Dr. R. D. Ranade  
1886 - 1957

Dr. Ranade graduated from Bombay University with Distinction. He was of a spiritual inclination even in student days. He became a professor of Philosophy at Fergusson College. Later he became head of the Department of Philosophy at Allahabad University, and still later Vice Chancellor of Allahabad University.

Dr. Ranade has written considerably on Philosophy and Mysticism. His life and teaching show a constant seeking for truth and an earnest endeavour to follow it. His *Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy* was well received. His analysis of mystic writings in Marathi, Kannada, and Hindi Literature show deep scholarship and devotion combined. His *Bhagavadgītā as a Philosophy of God Realization* is probably his best work. Other books have been published from his writings since his death.
Dr. R. D. Ranade surveyed the mystic religious literature of Hindus in Hindi, Kannada, Marathi and English. He especially noted the spiritual experiences and ethical considerations necessary to a mystical life. In his discussion of the Kannada poets he devoted two full chapters to what are referred to as the "cumulative" and "supernal" experiences. He defines mysticism as "the philosophy of God-realization, and involves the faculty of intuition." This in turn is defined as "a faculty of super-sensuous experience which is aroused in us by proper spiritual initiation and practice." This intuition is said not to originate in the peripheral sensations, but in the central intelligence:

It is not the external or outside sense experience that counts; it is the experience that is generated inside us in our intuitionial process, that is, in the process of following the path of God, that matters. So intuition is something that transcends intellect, feeling, and will. It has got physiological support in what purports to be central initiation. Then there is an element of supersensuousness in this intuitional experience. ... So intuition, supersensuous experience and central initiation are involved in the evolution of mystical experience.²

The mystic seeks to "be caught in His greatness and lose ourselves in His glory."³ He seeks to reach nirvāṇa—not in its literal meaning of spacelessness, space, but the positive side of

2. Ibid., p. 3.
3. Ibid., p. 16.
nirvāṇa, blissfulness—which is God. This is defined as:

losing of one's identity in the Absolute, the wiping out of all our passions, desires, and impulses, and merging ourselves in the Absolute; ... (This) must be a positive entity, God, in whom we have to resolve ourselves ... the Foundation Reality.4

He stresses that man's "sole endeavour should be to regard ourselves as the servants of God, as the mere bondsmen of God." This step he regarded as "the ultimate step toward the realization of God."5 Following the way means getting rid of passions. The effort to overcome these will draw man nearer to God, and the nearer we go to him, the easier it is to be free from them.6

Ranade refers to the poems of Bhavatāraka which teach that the disciple who follows his guru without looking to emotion or devotion will still attain liberation. He felt that Bhavatāraka's position was the same as that of William James who claimed that "belief" is the essence of reality:

We may not know that God is real; but if we just 'believe' that God, freedom, and immortality are real, and if we carry on the belief from day to day, then a day will dawn when God, freedom and immortality will become real for us.7

Ranade referred to a poem from a disciple of Māḍivalayogi called 'I shall wave lights of camphor.' In this the ideal disciple is compared to the burning of pure camphor before God. The poet said:

5. Ibid.
6. Ibid., p. 31.
7. Ibid., p. 63.
The piece of camphor burns, shines before the deity, shines to his glory, but ultimately it disappears. Thus a vacuum or non-existence is created, but this ideal disciple is more than camphor, because he is immortal; he lives and makes his teacher live. So while the ordinary camphor exhausts itself, the real spiritual disciple never does. He immortalizes both himself and his teacher.8

Ranade said that many mystics spoke of worshipping the feet of God, and commented that "the highest revelation would consist of being able to see the feet of God."9 He then adds:

It is these feet we have to worship. Secondly this spiritual teacher enables us to transcend our philosophic doubts. It is only the power of realization which will carry you beyond these philosophic doubts.10

He felt that this is the true relationship between philosophy and mysticism. (Actually, the experience of realization has been claimed by many whose lives are not an honour to religion or truth, and it is not beyond possibility that it could be for many a self-induced hypnotic hallucination.)

Ranade referred to one of the mystical poets, Gurulinga-jaṅgama. This poem discusses Yoga, which is followed until illumination comes. Then "sitting under the canopy of illumination" we

8. R. D. Ranade, The Pathway to God in Kannada Literature, p. 79.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid.
are ready for the next stop.

We must be able to visualize the form of God, sitting in enjoyment of these Nādas (ten different kinds of sounds) and sitting under the canopy of illumination would not be enough. We must be able to see the Form of God and then 'enjoy that happiness' tatukha undu sukhisalu. What happens when we have seen this Form of God? The author tells us that the self becomes identical with God, as water mixed with water. ... The self and God are of one substance and of the same quality. No distinction remains between the devotee and God.11

Ranade referred to another poem in which the poet at last realized that "this Form of God is identical with myself." The poet then added:

When such things are realized, being and existence disappear; great merit is attained; the world is reduced to the state of a cavern, and my teacher Gurulīɾa jamāma is eternally there. There will be a sort of spaceless Reality, a sort of Nirguna Reality, bayaliɾa bayalu nirbayalu is the characteristic of this form of God to the experience of the spaceless Reality.12

Ranade speaks of the possibility of the mystic gaining an even higher vision than the vision of God—the vision of Self.12 So close does the union of the mystic become that he is pictured as:

12. Ibid., p. 103.
God is perfectly immanent in the devotee and the devotee is fully and perfectly immanent in God.13

This is discussed from a philosophical standpoint—admittedly debatable—with a possibility of meaning a reflection of God. Later he referred to this reflection in the "mirror of the heart and says:

