MODERN MYSTIC EXPERIENCE AND
NIRGUNA AND SAGUNA SCHOOLS

Has the rich tradition of Indian mysticism been able to withstand the inroads of the modern critical spirit, or has it been impoverished of its content?

There is no doubt that contemporary rationalism has undermined many orthodoxies. Indian mysticism, however, has little to fear from the corrosive acids of the scientific spirit since it has always taken its stand on experience. Modern India, too, has produced men who have certified the ancient witness to the theocentric life.

We look around and find that the spiritual impulse has not been deadened. The spirit is essentially creative: its creativity takes no count of the vast stretches of time and space. The Upanisadic seers continue to create seers in their own image. It is a characteristic of the Indian mind to invoke trans-earthly sanctions for its earthly transactions; to see whether its purposes are in consonance with the nature of things. Behind the socio-political agitations of the recent past lay the impulsion of religio-spiritual movements and attitudes. Tilak, Aravinda, Gandhi derived the sanction for their activities not from any political school of thought but from the dynamic philosophy of ancient seekers of truth, Brahma Samaj, Arya Samaj, and the Rama-krsna mission do not find the springs of their action in social idealism alone. Their social idealism is rooted in spiritual vision. The mystical spirit has been re-interpreted to meet the stresses of the modern age.

1. "An exact movement of life in India have begun with a new spiritual thought and usually a new religious activity."
   (Aurobindo: The Renaissance in India, p.46)
   "So with all our aims and activities, spirituality take them all and give them a greater, divine, more intimate sense."
   (Ibid, p.72)
In Râmakrśna Paramhamsa we have a fine flower of Indian mysticism. God is formless and God is with form, and He is that which transcends both form and formlessness. The Sâgâmites, too, bear witness to such an integral Divine. Are the Mirgûmites, too, believers in such an integral Divine? Kâbîra himself says that his God cannot be invested with form. To do so will bring him within the pale of mortality. It has however been pointed out that even Kâbîra invests him with form when he addresses Him as King, Lover, Master, Friend. The emphasis in the saints is on the transcendent aspect of the Divine. Underhill thinks that Kâbîra has achieved a synthesis between the personal and cosmic aspects of Divine nature. "More absolute than the Absolute, more personal than the human mind, Brahma, therefore, exists while He includes all the concepts of philosophy, all the passionate inclinations of the heart." But an appeal to logic to prove Eternity and time, the Supreme and the historical process, are incommensurable fails because logically the cosmic can no more become the personal than the Infinite can enter the time-stream. If personality and impersonality are sought to be reconciled on the plea that Divine nature is incorporeal then the Sâgâmite advocacy of avatârâhood and Râmakrśna's belief in a God with form are in consonance with the demands of logic.

1. Teachings of Râmakrśna, p. 7

2. See more pp. 227 and 227(a)


4. Ibid., p. xxvi
Habira agrees with Ramanuja that God is beyond the complementary categories of form and "no-form." But Habira's appreciation of God with form shows that he cannot lose count of the distance that separates the finite from the Infinite. There is no doubt that in moments of ecstasy Habira does achieve a synthesis between time and eternity, here and hereafter when this divine mood dawns the objects and affords of the world become for him symbols and sacraments. But we cannot explain away those passages in the Marganita where the emphasis lies unambiguously on the ephemeral character of the world, the insubstantial nature of man and the utter transcendence of the Divine. In Ramanuja, however, the emphasis is not so much on the transient character of the world as on the transformation of consciousness. Habira is supreme when he is in the grip of theapture of love, but this only shows that he is greater than the intellectual formulations which issue from his mind.

Ramanuja underwent a course of tantric discipline to realize the Divine as Shakti. He gladly submitted himself to the guidance of his female preceptor, Bhairavi, and went through the elaborate tantric ceremonies each of which will appear not only irrational to the modern but also morally revolting. Habira too had gone through the intricate discipline of the Nathan which bears remarkable similarity to the tantric ascetics before he emerged on the uplands of that

1(a) K. G. 77 190, p. 149
1(b) S. B. I. p. 14-15

2. Inf. p. 296 (Transcendence of the world)
4. The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. IV. p. 666
5. Hazari Pressed Divine: Kabir pp. 31 ff
transfigured consciousness which knows no dependence on external
rite and ceremony for its union with the Divine. There is no doubt
that some of the saints went through the Buddhist discipline during
their novitiate. Many of them display their knowledge of the
technical terms associated with that discipline. But divine love cries
a man of all fancy for exoticism. In the saints, particularly in
Hatha, it surpasses the torturity of Hatha. Ramakrishna, however,ex-
perienced with divinity in various ways. To him, we refer to a Vaishakha,
a Vaishakha devotee, a follower of Advaita and, to cap all, the Hadi and
a Christian saint. But he came to the conclusion that all paths
meet at the summit. With him it was not a case of one discipline
overriding the other. The problem of Nirguna and Saguna, therefore,
does not arise for him. There is no distinction between the personal
and impersonal aspects of the God. When the Supreme is thought of
as inactive He is styled God the Absolute, and when He is
active or creator, sustainer, and destroyer—He is styled
Sakti or Personal God. "God with form and without form are not two
different beings. He who is with form is also without form."
That the Divine can be approached in many ways is radical fault of
Ramakrishna's faith. Ramakrishna, the self-styled disciple of his spiritual experi-
ence, notwithstanding, chose to approach the Divine through Jai—
the Supreme as World-mother. His devotion to the Supreme as Mother is

