the will of God, nay it is God who manifests himself in and through the acts of the soul. The faculties of the soul as a result of the transforming union, are divinised. In other words, the divinisation of the faculties takes place through God's possession of the centre of the soul. Whenever the external activities intervene, the faculties are not deflected from the presence of God. In the beginning, the soul experiences a transient form of union; there is a break in the continuous flow of the presence of God. As the intimacy of the soul with God intensifies and heightens, the continuity of the union becomes more durable. St. John of the Cross lucidly describes the difference between the continuous and transient forms of union:

> Though the soul be always in the high estate of marriage ever since placed there, nevertheless actual union in all its powers is not continuous, though the substantial union is. In this substantial union, however, the powers of the soul are very frequently in union and drink of this cellar, the understanding by knowledge, the will by love and so forth. We are not, therefore, to suppose that the soul, when it says that it went out, has ceased from the union of its faculties, which is not and cannot be continous in this life [24]

The transforming union is a state in which the soul lives and acts in and through God. It is a state of participation in the divine life of God. It is a state in which the soul is transformed (*en Dios*). The soul, as it were, is transformed into the divine in the sense that it participates in the being of God. The faculties of the soul no more function at the natural and limited level. The soul now is in a position to receive the divine presence. The spiritual marriage is

> *a complete transformation into the Beloved: whereby they surrender each to the other the entire possession of themselves* together with a certain consummation of the union of love. [25]

The soul receives the fullest divine influx the moment it reaches the fullest consummation of love.. Through the union the self apprehends the Divine Act The union has not to be understood in terms God-received by the soul; rather it is a supernatural union of the soul with God. The state of mystical union is a life of grace in which the soul receives the divine nflux. Through the union, the soul is divinised and thereby achieves divine perfection. The result of this divine perfection is the beatific vision in which the soul's vision is that of God's self-vision. In other words, there is the divine illumination in the soul. John of the Cross describes this illumination, by using the simile of inflamed fire, in these words:

This illumination of splendour wherein the soul shines forth together with the heat of love is not like that caused by material lamps which illuminates with their flames the surrounding objects .. .. for the soul is within these splendours .... Nay, further, it is .... transformed into and made these splendours ... so that it is like the air inside a flame, enkindled and transformed into the flame. For the the flame is simply inflamed air, and the motions and splendours caused by that flame belong neither to the air nor to the fire alone ... but to the fire and air together, and the fire makes the air which it holds inflamed within itself accomplish these effects. After this fashion we are to understand that the soul with its powers is illumined within the Divine splendour.

The motions of the Divine flame are the work not of the soul alone, that has been transformed into the flame of the Holy Ghost, nor of the Holy Ghost alone, but of both together, for the Holy Ghost moves the soul as the fire moves the inflamed air. [26]

The inward function of the soul is but one aspect of the edge. The functions of the self are not destroyed by the supernatural union with God. What happens

is this: during the process of transforming union the faculties of the self function, when engaged, in and through the will of God, but when there is a passive moment in the soul, then the faculties function from the centre of the self. The soul in cooperation with God engages in caritative love. In other words, God is the primary agent of any activity of the soul, whereas the soul, as a passive agent, is the recipient of the divine flux of love. Although passive, the soul at the same time is also active in the very act of receiving the divine influx. In so far as our daily life endures, this divine influx is gratuitous and free. In this transforming union God acts in the soul. The action of God in the soul destroys those limits which, in the beginning, were antithetical to the divine operations. The union is so perfect that the words of St. Augustine ring in our ears: "When I shall with my whole self cleave to thee ... my life shall wholly live, as wholly full of thee." [27]

The ultimate stage of the transforming union is in the beatific vision of God. In this state the soul has nothing of its own. The soul, as it were, is naught. The soul's life is entirely determined by the divine presence of God, and thereby will and knowledge are nothing but the expressions of God's self-will and self-knowledge. The transforming union is established in the infusion of God's love in the soul. It is the centre of the soul, which is the root and apex of the will. Since the centre

is possessed by the presence of God, the will naturally functions in and through the will of God, and thereby the soul grasps the infinite being of God. The acts of the soul in the transforming union are basically the acts of love-in-will, that is, the divine self-love received in the will. The love of God in the soul burns like a flame, and thereby causes the sweet wound:

> Inasmuch as this Divine fire now holds the soul transformed into itself, not only does that soul feel a wound, but is made one entire wound of ardent fire. It is a strange and noteworthy fact that although this fire of God is so ardent and powerful that it could burn up a thousand worlds with greater ease than our earthly fire a wisp of a flax, it does not consume and destroy the soul wherein it burns after this fashion, nor even causes that soul the least affliction. On the contrary, ti deifies and delights that soul in proportion to the strength of the love, glowing and burning sweetly with it. [28]

The self no more hankers after the created things for the purpose of happiness or joy. The self no more operates in the realm of limitations. It is free to receive the unlimited love of God. It remains free of pain and conflict. The conative activity of the self is that of boundless and unlimited love. Before the union,

the field of love is limited: it seeks limited good in limited things. Love, in the mystical marriage, transforms itself, in and through the reception of the divine love, into the substantial love of God. In this reception the self realises its ultimacy:

> My only occupation is love. It is quite clear that the soul which has attained the spiritual bethrothal, knows nothing else but the love of Bridegroom and the delight thereof, because it has arrived at perfection, the form and substance of which is love ... The more a soul loves, the more perfect it is in its love. and hence it follows that the soul which is already perfect is, if we may say so, all love; all its actions are love, all its energies and strength are occupied in love.[29]

The state of the transforming union may be said too be filled with the rapture of love, which never decays, and never comes to an end. The experience in this state is the beginning of love eternal. The diivine love, through its infusion, draws the soul onward beyond the limits of the self into that umlimited love that is the Absolute Reality. Shelley has beautifully described the journey of the soul towards thee unbound love. The music in the poem is love, the boat is the soul, and the ocean is God.

> My soul is an enchanted boat
> Which like a sleeping swan doth float
> Upon the silver waves of thy sweet singing.

It seems to float ever, for ever,
Upon the many-winding river,
Between mountains, weeds, abysses,
A paradise of wilderness;
Till like one in slumber bound
Borne to the ocean I float down, around
Into a sea profound of ever-spreading sound,
And we sail on, away afar,
Without a course, without a star,
But by the instinct of sweet music driven;
Where never mortal pinnace glided.
The boat of my desire is guided.
Realms where the air we breathe is love.
which in the winds and on the waves doth move,
Harmonising this earth with what we feel above. [30]

It is a realm where the air of love is breathed; it is a world of the Kingdom of God within. Everywhere the presence of love is experienced. Whatever we touch or see, it reflects love. And everything-whatever there is-is subservient to love. It is in this state of love that all things are made one and are known as one. In this transforming union the soul understands that the meaning of God is nothing else but love. In this boundless ocean of love the self discovers itself and all things.

What kind of intuition does this union-will of love possess ? The intuition of this union of will in love belongs to the supernatural order of Being; it transcends all kinds of natural knowledge. Natural knowledge, however lofty in its range and scope, is the lowest form of ignorance when seen from the supernatural perspective. Through the divine wisdom of love, the mystic is detached from the empirical knowledge of the world.

> If we would understand what are those lamps to which the soul refers, and how they burn within her and emit light and heat, we must remember that God in his one simple Being is all the virtues and grandeurs of his attributes.... Since he is all these things in his simple Being, and since he is united with the soul, whenever he deems it good to grant the soul this knowledge, the soul sees distinctly in him all these virtues and grandeurs, to wit omnipotence, wisdom, goodness, mercy and the like. Moreover, since each one of these is the very Being of God in one person, either the Father, the Son or the Holy Ghost, and since each of these attributes is thus God himself, and God is infinite light and infinite fire divine..... each one of his attributes..... and virtues give forth the light and heat of God himself. Inasmuch as the soul is one single act of this union and thus receives the knowledge of these attribu-

tes, God is to that soul many lamps together, each one of which emits a distinct light of wisdom and a distinct heat (of love). The soul possesses a distinct knowledge of each, whereby it is inflamed with love. [31]

What these words of John of the Cross tell us is this: that each mental concept, that each mode of the manifested world, that each spiritual idea which is derived from our sense-experience, is to be found in its unlimited fullness in Being of God. Whatever positive value there is in the creatures consists in their participation in the divine attributes of Godhead. The truths of sciences or of arts are nothing else but the participation in God's wisdom. In the mystical union, the soul gets liberated from the limited and created participations. In the mystical union the soul apprehends these ideas in absolute unity which, on natural or empirical level, are apparent or reflected. It is a vision which Plato has described in the *Symposium* in terms of the Beauty Absolute.. Plato describes the ascension of the soul to Beauty Absolute in these words:

> He who has learned to see the beautiful in due order and succession when he comes towards the end will suddenly perceive a nature of wonderous beauty ... a nature which in the first place is everlasting, not growing or

decaying, or waxing or waning ... not fair in one point of view and foul in another ... but beauty absolute, separate, simple and everlasting, which, without diminution and without increase or any change, is imparted to the ever-growing and perishing beauties of all other things. [32]

Creatures in themselves are as unreal as shadows. It is in God alone that the actual reality of creatures is to be found. In themselves creatures are mere accidents without a substance. In the mystical union the true character of the world is unveiled: above and beyond this world of shadows stands God, and creatures are authentic in so far they participate in the Being of God. In this way the soul makes a journey from the realm of appearance to that of Reality, from the external to the internal, from the sensible to the spiritual, and so on. In this supersensory intuition the self recognises that everything, when compared to God, is illusion, that all things are but "such stuff as dreams are made of". Now the soul is conscious of things in the same manner as God is conscious of them. In *The Living Flame* St. John speaks of the infused divine consciousness as motion within the soul. He writes:

This awakening is a movement of the Word in the substance of the soul, a movement of such

greatness, lordship and glory and of a sweetness so intimate that it appears to the soul as though all the balsama, aromatic spices and flowers throughout the world were handled and shaken, being turned over to give forth their sweetness, and that all the kingdoms and lordships of the world and all the powers and virtues of heavens were moved. Neither is this all. All creatures-that is, the virtues, substances, perfections and graces of all things created-shine forth and make the same motion, all together and in one, inasmuch as all things, as St. John saith, are life in him (God), and in him (God) they live and are and move, as the Apostle also tells us. Hence when this mighty Emperor moves the soul .... all things appear to move with him, just as in th earth's motion all the natural objects thereon move, as if they had been nothing .... Here, however, they not only appear to move, but they all discover the beauties of their being, power, loveliness and graces, and *the root of their duration and life*.The soul perceives how all creatures, whether above or here below, possess their life and strength and duration in God .... And although it is true that the soul perceives that these things are distinct from God inasmuch as their being is so created, and sees them in him (God) with their strength, root and vigour, this soul perceives clearly that God is in his Being all these with infinite

eminency that it knows them better in his Being than in themselves. [33]

Our understanding of things is bound up with our understanding of the world. We cannot understand a relationless world. Our understanding depends on our *weltanschauung*. The world is that for us which our understanding of it will determine for us. Our world is that which our human nature and pecularity establishes. Beyond this relative reality, which exists in reference to man, there is the Absolute Reality. Of this Absolute Reality the Absolute alone knows itself. The knowledge of the world as it is in itself, is possessed by God alone.

From this it follows that one who desires to have right knowledge of the world must be able to see with the eyes of God. To achieve this capacity, it is essential to be united with God completely. When union with God is realised, only then does one have a right knowledge both of God and of the world. There are two kinds of union: the first kind of union is natural in every created being. Through this union the being of creatures is established in God. This natural union holds true even though man may know noting about it. This union exists even in "the soul of the greatest sinner" [34] The second kind of union exists only between

man and God. Not every man achieves this union. It is a supernatural gift; it is a union of "the transformation of the soul in God." [35] This union achieves its perfection in the "spiritual marriage". The union is actualised at the moment when all the faculties of the soul are submerged in God. It means that man must be die to his uatural nature and be reborn in God. It is by dying to the self that God "removes everything that is of the old man, that is, the capacity of the natural man." [36] What does it mean to be with God ? It means "to die to our nature, in the senses and in the spirit." [37] It is, therefore, essential that from the soul must be removed "every veil and stain of the creature -*todo veloy mancha de* caritura." [38]

Human nature, though good in itself, is wounded by sin. With the introduction of sin both part of man (that is, the sensuous and the rational) have lost their balance not only in themselves, but in relation to each other. Reason is the main faculty of the higher aspect of the soul, and it depends on memory, will and understanding. When reason itself is in imbalance, the other faculties naturally cannot function in their proper order. "Since these faculties (i.e, memory, will and understanding) depend on the understanding in their activity, it is clear that if the latter is impeded the former must also fall into disorder and confusion." [39]

Although sin has disrupted the integrity of ma yet the soul can achieve such a union with God which only a "thin veil" separates it from the luc vision of God. In this union the soul discovers th the "soul becomes God from God through the partic pation in him and in his attributes, which it terms a the "lamp of fire" [40] It is not only the soul which divinised, but all the faculties too.

Through the transforming union the soul acquire a new dimension of the world. If the soul has to rejec the world initially, the world is given back to it a the end of the journey. To be in union with Goc means that the soul is given to the divine understan-ding and knowledge. This divine knowledge is different from all human knowledge. The perception now is characterised by a vision in which the world is seen in and through the eyes of God in the same manner as the effect is known from its cause. This amounts to knowing the effect through the cause and not the cause through the effect. The latter is *a posteriori* knowledge, whereas the former is *essential* knowledge. [41] The knowledge which is acquired thro-ugh the effect is "evening" or "twilight knowledge", whereas knowledge acquired through the cause is referred to as the "morning knowledge". The soul in the "morning knowledge" sees "what God is in himself and what God is in creatures in a single view". [42] It sees "God, his countenance filled with graces of all creatures, awesome in power and glory, and with

the voice of a multitude of excellences. [43] The purified eyes of the soul see the immense beauty of God in the world. "From the eye already purged of enjoyment in seeing things, spiritual joy is directed to God at the sight of all divine or profane things, follows. Resulting from the enjoyment of hearing things is a great spiritual joy, a hundred times greater, directed to God in all that is heard, divine or profane; and so with other senses already purged. In the state of innocence all that our first parents saw, spoke of, and ate in the garden of paradise served them far more abundant delight in contemplation, since the sensory part of their nature was truly subjected and ordered to reason. He whose sense is purged of sensible objects and ordered to reason from the first moments procures the delight of savourous contemplation and awarness of God. [44] Now human love finds its true depth, meaning and freedom. Love must be spiritual and rational, that is, love has to be directed in such a manner in which God desires it to be directed.

The beauty which results from the mystical union is set by John of the Cross to lyrical poetry. However, behind this lyrical mysticismis a deep-rooted intellectual stand. St. John does not extoll emotional outbursts. He understands well that "it is one thing to be in the dark night and quite another thing to be in gloom." To live in the dark night is to live in the luminous knowledge which is darkness to reason. In the state of mystical union the mystic plunges into the depths of God's love. Therefore:

...the bride says that the Beloved is all things, both in himself and for her. For in that which God is wont to communicate in such ecstasies the soul feels and knows the truth of the saying uttered by St. Francis: *My God and all things*. Since God is all things to the soul and the good of them all, therefore ... the communication received in this ecstasy is explained by the similitude with the goodness of things .... It must be understood that everything that is expressed here is in God in a most eminent and infinite way, or better stated: each of the glories spoken is, and taken together are, God. For since the soul in this state is united with God, God is all those things in one simple being. [45]

The state of mystical union is a state of grace. The fundamental character of mystical experience is charismatic. Mystical experience is an experience o the divine. But it must transcend the domain of experience in the sense that it may not merely be a psychological transformation. It must go beyond the realm of psychology.

True mystical experience is always trans-psychological, because it exists in ontological continuity with supernatural Reality. This does not mean that psychological mode of apprehending Reality is debarred; it means that if the ontological experience

is real, the mystical intuition leads itself result in the apprehension of Reality. Further, Christian mystical vision is characterised by the growth of charity of God in the spirit. The mystique of Christ means to participate in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thus the mystical union is a state in which the Christio-sacrament of redemption is actualised at the ontological level. At the sacramental level, the mystic transcends all psychological phenomena. It is a state in which "the soul, keeping its creaturely nature, receives sanctifying grace and charity in exuberance, as also because the ardent love of God transforms it morally unto him (God); and furthermore it gives rise to an *alter ego*, i.e. we come close to God in our intimacy and relationship."[46]

Mystical experience by its very nature is ineffable It achieves noetic significance when the prophetic element is fused in it. Mystical union is nothing more nor less than the union of wills. In the mystical union, in the words of Tauler, the mystic

> discerns all things in joy and perfection, as no one else can do; this discernment is borne of the simple Unity; it is thus that they (the mystics) discern with clearness and faith all the articles of pure faith; they discern how it is that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one .... No one understands true discernment better than those

who have arrived at the Unity. This is call truly so, ineffable darkness, and yet it is essent light; and it is also called wilderness, desolat beyond all description; no one can find there an path, or any determinate; it is above all modes. [47]

The mystic joy is never free from pain, and sometimes the fulfillment of it. The experience of the divine presence brings both joy and pain.

When the soul is in dark night, it undergoes pain and anguish. It is the night of purgation. In the dark night "one does not lose the sight of the sacred incarnate Word, but he who has, until now, appeared only Love and has consumed the soul in his divine embraces, is the same who now crucifies the soul and penetrating it entirely, separates it from the Spirit, except in its deepest part, where is the dwelling of God, which in this state seems like an abyss and a place apart." [48]

Finally, the mystical union with God is the culmination of the spiritual journey on this earth. It is the summit from where the soul lives in an uninterrupted presence of God. It is a presence in terms of which divine love is actualised. The soul sings, in its ecstasy, the song of love:

O Living Flame of Love
That woundest tenderly

My soul in its inmost depth:
As thou art no longer grievous,
Perfect thy work, if it be thy will,
Break the web of this sweet encounter. [49]

Hence everything is filled with the divine presence of God:

My beloved the mountains,
The solitary wooded valleys,
The distant islands,
The sonorous rivers,
The sighing of the amorous breezes,
The night at rest
Before the coming of the dawn,
The silent music,
The resounding solitude,
The supper that refreshes and enkindles love. [50]

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4. ISLAMIC MYSTICISM IN THE CONTEXT OF PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION

Islam, being a religion of prophetic revelation, lays more emphasis on the credal articles of faith than on a form of knowledge which is experimental in nature and content. It is by accepting the credal truths, in the form of a belief-system, that results in the knowledge of God. As the revelation is final and ultimate, there is no possibility of adding to or subtracting from the revelatory knowledge of *the deposit of faith*. This deposit of faith is contained in the holy scripture, namely, the *Koran*.

A religion which believes in a direct revelation of God through the apostles and prophets must have a fundamental dogmatic concern with regard to the transcendence of God. The basic dogmatic attitude of Islam expresses itself in its belief in the complete transcendence of the Divine, that is, God as Allah is seen in such transcendental terms that he is not only

different from all the beings of the world, nay from his entire creation, but is also sovereign in terms of his ontological status. [1] The God of Islam, as interpreted and understood by orthodoxy, is totally "other", and therefore there is a radical gap and distance between God and his creation. God, being remote, is unapproachable, and even his name has to be uttered in awe and fear. As the sovereign Lord he is the absolute and ultimate master of creation, and as creator, everything depends on him for its existence and sustenance. In such a belief-system even to conceive of God is difficult, as he is unlike everything man is in knowledge of. [2] Being unlike man, there is no possibility of forging any kind of relationship. [3] The purpose of human life, therefore, is seen to consist of in obeying the divine decrees as revealed through the prophet Muhammed and as contained in the holy book, namely, the *Koran*. [4]

Once God is conceived of or seen as remote, transcendent, totally other, and unlike all beings of creation, it is but natural to ask as to what kind of role does the divine causality play in relation to the created existence. If man is asked simply to obey the divine decrees, then what is the role of human freedom? If human contingency is seen to mean that created existence is not being-itself, then it turns out to be the negation of human possibilities. In other words, it is a question concerning the divine sovereignty vis-a-vis human freedom. [5]

God as far as Koranic revelation is concerned, is conceived of as absolute denominator and determinator, which means that the created existence is a determined existence. This divine determination in terms of causality extends even to the realm of human will [6] in the sense that man is seen as a determined being. However, this is one side of the picture of God in the *Koran*. There is another viewpoint in the *Koran* from which we can infer the fact that human freedom is given some consideration. The *Koran* speaks of heaven and hell and of the last judgement. [7] From this doctrinal proposition we may infer that the *Koran* is enunciating a doctrine in terms of human choice, that is, man has the possibility of determining his future according to his own choice Man's existence after earthly death in terms of heaven and hell depends on what kind of choice he has made in this life. If this be the case, then man has the possibility of accepting or rejecting the divine decrees, and through this process of choice man's freedom is realised and actualised.

This kind of interpretation may be offered by a theologian who has a liberal bent of mind, who does not want to see human existence merely as a cog in the divine wheel of causality. There are a number of passages in the *Koran* which would support the upholders of human free will [8] Even though there is

a sufficient support in the *Koran* available to the upholders of human free will, there are also passages which support the viewpoint of orthodoxy. Orthodoxy considers the liberal interpretation as heretical on the ground that it impinges upon the absolute character of divine causality. If the idea of human autonomy, even in the form of contingency, is accepted, then we have a situation, contend the orthodox, in which clash between the divine and human autonomy is bound to take place. This would mean the undermining of the divine causality. It is because of this concern with the absolute character of the divine causality of God that the orthodoxy "has not preserved a single *hadith* in which *liberum arbitrium* is advocated." [9]

Trying to safeguard the transcendency and the otherness of God, and thereby the absoluteness of the divine causality and autonomy, the Islamic orthodoxy viewed with alarm all such opinions which would endanger the basic credal outlook of Islam. It saw a great danger in mystical spirituality on the ground that it bypassed the final revelation of God by advocating the possibility of knowing God by acquaintance, that is, through mystical intuition. Such an advocacy meant that the possibility of knowing God outside revelation exists. Man, according to the orthodoxy, is unlike God and is not being-itself; therefore he cannot know God by himself; that which is above and beyond everything cannot be an object

of human knowledge. Whatever knowledge man may have of God, it can be obtained only through the sacred text, as it contains the revelation of God. If mystical approach is accepted, it would mean, maintains the orthodoxy, that man has the possibility of approaching God, of being near to God. of possessing the nature of God. This amounts to saying that the relationship between God and man is not just a possibility, but a possibility which can be made into an actuality. For the orthodoxy such a viewpoint smelled heresy, in that God, being transcendent, can be known only through his self-revelation, and man, being a created existence (and therefore a creature), does not have the possibility of having or possessing the divine knowledge of God. Thus clash and conflict within the heart of Islam was bound to take place between those who adhered to the absoluteness of divine causality and those who believed in the possibility of human freedom. It is this conflict which will prove fatal to the very survival of mysticism in Islam, and a large number of mystics had to pay a very heavy price in terms of their lives for advocating a viewpoint which rant against the orthodoxy.

