CHAPTER III

THE PHASE OF MYSTIC CULMINATION: A SURVEY
OF HUXLEY'S APPROACHES TO MYSTICISM.

Someday Somehow Somewhere
that glory would be within his grasp
(Time Must Have A Stop)

That's all
Ye know on earth and all ye need to know.
(Keats: Ode On a Grecian Urn)

I. Limitations of Idealism: Nature of Mystical Consciousness.

Elevated and sustained idealism delighted Huxley for its potentialities for interpreting the cosmic scheme. It provided an incentive to his desire to understand and explain the inexplicable mysteries of the universe like intuition, "love, beauty, mystical ecstasy, intimations of Godhead." But soon he discovered the inadequacy of idealism, as is evident from his confession "still, in spite of the consolations of philosophy, I remained pensive". By philosophy, it seems, Huxley means idealism. Milton Birnbaum also draws our attention to Huxley's dissatisfaction with idealism. He says "that philosophy, unless it is guided by self-transcendence is inadequate". Idealism, though it

dazzles, also obscures. It lures us to follow certain ideals, which are, in essence, nothing but rationalizations of our selfish cravings.

In *Olive Tree*, Huxley expresses his dissatisfaction with philosophy because for him the real thing is not 'proposition' but a 'state of being'. The metaphysical thinkers are so much involved in rationalization that they commit all sorts of violence under the guise of good conscience. He says:

> Philosophies are devices for making it possible to do, coolly, continuously and with good conscience, things which otherwise one could do only in the heat of passion, spasmodically and under the threat of subsequent remorse. Unsophisticated by thought, anger soon dies down; but supply a man with a philosophy proving that he is right to be angry, and he will go on performing in cold blood the acts of malice, which otherwise he could have performed only when the fit was upon him. Philosophies, which their authors devised in order to justify some relatively harmless craving, have been subsequently made the excuse for monstrous iniquities. 1

Huxley shows his despair with the justificatory theories, because they codify "under the guise of pseudo-logicality all kinds of lunacy." They sanction all sorts of violence, biological and economic determinism. It is in response to

1. The *Olive Tree*, p.154.
this logicality that a lot of bloodshed and evil are caused in the world.

The thirst for rationality and righteousness is almost as insistent as the thirst for sexual pleasure and for the gratification of pride. There will always be cravings to justify and always a desire for justification. Justificatory theories are often non-sensical; but this would not greatly matter, if they justified only those desires and actions immediately responsible for their invention. The real trouble about most of these theories is that they justify and indeed logically impose upon those who accept them modes of thought and behaviour to which mere irrational cravings would never have prompted them ...

All justificatory theories are determined by the prevailing systems of philosophy and ethics. These, in their turn, are in part determined and themselves in part determine the economic and social circumstances of the age...

From the above, it could be rightly concluded that "Huxley was not satisfied with the existing philosophies either (except the non-personal mystical variety which he embraced after he discarded all the others)". He believes that various philosophical fashions do not show any adequate appreciation of the natural profundity of the human soul; their vision is obscured on account of their involvement in rationalization. They are unable to attain what Plato loved to call the synoptic vision of reality, a Samanvaya as the

Hindu thinker puts it. Human nature measured in terms of intellection, can hardly grasp the profanity and inexplicable mystery of life. Huxley is disappointed with ideals because they are reflections of our biases and prejudices. The same is apparent when Propter answers the question of what is an ideal in a definitive way thus: "An ideal is merely the projection, on an enormously enlarged scale, of some aspect of personality";... 'And the same holds good of art, of scholarship, of humanitarianism.'

Huxley believes that idealists are generally motivated by and imbued with the highest zeal for bringing about an improvement in society. In *Ends and Means*, he writes:

> From the Isaiah to Karl Marx the prophets have spoken with one voice. In the Golden Age to which they look forward there will be liberty, peace, justice and brotherly love. 'Nation shall no more lift sword against nation'; 'the free development of each will lead to the free development of all'; 'the world shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea'.

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2. *After Many A Summer*, pp.110-111.

They are prepared to kill or be killed because in pursuit of their ideals they are dominated by the power of dogma, superstition, violence and fanaticism. These idealists do not present any glorious record for humanity. Instead of alleviating the sufferings and tensions in the world they aggravate the situation. The golden age to which Huxley looks forward can only be realized through self-transcendence and change in the individual psyche.

In *After Many A Summer*, Huxley focusses our attention on the failure of idealists to seek the redemption of mankind. He urges that it is only through the mystical insight that value and meanings can be introduced in this degenerate world. It is the spiritual vision which can bring about the necessary change in the individual psyche. He writes:

"I mean the religious psychologist; the one who knows by direct experience that men are capable of liberation and enlightenment. He's the only philosopher of history whose hypothesis has been experimentally verified; therefore the only one who can make a generalization that covers the fact." ¹

By religious psychologists Huxley does not mean those persons who are associated with some religious institutions, for they, as Prof. Ghose rightly holds are "death worshippers". They believe in symbols and abstractions and do not allow human beings to develop a harmonious and integrated personality.

¹ *After Many A Summer*, p.285.
Huxley advocates that only theocentric saints can transform and transfigure this degenerate world:

Society can never be greatly improved until such times as most of its members choose to become theocentric saints. Meanwhile, the few theocentric saints who exist at any given moment are able in some slight measure to qualify and mitigate the poisons which society generates within itself by its political and economic activities. In the gospel phrase, theocentric saints are the salt which preserves the social world from breaking down into irremediable decay.

This antiseptic and antidotal function of the theocentric is performed in a variety of ways. First of all, the mere fact that he exists is profoundly salutary and important... The theocentric saint is impressive, not only for what he is, but also for what he does and says ... The work of the theocentric is always marginal, is always started on the smallest scale and, when it expands, the resulting organization is always subdivided into units sufficiently small to be capable of a shared spiritual experience and of moral and rational conduct.

Huxley observes that the idealistic programmes which have been envisaged on the socio-economic plane for the reconstruction of humanity have failed to bring about the desired results. Good intentions alone can hardly yield any tangible result unless they are practised, too. But even, if practised, their impact towards the transformation of society will be of limited nature. The only effective technique, according to Huxley, for the improvement of society is that of mystics. In Grey Eminence, he focusses

1. Grey Eminence, pp.296-301.
our attention on this point:

For several thousands of years now men have been experimenting with different methods for improving the quality of human instruments and human material. It has been found that a good deal can be done by such strictly humanistic methods as the improvement of the social and economic environment and the various techniques of character training. Among men and women of certain type startling results can be obtained by means of conversion and catharsis. But though these methods are somewhat more effective than those of the purely humanistic variety, they work only erratically and they do not produce the radical and permanent transformation of personality, which must take place, and take place on a very large scale, if political action is ever to produce the beneficial results expected from it. For the radical and permanent transformation of personality only one effective method has been discovered—that of the mystics. It is a difficult method, demanding from those who undertake it a great deal more patience, resolution, self-abnegation and awareness than most people are prepared to give, except perhaps in times of crisis, ... Because of the general reluctance to make such efforts during uncritical times, very few people are prepared, at any given moment of history, to undertake the method of the mystics. This being so, we shall be foolish if we expect any political action, however well-intentioned and however nicely planned, to produce more than a fraction of the general betterment anticipated...

Large scale organizations are capable, it would seem, of going down a good deal further than they can go up ... we asked ourselves what the politicians could do for their fellows by action within the political fields and without the assistance of the contemplatives. The answer would seem to be: not very much ... Meanwhile, politicians can do something to create a social environment favourable to contemplatives. Or perhaps, it is better to put the matter negatively and say that they can refrain from doing certain things and making certain arrangements which are specially unfavourable.1

In *After Many A Summer*, Huxley disapproves of all idealistic schemes. These schemes are mainly the projection of our inflated egotism. He observes that all ideals are at bottom the source of superstition, fanaticism, and madness. The idealistic programmes of nationalism, militarism, and industrialization are the product of the ego. The ideals of patriotism, social justice, virtues of loyalty, temperance, courage and prudence though they are good in themselves, but they hardly liberate the individual from a sense of ego. Self-sacrifice, which is considered to be the highest quality cherished by the idealists, is simply a wallowing in egotism. Huxley does not merely insist on the cultivation of virtue but says it must be the cultivation of right virtue; specifically of understanding and compassion. He only believes in an ideal, which guarantees liberation from personality, time and craving. He holds that the ideal of non-attachment can be practised only by devoted individuals, who are entrusted with the task of transforming human nature by the resolute use of intelligence and good will. He advocates that it is through the practice of the ideal of non-attachment that we can transfigure and transmute the world. In *Ends and Means*, he writes:

> How can existing society be transformed into the ideal society described by the prophets? How can the average sensual man and the exceptional (and more dangerous) ambitious man be transformed into those non-attached beings, who alone can create a society significantly better than our own ... 1

And moving from the sphere of ideals to that of immediate experience, is it not a fact, asks Huxley, that:

'to some people fairly frequently, perhaps occasionally to all, there come little flashes of illumination - momentary glimpses into the nature of the world as it is for a consciousness liberated from appetite and time, of the world as it might be if we didn't choose to deny God by being our personal selves. Those flashes come to us when we're off our guards; then craving and worry come rushing back and the light is eclipsed once more by our personality and it's lunatic ideals, its criminal policies and plans.' 1

Huxley does not like to dally with ideas. "These little flashes of illumination go a long way to modify his earlier intellectual attitude." He wants to find meaning and values in life and would like to live by those meanings and values.