1. See note p. 115
2. See note p. 115
3. The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. IV, p. 666
4. "Id., p. 668
5. "Id., p. 670
6. "Id., p. 672
7. Jeeochia of Ramakrishna, p. 7.
beneficence of a Mother. In Her love and wrath, birth and death, joy and dread are reconciled, and seen as the twin aspects of a single truth. The worshipper of such a Mother is saved from that cloying sweetness which fills the utterances of many medieval Sadhakas. It is to be borne in mind that the medieval Sadhakas we have been studying have not felt drawn to the Supreme Power. Kali no doubt is mother, but that only means that what to our ignorant gaze is gratuitous destruction is to the mighty Disposer of Destiny the necessary accompaniment of love. It is true that Ram, the Destroyer of Lanka, and Krishna the killer of Asuras typify in Sura and Tulsi this aspect of the Divine but it is not difficult to see that the emphasis lies somewhere else. In Hindi mysticism the Divine nature is figured as the plenitude of love and knowledge but the fearsome moods of nature and the dread march of destiny over the ashes of human hopes and achievements are not seen as the handiwork of the same God who receives the petitionary prayers of His suppliants. The mystics in addressing Siva and Parvati, Tulsi Das does not altogether forget that aspect of Divine nature which lays desolate, but the Divine as Destroyer fulfills the Divine as Redeemer, and the discord between love and hate which is irreconcilable at the phenomenal level is reconciled in the Divine.

(Vide Tulsi, (नाम-नाम) ३७० अर्थ १५५४, १७३४.)
of kings and also of philosophers; one can try to force
that Love and hate, life and death, and all the weird movements of
existence, and the constant experience of the non-existence of any
existence, to suit their liking. "It is better to live to the
Ghre's mask of death." 4

As one going to a strange and difficult path, the directions of one
who knows the real, while taking the advice of any will lead to confusion,
so in trying to reach God one must follow implicitly the advice of
a single Guru who knows the way to God. "The
character, the form, and the divine in its immanence are present throughout the
world, but the self, the real teacher is in the body. "God alone is the
Guru and Master of the universe." In so far as Krishna is this "I" he is not a historical
Guru but the super-historical essence who is above all biography.

Shri Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. 31, 11-12

2. See sv, pp. 28ff.
3. Teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, p. 67
4. The Bhagavad-Gita, Ch. 6.
He who thinks his spiritual guide to be a mere man cannot make much progress in the spiritual life. Ramakrishna was one of those souls who hunger and thirst after reality. It is difficult to assign him any sectarian inclination to bind him to any traditionally recognized pattern of thought. He had a full grasp of the philosophy behind the Yoga and Saivism positions and the secrets of love, knowledge and action lay wide open to his view. The spirits of Siva, Mandasa, Tulsidas and Caitanya became incarnate in him by turns. He tried to approach in many ways after the manner of the Vaishnavas as a son, servant, parent, friend and beloved. His community of thought with the Bastachar is thus evident. Thus the diverse manifestations of love in the human heart became concretized in him.

As Vaishnava anchoret, Ramakrishna, by name Jatadhari (Jatadhari was Dero of the Child) who was an adept in the practice of Vatsalya Bhava. He initiated him into the mystery of this Bhava. Jatadhari used to carry an image of child Ram with him. This image was called Rama Lala by him. Having been introduced to the mystic doctrine of Vatsalya Bhakti Ramakrishna dedicated himself to its service. "At this Ramakrishna's parental emotions surged up towards Rama Lala, and he began night and day to weep, fast, feed and support with him. They became as intimate that he could not feel any separations in clasthing the Divine Child...... Rama Lala became so near him that he could not ever separate from him even for a moment! The ecstasy of the Tulsidas of Chitrakut and of Surdas boiled itself forth in that untutored

1. Teaching, p.72 2. He scaled the heights of Vaishnavism by his devotion to Ram by strictly and to Rama as a master. Subsequently he also developed to introduce the Saivism attitude.

3. Ibid. p.669
4. Ibid. p.669
Bengali saint. His experiments with Divine love, however, did not come to an end here. The Lord had also to be approached with that deep, overwhelming passion with which women yearn for his love. Krishna now assumed the role of a God of Women and went through all the transports and ecstasies which have become articulate in the poetry of Asvaghosa. The God was in a frenzy of love but the Lord seemed at right in her voice. "He gave up food, sleep, lost all contact with the outer world, and urged by his burning passion, roamed ceaselessly in his spiritual dream and in a mad pursuit of his wily lover.

Krishna re-lived the life of Sura and those Kama-intoxicated states for whom the agony of separation was as welcome as the rapture of union. He was no longer Krishna, the poor priest of a temple in the suburbs of industrialised Calcutta. He stood fully identified with Sura, first among the hearts of Kama, and symbol of that distinct longing soul who has come through suffering to the threshold of the lover but has not yet been admitted into the Presence. "Then one day Sura with her golden complexion and heavenly beauty appeared before him, and drew close to him and vanished mysteriously in his body, leaving him engulfed in an ecstatic fit......"