The mystics affirmed that man, being a mode of divine existence. possesses the possibility of having divine knowledge of God by acquaintance, that is,

through mystical intuition. In other words, it meant the knowledge of God cannot be confined to the written words or propositions of a sacred text. This attitude is to be seen at the very beginning of Islamic mysticism, particularly in the utterances of Abū Yazīd (d. 874) [10] and Mansur al-Hallāj. [11] It was Abū Yazīd who,under the influence of Vedānta, revolutionised Islamic mysticism. He is responsible in changing the Sufi attitude from a strict Islamic monotheism to Vedāntic non-dualism. Before Abū Yazīd, as we shall see below, mysticism had, more or less, remained within the doctrinal confines of orthodoxy. After Abū Yazīd, Arabī and Ghazāli gave a philosophical framework to Islamic mysticism which would enable the mystics to stand on their own doctrinal formulations.

Abū Yazīb, as we have said, brought a revolutionary change to Sufism, and this can be glanced from the following statement:

> Once (God) raised me up and placed me before him, and said to me, 'O Abū Yazīd, verily my creation longs to see thee' And I said, 'Adorn me with thy unity and clothe me in thine I-ness and raise me up unto thy oneness, so that when thy creatures see me, they may say: we have seen thee (that is, God) and thou art that." [12]

Before Abū Yazīd, we do not find such mystical expressions in a belief-system which considers to think of man even as an image of God as a form of unbelief. Such a view evidently runs against to a form of belief which interprets God's otherness in extreme terms. The orthodoxy was bound to be, within the framework of their doctrinal beliefs, up in arms against this kind of mysticism which, for them, was pure unbelief. It is one of the main reasons that a continuous battle would be fought, both at the doctrinal and social levels, by the orthodoxy against mysticism. In this battle many a mystic suffered death, and Abū Yazīd was one of them.

Once the proposition of man's possibility of having divine knowledge of God is accepted, then the religious truth-claims lose their absolute character, that is, it is a process of relativising the absolute truth-claims of revelatory religion. In other words, the absolute claim to divine knowledge by a particular religion would not be acceptable to a Sufi. For him, various religious truth-claims of different religions are just approximations to divine knowledge. Islam, which believes in the absoluteness of its truth-claims, found danger in the open-door policy of mystics. Islam, being a non-ecumenical in its approach and orientation, would not tolerate a viewpoint other than its own. The ecumenical approach of Sufis sometimes, in the eyes of orthodoxy, verges on indifferentism.

The Sufi ecumenism is best expressed by Rumī [1207-1273]. According to Rumi, all genuine religious ways are as valid as the Islamic one. There is nothing so special, in so far as spirituality is concerned, in the Islamic religion which is not available in other religions. It is, therefore, truism to say that one religion is the possessor of special divine truths whereas the others are not. For a man of God religious labels do not mean much. Speaking of himself, Rumi contends that he is neither a Jew, nor a Christian, nor a Muslim: he is beyond them. [13] Religious labels lose their importance precisely because God is seen in everything and everything is seen in God To put it in the Upanishadic language, it would mean that *All is Brahman*. In this context Abū Yazīd says:

> The first time I made the pilgrimage I saw the House (that is, the Ka'aba), and the second time I made it I saw the Lord of the House, but the third time I made it I saw neither the House nor the Lord of the House. [14]

Although mysticism did not receive much co-operation from the orthodoxy, it is, however, an historical fact that mysical spirituality found its initial inspiration on the Islamic soil itself. There are quite a number of passages in the *Koran* which lend themselves to mystical interpretation. For example, in one place the *Koran* informs us that love within man exists

because God wills it. [15] In another place we are told that God is more near to man "than the vein of his neck," [16] and so on.

The earliest mystical outpourings found their expression in Rābi' ahal-Adwijah (d. 901) of Basra, Dhul 'l Nūn of Egypt, and Al-Junayd (d. 910) of Baghdad. Rabia'a's mysticism is not speculative in its approach. It is a kind of practical mysticism, and is centered on the passionate love of God. Love, according to her, is the only way which enables the soul to enter into the sweet presence of God. In order to become worthy of the love of God, some qualifications are needed, which mainly consist of moral perfections. In Dhul'-Nūn the same passionate yearning of the soul for God is to be found. The soul, once it receives the ignition of love, seeks refuge in the loving embrace of God. God for Dhul' Nūn is nothing but the simple unicity of love. His theory of love was attacked on the ground that love is possible between similars, and God being disimilar to man, there is no possibility of a love relationship between the two. [17] Dhul'-Nūn, however, maintains that the mystic, when in mystical ecstasy, transcends the space-time causality, and thereby becomes, in the words of Qushayrī, "the man of time." [18] As far as Junayd is concerned, he is very obscure and difficult to understand. The aim of his mystical spirituality is to realise the primordial mode of existence, and he

expresses this idea in the following manner: "to be as he was before he was." [19] Therefore, the effort of a mystic is to discover the primordial mode of existence which is lived in God. [20]

> May God encompass thee as he encompasses those of lovers whom he claims as his own, may he confirm thee and us on the paths of his good pleasure, may he conduct thee into the pavilion of his intimacy, and exalt thee in the gardens of the riches of his country. May he protect thee in all circumstances as an embryo in its mother's womb. Then may he perpetuate for thee the life that is appropriated (for thee) from eternal life for ages everlasting, and may he isolate thee in himself from what is thine in thyself from what is his, until thou art isolated through him for all eternity. Then ther shall neither be thou nor thine, nor knowledge of him, but God will be alone. [21]

In the initial stages mysticism may have been a simple affair. The mystics, in order to express the content of their experience, needed a framework of ideas, and Neoplatonism filled the gap. Thus a new relationship was formed between philosophy and mysticism in the sense that the One of mysticism would be explained in philosophical terms vis-a-vis the God of religion. We shall now direct our

attention to some important mystic-philosophers, and find out what kind of relationship they forged between mysticism and philosophy.

The intellectual reflection in Islam did not begin with the Islamic philosophical concepts because no such tools, within the Islamic world, were available at the beginning of Islamic history. The only available philosophical tools were those of Greek philosophy. The early Muslim thinkers while borrowing the Greek philosophical tools, attempted to interpret the Islamic faith in the context of philosophical reflection, so that reasonable answers could be found to questions which faith-statements gave rise to. The Muslim intellectuals, while translating the Greek philosophical treatises, were bound to be influenced by a viewpoint which belonged altogether to a different melieu. In this manner Aristotelian and Neoplatonic ideas permeated the Islamic reflection. This penetration of Greek ideas led to a synthesis between the Islamic faith and Greek philosophy, or, to put the matter in another way the Greek ideas were used in the service of Islamic faith. This we see clearly, for example, in Al-Farabi. Al-Fārābi not only made the use of the Neoplatonis theory of emanation and of the hierarchy of beings, but identified the Neoplatonist One with the Allah of faith. It was, therefore, easy for Al-Fārābi, while following the footsteps of Aristotle, to assert that the highest

and the most creative activity open to man was philosophical reflection on the ground that philosophy, like revelation, is the source of truth. By giving such a high status to philosophical reflection meant reletivising the absolute claims of faith statements of his religion; it meant that there are other sources, apart from those of revelation, of truth. This thinking naturally led to a situation in which the Islamic faith-statements could not be seen as absolute, but as one of the expressions of truth.

Averroes (Ibn Rushd, IIII-98), like Al-Fārābi, would not restrict the range of truth to the religious faith-statements. He postulated a theory of degrees of understanding, that is, he aimed at bringing harmony between reason and revelation, between faith and reflection, through this theory The aim of this theory is to explain that there are various approaches to truth. Truth is not something which can be confined to this or that statement; it is varied and complex. His theory did not advocate that a proposition is true in philosophy and false in theology. When this theory is applied to the Koranic faith-statements, the result is that the interpretation would be determined by the level of one's understanding. In other words, it means that the insight into the nature of truth depends on the level and degree of one's apprehension It is a theory which closely resembles Hegel's idea that art, religion and philoso-

phy basically express the same truth but from different levels of understanding.

The philosophical reflections of Al-Fārābi and Averroes, borne under the influence of Greek philosophy, did not suit the claims of the orthodoxy who believed that the final and ultimate truths concerning God and his nature, man and his destiny, had been disclosed, once-for-all, in the Koranic revelation. In this new philosophical assertion orthodoxy felt that the content of faith had been made subservient to reason, which, in other words, meant that it was not faith but reason which was to be extolled. Being defensive, the orthodoxy engaged in a battle royal against the viewpoints which proved to be uncomfortable. While developing the science of apologetic, the orthodoxy forgot one important thing: that, while attacking the oppenent's philosophical ideas and viewpoints in the defence of faith, they were using the same philosophical ideas and categories which they depreciated. It is an old game with all apologetic systems, that is, they use the opponents' methodology when it suits them, and attack it when it proves to be a thorn in the flesh.

One of the earliest philosopher-theologian, who engaged himself in the task of defending the Islamic faith against the liberal viewpoints, was Al-Ghazāli (1058-1111). The irony with Ghazāli is that he is

more of a Neoplatonist in philosophy and non-dualist in mysticism than an orthodox Muslim. He is a kind of philosopher–theologian who, on the one hand, gives the impression of being anti-philosophy in general, and, on the other hand, he, being a philosopher, developed, under the influence of Neoplatonism, a gnostic system of mysticism which does not serve the purpose of orthodoxy. In one of his treatises, namely, *Incoherance of the Philosophers*, Ghazāli makes an attempt to defend the orthodoxy against the philosophical vision of Al–Fārābi and Avicenna (Ibn Sinna, 980-1037). In this apologetic attack Ghazāli overlooks the fact that the philosophical ideas he is attacking are the very ideas he is making use of in the defense of orthodoxy. In other words, it means that Ghazāli, on the one hand, dislikes philosophy, and on the other hand, he is freely drawing from the treasury of philosophical ideas in so far as it suits him. Averroes, in his *The Incoherance of the Incoherance*, points out this incongruity in Ghazāli's apologetic attack Averroes criticises Ghazāli by pointing out that, while attacking the Neoplatonist Muslim thinkers, he himself is a Neoplatonist. Ghazāli's mysticism is but a variation of Neoplatonism in a Muslim garb. Being a Neoplatonist in his mystical spirituality, Ghazāli has many points in common with the Advaita of Śaṁkara. [22]

As a Neoplatonist, Ghazāli comes very close to Śaṁkara in his assertion that other than God (Absolute) is non-being, and sees the world, like Rāmānuja, as the "face of God". He agrees with the Upanishads that the world and its creatures are a theophany, that is, the divine self-manifestation. "Being is itself divided into that which has being itself, and that which derives its being from not-itself. The being of this latter is borrowed, having no existence by itself. Nay, if it is regarded in and by itself, it is pure non-being" [23] This statement of Ghazāli has to be seen in the context of the doctrine of *tawhīd* (union) and of *fana* (annihilation). *Tawhīd* is a state of union in which "nothing exists except the One". [24] It is the *turiyaātīta* state of Indian mysticism, that is, it is a stateless state of consciousness in which the unity of consciousness is experienced, and thereby the awareness of plurality vanishes As far as the concept of *fana* is concerned, it means, according to Ghazāli, that the mystic

forgets both himself and all that is, except God. He now enters on the beginning of the Sufi path. It is a condition called 'annihilation' or 'non-being' by the sufis. That is to say, all that is becomes non-existent as a result of his (mystic's) meditation, and that too becomes non-existent because (the

mystic) has forgotten himself as well. And just as God possesses universes of which we have no knowledge and which, as far as we are concerned, do not exist, so our existence is that of which we have consciousness and about which we have information. When someone forgets these worlds which constitute created being, they cease to exist, and when he forgets his own selfhood, he too ceases to exist so far as a self is concerned: and he is left with nothing but God, his existence is God, neither more nor less. And just as you survey heaven and earth and all that is in them and only see part of it, you will say that the universe extends just so far as this and that this is all. So too does (the mystic) see also nothing but God, and he says: "All is He (God) and apart from him there is nothing at all' [25]

Although the Muslim belief emphasises the transcendence of God and his radical ontological distinction from the world and from its creatures, there are some passages in the *koran* which can easily lend themselves to the kind of interpretation whicih Ghazāli has as Neoplatonist advocated. When Ghazāli says that the world and its creatures are but a theophany ofGod, he can easily appeal to the Koranic statement in which it is asserted that God's face can be seen everywhere. [26] As God's presence is seen in each and every thing, it means that the totality of the

universe is permeated by the presence of God, and therefore the logical conclusion would be: God is in everything. We are also informed that God is "the outwardly manifest and inwardly hidden." [27] It would mean that God as we know him through faith or reason is a God who is manifest, that is, is present in creation. But God as Absolute cannot be known through the process of discursive thinking. God as One is pure silence, and therefore the hiddenness of God can only mean the ineffability of the Divine. God as ineffable can only be experienced in the depths of silence.

God, on the one hand, is not so transcendent as to be totally absent; he is an indwelling God. On the other hand, God as Absolute cannot be reduced to mere propositions; and-being beyond the realm of thought, God is hidden; he is absent; he is total silence.

Ghazāli, while taking a clue from such Koranic statements, developed his mystical thought as a variation of Neoplatonism in the Islamic context. This approach opened a new door for Ghazāli, that is, he asserted that the divine knowledge of God, apart from revelation, is possible through the mystical acquaintance. In all prophetic religions there is a basic conflict between reason and revelation, on the one hand and, on the other hand,

between faith and mystical intuition. The basic datum of acquiring knowledge of God, within the prophetic tradition, is considered to be revelation; and the communication of this revelation takes place through the medium of language. Language becomes the main vehicle of divine knowledge, that is, revelational propositions are considered the main source of faith-knowledge of God. Believing in the authenticity of religious propositions as divinely revealed ones, the believers' knowledge of God mainly stems from the faith- content of the revelational proposition. In such a faith-system there can be no other source of divine knowledge except the revelation. It is but evident that a mystical approach to divine knowledge would be seen as an infringement upon the divine claims of God as contained and expressed in the revelational propositions. It is this conflict which is to be seen at the heart of Islam, and which has expressed itself in a continuous battle between Sufism and orthodoxy.

As Ghazāli had to face the orthodoxy, he was very careful in his language and would not express himself on matters of mysticism as fearlessly and openly as Al-Hallāj or Abū Yazīd. Even then, as a true Platonist, he could not control his expressions at times. Although he tries to rationalise the mystical experience of unity by bringing some kind of conceptual differentiation, he could not, however, deny the validity of the state of unity. This is how he rationalises the state of unity in the context of orthodoxy:

But the words of lovers when in a state of drunkenness, must be hidden away and not broadcast. However, when their drunkenness abates and the sovereignty of their reason is restored-and reason is God's scale on his earth-they know that this was not actual identity, but that it resembled identity as when lovers say at the height of their passion:

'I am he who I desire, and he whom I desire is I; we are two souls inhabiting one body.'

For it is not possible that a man should be confronted by a mirror and should look into it and not see the mirror at all, and that he should think that the form he saw in the mirror was the form of the mirror itself and think that the wine is just coloured glass. And he gets used to this (way of thinking) and becomes fixed in it, and it overwhelms him so that he says:

> Thine is the glass and clear is the wine;
> The two are alike-mutual resemblance.
> It is as if there is only wine, and no glass at all,
> Or as if only glass, and no wine there'.

But there is a difference between saying: 'The wine is the wine-glass' and saying, 'It is as if it were the wine-glass.' But when this state prevails,

itis called *annihilation* with referenc. to the person who is experiencing it, or even the annihilation of annihilation, for (the mystic) is annihilated in so far as he himself is concerned and annihilated too so far as his own annihilation is concerned: he is not conscious of himself in this state, nor is he conscious of his own unconsciousness; for were he conscious of his own consciousness, he would be conscious of himself. This condition is metaphorically called *Ittihād* with reference to the man who is immersed in it, but in the language of truth (it is referred to as) *tawhīd*. [28]

Thus the mystics who reach the state of unity experimentally and subjectively experience a state of consciousness in which the plurality disappears and consciousness is immersed in the One. In this state the faculty of reason or intelligence is transcended, and the mystic, being inebriated by the mystic ecstasy, cries out: "I am Truth", "Glory be to me! How great is my glory!" or "Within my robe is naught but God." [29]

If Ghazāli accepts the doctrine of *fana* and *tawhid*, then how does he view the doctrine of divine causality in relation to man? Before Ghazāli, Avicenna had advocated a theory of causality the purpose of which was to explain that the world is

characterised by necessary relations, that is, realations in the world are necessary because the nature of the world is relational. It would mean that the divine causality has no hand in the context of necessary relations in the world. This interpretation of causality is not acceptable to Ghazāli. Ghazāli's view of causality has to be seen from two perspectives: that is, as a believer and as a mystic. As a believer, he innterprets causality as a factual succession in time' that is, *C* is succeeded by *D*. Causality, if seen from an empirical context, would mean succession. But' from a transcendental perspective, the real Cause, for Ghazāli, of an effect is God. This interpretation of causality has to be seen in relation to the Muslim belief that the derived existence not only depends on God for its origin; it also depends on God for its very existence at any given moment of time.

But as a Neoplatonist and as a mystic, Ghazāli could not maintain the concept of divine causality on the ground that causality can operate only in the realm of duality. A mystic who has transcended the notion of duality, hasevidently crossed the ocean of relations. "If you see anyone at peace (*rāhat*)," says Ghazāli, "you will understand (that person who is at peace) only when all of you pass away in him, and all becomes his glory, so that duality ceases and unity appears. He remains, and you do not; or he passes away in you, and you remain and he does not. Or

lelse both of you pass away in God and pay no attention to yourselves, and that is perfection. From this oneness there is perfect scope. In short, so long as duality persists, no repose is possible, for repose is (possible only) in unity and oneness".[30] Moreover, divine causality is possible only if God is seen as person. God, for Ghazāli, is a timeless being, and as sueh God is characterless. As the soul is the *imago Dei*, the soul thereby shares in the nature of God. The urge of the soul is to return to its primor-- dial condition in which the difference of I-thou is tran scended, and everything is seen in the All and the All is seen in everything.

Mysticism has always shared the world over a common heritage of archetypes, and these archetypes express themselves in terms of symbols, metaphors, etc. We find, for example, the symbolism of darkness, ight, illumination, etc. very much in Neoplatonism, in the Upanishads, in Buddhism, in Christian mysticism, and in Sufism. The concept of *light* holds the key to mystical intuition. According to Eliade, the "experience of Light signifies primarily a meeting with the ultimate reality". [31] The mystical union with the Light "produces a break in the subject's existence, revealing to him-or making clearer than before-the world of the Spirit". [32]

The Neoplatonist concept of mystical Light via Ghazālī found a whole-hearted reception in Suhrawardī's (1153-1191) mystical theory of illumination. He, like Ghazālī and other Neoplatonists, thinks of Reality as Light and of the world as a reflection or diffusion of the Light, that is, the world and its creatures are seen as a theophany of Reality. Since creation is seen as a theophany, it means that man is potentially, in his empirical existence, divine on the ground that he participates in the nature of the Light. In order to actualise this divine potentiality within, and thereby union with the Light, it is necessary to follow the path of spiritual sanctity. In all mystical schools, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, the first pre-requisite demanded of a would be mystic is personal holiness. Spiritual holiness, in the case of Suhrawardī, has a Shi'ite colour, in that he thinks of holiness on the model of the universal perfect man who is linked with the invisible Imām of the Shi'ite theology. As much as man progresses in his spiritual ascent, so much does he appropriate the sanctity of the universal man, namely, Mahdī,

Let us digress a little, and find out the meaning of sanctity in Sufism. In this context we shall take Farīd al-Dīn Attār as our model. The sanctity of the soul is seen as the transformation of the substance of the soul into an elixir. Elixir is a symbol. It expresses the absolute purity and unity of the soul. It is,

in the words of Attār, "light of God", It is by trans—forming the substance of the soul into an elixir that the appropriation of the perfect man takes place. The state of the perfect man is described in the *Illahīnamā* in these words:

> He who has been dissolved in the gold, forever,
> Who knows no more of himself, he has been instructed.
> But the elixir remains forever-
> What the traveller of the path calls the light of God. (361:15)

The process of realising the state of the perfect man is closely related to the doctrine of *fana*, that is, self-death. The more one dies to oneself, the more one ascends the ladder of sanctity, and thereby more approximation to the perfect man takes place. The practice of self-death is a pre-condition for mystic holiness:

> I need one who has suffered death,
> who has in a day hundred times practised mourning over himself,
> who through God has come alive and died unto himself,
> who has not numbered among the survivers, but

has anticipated death. (240:1-2)

Once the total annihilation of the self is realised, there is left nothing but the One. Therefore:

If then thou hast freedom from thyself,
Then thy selflessness is Goodness.
When one has vanished, that is cessation of being,
When there has been cessation of being, behold, from it springs survival.
Extinguish me, that I may be Thou.

Sufi spirituality sees sanctity as a process of self-annihilation or self-death. It is a state in which the self, as it were, is emptied of itself, so that the soul is immersed completely in the Light. Thus Attār says: "Be absolutely not: This is perfection, this is the finished work".

The process of self-dying as means to spiritual holiness is not something which is specifically Sufi spirituality. It can be seen in all the mystical schools of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, etc. Discontinuity of the self from itself and from the environment is the key to mystical holiness. In Christianity, for example, the self-dying is spoken of in terms of the dark night of the senses; it is also spoken of in terms of sacrifice, that is Jesus'death on the cross

is taken as a model for perfection. Self-negation seems to be the springboard for myttical spirituality. The natural tendency of the self is to relate itself to the external environment. But in mysticism this is seen as a hindrance on the road of spiritual holiness. Self-dying is, therefore, to be seen as a universal phenomena in mysticism.

Ibn' Arabī (1165-1240), one of the contemporary mystics of Suhrawardī, follows completely in the footsteps of Suhrawardī in so far as the mystical experience of illumination is concerned. 'Arabī thinks of creation as a theophany: that is, creation is seen but the self-manifestation of the Divine. Almost most of the mystics see divinity in creation in terms of divine manifestation. It is this theme which is, as it were, the heart and core of Sufism.

The above mystical ideas have to be seen in the context of the question, which arose within the Islamic theology at the very beginning of theological reflection, of relationship between the divine attributes and divine essence, This question arose from the very heart of *Koran*. The *Koran*, on the one hand, asserts the simple unicity of God and, on the other, many attributes are predicated of him. Facing this situation, some theologians affirmed that the attributes are distinct or separate from the divine essence, that is, the substratum for the divine attribute is the divine

essence. In other words, it means that the substance and the qualities are identical in the sense that the attributes cannot be conceived of apart from essence. Therefore, essence and attributes form a single unity. This way of expressin the nature of relationship between the divine attributes and the divine essence found a ready acceptance in 'Arabī. The divine essence of God, aecording to 'Arabī, is beyond the ken and range of intellect, and therefore beyond the range of human knowledge. Since the essence of God is beyond the scope of empirical knowledge, it means it is a mystery. And as mystery we can speak of God only as the hidden God. [33]. Human language confines God to the realm of words; it constricts the infinity of God by reducing God to the finitude of language. It means that God is only spoken of in terms of attributes, that is, as creator, as sustainer, etc. It is this limited God of language which we apprehend through predication. This kind of knowledge of God is but a reflective or twilight knowledge of God. It is not the actual knowledge of God as he is in himself. As God in himself can never be known in terms of empirical knowledge, we can only think of this hidden God as an abyss. That which is of the nature of an abyss is mystery and beyond the empirical deductions. However, this hidden God is known to us through his self-manife-

station in creation, and thereby attributes are being superimposed on the divine essence. This conception of Reality is very much like the Brahman of Advaita Vedānta who, being beyond predication, is known only through mystical silence.

