CHAPTER I

MYSTICISM: ITS NATURE AND TYPES

Mysticism, generally speaking, is of two types, higher and lower. We are here, of course, concerned with the former.

Before stating what mysticism means and stands for, in the technical parlance and in essence, it would be useful and pertinent to point out what mysticism is not.

MYSTICISM AND ALLIED FIELDS.

Mysticism is often confused with spiritualism, theosophy, clairvoyance, clairaudience, hypnotism, even with occultism and magic; \(^1\) in fact, with many modern experimental cults in the field of 'psychism' 'parapsychology' and, what is called 'psychologism'. These are all esoteric abnormalities, psychic aberrations and morbid phenomena which cannot be accepted or allowed to pass in the name of mysticism proper. \(^2\)

William James goes so far as to say that "the words 'mysticism' and 'mystical' are often used as terms of mere reproach, to throw at any opinion which we regard as vague and vast and sentimental, and without a base in either facts

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1. F.C. Hapgood, *Mysticism*, p.36. For 'theosophy' see Annie Besant, *Mysticism*, p.6. "Theosophy is the reassertion of Mysticism within the bosom of every living religion, the affirmation of the reality of the mystic state of consciousness and of the value of its products."

The common usage of the term 'mysticism', as something vague and amorphous, is probably owing to the literal connotation attached to this term, of being, in its original meaning and genesis, something mysterious, secret, nebulous and purely subjective. But in order to emphasize the true nature and meaning of the term and its spiritual and religious significance, its meaning must, perforce, be restricted and fixed.


4. "a type of confused, irrational thinking" Happold, op. cit. p.36. See also T.P. Hughes, Dictionary of Islam; and Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics (1961) Vol. IX.

5. The word 'mystic' (and, for that matter, 'mysticism') has for its derivation the Greek word 'mysterion', i.e., mystery, which comes from the Greek verb 'muo', to shut or close the lips or eyes. (Happold, op. cit., p.18). Also see Radolph Otto, Mysticism East and West, p.141. Other variations of the Greek derivation are 'mystos' (keeping silent), 'Mvo' or 'Myein' (to be closed of eyes or lips). The Greek Religion of mysteries, centuries before Plato, called Orphism or oriental mystery cults, was the earliest mystical efflorescence in the West, having secret initiations and prayers as its doctrine, while the mystic was the one initiated. Inge op. cit., p.91. Cf. also Dasgupta, Hindu Mysticism, p.16.

Metaphysics, Philosophy and Religion, though it involves a natural contradiction with Science which deals merely, and exclusively with material-cum-external phenomenon. But whereas there are sufficient grounds of affinity and assimilation among these important branches of human knowledge and experience, there are also to be found considerable points of variance and divergence among them. Therefore, it is imperative to discuss their comparative natures and objectives in order to distinguish mysticism from each of them.

**Mysticism and Psychology**

Psychology, as a science of the mind, concerns itself mainly with the study of that part of the 'psyche' called the Ego and other related states of conscious and subconscious mind, including the neurotic and the aberrant, such as sex libido, schizophrenia, autosuggestion, hypnotism, clairvoyance, statis, hysteria, catalepsy, ecstasy, telepathy, and so on.

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8. Inge, *op.cit.*, p. 27.


10. *Driesch, Crisis in Psychology and Mind and Universe* pp. 88-104 quoted in Radhakamal Mukerjee, *Theory and Art of Mysticism*, p. 204. "Minds are capable of a mutual supernormal transfer of knowledge in the mental field which is something more than telepathy or clairvoyance."
Despite its recent effusions and expansions, researches and experiments and its considerable progress and apotheosis, Psychology (or rather, Para-psychology) is still groping in the dark and the areas of the deeper 'psyche' bordering on the domain of the unknown Spirit is still very much beyond its scope and purview. Jung admits the paucity of Psychological knowledge and insight, in the ultimate sense, when he says: "Psycho-analysis itself and the lines of thought to which it gives rise are only a beginner's attempt compared to what is an immemorial art in the East."¹¹

Mysticism, on the other hand, is not an abnormal phenomenon, nor an outcome of reflexes and baffled desires, but rather an expression of normal human impulses.¹² It is, rather, a quest of the Unknown, a direct apprehension of the Real through immediate experience and Inner contact.

Mysticism roots itself in a psychology of inner adjustment, as Mukerjee so aptly remarks.¹³ So it is psychology, with a difference. By transcending the known limits of Time, Space and Causation, mysticism acquires a higher mode of psychology. "It is quite inadequate", says Dean Inge, "to treat mysticism as a branch of psychology ..."¹⁴ Rather, it can be said that psychology as such provides a common initial ground and a suitable correlative for the experimental and methodical study of mysticism.

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¹³. Loc. cit.
Mysticism and Spiritualism

Similarly, we can easily differentiate mysticism from spiritualism — "the so called spiritualism of the evocations and the seances", as Marquette calls it — because, instead of having dialogue with the souls of dead persons (by resorting to the 'ouija board' or getting help from necromancers), mysticism "seeks union with God alone." Mysticism is, thus, clearly distinguishable from all aspects of 'psychism' and occultism, besides spiritualism, in so far as it discards the perception of concrete objects as its final goal and, instead, shifts its interest "from objects to their cause, from creation to the creator."  

