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# THE NATURE OF MYSTICISM

C. JINARAJADASA

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THE NATURE OF MYSTICISM

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THE  
NATURE OF MYSTICISM

BY  
C. JINARAJADASA, M.A.



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## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I Introduction . . . . .	1
II The Mysticism of Grace . . . . .	6
III The Mysticism of Love . . . . .	12
IV Pantheism . . . . .	20
V Pantheistic Mysticism . . . . .	29
VI Nature Mysticism . . . . .	41
VII Sacramental Mysticism . . . . .	52
VIII Theosophical Mysticism . . . . .	63
IX Conclusion . . . . .	73

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

THERE is a saying of the ancient Greeks that "Wonders are many and nothing is more wonderful than man"; and this thought has been worked out in many a philosophy to reveal to man that the highest elements of manhood are of the nature of God, while the dearest elements of the Godhead are of the nature of man. The study of man becomes a spiritual exercise if we seek in man the God; it little matters of what nature are man's activities that we watch, for man is the shadow while God is the light, and in all men's deeds, good and evil, a World Soul strives for self-realisation.

Now men are of many types, and for the present purpose of the study of what makes mysticism, let us group them into three natural divisions, according to their temperaments as they react to the environment round them. There is first the "practical" type;

Three Types  
of Souls

his characteristic is that his reaction to a thing or event is according to its *use*. He does not care for abstract truth; when an object or idea is before him, "Of what use is it?" is his first question. He trains himself to know things by their uses. The second type is the "scientific," whose reaction is to the *form* of the thing or event. What is its nature, what is its cause, how did it happen, what can I know from it?—these are the natural questions that first arise in individuals of this type. They desire truth first, and then deduce its use in terms of conduct. The third type is the "mystic," and his reaction is by *feeling*, and the use or value of a thing is seen only after it has passed through the crucible of the feelings. To him the highest criterion is: "I feel; therefore I am; therefore I know."

Though men are of these three main types—practical, scientific, and mystical—no one man is of one type alone, without traces of the other two temperaments. But what characterises a man will be one predominant quality, and the two other qualities will be as modifications brought into the fundamental type which he represents. Mystics need not necessarily be unscientific

or unpractical, nor are "practical" people necessarily without mysticism. But in the main the life of mysticism is a life of the feelings, and the message of mysticism consists of the values discovered to life as life has been transmuted by the feelings.

The first, if not the chief characteristic, that distinguishes the mystic is that the outer world is continually transmuting itself into an inner world of feeling; he lives for that inner world and his values to life in the outer world are derived from it. He is therefore extremely individualistic, for he knows of one sole authority, which is the growing life of his own inner world, and not another's. Though he is the youngest of the mystics in the company of the oldest, yet is he in a fashion among equals; and when he gives his own message he is *primus inter pares*. Utmost humility and confident self-assertion exist side by side in his character; for such is the mystery of the feelings, that while they may know nothing, from the standpoint of reason, they may know the All, from the standpoint of the Spirit.

The Mystic  
Temperament

We must, as we survey mysticism, distinguish the mystic from the pious man. Both

may be "religious," and equally devoted to a creed or ritual; but the latter **Mysticism and Piety** relies on the authority of church or ceremony in a way it is not in a mystic's temperament to do. The mystic is always a thorn in the side of an established church, because he will be guided by authority only so far as it suits him. While the pious man is ready to bend his will to the will of a superior, the mystic asserts it. In all ways, then, mystics are fundamentally individualists, though at the heart of true mysticism is an individualism that enwraps the whole world in one unifying embrace.

So universal is the mystic life, so all-inclusive of life's processes, that it is not easy to say what exactly constitutes mysticism; let us try first to establish by analysis the modes of mysticism that are to be found among men, hoping to come to a synthesis after an examination of the many facts before us.

**Six Types of Mysticism** There are six main types of mysticism, as follows :

1. The Mysticism of Grace
2. The Mysticism of Love
3. Pantheistic Mysticism
4. Nature Mysticism

5. Sacramental Mysticism
6. Theosophical Mysticism

In the study of each type we shall observe four principal elements: (1) the theme, (2) the method, (3) the obstacle, and (4) the ideal.

It should be noted that any one type of mysticism is not limited to a particular religion or creed; mysticism is a life of the Spirit that cannot be held within the boundaries of the religions. It is like a mighty river that cuts out channels for itself according to its need; there may be only one channel of the mystic stream in a religion, or there may be several. And mysticism may also exist where there is no religion at all.

Of a necessity, in our study of mysticism, it will be impossible to trace a particular type of mysticism as it manifests itself everywhere; the examples taken are only illustrative of mystic modes. Keeping in mind, then, our limited survey, let us pass on to examine one by one the types of mysticism.

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## CHAPTER II

### THE MYSTICISM OF GRACE

*The Theme.*—This is the thought that a gulf exists between the nature of man and the nature of God, which can only be bridged by Grace from God. Man is proclaimed as born with a predilection to sin; he is innately weak to resist temptation, and he is bound to fall. So naturally in the *Imitation of Christ* we have these words :

The World  
as Evil

There is no order so holy, no place so secret, as that there be not temptations or adversities in it.

There is no man that is altogether free from temptation whilst he liveth on earth : for the root thereof is in ourselves, who are born with inclination to evil.

When one temptation or tribulation goeth away, another cometh ; and we shall ever have something to suffer, because we are fallen from the state of our felicity.

Man must always therefore be full of contrition, for “ there is no health in us ” ; he

must confess his sins to his Maker. Repentance is the pre-requisite for the receiving of Grace. The thought Sin and Grace of sin looms large in the estimate of man ; we must acknowledge our sinfulness before Divine Grace can be ours. Thus in the Christian hymn we have all the elements of this type of mysticism :

But vain all outward sign of grief,  
And vain the form of prayer,  
Unless the heart implore relief,  
And penitence be there.

In sorrow true then let us pray  
To our offended God,  
From us to turn His wrath away  
And stay th' uplifted rod.

O righteous Judge, O Father, deign  
To spare us in our need ;  
Thou givest time to turn again,  
Give grace to turn indeed.

Sometimes, in this mysticism, so powerful is the thought of the grandeur and omnipotence of God, that it takes the strange garb of fear. "The Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" becomes inspiring and not depressing. To some the thought is repellent, because they do not The Fear of God understand ; it is not indeed any fear at all, but an indescribable awe which stills all thought while the soul gazes at the Godhead

before its vision. To one used to the soft yellow light of an ordinary electric lamp, the colourless light of an electric arc-lamp is blinding and cold as steel; yet it is a fuller light in every way. But it is light of an order that our eyes are not accustomed to. Similarly it is with the vision of the Godhead along this path of mysticism; that vision begets wisdom, though the first effect on a nature not used to it is the sense of fear and awe.

It is one form of the "Fear of the Lord" that we have in the great vision of Divinity that Shrī Krishna shows to Arjuna in the eleventh chapter of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, when the Lord shows Himself as

Time who kills, Time who brings all to  
doom,

The Slayer Time, Ancient of Days, come hither  
to consume;

and Arjuna sees all the mighty hosts of heaven gazing at the Godhead in awe.

These see Thee, and revere  
In sudden-stricken fear;

Yea! the Worlds—seeing Thee with form  
stupendous,

With faces manifold,  
With eyes which all behold,

Unnumbered eyes, vast arms, members  
tremendous,



Flanks lit with sun and star,  
 Feet planted near and far,  
 Tushes of terror, mouths wrathful and tender ;—  
 The Three wide Worlds before Thee  
 Adore, as I adore Thee,  
 Quake, as I quake, to witness so much  
splendour !

In the cult of Shaivism something of this same mysticism appears in the imagery of Shiva the Destroyer, the frequenter of burning grounds, the Shiva and Kali supreme Ascetic, wreathed with the skulls of men ; and in all that is best in Kāli the Mother we have similarly commingled the two thoughts of terror and tenderness, of splendour that begets fear and of motherhood that gives boons.

*The Method.*—The means of bridging the gulf between God and man is Prayer. Though in his inmost heart man knows God will forgive, is perfectly sure that Prayer God's grace will be his, yet that mere conviction is not sufficient. The act of magic that spans the gulf is prayer ; without the *act* of prayer the miracle will not happen. Hence in this type of mysticism the emphasis laid on prayer ; and man's unworthiness is laid stress upon in order that the virtue of humility may be born in him to make his act of magic by prayer certain of success.

*The Obstacle.*—The devil that tempts man away from the spiritual life, is, in this type of mysticism, self-reliance. The thought that we are not so sinful after all, that we can to some extent go our road unaided, that man made in the image of his Maker, cannot be in any danger of damnation by a loving God, is the direst of heresies. Such a thought corrodes the soul, weakens the character; self-confidence is the great illusion that wraps man in the folds of sinfulness. So proclaims this type of mysticism.