The creation of the world, according to 'Arabī, took place because God desired to be known. The same reflection is to be found in the Upanishads in terms of the One desiring to be the Many. If the case be so, then it would mean that man has the necessary knowledge of God. However, we need to ascertain what exactly 'Arabī means by this assertion. According to 'Arabī, man's knowledge of God, in so far as man views God in terms of empirical categories, is that of reflection or image. God in himself is an abyss, and an abyss can never be grasped by the intellect. Man gives being to God, argues 'Arabī, the moment he thinks of God in the mind. This means, on the one hand, that man, by reflecting on God in the mind, sees God as a given being in the mind, and, on the other hand, it means that God manifests himself in and through the mind. As God reveals himself in diverse ways and manners, so the divine manifestation of God in various minds are different theophanies.

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Suhrawardī's and 'Arabī's mystical ideas gave birth, on th Persian soil, to a new mystical school, namely, the school of Wisdom (*hikmat*). In this school an attempt was made to synthesise philosophy, mysticism and theosophy. Sadrā-al-Dīn al-Shīrazī (1572-1641), popularly known as Mullā Sadrā, is the best representative of the school. As a convinced Shi'a, he firmly believed in the appearance of the invisible Imām who would convert the entire mankind to the kind of religion he personally believed in. Whatever his personal beliefs as a Shi' ite may have been, they do not concern us here. What concerns us here are his basic philosophic reflections in the context of mysticism.

As an intellectual, he detested the fond belief of those who undermined the role of the intellect, that is, those who spoke of philosophical reasoning in disparging terms. As a mystic, he concerned himself with the task of giving a proper philosophical framework to mystical ideas. The type of mystical spirituality he developed is known as the mysticism of "gnosis"; and by *gnosis* he means a mode of knowledge which is basically experimental or acquired by acquaintance. Mystical knowledge as gnosis is a knowledge by acquaintance, which has a practical bearing upon the human conduct. Mystical knowledge, for Mullā, is just a matter for theoretical abstractions; its orientation and aim has to be practical,

in that it must transform the human conduct, and elevate the human existence in terms of spiritual sanctity. Thus he aimed at a kind of synthesis between mystical and prophetic forms of knowledge: the former concentrates on the inward life, whereas the latter regulates the external behaviour of man.

The Neoplatonist idea that the created existence is the reflection of the divine Light, or, for that matter, is the self-manifestation of the Divine, is a very influential theme in Persian mysticism, and Mullā is no exception to this influence. Although following the footsteps of Ghazāli in so far as the Neoplatonist idea of Light is concerned, there is at the same time a shift in Mullā's thinking from Light to Existence. Before Mullā, Avicenna had made this shift a possibility. Ghazāli's trenchent criticism could not stop the subsequent influence of Avicenna on the Islamic thought.

Suhrawardī had interpreted Avicenna as saying that Existence is purely an accident occurring to Essence. It means, in the light of Suhrawardi's interpretation, that before anything comes into being or existence, there is only a possible Essence. The Existence of anything exists the moment existence exists as Essence. However, Mullā would not accept this kind of understanding of Existence on the ground that an Essence, which is non-existent

cannot, by any stretch of imagination, become an Existence. It is like putting the cart before the horse. Such a view may be possible in terms of abstract thought, but in so far as concrete reality is concerned, we never encounter such a thing happening, that is, we never see Essence as distinct from Existence. In concrete terms, Existence is not seen as an accident occurring to an Essence. Therefore, "existence, the act of being, is precisely the very existence *of* the substrate, not the existence of an accident *in* the substrate" [34]. Further, "the existence of each non-necessary existent is its quality (essence) itself, with which it is united in a union *sui generis*" [35]. What does this mean? It means that in terms of abstraction it is possible to think of Essence as prior to Existence, but in concrete terms both Existence and Essence are identical. It is, however, true to say that we cannot maintain that existence must necessarily exist. But this does not lead us to conclude that existence is to be seen as an accident occurring to an Essence. We may, therefore, arrive at the conclusion that there is no possibility of an existence unless there is a concrete reality which exists necessarily, and the nature of which is to exist. This concrete reality, for Mullā, is the Absolute Being or Existence, that is, God.

Mullā's argument that existence is not an accident occurring to an essence, is quite sound in the

sense that no existence is possible if the substrate (essence) is non-existent. If essence, is non-existent it is foolhardy to say that existence is received from essence. Many people, however, may not agree with Mullā in identifying God with the necessary substrate, that is, essence. It is a stock-in-trade argument for the existence of God Avicenna, in the same vein, had argued for the existence of God by maintaining that, in order to account for the existence of something, the postulation for the existence of a necessary being is necessary.

Mullā, while discussing the existence of God, concentrates on the view that God exists because he is what he is; that is to say, we cannot say that God does not exist because it is the nature of God to exist. As far as the existence of non-necessary existence is concerned, it is derived from the necessary existence. If God and the created existence is seen in this light, it becomes easy for Mullā to develop his mysticism of love in which the existence of the lover as well as of the beloved are pre-requisite conditions. The love relationship is possible if we posit, on the one hand, a lover who desires to love, and on the other hand, a beloved who is to be loved. Even in the mystical ecstasy, in which the lover loses his self-consciousness, the object of

love (that is, the beloved) remains Since love is possible only among the similars, it means that the being of man is but the mode of the divine being, that is, man has the divine spark within: "if existence is Reality in the true sense, all the rest are its states. It is the Light; that which emanates is the effusion of Light. It is the origin and source; all other beings are its manifestations and theophanies". [36].

Our aim has not been the study of Islamic thought in relation to its historical development. Islamic thought has expressed itself in various shades, and one of the shades which we have tried to study is the relationship of philosophical thought in the context of mystical spirituality.

In the beginning of its birth Sufi spirituality was simply a practical affair, that is, it was a praxis-oriented movement and had nothing to do with the speculative aspect of mysticism. The aim was more practical as to how to lead a spiritual life than with the abstract questions of epistemology or ontology. As time passed, the need for a theoretical framework was felt, and Ghazāli was able to provide the necessary philosophical ideas in terms of Neoplatonism. At the same time Indian mysticism, through Abū Yazīd, brought Vedāntic ideas into Sufism. Thus

Neoplatonism and Vedānta, being similar in their approaches, gave a new direction to Sufism.

Once Sufism obtained the necessary ideological framework, it had a direct bearing upon the Muslim praxis and theory. The new Sufi doctrines, being somewhat contrary to the orthodox ethos, spoke of Reality in a new idiom. The Sufi doctrines concerned themselves with "metaphysics, cosmology, psychology and eschatology". [37]. The orthodox doctrines were mainly concerned with affirming the credal statements of faith, whereas the Sufi doctrines were eclectic, and thus deviated from the mainline Muslim path.

The philosophical tools which the Sufis employed are mainly, directly or indirectly, taken from the Greek world. But the use of these tools was definitely made in the context, of Islamic faith. Thus Mullā, for example, while making the full use of Greek concepts, desired to employ the philosophical reflection as a means at arriving at the proper knowledge of God. As a mystic, he found God in all things and all things in God. To give a firm philosophical foundation to this insight, he used the Greek concepts for this purpose. The philosophical ideas were used for the purpose of affirming the mystical vision of Reality, on the one hand, and on the other, in interpreting and solving questions which the Islamic faith gave rise to.

The Sufi assertion that all things are in God and God is in all things means that the reflective minds, within Sufism, opted for a philosophy of the One, and Neoplatonism, more than anything else, supplied the necessary tools for upholding this viewpoint. This can be seen in 'Arabī, Ghazāli, Mullā, Rūmī, etc. At the same time we must keep in mind the Islamic background of Sufism, that is, the soil on which Sufism took birth and grew is Islamic, whereas its nourishment, in terms of ideas, came mainly from Greece and India.

Sufism as an historical movement is definitely Islamic in its general framework. In this sense Sufism cannot be termed as a neutral faith. But as a mystical vision of Reality, Sufism transcends the Islamic framework in the sense of its ecclectism and ecumenism, Sufism, if seen in this perspective, has a universal appeal. As to whether Sufism is universal or purely Islamic depends how one views mysticism as such.

References

1. The ontological otherness of God from creatures is not specifically Islamic, but is a characteristic

feature of all Semitic religions. Prof. Scholem, while commenting on Jewish mysticism, writes that in Jewish mysticism we "find no trace of a mystical union between the soul and God. Throughout there remained an almost exaggerated consciousness of God's *otherness*, nor does the identity and individuality of the mystic become blurred even at the height of the ecstatic passion. The Creator and His creatures remain apart, and nowhere is an attempt made to bridge the gulf between them or to blur the distinction". *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (London, 1955), pp 55-56.

2 *Koran*, 42:11.

3. In the *Koran* (112.4) the otherness of God is spoken of in these terms: *I am yakun la-hu kufuwan ahad*-like unto him hath there been never anyone.

4. See for further information W.M. Watt, *Muhammed in Medina* (Oxford, 1956).

5. The following statements of the *Koran* will give us an indication about the nature of divine determinism: "If God pleased, he would bring them all into guidance" (6:35); "God's is the east and the west, he guides whom he will into the

right path" (2:136); "God calls unto the abode o peace and guides whom he will into the right path" (10:26); "God elects for himself whom he pleases, and guides him unto himself who turns repentant" (42:12). Prof. Wensinck, in this context, rightly points out that "the main attitude of Islam was in favour of predestination". *Muslim Creed* (Cambridge, 1932), p. 51. Cf. A. S. Tritton, *Muslim Theology* (London, 1947), p.7.

6. *Koran*, 16:93; 74:31; see for further information W.M. Watt, *Free Will and Predestination in Early Islam* (London, 1948).

7. See, for example, the following statements of the *Koran* in which the status of free will is maintained: "Truth is from you Lord; let him who wil l believe, and let him who be an unbeliever" [18:28]" Verily this [the *Koran*] is a reminder, and whose willeth, taketh the way to his Lord; but will, ye shall not unless God will it" [76:29,30]: "We wished to be gracious to those who were weakened in the earth and to make them spiritual leaders and to make them heirs" [28:4].

8. The earliest upholders of free will were the *Qadaris* who were accused by the orthodoxy as asserting the view that man was a co-creator

with God. See Al-Malaṭī (Muh. b. Muh.), *Al-Tanbih wa'l-Radd 'ala Ahl al-Aḥwā wa'l Bid'*.

9. Wensinck, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

10. See Moti Lal Pandit, "The Influence of Vedanta on Sufism", in *Dilip* (Jan.-Feb, 1974), Bombay, pp. 27 ff.

11. See L. Massignon, *Al-Hallāj. Martyr mystique de l'islam* (Paris, 1922).

12. Abū Naṣr al-Sarrāj, *Kitāb al-Luma'fī l-Taswwuf*, ed. R. A. Nicholson (London, 1914), p. 382.

13. *Discourses of Rūmī*, tr. A. J. Arberry (London, 1961), pp. 108–112; *Selected Poems from the Divani of Shamsi Tabriz*, tr. R. A. Nicholson (Cambridge, 1952), poem xxxi, p. 125.

14. Sahlajī, *Shaṭaḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, ed. A. Badawi (Cairo, 1949), p. 70.

15. *Koran*. 2:165.

16. *Ibid.*, 50:12.

17. Al-Ghazālī, *Kīmiyā-yi Sa'ādat* (Tehran, 1319 A. H.), p. 943.

18. Al-Qushayrī, *Risāla* (Cairo, 1948), p. 119.

19. Sarrāj, *op-cit*, p. 20.

20. Qushayrī, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

21. Sarrāj, *op. cit*, pp. 242-43.

22 See R C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* (London, 1960) p. 171.

23. Al- Ghazālī; *Mishkāt Al-Anwar*, tr. W. H. T. Gairdner (London, 1924), p.58.

24. *Fada' il al-Anam*, p. 24. It is a commentary in Persian on *Mishkāt*.

25. *Kīmiyā yi*, p. 206.

26. *Koran*, 2:115

27. *Ibid.*, 57:3.

28. *Mishkāt*, pp. 107-8.

29 *Ibid*, p. 106.

30. *Kīmiyā-yi*, p. 705.

31. M. Eliade, *The Two in One*, p. 43.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

33. *Koran*, 57:3

34. Mullā Sa rā, *Kitāb al-Mashasir* (tr. into French by H. Corbin, Paris, 1964), p. 133.

35. *Ibid*, p. 142.

36. S. H. Nasr, *Sufi Essays* (London, 1972), p. 45.

5. THE NATURE OF MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

Mystical experience, when viewed from a philosophical perspective, has, before anything else, to be understood phenomenologically. Along with phenomenological analysis what is needed is to find out what kind of epistemological and ontological status mystical experience enjoys. To put the matter in simple terms, it means, first of all, to find out the essential phenomenological characteristics, through comparison and analysis, of data of mystical experiences of different religious and cultural contexts. It means to investigate as to whether the phenomena of mystical experiences occurring in different cultural and religious melieus are similar or dissimilar. Once the phenomenological investigation has been made, the task before the investigator is to find out whether the mystical experience is purely a subjective state of cognition or whether it has a metaphysical significance. All the points are inter-related and hold the key in so far as the unlocking of *mysterium* of mystical experience is concerned.

The greatest difficulty one encounters in analysing the nature of a mystical experience is data. The investigator does not possess, for his analysis, the mystical experience itself. What he is in possession of in terms of data are the reports or accounts of the mystics, on the one hand, and investigative reports of others, on the other hand. The mystical experience will bear fruit, in terms of understanding and analysis, in so far as it lends itself to non-mystical interpretation. While analysing the nature of a mystical experience, quite a number of investigators have arrived at the conclusion that the very nature of the mystical experience is such that it does not make itself accessible to a rational or analytical form of analysis or investigation. This premises is built upon the belief that mystical experience is ineffable, and that which is of the nature of *mystery* cannot be brought into the realm of philosophical analysis. The point of departure for any investigation concerning the nature of mystical experience has to be to find out the characteristic of ineffability.

When one approaches the vast amount of mystical literature, what one finds is a kind of description of mystical experiences which bewilder the human mind. It is very common among mystics to speak of

mystical experience as that which is ineffable, inexpressible, beyond discursive thought, and so on. So we come accross such terms in abundance in mystical literature as " darkness ", " incomprehensible ", ' immense ", " non-knowing ", etc. All these terms are meant to explain the authentic nature of a mystical experience. Such terms would indicate that the mystical experience is beyond any kind of rational description or comprehension. If the case is such, then one could easily ask as to why do mystics at all write or speak about their experiences? It is maintained that the mystics write about their experiences from a theological or devotional concern. The mystics, as a class of writers, do not write (there are exceptions to the rule) with the intention of proving the authenticity of their experience. Literature which is devotional or theological in orientation cannot be treated as descriptive or analytic. Devotional literature, in its intent and content, concerns itself with edification and exhortation rather than with description or information. Mystical literature, most of the time, has a practical end in view, and that is to provide the necessary encouragement and guidance to those who are on the mystic path. This argument of those who treat of mystical accounts as non-informative and non-descriptive, needs serious consideration. It would mean that the mystical reports cannot be treated clinically; rather they have to be viewed and seen in

terms of their goal and function. However, it would not be quite correct to generalise the premise that mystical literature in general is non-descriptive, and therefore it is bereft of any epistemological value or status. The mystic, even when his intention is devotional, theological or practical, is communicating or saying *something*, and this something he is communicating in terms of ideas, concepts, images, symbols, metaphors, etc. The basic tool of communication in the hands of a mystic is nothing but the spoken word, that is, language. There is no possibility of communication unless there is at least a minimum use of description. While a mystic reports about his experience, he is simultaneously engaged in informing the reader as to what he means when he speaks of his experience in terms of " ineffability ", " darkness ", 'non-knowing,' " etc. It is not fair to say that all mystical literature is either devotional or theological. It is *interpretative* also. The mystic, while reporting about his experience, makes a conscious and deliberate effort in interpreting and describing the nature of his experience. The objection of those who speak of mystical accounts or reports as non-informative does not seem to be entirely correct. Although ineffable, the mystic, within the limitation of language, does describe and interpret the nature of his experience.

The mystic's interpretation as well as description

of his experience begins the very moment he speaks of mystical experience as ineffable. It means that the nature of experience is not so ineffable that it cannot yield some kind of human communication. The moment a mystic reports about his experience, that very moment he begins the process of inrerpretation. Accepting the ineffability of mystical experience as a given fact, it does not mean that the possibility of interpretation is lacking. Rarely does an occasion arise when a mystic engages himself in a total silence. Another aspect of mystical experience we have to keep in mind, is this: that there are various levels or stages of experience and each level ofexperience is different from the others both in terms of meaning and interpretation. There are experiences which mystics alone are able to comprehend; and there are experiences which non-mystics can easily follow. Conscious of the fact that certain kinds of experiences can be communicated to non-mystics, St. Teresa of Avila, while explaining the lower stages of contemplation, writes: " This will be easily understood to whom Our Lord has granted it, but anyone else cannot fail to need a great many words and comparisons ". [1] The very existence of such a vast body of mystical literature means that mystical experiences are communicable. The depth of a mystical experience is such that the mystic has no choice but to employ linguistic tools available to him. The mystic knows this difficulty. St. Teresa of Avila, while

speaking about the higher states of experience, is conscious of this difficulty when she writes; "I do not know if I have conveyed any impression of the nature of rapture: to give a full idea of it; as I have said, is impossible" [2]. The mystic's assertion that certain states of experience are explainable and some other states are not, is not to be understood as a mystic subterfuge or inconsistency. What a mystic most probably is affirming in such assertions is that he is referring to different levels of experience; that is, an experience at the lowest level of contemplation is much more amenable to communication than the experience at the hightest stage. Even the experience at the higher stages of contemplation does not seem to be beyond the scope of some kind of description A mystical experience at the higher level can be described in the context of known experiences provided a mystic uses his linguistic apparatus with care and responsibility. When, for example, St. John of the Cross speaks of the "touch of the substance of God in the substance of the soul" [3] as an ineffable experience he is conveying the essential characteristics of the experience in terms of "touch", "substance", etc. Again he says the delight and joy a mystic has in this state of experience is "impossible of description". In this statement St. John is explaining the nature of experience within a class of known experiences like touch, delight, etc. He is conveying some kind of description about the experience, that is, as

to what it is to experience the states of divine delight in comparison to physical delight.

Plain linguistic expressions are not able to convey the full depth and range of a mystical experience. It is for this purpose that the mystic employs figurative and symbolic modes of communication. Mystics use this form of communication precisely because it has the strength and power to convey the inner depth of the mystical experience in a non-mystical context. But there is a possibility in such and similar contexts that the symbolic or other modes of communication may not bear fruit in the same manner in which difficulty is faced while describing the content of colour to a blind person. The communication of a mystical experience will succed to the extent of there being continuity between the mystical experience and the vocabulary a mystic employs, that is, there has to be a kind of rapport between the mystic and the reader When a mystic writes about his experience, he may assume that this kind of relationship exists between him and the reader. Even if such a relationship exists it belongs to the twilight zone. The mystic, while giving an account of his experience, must surely be aware of the limitations and possibilities of the medium of communication. It is with this awareness that a mystic should desire to be understood.

Even if it is accepted that the mystical experience can be explained within the limitations of language there must still be areas and zones of mystical experience which elude the process of rational conceptualisation. It is pointed out that the mystics are very fond of paradoxes, and they employ them precisely because the experience cannot be described or defined in rational terms or concepts. The mystics, no doubt, make use of paradoxes; but paradoxes are not meant to be literal translations or accounts of experience. It is however maintained that a mystical paradox does not accomodate a non-literal translation. The kind of experience a mystic describes is bound to end in self-contradiction, though he may use other modes of linguistic communication. This reasoning or argument would lead us to conclude that a mystical paradox is literal, and therefore an exact representation of the mystical experience. Therefore, all Mystical paradoxes are bound to end in self-contradiction. [4] It is therefore asserted that

> the mystic's paradoxes are central to his experiences and contradictory descriptions are one of the most striking characteristics of his attempts to say what his experience was like. Worse still, it is evident that the mystic not only feels that the experience was of a contradictory sort, but that the subject of his experience has contradictory properties.

To support this argument, the author of the above lines quotes the following lines from the *Isa Upanisad*:

> That One, though never stirring, is swifter than thought .... Though standing still, it overtakes those who are running .... It stirs and it stirs not. It is inside all this, and it is outside all this. [5].

It is this kind of support, furnished from the mystical literature, the aim of which is to establish the argument that a mystical argument is self-contradictory. The above passage from the *Isa Upanisad* is in no manner a description of a mystical experience. The so-called paradox in the passage can easily be understood if its immediate as well as wider context are pursued diligently. The Upanishadic paradox is a rhetorical juxtaposition of insights concerning the immanence and transcendence of Reality. [6] There is no self-contradiction involved in this paradox.

The function of most of the mystical paradoxes is similar to that of non-mystical paradox. It is the context which determines the function of a paradox. Take, for example, the question of the figurative speech of the mystics. When a mystic maintains that the immensity of light is such that he experiences blindness, or that the sweet love of the beloved is so unbearable that it causes a wound in the centre of the soul, he can hardly be said to be using paradoxes.

There is hardly any evidence to substantiate the argument that the mystics break the law of non-contradiction. The mystics make use of paradoxes in order to be more effective in their communication. If a paradox is taken in literal sense of the word, then a paradox will turn out to be self-contradictory. The mystics are quite aware of the difficulties concerning the use of language. This, however, does not mean that mystical accounts are beyond the scope of comprehension or analysis. Most of the mystics have written about their experiences with care and seriousness. It is not right to say that the mystics do not respect the rule of language and logic. The reason for opaqueness of most of the mystical writings is simple: the very nature of the mystical experience is such that it seems to be unintelligible to a person who believes in a commonsensical approach. Moreover it is necessary that a mystical experience needs to be examined in the context of religious doctrines and religious melieu within which the mystics operate.

A proper analysis of mystical experience can result only if, at the outset, a distinction is made between experience and interpretation... so the story goes.

The scholars, while examining the mystical reports, have viewed the mystical experience and the interpretation of it as two different and distinct entities. They have, therefore, aimed at separating the one from the other. An interpretation of a mystical experience is understood to mean " anything which the conceptual intellect adds to the experience for the purpose of understanding it, whether what is added is only classificatory concepts, or logical inference or an explanatory hypothesis ". Understood thus, interpretation is seen as a search for a kind of " universal core " which would enable the interpreter to " penetrate through the mantle of words to the body of experiences which it clothes ". [7] In principle this kind of distinction between experience and interpretation may, on the surface, seem to be acceptable, but when it comes to the practice of this principle, it seems to be both inadequate and impractical. A mystic, while describing his experiencing, is at the same time engaged in the interpretation of it. It is quite incorrect to maintain that experience and interpretation are seperate epistemological entities. The failure to understand and grasp the essential import or characteristic of a mystical experience stems from the unnecessary emphasis over the theoretical distinction between experience and interpretation. It is this basic failure which has led to the declaration that mystical statements abound in contradictions.