...Few days after this Sura merged with him soul-enthralling grace appeared, walk ed up to him and merged in his person. Sura had thus assumed the Garbha of Vishnu and become and realized that the Brahma, the Madhavite and the Vishnu were on the same path.


2. Ibid., p. 670.

"In an ecstatic mood, he saw Krishna in his resplendent beauty, standing before him and emitted the luminous rays emanating from his lotus feet touched the Bhogavarta and then his own chest, thus linking up for a while the holy Trinity—God, his Chakra, and his devotee." Ibid., p. 670.
His spiritual experience is thus open to very strong criticism. Known to the
learning of the classics he had evidently garnered the treasures of his wisdom with the help of those who had traversed the way the
company of those who are spiritually wise is more efficacious than the learned scholars. This is recognized by the medieval
scholars, too. Again and again they tell us how fellowship with and
service of those who have won liberation helps to achieve the human
bodily, soul of men across the "Ocean of Mortality." They
mediate others to the same goal. They lift their minds, body,
and the mind. He meditate before themselves before the face
someone who has taken the trouble of achieving the spiritual and other
necessary things, some, the their minds on the body, a meditation,
"We all following the instructions of holy men, it is hard
to love the body after using a bath packed in these elevated souls of
already"-minds of the soul, become a prospect of what is a foe.
In man's love and live the same emphasis on moral purity and
earnestness as in medieval mysticism. The charge that Indian mysti-
cism is a-moral or that it ignores the moral status of the soul in
its anxiety for the higher fruition, cannot be brought against the
medieval phase because the medieval Tadebas are insistent that he
who is unpurgéd is unredeemed. Truth, enthusiasm, patience, continence,

1. See supra p. 16; \( \text{Ramcharan, p. 360; } \text{Maha, p. 3.}\)
2. \( \text{Teachings of Sri Ramchandra, p. 208} \)
3. \( \text{Supra p. 42. Also infra p. 347} \)
single-minded devotion, charity, desirlessness, and renunciation are essentials pre-requisites to the beatified life. The exercise of these virtues constitutes the athletics of the mind and keeps off both the stupid indifference of 'tamas' and the futile unrest of 'rajas'. Those negative states of the mind which bar the light-vanity, hatred, fear—are to be kept off. The efficacy of Japa, Prahmacarya, concentration is recognized. But self-will, the notion that the ego is the agent of action, the source of power—the giver of sanction is condemned as the breeder of ignorance and inner strife. Without the grace of the Lord material and mental endowments avail naught. Here again we hear the echo of medieval mysticism. Unlike the saints Ramakrishna does not condemn image worship or ritualism as means of approach to the Divine. He knows the strength of the Iconoclast who is convinced that nothing finite can image forth the infinite perfection and that human frailty more often than not the symbol for the truth and loses sight of the.

"You cannot conceive, think of or perceive God otherwise than as a Person long as you are a person with an ego or individuality of your own!" As long as polypsychic the universe will appear to us as polytheistic. But the polytheist is not to be condemned if he regards the various gods he worships as aspects of the One Supreme. "If a man thinks of the images of gods and goddesses as symbols of the Divine he reaches Divinity." If a top-saint is a top-saint...

1. Teachings, Unit, p. 267.
2. Huxley: The Perennial Philosophy, p. 57
reminding one of the real fruit and the living animal, so do images worship, remind one of God who is the formless and eternal. But he not forget that these are mere stairways to the goal. The can be transcended only with the help of the relative as one takes out a thorn by means of another. Worn and then throws both of them away. Idols and ceremonial are to be discarded as soon as the mind, clogged with the superstition of self-existence, of things, gains the emancipative insight that the finite is in its essence identical with the infinite.

Establishing thus somewhat the Jackson and Mirza approach to reality, The real soul debate about the relative truth of the two positions could not have drawn him to either of the two camps. His way does not exclude any category of sciences. In their various ways the mind pushing the mysteries of life with his intellect, the mind lost in the enchanted vision of his dreams and the enchanted worlds, using the interpretation of life to understand reality. Thus one at least, are considering the issue respecting who has manifested himself in the

right teachings and actions. The emphasis on the means of the ends is not as pronounced as in the case of man, but it is evident that he was no 'pantheist'. The understanding of the way of life was no less than that of other traditions, and he had experimented in his own person with the self approach to reality, and

1. Teachings, p. 277
2. "Towards the end of 1866 his mind was irresistibly drawn towards Brahman. His arrival at the goal was marked by a vision, probably of the Prophet. Thus the path of Islam also led him up to the dizzy heights he had already scaled by his "Adventive Practice."