So then God need not pride himself upon supposing that He knows everything. All that He is is all shining, 'Kote prakāśa,' 'highest light.' But because the devotee sees this light reflected in the shape of a Bhindu in the mirror of his heart, he regards himself as even more omniscient than God himself,14

Ranade discussed the philosophical and religious problem of the nature of God. Is He a personal Being, or Impersonal?15 He partially answered by referring to the question of mukti, liberation:

Those who have studied Indian philosophy and particularly the question of liberation, know that there are four kinds of liberation: Samīpathā, Sala-katā, Sarūpata, and Sāvujvata (nearness, living in the same world, having the same form, and being one with God).16

He then discussed the three different positions taken: "the personalitic, the personal-impersonal, and the impersonalistic."17 The mystics described God as a personal being; He appeared to them in dreams, and because He is Reality, the dream must be real. He then told how some said they had seen God in both a form and without form, and that He may sometimes be in one mode, but that He exists

14. Ibid., p. 139.
15. Ibid., p. 151ff
17. Ibid., p. 154.
also in the other. "The three final stages of a man's experience of God" are said to be "Darśana, Sparśana, and Saṁbhāṣana, to see God, to touch Him, and to have conversation with Him."\(^{16}\) There is a spaceless space beyond space where "God fills the whole of existence, and also the whole of non-existence."\(^{19}\) This God on the one hand "has no sound, no touch, no form, and is beyond decay," and yet is present in every gathering of His saints. He is greater than all great ones, has more knowledge than all knowers, fills "every nook and cranny of the universe."\(^{20}\) Some conceived of God as a Being with whom they could play; others spoke of Him as both a macrocosm filling the universe but also as a microcosm "smaller than the smallest" though "bigger than the biggest." He has a "Subtle form" but is capable of resolving Himself into the transcendent. Thus they could say as did Kudaluresia, "I saw the thing which is unseeable."\(^{21}\) This leads to an experience which cannot be expressed by human language for "it is impossible to express the joy of formless experience" into which the mystic felt he entered; "the beatific joy is inexpressible by words of mouth."\(^{22}\)

The knowledge of Brahman that is identified with Reality is defined from three different viewpoints—"Vedanta, mystic experience of vision and audition, and of devotion." The Vedanta concept is first discussed, and with it the question of God's nature:

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The Vedanta definition combines bliss and illumination (bodha). Here the problem arises, is God bliss, or is He blissful? Are we to interpret the Absolute as a substantial or adjectival principle? 

Here a controversy exists between "intellectual and intuitional Vedanta." Saṅkarāchārya interpreted it to be "excess" or "saturation" of bliss (prāṇavyārtha) while Ramanuja explained it in the sense of blissful" and a third group combined the two views of the adjectival and substantial ultimate nature of the Absolute. 

Regarding the mystical interpretation of the knowledge of Brahman the poet Śarīraśheb said that man must get the vision of the "Illuminating feet, from which issue the ambrosial rays that fill the heart." This experience is brought about by meditating on the feet of the guru. This leads to the mystic being able "to see inside himself in his heart the feet of the Lord (Guru). These feet should be seen as evenly placed. In order to reach this goal three things are necessary:

The first is the mental equipoise, which is necessary for the realization of the God-head; the second is the continuous effort which is necessary for this realization; the third is the consummation of the efforts of the aspirant. That a man should be able to see the feet of the Lord inside his heart is possible only as the culmination of his spiritual endeavours. 

24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid., pp. 170, 171.
Some held that the name of God is the means by which to attain eternal bliss and knowledge found in the realization of Brahman. Such were Saríšāheb and Pañcākṣari of Nīrālekeri, in such names as the "five-syllabled name of God," Ṣaṁ Naṁah Śiva. The person who seeks realization should:

repeat the name of God at every step,
and with every breath, secretly and
with a sense of pride, there being
no need of resorting to any other
means for the realization of God.28

Siddhāramesvara explained a six-syllabled name or Mantra
"Oṁ na mah śi va ya." So important was this that he pictured even
the Gods as coming to hear the explanation, which was similar to
that given by Sankaracharya:

The letter Oṁ means what fulfills
the desires and liberates man, and
is therefore always meditated upon
by the Yogis. The Na stands for
namantī what is bowed to with res­
pect by sages, nymphs and gods. Na
signifies Mahīdeva (Great God),
Mahādhvani (great mediator), and
Mahāsakti (great power). Śiva
means what is sānta (peace) and
gīva (good). Śi stands for
the great bull on which the God
Śiva rides, Vāsuki (the serpent
that adorns God Śiva and that sup­
ports the earth), Ya stands for
the Omnipresent God.29

Another, Śisunāladhīśa, said that Reality would be within
the grasp of the one who contemplated the "five-syllabled Mantra of

28. R. D. Ranade, The Pathway to God in Kannada Literature,
p. 175.
29. Ibid., p. 176.
the Deity." "You will be absolutely certain about the ultimate Reality you have to reach." Another sage of Nīralakera:

exhorts us to realize our real self, without entertaining any doubt about its spiritual nature. You will become one with Reality, after having gone beyond the consciousness of your body, and after having reached the state of ecstasy or bliss, and after having transcended once for all the fear of birth and death. ... And after having secured the grace of the Lord, one should enter into union with him. In this way only will the worldly existence be transcended. 

31. Ibid., pp. 179, 180.