Huxley discovers that idealists are unable to maintain a relationship with the living thing which matters in life. They delight in abstractions at the expense of living experiences. Moreover, Absolute of the metaphysicians remains a diagram - impersonal and unattainable - the Absolute of mystics is lovable, attainable and alive." 3


In *Do What You Will*, Huxley disapproves of the creed of the ascetic for encouraging abstraction. He writes:

The sterile creed of the ascetic has to a great extent given place, in our modern world, to the sterile creeds of the abstraction—worshiping man of science and the machine-worshipping man of applied science (who is the modern ‘average man’). Indeed, Christian spirituality prepared the way for our intellectualism and machine-worship by rendering disreputable all that in human nature is not mind, not spirit, not conscious will. 1

Huxley believes that 'remote abstractions' precipitate evil and suffering in the world. The impact of evil becomes more forceful when they are given prominence over human beings. They create a climate inhospitable to the individual. He writes:

The monstrous evils which arise when remote abstractions, like 'nation' and 'state' are regarded as realities more concrete and of greater significance than human beings may be remedied, in some measure, by the insistence on the relative concreteness of individual men and women. 2

Huxley shows his mistrust of abstractions which is evident from Palanese scheme of education propounded in *Island*.

"The real thing"? Will shook his head.
"Is there such a thing? I wish I could believe it".

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"You're not being asked to believe it", said Dr. Robert.

"The real thing isn't a proposition; it's a state of being. We don't teach our children creeds or get them worked up over emotionally charged symbols. When it's time for them to learn the deepest truths of religion, we set them to climb a precipice and then give them four hundred milligrams of revelation. Two firsthand experiences of reality, from which any reasonably intelligent boy or girl can derive a very good idea of what's what."

Idealists rely on abstractions, symbols and verbalizations, which prevent them from perceiving reality in totality. In *Adonis and Alphabets, Human Potentialities*, *Foreword to Mystics and Society* and in his other fictional and non-fictional works, Huxley has insisted on the supremacy of immediate experience on "the non-verbal level" over "metaphysical or theistic hypothesis". He begins to believe that reason is inadequate to perceive reality because it always operates with abstractions, functions under duality and promotes exclusiveness. It gives rise to egocentricity and distorts the vision of man. Like the transcendentalists, Fichte, Schelling, Kant and Hegel, Huxley employs the dialectical process to resolve the inner conflicts but soon

1. *Island*, pp.159-160.
he discovers the inadequacy of this process because thought presupposes dualism and the conflicts therefore cannot be resolved. Though it appears that contradictions are resolved into unity, in actual practice they are only avoided and not resolved, as the contradiction of lower category is included in the higher category and those of higher in a still higher and so on, till all of them are enfolded and preserved in the absolute.

Huxley has portrayed a few intellectual characters who are disillusioned with their rationalism because they are unable to establish contact with the living experience and lead an integrated life. Their empirical attitude towards life blurs their vision, as the sophistries of intellect are hindrances to the higher life. Knowledge of reality is to be won by spiritual effort. One cannot think one's way into reality, but can only live into it. Intellectual symbols are no substitutes for perceived reality.

Denis in Gnome Yellow, Shearwater in Antic Hay, Lord Edward Tantamurt and Philip Quarles in Point Counter Point, and Brian Fox in Eyeless in Gaza strongly yearn for integral living and would like to experience life in its fullness and richness. Though they long for experience, intuition and love, they get bogged down in artistic dilettantism, fornication and scientific hobbies. They remain completely fragmented in their specialized compartmental knowledge, and are unable to grasp the truth, which can be experienced by living integrally with wholeness.
The ontological mind of Huxley was fascinated by a Blakean idealistic approach to life but he did not find it satisfactory because of Blake's strong insistence on contraries. It was thus natural for Huxley to turn to mysticism in order to seek the resolution of contraries and conflicts which were the source of perturbation to his reflective mind. He found that it is only through mystic intuition that we could achieve the reconciliation between the known and the unknown, the synthesis between the tangible and intangible, the integration between reason and imagination, the fusion between thought and feeling, and the harmony between body and spirit.

This intuitional sense operates first by dissolving the oppositions and conflicts, and then establishes a unity between subject and object, macrocosm and microcosm. Huxley's thought operates on the principle of intuition. Intuitive knowledge gives us access to this original unity of our experience. Intuition is knowing by being. Intuition is knowledge by identity. In that state of immediacy the object is merged in the subject, so that the subject is all. The knower, known and the act of the knowing are one.

Intuition is integral knowing. It gives the comprehensive all-inclusive vision of reality and illusion, inner and outer, discord and harmony, matter and spirit, seeming and being, and the individual and the universal are perceived as one. Through intuition man can realize oneness with the universe.
Huxley understands the world as a unity, an undifferentiated whole. In his all-embracing vision of oneness, diversity transcends all limited forms, and particularity praises the absolute worth, and reality of every existent fact and sees "a World in a Grain of Sand."

Huxley has always been interested in "union with that something deeply interfused". His inclination towards mysticism has, however, a long history. He himself gives us enough information through his letters and autobiographical writings about his interest in mystical consciousness. Julian Huxley states that Huxley's interest in mysticism dates back from his childhood. He says:

From early boyhood, I knew in some intuitive way that Aldous possessed some innate superiority and moved on a different level of being from us other children. This recognition dawned when Aldous was five and I a prep school boy of twelve; and it remained for the rest of his life. As a child, he spent a good deal of his time just sitting quietly, contemplating the strangeness of things.

In a letter (22.8.1939) to Dilip Kumar Roy, Pondicherry, he had written:

Now let me reply to your question. I have been interested in mysticism ever since I was an undergraduate. For sometime the interest was predominantly negative; that is to say, I read a good deal of Western and Eastern writing, always with intense interest, but always with a wish to 'debunk' them. Later the interest became positive. I have also found a great deal in Buddhist Literature.

3. Ibid., p.21.
In a letter to Juliette, Huxley expresses his keen interest in mysticism. He writes:

One cultivates Wordsworth's 'wise passiveness' and opens oneself up respectively to the MYSTERIUM TREMENDUM ET FASCINANS within and without. 1

Without much constraining our thinking, we can discover the distinct intimations of mysticism in his earlier works, too; for example, the impulse for contemplative life, the disgust for social reality, the "hatred of sterile rationalism" and relativism, the "disgust for the sensuality" and "the interest in history and flow of time" have been recurring strains in the general theme of his work. In his poems and earlier novels these distinct intimations shadow forth the various directions he has to take subsequently. He is not as one who first a satirist, cynic, agnostic and fatalitarian, and then suddenly renounces every temporal pursuit and becomes a saint.

Psychologically Huxley is "all of a piece". Mr. Holmes correctly focuses our attention on this point when he says that Huxley "preferred presenting himself in verses, like 'The contemplative-soul'... Huxley is already aware of his future; the final images hint at the mysticism he will

3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
eventually pursue. But the secret, whatever it is, is only barely suggested."

In *Crome Yellow*, Huxley shows his interest in mysteries and unseen things rather than seen things. He says:

"The things that matter happen in the heart. Seen things are sweet, but those unseen are a thousand times more significant. It is the unseen that counts in life."

In *Those Barren Leaves*, Calamy abandons the world of relativism and seriously ponders on the great mysteries of human life and death. He is convinced that worldly ambition and fame are vanities of vanities because they belong to man's finite existence. He goes to a mountain to start a life of pure contemplation. He says:

'The mind must be open, unperturbed, empty of irrelevant things, quiet. There's no room for thoughts in a half-shut, cluttered mind.'