Mysticism and Metaphysics

Passing over, from the nebulous psychical fields, to the rational and intellectual areas of Metaphysics and Philosophy, we, indeed, travel a great subjective distance. But here also mysticism finds itself on an alien ground. Bertrand Russell, in his famous essay, "Mysticism and Logic", defining metaphysics as "the attempt to conceive the world as a whole by means of thought" connects its development with

mysticism, on the one hand and science, on the other, having recourse as it does to the interplay of two different impulses. But, he says further, that the greatest philosophers tried to harmonize the one with the other with the result that philosophy can be regarded as "a greater thing than science or religion." Thus we find a new term coined by Russell i.e. 'mystical metaphysics' which exalts mysticism, by implication, above science, religion, philosophy and metaphysics, inasmuch as it has a supra-rational or intuitional basis of its contact with the Supreme Reality. Bergson's advocacy of 'intuition' against 'intellect', of the 'absolute' against the 'relative' is a strong justification and infallibility of the view that holds mysticism as the sumnum bonum and the sine qua non of all knowledge whatsoever.

This unique superiority of mysticism consists, as Russell says, in the mystic belief in 'insight' as against discursive analytic knowledge, i.e. "the belief in a way of wisdom, sudden, penetrating, coersive, which is contrasted with the slow and fallible study of outward appearance by a science relaying wholly upon the senses."
Russell goes so far as to say that all knowledge other than mystical, based as this latter is on the 'certainty and revelation' and on the intuitional insight, is just darkness: "What others dimly seek he knows, with a knowledge beside which all knowledge is ignorance." Such is the "full light of the vision," which the mystic perceives in his state of illumination.

All metaphysical and philosophical concepts of acquiring knowledge such as ontology, epistemology, gnosis, cosmology, eschatology, etc., are just handmaids of the mystical process or realization, because all supra-rational speculations, leading to rational concepts and postulates, are fortuitously based on esoteric and intuitional apprehension.

Mysticism and Philosophy

Coming to philosophy, as in the case of metaphysics, we can, with more certitude, speak of a 'mystical philosophy' or a 'philosophy of mysticism', as adumerated by great philosophico-mystical thinkers such as Heraclitus, Socrates, Plato, Plotinus, Eckhart, Spinoza, Kant, Berkeley, Hegel, Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Bergson, in the West and Sankaracharya, Avicenna, Al-Farabi, Al-Kindi, Ibn'al-Arabi, Al-Chazali in

23._Ibid_, p.10.
24._Loc. Cit._
25.For specific meaning of these terms, see Gaynor, _Dictionary of Mysticism_.
the East, which provides ample proof of the closest affinity and reapproachment between these two higher branches of knowledge.

The human paucity of knowledgeability, consequent upon the peculiar conditioning of the ephemeral world, which simultaneously delimits the scope of philosophical speculation and cognition, is such a glaring fact that some of the modern philosophical thinkers are becoming increasingly conscious of it --- a fact which, for example, Korzybski has so clearly stated: "All human knowledge is conditioned and limited at present by the properties of light and human symbolism." It is, indeed, mysticism that transcends and expands, by intuitive processes, the human bounds of knowledge and insight. In other words, "Mysticism opens the door of consciousness to the universal mind."  

Whereas philosophy, with its rationality (or ratiocination) and logicality, treats the cognitive field with circumspection and tardiness, the intuitive mysticism goes by leaps and bounds, as the poet of the East, Shaikh Mohd. Iqbal, in one of his well-known urdu verses, says:

Love plunged dauntlessly into the fire of the Nero,
While Reason is still tarrying and watchfully waiting on the edge of the balcony.

26. Cf. passim, Otto, Mysticism East and West; Inge, Mysticism in Religion; James, Varieties of Religious Experience; Stace, Mysticism and Philosophy; Mukerjee, Theory and Art of Mysticism for discussions relating to these mystical Philosophers.


28. Ibid. p.31.

29. Be Khatar Xud para atish-i-Namrud men Ishq.
    Aql hai mehv-i-tamasha-i lab-i-bam abhi. (Bang-i-Dira).
The mystic, in his own right and his specialized tour de force, lives more intensely, feels more deeply, acts more forcefully, realizes more profoundly, even thinks more reconditely, suffers more patiently and loves more passionately than any so-called philosopher in the technical sense, not in the original in which philosophy meant wisdom of life or way of life. Verily, it has been said, "The mystic does not merely conceive but also realizes, in sentiment and action, the unity of life. This is the distinction between philosophy and mysticism."  

To sum up this discussion, we may concur with Mukerjee who observes; "Mysticism reconciles the opposition between idealism and pragmatism, between transcendentalism and naturalism and makes the sense of the unity of all things as realized in the self, the basis of all vision and effort." It is basically synthetic, not analytic, discursive or theoretical.

Mysticism and Religion:

By far the closest correlative of mysticism is religion. Both have an inter-relationship bordering on identity. Both are of the same category or genre. Both have a well-marked universalism as their sine qua non. Religion, in the singular, not plural, is what comes nearest to mysticism i.e. to the concept of the 'world-religion'. Mysticism, says

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Mukerjee, is one of the commonest elements in world religion. Whereas individual religions separate classes of humanity from each other on sectarian grounds, world-religion or 'the highest religion' or, what is called, 'mystical religion', binds and unites them together and also binds them in love to their Creator. It is this altruistic and cosmopolitan aspect of religion, in its purest and highest form that assumes the quality and role of mysticism as such; and though sometimes, in common with mysticism, it gets the odium and disrepute of aberration attributed to magic, myth and miracle, yet it is the most potential and effective characteristic of religion.