2. The Cultural Heritage of India (Sri Ramakrishna

Centenary Committee, Belur Math, Calcutta,
Vol. II, pp. 92-93)
Sri Aurobindo Ghosh is well-known as a Yogi and expounder of the philosophy of mysticism. Deeply learned in the philosophical traditions of both East and West as he is, his work is a monumental achievement in synthesis. The human soul is here for the unfoldment of its hidden Godhead. He recognizes the validity of the aim which the orthodox Indian Yogi set before himself: the transcending of the realm of death to seize that absolute status and immortality which are regarded as the real essence of our nature. This aim and the spiritual discipline associated with it do not constitute the entire range of India's spiritual endeavor. There are schools (particularly those of Vaisnavism) which deny that man's spiritual aspirations ultimate in the dissolution of his selfhood in some transcendent immobility. But there is no doubt that Indian spirituality has come to be identified—wrongly, no doubt—with a world-denying materialism. We are generally regarded as a people who are prone to look for virtue more in aloofness and renunciation than in acceptance and participation. This type of consciousness follows eagerly the ascent of nature to Godhead but regards the descent of God to nature as an illusion, or a fall or a frightful dream. Under the spell of this philosophy we are glad to identify ourselves with the being of the Absolute but not with its limitless energy that reels off worlds upon worlds and knows no end. It is this emphasis upon the way of the ascetic which led, according to Sri Aurobindo, to the impoverishment of our material and social

1. Sri Aurobindo: Thoughts and Kships, p. 8

He says: "What is the new that we have yet to accomplish? In a word, Godhead, to remake ourselves in the divine image." p. 8.
life after the efflorescence of the classical age. He takes strong exception to the concept of Maya which seeks to explain the world away as a phantasy conjured by ignorance. To regard the world as Maya is to loosen our hold both on the material world and on ourselves. The objective world with its procession of phenomena presupposes a witness called the subject. Both the object and the subject are equally real, one in an immovable, superintending eternity, the other in its various procession. But the Mayavadi identifies himself with the calm of the witness consciousness and regards the dissolving phenomena of Prakriti as non-existent. He accepts Brahman as an absolute behind the dualism of subject and object but, when descending to the relational level, lets the subject suck the object into itself and exhaust the entire content of objectivity. This is logically untenable. The object cannot be allowed to collapse in this way for its collapse implies the extinction of the subject as well. The objective world and the subject are both of them the manifestation of the Absolute who is at once Purusa and Prakriti. "The One is forever and the Many are forever because the One is forever. So long as there is a sea there will be waves." "Sankara's theory is not at all a necessary deduction from the great Vedantic authorities, the Upanisads, Brahma-sutras and the Gita, and was always combated by other Vedantic philosophies and religions which drew from them and from spiritual experience very different conclusions."  

1. "A theory of Maya in the sense of illusion or the unreality of cosmic existence creates more difficulties than it solves."  
2. The Ideal of the Karmayogin, p. 78  
3. The Foundation of Indian Culture, p. 205
Whatever the differences in detail both the Nirguna and Bhaga schools are agreed that the phenomenal world is not what it seems. This misperception consists in regarding the Many as a self-existent reality. We are thus led to seek happiness among ephemera and come to think that possessions can lead to self-possession. The emphasis is on the way the empirical world of phenomena misleads the seeker, filling his mind with erroneous notions about the comparative values of God, soul and the world. It is however recognized among the devotees of the Puṣṭi Mīrga that Maya has two aspects, Vidya and Avidya. Avidya alone is the author of evil and discord. How could Vidya be an aspect of Maya? Maya is associated in our minds with all that casts a veil over the face of truth, and brings about the attachment of the soul to this world in spite of the knocks and buffetings she receives. But the reason for placing Vidya within the domain of Maya is not hard to seek. Although the concept of Vidya as an aspect of Maya does not occur in Śaṅkara yet it is implicit in him. When we arrive at the insight that both bondage and release are illusions (for Mokṣa is not affected in time, otherwise like all temporal things it will be subject to decay and death), all efforts to attain Vidya are seen to be futile. For the highest truth is a unity of consciousness without any trace of desire privation, it is clear that all movement to and from that status is metaphysically of the same sort, though ethically it can be graded according as it leads away from or towards the supreme goal.

Since Vedānta is less to condemn the world as totally void of value for the Śādācara, it seeks to redeem some of the value of earthly experience under the Vidya aspect of Maya. Śaṅkara also says:

"The wise man should not look upon the world as an abode of delusion, nor should he think of himself as a controller of the world."

Śaṅkara, p. 615
Here and there we find in these mystics the recognition of Maya as
the power of the Supreme—the author of the worlds, their sustainer
and destroyer. But the emphasis is on the Avidya aspect of Maya which
gives birth to a brood of ills, beginning with the unbalance of the
mind and leading to the envelopment of consciousness by the "Asuric"
forces of desire. Lust, anger and greed are some of the manifesta-
tions of Avidya—Maya and are rooted in ignorance and 'a-bhakti' or
lack of devotion. The attention of these mediaeval mystics is focused
on the way this Maya works to keep the soul from enlightenment and
dedication. By emphasizing the ego which is just a bundle of likes and
dislikes, a featureless point of reference, it makes us believe that the
maintenance of our separate identity is the supreme good.

Contemporary Indian thought is averse to reducing the world
to Maya if Maya means the recognition of the world as a vanity fair. We
are anxious for the conservation of values realized by us in our
temporal endeavour. Moksa should not mean the abrogation of all that this
life holds good. Sri Aurobindo favours the the concept of Maya as the
Sakti of Brahman that weaves the countless multitudes of forms on the
loom of time.

1. See supra. p. 40

2. Same. p. 24

3. The Bitter Maya is the knowledge of the truth of things, its essence, law,
operation, which the gods possess, and on which they found their own
eternal action and creation and their own building of their own
powers in the human being.