In his quest for meaning and values in life, Calamy realizes how thin is the ice across which each one skates. Spiritual life starts with a transformation of values. Renunciation is but a prelude in the life of an aspirant. Calamy by means of his intuitive vision penetrates to the spiritual center within himself and discovers the true glory and independence of self. He believes it is through meditation that we can understand the true nature of reality. The belief in the existence of a permanent self underlying all changes

2. *Crome Yellow*, p.11.
is an unshakable conviction and forms the quintessence of his mystical realization. He comes out more vigorously as an advocate of contemplative life. He is convinced that real self is different from the fettered ego and one can gain the supreme knowledge and self integration through meditative discipline (Dhyana Yoga). This mystical consciousness can be achieved only by those who can elevate their life by a conscious endeavour and disciplined thought.

Calamy says:

"No, it's not fools who turn mystics. It takes a certain amount of intelligence and imagination to realize the extra-ordinary queerness and mysteriousness of the world in which we live. The fools, the innumerable fools take it all for granted, skate about cheerfully on the surface and never think of inquiring what's underneath. They're content with appearances, such as your Harrow Road or Cafe' de la Rotonde, call them realities and proceed to abuse any one who takes an interest in what lies underneath these superficial symbols, as a romantic imbecile."

Calamy believes that since self is reality which is identical with the universe, recognition of its real nature is the ultimate end and fulfilment of life. He wants to experience in its expansive vision the totality of the universe. The result of knowledge is identity with all, the result of ignorance is identity with finite things.

He says:

There is a whole universe within me unknown and waiting to be explored; a whole universe that can only be approached by way of introspection and patient uninterrupted thought. Merely to satisfy curiosity it would surely be worth exploring. But there are motives more impelling than curiosity to persuade me. What one may find there is so important that it's almost a matter of life and death to undertake the search.

Mary Thirplow experiences a divided allegiance. She resolves her inner conflict on the spiritual plane. She expresses her firm belief in the existence of God. She says:

God is a spirit, she said to herself, a spirit, a spirit ... A spirit, an all-pervading spirit. God is a spirit. ... All the universes are one in the spirit. Mind and matter in all their manifestations - all one in the spirit ... God is a spirit ... All things are one, ah yes, yes. All, all, all, she repeated. But to arrive at the realization of their oneness one must climb up into the spirit. The body separates, the spirit unites. One must give up the body, the self; one must lose one's life to gain it. Lose one's life, empty oneself of the separating Me.

2. Ibid., pp. 359-360.
In *Point Counter Point*, Spandrell has been portrayed as a cynic and a masochist realizes the futility and triviality of life and overcomes his suffering by affirming perfect faith in God. He says:

'Living in a kind of dust-heap' Spandrell added, 'that's like me. Whatever I do, however hard I try to escape, I remain on the dust-heap. 1

Further he says:

'It proves all kinds of things - God, the soul, goodness - unescapably. It's the only real proof that exists; the only one, because Beethoven was the only man who could get his knowledge over into expression.' 2

In *Brave New World*, too, where Huxley has projected a horrifying vision of the universe, the mystical elements are not missing. Mustapha Mond bans a work on 'A New Theory of Biology' because people might begin to think "that the goal was somewhere beyond, somewhere outside the present human sphere; that the purpose of life was not the maintenance of well being, but some intensification and refining of consciousness, some enlargement of knowledge." 3

In *Eyeless in Gaza*, Anthony Beavis was fascinated by mysticism even when he was an undergraduate student. But he could not pursue his interest in mystical experiences because his nature was torn by an internal dualism; his spirit was restive under the bondage of intellect. He was

1. *Point Counter Point*, p.590.
2. Ibid., p.591.
3. *Brave New World*, p.149.
an indefatigable reader and the range of his knowledge was extraordinary. Finally, he realized that dualism was an outcome of his intellectual and cold-detachment to life.

Anthony Beavis sees the world broken because he is broken within. The Vedantic philosophy offers him light when he is passing through a crisis of development. He perceives that there is a power in the constitution of every man above the intellect which gives direct insight into the ultimate reality. He believes that the individual is One with the Cosmos and when the novel ends he perceives the unity of life. He does not now feel any opposition, for all sense of opposition is false. The world of material objects no longer confronts him for his own soul has become the soul of all beings. The opposition of not-self has evaporated in the expansion of self. He perceives the unity of life. It is a state of mind where all multiplicities and diversities are fused into harmony. He holds his firm faith in the ultimate unity, which is all pervasive and all-inclusive. He says:

Unity, he repeated. Unity.
Unity of mankind, unity of all life, all being even. Physical unity, first of all. Unity even in diversity, even in separation. Separate patterns, but everywhere alike. Everywhere the same constellations of the ultimate units of energy.


The infinite is bliss; there's no bliss in what is small.

2. Eyeless in Gaza, p.612.
In Ends and Means, Huxley has systematically developed his ideas of mysticism. He treats mysticism as a definite shade or form of heightened states of consciousness. It is an ordered movement towards higher level of reality involving a conscious and permanent union with Absolute or closer identification with an infinite. It involves complete transmutation of personality and complete rebuilding of a character. Its aims are wholly transcendental and spiritual. Huxley treats mysticism as "a system of education", and, therefore, prescribes certain ethical, intellectual and spiritual disciplines for achieving the mystical state of consciousness. He advocates that "meditation is ... the technique of mysticism. Properly practised, with due preparation, physical, mental and moral, meditation may result in a state of what has been called 'transcendental consciousness' - the direct intuition of, and union with, an ultimate spiritual reality that is perceived as simultaneously beyond the self and in some way within it (God in the depth of us, says Ruysbroeck, 'receives God who comes to us; it is God contemplating God')." Huxley believes that through "systematic training in recollection and meditation" the individual can, obtain direct experience of a "spiritual unity underlying the apparent diversity of independent consciousness."

2. Ibid., p. 286.
3. Ibid., p. 293.
4. Ibid., p. 295.
Huxley recommends certain ethical virtues like goodness, intelligence, compassion and love, which he believes, are preliminary virtues towards the realization of the mystical state of consciousness. He advocates the ideal of non-attachment and insists that the individual should transcend the bodily limitations: senses, desires, images, intellect and ego, etc. He recommends that we should "get rid of self will", and to "cultivate... a state of being propitious to knowledge of, and union with, ultimate reality". Huxley believes that "goodness, meditation, the mystical experience and the ultimate impersonal reality discovered in mystical experience are organically related".

In After Many A Summer, Propter has been portrayed as a spiritual character who regards man as "a nothingness surrounded by God, indigent of and capable of God, and filled with God if man so desires". He believes that evil is whatever strengthens our ego-sense; good, whatever helps to annihilate it. He advocates that we should transcend our empirical ego and strive to seek unity with God. On the empirical level of existence we are obsessed with time, our personalities

1. Ends and Means, p. 327.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 299.
and their projections which we call policies, ideals and religion: "We worry and crave ourselves out of the very possibility of transcending personality and knowing, intellectually at first and then by direct experience, the true nature of the world." He advocates that we should abandon our preoccupation with mundane activities and must make room for the timeless consciousness. In other words, it means we must annihilate our ego. The ego, according to Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood, is man's obsessive consciousness of existence of being a separate self— from his true self, the Atman. The ego sense results when we falsely identify the Atman, with the mind—body, that which merely reflects consciousness.

Propter believes in the essential three qualities for the annihilation of ego: goodwill, the persevering effort for liberation with an ethical life as its corollary; intelligence, the unflailing discrimination between the ego and its products and that which is beyond the ego; recollectedness, the focussing of mind upon the goal of life.

1. After *Many A Summer*, p.121.
Propter tells Pete what good is and where it is to be found:

On the level below the human and on the level above. On the animal level and on the level ... Well, you can take your choice of names; the level of eternity; the level, if you don't object, of God; the level of the spirit - only that happens to be about the most ambiguous word in the language. On the lower level, good exists as the proper functioning of the organism in accordance with the laws of its own being. On the higher level, it exists in the form of a knowledge of the world without desire or aversion; it exists as the experience of eternity, as the transcendence of personality, the extension of consciousness beyond the limits imposed by the ego. 1

In *Time Must Have A Stop*, Sebastian Barnack is initiated into spiritualism by Bruno Rontini who teaches him the ideal of non-attachment. Bruno tells Sebastian to make "sacrifice of self-will" in order to "make room for the knowledge of God ... Don't try to act somebody else's part. Find out how to become your inner not-self in God while remaining your outer-self in the world". 2 The only way to achieve self-hood is by living the life of a saint, just as one learns to love by the act of loving. One must keep one's mind and heart open to God's presence. Finally, he states that there is not only indirect knowledge about Absolute but possibility and finally necessity of direct

1. *After Many A Summer*, p.120.
intellectual recognition leading the liberated spirit to identification with the object of its knowledge: the Atman is identical with Absolute. To achieve this unitive knowledge of Godhead is the end and purpose of all human existence. Huxley has used a lot of mystic phraseology in this novel.