The essence of religion, says Troeltsch, is not dogma and idea but cultus and communion. Similarly Augustus Sabatier contrasts the 'religion of authority' with the 'religion of spirit.' It is indeed, this 'religion of spirit'

35. Ibid. Introduction.
38. T.Newman: "What is religion but the system of relation between me and a supreme Being." Quoted in "Sufism",(art.) Collective Works of Max Muller, p.336.
that is most synonymous with mysticism.

Mysticism, remarks Dasgupta, is the basis of all religion — particularly of religion as it appears in the lives of truly religious men.

It is, certainly, misleading to connect or confuse the common emotional aspect of religion, may be at its highest pitch, or the instinctive, natural aspect of religion, with advanced mysticism. There is, however, much intrinsic substance, both in religion and mysticism, to falsify this naivety.

Religion, thus, is not only universal in its true nature, but also compact and complete in its relevance to the endless needs and problems of mankind. "Religion in its completeness," says Westcott, "is the harmony of philosophy, ethics and art blended into one by a spiritual force, by a consecration at once personal and absolute."

Emphasizing the personal and individual element of religion, on the other hand, Desgupta observes: "Religion means

41. Dasgupta, op. cit., preface.
42. Inge, op. cit. p.8.
43. Cf. Freud: Religion at its best "is the projection of man's infantile impulses." Quoted in R. Mukerjee, op. cit., p.12. Cf. Also H. Read, Phases of English Poetry, (Chap. "Poetry and Religion"), p.60. He says: "Religion represents an emotional attitude towards the university ..." Perhaps Read has in his mind the instinctive aspect of man as diffused in the emotive element. But whereas instinctive aspect of religion is elementary, mystical aspect is certainly very advanced and specialized.

44. Quoted in Inge, Mysticism in Religion, P.153. For the definition of religion, see Tolstoy, op. cit., p. 295.
a personal relationship with some divine or transcendent person
to whom we submit and to whom we pray for material advantage
or for spiritual or moral enlightenment."  

Perhaps with the attenuation of the sectarian,
separatistic, dogmatic and institutional aspect of religion,
what remains as the subtle, ubiquitous, divine residue is what
we may call 'mystical religion' or mysticism itself. "It is
mystical religion", says Mukerjee, "that exposes, cultivates
and enlists man's fullest potentialities, latent in the
unconscious."  

All great religions have largely contributed to the
making of mysticism, if we can use this very tangible word
'making' for mysticism which is basically something intangible
and amorphous.

Summing up this discussion on religion and mysticism,
we can conclude that mysticism is the most developed, advanced

45. Dasgupta, Hindu Mysticism, p.7 Toynbee regards mysticism
as "personal religion raised to the highest power." Quoted
in Sisakumar Ghose, Mystics and Society, p.1.

46. For discussion of religions institutionalism and mysticism,
see Dean Inge, Outspoken Essays, pp.230-236.

47. Theory and Art of Mysticism, p.15. He says further:
"Religion sums up some of the profoundest feelings and
experiences of man and has played a dominant part in his
social development," (Ibid.p.11). John Wesley terms this
'mystical religion' as 'heart-religion' in which, he says,
every great faith originated and in which each great faith
lives. W.S.Lilly, "Mysticism"(art), Religions Systems of the
World, p.637.

48. E.Underhill: "Though some creeds have proved more helpful
to the mystic than others, he is found fully developed
in every great religion." Essentials of Mysticism, p.4.
or heightened form of the principle of religion; it is the fructification of the religious effort of man — the spiritual efflorescence of the most crucial and fundamental aspects of the human life.  

MYSTICISM DEFINED:

It is extremely difficult to define mysticism, the subject being so vast and limitless in the ramifications of its meaning and application.

William James advances a very cogent reason for this indefinability, viz. that the nature and data about mystic modes of consciousness are not clear and definite and being other than ordinary ones, these forms of consciousness "open a region, though they fail to give a map. At any rate they forbid a premature closing of accounts with reality."  

To pile up definitions and excerpts from authorities on the subject, therefore, would only add to the confusion already generic and inherent in the ineffable nature of

49. Cf. Caird: "Mysticism is religion in its most concentrated and exclusive form. It is the attitude of the mind in which all other relations are swallowed up in the relation of the soul to God." (quoted in Inge, Mysticism in Religion, p.25). The philosopher Bradley also affirms this truth: "There is nothing more real than what comes in religion." Appearance and Reality, p.449, quoted in Inge, Ibid., p.21.

mysticism. The mystic himself, being too much absorbed and lost in his mystical statis or ecstasy, cannot express clearly what he sees or apprehends, while the non-mystic intellectual writer knows mysticism only at second hand, as James says. It is befitting, therefore, to represent, as best as one can, in symbolic language and terms, the meaning and truth of what mysticism stands for or signifies.

But before we do this, the appropriateness of the word, 'mysticism' as it is used in the technical sense (of the highest mystical experience or consciousness) has to be considered. A writer says: "Mysticism is a misnomer; its name suggests mist, something vague, foggy - hocus pocus ... We had better use the word enlightenment or illumination." The common word used by Western theologians in the medieval times, says Happold, was either Contemplatio (contemplation)

51. "In Appendix A of his Christian Mysticism (methuen) Dean Inge gives no less than twenty six definitions of mysticism." quoted in Happold, Mysticism, p.38.