He believes that the much maligned Šaktas had the root of the matter in them in regarding Power and Delight, Sakti and Ānanda, as the twin forces which preside over the conduct of the procession of forms through time and space. Both the materialist and the ascetic are wrong. The materialist regards the repetitive and blind processes of matter as the origin and prototype of the vital, intellectual, and spiritual nature of man. For him religion, art, and philosophy are the derivative products of an unaccountable stir in the Inconscient. The ascetic too is wrong because in his exclusive concentration on the Spirit he comes to regard its lower self-expressions—body, life and mind—as a fall and a blunder. He thus arrives at that definition of Maya for which the stainless purity of the Absolute alone is true and its embodiment in the things, figures and transactions of empirical life is a nightmare. Sri Aurobindo thus thinks that it is not safe to take a leap from latter to Spirit: the intermediate zones of life, mind and intellectual nature cannot be crossed in one giant stride without impoverishing the value of the spiritual achievement itself. Most of the mediaeval Ādākās know only two terms—the world and the spirit and urge us to avert our eyes from the former. They lump together the vital, mental and intellectual domains as the world and have little use for science, art and imposing philosophical systems.

1. "Ānanda and Sakti are two real terms of existence."
   Yogi Sādhana: p. 83.

The Sagunites did find a use for vital, aesthetic impulses, and consecrated them to Divinity, and the Nirgunites, too, did not preach an unmitigated renunciation of the world, but it is true that the emphasis lies more on the abandonment of the lower hierarchy than on its transfiguration. Even when dedicating the vital mentality to the Lord of love and beauty, the Sagunites did not care to work out the implications of this dedication. The attitude of the Nirgunit is, however, iconoclastic. It comes into sharp conflict with that affirmative attitude which calls upon us to cultivate the powers of body, life and mind as ancillary to the growth of the spiritual vision. This conflict is partly traceable to the lack of that ritual which, if rightly understood, brings to the grosser mind of the ordinary man some intimation of higher levels of being and gives the finite some idea of its infinite ambient.

When the Indian mind sees the One without a second, it still admires His duality of spirit and nature, His many trinities, His trillion aspects. This synthetic turn is not peculiar to the mystics or the litterateur or the thinkers nourished on the high sublimities of Veda and Vedanta, but permeates even the popular mind which is filled with the thoughts, the traditions and the cultural symbols of the Purana and the Tantra. This is an integral view of Indian mysticism which tries to comprehend the Divine in its entirety.

Aurobindo lends no support to the issue that divides the Nirgune from the Sagune nor does he believe in that hierarchical conception of the Divine which arranges the Nirguna and Saguna aspects in an ascending and descending order of truth and significance. The theist and the Absolutist may become infatuated with their several formulae and categorical definitions, but it seems that the soul of all things may take as much delight in the prayer of a little child as in the philosopher's leap from the summit of thought into the unknowable. He does best who can rise and widen into the shoreless realization and yet keep the heart of the little child and the capacity of the seer of forms.

Aurobindo's conception of Moksha is a corollary of his view of the Divine. To be released is not to be fixed in impassive, timeless repose for the Divine is not to be identified with the Aksara, the principle of absolute immobility. The Divine is called Purusottama, the Highest Person who transcends the status as well the mobility of the self and contains them both. "When we perceive its deployment of the conscious energy of its being in the universal action, we speak of it as the mobile active Brahman; when we perceive its simultaneous reservation of the conscious energy of its being kept back from the action, we speak of it as the passive Brahman-Saguna and Nirguna."

1. *Views and Reviews*, p. 34.

2. "But the highest goal of man is neither fulfillment in the movement as a separate individual, nor in the silence separated from the movement, but in the Ultimate Purvah, the Lord, He who went abroad and upholds in himself both the Self and the Self as head of His being."

Aurobindo (Commentary on *Gita Upanisad*, p. 71).

The progress towards Moksa consists in the merging of the Ksara Purusa, the soul in nature identified with any moment of the psycho-physical processes of Samsara, into the Aksara, the imperturbable witness of the cosmic movement. But the recovery of the calm of Aksara is the penultimate stage; we have to go beyond the passivity of the witness self. We have to transcend both the activity of Ksara and the calm of Aksara and to possess and contain them both. There is a greater fulfilment of our true and integral being in which both the static and dynamic sides of the self are liberated and fulfilled in that which upholds both and is limited neither by action nor by silence. The emancipated soul, thus, is not to be defined in terms of its aloofness from the turmoil of Prakriti; it is active but at the same passive, because it stands identified with the double-aspected Lord who is at once Purusa and Prakriti, being and becoming. This simultaneous possession of motionless Purusa and motional Prakriti is the highest state (निरगुण रूप) of the Lord and the justification of the paradox that for the beatified soul action and inaction are one.

In mediaeval Sadhana of the Nirgunite school the state of release consists in either in stripping the soul bare of all attributes or in recognizing it as a part of the Divine Whole. Some of these saints define the unitive state as the absolute mergence of the individual soul in the infinite while for others this individuality is not completely abolished in Moksa. More often than not both conceptions of the ultimate experience are available.