Specially noteworthy too is how on this path the acquisition of knowledge is discouraged, for there can be only one knowledge worth the seeking, the knowledge of the grace of God. Arts and sciences are apt more to lead astray than to guide: "Cease therefore from an inordinate desire of knowledge, for therein is much distraction and deceit."<sup>1</sup> Similarly too there is no message but of distraction in song and dance, and in the theatre; God's face is not to be seen along those ways of temptation. "Endeavour therefore to withdraw thy heart from the love of visible things, and to turn thyself to the invisible."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Imitation of Christ.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

*The Ideal.*—He who is the true mystic of this type is the man of Righteousness. Neither wisdom nor compassion nor devotion are his ideals, but to be righteous, which is to feel within the heart a continuous battle between good and evil, and the attempt to express the victory won for God in being a pattern to men to lead them to Him. The prophets of Judaism clearly are mystics of this type; when they turned their inner realisation to bring changes in the life of their nation they became practical mystics of extraordinary ability.

**The Prophet of  
Righteousness**



## CHAPTER III

### THE MYSTICISM OF LOVE

*The Theme.*—The overflowing love of God towards man is the theme in this type of mysticism. The never-ending wonder is that God is so full of love for His creature; if only man would recognise how greatly he is sought by God, then man's salvation is not the work of time but of an instant. The mystic therefore never wearies of dreaming of the open arms which God ever holds out towards him, in spite of his sinfulness and repeated failures. To know his own weaknesses—they are not sins so much as blemishes on the garment he must wear before God—and yet to feel God will accept him as he is, this is both bliss and pain, both heaven and hell. In the following hymn we have clearly some of the characteristics of this type :

God's Love  
to Man

O Love, Who formedst me to wear  
The image of Thy Godhead here ;  
Who soughtest me with tender care  
Through all my wanderings wild and drear ;

O Love, I give myself to Thee,  
Thine ever, only Thine to be.

O Love, Who lovedst me for aye,  
Who for my soul dost ever plead;  
O Love, Who did that ransom pay  
Whose power sufficeth in my stead;  
O love, I give myself to Thee,  
Thine ever, only Thine to be.

It will be seen that in such a type of mysticism as this, the Godhead becomes intensely personal, at times almost verging on the nature of a human beloved.

In Christianity a hymn such as God as Lover  
this above has as its inspiration not God the Almighty but Jesus the Lover of the soul. In the following from St. John of the Cross we have an attempt to describe the rapture produced as the Godhead is loved by many a mystic of this type:

O sweetest love of God, too little known; he who has found Thee is at rest; let everything be changed, O God, that we may rest in Thee. Everywhere with Thee, O my God, everywhere all things with Thee; as I wish, O my Love, all for Thee, nothing for me—nothing for me, everything for Thee. All sweetness and delight for Thee, none for me—all bitterness and trouble for me, none for Thee. O my God, how sweet to me Thy presence, who art the supreme God! I will draw near to Thee in Silence, and will uncover Thy feet, that it may please Thee to unite me to Thyself, making my Soul

Thy bride; I will rejoice in nothing till I am in thine arms. O Lord, I beseech Thee, leave me not for a moment, because I know not the value of my own Soul.

It is this phase of mysticism that is so very pronounced in the Vaishnava cult of Hinduism, where Shrī Krishna becomes the Divine Lover in search of His mate, the human soul. With prayer and song his love for man is hymned; it is the intense Personality of Divinity that works the miracle of the soul's salvation.

Wherever exists this mysticism of love, we shall frequently find the object of devotion in the aspect of Woman. The Virgin Mary in Christianity, Kāli the Mother in Hinduism, Isis in Egypt, and Pallas Athene in Greece, bring the thought of God nearer to some hearts than any male presentation of the Godhead. Why this is so is a mystery of the soul that can be understood only by those on this particular mystic path; we can only state here that one of the most beautiful as well as powerful forms of love mysticism is that which sees the All-Love as Mother and Friend or Goddess and Beloved.

*The Method.*—The Magic of this mystic path is performed through Adoration. To pour

Divinity as  
Woman

one's heart and soul in streams of love and offering to the feet of our God, to the knees of our Goddess, is the heart's sole desire; and in the act of magic the soul's consciousness wakes to know mystery after mystery of the Divine Nature. It is not prayer; there is no thought of receiving, none of asking. The bud asks nothing of the sun's light; it opens and adores and shows its beauty. Yet is there intense effort; the adoration is not a negativity, but a positive outpouring of the soul.

**Adoration**

*The Obstacle.*—While on the path of the mysticism of grace, man's unworthiness to receive Divine Grace is insisted upon, it is exactly contrary on this path.

God so loves man that for man, even in his greatest sinning, to imagine that God would veil His Face is a blasphemy. What matters our sin and our failure if God loves us in spite of both? It is the sense of shame, of diffidence, of timidity before the thought of God, that is the obstacle to realisation. Belief in our unworthiness and that our sinning could ever erect a barrier between us and Him, is the illusion that surrounds the soul on this path of mysticism.

**Humility**

*The Ideal.*—Naturally on this path the ideal is the devotee, who is the Bhakta, the saint. He shall not be judged by God by the wisdom of his mind, nor by the strength of his practical ability; he stands or falls by the nature of his devotion alone. To grow in wisdom or understanding, or in power to guide men, means little to his imagination; life grows only as he rises from one intensity of adoration to another. It goes without saying that the more saintly becomes the soul treading this path the more full of wisdom he is, and the greater is the power in him to inspire men and their actions; but the typical saint does not aim at either; his aspiration is to pour out greater and greater love to the Object of his devotion.

The Saint

One variant of this Love Mysticism proclaims as the ideal an actual union between the Godhead and the soul, so that the twain are one. In Christianity this mystic phase has developed from the teaching of Christ in the Gospel of Saint John, where again and again Christ tells us of the mystic unity between Him and those who have found Him. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me and I in you." Such an

Union of God  
and Man



ideal of union is blasphemous to some Christians, and of course heretical from the standpoint of orthodox Christianity. Yet such a staunch pillar of orthodoxy as Saint Augustine proclaims it as a part of the Christian doctrine, when he makes a distinction between the two forms of faith, the "faith on Christ" and the "faith in Christ". The former is the mental process, the inevitable acceptance by the mind of the facts before it of His nature; even the demons believed "on Christ". But what is the other form of faith, in Him, *in Christum*? It is: *Credendo amare, credendo diligere, credendo in eum ire, ejus membris incorporari*.<sup>1</sup> By faith to love Him, by faith to be devoted to him, by faith to enter into Him, to be incorporated into His Members.<sup>2</sup>

This type of mysticism in Christianity, largely due to Plotinus, has profoundly influenced it, though mystics following this path have been mostly regarded as unbalanced, if not indeed as heretical. The mysticism of grace, involving as it often does a church as intermediary, has felt itself jeopardised by the mysticism of love. What part need churches and priests and sacraments play in a mystic

<sup>1</sup> *Milleloquium Veritatis*.

<sup>2</sup> *Members* here mean the parts of His very Body.

life such as Ruysbroeck describes in these words ?

When we rise above ourselves, and in our ascent to God are made so simple that the love which embraces us is occupied only with itself, then we are transformed and die in God to ourselves and to all separate individuality. . . . In this embrace and essential unity with God all devout and inward spirits are one with God by living immersion and melting away into Him ; they are by grace one and the same thing with Him, because the same essence is in both . . . Wherefore in this simple and intent contemplation we are one life and one spirit with God. . . . In this highest stage the soul is united to God without means ; it sinks into the vast darkness of the Godhead.

The thought of complete union with Divinity is so prominent in all Hindu thought that naturally this phase of the mysticism of love is well known in India. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* has the teaching as its essence :

Place thy mind in Me, in Me fix thy reason ; then with no incertitude thou shalt abide in Me hereafter.

They who worship Me with devotion, they are in Me, and I also am in them.

And since the appearance of Shri Krishna, this thought of mystic union with Him has been as the song of angels in the land, inspiring high and low alike, now driving to waywardness and frenzy the unbalanced worshipper, now raising to supremest acts of renunciation and blessing those

Shri Krishna

who have more strength of character to grasp the Reality. Supremely dear is this mystic path to humanity, since along this road there is always One as the goal, who Himself journeys with the pilgrim to the end.

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## CHAPTER IV

### PANTHEISM

“GOD is All.” This is Pantheism. In one form or in another the teachings of Pantheism are found in most of the religions. The Substratum of all things, when conceived of as a Personal God, and not as a super-personal Absolute, is thought of in religion in two manifestations, as either the Transcendence or the Immanence.

In the former, the Creator is distinct and apart from His creation; however much His craftsmanship is evident in the “design” in nature, that nature is not He; to the devotee who worships the Transcendent Godhead, to think of any pantheistic unity between God and nature “subverts the personality of God and man, renders free-will impossible and destroys all real moral responsibility”. In the latter, however, nature could not exist but for God’s eternal and inseparable unity with it; it is only because He is immanent in the atom

Transcendence  
and Immanence

that the atom has energy and substance; it is only the Immanence of God in nature that makes evolution possible; and the final victory of man over evil is achieved only because man is himself a manifestation of the Immanent Godhead.