53. W.T. Stace, op.cit., p.15. Cf. Happold: "The word 'mysticism' is not a fully satisfactory one." He further says that this word was not originally used in ancient Greece for the meaning it stood for and whereas the word 'mystical' became current in later middle ages, 'mysticism' as a term is quite modern. op.cit. p.37. Cf. also Dasgupta, Hindu Mysticism, p.13.
or *Theologia mystica* (mystical theology).

Now from the word to the meaning. Russell, the philosopher and the sceptic, emphasizes the emotional aspect of mysticism (as against the discursive reason) and offers probably the best definition: "Mysticism is, in essence, little more than a certain intensity and depth of feeling in regard to what is believed about the universe ...".

Feeling, intense and deep, is the keyword for mysticism. Almost all great writers on mysticism have accepted 'feeling' as the true sense of mystical truth, as distinguished from reason, intellect, speculation, logic gnosis, learning, education, and so on. This uncanny, mysterious, unknown 'feeling' is what leads to the highest state of consciousness or the ecstasy and opens up new spiritual vistas of experience and esoteric phenomena (in what is called *synteresis* i.e., the innermost, impeccable, sinless part of the soul).

This 'feeling', or we may better call it, 'intuitive feeling', in the innermost heart of man, is something positive, something ingrained in the mind. In philosophical language,

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55. Russell, *Mysticism and Logic*, p. 3. Cf. Lilly's interesting reference to an anecdote from 'Mesnavi Maulana Rumi' (as he calls it) in which Moses regards a man as 'infidel' because he worships God as if He had a form, body, clothes, chamber etc., and he (Moses) is reprimanded by God who ordains: "Words are nothing to me, I regard the heart." *op.cit.* p.636. Cf. also Guru Nanak, *AG* pp. 468 (Salok: Pauri 10), 470 (Salok: Pauri 13), 473 (Salok: Pauri 20), 474 (Salok: Pauri 22), *Var. Asa*.

we may call it 'a priori, as it is always there and exists in its own right and without any external cause. Russell calls it 'mystical insight', because it is not a feeling in the ordinary sense, but something much more. He writes: "The mystic insight begins with the sense of a mystery unveiled, of a hidden wisdom now suddenly become certain beyond the possibility of a doubt."

Mysticism, thus considered, has its own 'raison d'être'. Its concepts and achievements are absolutely independent of every other human faculty or activity whatsoever. It has its own norms and principles, its own ideals and aspirations, though a mystic never totally loses sight of the human matrix or anchorage.

Goethe calls mysticism "the scholastic of the heart, the dialectic of the feelings," What Goethe implies in his beautiful epigram, is the idea that mysticism cannot be categorically divested of thought and reason, even philosophy and logic (which are the necessary media used

57. Russell, op.cit., p.9 The word 'insight' implies a 'seeing' or a 'presence'; a 'knowing' which is at once a 'phenomenon' and a 'being'. In this mystical state the knower, the known and the knowing are all one. Max Nardau in his work "Degeneration" says that Mysticism means any sudden perception of hidden significance in things. Quoted in William James, op.cit. p.334 n.


59. Cf. Lasson emphasizes the noetic or intellectual quality of mystical experience when he says: "The essence of mysticism is the assertion of an intuition which transcends the temporal categories of the understanding, relying on speculative reason. "Rationalism cannot conduct us to the essence of things; we therefore, need intellectual vision."

Quoted in Happold, Mysticism, p.37.
for the acquisition of knowledge and insight) but all this 'mystical' thinking and knowing is of a different quality; it is the thinking and knowing of the 'feeling' i.e. not the cognitive faculty of the mind, but the conative and the affective.  

This unavoidable correspondence between intellect and feeling (so important in human psychology) has so much dominated the nature and history of mysticism as realized and propounded by various mystics in the East and the West, that no discussion of mystical experience or apprehension can be devoid of this particular parallelism. Rudolph Otto, for example, has put his full weight on the side of intellect; so have Dean Inge, R. Mukerjee, E. Underhill and many others; on the other hand, Bertrand Russell, William James, Goethe, Luther and others have emphasized the emotional basis of mysticism. In fact the two main types of mysticism have been put forward as 'intellectual mysticism' and 'emotional

60. Lilly Calls this type of higher or true thinking 'Godlike reason' or in the words of Marcus Aurelius, 'Diamond' i.e. the deity within us. op.cit p.638.

61. Otto, Mysticism East and West pp.30-31. He has chosen two supreme examples of intellectual (or contemplative) mysticism viz. Sankara in the East and Eckhart in the West.

62. Inge, Mysticism in Religion, p.9. He quotes Mctaggart to support his view: "A mysticism which ingnores the claims of understanding would be doomed."

63. Theory and Art of Mysticism, p.5. He gives three types of mysticism viz. (1) Fervent or emotional (2) Cosmic or nature and (3) Cool or unimpressed.

64. E. Underhill, Essentials of Mysticism, pp.5, 117, 119.

65. Otto names the intellectual or introvertive type 'The Mysticism of Introspection' or 'the inward way'. Quoted in W.T. Stace, Mysticism and Philosophy, p.61.
mysticism' (also called extrovertive and introvertive). Plato, Plotinus, Eckhart, Shankara, Al-Ghazali, Al-Farabi, Ibn Al-Arabi and Al-Jili are well known examples of the intellectual (introvertive) type and St. Paul, St. Thomas, St. Augustine, St. Francis of Assissi, St. Teresa, Luther, medieval Indian Saints and Bhagats and the typical Sufis are the famous examples of the emotional (extrovertive) type of mysticism.

