CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

The search for identity has emerged as the ontological necessity of the modern Western writer who has lost his faith in religion and is desperately in quest of a spiritual nexus that can provide him with a unified and integral view of existence. Consequently, concepts like 'Salvation', 'Liberation' and 'Identity' have come to acquire a charismatic significance in modern literature. Dennis H. Wrong seems to be right when he says that the term "identity" has become "a value charge, almost a charismatic term, with its secure achievement regarded as equivalent to personal salvation". It is personal salvation that has become the major thematic concern, the informing principle, of the modern writers like, Aldous Huxley, L.H. Myers, D.H. Lawrence and a host of others.

Philosophy and religions talk about Liberation or Salvation as the ultimate end of human existence. While some emphasize that Salvation is possible here and now, others refer to it as a state of posthumous consciousness. Again different religions emphasize different ways to attain salvation. While the Hindu Tradition advocates three major ways - Karma Marga, Bhakti Marga and Janan Marga, the Christian Tradition emphasizes the way of Martha (action) and the way of Mary (devotion). But then, there are esoteric cults, both in the East and the West, which advocate
'Dionysian Mysticism', as opposed to Apollonian, as the most efficacious means of attaining salvation. The present study is an attempt to examine the novels of Aldous Huxley, L.H. Myers, and D.H. Lawrence who advocate 'Dionysian Mysticism' as a valid means of transcendence. A review of critical literature on these authors shows that there has been no systematic study of these novelists from this particular angle. I personally feel that this pre-occupation with Salvation, with a stress on 'Dionysian Mysticism', has greatly enriched the tone and texture of the modern novel. Therefore, a detailed study for the prevalent popularity of Dionysian Mysticism or sex mysticism as a means of seeking the ultimate Reality which forms the basis of perceptual world.

Chapter II is devoted mainly to an analysis of Dionysian Mysticism and to the elaboration of the meaning of salvation, which is the generic term employed in all philosophical systems and religions to express the idea of any gracious deliverance or spiritual redemption from sin, pain, misery, sorrow and suffering of any kind. Salvation is a type of release from bondage paving the way to a further unworldly existence which is not subject to change. "Moksa (Salvation) is oneness with Brahman, and is eternal".

Mystical experience is as old as humanity. The word 'Mysticism' has been commonly used for "the first hand experience of direct intercourse with God and theologico-metaphysical doctrine of the soul's possible union with
Mysticism implies a certain metaphysical conception of God and of the soul and it implies further an intuitive way of attaining union with the Absolute. Mystics follow different paths to experience the ultimate spiritual reality. While most of the religions follow the Apollonian way - the way of self-abnegation and renunciation, there are esoteric cults which emphasize that by making use of those very things which are shunned by the traditional mystic, they can experience the divine reality. Thus 'Dionysian Mysticism' lays emphasis on the cultivation of the senses particularly the sexual experience as a potent and valid means of salvation.

The philosophical idea of Dionysian Mysticism is derived from Greek cult and mythology where Dionysus is "a nature god of fruitfulness and vegetation but tending specialise as a god of wine". The worshipers of Dionysus largely believed in the cult of wine and secret rites. In the Orphic societies, which were generally attached to the worship of Dionysus, those who were eager to attain communion with the Divine and anxious to attain eternal peace of mind, were attracted to the mystery religions. Arthur Gibson has rightly remarked that "the mystery of sex is the mystery of total contact between created existents".

Sex Mysticism seems to have found its basis in Hindu and Buddhist scriptures particularly in Tantric texts, which emphasize that sex a natural activity can be transformed into
a mode of worship to experience the mystery of the universe and the mystery of man's own being. The adherents of Tantrism claim that tantra constitutes the fifth Veda and that its esoteric teachings were expounded by Lord Siva to Parvati for the weak-willed people of Kaliyuga who were unable to control their unruly passions. To a Tantric all is Siva, all is Brahman, to him nothing seems impure. The tantric manner of approach, as Heinrich Zimmer points out, "is not of Nay, but of Yea", for it advocates the use of those very things which are forbidden by the traditional religions. The sexual act (Maithuna) can lead a man to the portals of bliss. Benjamin Walker equates Maithuna with genuine mystical experience: "The bliss that proceeds from ritual sexuality is the height of religious experience. In this state of non-duality all differences vanish the couple apprehend the mystery of the whole cosmic process and taste the transcendent bliss of divine experience".

The third chapter analyses the modern human situation with its growing dissatisfaction with established religions and traditional moral values. It examines the factors like uncertainty, doubt, which have tainted modern life. A complete decay of faith and loss of certitudes in the matters of religions and ethics was quickened by the War. A.C. Ward rightly observes that "at no time since Constantine made it an official religion has Christianity been so seriously shaken as in the years since the War". The new discoveries in the field of Biology, Anthropology, Psychology, Astronomy and Physics have also
made a deep impact on the social, moral and spiritual ideas of modern man and weaned him away from traditional religious beliefs.