Pantheism is seen in its clearest presentation in Hinduism. These verses from the *Shvetāshvatara-Upanishad* alone will show well the Hindu doctrine of Im- The Upanishadsmanence; it will be seen that the Hindu pantheistic Divinity is not a vague impersonal abstraction—"the night in which all cows are black"—but the splendid Reality of a Personal God.

This God, in sooth, in all the quarters is; long, long ago indeed, he had his birth, he verily is now within the germ. He has been born, he will be born; behind all who have birth he stands, with face on every side.

Whose faces, heads and necks, are those of all, who lieth in the secret place of every soul, spread o'er the universe is He, the Lord. Therefore as all-pervader, He's benign.

That sure is fire; That sun; That air; That surely moon; That verily the bright; That Brahm; the waters That; That the Creator.

Thou woman dost become, and man, and youth, maid too in sooth; when old with staff thy steps thou dost support; thou takest birth with face on every side.

Blue fly, green bird, and red-eyed beast, the cloud that bears the lightning in its womb, the seasons, and the seas, beginningless art thou. In omnipresent power thou hast thy home, whence all the worlds are born.<sup>1</sup>

It is in the same Upanishad we have the following verses, which show how the Hindu mind has united the Transcendent and Immanent Godhead, so that from the soul of man rises utmost devotion to one theistic God. He is called "The Man".

I know this mighty Man, sun-like, beyond the darkness; Him and Him only knowing one crosseth over death; no other path at all is there to go.

Than whom naught is greater or less, than whom none more subtle or vast; like as a tree, he silent stands in shining space, in solitude. By Him, the Man, this all is filled.

Him know I, old, without decay, the Self of all, gone forth into all the worlds with omnipresent power; about whose birth and death fools only speak; they who of Brahman tell, Him everlasting call.

Him, nor from above, nor from below, nor midmost, can one grasp; no equal to be found is there of Him, whose name is glory great.

His form stands not within the vision's field, with eye no man beholds Him. Him standing in the heart, by heart, by mind; thus they who know immortal they become.

Alone within this universe He comes and goes; 'tis He who is the fire, the water He pervadeth.

<sup>1</sup> Mead and Chatterji's translation.

Him and Him only knowing one crosseth over death, no other path at all is there to go.<sup>1</sup>

In popular Buddhism, since Buddhism is a non-theistic religion, there is no Pantheism of the ordinary kind. Nevertheless the Buddha recognised the Substratum of all things; He called it Nirvāna, which is thus described :

Nirvana

There is, O Brethren, that Abode, where there is indeed no earth nor water nor air ; nor the world of the Infinity-of-Space, nor the world of the Infinity-of-Intelligence, nor the world of No-Thing-Whatever, nor the world of Neither-Cognition-nor-Non-Cognition ; nor this world, nor the world yonder, and neither the sun nor the moon. That I call, O Brethren, neither coming nor going nor standing, nor birth nor death. Without foundation, without origination, beyond thought is That. The destruction of sorrow verily is That.

There is, O Brethren, that which is unborn, unmanifested, uncreate and unconditioned. Unless, O Brethren, It were not unborn, unmanifested, uncreate and unconditioned, there could not be cognised in this world the coming forth of what is born, manifested, created and conditioned.<sup>2</sup>

In Christianity, Pantheism has not been an orthodox doctrine ; and this is natural, for in all religions where emphasis is laid upon the Godhead as Transcendent, there is often a repugnance to thinking of Him as Immanent. Nevertheless in Christianity many mystics have

The Logia of  
Jesus

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Udānam. Section VIII.

been pantheists; and it is striking to note in the newly discovered Logia of Jesus that in early Christian days a lofty Pantheism was not incompatible with true faith. In one Logion, Jesus says:

Raise the stone and there thou shalt find Me;  
cleave the wood and there am I.

In yet another Logion, fragmentary though it is, we have the pantheistic conception of one chain of ascending life.

Jesus saith, Ye ask, Who are those that draw us to the kingdom, if the kingdom is in Heaven? . . . the fowls of the air, and all the beasts that are under the earth or upon the earth, and the fishes of the sea, they are they which draw you, and the kingdom of Heaven is within you; and whosoever shall know himself shall find it. Strive therefore to know yourselves, and ye shall be aware that ye are the sons of the Father.

This is of course Pantheism of a lofty kind; and we have the paraphrase of the Logion by Messrs. Grenfell and Hunt, who discovered the fragment, in these words: "The idea seems to be that the divine element in the world begins in the lower stages of animal creation, and rises to a higher stage in man, who has within him the kingdom of heaven.

. . . The transition from the inward character of the kingdom to the necessity of self-knowledge is natural. Since the kingdom



is not an external manifestation but an inward principle, men must know themselves in order to attain to its realisation."

An interesting form of Pantheism is that which appears in Sufism. Orthodox Mohammedanism, with its high conception of God as Transcendent, leaves no place for Pantheism; but in Persia Sufism the teachings of Mohammed underwent a mystical transformation, which has given such a beautiful pantheistic conception of God as this, from the Persian mystic poet Jāmī:

Each speck of matter did He constitute  
 A mirror, causing each one to reflect  
 The Beauty of His visage. From the rose  
 Flashed forth His Beauty, and the nightingale  
 Beholding it, loved madly. From that fire  
 The candle drew the lustre which beguiles  
 The moth to immolation. On the sun  
 His beauty shone, and straightway from the wave  
 The lotus reared its head. Each shining lock  
 Of Leyli's hair attracted Majnun's heart  
 Because some ray divine reflected shone  
 In her fair face. 'Twas He to Shirin's lips  
 Who lent that sweetness which had power to steal  
 The heart from Parviz, and from Farhad life.  
 His beauty everywhere doth show itself,  
 And through the forms of earthly beauties shines  
 Obscured as through a veil. He did reveal

His face through Joseph's coat, and so destroyed  
Zuleykha's peace. Where'er thou seest a veil,  
Beneath that veil He hides. Whatever heart  
Doth yield to love, He charms it. In His love  
The heart hath life. Longing for Him, the soul  
Hath victory. That heart which seems to love  
The fair ones of this world loves Him alone.  
Beware! say not, "He is All-Beautiful,  
And we His lovers!" Thou art but the glass,  
And He the face confronting it, which casts  
Its image in the mirror. He alone  
Is manifest, and Thou in truth art hid.  
Pure love, like beauty, coming but from Him  
Reveals itself in thee. If steadfastly  
Thou canst regard, thou wilt at length perceive  
He is the mirror also; He alike  
The Treasure and the Casket. "I" and "Thou"  
Have here no place, and are but phantasies  
Vain and unreal. Silence! For this tale  
Is endless, and no eloquence hath power  
To speak of Him. 'Tis best for us to love  
And suffer silently, being as nought.<sup>1</sup>

In modern days, we have a revival of pantheistic teaching in Emerson. He amplifies the ancient teachings of Plato and the Stoics of a universal Divine Mind. It is this Divine Mind, the "Over-Soul,"

within which every man's particular being is contained and made one with all other; that common heart, of which all sincere conversation is the

<sup>1</sup> Translation of E. G. Browne.

worship, to which all right action is submission; that overpowering reality which confutes our tricks and talents, and con- **The Over-Soul** strains everyone to pass for what he is, and to speak from his character, and not from his tongue, and which evermore tends to pass into our thought and hand, and become wisdom, and virtue, and power, and beauty. We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal ONE. And this deep power in which we exist, and whose beatitude is all accessible to us, is not only self-sufficing and perfect in every hour, but the act of seeing and the thing seen, the seer and the spectacle, the subject and the object, are one. We see the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree; but the whole, of which these are the shining parts, is the soul.<sup>1</sup>

This general survey of Pantheism gives us its main elements. They are:

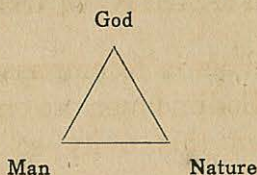
1. God is All, and all things are God. All life and force and matter are modes of His existence. He is Immanent in the world He has created; but He is at the same time Transcendent, and exists in a mode which can never be realised through His creation.

2. The Divine Nature expresses itself in creation in ascending grades of life and form; it is the Divine Mind which is manifest in the law, beauty and harmony in the universe.

<sup>1</sup> *Essays, "The Over-Soul"*.

3. Individual man is one with God, and is of His very nature in essence and in existence.

We have thus a trinity of God and man and nature. If we symbolise this trinity in the form of a triangle, we shall find that two



main types of mysticism appear, one that emphasises the relation between man and God, and the other that between nature and God. These two types we shall call respectively Pantheistic Mysticism and Nature Mysticism.