The reason for finding the mystical experience opaque is due to the incapability of seeing it in its religious and cultural contexts. A mystic does not operate or function in a void. The doctrines, practices and cultural modes form the reference point for a mystic. His upbringing, his culture, his religious beliefs influence the content of his experience. This influence is not only evident in the context of interpretation, but also in the field of selection of mystical reports. In other words, a mystic, while describing his experience, selects such contents of his experience which his religious beliefs or cultural modes may demand of him. It means that a mystic is not only selective in what he remembers of his experience; he is also selective in terms of what he thinks is worth reporting.

There is a school of thought which disfavours the so-called influence of religious beliefs upon the experience of a mystic, and think of them more as obstacles than as aids in the way of proper phenomenological analysis. Such an attitude is negative in the sense that it undermines an important aspect of the mystical experience. The influence of religious beliefs or cultural modes in the make-up of a mystic has a complex relationship with the substance of a mystical experience. Seen from an external angle, a particular religious belief does determine the description of an experience. At the internal level, the influence directly touches upon the substance or

content of an experience. Even if a theoretical distinction is made between an experience and its interpretation, it is quite difficult to comprehend an experience outside the religious or cultural framework for the simple reason that a mystic operates within a particular religious or cultural context. The difficulty at not comprehending the nature of an experience outside the religious or cultural framework arises because the only data available is the mystic's description of his experience. The mystic's description, which is at the same time interpretation of his experience, cannot be examined or checked against the background of his original experience. The only way available to us, a particular piece of experience, is to see it in the context of other pieces of description of the mystic, or by comparing it with the description of other mystics of the same tradition. The main point of emphasis here is that the religious elements may furnish some important information with regard to the phenomenological character of an experience. The importance of religious beliefs in the make-up of a mystic may not be considered as mere additions or points of obscurity with regard to the content of mystical experience. Almost all the mystics make use of doctrinal concepts in their writings. In order to support their viewpoints, they quote profusedly passages from the scriptures. The use of doctrinal concepts or scriptural passages has a purpose: to facilitate the way for communicating the

depth of a mystical experience in a language which is commonly understood by the people of the mystic's tradition. The doctrinal concepts or scriptural passages help in carrying the essential import of experience in non-mystical contexts.

It is commonly assumed that interpretation is something which has been added to, or superimposed upon, the existing corpus of experience. A very complex form of relationship exists between experience and interpretation. There is also the possibility that interpretation may undergo change in the light of new aspects of experience or in the context of new doctrinal developments. Interpretation of a mystical experience will thereby take new furns and vistas. Both experience and interpretation, however, reinforce each other. The inner strength of an experience will not get exhausted through new forms of interpretation. It is also pointed out that the doctrinal element to be found in the mystic's account does not help the mystic in understanding his own experience. Therefore, the doctrinal element may be considered as a block or an obstacle in so far as the experience itself is concerned. This assumption does not hold water. The mystic's personal beliefs will not create obstacles in the same way as the personal beliefs of a scientist do not obscure his objective experience. The mystic's personal beliefs need to be seen as a means of understanding his experience. Most of the mystical experiences appear to be obscure because of non-acquaintance with the

tradition to which the mystic belongs. The doctrinal element is not a hindrance to a mystic; he finds it as a helpful means both in terms of cultivation and interpretation of mystical experience.

Apart from the doctrinal elements, the mystical experience has a practical aspect, that is, meditational techniques. The meditational techniques play an important role concerning the realisation of mystical states. The negligence of mystical techniques has resulted in treating the mystical experience as self-contained. The reason for looking at the meditational techniques as unimportant is that the causal conditions are said not to be responsible in determining the mystical experience. This attitude leads to treating the causal conditions and experience as separate and exclusive compartments. This indifference towards mystical techniques has influenced the interpretative approach of scholars concerning the mystical states. To exclude praxis from experience leads to the distortion of the latter.

If an adequate understanding of mystical praxis is to be formed, it is necessary to take into account moral, ascetical and meditational techniques. [8] We shall not, however, concentrate on mystical praxis as such. We shall limit ourselves to such mystical techniques which form, as it were, the basis for mystical experience. Broadly speaking, mystical techniques have been divided into *meditational* and contemplative *methods*. The former method is characterised by such

mental exercises in which a complex religious theme is meditated or reflected upon. It is basically an intellectual exercise. Its aim is to comprehend mentally the essential ingredients of a theme which is reflected upon. It helps the process of concentration as well as understanding. As far as contemplation is concerned, it comes into being when the process of meditation has been mastered over. Contemplation may, therefore, be said to be the development or outcome of meditation. However, contemplation transcends all mental activities which are involved in the excercise of meditation. This contemplative transcendence over meditation takes place through an intuitive process of concentration on some mental image or idea. The contemplative contemplation ultimately results in the dissolution of mental ideas or images, and thereby the vista for mystical experience is facilitated. Thus mystical praxis has to be taken seriously when it comes to the study of mysticism. The meditational ideas or images provide the necessary material for the objectively presented mystical vision. For mystics meditation

> will necessarily consist, in great part, in attending to, calling up, and, as far as may be, both fixing and over-renovating certain few great dominant ideas, and in attempting by every means to saturate the imagination with images

and figures, historical and symbolic, as so many incarnations of these great verities. [9]

Mystical praxis allows us to penetrate the depth of interpretation. At the lower stages of experience, a mystic, to a great extent, shapes and forms his experience. It would not be wise to make a sharp distinction between contemplation as an activity and meditation as a state of experience. It is, however, of significance to note that the mystical praxis needs to be studied within the religious context of the mystic.

The religious and cultural background of a mystic must be studied with utter seriousness, so that a proper analysis of mystical praxis as well as of experience is made. However, it is assumed that at times the ecclesiastical pressures are such that a mystic is led to express his experience in terms of orthodoxy. Thus, as the story goes, most of the mystic statements need not be treated as authentic. [10] This kind of objection is mainly raised in the context of theism. Theism is said to be incompatible with, and often hostile to, mysticism. With such a suspicious approach the study of mysticism would become vitiated, and therefore no proper study can be conducted. The religious or cultural influence, if

seen objectively, expresses itself in terms of language, that is, the kind of terms of concepts mystics use in expressing the content of their experience. There is a possibility that mystics may be so overburdened by their religious or cultural backgrounds that the accounts of their experiences, through the use of conventional modes of language, may not be as accurate as one would like them to be. Such a possibility cannot be ruled out entirely. But this possibility must not prejudice us in thinking that the mystics, while borrowing the traditional concepts and ideas, are not careful in their selection and usage of words. The most possible obstacle in the way of properly communicating the nature of an experience arises when overused words or concepts are borrowed from a particular tradition. It is also true to say that the conventional words or images are much more effective in their meaning and range precisely because they are known and understood in a wider context. A mystic is not ignoramous person. He knows how to choose his words and concepts in the context of his readership. A mystic writes only for that context which is known to him He does not write for the contexts which are unknown to him. Most of the mystical writings come from the past and from contexts of which we have scant knowledge. One of the major difficulties one encounters in apprehending the true and exact import of a mystical experi-

ence is the scant knowledge one possesses of the tradition to which the mystic belongs. Much of the mystical literature, for example, is filled with sexual imagery. It has nothing to do with the Freudian analysis of repressed sex. A modern reader may usually see in such writings Freudian libido. In such a situation what is needed is the knowledge of the context in which the mystic made use of such modes of communication. The so-called sexual imagery of the mystic can be understood only if we know what characterised the assumption of courtly or chivalric love. It has nothing to do with the kind of sexuality a modern reader has in mind. [11] If seen in the proper context, the sexual imagery of mystics is more romantic than sexual. Again when, for example, a mystic maintains that the nature of the mystical experience is such that it transcends the normal process of knowledge, this assertion can be understood only in the context of a theory knowledge within which the mystic is operating.

The external influence of religion and culture has a considerable effect upon the mystic. The external influences may not only express themselves in the description of experience, but may effect the very content of an experience. These influences could be found out by the way a mystic makes use of ideas, modes of living, etc. We cannot rule out "the way our

senses report experiences to us may be structured by the conventions of language, art, and the like", so that "while symbols are created by us, these creatures in a peculiar way come alive, turn upon us, and cause us and our experience to conform to their autonomy." [12] These external influences, however, have not to be treated as corruptions of or additions to a pure experience. There can be no such thing as absolutely "pure" experience which is shapeless, formless and contentless. The so-called pure experience is incommunicable, and there is no such thing as experience which is so "dark" and "impenetrable" as cannot be communicated.

A proper phenomenological analysis of an experience is possible when the complex relation between an experience and its interpretation is taken into account. Furthermore, what is needed are the proper and correct tools of communication which would, without any form of distortion, communicate the exact substance of an experience. It means that a precise vocabulary is needed, that is, such a kind of vocabulary which would fit the mystic's description of his experience. If, for example, a mystic speaks of his experience in terms of identity with the Absolute, a phenomenologist would be able to do nothing more than to classify the experience in terms of loss of self-awareness. This does not mean that the voca-

bulary of a phenomenologist is bereft of metaphysical significance. What it comes to the classification of experience, a phenomenologist needs to make use of such a precise vocabulary which would communicate the core of an experience. What is needed is a kind of language which has the power of unveiling the basic structure of an experience as well as defining the basic and specific meaning of the terms.

The negligence of mystical states or stages in the study of mysticism has resulted in mis-interpretation and mis-information concerning the nature of mystical experience. The mystical states have a direct bearing upon the phenomenological classification. [13] Even if some have made attempts to study the mystical states, the attitude has always been that the higher states are much more important than the lower ones. The concentration has been on the higher stages. This biased attitude is based on the premise that the higher states yield much more information concerning the mystical experience. This inference may be justifiable to some extent by resorting to the assertion of mystics themselves. But this assertion cannot be said to be universal in the sense that the higher states of experience depend for their very existence on the lower ones. The lower states are as important as the higher ones precisely because there are features of experience which may

not be available in the higher ones. The lower states belong to the mystical experience to the same extent as the higher ones. Mystical experience, if seen f om the point of higher states, seems to be static and constant. This is not true. Mystical experience has a dynamic dimension, too. It is because of dynamism in the mystical experience that there is a development or advance from one state to another. In the process of this development there are features in the experience which are lost, whereas some other features are intensified. Also new and fresh experiences come into being. The assumption that the higher states are more informative than the lower ones seems not to be correct. The higher states are, for most of the time, negative in character, in that the mystic either loses his self-awareness or there is nothing of importance to report in so far as phenomenological analysis is concerned. [14] Moreover, the higher states are nothing but the culmination or advancement of the lower states. Hence in the study of contemplative states what is needed is a holistic approach. If the states are not studied in terms of higher and lower, but as inter-related and inter-dependent, then the apprehension of the nature of a mystical experience becomes easy and wholesome.

The classification of a mystical experience must begin with the classification of specific content of an experience in the context of its structure. The struc-

ture of an experience, as and when possible, must be evaluated in the light of various contemplative states of experience. If classification is made in this manner, then the experience will not be viewed as a series of disjointed mental images, intuitions and visions. Mystical experience is as integrative as any ordinary experience. The normal mode of experience is characterised by cognitions, perceptions, feelings, etc. It is the same with the mystical experience. Mystical experience is not contentless and disembodied. We are told that a mystic has the experience of subtle bodies, of psychic organs, and so on. They are as real as the so-called objective perceptions of a non-mystic. Therefore

> the intense reality and vivid objective presence of the higher states, are utterly unlike the flat intangibility of self-centred imagination. The higher states...are logically prior to the physical states, and consequently not to be interpreted in terms of physical phenomena posterior to them. Everything in such states, spatial characteristics included, is known as if in archetypical unchanging form, and is therefore startingly more real than the derivative and shifting forms of the physical world. [15]

It would seem, in the light of the claims of

mystics, that the structure as well as the content of a mystical experience is as dynamic, objective and complex as of any normal experience. In recent years a beginning has been made in the study of the structure and content of a mystical experience. [16] As the study is yet in infancy, it would not be correct to commit oneself as to whether there are phenomenologically separate experiences or whether there is only one type of experience.

Every phenomenological effort needs to be made when it comes to the question of finding out the epistemological and ontological status or validity of a mystical experience. What is therefore needed is a careful examination of the claims and assertions of mystics concerning their experiences. To begin with, a proper typology needs to be made for various truth-claims and assertions. As the claims constitute data for investigation, the categorisation of claims is necessary. There are, firstly, such claims which are subjective in nature. These subjective claims are responsible in determining the behaviour, beliefs, understanding, etc. of a mystic. [17] There are, secondly, claims which are causal in orientation, that is, such claims which have a practical end in view. It is asserted that if certain conditions are fulfilled, the realisation of a mystical state is inevitable. Thirdly, there are claims which are existential in nature. The existential aspect of a claim expresses

itself in the assertion that in and through the mystical experience there is the disclosure or revelation of ultimate reality, that is, of God. This revelation is meta-empirical. Finally, there is the cognitive aspect in a mystical claim. This aspect is characterised by an assertion that, on the one hand, there is revelation of a transcendent reality and, on the other hand, there is an authentic cognition about the nature of the world. All these claims are assumed to be based upon the immediate experience or are derived from the data supplied by the experience.

A mystical claim can properly be appreciated if ts typology is identified and its content analysed. This approach is necessary because there are inherent distinct claims within a single claim. The comprehensibility of a claim will visualise itself the moment the context and conditions of the claim are grasped. Analysis in formal terms may be necessary, but the context of a claim must never be forgotten.

The mystical writings do not lack in objectivity. What a mystic apprehends at experiential level is reported in terms of objective ideas and concepts. However, the subjectivity of a mystic claim is not self-authenticating in the same manner as that of a scientific claim. A mystic may insist that his experience is as valid and objective as any normal experience. He may, however, not be able to inform us

about the content and character of his experience. The objectivity of a mystical claim needs to be distinguished from the doctrinal certitude which a mystic may possess either in terms of religious beliefs or reasoning. It is sometimes objected that the mystical claims are not well formulated. This objection may be true with regard to some mystics, but most of the mystics have described the nature and specific content of their experience in precise terms. What can be said about the claims is that they are not self-authenticating. Mystics do agree that sometimes it may happen that their account or interpretation may not be correct. [18] But this does not mean that mystics have no tools at their disposal to find out whether a particular experience is authentic or not. And whenever they find an error of judgement or of interpretation, they do point it out. [19] Mystics modify their accounts in the light of new experiences and interpretations. As far as the validity of an experience is concerned, mystics have their own procedures and methods. These procedures mainly comprise of moral, ascetical, meditational rules, etc. By applying these norms to a particular experience, a mystic is able to find out whether an experience is genuine. Moreover, epistemological continuity confirms the authenticity of an experience. Keeping these points in view, it is not in the interest of scholarship to dismiss mystical experience as subjective and

without any metaphysical content or significance. For a mystic experience of Reality is much more real than the experience of the world outside of us. What metaphysical significance this experience of Reality has needs to be looked into.

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6. THE MYSTICAL ARCHETYPES

Most of the time-it is maintained-that the various religions not only differ from each other in their approaches concerning Reality, but hardly have anything in common in so far as the fundamental questions of life and death are concerned. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that each religion has developed within a specific historico-cultural matrix, and it is this specificity which distinguishes a particular religion from other religions; and also in this specificity lies the uniqueness and individuality of each religion. Those who follow this particular viewpoint have, on theological premises, made a clear demarcation between religions of Semitic origin and religions who were either born on the soil of India or China. The former religions, in the theological parlance, are spoken of as the revealed ones, whereas the latter religions are labelled as belonging to the realm of nature. The former ones are referred to as the revealed ones as it is believed that the transcendent God has revealed himself, through prophets, in the context of history. Therefore, these

Semitic religions, as opposed to the natural religions, are called the prophetic ones. It is construed that a prophetic religion is opposed to the natural religions on the ground that such religions are man-made and do not orientate themselves to the worship of an authentic God. The upholders of these religions, so the story goes, have hardly anything in common with the adherents of natural religions.

On the other hand, the adherents of the so-called natural religions do believe in the divine revelation—but it is not in exclusivist terms. The natural religionists basically believe in the creative spirit of man; they find the divine presence in nature itself. It is in the discovery of unity of God and man that true revelation of God is said to take place. It does not give emphasis on the necessity of propositional revelation of God in terms of written words; it speaks of revelation in terms of the Spirit. It is for this reason that these religions are spoken of as mystical. Therefore, each religious way is thought of as a "mode of salvation". Each religion is said to be valid in so far as it leads man to liberation.

The adherents of prophetic religions make a fundamental distinction between revealed and non-revealed religions. It is believed that a religion which

has its source in the divine revelation itself, can hardly share anything with a religion which is of the earth. It is, therefore, assumed that the depositum of salvation exists, as it were, only within the fold of revealed religion. They see non-revealed religions as forms of unbelief. Thus their understanding of God, of salvation, of man, of the world not only differs from the «natural forms of religion," but seem to be hostile towards them.

If religion is understood in such narrow theological terms, there seems to be little possibility of entering into dialogue with religions other than one's own. This scenario seems to be quite dismal. However, people of various religions may differ in their theological dispositions; but as far as the human spirit is concerned, it seems to be the same everywhere. This unity of spirit is best expressed in mystical spirituality of religions, whether Semitic or non-Semitic. This oneness has found its expression in certain archetypical themes of mysticism. these themes not only express their epistemic unity, but reveal the ontological unity of man. It is for this reason that I have chosen certain archetypes, and these archetypes are deeply rooted in human consciousness. While discussing these archetypes, I have confined myself to the Śaiva [Trika] mysticism of Kashmir vis-a-vis Christian mysticism.

The mystical search for the Ultimate Reality is universal in its approach and orientation. The organised forms of religion express this mystical streak the moment it searches, at the experiential level, for such a mode of existence which would be free from the historical contingency or causality. In other words, it is a search for Being as opposed to non-being, for the Infinite as opposed to the finite, and so on. It is at this level of search that the religion meets mysticism. But religion takes leave of mysticism when it solely devotes its attention to the exterior, that is, when it considers adherence to certain norms of religiosity as the mark of spirituality. Mysticism, on the other hand, does not neglect the external norms. Its emphasis, however, is on the interior, that is, in discovering the nature of the Spirit. It is at the level of the Spirit that all schools of mysticism meet. They may differ from each other in so far as the externals are concerned, but at the level of the Spirit, they all meet and share the same experience This aspect of mysticism shall be dealt with when the question of archetypes comes.

Religion believes in a theoretical knowledge of God. It is because of this reason that the credal articles of faith form the core and centre of religion. Religion expects from its adherents conformity to the

propositions of faith, whereas mysticism concerns itself not so much with theoretical knowledge as much with experiential knowledge. This experiential knowledge of Reality is said to be ineffable and undefinable, [1] and therefore no emphasis is given to the credal propositions.

As the nature of mystical experience is said to be ineffable, the mystic uses such modes of language which are symbolic and metaphoric. By using language in this manner, the mystic is able, to some extent, to unveil the content of his experience. The mystics have a common stock of metaphors and symbols–no matter to what religion or culture they may belong. It is through these symbols and metaphors that the mystical archetypes find their expression. By studying these symbols and metaphors, we shall find out that the mystical spirit opens the doors of encumenicity for all those who desire that this world of ours should be a place where each religion and culture moves towards peace and harmony.

As we have pointed above, our aim in the following pages will be to study such mystical themes [archetypes] which are common to all mystical schools the world over. We shall, for the sake of

brevity, confine ourselves, on the one hand, to the study of Trika mysticism of Kashmir and, on the other hand, to Christian mysticism.

Fundamental to the Trika system is the assertion that Reality, in its undifferentiated form, is pure luminosity. It is Absolute Light shining in its own effulgence. As Absolute Light, Reality is spoken of as Paramaśiva. As Absolute, Reality reposes in itself, and as such subsists in its own sovereign freedom. But the moment Reality engages itself in reflection or in its own discovery, Reality does this through the process of creation, that is, Śiva as Absolute constricts itself by manifesting itself in terms of creation. This the Absolute does through its sovereign will and freedom. What it amounts to is that the Absolute becomes the Many the moment it expresses itself in terms of the manifest creation. Why does the Absolute engage in such an act ? It is, so to say, the nature of Absolute. As the nature of the sun is to shine, so the nature of the Absolute is to create and re-absorb. The Absolute, while expressing itself as creation, hides, as it were, its fullness or perfection. The obscuration of perfection of the Absolute means the negation of unity. This negation of unity of the Absolute also indicates

the emptying of its perfection, of becoming nothing through the veiling power of Māyā. Māyā is that power of the Absolute through which it hides, as it were, its true nature, which is that of fullness. It is a power of darkness in terms of negation. Through this dark veil of Māyā the Absolute emerges as Spirit and Matter, and thereby evolves itself into a differentiated universe. Abhinavagupta, in his Tantrasāra, beautifully expresses this central aspect of Reality:

> The Self is embodied Light and is Śiva, sovereignly free. Impelled by the joy of his freedom, he obscures his essence, and then discloses it in plenitude-with or without sequence..... [2]

The Absolute expresses itself as the universe by becoming the Many. It means that each contingent being, that each created thing of the universe, is nothing but the potential Śiva, that is, each created thing reflects Reality. The Absolute as Being enters into the process of becoming through its own power of veiling, namely, Māyā. In so far as the limited individual functions on the level of differentiation, of I and thou, he views Reality as different from himself. This viewing of Reality in terms of subject and object is called ignorance, and the cause for this ignorance, is nothing else but Māyā. Māyā veils the

intuitive vision of man. It is because of this viewing of Reality as the other that an individual thinks of himself as limited, finite, etc. By experiencing finitude, man gets caught in the wheel of becoming, and this becoming is considered to be bondage. Bondage, in other words, is self-forgetfulness. The aim therefore is to regain the primordial state of existence, which is that of oneness with Reality. In recognising oneself to be one with Reality, liberation from finitude, from becoming is realised. This process begins the moment man experiences the process of re-absorption of the universe into the plenitude of Light. The universe, as it were, gets consummed in the fire of the Light. This consuming fire of the Absolute is conceived of as the goddess. By purifying the universe in her consuming flames, the goddess thereby destroys everything. In this experience of consuming fire nothing remains but the Absolute. To paraphrase this aspect of experience, it means that in so far as man remains conscious of himself as an individual, in so far he is veiled by the power of Māyā, he remains bound to the limitations of the universe. This limitation is experienced in antithetical terms, that is, everything is experienced against each other. In order to set himself free from this bondage, the individual needs to offer everything, including his limited I, to the pure Light within. It is by dying to the self, to oneself, that one is able to re-cognise, to experience everything in the Absolute.