1. *Bidh,* p. 511
   Also commentary on the *Sā viddh**ā* 1, p. 61

   So becomes the self not only like the silent Purusa, the witness and upholder, but also the Lord and free enjoyer of Prakriti and her works.

2. *Purushottama Kadāmar Varadānārā* 1

   *Vedanta Sūtra* 7.18
In mediaeval Sadhana as we find it in Nirguna schools the emphasis is on cit and Ananda. The soul tries either to identify itself with cit and Ananda or to feed on them. In various ways it tries to ascend to that state which transfers our partial knowings into Divine Gnosis and our nervous pleasures and affections into an even objectless ecstasy. There is a great emphasis in the Nirgunites on the strangulation of the ego. But to reduce the ego to naught is not to enter a void. We are rewarded with an ecstasy compared with which the sensual gratifications of the ignorant are an infliction. The saints are full of this ecstasy and celebrate it in their verse. This ecstasy ranges from complete identification with the Lord to self-forgetful adoration of greatness and kindness; from establishment in that Sahaja Samadhi which turns work into worship and the whole of life into a sacrament, the rapture of union and the pangs of separation. The Sagunites too long for the Ananda of participation in the Lila of the Lord, as in Tulsi, to serve the "lotus-feet" of the Lord in complete resignation to His will. Sri Aurobindo, however, puts great emphasis on the Sakti of the Divine. This Sakti when achieved does not rest in self-contained unconcern, but pours itself on all the levels of consciousness—biological, mental, social, intellectual—and transfigures them.

He is not only the Knower behind all knowings and the enjoyer behind all enjoyings but also the Worker behind all works.

1. *Gita* Gita 10, p. 65
2. *Gita* Gita 18, p. 69
3. *Gita* Gita 37, 46-48
4. *Gita* Gita 11, p. 69
5. *Gita* Gita 64, 48
Sri Aurobindo's way of approach to reality has been called "Integral Yoga." Explaining this, Sri Aurobindo says: "The way of Yoga followed here has a different purpose from others. For its aim is not only to rise out of ordinary ignorant world-consciousness but to bring the supra-mental power of that divine consciousness into the ignorance of mind, life, and body, to transform them to manifest the Divine here and create divine life in matter." In mediaeval mysticism the emphasis is on the Divine as such—on its transcendental knowledge and bliss and the response of individual consciousness thereto—than on the Divine in contact with the world, acting upon and transfiguring it. For most of the Nizamites the world and the impulses it evokes are hardly worth our attention. The Saguñites seek to shape these impulses into consonance with ends the attainment of which presupposes absolute indifference to the goods that the world has to offer. To be the playmate of Krishna in supra-lunar Vrndavana is an ideal which will not appeal to a modern rationalist. This is not to lower the achievement of modern Sadhana which when contemplated in all its aspects is a powerful force for regeneration, as powerful as any that human devotion has known. Sri Aurobindo is, however, addressing a stage that has behind it the practical triumphs of science. These have been made possible by an extroverted mentality which finds truth in number, measure, and quantity. The problem before him is to enrich a consciousness impoverished by an exclusive concentration on those aspects of the objective world which are amenable to the methodology of science.

1. _Light on Yoga_, p. 1

2. _India_, p. 296
Moreover, the previous Yogas, according to him, do not realize all the potentialities of the lower hemisphere of consciousness constituted by life, mind and body. In the schools of Shakti, particularly, where the attitude of the solicitor comes naturally to man, body, life and mind remain petitioners to the end at the door of the spirit and are not lifted to its divine dynamism. But the spirit is not the unassuming witness of a Prakriti loosed into action without its consent; it is the master and guide of life. The spirit is not creative; it has to convert body, life and mind and to re-shape them in its own image. The form of this creativity is not difficult to understand. When Ramaendas creates a Rahu or Yali, he creates a Suret it is transforming mind into its own image under its plastic stress. Such is the spiritual innovation of nature which Gurus are mission to achieve. The various levels of consciousness are to open themselves to receive this supramental Iswari Shankti who is being kept out by our own bard, walled-in egoism.

Like Helene and other Yoginis, Aurobindo acknowledges the importance of Hathayoga as one of the ways to the attainment of the supreme bonus. But like the later Hatha who gave up the involved processes of Hathayoga for the utter simplicity of Sahaja Samadhi, Aurobindo, too, has little use for the tangled and tiresome ways of Hathayoga. He gives a psychological interpretation to the well-known "essence" of Hathayoga:

1. "The Indian systems did not distinguish between two quite different powers and levels of consciousness, one which we can call Over-mind and the other the true Super-mind."
(Aurobindo: The Riddle of This World, pp. 4-5)

2. "That which is free, one and lord, does not desire, but inalienably contains, possesses and enjoys!"
(Aurobindo: The Unfinished (Commentary), p. 21)

3. "Our Yoga is a double movement of ascent and descent."
(The Riddle of This World, p. 2. T.O.)
"The Muladhara governs the physical down to the sub-conscious; the abdominal centre—sukhasna—governs the lower vital; the naval centre—swadhishthana—governs the lower vital; the heart centre—anjali—governs the emotional being; the throat centre—ajna—governs the expressive or externalising mind; the centre between the eyebrows—vishuddha—governs the dynamic mind, will, vision, mental formation; the thousand-petalled lotus—swadhisthana—above governs the higher higher thinking mind and governs the still higher illumined mind. The progress of the Hathayogi from lower to higher states marks his ascent to the high sattvika.