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## CHAPTER V

### PANTHEISTIC MYSTICISM

*The Theme.*—This is to emphasise in all possible ways that God and man are one. No religion has proclaimed this unity so clearly or so boldly as Hinduism; it is the great “Secret” that could be **Man as the All** expounded only to “twice-born” men; it rings out throughout the centuries, from age to age. The father Uddālaka teaches it to his son Shvetaketu :

All this universe has the Supreme Deity for its life. That Deity is Truth. He is the Universal Soul. *Thou art He, O Shvetaketu.*<sup>1</sup>

If a man thinks he is a mortal, governed by time and tide, he knows not the facts of his own existence. The great Self and man’s self are one, and not twain.

As oil in seeds, butter in cream, water in springs and in the firesticks fire, so is that Self found in the self, by him who seeks for Him with truth and meditation.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chhândogya Upanishad.

<sup>2</sup> Shvetāshvatara Upanishad.

This same unity is hinted at in Christianity, though not worked out to a logical conclusion, as in Hinduism.

In modern days, the unity of God and man is the fundamental basis of Christian Science and New Thought. In both we have a revival of Pantheistic Mysticism, as we shall see clearly when we come to analyse "the method" and "the obstacle".

Christian  
Science

What is the Ego, whence its origin and what its destiny? The Ego-man is the reflection of the Ego-God; the Ego-man is the image and likeness of perfect Mind, Spirit, divine Principle.

The one Ego, the one Mind or Spirit called God, is infinite individuality, which supplies all form and comeliness and which reflects reality and divinity in individual spiritual man and things.<sup>1</sup>

In Christian Science the unity of man with God or Good or Mind is so complete that a Personal God or Creator almost disappears.

On the other hand, New Thought would seem still to retain the Personality of God, while proclaiming man's oneness with Him.

New Thought

God, then, is this Infinite Spirit which fills all the universe with Himself alone, so that all is from Him and in Him, and there is nothing that is

<sup>1</sup> Mary Baker G. Eddy, Founder of Christian Science, in *Science and Health*, Chap. X.

outside . . . . We are partakers of the life of God ; and though we differ from Him in that we are individualised spirits, while He is the Infinite Spirit including us as well as all else beside, yet in essence the life of God and the life of men are identically the same, and so are one. They differ not in essence, in quality ; they differ in degree.<sup>1</sup>

*The Obstacle.*—If, according to Pantheistic Mysticism, man and God are one, why then should man not be able to realise that unity and so be free from life's

evils? Because man is hinder-  
ed by one obstacle, and that is  
Matter. This is the great doctrine of Māyā,  
or Illusion, of Hindu philosophy. Purusha and  
Prakriti, Spirit and Matter, God and His crea-  
tion, seem to our senses to be a duality. How-  
ever much man may believe he is Brahman, the  
Absolute Deity, his senses impress continually  
upon his consciousness that he is a mortal  
and suffers mortality's limitations. Hindu  
philosophy gets round this obstacle in two ways.

The method of the Sāṅkhya philosophy admits an eternal duality of Spirit and Matter, but holds that Spirit shows the attributes of mortality—life and death, re-  
incarnation and karma and  
evolution—only so long as It lets itself be  
hypnotised by matter ; the moment Spirit

Doctrine of  
Illusion

Sankhya

<sup>1</sup> R. W. Trine, *In Tune with the Infinite*, Chap. II.

knows its true nature, the delusion of matter, with all its concomitants, vanishes.

The method of the Vedānta admits no duality; Prakriti or matter has no fundamental reality whatsoever. If matter seems to our senses

real, it is because we have succumbed to Māyā. Just as a man at dusk may be frightened by seeing a snake, which on closer examination he finds is only a piece of rope, so we superimpose on the reality of the Spirit the unreality of a material universe. So long as we as Spirit continue to superimpose the illusion on the reality, so long are we subject to all the powers of that illusion.

Both the Sāṅkhya and the Vedānta admit that to our deluded consciousness Brahman, the Over-Soul, is separated from man by the intervening barrier of the Māyā of matter; the denial of any reality to matter does not mean the denial of the testimony of our senses. Matter and the universe are real to us, so long as we permit ourselves to be immanent in them; it is our voluntary immanency in matter that causes the illusion. But we can transcend our immanency, and live in a realm where there is only the reality of Spirit. This transcending the illusion is proclaimed



in both philosophies as achievable only by an arduous course of purification and mental and spiritual development.

Now it is interesting to note that New Thought and Christian Science follow these two ancient philosophies. New Thought, like the Sāṅkhya, recognises the real existence of matter, but proclaims man's complete freedom from its limitations by the realisation that matter is after all a mode of Mind, and so can be modified by man's Mind. On the other hand Christian Science, like the Vedānta, totally denies the existence of matter. Thus we have in Mrs. Eddy's book :

The verity of mind shows conclusively how it is that matter seems to be, but is not.

Spirit and its formations are the only realities of being. Matter disappears under the microscope of Spirit.

Matter and mind are opposites. One is contrary to the other in its very nature and essence; hence both cannot be real. If one is real, the other must be unreal.

There is no life, truth, intelligence, nor substance in matter. All is infinite Mind and its infinite manifestation, for God is All-in-all. Spirit is immortal Truth; matter is mortal error. Spirit is the real and eternal; matter is the unreal and temporal.

*The Method.*—In this pantheistic mysticism, which proclaims the unity of God and man,

and which considers matter an illusion and hence the great obstacle to spiritual realisation, the method or mode of magic is Affirmation. There is no need to pray; to whom shall a man pray, if man is himself God? There is no need to aspire to Unity; the Unity is a Fact. But man must put aside all the illusions that bar the way to the realisation of that great Fact; and man achieves it through Affirmation.

In the Vedānta the affirmations are both of what man is not and of what he is. "Aham etat na," *I am not This*, this material universe of cause and effect, birth and death, joy and sorrow; the contrary affirmation is, "So'ham," *I am He*, the Universal Spirit, the Over-Soul, or "Aham Ātmā," *I am the Self*.

A daily affirmation for the morning meditation prescribed in Hinduism shows the characteristic ideas of Hindu mysticism: "I am God and not anything else. I am Brahman and not the mortal of sorrows. I am Being, Bliss and Wisdom. Eternally free am I in my Nature."

Affirmations are the most characteristic features of New Thought and Christian Science; that their affirmations are of practical efficacy up to a certain point none can doubt who have heard the testimony of believers in

**Affirmations  
in New Thought**

these creeds. Typical New Thought affirmations are the following :

I come face to face with the great Fatherly Presence.

My life is a part of the Universal Life, and not an isolated unit.

The heart-throbs of the Eternal Spirit pulsate through me.

I assert my freedom from the rule of the seen and temporary.

I am at one with the Universal Good.

I deny the slavery of sense. I repudiate the bondage of matter. It is well in its place, but I renounce its supremacy.

I have growth, energy, vitality, and power. I have love, light, harmony, and courage. I am wise, strong, and free.<sup>1</sup>

The following four affirmations are well known in Christian Science. According to Mrs. Eddy: "Even if reversed, these propositions will be found to agree in statement and proof, showing mathematically their exact relation to Truth."

Affirmations  
in Christian  
Science

1. God is All-in-all.
2. God is good. Good is Mind.
3. God, spirit, being all, nothing is matter.
4. Life, God, omnipotent good, deny death, evil, sin, disease.—Disease, sin, evil, death, deny good, omnipotent God, Life.

<sup>1</sup> Henry Wood, *The New Thought Simplified*.

There is one important point in which the affirmations of the Hindu philosophies differ from their modern examples. While the Vedānta denies the fundamental reality or permanence of matter, it is so far in touch with actuality as to admit that, while we are wrapt in Māyā, that illusion has a reality. Immersed then in the Māyā, we must follow the laws of the illusion. There is heat and cold, injury and disease and pain, sowing and reaping and the eternal righteous Law of Karma, and Reincarnation, and the slow casting off of the power of Māyā by purification through successive births. The present embodiment in matter of a given individual is regarded as the result of his past lives; everything is just, and it is foolish to deny pain and misery, and unspiritual to hope to obtain benefits which one has not earned by actions in the past.

The affirmations of the Hindu philosophies are never turned towards material gain, nor to make life more full of health or wealth. There is nothing in them akin to the following from New Thought literature :

Affirm that you will be in a prosperous condition. Affirm it calmly and quietly, but strongly, and confidently. Believe it, believe it absolutely. Expect

it—keep it continually watered with expectation. You thus make yourself a magnet to attract the things that you desire.<sup>1</sup>

I want work that will bring me money. I want money to be free. Money means freedom. Money comes to me freely. I can use money freely. Gold wants me, gold loves me, gold needs me. I am drawing money.<sup>2</sup>

Nor are such exaggerations as these possible in India by anyone who understands the great Way to Liberation described in Hindu philosophies :

What is desire? Desire in the heart is always God tapping at the door of your consciousness with His infinite supply—a supply which is for ever useless unless there be demand for it.