In *Perennial Philosophy*, Huxley gives a systematic exposition of his mystical philosophy. Though it is an anthology divided into twenty-seven chapters containing excerpts from the writings of other mystics, yet it is a valuable document for the understanding of Huxley's ideas of mysticism because these excerpts have been brilliantly commented on by him. Huxley states:

> The Perennial Philosophy is primarily concerned with the One, divine Reality substantial to the manifold world of things and lives and minds. But the nature of this one Reality is such that it cannot be directly and immediately apprehended except by those who have chosen to fulfill certain conditions, making themselves loving, pure in heart, and poor in spirit.1

He insists that "the end of human life is contemplation or the direct intuitive awareness of God." 2 He believes that every phase of human activity must be judged in terms of its hindering or facilitating the achievement of ultimate purpose of life. He maintains that Perennial Philosophy will enable us to lead a life of an integrated being and facilitate our union with Godhead.

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Huxley recommends the following 'Eight-fold path' perhaps inspired by the Buddha for achieving this ideal state:

Complete deliverance is conditional on the following: first, Right Belief in the all too obvious truth that the cause of pain and evil is craving for separative, egocentric existence, with its corollary that there can be no deliverance from evil, whether personal or collective, except by getting rid of such craving and the obsession of 'I', 'me', 'mine'; second, Right Will, the will to deliver oneself and others; third, Right Speech, directed by compassion and charity towards all sentient beings; fourth, Right Action, with the aim of creating and maintaining peace and goodwill; fifth, Right Means of livelihood, or the choice only of such professions as are not harmful, in their exercise, to any human being or, if possible, any living creature; sixth, Right Effort towards self-control; seventh, Right Attention or Recollectedness, to be practised in all the circumstances of life, so that we may never do evil by mere thoughtlessness, because 'we know not what we do', and eighth, Right Contemplation, the unitive knowledge of the Ground, to which recollectedness and the ethical self-naughting prescribed in the first six branches of the Path give access. Such then are the means which it is within the power of the human being to employ in order to achieve man's final end and be saved. 1

In the Introduction to Swami Prabhavananda's and Christopher Isherwood's translation of The Song of God, Huxley has stated the true goal of the mystic quest.

This means that the individual has to transcend his empirical self in order to seek unity with Godhead. He says:

First: the phenomenal world of matter and of individualized consciousness - the world of things and animals and men and even gods - is the manifestation of a Divine Ground within which all partial realities have their being, and apart from which they would be non-existent.

Second: human beings are capable not merely of knowing about the Divine Ground by inference; they can also realize its existence by a direct intuition superior to discursive reasoning. This immediate knowledge unites the knower with that which is known.

Third: man possesses a double nature, a phenomenal ego and an eternal self, which is the inner man, the spirit, the spark of divinity within the soul. It is possible for a man, if he so desires, to identify himself with the spirit and therefore with the Divine Ground, which is of the same or like nature with the spirit.

Fourth: man's life on earth has only one end and purpose: to identify himself with his eternal self and so to come to unitive knowledge of the Divine Ground. 1

In Island, Huxley has portrayed a mystic society. The ideal of that society is directed towards self-understanding rather than knowing the things of the outer

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world. He has given systematic expression to his many-sided concern with human affairs. The polarities have disappeared giving place to unity. The conflict between the individual and the environmental order has been resolved by the all pervasive spirit of unity. The diversities are overcome in the consciousness of Oneness; contradictions are finally lost in the identity of self. Huxley's mysticism appears to be more in line with the system of Hindu Sādhanā or yoga.  

Will Farnaby, the main character in the novel, who infiltrates into Pala is administered moksha medicine and he begins to perceive all pervasive unity. His ego is shattered and self is liberated to achieve unity with the Divine Ground. He achieves a distinctionless state as he perceives beauty and harmony even in dog.

II. Two Approaches to Mystical Experiences:
Methodical and Non-Methodical.

It is the consciousness of temporality that provides the momentum to Huxley's quest. He is impelled to explore the nature of consciousness and to find and suggest a way out for a much disturbed, confused and fragmented world. He found that life is fragmentary and futile because man is ignorant of his divine essence and is engaged in the pursuits of ephemeral things. Forgetting his divine nature which is within, and missing the infinite in being and thought,

1. See the discussion on this theme in the next section.
man wrongly identifies himself with one thing or the other at different times and is completely lost in the world of relativism and purposelessness. "This delusion continues so long as he remains ignorant of the true nature of his Self - which is said to be shuddha ('pure'), Buddha ('enlightened') and mukta ('free'). Thus Huxley's major problem is how to achieve self-transcendence and "union with something deeply interfused", which pervades existence and makes for righteousness, significance and fulfilment." He believes that it is only through self-transcendence that man can achieve understanding, compassion and love which will enrich the world with pure goodness, pure beauty and pure enjoyment. His vigilant quest for life meaning and values leads him to explore the methods and experience of mystics. He found mysticism "as an organic process of transcendence", an "illuminated apprehension of things", and a "cleansing of the doors of perception". And "it marks the self-growth towards free conscious participation in the Absolute Life"

4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
and awakened self is "purified from the domination of senses", illusions, evils and imperfections, and it experiences "a deeper and wider apprehension of the mysterious world". In such a moment of enhanced perception the individual establishes a harmonious relationship with the universe and views everything with sympathetic judgment and elevated vision. It is accompanied by a state of moral exaltation and the "barrier between human and non-human life", which creates fragmentation and "makes man a stranger on earth as well in heaven" is shattered. It is accompanied by an intense feeling of joy and exaltation. The self is illuminated and establishes an intimate relationship with all things. The secrets of the 'mighty universe' are unfolded to him "which he shares with Nature and with God". Dr. R.K. Bucke

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p.260.
4. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

Life now whispers to his life; all things are his intimates, and responds to his external sympathy.
Huxley treats mysticism as a way of life, an experimental science having a discipline of its own: \textit{methodus, mystica, yogae, dhārayana} and contemplation etc. It is "active and practical" and not "passive and theoretical". It is an organic life-process which is "arrived at by an arduous psychological and spiritual process". Moreover, "it is an ordered movement towards ever higher levels of reality" which involves the complete identification between the knower and the known, inner and outer, and macrocosm.


The prime characteristic of cosmic consciousness is a consciousness of the cosmos, that is, of the life and order of the universe. Along with the consciousness of the cosmos there occurs an intellectual enlightenment which alone would place the individual on a new plane of existence - would make him almost a member of a new species. To this is added a state of moral exaltation, an indescribable feeling of elevation, elation, and joyousness, and a quickening of the moral sense, which is fully as striking, and more important than is the enhanced intellectual power. With these come what may be called a sense of immortality, a consciousness of eternal life, not a conviction that he shall have this, but the consciousness that he has it already.

2. Evelyn Underhill, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 81.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid., pp. 81-82.
and microcosm. It is ekavidya, the knowledge of the one, or the knowledge that unites or reconciles the different sides of existence, above all it is brahmavidya, the knowledge of oneself, one in all. Huxley defines mysticism as a research. He writes:

Research by means of pure intellectual intuition into non-sensuous, non-psychic, purely spiritual reality, descending to rational theories about its result and to appropriate moral action in the light of such theories. 1

Focussing our attention on the philosophy of mysticism Huxley writes:

The philosophy of mysticism is a kind of transcendental operationalism. Perform certain operations, it teaches, and certain states of the mind-body may result. 2

Huxley's treatment of mysticism or the nature and development of man's spiritual consciousness can be studied under two broader categories known as methodical and unmethodical. The methodical cultivation of spiritual consciousness is based on certain ethical virtues, psychological and intellectual disciplines, and religious practices: meditation, detachment, contemplation and the

1. Time Must Have A Stop, p.288.
2. Sisir Kumar Chose, Mystics and Society, op.cit., p.viii
practices of moral virtues, like truthfulness, sincerity, honesty, goodness, non-injury, and continence etc. But the flashes of spiritual consciousness produced by intoxicants like LSD, mescaline, nitrous oxide, and psilocybin etc. can be brought under the category of unmethodical experiences. Though in his work one discovers a constant insistence on both the methods for changing the


Swami Prabhavanand writes:

The concrete means by which spiritual control is exercised Patanjali analyses in considerable detail. Control, he says, is 'by practice and non-attachment'. By 'practice' is meant he tells us, the exercise of the ethical and spiritual discipline. These are yama, the cultivation of moral virtues, such as truthfulness, non-injury, continence; niyama, the acquiring of regular habits of study and worship; asana, the discipline of sitting quietly in order to achieve tranquility; pranayama, the taking of breathing exercises in order to gain control of the mind; pratyahara, the gathering of the mind from thraldom of the senses; the dharana, concentration; dhyana, meditation; and samadhi, absorption.
nature of human consciousness, nevertheless, he accords top priority to the yogic technique of contemplation, meditation, non-attachment, ethical and religious practices.