This self death is not something exceptional to Trika Śaivism; it is found in the Islamic mysticism too. The Sufis speak of this experience as the annihilation of the self. Through self-annihilation spiritual ascent is made possible. The process of self-death is a two-way process. On the one hand, the Absolute (as we have already seen in the case of Trika mysticism) annihilates itself through the process of manifestation, and, on the other hand, man, by destroying his self, regains the primordial state of existence. In Christianity it expresses itself in the doctrine of Incarnation, that is, God empties himself when he becomes man in Jesus, and through the death of Jesus, he uplifts man from the death of darkness. The cross is a symbol which expresses the divine descent and the human ascent; it is a point where God meets man and man meets God. Ghazāli explains this process of self-death in these terms:

> And they (that is, the mystics) are passed by other, among whom are the few of the few; who 'the splendours of the Countenance sublime consume,' and the majesty of the Divine Glory obliterates; so that they are themselves blotted out, annihilated. For self-contemplation there is no more found a place, because with the self they have no longer anything to do. Nothing remaineth any more save the One, the Real; and the import of his word, '*All perisheth save his* Countenance', becomes the experience of the soul. [3]

In so far as man's intellect operates at the level of human understanding, that is, it engages itself in gathering the empirical forms of knowledge about Reality, its range of understanding will remain limited precisely because it will have to operate within the subject-object realm. In the words of Trika system, the intellect's field of operation will be that of Māyā. This limited capacity of the intellect, according to Christian mysticism, exists because of man's fall. It is because of all that man has lost the contact with the Divine Presence, and therefore operates in the realm of absence which is characterised by imperfection and finitude. It is this absence of the Divine which has resulted in the creatureliness of man. And as a creature, man "knows God imperfectly". [4] Whatever knowledge man has of God, it is indirect, in that it is derived from the externals. This corpus of knowledge is referred to as "faith"-and the faith-knowledge is that of twilight, that is, it operates in the same manner as veil operates in the sunlight. The faith-knowledge is not that of morning; it is imperfect and indirect. John of St. Thomas explains the nature of faith thus:

> Faith, ... is of its very nature imperfect, inscrutable, and obscure. The eyes remain enshrouded in darkness; .... This defect is removed by a further perfection, which is called a gift because it exceeds the ordinary manner of

human operation. In this case it is the gift of understanding. This gift enables the intellect to penetrate more clearly the suitability and credibility of the things of faith. [5]

Faith, in this context, functions, more or less, in the same manner as the veiling power of Māyā operates in Trika mysticism. Faith, if seen in its horizontal dimension, does not unveil the love and knowledge of God, because it operates in the realm of absence. Faith, in its nakedness, puts a veil of concealment on understanding. As such, faith-knowledge of God's majesty and glory turns out to be "ignorance". If faith is seen in its transcendental perspective, then the veil of concealment is removed, and thereby the knowledge which results from such faith is the morning knowledge. This aspect of faith is explained in terms of the gift of understanding, that is, it is the gift of the Holy Spirit—the Divine Light which consumes in its flames all such forms of concealment which are of the created order. It is the Divine desoent, as it were in the depths of the soul. It is through this gift of the Holy Spirit that God gives himself to man. By giving himself to man, God dwells in the faculties of the soul (that is, memory, will and understanding). Through this inner experience the contemplative is able to have a partial "re-cognition" of the majesty and glory of God. A faith which simply operates at the level of time-space scale cannot lead to the knowledge of

God. What is needed is to

> ...cast off the shroud of unadorned faith and to leap up to run with God. Through the illumination of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit the soul enjoys... a variegated understanding of divine things... [6]

We find in the Trika mysticism almost the same line of thought concerning the inability of human understanding with regard to the Divine knowledge. In so far as the intellect operates through the veil of Māyā, there is no possiblity of knowing the divine essence of God. As the vision, under the influence of Māyā, is distorted, so our love too is distorted. As Abhinava points out:

> Even though the Master of the universe always shines in us as our Self, nevertheless his true nature is not recognised in its transcendence and sovereignty; the heart is not full of the plenitude of his Light. But when the soul becomes aware of the true freedom of the Self and of its liberation from this life, perfection will be attained. [7]

As Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Christian mysticism give a proper understanding to soul concerning God, so in Trika mysticism it is the Light of Śiva's Energy

which removes the veil of Māyā from the eyes of the soul. Analogously speaking, it means that in Trika mysticism it is Māyā which conceals the Divine Essence, and in Christian mysticism it is naked faith which obscures the vision of God. Like the Energy of Śiva, the Gifts of the Holy Spirit open up the soul's window towards the knowledge of God.

The Holy Spirit inflames love in the depths of the soul, and love, in turn, removes the veil of faith from the faculty of understanding. Through this inflamed love of God understanding breaks through the morning mist of faith. It means that love-to put in Trika terms-penetrates the obscure veil of Māyā. Once the penetration of love takes place with the soul, there is an ascent of the soul from the steps of obscure knowledge of faith to the heights of the majesty of certitude concerning the Divine mystery. In the night of faith there is obscurity, but through love there is transformation, and thereby the soul sees the brightness of the flames of the inward fire in the night. The fire of love, in the words of Ksemrāja, "penetrates the darkness of ignorance", and thereby transforms the soul into a "lamp of flame of love". [8]

The role of mystical love in Trika mysticism is almost the same as it is to be found in Christian mysticism. It is not possible to penetrate the deep and dark cavern of the heart unless the lamp's flame

is ignited by the sparks of love in the soul. It is through the love of God that quietude as well as intensity is experienced. "Even though your (God's) essence is inconceivable-therefore beyond contemplation–it shows itself to those who love you as soon as they (the contemplatives) begin to contemplate." [9]

The main theme of the mysticism of love is to extol the majesty and grandeur of God. This mysticism finds its soil for growth in a theocentric framework, that is, a framework in which God is seen absolutely transcendent, and therefore worthy of worship and adoration. It is a form of worship in which God is glorified solely for the purpose that God alone is worthy to be worshipped. In such a framework it would mean that the creature, in comparison to God, would be considered nothing [10] Recognising the sovereign character of God, it is said that

> We bow to that par-excellent Supreme Spirit who is the Creator, Protector and Destroyer of this whole universe, who relieves from the miseries of existence the hearts of those who, horrified by the fury shown by him [God] in the shape of fires, earthquakes, etc., threw themselves at his mercy. He is the fulfiller of their desires, the conqueror of death, the propeller of the sun, the moon and other planets and in the

form of super-knowledge, remover of all kinds of fears from the hearts of Yogis. [11]

Christian mysticism, in its theocentric framework, revolves around the mystery of Incarnation of God in and through Jesus. The mystical devotion in Christianity is mainly centered on the Incarnation, as God makes himself manifest in and through Christ. Moreover, the Incarnation expresses the symbolism of self-negation. The Christian mystical doctrine of self-death finds its source in the Incarnation. It is by meditating on the mystery of Incarnation that the contemplative, step by step, realises self-death. Thus it is said:

> Meditating on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ, I have long and profoundly dwelt, in the depths of my soul, on the sovereign goodness of the Word Eternal... dwelt deeply also upon how great should be the annihilation of the self... I was instructed and drawn to adhere entirely to God, to depend wholly upon him in perfect forgetfulness of self and of all conditions. [12]

The archetypical theme of creaturely nothingness and self-annihilation is to be found in all schools of mysticism the world over. It is an idea which says that man as a creature, when compared to God's majesty, is nothing. This realisation is possible only

when the self totally is negated. In so far as self functions as an entity in itself, it will seek autonomy and therefore will oppose the sovereignty of God. This opposition results in the separation of man from God. It is in the self-death that the mystic submerges his will with the will of God.

The self-death al o symbolises the sacrificial devotion of the mystic. In the context of the sacrificial devotion the doctrine of Incarnation opens up new vistas, in that God offers himself as a sacrificial victim in Jesus on the Cross. Moreover, it is through the Incarnation that God, as it were, empties himself when he becomes man Jesus. [13] The concept of self-death in terms of sacrifice expresses, on the one hand, that the Eternal Word, by becoming flesh, empties himself, and as flesh (that is, as man) he offers himself as a sacrificial victim on the cross. It is the process which is involved in the mystical self-death. The mystic, by dying to himself, realises his nothingness, and this death is a process of sacrifice in which the mystic offers himself as a victim. This idea in the Trika mysticism finds its expression in the doctrine of creation, that is, by manifesting himself in terms of creation, God thereby empties himself of his perfections; he becomes a limited being. It is God himself who suffers the pain of contingency. However, Christian idea of God's self-negation differs from that of Trika mysticism, in that the former takes this idea as the basis for the

Poctrine of salvation, whereas the latter does not. Where the two schools meet is in the affirmation that God's self-emptying takes place. It is in the application of the doctrine that they differ from each other.

The idea of self-annihilation, on the one hand, connotes a complete and total adherence to, and adoration of, the majesty of God and, on the other hand, it denotes the possession of the soul by God. In other words, it means that when the self is dead to itself, there is nothing left but the presence of God. In the Christian context it means that the Incarnate-Word, in the words of Condren, "appropriates to himself our states", and thereby God-Man "absorbs and consumates us in every sacrifice of the Incarnation and of Calvary". [14]

What it amounts to is that self-annihilation is a process of self-offering in terms of sacrificial love. In the sacrificial fire of love and devotion the mystic, without any reservations, offers himself to God. Both adoration of God and the sacrificial self-annihilation are closely related to each other. The sacrificial annihilation demands that the victim "must be cast into the fire of sacrifice, taken away from its place to be consumed and vanish utterly." [15] The Trika mysticism also expresses similar thoughts concerning the doctrine of self-annihilation. The self-death in Trika mysticism hovers around the devotion to Śiva. Through worship and adoration

the mystic offers himself as a gift in the mystical immolation. Through self-death the mystic recognises that God is absolutely sovereign. [16] The mystic "offers himself as victim to Śiva by thrusting himself into the ardent fire of the Supreme Consciousness which consumes corporeal and subtle differentiations". [17] In the sacrificial flames the soul is purified, and thereby responds to the divine will without any resistance. [18] In this manner the mystic realises his utter nothingness before the majesty and holiness of God. Lallā, the great Kashmiri Śaivite mystic, expresses this state clearly:

> When I beheld him (Śiva), that he was near me I saw that all was he, and that I am nothing [19]

As Christ, the Incarnate-Word, is the model for self-annihilation in Christian mysticism, so is Śiva, in Trika mysticism. Śiva as a model ascetic, offers himself as a divine oblation to his subjects. Thus Utpala says: "Glory to you, Lord, Master of the universe, who goes so far as to give your own self!" [20] This self-gift of Śiva has to be understood at two levels: at the macrocosmic level and at the microcosmic level. Śiva, at the macrocosmic level, offers himself in terms of creation, and at the microcosmic level, he offers himself in terms of grace.

As we have pointed out, the main roots for th doctrine of sacrificial self-annihilation are to be found in the concept of God's majesty. As God is majestic, so creature is said to be nothing. The contingency of the creature results in the adoration of God. God, being sovereignly free and majestic, is not dependent on anything. God is said to be plenitude and freedom. He is self-sufficient in himself.

It is against this understanding of God that the sacrificial mysticism has to be understood. In the *Old Testament*, for example, God's majesty is felt so intensely that the sacrificial mode of worship was understood as the best way of expressing gratitude to God. In the context of the *New Testament*, the idea of sacrifice takes completely a new turn. The death of Jesus on the cross is understood as a sacrifice: it is taken to mean "the total holocaust, totally given and totally offered to God, for whom he (Jesus) is totally immolated. He (Jesus) represents all mankind." [21] As the Father demands the sacrifice of the Son for the expiation of sins of mankind, so does Śiva as Bhairava (that is fearful aspect of Śiva) destroy all the dualities through the flame of the consuming-fire of Energy. In doing so, Śiva expresses his transcendent character. Abhinava explicitly states the significance of sacrifice in these words:

Sacrifice-the dissolution of all beings in the

ardour of the fire of the Supreme Lord's Consciousness, a fire possessed of a yearning to devour all beings in itself, and uniquely subsistent on their dissolution is (offered) to realise in its intensity the idea that all beings are in essence the ardour of the Supreme Lord Himself. [22]

In the *Vijnanabhairava* the nature of this mystic sacrifice is referred to in these words:

The mind swiftly offers the oblations-such as the elements, the faculties, and the objects of knowledge in the fire, the receptacle of the great Void. Such is the offering: the illumined Consciousness in the sacrificial ladle. [23]

In the above lines a direct reference is made to the Vedic sacrifice. A true sacrifice is said to be the one in which the entire universe is offered as an oblation, [24] and which, in terms of yogic language, means that a yogi offers his own body as an oblation in the fire of Consciousness' in which every aspect of phenomenality is devoured. Bhatta Nārāyana of Kashmir too speaks in similar terms. He says:

Even while united with the differentiated, ... you (Śiva) remain undifferentiated; we bring the offering to your Reality, the only realisation of

the ultimate Truth. [25]

Abhinava continues this theme of fire-oblation:

> When in the blazing flame of Consciousness he offers the pile of the great seed which consists in the manifestation of outward and inward fragments of thoughts, this is his fire-oblation, done with labour. [26]

The symbol of "fire" is not simply confined to Hinduism. In the *Old Testament* "fire" is used as a symbol for God's "embodiment". Even God appeared to Moses on the Mt. Sinia in the form of a "column of fire". [27] In the Deuteronomy Moses speaks of God in terms of a "consuming fire". And it is in this consuming fire of sacrificial love that the self is destroyed. St. John of the Cross, in his ecstatic language, speaks of this fire in these words:

> Oh, the great glory of you souls that are worthy to attain to this supreme fire, while it has infinite power to consume and annihilate you, it is certain that it consumes you not, but grants you a boundless consumation in glory. [28]

While elaborating the theme of sacrifice, Condren almost speaks in the language of Trika mysticism. He writes:

Sacrifice answers to all that God it is, recognises him as the sovereign Being to whom every being is owed in sacrifice. It regards him in his own incomprehensible grandeur and perfection as Being itself-beyond all invocations, all light, all thought, all names, and all term, beyond all representation, all love. [29]

Further:

In offering all to God, we profess that he (God) is all; in destroying all, we affirm that he (God) in no way is part of anything in the universe, and that nothing is in any way part of him. [30]

What, then, is the significance of the sacrifice of Jesus ? In the *Old Testament* sacrifice mainly consisted of offerings. All human offerings, whatever their mode may be, are imperfect. It is in this context that the sacrifice of Jesus has to be understood. Jesus, as God-Man, offered himself as a perfect sacrifice to the Father. At the point of Incarnation Jesus was both the priest and the victim, and in this role he fullfilled the will of the Father. The sacrifice of Jesus took place on the cross. However, Jesus' sacrifice is not co-terminus with his death. It is closely related to the resurrection of ascension of Jesus. "This entire risen state of Jesus ... is the actual return of the

victim to God, the union of Jesus with his Father, and the consequent acceptance and ratification of his entire sacrifice." [31] To put it in Pauline terms, it would mean that the Son of God, through Incarnation, becomes the Son of Man, [32] whereas through Resurrection the Son of Man becomes the Son of God. [32] As our "victim (Jesus Christ) is now in heaven in the final glory of his priesthood," he thereby is "the source of all our life." [33] The whole point of this doctrine is that the mystic, by offering himself as a sacrificial victim, dies to himself, and through the self-death, he finds himself. In other words, it means that it is in death that Life Eternal is to be found.

As in Trika mysticism, Śiva is engaged in constant creation and re-creation, so in Christianity God is said to be "ever creating, ever referring the world to himself, governing and renewing it by continual creation, so that the created being is ever emanating from God and has subsistance only in this continuous and perpetual emanation ... " [34] It establishes God's transcendence from, and immanence in, creation. Trika mysticism and Christianity touch each other in the doctrine of God's self-offering, and the purpose of this God's self-sacrifice is to elevate mankind to a non-temporal mode of existence.

The symbols of "light" and "darkness" have a special significance in the schools of mystical theology. The concept of "divine light" finds expression in such metaphors as, for example, light, candle, flame, etc. St. John of the Cross, in his *Living Flame of Love*, expresses the idea of "divine light" in such metaphors:

> Oh, lamp of fire, in whose splendour the deep caverns of sense which were dark and blind With strange brightness give heat and light together to their Beloved: [35]

Similar understanding of divine light is to be found in Lallā. This is what she has to say:

> At the end of moonlight to the mad one did I call, And soothe his pain with the love of God. Crying 'It is I, it is I, Lallā,' the Beloved I awakened. I became ne with him (God), and my mind lost the defilement of the ten. [36]

The idea of "night" or "darkness" is closely related to the idea of "light". Both of them are interdepenpent. Lallā's use of "night" or of "darkness" is almost identical with that of St. John of the Cross. They understand by "night" as a "night of purgation" in which the soul, through the pain of the night, goes through the process of purification. It is an attempt to tear the veil of darkness asunder from the cavern

of the heart, so that the Beloved may be found. As the gold has to be purified in the flames of the fire, so the soul has to be purged from the stains of impurity iu the flames of the night. The attempt of the mystic is to reach the bottom of the heart, for it is the centre of the soul, the abode of the Beloved, the source of the divine light and of knowledge. It is the lamp of light in the heart which destroys darkness, that is, ignorance. The process of purgation is painful, and therefore finds expression in the symbol or dark night. Look at these beautiful lines of St. John of Cross concerning the dark night:

On a dark night, kindled in love with yearnings-oh, happy chance!
I went forth with being observed, my house being now at rest.
In darkness and secure, by the secret ladder, disguised-oh happy chance!
In darkness and concealment, my house being now at rest.
In the happy night, in secret, when none saw me,
Nor I beheld aught, without light or guide, save that which burned in my heart.
This light guided me more surely than the light of noonday
To the place when he was waiting me-
A place where none appeared.
Oh, night that guided me, oh, night more lovely than the dawn,

Oh, night that joined Beloved with lover, lover transformed in the Beloved. [37]

Compare these lines of Lallā with those of St. John of the Cross:

With passionate longing did I, Lalla, go forth.
Seeking and searching did I pass the day and night.
Then, lo, saw I in mine own house a learned man,
And that was my lucky star and my lucky moment when I laid hold of him.
Slowly, slowly, did I stop my breath in the bellows-pipe (of throat).
Thereby did the lamp blaze up within me,
And then was my true nature revealed unto me.
I winnowed forth abroad my inner light,
So that, in the darkness itself, I could seize (the truth) and hold it tight. [38]

St. John of the Cross defines dark night as "purgative contemplation, which causes passively in the soul the negation of itself and all things." The soul, during the period of dark night, is purified til it reaches the goal, which is "the state of the perfect, which is that of Divine union of the soul with God." [39] In Trika mysticism the *dark night of Śiva* (*Śivarātri*) has a similar significance. In so far as the soul is in the state of differentiation,

it is in darkness. But when the soul, through the night of Śiva, goes through the pangs of pain, and experiences absence of God, there is a pugation in the soul, and ultimately the lamp of knowledge is ignited in the cavern of the heart, which destroys ignorance. The lamp of knowledge is ignited with the flames of love. [40]

The experience of the night connotes a spiritual *metanoia*, a total conversion towards God.

The dark night, according to St. John, consists of two parts, namely, the active night of the sense and the passive night of the spirit. When the soul goes through the active night of the sense, it goes through the purgation of the sensual faculties. [41] The beginners, who set out on the spiritual path, have initially to go through the pain of this night. Unless the senses achieve purity, it is not possible for the soul to engage in meditation. The beginner must spend his time in prayer, fasting, meditation, and in ascetical practices. He must make every effort at self-death. [42] These spiritual exercises, as it were, lull the soul into a kind of sleep. After the sleep, there descends deep quietude upon the soul as well as intense yearning for God. There is thus harmony between the faculties of the senses as well as the faculties of the soul. Due to this harmony and quietude active meditation comes to an end. [43] For, "in order that the interior motions and acts of the soul may come to

be moved by God divinely, they must first be darkened and put to sleep ... until they have no more strength". [44]

When the soul, through the active night, has reached the state of quietude, it thereby passes into the passive night of the spirit. In the first night the senses and the inner faculties are prepared "for the reception of Divine influences and illuminations in greater abundance than before." [45] The result is that God sets the beginners "in the state of progressives-which is that of those who are already contemplative". In the night of the spirit the contemplative is made ready for "the Divine union of perfect love." [46] This elevated path is also referred to as "the spiritual night of infused contemplation, through which the soul journeys with no other guide or support than the Divine love which burned in my heart."[47]

The soul, in the night of the spirit, "no longer meditates nor reflects in the imaginative sphere of the sense... For God now begins to communicate himsel to it, no longer through the sense, but by pure spirit ...by an act of simple contemplation." [48] Although in the night of the sense the soul, in the beginning, is made to experience the joy of the spirit, but there comes a period when it has to go through spiritual aridities. It is a period of trial and tribulation in which the soul is unable to meditate, or concentrate

on the divine images in prayer. The contemplatives-because of aridities-"suffer considerable affliction in this night, owing not so much to aridities they undergo as to the fear of having gone astray. Since they do not find any satisfaction or support in good things, they believe there will be no more spiritual blessings for them and that God has abandoned them." [49] The pain of aridity is so intense that the soul "no longer has any power to work or to reason with its faculties concerning the things of God". [50]

However, the spiritual aridity is a process of complete purgation. After this stage, there is an infused contemplation in which there is an inflow of God in the soul. This inflow purifies the soul from its imperfections and ignorance. "God secretly teaches the soul and instructs it in perfection of love, without its doing anything, or understanding of what manner is this infused contemplation." [51]

The dark night is not simply to be viewed as a mere purgative night; it is a night of purification whereby the soul is annihilated and consumed in the divine fire of God's love. [52] God's fire of love acts upon the soul in the same manner as the natural fire does on wood. The divine flame penetrates so deep into the soul that the soul itself vanishes. The fire destroys the clouds of ignorance and of impurity. This is how St. John of the Cross describes the process:

This is naught else by his (God's) illumination of the understanding with supernatural light, so that it is no more a human understanding but becomes Divine through union with the Divine. In the same way the will is informed with Divine love, so that it is a will that is no less than Divine... So, too, it is with memory; and likewise the affections and desires are all changed and converted divinely, according to God. And thus this soul will now be a soul of heaven, heavenly, and more Divine than human. [53]

The treatment of the dark night in Trika mysticism is almost similar to that of Christian mysticism. Abhinavagupta, while expressing his intense adoration for the ineffable Śiva, speaks of the *mystical night of Śiva* (*Śivarātri*) in these words: "Light of all lights, darkness of all darknesses! To these lights and to these darknesses, brightness without equal, homage" [54] Utpaladeva, too, adores the Night of Śiva in similar terms by speaking of it as that night of Siva which is "inexpressible» and which "reigns supreme, Śiva whose radiant essence spreads its own brightness. It is in it that the moon and the sun as well as the other (dualities)

penetrate when they set". [55]

The mystical night of Śiva is spoken of under different names, and each name is said to represent an aspect of Śiva. One such night, for example, is spoken of as the *night of undifferentiation*, another one as the *night of annihilation*. It is a night in which the contemplative delves deep into the secrets of the Self. When there is a total and complete plunge into the recesses of the soul, there is a progression, a spiritual growth which results in the divine illumination of love of God. In the secrets of the night, the soul does not understand the mechanism of illumination. The divine mystery of love is so intense and ineffable that the soul remains happy in its non-knowning- "In a way that I did not know, I acquired the nectar of your (Śiva's) love, that I had not known previously. May it now, in the same manner nourish me, O Sovereign One!" [56]