Remember this: Desire in the heart for anything is God's sure promise sent beforehand to indicate that it is yours already in the limitless realm of supply; and whatever you want, you can have for the taking.<sup>3</sup>

New Thought also parts company with the affirmations of Hindu mysticism when it changes an affirmation into a demand. An affirmation is the statement of a fact; the power of the fact is absent when the mind merely demands. And moreover whatever spirituality is achieved by affirmations of the

<sup>1</sup> Trine, *In Tune with the Infinite*, Chap. IX.

<sup>2</sup> K. T. Anderson, *I Wants and Wants Me*.

<sup>3</sup> H. Emilie Cady, *Lessons in Truth*.

right kind is replaced by a refined selfishness having at its command a strong will.

I demand of the Supreme Power good for myself. I demand of it greater health of body. I demand more clearness of mind. I demand power to rid myself of hatred, envy and jealousy and ill will towards others, for I know such thoughts or forces hurt me. I demand wisdom so that ways and means may come to me to get health of body, clearness of mind, and freedom from the bondage of evil thought towards others.<sup>1</sup>

There are indeed magical incantations of Hindu priestcraft similar to the above; but a careful distinction is made in India between the true affirmations of the spiritual life, and any act of the will guided by the desire for a personal benefit. By compelling invisible agencies, or by the power of one's own trained will, men can indeed gain much profit for themselves, and there is always teaching to be had in India in such magic; but it appertains to the life of the world and its desires and is well recognised as *not* the true great philosophy of the spiritual life. In the revival of these ancient mystic ideas now taking place in New Thought, this clear distinction between "the spirit of man that goeth upward and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to earth" is not made, and that is why that philosophy is only a

<sup>1</sup> Prentice Mulford.

temporary halting-place for the seekers of the highest spiritual verities.

It has already been pointed out that Christian Science in its essence is the Vedānta of India in a less rational garb ; the lack of clear philosophic thought in Christian Science confuses the boundaries between true spirituality and a refined selfishness. While high spirituality can result in Christian Science from its general standpoint of affirmation, it is equally true that a self-centred and hard nature often results from its "demonstrations". Though both Christian Science and New Thought have done much to relieve the sufferings of thousands, and to lift the load of their depression, it is quite a question whether that result has not been achieved partly at the cost of true spirituality. However, it is interesting to study these new phases of old, old teachings ; and Schopenhauer was right when in 1851 he prophesied : " In most of the pagan philosophical writers of the first century we see the Jewish theism, which, as Christianity, was soon to become the faith of the people, shining through, much as at present we may perceive shining through in the writings of the learned the native pantheism of India, which is destined sooner or later to become the faith of the people. *Ex oriente lux.*"

*The Ideal.*—The ideal of Pantheistic mysticism is quite clear in India. It is the Yogī, the “unifier”. He seeks the high path of oneness with Brahman. Life after life,

**The Yogi** stage by stage, he has paid his debt to Māyā by the performance of duties imposed upon him by the laws of that illusion. He is now free to renounce the Immanence and seek the Transcendence. He is therefore the homeless wanderer, the Sannyāsi, the “renouncer”. When he attains, he is Mukta, the “liberated,” and Paramahansa, “who comes not nor goes,” beyond birth and death and rebirth, a “pillar” in the temple of God who “shall go no more out”.

This ideal has not yet been worked out clearly in either Christian Science or New Thought. In both, emphasis has so far been laid on the negative phase, that of freedom from the painful aspect of evolution ; there yet awaits for them the discovery of the positive phase, when men through affirmation shall realise Brahman, the One without a second.

Of him who thus discovers, it shall be asked, as of old: “Friend, your face shines like that of one who knows Brahman. Who has taught you?” And the reply shall be, as of old: “*So’ham*—I am He.”



## CHAPTER VI

### NATURE MYSTICISM

The great Mysticism is the belief which is becoming every day stronger with me, that all symmetrical nature objects are types of some spiritual truth or existence. When I walk the fields, I am oppressed now and then with an innate feeling that everything I see has a meaning, if I could but understand it. And this feeling of being surrounded with truths which I cannot grasp, amounts to indescribable awe sometimes. Everything seems to be full of God's reflex, if we could but see it. Oh, how I have prayed to have the mystery unfolded, at least hereafter! To see, if but for a moment, the whole harmony of the great system! To hear once the music which the whole universe makes as it performs His bidding.<sup>1</sup>

To the nature mystic, the manifold nature around him is as a mirror in which is reflected the Face of Divinity. The mystic of this type is not like the pantheistic mystic who realises God's Immanence in nature; to him there is practically no Immanence, for his heart is set on the Transcendence. To the pantheist, nature is a veil over the great Reality; to the

Nature, the  
Mirror of God

<sup>1</sup> Charles Kingsley, *His Life and Letters*, I. 55.

nature mystic, she is real and not an illusion, though he values in her an inner relation and not the outer form. As in a great piece of tapestry full of colour and line there are beneath, unseen, the warp and the woof, without which the tapestry could not be, so too is it in nature; the phenomena of nature—form and colour, dimension and relation, appearance and disappearance—are only as beads strung on a silver thread. The nature mystic senses the hidden divine axes of structure in the shape of wave and peak and cloud, in the delicacy and grace of fern and flower, in the beauty of the human face, in the flowering of love in the heart of man. The beauty of nature and the beauty of man both speak to him one continual message, and it is of “Yonder, Yonder”.

*The Theme.*—This is the all-powerful fact that the Divine Mind is mirrored in nature. In many forms this thought appears in religions; the greatest exponent of it, with the exception of the Founder of Buddhism, is Plato, and after him come the Stoics, and then Plotinus and his followers, and after them the Christian mystics who have been influenced by this most characteristic phase of the Greek imagination. For Plato, each object as a

The Divine  
Mind

particular thing is related to a general concept, whose essence is an Idea of the Divine Mind; and since the Divine Mind is the Good, the True and the Beautiful, whenever we sense these Realities through our sense impressions, which are produced by contacts with nature, we "remember" our true home, whence we have come to earth for a while.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :  
 The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
     Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
     And cometh from afar :  
     Not in entire forgetfulness,  
     And not in utter nakedness,  
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
     From God, who is our home.

It is this "Home" of ours that the nature mystic sees in flashes as he thrills to the beauties of nature in all her manifestations. Everywhere he sees, according to his temperament and mood, **Nature the Revealer** Rhythm, Order, Beauty, Love, and beneficent Law; he needs no faith or doctrine to guide him to God, for he communes with God as he contemplates nature. The sight of sea or mountain or pool or field is the great purification his heart cries out for ;

nature's moods are the whispers of the God he seeks.

Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
Of eye, and ear—both what they half create,  
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise  
In nature and the language of the sense,  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.<sup>1</sup>

The theme of the Divine Mind in nature appears in Plato throughout all his philosophy, but one aspect of it is specially noteworthy, and that is the doctrine of **God the Beautiful** Beauty. What we find beautiful in any thing or in any event is only the beauty of the Divine Mind mirroring itself in the thing and the event. Therefore, if we but cultivate our sense of beauty, we pass from one vision of beauty to another till we see the alone Beautiful, God Himself.

For he who hath thus far had intelligence of love, and hath beheld all fair things in order and aright—he drawing near to the end of things lovable shall behold a BEING marvellously fair; for whose sake in truth it is that all the previous labours have been undergone: One who is from everlasting, and neither is born nor perisheth, nor can wax nor wane, nor hath change or turning or alteration of foul or

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth, *Lines on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye.*

fair: nor can that beauty be imagined after the fashion of face or hands or bodily parts and members, nor in any form of speech or knowledge, nor in dwelling in aught but itself: neither in beast nor man nor earth nor heaven nor any other creature: but Beauty only and alone and separate and eternal, which, albeit all other fair things partake thereof and grow and perish, itself without change or increase or diminution endures for everlasting.<sup>1</sup>

It is noteworthy that the fundamental basis of Buddhism is a Nature Mysticism of a unique kind. The Divine Mind is not visualised in any personification; it is, to the Buddha, the great Law, the Dhamma, irresistible and imperishable. This Law is no God's self-revelation or will; it is *The Law*, that statement of the true relation between things as they eternally are. Yet that Law is not an abstraction; it is a mighty Power that permeates the whole universe, and "the heart of it is Love, the end of it is Peace and Consummation sweet". It states the relation between inanimate bodies, and we call the Dhamma then the Laws of Motion of Newton; it states the relation between souls, and the Lord Buddha then expounds it as, "Hatred does not cease by hatred; hatred ceases only by love". Hence the supreme emphasis laid by the Lord

Dhamma the  
Law

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Symbolism*.

Buddha on the Dhamma as the Criterion, the Refuge, the Purification, and the Way of Salvation.