Gerald Herald writes:

Huxley not only wrote on these issues and recommended study of various yogas and the Buddhist trainings such as Zen. He also set himself to test out and experiment with these traditional exercises. At the same time, he was thoroughly investigating hypnosis with some of the best medical therapeutic practitioners, studying the many psychosomatic techniques as they developed, enquiring into endocrinological treatments, keeping himself abreast of and getting to know personally the researches in electroencephalography (brain-waves for short) and following carefully the latest reports on the psycho-physical effects of the Limited Environment ... A medical friend had asked him to experiment with mescaline ... His long study of and practice in states of meditation and contemplation had taught him how to avail himself of this perfect instrument, the invaluable use of which is to banish from the mind those otherwise uncontrollable automatic interruptions of and obstacles to undeviating one pointedness:

For him, then, LSD was a sacrament, a perfect psycho-physical aid to sustain the mind at its utmost reach...

Increasingly, as the consciousness-changing methods and medicaments are explored, it appears that here may be the most efficacious and most liberating of all our present discoveries.
Huxley writes:

Retirement from the world and yogic practices within a group of like minded individuals are certainly recommendable. But what about those for whom this sort of thing is not practicable? Aught not something to be done for them? 1

These techniques are the essential ingredients of all mystical traditions of the world, but Huxley found their systematic exposition only in the Vedantic and Buddhistic Yoga. Huxley is greatly fascinated by the Vedantic mysticism and Zen Buddhism because they insist on meditation and contemplation for transforming the nature of consciousness. In Ends and Means, he describes:

Meditation,... is the technique of mysticism. Properly practised, with due preparation, physical, mental and moral, meditation may result in a state of what has been called 'transcendental consciousness' - the direct intuition of, and union with, an ultimate spiritual reality that is perceived as simultaneously beyond the self and in someway within it. 2

Huxley describes "meditation as a device ... for producing a 'super-rational concentration of the will'". 3 It is "a method of self-education" and "a method for acquiring knowledge about the essential nature of things,

2. Ends and Means, p.286.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
a method for establishing communion between the soul and the integrating principle of the universe.\(^1\) He believed that the individual "trained in the discipline of recollection and meditation, could obtain direct experience of a spiritual unity underlying the apparent diversity of independent consciousness."\(^2\)

Huxley advocates that that society is good which makes possible and desirable the pursuit of contemplation. The love which is released by the exercise of this intuitive contemplation will cure many of the evils which are plaguing mankind. Thus this love will lead to the treating of nature kindly; it will release the people from the bondage of selfhood and the fetters of time and sensual demands. The self-denial will bring us into union with the essence of Godhead and will, in so doing, relieve us of all our physical pain.

In *Perennial Philosophy*, Huxley stresses the importance of contemplation for facilitating man's union with God. He

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writes:

The end of human life is contemplation, or the direct and intuitive awareness of God; that action is the means to that end; that a society is good to the extent that it renders contemplation possible for its members; and that the existence of at least a minority of contemplatives is necessary for the well-being of any society. In the popular philosophy of our own time it goes without saying that the end of human life is action; that contemplation (above all in its lower forms of discursive thought) is the means to that end. 1

In the Foreword to Mystics and Society, Huxley advocates the importance of training in mental silence as a means of attaining the spiritual consciousness. He writes:

Training in mental silence. Training in wise passiveness and choiceless attention. Training in sensitivity to the other people's feelings and our own motives. Training in awareness ... 2

Besides, certain intellectual and psychological disciplines, Huxley also recommends ethical and religious practices for the cultivation of mystical consciousness. They are the essential preliminary for mystical experiences. They assist the individual in the purification of his body and training of his will. He writes that:

A man who has trained himself in goodness comes to have certain direct intuitions about character, about the relations between human beings, about his own position in the world. 3

1. Perennial Philosophy, p.337.
2. Sisirkumar Ghose, Mystics and Society, op.cit., p.x.
3. Ends and Means, p.287.
He further writes:

Goodness is the means by which men and women can overcome the illusion of being completely independent existence and can raise themselves to a level of being upon which it becomes possible by recollection and meditation to realize the fact of their oneness with ultimate reality. 1

Huxley has portrayed a few characters in his novels who believe in ethical virtues, intellectual and psychological disciplines, and religious practices. They exhibit disinterested consciousness and have transcended the limitations of bodily adjuncts: senses, images, ego, desires and intellect. In Those Barren Leaves, Calamy gives much importance to meditation and contemplation for realizing the extraordinary queerness and mysteriousness of the world in which we live. He wants to explore the universe through "introspection" and disciplined thought. He also practises ethical and religious virtues for the realization of self. He believes that self is the reality and it is also identical with the universe, recognition of its real nature is the ultimate end and fulfilment of life. To be one's own self is to establish unity with the all.

Calamy while explaining the metaphysical significance of the outstretched hand to Mary Thirplow seems to expound the Hatha yoga technique of the Vedantist. He explains the

1. Ends and Means, p.298.
2. Those Barren Leaves, p.375.
multiple views of hand: physical, chemical, biological and metaphysical.

'And so these', he said, 'are some of the ways - and there are plenty more, of course, besides - and these are some of the ways in which my hand exists and is real. This shape which interrupts the light - it's enough to think of it for five minutes to perceive that it exists simultaneously in a dozen parallel worlds. It exists as electrical charges; as chemical molecules; as living cells; as part of a moral being, the instrument of good and evil; in the physical world and in mind. And from this one goes on to ask, inevitably what relationship exists between these different modes of being - what's there in common between life and chemistry; between good and evil and electrical charges; between a collection of cells and the consciousness of a caress? It's here that the gulf begins to open, for there isn't any connection - that one can see, at any rate. Universe lies on the top of universe, layer after layer, distinct and separate ...' 1

Mary Thirlow, too, accords great importance to contemplation and meditation for attaining the mood of tranquility and repose. She says:

'To think steadily and intensely of one thing is a wonderful mental exercise; it serves to open up the mysteries that lie below the common-place surface of existence; and perhaps, if one went on thinking long enough and hard enough one might get through the mystery to its explanation'. 2

In Eyeless in Gaza, Anthony Beavis who meets a crisis in his life, is diagnosed by Miller, who teaches him to

2. Ibid., p. 357.
transcend his personality through disciplining his body and educating his mind. Anthony Beavis overcomes his difficulties through mystical contemplation and ethical discipline. He realizes that it is only through self-transcendence that one can achieve union with Godhead. He advocates the theme of achievement of a union with God; Evil is that which separates man from man, manifestation of evil, such as hatred, greed and lust, should be avoided. Good is that which unites; love, compassion and understanding are demonstrations of unity.

Anthony Beavis admits that this unity is difficult to achieve, but man should at least attempt to achieve it through meditation and inner serenity. With the self expansion he feels that the ubiquitous soul of man enters into all existence and bestows reality on it. He realizes that the secret of the universe is contained in his own self and that the highest wisdom is the effusion of the soul. He feels it his obligation to propagate this new knowledge. With this new knowledge introspection and extrospection coincide. Anthony Beavis begins to feel that

1. **Eyeless in Gaza,** p.554.

Someway, Anthony was thinking, of getting beyond the books, beyond the perfumed and resilient flesh of women, beyond fear and sloth, beyond the painful but secretly flattering vision of the world as menagerie and asylum. 'Beyond this piddling, two penny - half penny personality', said the doctor, 'with all its wretched little virtues and vices, all its silly cravings and silly pretensions'
which is outside is inside, that inside is outside. Hence do the *Upanishads* proclaim: "the self alone is to be meditated upon, the self-alone should be realized, for one knows all this through it; the self is dearer than a son, dearer than wealth, dearer than everything else, and is innermost. One should meditate upon the self alone as dear".