Modern man feels himself rootless, he longs for a philosophy that can provide him peace, shanti. The chapter shows how the important writers of our age, particularly Aldous Huxley, L.H. Myers and D.H. Lawrence come to grips with this problem of loneliness and religious belief and how they arrive at Salvation as final solution to all ills of mankind.

The fourth Chapter traces Aldous Huxley's development from scepticism to mysticism, indicating how it marks the dynamic evolution of his thought to which Vedanta and Buddhism made significant contribution. The problem which recurs in Huxley's novels is the matter-spirit duality. Guided by his keen interest in mystical experience, he begins to handle it in his novels to reach a satisfying solution to it. Huxley's novel after Eyeless in Gaza (1936) reflect, in addition to his expanding knowledge of Salvation, his distinctive views on religion and psycho-mystical evolutionary ideas which form the subject of his essays and prose writings. "Spirituality", he says, in his essay Readings in Mysticism, "is the art of achieving union with God, and consists of two branches - asceticism and mysticism, the mortification of self and that contemplation by means of which the soul makes contact with ultimate Reality". In Ends And Means (1937) he advocates meditation as a "method
for establishing communion between the soul and the integrating principle of the universe. But after the publication of *After Many A Summer* (1939) Huxley's mysticism drifts towards Mahayana Buddhism or Tantric Buddhism. Consequently, contemplative mysticism gives place to sexual mysticism. In *Island* (1962) he investigates the possibility of mystical experience through sexual love and psychedelic drugs.

Tantric mysticism provides solution to problems like sex and death which Huxley is pre-occupied with. Tantrism treats sex as a valid means of spiritual experience. Ranga, one of the characters of *Island* says:

'Tantra's an enormous subject...there's a hard core of sense. If you are a Tantric, you don't renounce the world or deny its value, you don't try to escape into a Nirvana apart from life, as the monks of the Southern school do. No, you make use of everything you do, of everything that happens to you, of all things you see and hear and taste and touch, as so many means to your liberation from the prison of your-self.'

The Palanese have learnt that mind and body and their functions are divine, for they know that there is nothing impure and low in natural functions. The *Kularna va Tantra* says that man must be taught to rise by means of those things which can be the cause of his fall. Man may be debased through natural functions of drinking, eating and sexual indulgence; yet if these are performed with a sense of bhava, then they become the instrument of spiritual uplift.

Huxley favours the special technique of *Maithuna* to
achieve salvation. In *Island*, Will Farnaby learns about Tantric Practice of *Maithuna*, the Yoga of sex. Radha Appu explains the esoteric importance of *Maithuna*. There is nothing profane in it. She calls it "a real yoga", "As good as *raja yoga*, or *karma yoga*, *bhakti yoga". She further tells Will that it is not merely a sex technique for the sake of sex but a means to knowing our essential nature. *Maithuna* really gets you to know "Who in fact you are..........". "*Tat Tvam asi*........thou art that........."[14].

The fifth chapter shows L.H. Myer's pre-occupation with the problem of harmony between the outer and inner modes of life and his philosophical attempt to discover a solution to it. Myer's major concern in his novels is man's quest for Salvation and this can be seen in the development of Prince Jali, who serve as the connecting link between the *The Root and the Flower* (1935), his well-known tetralogy and *The Pool of Vishnu* (1940). In this chapter an attempt has been made to bring into focus his interest in Hindu lore as a means of Salvation. It becomes quite evident in the way in which he makes use of the Hindu concept of *maya*, the Hindu doctrine of *'tat-tvam asi'*[15] and the Vedantic techniques of self-enlightenment in *The Near and the Far* (1943).

Myers' major characters, in his tetralogy, Rajah Amar, Hari Khan and Prince Jali seem to be in quest of what is true and valuable in life. They appear in the first book of this tetralogy, *The Near and the Far* (1929) and are carried over
to the last book, *The Pool of Vishnu* (1940), where Rajah Amar drops first and Hari Khan fades out of the picture later. Only Jali succeeds and arrives at a definite philosophy of life i.e. inner enlightenment. In his quest for truth, he aims at the Indian mode of spirituality which asserts the importance of self-reliance. This quest for inner enlightenment reaches its climax with the pantheistic discovery that the real which is at the heart of the universe is identical with the real life in man.