Its effects are immediate, it is unlimited by time, it is conducive to salvation, it invites all comers, it is a fitting object of contemplation, the wise ponder it in their hearts.

Through life, till I reach Nirvāna, I will put my trust in the Law.

The Law as it has been in the ages that are past,  
 The Law that will be in the ages that are to come,  
 The Law as it is in this present age,  
 I worship continually.  
 I have no other Refuge,  
 The Law is my best Refuge;  
 By the truth of these words  
 May I conquer and win the victory.<sup>1</sup>

*The Method.*—This, for nature mysticism, is contemplation. Man need but cast out the self, and see things as they are, apart from any relation to himself, and he sees them in their harmony and beauty, with Plato, or he sees them, with the Buddha, as a vast Becoming, involving delusion and ignorance that cloud the vision and trammel his free life as Being. This contemplation may be worked out stage by stage, as in Buddhism, in ascending grades of intensity of spiritual realisation; or it may be

<sup>1</sup> *Pātimokkha*, Trans. by Dickson.

induced by a passionate response to the beauties of nature. In the former case, man separates himself from "the world as will," and identifies himself with "the world as idea," and becomes himself the Law, the Dhamma; in the latter, he becomes for the time one of those "organic harps divinely framed,"

That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps,  
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,  
At once the soul of each, and God of all.

The insight gained by the contemplation appropriate to this nature mysticism could not better be expressed than by these words of Wordsworth, as he analyses what the mood evokes in him:

that blessed mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened: that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on,  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,  
And even the motion of our human blood,  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.<sup>1</sup>

Nor can the magic of this mysticism be more clearly described than in these two

<sup>1</sup> *The Banks of the Wye.*

lines with which Wordsworth closes his great Ode:

To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

*The Obstacle.*—Wherever there are nature mystics, they love knowledge. Ignorance and superstition are the greatest obstacles in their path, and they feel that to know more is to see more. The mind must be made luminous, for they desire more truth of feeling than its intensity, and for them the clearer is the intellect the purer is the feeling. In Buddhism the greatest obstacle is ignorance, the last and final "fetter" which must be cast off before attaining Perfection; in Platonism, the training of the mind by philosophy and science, and of the feelings by art, is an integral part in the building of character. We shall see more clearly what is *anathema maranatha* for nature mystics when we consider their ideal.

It is interesting to note that wherever this mysticism develops a religious worship, its cults prefer as much sunlight as possible for their rituals. In their temples, there will be nothing akin to the awe-inspiring gloom of Hindu temples, with their innermost sanctuary almost in total



darkness, and into which none may enter but the consecrated priests; nor to the dim mystic softness of Christian churches and cathedrals radiating devotion. On the other hand, as in Buddhist temples now, and in Greek temples of long ago, there will be sunlight and open air, with the Holy of Holies in no mystic gloom at all, and approachable by every worshipper.

*The Ideal.*—This is the Philosopher, the Friend of Wisdom. And Wisdom for him is not a mere knowledge of facts and events gained by the mind: it is the co-ordination of everything by the human mind, which has become a reflex of the Divine Mind.

The Philosopher

Many are the paths to casting off ignorance and coming to wisdom; in Buddhism by rigid self-analysis, detachment and a compassion for all that lives; in Platonism by a contemplation of the "Ideas," the things-in-themselves, the thought-forms of the Demiourgos. The nature mystic is ever the idealist; and so long as the conditions surrounding his earthly embodiment fall short of his ideal, he feels a stranger in a strange land, and so strives to mould his environment to his ideal.

The Idealist

Blake is the typical nature mystic when he sings:

I will not cease from mental strife,  
 Nor shall my sword fall from my hand,  
 Till I have built Jerusalem  
 Within this green and pleasant land!

And not less typical are these words of Patrick Geddes as he calls for volunteers to build the City Beautiful: "People volunteer for war; and it is a strange and dark superstition that they will not volunteer for peace."

The nature mystic is therefore a reformer—not a mere iconoclast, but a fashioner anew, who longs for the new forms because his intuition has seen them. He is more a man who proclaims the ideal, than himself the hewer of wood and drawer of water who actually brings about the changes. Nature mystics may indeed lack executive ability, and a knowledge of ways and means; they can talk more inspiringly about what *must be* than on how it must be brought about. But they long to make all things orderly and sunlit and beautiful. The many forms of ignorance and superstition are for them dirt and disease, passion and delusion, ugliness and crudity, insularity and prejudice, commercialism and leanness of soul; and in

the ranks of modern nature mystics are Emerson and Carlyle, William Morris and Matthew Arnold and Ruskin, and all of that ever-increasing band of "volunteers for peace" who are the "children of light," whose path to God is through Wisdom and Beauty. And they tend whither tended Plotinus :

Oftentimes when I awake out of the slumber of the body and come to a realising sense of myself, and retiring from the world outside, give myself up to inward contemplation, I behold a wonderful beauty. I believe then that I verily belong to a higher and better world, and strive to develop within me a glorious life, and become one with the Godhead. And by this means I receive such an energy of life that I rise far above all other things, even the intelligible world. What then must he experience who now beholds the absolute beauty in and for itself in all its purity, without corporeal shape, freed from all bondage to time and space. And this therefore is the life of the gods and of divine and happy men, a liberation from all earthly concerns, a life unaccompanied with human pleasures, and the flight of the alone to the alone.

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Alone to the  
Alone

## CHAPTER VII

### SACRAMENTAL MYSTICISM

SACRAMENTAL mysticism, involving as it does rites and ceremonies, seems to many a hindrance to worship rather than a help. But

**Ritualism** this view is in no way borne out by history; if anything, sacramental mysticism may be said to be not only the earliest conscious form of mysticism but also the most persistent. Every religion has a ceremonial phase; even Buddhism, which in its spirit is utterly against priestcraft and ceremonial, has now developed ceremonial as one of its expressions. Like all other forms of mysticism, sacramental mysticism has its theme, its method, its obstacle, and its ideal.

*The Theme.*—This is the doctrine of the “Real Presence”. It means that, in some unfathomable yet real way, Divinity *as a Person* comes *directly* into touch with His worshipper who is on the lowest plane of existence.

While some forms of mysticism derive their vitality from the ascent of the human soul up to God, this sacramental type gains its life because the Spirit of God descends to man.

A vague belief that "God is with us," or that "We are one with God," does not make sacramental mysticism; this mysticism means nothing less than that God, in the fullness of His Reality, as a Fact and not as a symbol, comes to the worshipper,

And that a higher gift than grace  
Should flesh and blood refine,  
God's Presence and His very Self,  
And Essence all-divine.

How can the Highest and the lowest, complete Divinity and imperfect humanity, meet? For the simple reason, according to this mysticism, that the Highest is reflected in all lower things.

As above So  
below

"As above, so below," is the fundamental clue; all earthly events are therefore a reflection of a Procession of Events in the Divine Mind. Now, earthly events can be so co-ordinated that they become a miniature model of the Heavenly Events; when this happens, sacramental mysticism comes into being, for a sacrament is an act or a series of acts here "below"

which perfectly mirrors a similar act or series of acts "above". But how may earthly events be made models of the heavenly?

*The Method.*—Symbolism expressing itself in ritual is the method. Each symbol is chosen to represent a heavenly event, and the

Symbolism

symbol is the same for all time.

For we must not think of the Divine Procession of Events of the Immanent Godhead as beginning long ago with one event of a series, and that therefore that beginning is long past now; for sacramental mysticism, the first event is at every moment of subsequent time still the first event. Similarly every event in the series, while happening in its due order, is yet happening each moment of time.

What therefore is Past to our consciousness is a Now for this mysticism: the Divine Events "above" which happened once, are happening now in the same foreordained divine order. If men can create a set of symbolic acts, and co-ordinate them into a procession of events in a ritual, then, by means of the ritual, "Above" and "Below" become one, and Divinity descends to man.

This is the hidden structure of Ritualism. A ritual is not a mere series of acts, but a series

so constructed that each act of it points to a particular recurring Event in the heavenly worlds; the whole ritual series then mirrors the beginning, the middle and the end of the Divine series. Whether a ritual has slowly been put together throughout the centuries or is constructed quickly, it is a true ritual only if it correctly symbolises the Divine order. Those who are drawn to sacramental mysticism know at once, as if by clairvoyance, when a ritual "works," for they become part of the ritual, and themselves one of the series of Divine Events. In true ritual worship, there is a dependence between Divinity and man, for while Divinity is brought down to man, man's co-operation at the same time is made necessary to God.

There is one ever-recurring Divine Event which is always the theme of the great rituals. It is the sacrifice of the Logos, "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven". Without this voluntary self-sacrifice and limitation of God the universe cannot exist; all objects, animate and inanimate, exist only because God "died" to the fullness of His nature. But His self-chosen "death" is only in order that, through the co-operation

*The Sacrifice  
of the Logos.*

of those He died for, He may rise to a more glorious existence—more glorious because those He died for live with Him in a conscious communion. Now man from the beginning is an expression of Divinity; man's aim in existence is to know himself as God. This realisation is given in some types of mysticism through love or contemplation or ecstasy; sacramental mysticism achieves the same result through a ritual.