But, as pointed out above, Aurobindo 2— and here he falls in with both the Hingũptas and Saguṇitas—upholds the primacy of love as compared with the avowed and lifelong way of the Hathayogins. Faith, aspiration and self-surrender are according to him, the open entrance to the Divine mysteries. The impersonal truth towards which the Sādhu and Malla cults bend their energies represents but one aspect of the Divine. The ascetic wants to lose himself in the featureless, impersonal Absolute and thinks that for achieving this end his personal effort is adequate. 'For the Impersonal is not something that guides or helps but something to be attained and it leaves each man to attain to it according to the way and capacity of his nature.'

1. Light on Yoga, p. 11


3. Light on Yoga, p. 26
On the other hand, by an offering and surrender to the mother one can realize the Impersonal and every other aspect of the truth also.

The Personal is thus higher than and comprehends the Impersonal, but he must be aware of the dangers which beset the approach of the Vaisnavite, particularly where he draws his imagery from the sphere of sex and cultivates modes and feelings which are proper thereto. "Even the attempt to sublimate it by turning it towards the Divine is in the Vaisnavite meditations carries in it a serious danger, as the results of a wrong turn of use in this method so often show." Patanjali's poetry of "Kirti Pole" exemplifies one of the truth of this remark.

The various types of mediaeval Sadhana are taken up in Kurodndo and recommended in his Integral Yoga, he calls himself a Tantric and regards the world as an outpouring of Divine Energy, and thus "everything can be turned into a first means for the realization of the Divine." There are Divine sanctions behind the constitution of things and what is vile and worthless to our partial view has sense in this divine economy. His gospel is summed up in the two words, 'surrender and transcendence.' We are not to blame against what seems to be undivine, for our aversion and attachment are a measure of our commitment to the world.

Anandam has written brilliantly on art, sociology, literature, the fundamentals of political economy, Indian culture, religion, and all that is, with the exception of human life and experience which he has tried to negate or 'bi-polarize' into fiction.

1. Ibid, p. 26

2. Basis of Yoga, p. 88

3. The Riddle of This World, p. 47
All facts have been with me and assigned their several stations in the hierarchy of truth. There is an amplitude, a comprehensive versatility, which we miss in medieval Saññana. We find in medieval Saññana the soft harmonies of love and the out-flowing of Shantí in multi-coloured ecstasy. There is the white light of knowledge shining the road to felicity. But, excepting Tulsí, we have little of action in the midst of word, worldly strife, of work that dynamic power which delights in the war of good against evil. Have the insight of Aurobindo in Keener. "Despise not Force, nor hate it for the ugliness of some of its faces, nor think that love alone is God. All perfect perfection must have something in it of the stuff of the hero and even of the Titan."

Tagore's main delights both in the costlier patterns of Upanishadic thought and the home-spun of medieval Saññana. As a matter of fact, he drew a good deal of inspiration from Kabír and Bābā, from Vaishñavite Saññana and from the sincerity and spontaneity of the Bard singers of Bengal. The liberating visions of love is accessible more easily to the guileless heart of the untutored aspirant than to that conceiving intellect which is wont to take the concrete intellect for the creative spirit. Tagore has no faith in mere intellectual formulations and notions when these try to trespass into the sphere of spiritual truth. Nor does arid scholasticism fare better here.
He feels particularly drawn to those schools of mediaeval mysticism which derive their authority not from tradition but from immediate spiritual experience. A wonderful feature of this Śāhāna has been that it does not glide along any embankment of scriptural sanction, and the influence of scholasticism on it, if any, is very small. Its spring is within the innermost heart of the people whence it has gushed forth in its spontaneity and broken through the barriers of rules, prescriptive as well as prescriptive. Scriptural sanction on it, all types of mediaeval Śāhāna embodied in the languages of the people are authentic and issue from the heart of the people close to the soil and the common life of man. Their appeal to scriptural authority does not diminish the value of the work of Śaguna school or lessen their hold on the masses. Tradition by itself does not seal the springs of inspiration or petrify the creative urge. Its value or 'dis-value' depends upon the culture of those who are its interpreters, advocates or custodians. This Śaguna tradition is interpreted and upheld by men of great spiritual culture in mediaeval Hindi poetry. The Ṛṣi of Śiva and Vīraśēnti is enshrined in the hearts of people because it springs from the springs of experience. We shall see how Śiva and Śaguna are kindred spirits in spite of the reluctance of the modern poet to believe that the Divine is revealed in its fullness in a particular historical individual.

1. Forward to Mediaeval Mysticism of Śaguna by Rāmānuja
Krs̄ita Kṛṣṇa Sen, p. 11
It was for this reason that Kabira abandoned the ways of Hath and Saddha mysticism and turned to Ramananda. The Saguna poets seek to establish the same position in their Bhramara-Gita. Seen in this context the difference between the Nirguna and Saguna positions becomes superficial. Rupa or form means anything that condition that can become the object of apprehension. We can speak of the forms of smell, touch, and of sound as significantly as of forms that are apprehended by the eyes. Thus all that is apprehended by the sense-organs is a form whether the sense-organ is the eye or ear or nose. The objective world is an assembly of forms. There are passages both in Saguna and Nirguna poets where we are asked to transcend the world of forms because it does not endure. But this is not the only attitude known to them. Tagore, in the poems of Kabira edited by him jointly with Underhill, has carefully kept out those passages which preach revulsion against the phenomenal world and condemn it as a bar. Kabira, however, is full of other passages where the world of forms is regarded neither as a negation of the Formless One nor its distortion but as the inevitable expression of the love which is the very nature of the Real.