The night expresses itself in diverse ways. When the night overtakes the will, then the mystic's heart burns with a passionate yearning for the Beloved. The only desire is that of the Beloved. When the soul suffers long periods of God's absence, it is called the *night of pain*. When there is the *night of thought*, it means that all false ideas and concepts are obliterated in the purgation of this night. The more thoughts are purified in the night, the more illumina-

tive and divine thoughts become. No more does one think of oneself; there is only one thought, and that is that of Śiva. Says the great mystic-philosopher of Kashmir (Utpala): "The lover adores you perpetually Lord, in the state of *the night of Śiva* when there is not the slightest sign of a light, and when the entire universe is very drowsy". [57] In whatever state a mystic may be, whether asleep or awake, he is aware of his *yogic sleep* (*yoganidrā*); it is a state of non-duality, a state in which dualities are offered in the fire of Consciousness. It is a state in which the heart as well as the mind are stripped of concepts, images, of all that which is not Śiva. It is a state in which pure consciousness subsists in itself and without state. It is a state of love in which the heart plunges into bottomless and infinte cavern of Siva. It is sa state which Bhatta Nārāyana speaks thus:

> O that we may see your (Śiva's) interior cavern, enchanting and profound, in darkness dissipated on all sides by the Light Supreme! [58]

> Once the soul enters into the bottomless cavern of Śiva, there is the experience of the Effulgent Supreme Light-a Light which destroys spiritual darkness within and without. This experience also expresses the double-edged character of the Supreme Energy (Śakti), which for the

ignorant is the source of illusion or obscuration, and, for the liberated, source of freedom. Rūmī gives vent to this same experience when he says:

On the day when you pass over my grave, bring to mind this terror and confusion of mine; Fill full of light that bottom of the tomb, O eye and lamp of my Light...[59]

What the mystic aims at is to reach that bottomless cavern of the heart–the abode of Śiva–which is virgin and unexplored; it is where the Supreme Light of Śiva is to be fouud. Śiva reveals himself in the abysmal light of "torch of unity". It is an illumination which is ignited by the sacrificial flames of love, and in this sacrificial love the mystic offers himself, entirely and totally, as an oblation in the Fire of Consciousness. However, the sacrificial oblation is possible if the mind kills itself in order that the "torch of unity" may shine within secret chambers of the heart. It is in the death that freedom is found. [60] In this death-freedom the mystic has the "cosmic illumination", which means the discovery that the cavern is the "heart of cosmos". [61]

This long journey of the contemplative is filled both with pain and joy. When the mystic suffers the pain of absence of God, the experience is extremely painful. It makes the mystic cry: "For those of us who take delight in you, there is no pain, neither in

the begining, nor in the middle, nor in the end. Nevertheless, Lord, it is pain which causes us to weaken! Explain to us, how can this be!" [62]

The intensity of spiritual suffering inceases to the extent there is spiritual growth. while using the metaphor of a cotton-pod, Lallā describes the difficulties a mystic has to encounter on his journey:

Lalla, went forth in the hope of (blooming like a cotton flower.
Many a kick did the cleaner and the carder give me.
Gossamer made from me did the spinning woman lift from the wheel,
And a hanging kick did I receive in the weaver's work-room.
When the washerman dashed me on the washing-stones,
He rubbed me much with fuller's earth and soap when the tailor worked his scissors on me, piece by piece,
Then, Lalla, did I obtain the way of the Supreme. [63]

The nature of pain is such that the mystic feels helpless. The only help he can seek is from God. This expectation of the divine succour alone helps the soul to cross the ocean of anguish. Through this

pain the mystic is made aware of his own impurity, of imperfection, and so on. He feels that it is because of his own shortcomings that he is unable to experience the Divine bliss. [64] In deep anguish, the mystic prays: "Make me penetrate forcefully, Lord, into my own home". [65] At this stage the mystic feels as if he is suspended in the mid-air, that is, on the one hand, there is pull towards the pleasures of the world, and, on the other, the soul yearns for the eternal bliss of the Lord. Thus doubt arises, and the mystic is made to say: ' I turn away from the pleasures of the world as I am sprinkled with a drop of ambrosia from your union with me, but this is so rare and the drop so little! Will I not be (now on) deprived of both at the same time ?" [66]

The mystic feels uncertain, and he is not able to concentrate on the Lord. He is torn between the pleasures of the world and those of the Lord. It is a pain of suspension-and the mystic bears this pain in perseverance. In the beginning, the mystic directs his entire attention on Śiva, When there is an experience of the sweet presence of Śiva, the anxiety increases, in that the mystic does not want to loose this presence. He wants to possess it. The more his desire for possession increases, the more his anxiety develops. The pain heightens to such an extent that the mystic feels a kind of death: "And if now my

spirit, although lifted by ardour, does not even approach the Essence of the Self, then, alas, I die!" [67]

In this ordeal of pain it is love alone which quietens it. In the midst of this pain, the mystic cries:

> At the end of moonlight to the mad one did I call,
> And soothe his pain with the love of God.
> Crying 'It is I, Lallā, –it is I, Lallā', the Beloved I awakened.
> I became one with him, and mind lost the defilement of the ten. [68]

It is love alone which prepares the soul for the ultimate illumination. It is love alone which quietens the heart and also activates the inner longing for the sweet joy of God's presence. "Even though your (God's) essence is inconceivable-therefore, beyond contemplation–it shows itself to those who love you as soon as they begin to contemplate". [69] The mystic, while in contemplation, is submerged in the ocean of love. It is in this ocean that the mystic has the privilege to experience peace, joy, ecstasy of madness, mystical sleep, etc. Ultimately he arrives at a state of experience which is

passionless and desireless-a state of passivity. It is the goal of the mystic's journey. It is the state of Beatific Vision of Christian mysticism. Abhinavagupta has explained the nature of this Beatific Vision in these words:

> All this is therefore one Reality-a Reality undivided by time, unconfined by space, unfeebled by accidents, unconstrained by configurations, unexpressed by words and unmanifested by norms of knowledge. It is the cause, at its own will and pleasure, of the attainment of the essence of these things from time to norms. It is sovereignly free Reality, the concentration of beatitude. [70]

References:

1] See William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York, 1958).

2] *Tantrasara*, ch. 1.

3] Al-Ghazali, *Al-Ghazāli's Mishkāt al-Anwār (The Niche for Lights)*, tr. by W. H. T. Gairdner (London, 1924), p.97.

4] *Basic writings of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. Anton C.Pegis (New York, 1945), I-II, Q. 68 A. 2, p. 531.

5] John of St. Thomas, *The Gifts of the Holy Spirit*

tr. Dominic Hughes (New York, 1951), p.32.

6] *Ibid.*, p. 33.

7] Abhinavagupta, *Īśvarapratyabhijñā Vimarśini*, iv 2. 2.

8] Ksemraja's commentary on the *Stavacintāmani* of Bhatta Nārāyana, v. 58.

9] Utpaladeva, *Śivastrotāvali*, xx. 19.

10] See St John of the Cross, *The Ascent*, i.4.3; i.4.4; i.6.1; i.5.7. Cf. Prov. 31:30; Lk. 19:19; ICor. 3:19; Rom. 1:22.

11] The opening verse of the *Vijñānbhairava*.

12] Heri Bremond, (ed.) *A Literary History of Relîgious Thought iu France*, (New York, 1936), p.. 12.

13] Francois Amiot writes: "The vigorous expression of 'dispossession' or *kenosis* emphasises the extent of the reuunciation that Christ accepted. Instead of assuming in his human nature a rank consonant with his divinity, he took the status of a slave or servant, that is to say a human nature like our own and subject to all its limitations, including suffering and death". *The Key Concepts of St. Paul* (New York, 1962), p.112.

14] Bremond, *op cit.*, p. 298.

15] *Ibid.*, p. 318.

16] *Ibid.*, pp. 47,49.

17] Bhatta Nārāyana, *op cit.*, v. 11.

18] Maheśvarānanda, Mahārthamañjari, v. 66.

19] Lallā, *Lallā-Vākyāni, or The wise Savings of Lal Ded: A Mystic Poetess of Ancient Kashmir*, ed and tr. by Sir George Grierson and Lionel D. Barnet. (London, 1920), q. 31.

20] Utpala, *op. cit.*, xiv. 12.

21] Le R. P. de Condern, *L'Idée du Sacerdoce et du, Sacrifice de Jesus* 1849), pp. 53, 59.

22] Abinavagupta, *Tantrāsāra*, ch. 4.

23] *Vijñānabhairava*, v.149.

24] Cf. *Rigveda*, viii.3.16.

25] Bhaṭṭa Nārāyana, *op.cit.*, v.ll.

26] Abinavagupta, *Paramārthasāra*, v.76.

27] Deut. 4:24.

28] St. John of the Cross, *The living flame of love*, tr, and ed. E. Allison Peers (Garden City, NY 1962), pp. 18 2-3.

29] Condern, *op.cit.*,p. 59.

30] *Ibid.*

31] Eugene Aloysius Walsh, *The Priesthood in the writings of the French School: Berulle, De Conderns Olier* (Washington D.C., 1949), p.10.

32] Cf. Rom.1:3-4.

33] Walsh, *op.cit.*, pp. 19-20.

34] Bremond, *op. cit.*, pp- 108-9.

35] St. John of the Cross, *The living Flame of love op.cit.*, pp. 81-137; 205-261.

36] Lallā, *op. cit.*, q. 105.

37] St John of the Cross, *The dark night of the soul*, tr. and ed. E. Allison Peers (Garden City, NY, 1959) stanzas 1–5.

38] Lallā, *op.cit.*, qs. 3–4.

39] *Dark Night*, pp. 36–37.

40] Bhatta Nārāyana, *op.cit.*, v.12.

41] *The dark night of the soul*, p. 27.

42] *Ibid.*, pp. 36, 38.

43] *Ibid.*, p. 87.

44] *Ibid.*, p. 153.

45] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

46] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

47] *Ibid.*, p. 26.

48] *Ibid.*, pp. 67–68.

49] *Ibid.*

50] *Ibid*, p. 69.

51] *Ibid.*, p. 100; cf. p. 193.

52] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

53] *Ibid*, p. 146.

54] *Īśvarapratyabhijñā Vimarśinī*, i 1 see also *Bodhapañcadaśika*, v. 1.

55] Utpala, *op. cit.*, iv. 22.

56] *Ibid.*, xvi. 5.

57] *Ibid.*, iv. 22.

58] Bhaṭṭa Nārāyana, *op. cit.*, v. 12.

59] Rumi, *The Mystical Poems of Rūmī First selection, Poems* 1-200, tr. by. A. J. Arberry (Chicago, 1968), no. 193, vv. 1-2, p. 159.

60] Bhaṭṭa Nārāyana, op. *cit.*, v. 29

61] *Ibid.*, v. 12.

62] Utpala, op. cit., xx. 13.

63] Lallā, *op. cit.*, qs. 102–103.

64] Utpala, *op. cit.*, xiii.2.

65] *Ibid.*, v. 1.

66] *Ibid.*, viii .9.

67] Bhaṭṭa Nārāyana, *op. cit.*, v.52

68] Lallā *op. cit.*, q. 105.

69] Utpala, *op. cit.*, xx. 19.

70] Abhinavagupta, *Tantrasāra*, ch. 2. Francisco Suarez speaks of the Beatific Vision as "a simple cognition without any comparison or discourse. For it is a knowledge of a higher and divine order; hence, just as God, without composition, sees predicate in subject and their mutual union, effect in cause, or conclusion in principle-so also

the blessed creature, even more, perceives all that he knows through the knowledge in a simple intuition, which is indeed most true of the Vision, in so far as it terminates in God–for, as such, it is most simple even on part of the object (the divine essence), because in the latter it manifests the most simple Truth in which there is no composition at all. If, however, the Vision terminates in the creature, even so it is simple in itself–for it manifests all things in one most simple and eminent Presentative Form (the divine essence). And lastly (this Vision of the creature in God) is the same most simple act as the Vision of God Himself. *De Deo uno et Trino*, lib. 2, cap 18, num. 7.

THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN MYSTICISM

Both mystics and mystical scholars tell us that the nature of mystical awareness is characterised by ineffability, that is, it is an experience of a transcendent character. An experience which is ineffable and transcendent, has to be different from the kind of experience which people experience commonly. A transcendent experience of reality, therefore, goes beyond or transcends the empirical mode of experience. An experience whose character is basically ineffable will evidently find i difficult to express itself in such linguistic modes of thought which are only capable of expressing conventional experiences. This means that the mystical awareness of reality has to be (of necessity) non-verbal in character, since words and concepts express, explain and describe only that which they are intended to express, that is, conventional experiences. The mystics, even though they know the limitations of linguistic modes of expression, make

use of words concepts and symbols. How ever, their use of language has to be of a different order, that is, the mystical experience is radically different from the experience of the non-mystics. It is necessary, therefore, to keep in mind, while discussing the nature of mystical awareness, that mystical experience is not the same as the conventional experience, and therefore the use of language will have a different significance at the mystical level.

The term mysticism has an ambiguous character. The term has been used for any kind of experience which usually does not fall within the realm of common experience. It has been used to explain magical and occult phenomena, because such events are said to transcend the realm of nature. However, our use of the term has a different connotation. We shall understand by the term a kind of inner illumination of reality which results in redemption or freedom from the conventional constructs of life. It is a kind of experience in which there is an absence of external presence. [1] The mystical awareness is a kind of experience in which the mystic is said to apprehend the ultimate reality, in which there is a purification of mental and emotional life, in which inner peace and harmony is felt, in which freedom from the space-time continuum and constru-

cts is attained, and in which there is an expansion of consciousness.

The fundamental pre-requisite of spiritual life is said to be the inner purification. Unless inner dispositions and attitudes are purified, there is no possibility of having a right perception or apprehension of reality. It is not simply an assertion of the mystics, but all religions the world over demand this pre-requisite from their adherents. This assertion connotes that the means are as important as the end, that is, the means have to be evaluated in the context of the goal. It means that the object of knowledge, particularly in the context of mysticism, is closely related to the means of knowledge the mystic employs for the attainment of right perception of the object. The mystical awareness, being of transcedent nature, has to adopt such a mechanism of means of knowledge which transcend the ordinary means. It means that there has to be a radical and complete transformation of the mechanism of perception. By transforming the mechanism of perception, the mystic is able to go beyond the appearance of things, which, on the one hand, denote rejection of the empirical world, and on the other hand, it means the expansion of consciousness. Rejection of the world and the expansion of consciousness mean, for the mystic, transcendence of space-time limitations and the

awareness, of that reality which is free from limitations, namely, infinity.

Fundamental to religious or mystical life is the assertion that the individual "I" is not the same as total consciousness or psyche. In so far as man functions in the realm of individuality, his understanding of reality will remain limited. He lives in the prison-shell of words, images and ideas. He imposes these constructs and images upon reality, and thereby imprisons reality in the prison-house of language. However, psyche is radically different from the ego-consciousness, in the sense that it is new and pure. In total consciousness there is an awareness which was not there before when one functioned at the level of conventional consciousness. At the level of conventional consciousness there is a new perception of the world and of oneself. It is a shift in perception. It may be difficult to explain the nature of total consciousness because it is said to be different from the ego-consciousness. However, this shift of perception-from ego-consciousness to total consciousness -may be explained in terms of concepts, that is, the use of language at the higher level of consciousness produces a kind of catharsis both in perception and thought: it sees things in a new way and thinks of them in a different manner. In this shift of perception the mystic transcends the field of intellect as well as of

thought. This transcendence is not a total rejection of the intellect or of ideas; rather in this transcendence they are included. The awareness of expanded consciousness has to be viewed in terms of comprehensiveness and purity. It means that whatever is perceived has the qualities of comprehensiveness as well as of purity. These qualities of comprehensiveness and of purity of the perceived object find expression in a kind of language which makes the mystic aware of the potentiality as well as of limitations of language.

It is usually asserted that the nature of mystical awareness is holistic, whereas that of ordinary experience is fragmentary and limited. By contrasting the mystical awareness with that of conventional awareness, it is said that the former kind of awareness is characterised by total awareness, by ineffability, etc. As such, mystical awareness is spoken of as "transcendent knowledge", "pure intuition", "perfect wisdom", etc. The mystical awareness is spoken of in such terms because it is the knowledge of that reality which is the underlying principle of all that which we know and perceive in our ordinary experience. In contrast to the mystical awareness, the ordinary forms of knowledge are spoken of in terms of "limited awareness", a knowledge which is that of "apparent reality", and a "knowledge of sense

objects". These two levels or modes of knowledge are spoken of subjective or objective awareness. The mystical awareness, being subjective, is said to be intuitive, that is, it is a kind of supersensory knowledge which cannot be properly expressed in words and concepts. We can make use of concepts only in a suggestive sense. Concepts express only one-to-one relation, whereas mystical awareness is holistic, and comprehends all that which is to be comprehended. The total consciousness, in its totality, is able to comprehend the relation of the whole to its parts. The conventional or ego-consciousness comprehends only the parts. This comprehension may be termed as the mystical intuition or insight. [2] As far as the other mode of knowledge-objective mode of knowledge-is concerned, there are some mystics who assert that their perception of reality is in terms of the other, that is, reality is experienced in terms of disjunction, as an object outside that is to be perceived. The mystic in his mystical experience experiences a kind of contact with this transcendent reality. The mystics, in the words of W. R. Inge, "are convinced that they are or have been in contact with objective reality, with the supreme Spiritual Power behind the world of our surface consciousness". [3] Thus the ultimate reality is seen to be totally and radically different from the individual self. This mystical experience may be said to be characterised

by the awareness that the soul is closely related with "the primal source of all reality". It is a relationship between two dissimilar entities: man and God.

Whether the reality is viewed in monistic or theistic terms, it is a fact that mystics are agreed that, in order to attain the state of total consciousness, the cessation of the modifications of the mind is necessary, that is, the adept must transcend the realm of thought. Theistically minded mystics assert this viewpoint because the destruction of self-will connotes that the will of God alone prevails. Furthermore, it means that the individual submits to the will of God, and thereby the ultimate reality is experienced as the expression of the inmost soul. Monistically minded mystics, by transcending the dichotomies of the mind, arrive at that awareness whereby reality is experienced within. The necessity of transcending the mind is well expressed by Jacob Boehme. He tells his disciples that they should bring to an end all thinking process for the simple reason that God's will and communication may be known.[4] In the *Yogasutras* an equal emphasis, if not more, is given on this aspect of spiritual life–that is, the purpose of yoga meditation is to eliminate the modifications of the mind. In the Buddhist texts almost identical reasoning is offered: in order to apprehend reality, that is, in order to arrive at the

state of all-knowledge, elimination of thought-process from the mind is necessary. Thus, the Buddha, while addressing Subhuti, is made to say:

> Why is (perfect insight) an unthinkable enterprise ? Because unthinkable are Tathagata-hood, Buddhahood, Self-existence, and the state of knowledge. And on these one cannot reflect with one's thought, since they cannot be an object of thought, or of any of the *dharmas* which constitute thought. [5]

However, there is a great difference between the viewpoint of Boehme and that of the Buddhists. Boehme desires the elimination of human will in order that the penetration of the divine will may be facilitated into the soul. He sees human will in opposition to the divine will. In so far as man functions at the level of self - will, there is no possibility of knowing the divine will. As a counter will, the adept will have to bring his own will under the control of the divine will. It means that it is not human will which wills; rather it is the divine will which wills in and through the human will. For a Buddhist, on the other hand, the matter is not as simple as in the case of Boehme. A Buddhist, particularly a Mahāyānist, feels that in so far as man

is subject to his own willing and thinking, he can never be able to apprehend reality, that is, Tathagatahood or Buddhahood precisely because Tathagatahood is not an object of and for knowledge. A Buddhist wants to transcend willing and thinking because he desires freedom or redemption from the physical and personality desires. A Buddhist wants to eliminate the thought-process of the mind. in order to achieve freedom from the mind. His desire is not to subject himself to some super-human will.

Elimination of thought—so the mystics assert—results either in union or identity with reality. An adept who has reached this state of union or identity with reality is said to have realised the authentic self, or, in the words of a Buddhist, "thusness" or "suchness" of life. Thus the essence of mystical awareness is said to reside in the realisation of union or identity with reality. Evelyn Underhill, while describing the essential characteristics of mysticism, writes:

> Mysticism, in its purest form, is the science of ultimates, the science of union with the Absolute, and nothing else, and....the mystic is the person who attains to this union, not the person who talks about it. Not to *know about*, but to *Be* is the mark of the real initiate. [6]

In this mystical union or identity with the ultimate reality a mystic transcends the normal modes or forms of language. That is to say, our normal modes of knowledge find their expression in words and concepts, who have, as it were, one-to-one correspondence. The mystics, on the other, maintain that the mystical awareness, being super-sensory in character, is trans-linguistic, and therefore beyond the reach of language. In other words, it means that the mystical awareness is not to be viewed either in subjective or objective terms of knowledge. It is a knowledge of transformation, that is, the mystic becomes, or is transformed into, *that* which is attained in the mystical awareness. So the essence of mystical awareness means to "become" or "to be". M. Smith aptly describes this aspect of mystical awareness when she writes:

> The final stage of the way is the Unitive Life, in which the soul passes from Becoming to Being, man beholds God face to face, and is joined to Him in a progressive union, a union which is a fact of experience consciously realised. [7]

It is asserted that this union or identity with reality results in a radical existential transformation of the mystic. He no more is his former self, the self which functioned at the level of space-time continuum. The mystic's perception becomes so comprehen-

sive that he perceives what he has been, is, and will be. The mystic, therefore, regards his experience of the ultimate reality as self-authenticating. Although the experience is of a personal kind, yet the mystic cannot regard it as subjective or personal because it is an experience of "suchness", which transcends the realm of subjectivity. The experience can only be termed as trans-subjective. [8]

As we have already said, it is not possible to describe mystical awareness in words and concepts. It is, therefore, assumed that the only proper way or describing the mystical awareness is the use of symbols and concepts on account of their being suggestive rather than literal. When an account of something is given, it is either a description of a subjective state or of an objective event. If this be the case, it would then mean that the mystical awareness has to be either a subjective state or an objective event. If description is characterised either by subjectivity, or by objectivity, then the claim of the mystics that the mystical awareness results in the inner transformation has to be seen from a different horizon. In such an assertion the mystic is not concerning himself with the description of reality; rather he is focussing his attention on such causes and conditions which transform the inner being of the mystic. Thus the mystic aims at finding such ways and

means which would, by transforming him within, free him from the debilitating bondage of convention. The conventional conditions, according to the mystic, are responsible in obscuring the real nature of man. Man, by living in the prison-house of convention, is unable to know his real nature. Therefore, the mystic aims at achieving that state of freedom whereby he is no more embedded to the conventional mode of life in which words are seen to have a one-to-one co-relation with individual entities.

From the above discussion it becomes clear that the claims of a mystic are either transformative in orientation or descriptive in nature. A descriptive account of a mystic needs to be analysed on the touchstone of logic, whereas a transformative aspect of the claim can be understood in the context of a mystic's inner perceptions and actions. However, transformative aspect of a claim is not totally void of description; it cannot be so. Both aspects of a claim are interdependent and inter-related.