There are three great rituals which show this archetypal basis of real ritualism; they come from Egypt, India and Europe. Widely different though they seem in externals, Masonry, and the **Hindu Ritualism** Prajāpati ritual of ancient Hinduism, and the Mass of the Christian Church—all three tell of the primordial sacrifice of the Logos. We need but take the Prajāpati ritual and the Mass for comparison. In the former, God as Prajāpati, "Lord of Creatures," lays Himself down on the altar as a voluntary victim, to be slain and dismembered by the Devas, the elder children of His family. From the dismembered parts of Prajāpati then arise all creation; men exist in their individual natures only because He was slain. It is this sacrifice of Prajāpati which is commemorated



each day in the great ritual. As His sacrifice takes place in Time, so the earthly ritual requires the four priests of the four Vedas to symbolise the four seasons; as the dismembered Godhead can be made whole and resurrected from the dead only by God Himself, so man (who is God) must himself perform the commemorative sacrifice and "make Father Prajāpati whole once more". When, after the sacrifice lasting a year, Prajāpati is made whole, two wonderful results ensue: first, the human sacrificer becomes one with Divinity and hence deathless and immortal; secondly, Father Prajāpati lays Himself down once more as a voluntary victim to be slain and dismembered again. Indeed, were Prajāpati not to sacrifice Himself after He had been resurrected from the dead, says the ritual, the universe would vanish into nothingness; it requires a perennial sacrifice of Prajāpati to make the universe live and grow from year to year.

The Mass in Christianity commemorates the voluntary sacrifice of God as Christ; He is called "the victim" (*hostia*, or Host). He came foreknowing His crucifixion, and it is only because of His crucifixion that men can be saved. Every act of His life was foreordained,

The Mass

because His whole mission, from the Descent from heaven to the Ascent, was but a reflection of a Divine Procession of Events in the heavenly worlds. The Mass in symbol enacts the whole life of Christ, and it must be performed every day. At each celebration Christ is resurrected, and gives to the worshippers the promise of their resurrection.

In the ancient Hindu ritual, it is never forgotten that the human sacrificer is of the nature of God. When the altar was built for this sacrifice which commemorated the descent of the Logos into matter, it was made out of 365 bricks, laid one at a time each day, and at the bottom of them all was laid a miniature gold man on a gold sun, for God "in the Sun" is also man, the human soul. The human soul, symbolised by the miniature gold man, rises through the altar up to heaven with his sacrifice, and so makes Prajāpati whole once more, for without man's aid God who has died for us cannot be resurrected. The identity of the human sacrificer with Prajāpati was further shown in one striking way; as Prajāpati once laid Himself down to be slain, so the human sacrificer laid himself down during the ceremony on the ground

with outstretched arms. In the Mass ritual there are certain places where the celebrant "unites himself" to Christ; and as Christ was laid on a cross, so in symbol, to show that the priest is both man and Christ, the priest's chasuble bears on it a great cross at its back.

In the great rituals there is always the climax when Divinity reveals Himself through the ritual; this is the moment of the "Real Presence," and it is this alone that makes a ritual really sacramental. In the Hindu ceremony and in the Mass there is the moment of consecration when God is present in Person, and not merely symbolically. He is then resurrected "from the dead"; and this resurrection of the Godhead is the theme of sacramental mysticism, and the ritual is the method.

The Real Presence

There are very few descriptions of the effect on the worshipper of sacramental mysticism, especially of its climax, the moment of the Real Presence. But the reality of the effect is, as millions will testify still, beyond imagination. It transcends the power of death, it purifies the foulness of hell, and transforms for the time human weakness into Divine strength. Those who worship God

through this mysticism need bring before His presence no special attribute of culture or wisdom; when He descends to the lower worlds, then to all who open their hearts to Him, sinner and saint, ignorant peasant and man of wisdom, He gives His Presence, and as God the giver to Man the receiver—both One and the same—He gives His communion.

*The Obstacle.*—The obstacle is naturally incorrect performance of the ritual. Every act in the series must be performed, and if one

**Ritual Magic** is omitted, the mystic magic will not create the necessary forces.

Knowledge has little to do with the magic; as the turning of a switch will set a hundred electric bulbs alight, provided one knows where the switch is, so anyone who is taught the ritual can perform the magic. But to achieve the result, he must perform according to the rubric, keeping to the ancient landmarks; to omit or to add mars the ritual and hinders the magic. For the rubric was made carefully by those who knew in what way each part of it should point to an event in the heavenly world, and sacramental mysticism ceases to be sacramental when there is not the perfect mirroring of the heavenly acts by the earthly.

*The Ideal.*—This is the priest. He must be consecrated for his function, for the magic of this mysticism will not work unless the operator is a true priest. In Hinduism a man must be consecrated a priest, in Christianity he must be ordained, in Masonry the officer must be duly installed. Here comes in the great question of the validity of "Orders" in Christianity, or the regularity or irregularity of Masonic bodies; but this matter goes deeper into Occultism than can this brief treatise on Mysticism.

The Priest as  
Celebrant

The consecrated priest, of Hinduism or of Christianity, or the R.W.M. of a Masonic Lodge, plays a dual rôle; he is a worshipper for himself, but he is also a celebrant representing others who are his congregation, or his Lodge. It is his function to unite in himself their devotions and offerings, and with his own, or rather through his own, offer them up to God; then to the priest is given what God has for the worshippers. At the ceremony, each worshipper at the moment of the Real Presence is directly before God; but the moment was made possible only because of the consecrated character of the priest and of the ritual he alone can perform. The priest

is therefore a messenger of the people to God, and a messenger of God to the people.

It is all these mystical thoughts, acts and realisations that make sacramental mysticism; and certainly to one who studies and understands and lives it, this type of mysticism is not second to any other type. It is specially noteworthy in the religious life of the world to-day, because sacramental mysticism is once again becoming a fuller expression of the life of both God and man than it has been for many ages.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### THEOSOPHICAL MYSTICISM

MODERN Theosophy is such a vast body of ideas that at first sight it is impossible to predicate any one mode of mysticism as characteristic of it. All the main principles of the great religions and philosophies are represented in Theosophy; it is fully Pantheistic when certain teachings are examined, and yet at the same time it is a pure and lofty Monotheism. No greater impetus to Devotion can be found than in certain Theosophical teachings, and yet the emphasis laid on the Wisdom aspect of existence makes Theosophy a scientific philosophy. Not less striking is the acceptance in Theosophy of ritualistic and sacramental mysticism as one mode of discovery of the Great Reality.

Furthermore, modern Theosophy is still developing, adding fact after fact to the age-long tradition of ancient Theosophy; and since too the Theosophical Society cannot lay down

what constitutes Theosophy, Theosophical mysticism must be looked for more in the ideals of leading Theosophists than in books. Three main ideas, however, in Theosophy give us the clue to its characteristic mysti-

Three Theo-  
sophical Truths

cism, and of these the first describes the nature of the Great Reality. This is viewed both as a Transcendence and as an Immanence, both as an Absolute and as a Creative Logos. Hence all creation, all things whatsoever, visible and invisible, partake of the Divine Nature, and yet Divinity exists in a Transcendental nature of Himself that is not involved in His creation. The second idea is that man is an expression of Divinity, "very God of very God," and, like his Maker, he partakes of the dual nature of Transcendence and Immanence. As the Immanence, man

Transcend-  
ence and  
Immanence

is an unfolding life, evolving through the lower kingdoms of life up to humanity and then beyond into still higher orders of creation; yet as the Transcendence, man the "Monad" is ever in the bosom of his Father, a perfection that is, and not a perfection that is to be. The third idea is that the universe in its changing life is guided in all its changes by the Divine



Consciousness, with the one aim of enabling man as the Immanence to unfold the latent germ of Divinity within him, so as to bring to his consciousness the realisation of himself as the Transcendence.

These ideas, so characteristic of Theosophy, have given rise to a Theosophical mysticism which may be stated as follows.

*The Theme.*—This is “the Plan of the Logos”. This thought dominates Theosophical mysticism; each moment of time, each particle of energy, is revealing this

“God’s Plan, which is evolution”. One mighty Divine

**The Plan of  
the Logos**

Thought is building and unbuilding, according to a Plan, alike the atom, the human soul and the stars. This Thought at work, this Plan which is being carried out, is a radiant Love, an omnipotent Power, and an entrancing Wisdom. The Logos, the Maker of the Plan, is Himself the Plan; therefore to work for the Plan, to co-operate with it ever, is the way to communion with Him and to the discovery of the God that we are.