Dr. Miller, a physician, and anthropologist is an advocate of a synthetic orientale mysticism combining the best feature of Yoga and Buddhism. He practices yogic exercises, mystical meditation and eats vegetarian food. He believes in love, compassion and understanding as against hatred, violence and stupidity. He believes that these are the essential requisites for attaining the spiritual consciousness and leading a life with transformed and elevated vision. He says:

Increased awareness and increased power of control result. Awareness and control: trivialities take on new significance. Indeed, nothing is trivial any more or negligible ... In Evans - Wentz's last book on Tibet I find among 'The Percepts of the Gurus' the injunction; 'Constantly retain alertness of consciousness in walking, in sitting, in eating, in sleeping'. An injunction, like most injunctions, unaccompanied by instructions as to the right way of carrying it out ... one is taught how to become aware ... skill acquired in getting to know the muscular aspect of mind-body can be carried over into the exploration of other aspects. 2

Besides, he practices the principles of non-violence, truthfulness, continence, love, sincerity, strength of character and resoluteness of will. He believes that non-violence rests on a profound and deep love of God. It is the intense love of God that makes the individual realize that all things are essentially one, and with the attainment of this unitive knowledge he begins to love all his fellow creatures. In *After Many A Summer*, Pproter advocates that ethical virtues, psychological and intellectual disciplines, are essential preliminary for attaining the mystical consciousness. He advocates that the individual should strive for the transcendence of his empirical ego to experience a mood of timelessness or eternity. He insists that man should strive hard to actualize his potentialities and establish his identity with the Divine Ground.

In *Time Must Have A Stop*, Bruno Rontini believes in the ideal of non-attachment. He is a Yogi, who keeps the mood of serenity and cheerfulness under all circumstances. He has transcended his empirical self and believes in selflessly seeking good and practising charity. He tells Sebastián Barnack that we can eliminate sufferings and evils which enchain us and blur our vision through self-transcendence. It is under the guidance of Bruno Rontini that Sebastián realizes the true value of renunciation which consists in the rejection of the unstable and dedication to the eternal. From the supreme realization of self is born the mystic consciousness facilitating the achievement of
the ultimate purpose of life. The differences of place, distant and near, of past, present, and future are merged into a living sense of the present, and the essence of existence, is felt everywhere the same. Time and space are seen as a vast spiritual expanse, a flow or continuum. Sebastian rises above the purely subjective level to the cosmic, his thought coincides with the thought of the world. One's real self is the cosmic self, and, knowing it, one knows all; one thinks cosmically and feels cosmically. Sebastian in his note-book records the personal problems which clearly disclose the religious philosophy of Huxley. He explains his belief in the Divine Ground or Ground of being, which is transcendent and immanent: "Law or Dharma, which must be obeyed, a Tao or Way, which must be followed, if men are to achieve their final end". He holds a strong belief that it is actually possible for human beings to become actually identified with Godhead.

In Island, Huxley has portrayed a mystic society where the aim of each individual is the attainment of Prana or wisdom or the ultimate unity. To become what you are should be the ultimate human end, and it is towards the attainment of this goal that the individual is required to direct all his potentialities: physical, moral and spiritual. The Upanishadic phrases of Tat-Tvam-Asi (That Thou Art) and Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahma) are the expressions of realization of this

1. Time Must Have A Stop, p.239.
very truth. The two concepts nearest to Buddha namely Karma (corresponding) and 'Attention' constantly reverberate in the air of Pala through the utterances of the ever present 'mynah birds'. The entire climate of Pala is pervaded with the mystic flavour.

The people of Pala practice various types of ethical, religious, spiritual, psychological and intellectual disciplines for the realization of true self. They practice various types of yogas. All life is yoga for them. They are integrated beings and believe in the co-mingling of being and becoming.

From the preceding analysis, it emerges that Huxley shows his marked preference for the methodical cultivation as an element of the spiritual consciousness, but he knows that all people are unable to practice yogic techniques, because they lack essential talent and capability. His love for the humanity does not permit him to leave these people in despair who are unable to follow methodical approach to mysticism. He tells them to avail themselves

1. Island, p.165.

"... But after the yoga of danger there's the yoga of the summit, the yoga of rest and letting go, the yoga of complete and total receptiveness, the yoga that consists in consciously accepting what is given as it is given ... the yoga of the jungle, the yoga that consists of being totally aware of life at the near point ..."

2. See discussion on this theme in Chapter IV.


Retirement from the world and yogic practices within a group of like-minded individuals are certainly recommendable. But what about those for whom this sort of thing is not practicable? Aught not something to be done for them?
of the comparatively harmless drugs like mescalin, psilocybin, LSD and moksha medicine, because he believes that these drugs are perfect psycho-physical aid for modifying the nature of human consciousness. These drugs will facilitate the banishment from the mind of "those otherwise uncontrollable automatic interruptions of and obstacles to undeviating 'one pointedness'. Because of his great sense of responsibility "to keep alight humanity" that he is always "opening doors - doors through which not only he but all the rest of us might pass, to enter on new kinds of experiences, new ways of thinking, new possibilities of living."

Huxley believes as Prof. Ghose rightly states:

There are other worlds of experience, however improbable at first sight. These are: an Old World of personal consciousness; a New World of personal sub-conscious; the Far West of collective unconscious; and, finally, at the antipodes of every day experience, the world of Visionary Experience.

Prompted by a strong desire to plumb the mysteries of the universe, Huxley sets himself to test out and experiment with mescalin. He swallowed a pill of mescalin and experienced

2. Ibid., p.25.
3. Ibid.
a state of mind wherein everything seemed to be "apparelled in celestial light, the light that never was on land and sea". It resulted in the emergence of the highest quality of comprehensive consciousness, that complete 'ego-less' awareness of being.

These experiences have been recorded in The Doors of Perception, published in 1954 followed with a sequel in 1955 Heaven and Hell. Under the influence of mescalin, Huxley claims to have understood for the first time, not verbally now but experientially, what terms like 'grace', 'transfiguration', 'Istirkeit', Beatific Vision, Sat-Ci-Sat-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss), refer to. He claims to have grasped mystical consciousness intuitively.

Huxley maintains that mescalin is a powerful instrument of modifying our body-chemistry. He says that: 

The brain is provided with a number of enzyme systems which serve to co-ordinate its workings. Some of these enzymes regulate the supply of glucose to the brain cells. Mescalin inhibits the production of these enzymes and thus lowers the amount of glucose available to an organ that is in constant need of sugar. When mescalin reduces the brain's normal ration or sugar, what happens? 3

It modifies our body-chemistry and by reducing the efficacy of brain it allows the entry into consciousness of the phenomena of the other world.

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2. The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell, p.18.

3. Ibid., pp.22-23.
He adds that:

1. The ability to remember and to 'think straight' is little if at all reduced ...

2. Visual impressions are greatly intensified and the eye recovers some of the perceptual innocence of childhood, when the sensum was not immediately and automatically subordinated to the concept. Interest in space is diminished and interest in time falls almost to zero.

3. Though the intellect remains unimpaired and though perception is enormously improved, the will suffers a profound change for the worse. The mescalin taker sees no reason for doing anything in particular and finds most of the causes for which, at ordinary times, he was prepared to act and suffer, profoundly uninteresting. He can't be bothered with them, for the good reason that he has better things to think about.

4. These better things may be experienced (as I experienced them) 'out there', or 'in here', or in both worlds, the inner and the outer, simultaneously or successively. That they are better seems to be self-evident to all mescalin takers who come to the drug with a sound liver and untroubled mind. 1

The experience may result in any form depending upon the capacity of person. "In some cases there may be extrasensory perception. Other persons discover a world of visionary beauty. To others again is revealed the glory, the infinite value and meaningfulness of naked existence, of the given, unconceptualized event. In the final stage of ego-lessness there is an 'obscure knowledge' that All is in all - that All is actually each." 2 But "a finite mind can ever come to perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe". 3

1. The Doors of Perception and Heaven and Hell, p.23.
2. Ibid., p.24.
3. Ibid.
This book became debatable and provoked a stimulating controversy about the visionary experience induced by the drug. The most vehement criticism came from the pen of Prof. R.C. Zaehner who took up the challenge and published a book Mysticism Sacred and Profane, (Oxford, 1957) refuting Huxley's hypothesis about the visionary world. It is a well documented study on mysticism dealing with the mystical experiences of Richard Jefferies, Proust and Rimbaud. It also deals with the mystical tradition as developed in India, Christianity and Sufism. In "Zaehner-Huxley Debate", A.W. Sadler observes:

Huxley, said Zaehner, has confused genuine, God-induced mystical experience, with the simple praeternatural experience; he has confused sacred mysticism with profane mysticism, the mysticism of the nature poet, the taker of vision producing drugs and the manic, 1

Zaehner's main allegation against Huxley is that by equating yogic experiences with drug induced experiences Huxley had distorted the sanctity of the experience.