Mysticism not only unites the 'polarities' of the mind but also correlates the inner phenomena with the outer, i.e. the ideal with the real and vice versa. Marquette says that "between the idealists and realists, mystic occupies a middle position." 67

But still the preponderance of the 'feeling' aspect is a paramount fact, as is clear from the writings of a few important writers. To expatiate on this subject, it is necessary, first of all, to consider the unanimity or universality of 'feeling' in all men, as William James affirms in his well-known saying: "The unanimity of the mystics ought to make the critic stop and think." 68 Similarly Marquette affirms the "idea of the essential unity of all life which is the cornerstone of mysticism ..." Defining mysticism and highlighting its universal aspect, he adds: 'The fundamental idea of mysticism

67. Introduction to Comparative Mysticism, p. 17.
68. Quoted in Inge, Mysticism in Religion, p. 41.
is that the essence of life and of the world is an all-embracing spiritual substance which is the reality in the core of all beings, irrespective of their outer appearances or activities." 70

Prof. Pratt says: "The milder forms of mysticism are shared by a large number of people and are quite possible, though latent, for a great many more." 71

Mukerjee also refers to the 'totality of life and the world', involved in the mystical development, when he says: "Mysticism gradually develops into a method of knowledge and action which includes the whole of man's adjustment to totality of life and the world that he apprehends." 72

To quote another authority on the point under reference: "Mysticism is independent of time, place, nationality and creed. In reading extracts from great mystics we might often be in doubt whether the writer was a Neo-Platonist, a Sufi, a Buddhist, a Catholic or a Quaker." 73

'Feeling', we may conclude, is the central fact that inheres in the very nature of mysticism. It is not only universal and perennial, but also synthetic, altruistic,

70. *Ibid.*, p.24. This 'essential unity' or 'all-embracing substance' is what Lilly calls 'a higher synthesis' (a sort of higher feeling), *Mysticism* (art.) Religious systems of the world. p.634.
73. Dean Inge, quoted in *Mukerjee, Ibid.*, preface to 1st ed.
74. 'Feeling' may be defined as "a special form of Man's relations to objects and phenomena of reality conditioned by their correspondence or non-correspondence to his needs." *K. Platonov, Psychology*, p.199.
responsive, ethical, expansive (having centrifugal quality) and progressive; whereas thinking (the other form of mental activity) is discursive, analytic, dialectic, self-involved and recessive.

The second important factor in the advocacy of 'feeling' as the primary source and expression of mysticism, is its higher compatibility. It not only unites with 'thinking' as and when the need arises for the apotheosis of a mystic's 'spiritual' feeling' (resulting in what we call 'contemplation' or 'imaginative thinking') but also perfectly combines this lofty state of contemplation with the 'willing' or the volitional activity of the mind (which causes action and actionability), out of which is born the highest mystical state called 'ecstasy', 'raptus' or 'Samadhi' in which all the human faculties harmonize into a single consecrated transfiguration.

Besides what has been said above about the unique quality of 'feeling' so conducive for the growth and incidence

75. Actually 'feeling' has a simultaneous double process, i.e. a centrifugal and centripetal inner movement. Hence its unique effectiveness.

76. 'Thinking' is defined "as mental activity aimed at generalized and mediated cognition of objective reality by discovering the connections and relations existing between the objects and phenomena." Briefly stated, it is a reflection of the connections between objects and phenomena. Ibid., p.143.

77. Sechenov: "Volition is not some impersonal agent in charge only of movement; it is an active aspect of the mind and the moral sense." quoted in Platonov, Op.cit., p. 227.
of mysticism, (viz. its universality, its compatibility, its all-inclusiveness, its altruism and moral expansion, etc.), we may also discover in it a certain quality of 'dynamism', which not only affects and changes all that comes into contact with it but also colours and infects all that is. It is the vital force, the great principle of life, the Bergsonian 'slogan' which sustains, inspires, uplifts and transports the mystics to regions unknown and depths unfathomed. We can describe it as "the awakening of the soul in response to some unsuspected stimulus by which, as Arnold says: "A bolt is shot back somewhere in the breast, opening a way for the flood of transcendental consciousness to burst through." 

Perhaps the most important factor in the mystic feeling, is its harmonizing quality - it creates harmony out of discord, unity out of diversity, peace and repose out of conflict, divinity out of nothingness. "Mystical apprehension", says Mukerjee, "is the outcome of a harmonious blend of all the sense experience including the kinaesthetic and organic...

78. Otto, op. cit., p.169. "This God becomes a mystical God because He is a stream of glowing vitality." Also see S. Dasgupta, op. cit., Preface; "Mysticism is not an intellectual theory; it is fundamentally an active, formative, elevating and ennobling principle of life."

79. Cf. Bastide: "Mysticism does not mean dissociation; it is the creation of a new ego." quoted in Inge, Mysticism in Religion, p.28.


This eminent writer further says: "Mysticism gradually develops into a method of knowledge and action which includes the whole of man's adjustment to totality of life and the world that he apprehends." 82

Next to 'feeling' and 'insight', we may regard as the most important essential of mysticism, its empirical quality i.e., its direct 'attitude' towards things of life, toward God who is the 'spiritual substance' underlying all that exists; its 'temper', so to say, or its 'manner'; its 'way of life'. In other words, it is the 'modus' or the mode which mystic 'feeling' or 'insight' assumes when it comes into play or when it finds symbolic expression.