This chapter also shows Myer's acquaintance with Hinayana Buddhism and Tantrism. In *The Root and the Flower* (1935) Myers presents the Hinayana attitude to life and Nirvana in character of Rajah Amar. But he comes to believe that Hinayana Buddhism is an inadequate ideal as it insists on renunciation of the world for mystical experience. Rajah Amar as Hinaynist seeks "the tranquillity that is at the end of all desires," and seldom gets out his quiet contemplation. He fails to cope with the world around him and eventually takes refuge in a Buddhist monastery for Nirvana. Thus L.H. Myers rejects Hinayana Buddhism in his search of Nirvana. Another cult which receives critical treatment in L.H. Myers's fiction, is Tantrism or Shaktism. Through Gunevati who represents 'the religion of sex', Myers seems to advocate sexual experience as a way of apprehending Reality. L.H. Myers introduces the Tantric religion to Rajah Amar, through the Yogi, when he says:

"The true religion', the yogi broke in, is that
which has run like a hidden vein of gold through the history of this country from the earliest times. Underneath all the shams and inventions of false shame, pedantry and hypocrisy, there has lived amongst us Hindus the ancient verity that Sexuality and religion are one. You Rajah, are an ascetic, and it may pain you to listen to these words; nevertheless in your asceticism you recognise their truth. Chastity is a noble way of recognizing the divinity of sex. But there are other ways."

The sixth chapter attempts to show D.H. Lawrence's pre-occupation with 'the door beyond' through sexual experience and points out that it can be appreciated when studied in the context of Indian Tantric philosophy. Harry T. Moore rightly suggests the affinity between Lawrence and Tantrism when he says that "Lawrence's God comes........ out of Indian concepts of the Chakra and the Kundalini". D.H. Lawrence believes that all men are primarily personal beings growing into ever new knowledge of life through spontaneous, instinctive and creative moments. He considers the unknown within one-self as the channel for the unknown beyond one-self. Lawrence can never forget the other world lying beyond consciousness and how large a place it occupies in relation to the whole life of man, particularly his intellectual life, occupies an infinitesmally small place. In reality, his aim is to reconcile both intuitional and intellectual judgement by means of 'Sex Mysticism'.

Lawrence advocates sexual experience as a means of self realisation. He believes that the primal consciousness in man is pre-mental and has nothing to do with cognition.
Lawrence's emphasis on sex experience is for the sake of the liberation of imprisoned creative psychic powers. From *The Rainbow* (1915) onwards, his major characters are constantly striving towards a state of mystical experience for which Lawrence had several names such as "the unknown", "the creative beyond". R.H. Poole rightly says that with Lawrence "the way to the central mystery lay through sensuous experience." It is through sex that Tom and Lydia in *The Rainbow* undergo a deep spiritual experience:

"It was the entry into another circle of existence, it was the baptism to another life, it was the complete conformation. Their feet trod strange ground of knowledge, their footsteps were lit up with discovery............ The new world was discovered, it remained only to be explored. they had passed through the doorway into further space........ She was the doorway to him, he to her. At last they had thrown open the door, each to the other and had stood in the doorways facing each other, whilst the light flooded out from behind on to each of their faces; it was the transfiguration, the glorification, the admission."

In *Women Love* (1921) Ursula and Birkin seem to be an ideal pair whose unison leads to some kind of mystical experience.

In a letter to Blanche Jennings, Lawrence wrote, "Somehow, I think we come into knowledge (unconscious) of the most vital parts of the cosmos, through touching things." It is through this tender touching that Ursula and Birkin become aware of ultimate mystery and spiritual experience:

"She closed her hands over the full rounded body of his loins she seemed to touch the quick of the mystery darkness that was bodily him. It was a perfect passing away for both of them, and at the same time the most intolerable accession into being. There were strange fountains of his body, more mysterious and potent than any she"
had imagined or known, more satisfying, ah, finally, mystically-physically satisfying, she had thought there was no source deeper than the phallic source.

D.H. Lawrence believes that "the phallus is only the great symbol of godly vitality in a man and of immediate contact in relationship to the rhythmic cosmos". Lawrence's advocacy of sexual experience as a means of salvation and his emphasis that sex is a door to 'beyond' seems to be in consonance with the Indian Tantrik Mysticism in which "sexual" impulses become a pathway for opening the realities of the cosmos, pointing towards the oneness of the finite and the infinite.

The concluding chapter gathers various strands of the fictional writings of Aldous Huxley, L.H. Myers and D.H. Lawrence to show how they highlight 'Dionysian Mysticism' which has lent a new dimension to the English Novel. The novel in hands of these writers has become a powerful means of spiritual exploration to examine the nature of human existence and man's constant thirst for peace and joy which are the fruits of a fully-blown spiritual experience.
Notes and References


18. *ibid* 511-512.