Genuine mysticism results in a total transformation of personality. It lays down certain ethical disciplines, self-denial and charity but no such thing is needed in case of profane mysticism. Zaehner has compared Huxley's experiences

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with the other drug takers and has observed that there is a certain similarity in regard to the incredible heightening of the sense of colour but the transcendency of the ego which Huxley claims to have achieved has hardly been experienced by them. Huxley becomes feeble as soon as he attempts to classify or dogmatize his experiences. The most significant aspects which elude the grasp of reason is Huxley's claim of achieving 'Nirvana or Moksha' through drugging as he "speaks of the sacramental vision of reality." The whole picture appears quite comic.

Zaehner characterizes this experience as pan-on-henic, a characteristic form of profane mysticism. It is commonly termed as "pantheistic, but the discovery is not that all is God and God is all, but rather that all is a unity, and the unity is all." Zaehner vehemently differs with Huxley's thesis by saying that his experiences are not genuine, for neither is there any beatific vision in it, nor self-transcendency nor any unity with God in it. Huxley, according to Zaehner, is reducing all "meditative and contemplative religion to pure lunacy".

2. A.W. Sadler, op.cit., p.43.
But Huxley is sane enough to point out that the aim of yogic exercises is to disturb the nervous and cerebral systems and then to bring it to a certain order. A similar state of consciousness can be achieved by mescaline because it brings about psycho-physiological reactions in the body. He has also drawn the distinction between the schizophrenic personality, the man who takes mescaline, and the mystic. In all these cases body-chemistry is modified. But fundamentally their experiences are of different kinds and the main difference is "of duration and preparation". The mescaline taker only experiences this visionary world for a short duration and then comes back to the conventional world; the schizophrenic personality lives continually in the lunatic world, whereas the mystic stays permanently in touch with ultimate Reality. "He is, in Huxley's words, 'holy enough'. It is holiness that makes the difference - Holiness which is shaped, according to Huxley, by ethical preparation and philosophic preparation."

The critical appraisal of "Huxley's - Zaehner Debate" reveals that Zaehner was obsessed with the problem of duality between higher self and lower self, whereas, for Huxley this dualism between higher self and lower self, rational and irrational, order and chaos, conscious and unconscious was completely annulled and he could perceive all-pervasive unity.

1. A.W. Sadler, op. cit., p. 47.
2. Ibid.
Zaehner's argument has its validity when he says that there cannot be total transformation and sanctification of character under drug-induced experience, but there can be a heightening of certain perceptions. It is possible that under the influence of drug certain unconscious objects can become conscious, implicit things can become explicit. This is what exactly seems to have happened in the case of Huxley, because as we know, he has made an extensive study of *Upanishads*, *Dhammapada* and other religious books before administering to himself mescaline. All this wide range of knowledge came out like a 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling' under the influence of mescaline.

In reply to Zaehner's allegations Sadler writes that Huxley does not claim his experience to be a genuine one because he only writes that he has "gained insight into the mystical experience, the Beatific Vision, Enlightenment, ... for a few timeless hours, of direct and unconditional perception - an 'experience of inestimable value'."

It appears that Sadler does not draw the distinction between the genuine and spurious mystical experiences. There seems a distinct contradiction in his statement because an experience which gives one insight into the beatific vision, etc. cannot be other than a genuine one.

Many critics regard this kind of research as aberrant and dangerous. Huxley's recommendation of this drug is based on the fact that it offers new capacities to human psyche. This drug can be effectively utilized for transforming the psyche of the individual.

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Huxley has made this point very clear in his interview with Hans Beerman in 1960. Hans Beerman writes:

"Just what then is your answer to the riddle of a better world"?1

Huxley answers that:

the destiny of human soul is to realize its Oneness with the supreme. Only by the experience can the quality of life be transformed. The new drugs like psilocybine and LSD we have today can be wonderfully utilized in helping to bring about these spiritual states, in which the soul sees the sovereignty of the Spirit over matter. It is thus that man feels the unity of himself and the universe and is convinced that this is, after all, a friendly universe. He is no more a separate and self-centred individual but has become a vehicle of the universal spirit. 2

The mind of Huxley is inquisitive and restless and is continuously searching for new devices for the enrichment of the world. In Island, Huxley projects a mystic society which has developed a moksha medicine and this drug is described as "the reality-revealer, the truth-and-beauty pill."3

In Island, Will who is in search of spiritual integration is administered moksha medicine by Sushila Macphail and he experiences a twilight of double vision and claims to have achieved that state of consciousness where the horror of the universe and its smallness are both visible at the same time.

2. Ibid., p. 229.
where he is exposed to heaven and hell simultaneously. He begins to feel that the intellect of man is sterile and it cannot give him any direction or sense of proportion in utter darkness, logic appears to be a hindrance to truth. He begins to abhor the rationalism and materialism of the West. The outer world according to him is infected with the evil of illusion. Through the experience of knowledge of absolute reality his ego is shattered and self is liberated to seek unity with oneness. It was an experience of a timeless world:

that changed incessantly in a dimension, not of a seconds and minutes, but of beauty, of significance, of intensity, of deepening mystery.

"Luminous bliss". 1

It was an experience of bliss and discursive reasonings were completely transcended. It was an experience of one with oneness:

Ultimately and essentially there was only a luminous bliss, only a knowledgeless understanding, only union with unity, in a limitless, undifferentiated awareness... 2

It was an experience of peace, bliss and understanding.

The personality of Will Farnaby underwent a complete transformation:

From a praeternaturally wretched and delinquent self he had been unmade into pure mind, mind in its natural state, limitless and undifferentiated, luminously blissful, unknowledgelessly understanding. 3

It involved an experience of blazing uprush of bliss and understanding.

"It sound suspiciously like Nirvana". 4

1. Island, p.263.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p.264.
4. Ibid., p.265.
Will Farnaby begins to experience something far more deeply interfused whose dwelling is the light of something or other.

Tonight, for the first time his awareness of a piece of music was completely unobstructed. Between mind and sound, mind and pattern, and mind and significance, there was no longer any babel of biographical irrelevances to drown the music or make a senseless discord.

The popularity of drugging in recent times has stirred a great deal of controversy about the authenticity of mystical consciousness induced by drugs. It is on account of Huxley's recommendation of drugs that he is regarded as a prognosticator of much criticised modern hippy movement. However, into these questions we cannot go just now, except briefly. For the purpose of this study it is enough to maintain that Huxley pays full attention to the non-methodical cultivation of mystical consciousness.

III. The Nature of Mystical Language.

It has been universally recognised by all the mystics that mystical experience defies expression, that no adequate report of its contents can be given in words. These experiences have been pronounced time and again as ineffable, unutterable, unconceivable and unconceptualizable. Aldous Huxley is aware

1. Island, p.266.
of the ineffable character of the mystical experience and is also conscious of the difficulties involved in their transmission. In *Those Barren Leaves*, when Calamy goes to a mountain, he confronts the same difficulty. He says:

> How is a man to give an account of something entirely unlike the phenomena of known existence in a language invented to describe these phenomena? You might give a deaf man a most detailed verbal description of the Fifth Symphony; but he wouldn't be much the wiser for it and he'd think you were talking pure balderdash.'

Even after the complete acceptance of mystical philosophy, Huxley continues to doubt the possibility of transmitting their truths to others. In *After Many A Summer*, Propter says:

> The only vocabulary at our disposal is a vocabulary primarily intended for thinking strictly human thought about strictly human concerns. But the things we want to talk about are non-human realities and non-human ways of thinking. Hence the radical inadequacy of all statements ... about God or spirit or eternity.

The words God, or spirit or eternity, or timeless bliss cannot be given adequate expression on a verbal level. The word knowledge, wisdom, power, mind, peace, joy, freedom cannot be verbalized in adequate expressions. The fauna of the spiritual world cannot be given expression in the mundane language. Any attempt in regard to the verbalization of these experiences creates more confusion and misunderstanding.

as we say something which we possibly do not mean to say. The symbols and words create barrier in the understanding of reality.

In *Time Must Have A Stop*, Sebastian refers to the ineffable character of the mystical experience. The experience is something that cannot be communicated even to ourselves. Silence is the language of this experience.