To quote Supergeon: "Mysticism is, in truth, a temper rather than a doctrine, an atmosphere rather than a system of philosophy." 84

Mysticism, thus is a sort of 'becoming', not a 'knowing'. It has no abstraction to confuse it, but a manner to display it. The mystic has a peculiar, inexorable manner of behaving which is at once dramatic and immediate. Mystic's moment is his eternity; his manner is what we call

82. Ibid., p.3.

83. Marquette, Introduction to Comparative Mysticism, p.24 Cf. Caird: "Mysticism is the attitude of the mind in which all the relations are swallowed up in the relation of the soul to God." Quoted in Ing. Mysticism in Religion, p.25.

84. C.F.E. Spurgeon, Mysticism in English Literature, p.2.
'personality'. Mukerjee says: "Mysticism is not merely a way of understanding, it is also a way of life."  

Now we may consider what lies behind this manner or 'modus' of the mystic; that is, what is at the bottom or the centre of 'the mystic feeling' and 'the mystic insight'? The manner, the madness, or the ecstasy of the mystic certainly hides something, which gets betrayed sometimes (in the form of 'miracle'). The Sufi poet Ghalib says in one of his profound verses:

"O Ghalib! this ecstasy is not without reason; There is something in it which is hides."  

The main concern in mysticism lies between the mystic and the Supreme Being. This simple equation has infinite ramifications. Let us consider some of the most essential among them.

Evelyn Underhill while defining mysticism directly touches this basic point: "Mysticism is the art of Union with Reality. The mystic is a person who has attained that union in a greater or lesser degree; or who aims at and believes in such attainment."

85. Op. cit., p.9. Cf. Russell; "Mysticism is to be commended as an attitude towards life, not as a creed about the world." Mysticism and Logic, p.11. Cf.also Lilly: The office of mysticism is "to conduct us from the phenomenal to the noumenal, from that which seems, to that which is." 'Mysticism' (art.) Religions Systems of the World, p.638.

86. Re-Khudi be-sabab nahin Ghalib, Kuchh to hai jis ki bardadari hai. (Diwan-i-urdu)

87. E. Underhill, Practical Mysticism, quoted in Happold, Mysticism, p.33.
Similarly Professor A. Seth writes: "It (Mysticism) appears in connection with the endeavour of the human mind to grasp the divine essence or the ultimate reality of things and to enjoy the blessedness of the actual communion with the highest."\(^{88}\)

Dasgupta also emphasizes the spiritual aspect of mysticism when he says: "Mysticism means a spiritual grasp of the aims and problems of life in a much more real and ultimate manner than is possible to mere reason."\(^{89}\)

Thus we can see that mysticism involves a going beyond or transcending ordinary reality of the world in order to grasp the spiritual reality that underlies and infuses all visible phenomena. Nettleship says: "True mysticism lies in the consciousness that everything which we experience, every 'fact' is an element and only an element in 'the fact'; i.e. that in being what it is, it is significant or symbolic of more."\(^{90}\) Spurgeon, while elucidating this point, remarks that every finite intelligence becomes "a husk of a deeper truth."\(^{91}\)

In fact, the mystic has not only to transcend the whole visible phenomena in order to enter the realm of the

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88. Quoted in Happold, op.cit., p.38.

89. Hindu Mysticism, Preface. We may also cite here Christ's well-known dictum: "Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness." Quoted in Marquette, op.cit., p.20.


unseen Divine Being, but also, as a paramount necessity, to transcend his own self or the ego. He has to give away everything to get all. Nicholson says: "When God wishes to benefit a man, He shows to him the path of self-abasement." Mysticism, says Marquette, is "none other than to attain divine communion in complete surrender of any personal end whatsoever."

There is, besides, a certain and fundamental perception of the unity underlying all diversity which all mystics claim. Some perceive it in Nature, as Wordsworth, some in imagination, as Blake, others in all visible things, as the pantheistic Hindu sages and saints, still others in the soul, as Shankara and Eckhart, while there are some of the highest mystics who perceive Reality directly in the apprehension of the Godhead, like Plato and Plotinus. These are some of the ways of mystical approach to the Divine Being who is absolutely 'Beyond' and 'Unknowable'. On the basis of this variation we can determine the different types of mysticism, as we shall see later.


94. Spurgeon, op.cit., p.3.

95. Loc.cit.
Mysticism "deals with the attempt to reach, while still alive, a knowledge and experience of the next world, promised by the teachings of religion and generally held to be experienced after death only." 96

Here is thus introduced into things material and mundane a certain element of 'beyondness', of eternal values, of a Polarity of experience and life, which facts have been emphasized by some writers.

Mysticism, says Mukerjee, imports final or absolute values in the common daily life and relations of men. Again: Mysticism is the art of finding a harmonious relationship to the whole of Reality which man envisages. 97

Mysticism, as Otto observes, is by its nature 'polar' and is not inconsistent. 98

Mysticism posits eternal values such as Truth, Beauty, and Goodness which are all infinite and which transcend any system of human relations. 99

Dean Inge expresses the intrinsic meaning of mysticism in very clear words: "Mysticism means communion with God, that is to say, with a Being conceived as the supreme and ultimate reality." 100

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97. Mukerjee, Theory and Art of Mysticism, pp.301-302
98. Quoted in Mukerjee, Ibid. p.7.
99. Ibid., p.9.
100. Inge, Mysticism in Religion, p.8.
The Divine Being and the mystic's communion with Him is the *sine qua non* of all true mysticism -- a communion or unity which is at once intense, immediate, certain, and transporting. Pfleiderer remarks: "Mysticism is the immediate feeling of the unity of the self with God."\(^{101}\)