This Plan reveals itself in all worlds, and at all stages of evolution. When nebulæ condensed into planets, it was according to the Plan; as atoms developed affinities to form

molecules, - it was according to the Plan. Stage by stage the Plan is carried out, and the orders of creation in the ascending ladder of evolution appear according to the Plan. Similarly too is it with reference to all human affairs; the rise and fall of civilisations, the growth and decay of empires, the appearances of religious teachers, lawgivers, prophets and martyrs, all happen in accordance with the Plan; it uses for its purposes each man individually, and also men collectively as nations and races. Each created thing is an agent of the Plan.

It slayeth and it saveth, nowise moved  
 Except unto the working out of doom;  
 Its threads are Love and Life; and Death  
and Pain

The shuttles of its loom.

It maketh and unmaketh, mending all;  
 What it hath wrought is better than  
had been;  
 Slow grows the splendid pattern that it plans  
 Its wistful hands between.

For this mighty Plan is not a mechanical working of the forces of nature. It is a Being who, closer than breathing, "nearer than hands and feet," as a wondrous Personality holds a little child's hands while it prays, and gazes into the face of the martyr

The Logos as  
 a Personality

when he is enveloped in flames ; beyond all personality, and yet a Person of Persons, the Plan catches up to Himself the saint who flames in devotion and the lover who offers himself to the Ideal. To gain a glimpse of the Plan is to see life in its totality and beauty, and to know how to co-operate with the Plan is to know what life truly is.

*The Method.*—This for Theosophical mysticism is Discipleship. The Plan of the Logos reveals itself not only in Nature, but also in personality ; and it expresses itself in a Master of the Wisdom in a perfection not too far beyond realisation by the human heart and mind. In mysterious ways the Plan crystallises itself in a Master of the Wisdom ; he is a perfect mirror of the Divine Thought, a flawless conductor of the Divine Will. The Master is therefore both Guru and Deva, Lord and Master ; and the soul that serves his Gurudeva serves the Plan.

The Master  
as the Plan

Therefore the method is Discipleship, and this means not merely to be a pupil or learner. In Theosophical mysticism the disciple is first and foremost an apprentice of his Master, less a learner and more a worker. For the Gurudeva, since

Discipleship

he is the Plan, is a mighty Worker; in worlds visible and invisible he toils night and day, bringing to birth new forms of life—new thoughts for men to think with and new hopes for men to dream with. The disciple's aim then is to understand his Master's work, to share in it, and to do such parts of it as are within his capabilities, releasing thereby the energies of his Master for vaster schemes of work. Such knowledge as the disciple seeks is only in order that it may make him more efficient in his Master's work; such purification as he strives for is only in order that he may grasp swifter the Master's thought and be a better channel of his will.

A disciple, according to the need of his Master's work, may be a recluse, taking no part in the movements of the outer world; or he may be in the workaday world, giving his Master's message by word and deed, trying to mould events so as to make the Master's plan more realisable in the affairs of men.

But Discipleship does not mean that a soul merely strives to serve the great Plan as it is reflected in his Master; it also means that he grows in the image of his Master. Indeed this may be said to be the true "method" of

Theosophical mysticism, though such growth is impossible without serving the Master in his great Plans. The strength and inspiration to serve grow steadily, because the pupil is more and more assimilated to the consciousness of his Master; the final proof to the Theosophical mystic that his way is a true way lies in the realisation that the larger Personality of his Master slowly permeates his smaller personality, giving him a wisdom he did not possess and a strength of which he was not capable. The stages of this growth into the consciousness of a Master are those of the Probationary Pupil, the Accepted Pupil, and the "Son of the Master". Each stage has its characteristic content of the mystic life, but through all the stages runs the delight in increasing powers for the service of man and of God, and a mysterious joy in the possession of a Father and Friend who is both "perfect God and perfect Man".

Stages in  
Discipleship

*The Ideal.*—If the "method" is Discipleship, it follows logically that the ideal should be the "Master of the Wisdom". From what has been said about the Gurudeva, it will be evident that the ideal of this mysticism is not

Master of the  
Wisdom

the liberated soul, the "Mukta," who enters into a Nirvāna which removes him from all contact with his fellow men. Far rather is it the Perfected Soul, free from all that trammels him of personal desires, who is the Perfect Worker in the Plan of the Logos. The goal of the Theosophical mystic is to be "as a pen in the hand of God, through which His thought may flow, and find for itself an expression down here".<sup>1</sup> Instead of withdrawing from the world of sorrows, in which his brothers still live, the Master of the Wisdom becomes "a living plume of fire, raying out upon the world the Divine Love which fills his heart".<sup>2</sup>

In this ideal, the Perfected Soul as a Divine Worker appears with wonderful brilliancy. According to his temperament or "Ray," he may pass from level to level of Adeptship, growing mightily in Power, Wisdom and Love, till, unfolding the powers of his Ray, he becomes a Manu and a Lord of the World, a Bodhisattva and a Buddha, a Maha Chohan, or a great Adept with other functions. Each level he attains to makes him a Minister of

The Soul as  
Minister of  
the Logos

<sup>1</sup> *At the Feet of the Master.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

the Logos, with larger spheres of activity and responsibility; he becomes a reservoir of His forces, an architect of His Plan, and an agent of His Will. The freedom which he has achieved after lives of toil he plans to share with all his brothers; he becomes as a parent to the "great orphan," humanity. He loves to brood over its destiny as a mother broods over the future of her only child; as the mother shields her child from all harm, from even the consequences of its own mistakes, so the Master of the Wisdom makes his Divine Self the crucible in which the dross of all men's evil is burnt away in a great flame of love and compassion, leaving for men out of their deeds only what helps men.

*The Obstacle.*—Since to be the Perfect Worker is the ideal, what hinders such an achievement is evidently the obstacle. This can be but one thing, and it is "the personal equation". There is but one mighty Person at work, the Logos Himself; we are mirrors of His life, but as His Light shines on us to be passed on to others, we may distort it or retain it. It is our personalities that make the obstacle. Each one of us throughout our many lives has built up our "individual"

The Personal  
Equation

centre of existence, each with his particular angle of vision; and each identifies himself with his past experiences and with his dreams of future achievement. Yet the centre of each cannot be the true centre, the centre of the One in whom all live; to come to His centre we must each renounce something of what we call our "individuality". The renunciation is easy enough, when once a man has gained a glimpse of God's Plan; thenceforth he longs only to be the perfect mirror of that Plan. Day by day he toils to "cast out the self," to see the problem of life, first as his Master sees, and then as God sees. For in every thought and in every feeling he knows that his personality lurks, obstructing the flow of the Divine Life through them; therefore he toils persistently to purify himself through love of the Wisdom, through worship of the Beautiful, and through unwearied Service of his fellow men. Slowly his individuality casts out its "self," and the "personal equation" is destroyed for ever; yet he lives himself and not another. Yet is he also nevermore himself, but Another.

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## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

THERE is one fact which binds all mystic ways together "in a mystery," and that is that the more mystic ways a soul will attempt and sympathise with, the more fully he will live his own characteristic life of mysticism. Greater than the mystic of any one of the types I have described is the Panmystic, who greets with joyous rapture the great Life as it comes down to him through any road It chooses for Its coming.

The Life of  
Mysticism

No amount of mere description will ever reveal the full truth about the life of mysticism. For truly did the ancient Greeks call the mysteries things seen which imposed silence; and so in each type of mysticism the heart of it can never be described. Each of us must discover his own mystery, that "final secret"<sup>1</sup> which the inmost, the One, holds for him through the

<sup>1</sup> *Light on the Path*, Part II. Rule 17.

ages. To that discovery each of us is pledged, and "but for this cause came I unto this hour". Each mystic who has come to his "hour" has known that each man has his hour too, and has longed to bring him to it. Thus has come the great tradition of mysticism which, like incense on an altar, ascends from man to God, scattering the while its scent to the surrounding air.

\*             \*             \*             \*

I have tried as best I could to portray something of the great Mystic Life hitherto found by the mystics of all ages. I have to some extent lived each phase, for I love them all, and while I live each, it seems as if it were the only road to the Reality. Yet I know that I cannot tread as yet all the many roads with equal delight, and that my personal equation has marred what I have tried to give. That thought is that among these many types of mysticism there is none first and none last; all are equally roads to God, and souls tread equally swiftly along them all. Nor are these the only roads to Him; other ways there are, not even necessarily through mysticism, and new mystic modes too will appear as the

All Mystic Ways  
Equal

future unfolds the hidden beauties of "God's Plan, which is evolution".

Mysticism is as the scent of blossoms in tropical lands which only open as the sun goes down, and then perfume the air to a swooning rapture. Away from the turmoil of action, beyond where thoughts can live, the mystic senses the perfume of life and makes of his heart a chalice to gather that perfume to offer to God and to man. Happy are men that the world contains mystics always, for the mystics are those children of God who know no age, who sing of sunrise in the darkness of the night, and who see the vision of Man's Ascension in the tragedy of his crucifixion.

13