However, it is assumed by some that the mystical assertions are descriptive in nature. If an account of mystical awareness is said to be descriptive, it either has to be a description of a subjective state or that of an objective event. If it is assumed for example, that the function of mystical claims is to describe the attributes of God, then logic tells us

that the attributes which are predicated of God belong to the finite realm. Predication is possible only of that which is sensible, and therefore within the range of senses. Predicates of God can only be derivative, that is, they are derived from the causal power of God. These attributes cannot directly belong to God. Language can be used only for that which is known. God, being transcendent, is said to be absolute ineffability. That which is absolutely ineffable can never be described or spoken of. It is this claim of ineffability that Stace criticises. He writes:

> If the mystical consciousness were absolutely ineffable, then we would not say so because we should be unconscious of such an experience: or in other words, we should never have had such an experience. [9]

If the mystical claim of ineffability is accepted, then the role of language is quite limited. The function of words should be either to describe the nature of God, or to explain the nature of the transcendent experience. It seems that language miserably fails on both counts, that is, it seems to be incapable of describing what God is, and also it is not in a position to explain in appropriate terms the exact nature of mystical experience.

It is also maintained that language can function

only on a symbolical level when concerning itself with the description of that which is neither measurable nor quantifiable. Language can speak of God only in terms of symbols, When words are used in relation to God, they have not to be construed in literal or one-to-one correspondance terms. So what, in this context, language relates is in terms of resemblance. A religious person, for example, may find some kind of divine resemblance in a non-divine event. However, this interpretation of language concerning the nature of reality fails. If reality is ineffable, it is by definition beyond description. It means we cannot conceptualise that which is beyond concepts. In other words, the nature of reality is such that it can have no resemblance with that which belongs to a different order of being. Seeing this problem, Stace proposes that it is of importance to make a distinction between the experience and the rememberance of experience.

> Mystical experience, *during* the experience, is wholly unconceptualizable and therefore wholly unspeakable. This *must* be so. You cannot have a concept of anything *within* the undifferentiated unity because there are no separate items to be conceptualised. Concepts are only possible where there is a multiplicity or at least a duality....But afterwards when the experience is remembered the matter is quite different. For we are then in our ordinary-intellectual consciousness ... Since

we now have concepts, we can use words. We can *speak* of an experience as 'undifferentiated', as 'unity', as 'void', and so on. [10]

From the above discussion of Stace it seems that what actually a mystic is saying about his experience. is an account what he remembers of his experience. This remembrance of experience he puts in words and concepts. Therefore, all mystical expressions, terms and words are but the expression of a remembered experience. The mystic, by using a common language, classifies his experience into "sensuous and non-sensuous and assigns mystical experience to the latter class." [11] Thus the mystical terms like "void". "darkness", etc. are not metaphors. The yare literal translations of the experience the mystic had. Out of his memory he describes the kind of experience he had. Thus Stace continues:

> One empties the mind of all sensations, images, and thoughts of all particular empirical contents. What is left is an emptiness. It is true that according to the mystics this emptiness, which is darkness, is also the shining forth of a great light.It is not merely the vacuum; it is the vacuum plenum. But the undifferentiated unity is a description of the negative side,the vacuum. Since the multiplicity of particulars has been obliterated, it is a unity. And since there are no distinctions of one particular from another, it is

undifferentiated. Plainly this is a literally correct description - if of course one believes that such a state of mind is ever reached, which is not now the question at issue. [12]

The role of language is not simply descriptive; it can be cathartic as well as evocative. When a mystic gives an account of his experience, he is not simply describing or explaining his experience. He may use the description of his experience as a means of catharsis or evocation, that is, he may desire to point out the way of freedom. Almost all the mystics have engaged themselves in this task. In order to drive our point home, we shall examine a Mahāyāna Buddhist text, namely, *The Perfection of wisdom in Eight Thonsand Lines (Ashtasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā)*. In this text the ultimate reality is referred to as Buddhahood, Tathagata, Emptiness, etc. When the text makes use of such terms concerning the ultimate reality, the intention is not to describe reality in terms of a subjective state or as an objective entity. The aim is rather different: it is to evoke an insight into such causes and conditions which would lead to the state of freedom from the conventional hopes and fears. It is an *a priori* assumption that conventional modes of knowledge are unable to comprehend the state of "all-knowledge" or gnosis. Concepts and terms can never express adequately the content of reality. However, concepts and terms can play a useful role

in so far one is not bound by the unconscious forces of concepts-formations. If one is free from the subconscious slavery of concepts,then no attachment will there be towards things which are apparent.

The state of Buddhahood is said to be the state of "all-knowledge". As such, this ultimate state is both unthinkable and unspeakable. [13] When our text uses negative concepts with regard to the ultimate reality, it does not mean that the text is advocating a line of thought in which language is dismissed. Language has, in its own context, meaning and significance. Language can be used as a pointer towards the state of perfect wisdom, or as a means of insight into the state of all-knowledge. If words and phrases are properly used, they can evoke a sense of joy; they can explain and describe the points of knowledge; they can, by creating a cathartic feeling within, transform feelings and emotions and thereby become a means for purification of thought. Languge can be used for the purpose of explanation, and in our text such a use of language is abundantly made of. This is how Subhuti makes use of language as a means of explanation:

> A Bodhisattva (an enlightened being) who courses in perfect wisdom and develops it, should not stand in form, etc. Because, when he stands in form, etc , he courses in its formative influence, and not in perfect wisdom. For, while

he courses in formative influence, he cannot gain perfect wisdom, nor exert h imself upon it, nor fulfil it. When he does not fulfil perfect wisdom, he cannot go forth to all-knowledge, so long as he remains one who tries to appropriate the essentially elusive. For in perfect wisdom form is not appropriated. But the non-appropriation of form, etc., is not form, etc. And perfect wisdom also cannot be appropriated .... The state of all-knowledge itself cannot be taken hold of, because it cannot be seized through a sign. [14]

In the above passage there are statements which have to be understood literally, whereas other statements cannot be construed as literal explanations. When, for example, Subhuti maintains that a Bodhisattva who "courses in formative influence. . . . cannot gain perfect wisdom"-has to be understood literally. Subhuti means everything literally what he says in it. It is a kind of statement of exhortation. However, when it comes to the description, in terms of concepts, of such realities which are abstract, the descriptions or concepts of such realities have not to be taken as literal statements. When, for example, it is said that the ultimate reality is "perfect wisdom" or "all-knowledge", the concepts of perfect wisdom or all-knowledge are not to be treated in the same manner as we would do with the conventional concepts. What the above passage aims at is the

avoidence of extremes, that is, the use of words or concepts should not be thought of as meaningless, and the dependence on concepts or forms should not result in bondage. The effort should be to avoid both extremes.

As we have already pointed out, the role of language is not simply confined to description; its role and range is much wider. Language can function at the level of catharsis; it can be used as means of bringing inner transformation. Words can evoke a sense of joy or elation within. The inner joy is not simply experienced when one attains the state of perfect wisdom; it can also be experienced when one knows that others too have this state of wisdom. One who is elated at the merit of the other performs himself an act of merit. Thus Subhuti tells us :

> (In his meditation Bodhisattva) piles up the roots of good of all those, all that quantity of merit without exception or remainder, rolls it into one lump, weighs it, and rejoices over it with the most excellent and sublime jublilation, the highest and utmost jubilation, with none above it, unequalled, equalling the unequalled. Having thus rejoiced, he utters the remark: 'I turn over into full enlightenment the meritorious work founded on jubilation. May it feed the full enlightenment (of mysel and of beings)' [15]

Subhuti's description of jubilation is not a literal account. If the desciption is taken literally, then it would mean that the terms function as some kind of sign-posts of some entities. Against this viewpoint Subhuti warns us in these words:

> The thought by which one has rejected and turnsd over .... that thought (of jubilation) is (at the time of turning over) extinct, stopped, departed, reversed. Therefore, what is that thought by which one turns over to full enlightenment ? Or what is that thought which turns over into full enlightenment the meritorious work founded on jubilation?... Nor is it possible to turn over that thought as far as its own being is concerned [16]

A double kind of negation is involved. The so-called description of jubilation at one's or of other's enlightenment is not a literal account. Neither the description nor the jubilation itself are the accounts of feelings or of perception. The aim of this description is not so much to give an exact description of jubilation or of enlightement as much as it is to produce a cathartic process of purification of perception and of feeling. Thus the function of words is seen in cathartic or transformative terms. Inner purification of feelings and of perception is needed because words can, like an enchantress, pervert the whole field of perception. It is because of this fact that not only Buddhist mystics, but all mystics,

emphasise that the words have to be eliminated at the level of enlightenment. The case is so because the state of enlightenment is not a point of view which can be described in conceptual terms; rather it is a state of insight, of right perception. It is for this reason that the mystics refer the state of enlightenment as the state of non-cognitive intuition. This means that words can be used in explaining the state of enlightenment. Thus Bodhisattva Maitreya tells us:

> The Bodhisattva must not, as a result of the thought by which he turns that (meritorious act) over, become one who perceives a thought. It is thus that the meritorious work founded on jubilation becomes something which is turned over into full enlightenment. If he does not perceive that thought (identifying it) as 'this is that thought', then a Bodhisattva has no perverted perception, thought or view. But if he perceives the thought by which he turns that over, (identifying it) as 'this is that thought', then he becomes one who perceives thought. As a result he has a perverted perception, thought and view. [17]

However, words or forms cannot totally be eliminated. Their use is essential. This aspect too is emphasised when the Buddha is made tosay:

In the future there will be some monks whose

bodies are undeveloped, whose moral conduct, thought and wisdom are undeveloped, who are stupid, dumb like sheep, without wisdom. Then they anounce that they will expound the perfection of wisdom; they will actually expound the counterfeit. They will expound the counterfeit perfections of wisdom by teaching the impermanence of form, etc. To strive for that insight, that, according to them, will be the coursing in the perfection of wisdom. But on the contrary, one should not view the impermanence of form, etc., as the destruction of form, etc. [18]

Both form and non-form have their respective functions. Words and terms have to be used in such a manner as would lead to the purification of perception. But one must not become dependent on words to such an extent that one becomes their prisoner. The aim is to attain freedom – and words must ultimately lead one to ultimate freedom from forms, and thereby experience void or have the insight into the state of non-form.

One of the major claims of the mystics is that the mystical awareness is characterised by the awareness of ultimate reality. It is also maintained that this spiritual knowledge of ultimate reality is radically different from conventional knowledge. If this be the case, then how shall we account for this

spiritual knowledge? Is this knowledge related in any manner with the conventional knowledge? Although the mystics claim that all forms of verbal communication concerning reality are unsatisfactory, yet they have to make use of words in order to communicate the content of their experience. A mystical state, which is said to be non-cognitive in nature, must of necessity be of a transcendent character, that is, it must radically be different from the conventional process of knowing. This is what Underhill says when she writes:

> Its aims are wholly transcendental and spiritual. It is in no way concerned with adding to, exploring, re-arranging, or improving anything in the visible universe. The mystic brushes aside that universe, even in its supernormal manifestation, ... (Mysticism) is the name of that organic process which involves the perfect consummation of the Love of God: the achievement here and now of the immortal heritage of man. Or, if you like it better - for this means exactly the same thing - it is the art of establishing his conscious relation with the Absolute. [19]

This ultimate reality, which is said to be transcendent in character, is experienced by the mystic in the unitive state. As such, the nature of the experience is said to be ineffable, and therefore

beyond the range of the mind. Since the mind cannot grasp the nature of reality, it is by transcending the mind that reality is apprehended. Mind can apprehend only that which belongs to the realm of measurement. That which is pure Being can never be grasped by the mind. What it amounts to saying is this: that the mystical awareness is different from the conventional knowing. This difference between the two forms of knowledge must reside in the distinctive character of their respective objects of knowledge. This distinction must also mean that the mystical knowledge is of different character than that of conventional knowledge.

Since the mystical knowledge of reality is said to be non-cognitive intuition, it can be related to the conventional knowledge only through the use of words and concepts. However, the moment ane ffort is made to conceptualise mystical awareness, the birth of paradoxes takes place. The use of paradoxes becomes unavoidable because antithetical concepts have to be juxtaposed. It means that, on the one hand, the undifferentiated awareness has to be related to the differentiated concepts and images. This relating of the undifferentiated whole with the differentiated concepts is done through the process of classification and through the principle of non-contradiction. In order to comprehend the awareness of pure Being in terms of conventional knowledge, two logical methods need

to be adopted, namely, the principle of non-contradiction and that of the excluded middle. By applying the principle of non-contradiction to mystical awareness, we come to understand that the knowledge of pure Being is different from the kind of knowledge which is referred to as conventional knowledge. This discrimination between the two forms of knowledge informs us that knowledge of a particular object is knowledge only of that particular object. In so far as the principle of excluded middle is concerned, it tells us that by negating the conventional knowledge we arrive at the knowledge of pure Being, and vice versa. What it amounts to saying is this: knowledge of pure Being is knowledge only of pure Being; it cannot be said to be mixture of transcendental knowledge and of conventional knowledge. Therefore, knowledge of pure Being cannot be said to be the knowledge of empirical entity or entities.

As we have already seen in our Buddhist text-*Astha*-not all forms of mystical terms or concepts are engaged in describing reality either in subjective or objective terms. Buddhists have a very important ontological concept in their metaphysical language, namely, the concept of *dependent origination*; and this concept will help us considerably in understanding the role of language in mysticism. According to this theory, there is no such an independent entity as uncaused cause or first cause in so far as our world of becoming is concerned. The world of our becoming, the world we live in, is the result of temporary

causes and conditions; and these causes and conditions are experienced as either subjective or objective entities. All living beings are responsible in causing the world of becoming we know and experience. The world is not a created realm of God; it is not a manifestation of the universal Spirit. The world of forms, whether mental or physical, arises because of objective conditions and subjective conditioning. The knowledge we possess of the world is itself responsible in conditioning the arising of the world of becoming we perceive and experience. [20]

This theory tells us that it is conditioning, whether subjective or objective, which is responsible in giving birth to forms. When applied to the use of language, this theory leads us to conclude that language can either, through the process of conditioning, bind a person or, through the process of de-conditioning, free him. Thus our language is as much responsible in causing the arising of the world of becoming as other causes and conditions may be. While the *Ashta* maintains that the state of all-knowledge is both unknowable and unspeakable, it is so because this state is not to be considered as a thing-in-itself. Thus the Buddhist texts do not want to commit themselves to the concept of pure Being. Thus the nature of things is said to be "emptiness" or "void". [21] In the *Ashta* non-substantiality of things or of forms is explained thus:

Born after the image of that Suchness is Subhuti

the Elder; hence born after the image of Tathagata. But that Suchness is also no Suchness, and after the image of that Suchness has been born.. And just as the Suchness of the Tathagata, which is immutable and undifferentiated, is nowhere obstructed, so also the Suchness of all dharmas, which is also immutable and undifferentiated. For the Suchness of the Tathagata, and the Suchness of all dharmas, they are both one single Suchness, not two, not divided. A non-dual Suchness, however,is nowhere, is from nowhere, belongs to nowhere. It is because it is a Suchness which belongs to nowhere that it is non-dual. [22]

To have an *insight* into the nature of things means to be aware of things as they really are. It is not an insight dependent upon the mechanism of concept-formation. The knowledge of Suchness of concept-formation. The knowledge of Suchness of one's own self as well as of things results the moment we free ourselves from the attachment to forms, concepts and images. However, this does not mean a complete exclusion of forms and ideas. Nothing of this kind is required. While participating in forms or concepts, the participant needs to remain detached from them. The knowledge of Suchness of things means to be free from attachments to forms. Whether it is state of all-knowledge or the knowledge of things we experience none of them are self-existing,

existents. [23] Thus nothing can be compared or spoken of. The real freedom, therefore, lies in going beyond both form and non-form. [24]

When it comes to the question of interpretation of mystical awareness, mystics do not agree on a common interpretation. They differ in their approach, in their use of words, concepts and images. When a mystic, for example, says that the nature of ultimate reality is unitary, his epistemological concern differs from the mystic who views reality in terms of ontological otherness. Also he sees language as a means of describing the nature of reality. From a soteriological viewpoint, it means that language loses its significance in the ocean of undifferentiated bliss. A mystic who, on the other hand, maintains that reality is a dynamic process, his epistemological concern is different. For him, words are not just descriptive ornamentation; rather he will see the function of words as a means for freedom from the mental-emotional attachments to both being and non-being, form and non-form. Seen from soteriological viewpoint, it would mean the cultivation of an awareness which is neither attached to nor afraid of form and non-form, and which sees everything in terms of "emptiness". However, both these forms of mysticism have a common soteriological goal, and it is to transform consciousness in such a manner as to enable one to

view reality comprehensively. Such a transformation is self-authenticating, in that it results in inner joy, bliss, peace and harmony.

However, the deepest value of transformation of consciousness has not to be seen simply in psychological or epistemological terms; it has a deep ontological significance. This transformation of consciousness gives birth to a new person. In biblical terms it means he is re-born, that is, the mystic dies to natural self; he leads a supernatural form of existence. In mystical terms it means that the adept's will, perceptions and intentions are purified to the extent he has realised the inner transformation of consciousness. This newness of the mystic does not reside in his being different from other ego-bound persons; this newness of the mystic is characterised by an awareness in which his perceptions or will are not his ego-bound perceptions. His will or perceptions remain dissolved in the unity of Being. In this way the mystic transcends his former ego-bound consciousness. He operates from the realm of total consciousness. It is this newness which distinguishes the mystic from other persons.

The soteriological significance of language is determined by the kind of awareness a mystic assumes of reality. If reality is assumed as an indeterminate Being-itself, then the role of language will be seen as negative, that is, the description of

reality will be in negative terms If reality is viewed in ontological otherness, then the use of words would be in terms of analogy. A mystical awareness which does not assume an existence of a self-existent being but views reality as a dynamic process, then the use of words is seen as a means of freedom from the attachment to the forms which express this very freedom. Thus language is not seen as a means of establishing reality; rather it functions as a catalyst in not allowing the establishment of forms. Thus the soteriological aim is to achieve freedom from forms. Forms and concepts are used for the purpose of freedom.

In conclusion, it may be said that mystical awareness or knowledge is different from the kind of awareness which we commonly experience. In this context the use of language depends on the way a mystic views reality. However, all forms of mysticism aim at transcending the empirical forms of concepts and forms. Language is not simply seen as a means of describing reality; it is also seen as a means of purification. Thus language functions both at practical level of spirituality and at theoretical level of explanation. In the final analysis of the word, the aim of the mystic is to achieve freedom from the very words and concepts which he makes use of for the purpose of this very freedom.

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17] *Ibid.*, p. 127.
18] *Ibid.*, p. 122.

19] Underhill, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

20] S. N. Dasgupta writes: "The true meaning of pratītyasamutpāda or śūnyavāda is this, that there no truth, no essence in all phenomena that appear. As the phenomena have no essence, they are neither produced nor destroyed; they really neither come nor go. They are merely the appearance of māyā or illusion. The void (*śūnya*) does not mean pure negation, for that is relative to some kind of position. It simply means that none of the appearances have any intrinsic nature of their own (*niḥsvabhāvatam*). "*History of Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1, pp. 140-41. On this very theme (.i.e. conditioned origination). VenkataRamanan points out that "they (i.e. conditioned origination and the Middle Way) yield truth of conditionedness of determinate entities and the relativity of specific concepts and conceptual systems; they bear again the all important truth that the conditioned is not ultimate in its conditioned nature or that the conditionedness of the conditioned is not its ultimate nature, but that in its ultimate nature the conditioned is itself the uncoditioned reality. And he (i.e. Nāgarjuna) finds in them what he considers as their most basic conception, viz., the distinction of the mundane and the ultimate. Thus he says in the Karika: 'My teachings of the Buddha are based on two

truths, the mundane and the ultimate. Those who do not know the distinction between these truths do not understand the profound meaning in the teachings of the Buddha'". *Nāgarjuna's Philosophy as Presented in the Mahā prajñāpāramitā Śāstra* (Vermont, 1966), p. 53.

21] Radhakrishnan explains the concept of Emptiness in these words: "To the Mādhyamikas reason and language apply only to the finite world To transfer the finite categories to the infinite would be like attempting to measure the heat of the sun by the ordinary thermometer. From our point of view the absolute is nothing. We call it sunya, since no category used in relation to the conditions of the world is adequate to it. To call it being is wrong, because only concrete things are. To call it non-being is equally wrong." *Indian Philosophy* (London, 1966), vol. 1, p. 663.

22] *The Perfection of wisdom* ..... p. 193.

23] "The Mādhyamika," "writes Radhakrishnan, "adopts a position midway between extreme affirmation and extreme nega tion. If the world were real, no changes can occur in it at all. Improvement and enlightenment are possible only if the world is plastic and in a state of constant becoming. As Chandrakirti, commenting on Nāgarjuna, observes: "If everything has its own self-essence, which makes it

impossible to pass from one state to another, how could a person desire to ascend, if he ever so desire, higher and higher on the scale of existence ?' We cannot do anything in a world perfect and real. So it must be unreal. Nāgarjuna asks: 'If you negate the doctrine of śūnyatā, you negate causation. If there were such a thing as selfessence, the multitudinousness of things must be regarded as uncreated and imperishable, which is tantamount to eternal nothingness. If there were no emptiness, there would be no attainment of what has not been attained, nor would there be the annihilation of pain nor the extinction of all the passions'. *Op. cit.*, p. 646

24] "Non-exclusiveness [śūnyatā] ... is of the very nature of wisdom [*prajñā*]. Rejecting the error of misplaced absoluteness, he [that is, the Buddhist mystic] reveals the conditioned as unconditioned and the unconditioned as the unconditioned. In this he is doing just what the sun does. The sun does not make the high low or the low high, but just reveals the nature of things as they are, the low as low and the high as high". K. Vr Ramana, *op. cit* , p. 42.

MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE AS A SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE

Mysticism is such a vast and complex theme that one can engage himself in the study of it from various dimensions. It is one's interest as well as the belief-system which will determine one's approach to the study of mysticism. A psychologist will naturally tend to reduce the mystical states to psychological norms, whereas a literary critic will not be so much interested in the validity of the mystical states as much as in the aesthetic quality of a mystical piece of writing. A theologian, on the other, may try, within his credal belief-system, to find out whether a particular mystical experience conforms to the articles of faith or not. A philosopher's concern may be to find out the nature and content of a mystical experience in the context of epistemology and ontology. It is one's nterest which is the deciding factor in one's approach to the study of mysticism. Their judgements, too, will have to be seen in the context of their interests. Our concern, however, is not determined by any one of the above approaches. Our desire is to find out whether a mystical experience on ts own can be considered as a source of knowledge concerning the transcendent reality. A mystic claims that he has, within the depths of his soul, experienced union with the transcendental reality. The nature

of this union is inexpressible and ineffable; it is beyond the modes of discursive thought; it can never be analysed with the empirical tools of knowledge. Since the nature of experience is said to be ineffable, it will be our effort to find out whether such an assertion has a cognitive value concerning the knowledge of the transcendent reality. The range of our study, therefore, is limited, as no attempt will be made at the psychological, theological or literary aspects of the mystical experience. We shall restrict ourselves to one point: to find out whether there is any cognitive depth in a mystical experience in so far as the knowledge of God is concerned.