To make the point further clear we may quote Leuba who says, mysticism is "an intuitive certainty of contact with the supersensible world."\(^{102}\)

"Mysticism", says Otto, "enters into the religious experience in the measure that religious feeling surpasses its rational content, that is, to the extent to which its hidden non-rational, numinous elements predominate and determine the emotional life."\(^{103}\)

R.M. Johnes, another great authority on the subject says: "Mysticism may be defined as the attempt to realize, in thought and feeling, the immanence of the temporal in the eternal and of the eternal in the temporal."\(^{104}\) He further observes that mysticism "is the type of religion which puts the emphasis on the immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and intimate consciousness of the divine presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense and living stage."\(^{105}\)

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E. Underhill defining mysticism says:

"Mysticism is not a theory of the intellect or a hunger, however, passionate, of the heart, but a definite and peculiar development of the whole self ... a re-making of the whole character on high levels in the interest of the transcendental life." 106

"Mysticism", says Sircar, "is the heightening up of life and consciousness." 107

The common characteristics in the definitions cited above may be summed up in the following statement:

"Mysticism is an intuitive feeling or insight, having as its source and basis an immediate awareness of the one spiritual principle underlying all life and the universe, which, as a result of direct experience of union with the Divine Being, brings about a complete reversal of values and a reawakening of the whole being and personality of the mystic into a supremely blissful fulfilment.

We may, in the end, add a few technical definitions from the outstanding dictionaries and encyclopedias:

1. "Mysticism in its simplest and most essential meaning is a type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, direct and intimate consciousness of divine presence." 108

2. "The belief in the spiritual intuition of truths beyond the reach of reasoned understanding; direct contact with supernal powers without the intervention of reason or of an officiating priest." 109

3. "Mysticism, the immediate experience of oneness with ultimate Reality. Both those who have known mystical experience and those who have only studied it, are agreed that the mystical vision is ineffable." 110

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106. Quoted in Sircar, Ibid., Preface.
107. Ibid., p. 20.
110. Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. XV.
4. "The opinions, mental tendencies or habits of thought and feeling characteristic of mystics; mystical doctrines or spirit; belief in the possibility of union with the Divine nature by means of ecstatic contemplation; reliance on spiritual intuition or exalted feeling as the means of acquiring knowledge of mysteries inaccessible to intellectual apprehension."

5. "... immediate experience of a divine -- human intercourse and relationship; the first hand experience of direct intercourse with God; the theologico-metaphysical doctrine of the soul's possible union with Absolute Reality i.e. with God." 112

6. "... generally applied to all those tendencies in religion which aspire to a direct communication between man and his God, not through the medium of the senses but through the inward perception of the mind." 113

- III -

TYPES OF MYSTICISM

Besides what we earlier called higher and lower mysticism (named superior and inferior, by S. Dasgupta) 114 there have been other ways to distinguish the various types into which mysticism was divided by its exponents from time to time.

113. T.P. Hughes, Dictionary of Islam.
114. Hindu Mysticism Preface. By the higher or the superior is meant the religious mysticism which is genuine and proper while the other is psychological and pathological, thus supurious and faked. William James also affirms this twofold character of mysticism, corresponding to the higher and the lower, calling them: (i) religious mysticism and (ii) 'diabolical' mysticism, Varieties of Religious Experience p.334. Cf. also C.Jinarajadasa, Nature of Mysticism quoted in S.S.Kohli, Philosophy of Guru Nanak, p.56 f. The types cited are Mysticism of (1) Grace, (2) Love, (3) Pantheistic, (4) Nature, (5) Sacramental, and (6) Theosophical. Lilly distinguishes mysticism (a) in proper theological sense and (b) the popular sense of "supersensous knowledge." 'Mysticism' (art.) Religious Systems of the World, p.631.
By far the most representative division is that based on the two fundamental elements of human sensibility viz. the feeling and the thinking (i.e. the affective and cognitive faculties of the mind).

The types based on these two subjective faculties may be called the "mysticism of love and union" and the "mysticism of knowledge and understanding". In the first the urge is to escape from a sense of separation, from the loneliness of selfhood, towards a closer participation and re-union with Nature or God, which will bring peace and rest to the soul; while the other, i.e. the mysticism of knowledge and understanding, springs from the urge, inherent in man, to find the secret of the universe, to grasp it not in parts but in its wholeness.

Otto calls these two types as the "emotional and erotic mysticism" and the "intellectual mysticism". He further divides the second type into the "mysticism of introspection" and the "mysticism of unifying vision" connecting these two respectively with the 'Inward path' and the 'outward Path'.

With regard to the first type which has been so common in the medieval Indian theology and named 'Bhakti mysticism' (the Christian name for which is'Voluntaristic Mysticism'), Otto observes: "It is peculiar to this 'Bhakti mysticism', as to our 'voluntaristic mysticism' that it seeks

to attain unity with the Highest through coalescence by an emotional exaggeration and flow of feeling. And even the Highest is thought of as responding to amorous longings."  

Of the second type the greatest exponents, according to Otto, have been Eckhart in the West and Shankara in the East, both of whom are seekers after *jnana, vidya, samyagdarshnam*, i.e. knowledge.  