In *Ends and Means*, Huxley says:

> "The Atman is silence," is what the Hindus say of ultimate spiritual reality. The only language that can convey any idea about the nature of this reality is the language of negation, of paradox, of extravagant exaggeration. The pseudo-Dionysius speaks of the "ray of the divine darkness" of the 'super-lucent darkness of silence' and of the necessity to 'leave behind the senses and the intellectual operations and all things known by sense and intellect'. 'If anyone', he writes, 'seeing God, understands what he has seen, he has not seen God'. "Hescio, nescio" was what St. Bernard wrote of the ultimate reality; "neti, neti" was Yajnavalkya's verdict at the other side of the world. 'I know not, I know not: not so not so'. 1

In *Island*, Will Farnaby under the influence of moksha medicine also focusses our attention on the ineffable character of these experiences. Their incommunicability is the result of some physical impediments.

Despite the pronounced ineffability of mystical experiences the mystics have philosophized their experiences and there has come to being what we call mystical theology.

The existence of mystical theology in the West and spiritual philosophy in the East does not permit us silently to brood on the matter and leave the subject unattempted. Prof. Ghose rightly observes that "a complete blank between the empirical and transcendental consciousness is not desirable; some sort of relation or linkage there must be".

Aldous Huxley also shows his strong concern for unfolding the ineffable character of mystical experiences by reducing them to a certain classificatory concepts or the systems. In Foreword to Mystics and Society, he writes:

Talk about the ineffability of mystical experiences is perfectly correct, but requires to be related to a theory of language and physico-psychology of the symbol-making, symbol using mind-body.

Thus Huxley recognizes the ineffability of mystical experience through mundane language, but he believes that if we can evolve a spiritual calculus, then it becomes possible to give expression to mystical deliverances. Until that is done mystical utterances will continue to be couched in paradoxical metaphors and linguistic eccentricities; and the normal unregenerate man will continue to dismiss them as fantasies midway between nonsense and insanity.

1. Sisirkumar Ghose, Mystics and Society, op.cit., p.29.
2. Ibid., p.viii.
IV. Mystics and Society.

Julian Huxley correctly assesses Aldous Huxley's main problem of life. He says:

One of Aldous's major preoccupations was how to achieve self-transcendence while yet remaining a committed social being - how to escape from the prison bars of self and the pressures of here and now into realms of pure goodness and pure enjoyment; how to integrate, the warring drives of what he called our multiple 'amphibian' nature into some satisfying total pattern of peace, harmony, and wholeness; how to achieve union with that 'something deeply interfused', which pervades existence and makes for righteousness, significance and fulfilment.

Like Aurobindo Huxley wants to treat mysticism as a social experiment. Beneath his mysticism there is a strong undercurrent of realism. He does not treat mysticism as an "ego-centric, abnormal, escapist activity" or flight of the alone to the alone. He feels it has a great relevance to the present-day world bogged down in materialism, and it is a living force which has the power to transfigure and transform the world. It is not a factor of alienation from society but a complete involvement for the betterment of society. It does not encourage retirement or to be a recluse, on the other hand it enjoins commitment and compulsion to face life with an elevated vision and illumination. It demands that we should throw ourselves into the vortex of life and uplift it.

2. Sisirkumar Ghose, op.cit., p.II.
Huxley advocates that mysticism is basically a technique of transference and transcendence. It is in the best sense a criticism of life. "It always adds up to a total valuation of values". It is through mysticism that we can shift from 'chaos to cosmos'. It alone can change the "very texture of our consciousness, the ground or door of perception. Mysticism stands for the greatest revolution in human condition. It alone can counterbalance 'this death of purpose' which infects the modern world through and through." It goads men to change themselves and their ways. It is not merely a way of understanding; it is also 'a way of life'. It brings back the meaning to life, the meaning of whole. It is only through mysticism that we can bring about a change in the "contemporary mentality, a fundamental transformation of our system of values, and the profoundest modification of our conduct towards other men, cultural values and the world at large".

Huxley believes that in mystical experiences "the soul sees the sovereignty of the spirit over matter. It is thus that man feels unity of himself and the universe and is convinced that this is, after all, a friendly universe. He is no more a separate and self-centred individual but

2. Ibid., p.38.
has become a vehicle of the universal spirit." Huxley believes that life and the world can and should be improved by mystical consciousness. He has a strong belief that the mystics can introduce values and meaning in this world. He says that "these states are experienced as being intrinsically valuable, and their fruits improved character, increased sensitivity and insight - are often ethically desirable."

In *Grey Eminence*, Huxley writes:

> Society can never be greatly improved, until such time as most of its members chose to become theocentric saints. Meanwhile, the few theocentric saints who exist at any given moment are able in some slight measure to qualify and mitigate the poisons which society generates within itself by its political and economic activities. In the gospel phrase, theocentric saints are the salt which preserves the social world from breaking down into irremediable decay.

This antiseptic and antidotal function of the theocentric is performed in a variety of ways. First of all, the mere fact that he exists is profoundly salutary and important...

The theocentric saint is impressive, not only for what he is but also for what he does and says. His actions and all his dealings with the world are marked by disinterestedness and serenity, invariable truthfulness and a total absence of fear...

The work of the theocentrics is always marginal, is always started on the smallest scale and, when it expands, the resulting organization is always subdivided into units sufficiently small to be capable of a shared spiritual experience and of moral and rational conduct.

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Huxley believed that a minority of contemplatives are necessary for the well-being of any society in keeping the world disinfected. "The mystics are channels through which a little knowledge of reality filters down into our human universe of ignorance and illusion. A totally unmystical world would be a world totally blind and insane." 

The mystics play a notable role in awakening us to the pitfalls in which we have fallen. They give us a profounder picture of humanity. They give us an integral view of self-knowledge and existence. They see clearly, correctly and comprehensively.

Huxley believes that in mystical experience the individual experiences a unity of feeling, a calm and pure love, joy and blessedness based on the unity of being. The individual apprehends that unity not merely in the depth of understanding but also in his relation to his fellow creatures as the surpassing onanism: good and beautiful.

The mystic vision of the one in the many and of the many in the One accordingly supplies the deep and broad foundation of ethics. Mysticism posits eternal values such as Truth, Beauty and Goodness, which are all infinite, and which transcend any system of human relations, but it finds these actualized in concrete human situations and experiences. God as Truth safeguards society's pursuit of knowledge and broadens the horizon of human concepts, attitudes and affections. God as Beauty assures the promotion and conservation of values in the world of art. God as goodness and love guarantees man

and society all that is worth maintaining and developing in social life and relations. Mysticism alone offers the ways of accommodation and synthesis to the individual or community faced with the problems of tension and conflict.

The mystic capacity for guidance of others is born of a sense of whole, a freedom from inertia and prejudice, an inner certitude and a simplicity of will, invaluable qualifications for chalking out social policies and programme. The mystics sustain and renew society, give it an unerring lead, and endow it with an unswerving faith.

For Huxley mysticism has a social value of considerable importance. Huxley has portrayed a few mystic characters like Anthony Beavis and Dr. Miller in *Eyeless in Gaza*, Propter, in *After Many A Summer*, Sebastian and Bruno Rontini in *The Time Must Have A Stop*, and Palanes in *Island*, who are not escanists but they confront life and face it with an elevated vision. They practise ethical and spiritual virtues and want to transform and transfigure this world. They believe in compassion, understanding, and love. They want to spiritualize politics and economics in order to bring about a necessary social change. They advocate the ideal of non-attachment and practise pacifism as against violence or war, decentralization as against centralization, goodness as against ugliness, goal of timelessness as against perpetuation of evil in time.

In *Island*, Huxley has portrayed a mystic society. The ideal of that society is to produce an integrated human being. Their whole energy is directed towards the actualization of love, goodness, compassion and understanding. The main aim
of their education is directed towards the attainment of self-awareness. In that society there are no discordant elements, rather a perfect harmonization and supreme love pervades there:

"But Wisdom never puts enmity anywhere. All those senseless, pointless, cockfights between Man and Nature, between Nature and God, between Flesh and the spirit! Wisdom doesn't make those insane separations."

Thus from the foregoing analysis, we have observed that Huxley's mysticism can be described as this worldly mysticism. It can be best viewed in the light of Vedantic mysticism. Like Vedantists, Huxley neither denies the external world nor the psychological selves. What is denied is not the reality but ultimacy. Vedanta does not deny the empirical world, nor negate it absolutely but wants to make an improvement on it by transforming and transfiguring it. Huxley like Vedanta says that:

"We must not attempt to live outside the world, which is given us, but we must somehow learn how to transform it and transfigure it."

Huxley's mysticism, if interpreted in the light of Vedantic mysticism, seems to gain new depth and meaning.

1. Island, p.193.
2. William James in The Varieties of Religious Experiences, classifies mysticism into two categories: this worldly mysticism and other worldly mysticism.