It would be imprudent and unwise to accept the mystical assertion or claim uncritically and on its face value. It is accepted by most of the scholars that the basic structure of a mystical experience is almost the same. All the mystics of all religions-no matter to what historical period they may belong-are in agreement in so far as the basic structure of the mystical experience is concerned, that is, the mystics agree that the nature of the experience is supersensory and intuitive in the sense that it transcends the normal or empirical modes of perception. In other words, it means that the normal modes of sense-perception are suspended during the period of mystical experience. What it amounts to saying is that the mystical experience is in no manner the product of sense-perception. As such, it cannot be analysed and

explained in a kind of language or thought-system to which we are accustomed. Because of this character of experience, the mystics mostly communicate the content [in so far as it is possible] of their experience in symbolic or metaphorical modes of language.

Although mystics may be in agreement as far as the basic structure of the mystical experience is concerned, but they do differ from each other when it comes to the question of interpretation. As the mystics are generally in agreement about the basic structure of the mystical experience, it is reasonable to accept the mystical claim or assertion concerning the ineffable or intuitive nature of the experience. The reason for rejecting their claim, at this point, would seem to be wrong information concerning the experience, that is, there is a genuine reason to reject the mystical assertion if it is found out that the mystics have lied. However, we shall presume, for the sake of argument, that the mystics do not lie when they inform us that the nature of their experience is supersensory. The reasonable ground for accepting the mystical claim as a reasonable assertion stems from the inference that most, if not all, mystics declare their experience to be intuitive. There is no other ground for the non-mystic in accepting this claim as a reasonable claim. We have to accept this mystical claim as reasonable precisely because the mystic alone is the person who has had this experience. The only reports concerning the mystical

experience we depend upon are those of mystics. Whether a mystical assertion is valid or not has to be seen from the perspective of a mystic and a non-mystic. A mystic, when speaking about the mystical experience, is in an advantageous position, that is, he is speaking from the vantage-point of knowledge in the sense he has had the experience, and therefore has the knowledge of it. A non-mystic, on the other hand, has neither the experience nor the knowledge of the experience. He entirely depends on the communication or explanation of the mystic because he never had the experience himself. Whatever knowledge a non-mystic may have of the mystical experience, it is derivative in the sense that it is contingent upon the mystical accounts of mystics. Even if the non-mystic is handicapped, he has much more reasonable grounds in accepting the mystical assertion concerning the nature of the experience than he has for rejecting it. The only reasonable ground for rejecting the mystical assertion, at the preliminary level of investigation, is that if the mystic is found out to be lying. Whether one accepts or rejects the mystical claim, it should, however, be kept in mind that the non-mystic has no authority in rejecting the experience as not genuine simply because he never had the experience himself. A philosopher, on the other hand, may reject the mystical experience as valid not because he did not have the opportunity of having the experience, but

on grounds of reason. He may *a priori* assert that the mystic's claim that his experience is intuitive is to be rejected on the ground that *to exist* means to be a possible object of sense-perception. Any form of knowledge, according to this viewpoint, has necessarily to be a knowledge of perception, and the claim of the mystics that their knwoledge is non-empirical is false. But if it is accepted that the mystic's claim is reasonable, and therefore true, then the philosopher's argument cannot be said to be true. It would be said that the philosophers' approach to mysticism is full of prejudices and entangled by the chains of dogmatism. The philosopher should-even for the sake of an argument-accept it to be reasonable that there may be other forms of knowledge or of knowing which necessarily do not have to be empirical or discursive in nature.

The whole thrust of this discussion is that it is fair and reasonable to accept the mystical assertion as valid concerning the nature of the mystical experience as intuitive and supersensory. The mystic knows the fact that he has experienced certain states of consciousness. It is also a fact that the mystics differ in so far as the interpretation of these states is concerned. It can reasonably be argued that the difference in interpretation among the mystics may arise from their pre-existing belief-systems, from the cultural environment, etc, that is, each mystic's

interpretation of his experience-may be subconsciously-is determined by the beliefs and the cultural modes of thinking he has inherited. There are mystics who agree in their interpretation, and there are mystics who differ from other mystics. We cannot also discount the fact that the mystics may be mistaken in their interpretation. While accepting the validity of the mystical experience, it is reasonable not to accept, without careful examination, their interpretation.

It is not an easy task to decide whether the mystic has really experienced the transcendent reality the way he communicates, that is, it is difficult either to reject or accept the mystic's assertion as valid or invalid that his experience is nothing but the experience of transeendent reality, namely, of God. What tools do we have at our disposal which would help us in deciding the correctness or incorrectness of the mystical experience. The situation is very puzzling because the non-mystic may arrive at the conclusion that, since he has no tools at his disposal, it is better to give up the entire enterprise. He may contend that the mystical proposition, in the light of the mystical assertion, is said to be non-verifiable-therefore the validity of the proposition is neither true nor false but nonsense. The empirical proposition, on the other hand, is said to be verifiable. The proposition,

for example,- there is fire in the forest-can easily be verified. The verifier can go to the forest to find out the claim of the proposition; if there is really fire in the forest, then the claim of the proposition is true. So the claim of the proposition is easily established. But this is not the case with the mystical assertion for the simple reason that the mystical claim cannot be verified or ascertained empirically. Since the mystical assertion is said to be non-empirical in nature, it cannot be verified with the empirical tools. Because of the non-empirical character of the mystical assertion, the non-mystic may *a priori* reject the mystical assertion on the ground that such a claim is unverifiable. The contention, therefore, would be that a proposition or assertion, which cannot be verified, need not to be entertained; it needs to be rejeeted at the very outset, as no knowledge would be possible from such an assertion. But before arriving at such a negative conclusion, the non-mystic will have to prove that his own theory is verifiable, and therefore true. How are we going to verify such statements of which we know nothing. An historical event is said to be an empirical event. The event might have taken place thousands of years ago. But then how we are to verify the proposition. The only available tools are the documents. But are these documents authentic? The situation is not as easy as the non-mystic may think. What it means is that the non-mystic's theory need not necessarily be true. Therefore, the assertion

that the mystical proposition need not to be entertained as valid has to be rejected. It is a very ambivalent situation. What is needed is to search for a kind of theory which may be necessarily true. Let us, therefore, see whether such a kind of theory is available.

It may be asserted that the only way left open to a non-mystic-in order to find out whether the mystical proposition is authentic-is to repeat the mystic's experience himself, that is, by undergoing the experience himself the non-mystic will be in a position to establish the truthfulness or otherwise of the mystic's claim that his experience of the transcendent reality is ineffable. This way would seem to be the only way open for verification. It means that the non-mystic has no right to reject the assertion of the mystic unless he undergoes the experience and finds out whether the claim is true or false. The suggestion, if seen only from the surface, may sound to be a good one.

We all agree that very few people have had the opportunity of enjoying the mystical experience. In other words, mystical experience occurs, as and when it occurs, rarely. It is not a kind of experience which is open to all. The non-accessibility of the experience may be because certain norms have to be fulfilled. It may be

because a certain kind of psychological disposition is needed. A theologian, however, would say that the mystical experience is gratuitous gift of God, that is, it is an unasked gift of God in terms of grace. Whether it is a gift of God, whether certain mental disposition is needed, or whether certain discipline has to be followed, need not detain us. What is a fact is that the mystics seem to be a rare kind of species who have this experience. It may, however, be accepted [just for the sake of argument] that the mystical experience can be repeated. In principle every thing seems to be possibile. But when it comes to the practice of it, we find it difficult to accept the theoretical principle of possibility, of possibleness, etc. Even if a person follows the discipline, he may never enjoy the mystical experience. The argument that the mystical experiences of different historical periods are similar, indicates that the experience can be repeated. It may, therefore, be pointed out that if one accepts the mystical discipline, and follows the mystical path, and also is able to experience the mystical state, then the reasonableness of the mystic's claim may be said to be genuine. It would, therefore, mean that there is no better method than this in finding out the authenticity or inauthenticity of the mystical assertion.

The above line of thought or argument may seem to be reasonable in so far as reasonableness goes.

But serious objections can be raised against this line of thought. Even if the experience can be repeated, it in no manner can validate the truthfulness or otherwise of the experience on the ground that an experience necessarily need not be true. Let us illustrate our point with an old argument of snake and rope or of water in the desert. Suppose a group of people are travelling in a desert. They are thirsty and are in search of water. They perceive an oasis at a distance. But on reaching the location of the oasis, what do they find: there is no oasis except sand. Even though the entire group collectively had the experience of an oasis, yet their experience deceived them. On verification, their experience turned out to be untrue. It may, therefore, be said that truthfulness of an experience cannot merely be determined by repeating the experience. The cognitive value of an experience may be counterfeit. The mere repetition of an experience does not necessarily establish the cognitive value of an experience. When this argument is applied to the mystical experience, it means that the cognitive assertion of the experience concerning the ultimate reality need not necessarily be true. The interpretation of the mystics of their experience may be as mistaken as of the group of people who interpreted a mirage in the desert as an oasis. The argument that by repeating the mystical experience the cognitive truthfulness

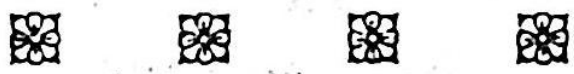
concerning the ultimate reality can be established, does not seem to hold water.

In any kind of study of mysticism, we are informed, distinction between experience and interpretation needs to be maintained. This distinction between the two, however, may be challenged on the ground that there is no such a kind of experience which is pure and uninterpreted. Each experience is as well an interpretation. In other words, when a person has an experience of something, he experiences it *as* something. When the mystic, for example, asserts that he has experienced the unity of being, he is really asserting that his experience is characterised by the content of the unity of being. The very assertion of the experience in terms of unity of being is an interpretation. If it is argued that the mystic's interpretation of his experience is mistaken, then the very assertion of the experience is wrong, which, in other words, means that the mystic did not experience the unity of being. If this argument is further followed, we would be saying that experience and interpretation are indistinguishable for the simple reason that the one without the other not possible. When the mystic says that he experienced the world as the "face of God", it means that he did have the experience-an experience in which he literally experinced the world as the face of God. The question is : how are we to interpret the mystic's

interpretation of his experience in terms of which he experienced the world as the face of God? If we accept that the mystic experienced the world as the face of God, then we must accept his explanation also. If the explanation is rejected, then his experience too has to be rejected.

If, for example, a mystic maintains that he had an experience in which he experienced the merger of his being in the being of God, then two options are left before us: either to reject or accept the assertion. If we accept the assertion. to be valid, then his explanation of the experience in terms of merger of his being in the being of God too has to be accepted. However, a strict monotheist will be one with the atheist in his protest against this kind of assertion. He will consider it as unbelief. An atheist will think of this mystical assertion as madness. So both a religious monotheist and an atheist become friends, although reasons may be different. But a person who, for religious or philosophical reasons believes in the unity of being, will find support for his own belief in this mystical assertion. His approach, therefore, will be favourable and sympathetic. A monotheist may feel that such an expression is satanic, whereas a non-believer may think it to be a physio-psychological phenomena. This would mean, in the light of the monotheist as well as that of the atheist, that the mystic's experience as well as his

explanation is mistaken on the ground that any kind of mystical experience is the result of a post-experience reflection. What it means is this: when the period of experience is over, the mystic reflects over his experience within the framework of his ideology. Therefore, the mystic's explanation is not as authentic as one may think it to be. But what about the mystical assertion concerning the unity of being which the mystic utters in utter ecstasy-a time when there is no possibility of reflection over the experience in the context of ideology. Due to these various difficulties, it is better that interpretation and experience may be treated as separate themes.



It is the mystic alone who knows the nature and content of his experience, for he alone has experienced it. A non-mystic, on the othe hand, is not in such a privileged position for the simple reason that he has not experienced the kind of experience which the mystic claims he had. The non-mystic, therefore, has no means of knowing the nature and content of the mystical experience except by relying on the accounts and reports of the mystics. If the mystic's assertion concerning the Absolute is accepted by the non-mystic as reliable and valid, then surely he must be knowing the content and nature of the experience. Since the non-mystic never

had the supersensory experience of the Absolute, he, therefore, entirely depends upon the accounts and explanations of the mystic. But, then, the mystic asserts that his experience is ineffable, beyond description, beyond normal modes of thought, and so on. The mystic's assertion of ineffability of his experience seems to block all the ways for a non-mystic of knowing or understanding the nature and content of the experience.

How to cope with the situation ? The best way of tackling the problem seems to find out whether the mystics are totally silent about the nature and content of their experience.[1] If the mystics are silent in expressing the content and nature of their experience, it means that the experience is not communicable. If the experience is not communicable, then the explanation of the mystics must be unintelligible. But when we read, for example, St. John of the Cross or St. Teresa of Avila, we do not find them as silent concerning the experience of the transcendent reality as some would like us to believe. Even though they try to communicate their experience as intelligibly as possible, yet they constantly end with this refrain: the nature of the experience is ineffable. They further entertain the idea that a person who has not experienced the mystical state, is in no position to understand or grasp the truth or exact depth of the experience.

A person, as John of the Cross points out, who has not experienced the state of the transforming union is like a person who is given a description of a place which he has not seen. [2] What St. John is maintaining is that there are such kinds of experiences which cannot be communicated in empirical terms. It would, then, mean that the mystic does not write his accounts of his experience for non-mystics. He may be writing only for the mystics or for those who are walking the path of contemplation, or who desire to be contemplatives. The mystics, however, are in agreement that no one can comprehend the exact depth of the mystical experience unless he himself undergoes the experience.

However, there are sceptics who do not accept the assertion of the mystics that their experience, being ineffable, cannot be analysed. They are of the opinion that the various mystical states can easily be explained in naturalistic terms, that is, by reducing the states to physio-psychological norms. [3] It is a reductionistic approach. Even if the state of our knowledge, according to them, is not perfect, it does not mean that this vaccum cannot be filled in the future. In other words, we must not exclude the possibility that in future no necessary means will be

found in understanding the nature and content of the mystical states in naturalistic terms. As our knowledge at present is deficient, it is better that, for the moment, we suspend our judgement concerning the authenticity or inauthenticity of the mystical assertion. If this argument is taken to its logical end, it would mean that the mystical experience has nothing to do with religion. In other words, the assertion that mysticism and religion are closely realated to each other would seem to be a matter of interpretation. But this naturalism has its own limitations and pitfalls. It is unwise and imprudent to maintain that we can explain *that* that which we do not know. How are we going to explain a mystical state in naturalistic terms when we do not know the content of the experience! As far as the future possibility is concerned, let us wait for that day.

It is also asserted that the mystical states can be produced through the use of drugs. This view wants us to believe that there is no difference between the drug-induced experience and experience which results from contemplation. What it amounts to saying is that both kinds of experiences are identical [4]. If there is no difference between the two, then they can be compared to each other. There is no doubt that certain kinds of experiences do take place through the use of drugs in which a kind of unity is

experienced. There seem to be certain similarities between the mystical states and the states caused by the use of drugs. If, however, there are states in contemplative life which elude analysis or explanation, then an otsider is in no position to compare them with the drug-induced states. It is not, therefore, proper to adopt purely an empirical approach. If Huxley says that his drug-induced experience is comparable to the highest mystical state, then the question is: how does he know this to be the case since the mystics are unable to communicate the content of this state? If the highest mystical state is ineffable, there seems to be no ground in asserting-as Huxley does-that the drug-induced experience is the same as the highest mystical state. The transformating union, as explained by St. John, has not the slightest resemblance with the kind of drug-induced state of Huxley. It is not at all correct to maintain that the two kinds of experiences are one and the same.

While discussing the mystical experience as a source of knowledge concerning the ultimate reality, it is evident that the difficulties will be encountered both by the apologist, who thinks of the mystical experience as further proof for the existence of God, and the sceptic, who is not enamoured by the mystical assertions. Both will find it difficult, in the light of

the above discussion, to explain exactly what constitutes a mystical state. The apologist may think that the higher mystical states confirm his own belief: that God exists. He can use this argument for the existence of God, only if he is in a position to make clear the content of the mystical state. If the mystical state is said to be ineffable, and therefore beyond the scope of the intellect, then the apologist cannot use it as a proof for the existence of God. The sceptic, too, is in the same position. Since he himself is ignorant with regard to the content of the experience, he cannot brush off the mystical assertion as invalid. The sceptic is as much in the dark concerning the content and nature of the mystical experience as an apologist of mysticism. The discussion between the two parties will remain inconclusive in so far as definite and exact information about the nature of the experience is known. It will be premature at this stage to give a judgement for or against the cognitive value of the mystical experience.

The above discussion concerning the cognitive dimension of the mystical experience may seem to be tiresome. The aim of the discussion is not so much

to make us weary as much as to make ourselves aware of the difficulties which may arise when the mystical claims are taken into consideration. No doubt, many people seem to be genuinely aware of the fact that mystics of all cultures and religions seem to be sharing a common spiritual heritage in terms of claims concerning the ultimate reality are made, that is, the claim is characterised by an orientation in which it is asserted that the mystic has experienced the transcendent reality. It is an experience of a intuitive character of a reality which is other than the physical world we perceive and know through the means of sense organs and the intellect. It may, however, be pointed out that the so-called intellectual intuition is a false epistemological assertion. The only kind of knowledge man has is that of sense-perception–and Kant has long before shown us this epistemological fact. But if it is accepted that the supersensory perceptions occur, then Kant's assertion may not be accepted to be universally valid. It would, in the light of this argument, be reasonable to say that the mystics do experience intuitionally a reality which is other than the tangible world of ours. This aspect of the mystical experience is generally neglected when attention is paid to such logical questions as, for example, whether to experience means to experience something *as*, whether experience is distinct from

interpretation, and so on. Although the mystics may differ in their interpretations concerning their experience-and the difference may stem from their pre-existing beliefs or ideologies-what remains a fact is that all mystics, in one voice, assert that the nature of their experience is intuitional and that they have experienced a reality which is other than the physical world of ours.

It may be pointed that this kind of argument may be acceptable to those who may be disposed towards mysticism, or who, being religious, would like to use mystical experience as an evidence in their argument for the existence of God. A religiously disposed person may also use mystical experience as a means of affirming his own belief in God. By resorting to mystical experience, the believer would thereby be strengthening his own belief. For the believer mystical experience would not be an isolated event. He will try to integrate it with other lines of thought concerning God. Thus various lines of thought are seen in integral terms, which collectively provide a cumulative evidence to the believer for the existence of God. When reflection on mysticism converges on other lines of thought, there emerges a comprehensive view of reality.

The basic characteristic of a comprehensive

reality is that reality is seen from various dimensions. Hegel, for example, approached reality from various horizons He integrated the various lines of thought into a whole, and thereby endeavoured to present a general view of reality. His reflections on art, religion, philosophy, history, etc. converge on a single point, and thereby give birth to a view of reality which is sweeping and comprehensive. His view of reality, therefore, is not fragmentary; it is totalistic. It is because of this view of reality that Hegel's ideas have played a persuasive role on minds of those who are inclined to view reality in such a fashion. But does this argument serve any purpose? It may have a psychological value, but that does not mean that it is offering us any definite knowledge of reality. In order to prove something what is needed are hard proofs. It is at this point that a comprehensive view of reality lacks depth Both Marx and Hegel, for example, give comprehensive views of reality. But the pictures of reality they present are incompatible with each other. To decide which picture of reality is correct is to engage in logical proofs and arguments. Each argument of a particular viewpoint will have to be examined on its own. If the arguments lack the logical depth, then the whole picture of reality will fall to pieces. The truth-claims of a particular general viewpoint of reality will serve no cognitive purpose even if the entire picture may be persuasive.

The claim of the mystics that they have experienced a reality which is other than the physical world of ours need not be accepted as a valid assertion even though the honesty and integrity of the mystic may be beyond doubt. The critic may assert that there is no such a kind of knowledge which is the result of intuition, and the claims of the mystics as a cumulative proof for the the existence of God need not be taken as a sufficient proof for the authenticity of their assertions. It may be assumed that the mystic may have simply encountered his own psyche where distinction between subject-object vanishes. If a philosopher, for example, is able, without resorting to the subterfuge of mystical argument, to show that the mystical claim, on the touchstone of logical proofs,is reasonable, then it may be considered reasonable to accept that the possibility of a mystical experience is possible. Further, if a philosopher is able to show that there is a creative power beyond and behind this world, then the mystical claim may not seem to be far-fetched. In this manner a philosopher may attempt to integrate various lines of thought, and thereby give birth to a comprehensive view of reality.

The emergence of a particular general view of

reality does not mean that a definite knowledge of reality has come into being. There may be another general picture of reality which is much strong in its presentation and argument than the one which we first adhered to. There may also be disagreement among the contending parties with regard to question of deficiency or strength of a particular viewpoint. Many people, for example, would argue that Marx's picture of reality not only distorts the religious experience of mankind, but makes a hash of it. Marxists, on the other hand, would opine that Marx's presentation of religion is based on solid scientific investigation and logical proofs. If a particular picture of reality is accepted as valid and accurate one, it is necessary to furnish the reasons for it. It means that the rational discussion with regard to merits aud de-merits of various viewpoints must be possible. If so, it is therefore imperative to find out whether the mystical assertion is valid in the context of its knowledge-content.

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8	15	sence	sense
10	15	thing	thinking
15	2	existance	existence
19	line 4 reads: Self is identical with Brahman		
21	3	entological	ontological
23	11	affected	effected
25	3	extant	extent
38	2	Vactican	Vatican
39	7	fountan	fountain
44	10	who issue	whole issue of
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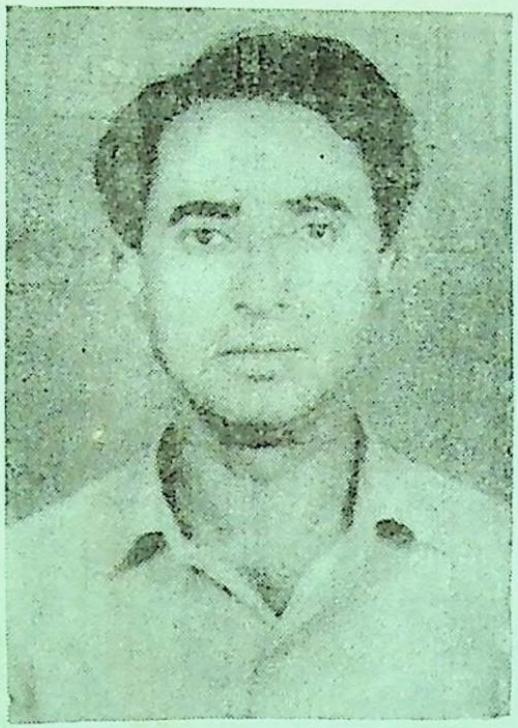

Shri Motilal Pandit is a distinguished scholar and Indologist, who has travelled extensively in Western Europe and in India. He has already six works to his credit and his latest book - "Yoga as a Method of Salvation" is now in the press.

He has a spiritual bent of mind and has been frequently contributing articles to Philosophical and Religious journals. This book - "The Mystical search for the Absolute" has come from the pen of this renowned author and is now placed in the hands of the public.

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