The third well-known type is the Nature mysticism, which is akin to the 'Outward Path' of Otto, as mentioned above. The idea behind this type is the conception of unity in diversity, the 'ekam' of the Rigveda (i.e. the One). It is a unifying vision; its watchword is unity, not inward soul. Nature mysticism is what William James calls 'Expansion' the 'sarvam' of the Indian mystic theology.  

Nature mysticism, says Otto, is the sense of being immersed in the oneness of nature, so that man feels all the individuality, all the peculiarity of natural things in himself. He dances with the motes of dust and radiates with the sun, he rises with the dawn. It is romantic and presupposes a highly developed sensitiveness for nature; it is a sublimated naturalism, even in its highest and most abstract forms and therefore, easily passes into the fervour of erotic mysticism.  

Thus the emotional-cum-erotic mysticism and the Nature mysticism easily merge into each other and these two types

118.Ibid., p.30.  
119.Loc. cit.  
120.Ibid. p.75.  
121.Loc.cit.
are often found together and as a common factor among mystics of this 'first' type (i.e. emotional as distinguished from the 'second' i.e. intellectual.)

The Christian term in vogue in the ancient and the early medieval ages, and commonly used by Eckhart, for the intellectual type of mysticism, was 'Contemplation' and it was Luther who, like the Indian saint Ramanuj, led a revolt against this type of cold and abstract spiritual intellectualism, giving his clear preference to the emotional and ethical approach to God and the world.

Otto has coined another term for the vital mystical philosophy of Eckhart as contrasted with the cold and static Vedantic philosophy of Shankara and called it the 'dynamic mysticism', though it may not be regarded as a new and separate type.\textsuperscript{122} It is, in fact, an off-shoot of the 'mysticism of introspection', though it seems to possess a tendencious affinity with the outward and extrovertive aspects of the emotional or the Nature mysticism. This dynamic element is what Otto calls the mystical principle in the Godhead viz. "He is a stream of glowing vitality."\textsuperscript{123} This principle of vitality, inherent in God and in life as a whole, was later developed by Bergson in his well-known philosophy of 'Vitalism' or the \textit{elan vital}.\textsuperscript{124} What Otto

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., p.169.

\textsuperscript{123} Loc.cit.

means by the enunciation of this 'dynamic mysticism' is perhaps the emphasis he discovers in Eckhart on the ethical and active way of approach to things as against the passive and escapist (the well-known verdict in favour of Martha, rather than Mary);\textsuperscript{125} in other words, the emphasis on the 'kinetic' (active) faculty of the mind, as compared with the affective and the cognitive.

Jaures said: "God is not a total but an active infinite, beyond the scope of mathematics."\textsuperscript{126}

So far we have noticed that there are two main types of mysticism, the emotional and the intellectual i.e. the outward and the inward, though there have been cited two other 'types' which are only offshoots, i.e. the Nature mysticism and the dynamic mysticism. Stace has given two very cogent and appropriate epithets for both these main types viz. the Extrovertive mysticism and the Introvertive mysticism.\textsuperscript{127} He has based his view on the study of the two representative types of mystical experience as grounded in the psychological phenomena of extroversion and introversion of the mind or the personality. Thus his classification and nomenclature closely correspond to the psychological study of mystical experiences presented by William James in his famous work.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{125}Otto remarks that Eckhart favours Martha, the activist, as against Mary the quietist op.cit., p.176.
\textsuperscript{126}Quoted in Marquette Introduction to Comparative Mysticism, p. 197.
\textsuperscript{127}Mysticism and Philosophy, pp. 60-61 and 131.
\textsuperscript{128}Varieties of Religions Experience, (Chap. 'Mysticism') pp. 299-337.
Approached from a different angle, says Happold, it is possible to consider mysticism in its three aspects of nature - Mysticism, soul-mysticism and God-mysticism. As regards nature mysticism, he says that "It is characterized by a sense of the immanence of God or soul in Nature. At the heart of it in its most highly developed form lies what Zaehner, in Mysticism. Sacred and Profane, calls the 'pan-en-henic' experience that is, experience of the All in the One and of the One in the All, which is typical of much mystical insight. It may usually be labelled 'pantheistic'.

The Soul-mysticism is peculiarly Indian in concept and exposition. Westerns cannot easily understand it, as Happold remarks. Some schools of Hindu and Buddhist mysticism have confined their sphere of experience to the soul itself and the quest of the inner self is their main object or goal, irrespective of the idea of the existence or non-existence of God.

The basis of God-mysticism, on the other hand, is the idea of the 'return of the spirit to its immortal and infinite Ground, which is God.' There are two variants of the mystical approach to God (in God-mysticism) viz., the complete absorption or identification with Divinity and, second, the retaining of identity and personality, by a process of 'union'
and 'transformation'.

In the end, it may be remarked that mysticism has no exclusive or 'watertight' classification of types in as much as it is in its very essence and nature synthetic and unitive but since the Godhead assumes principles of 'duality' within the domain of unity, which creates 'paradoxicality' (or antithesis) and the concept of 'otherness' within the oneness of God, the approach and reference to the Divine Being (who is at once Absolute and Immanent, Transcendent and involved) takes different shapes and forms and thus causes the division into 'types' of mysticism and mystical experience. Ultimately speaking, these types intermerge and intermingle with each other and give the final impression of the unitary realization.

132. Ibid., p.45. The first is mostly characteristic of the Eastern as the second of the Western mysticism. In Sufi terminology both these variants have been called 'fana' and 'baha'. Cf. R.A.Nicholson, Mysticism of Islam, pp.18, 28 and 61.

133. Happold, Loc.Cit.