The point at issue is whether Kabira or Sur or for the matter of that, the Nirguna and Saguna poets are in favour of or against the theory of Avataravada. We should rather ask: what is their attitude to the world of forms? If both of them discover behind it the play of love then they agree on the fundamentals. The lover and the beloved are the

1. Poems of Kabira, p. 59

2. See supra pp. 196 f.

3. Sri Krsna: Prema: "... from one does not mean oneness but fullness in contact, a bond. We have the bond of sound, a taste, a feeling."

4. Poems of Kabira, pp. 81, 82, 60, 31, 103, 12, 13, 38, 58, 141, 105 (ed. Tagore and Underhill)
necessary expression of that love because Love resides neither
in the lover nor in the beloved but in the meeting of the two whether
that meeting be physical or mental. Both the lover and the beloved
are necessary to each other. That is why the Bhakta says that the Lord
is incomplete without his devotee. Tagore too has pointed out the need
of the Lord and the devotee for each other for the fulfilment of love.

"Thus it is thy joy in me is so full. Thus it is that
when last came down tone. O thou Lord of all heavens, where would thy lov
be if I were not?" It is this love which turns the world of forms into
a festival. Kabira says, "The Formless is in the midst of all forms.
I sing of the glory of forms." It is the perception of this inhabiting
love which melts his heart in liquid melodies.
The yearning wistfulness and the rapture of this love have found a
touching expression both in Tagore and the mediaeval mystics. "More
than all else do I cherish at heart that love which makes me live a
limitless life in this world;" "Dear friend, I am eager to meet my beloved.
My youth has flowered and the pain of separation from him troubles
my breast." The imagery drawn from the sphere of sex is found in all
its charm and beauty in Tagore. In many songs of Gitanjali we find the
heart of the woman praying for the fulfillment of love waiting in protra-
cted anguish, rejoicing at the intimations given by nature, feeling sad
for opportunities lost.

1. Commentaries, Tantamahal of Naren in Art., p. 11 ["Incarnately
insecure, nor in the love or beloved, is to "union".] Dover Publications.
2. Poems of Kabir, p. 60
3. Gitanjali, No. 56
4. Poems, p. 31
5. Shud, pp. 56-57
6. Nil, Nos. 22, 24, 32, 42, 47 59

3A. Poems of Kabir, p. 54
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As power and joy are the central springs of cosmic activity according to Tagore, this at once rules out the conception of Brahman as an immoveable Reality which according to Sankara Vedaqa never falls from its high status. For Tagore a static impersonal Brahman cannot respond to the values cherished by the human person. The worth of personality becomes provisional and all action aiming at its enrichment turns out to be irrelevant. But love and joy can be understood only as the activities or manifestation of a Reality that is personal. For Tagore the Supreme is a person. He is neither a state of transcendence nor an impersonal law that sustains the manifold of nature in mute all-pervasiveness. There is an impersonal idea which we call law, discoverable by an impersonal logic. But as the physiology of our beloved is not our beloved, so this impersonal law is not our God, "पति कतोऽकरणः", the Father ultimate in all Fathers. Of him we cannot say भगवद् यज्ञवर्ड यजर्यात तत्वाः.

For this can only be relevant to the God who is God and Man at the same time; and if this faith be blamed for being anthropomorphic, then man is to be blamed for being man and the lover for loving his dear one as a person instead of as a principle of psychology.

This is a fine vindication of those who in their quest after the Divine turn from the calculus of the intellect to the Gita within the heart.

1. "What we call nature is not a philosophical abstraction, nor cosmos, but what is revealed to man as nature."
   (The Religion of Man, p. 115)

2. Religion of Man, p. 114
It will not be out of place here to compare the mind of Kabira as it emerges from the pages of "Kabira-Granthavali" with that embodied in Tagore's "Poems of Kabira." In Kabira-Granthavali, we find the authentic vision of the true lover, the longing that will not be silenced, the bliss of the converted soul, and the aching heart of separation. But there are a good many passages where the moraliser quenches the flame of love and the ascetic bewails the transience of forms without reminding us of that joy which upholds them. A pronounced other-worldly outlook is discernible in many passages. We are reminded that the world is futile and that its "goods" are deceptive. Princes tumble from their thrones in no time and are levelled with the commoners. One should never lose sight of the spectre of death that haunts the footsteps of mortals. To add to one's fortune is to add to one's sorrow. In such passages there is an unmistakable ascetic strain which regards the world and Nirvana as irreconcilable categories. Tagore's selection, however, gives us a Kabira who has achieved a synthesis of Nirvana and Samkar here and yonder. "When you leave off your clothes and kill your senses you do not please the Lord. One who remains passive amidst the affairs of the world attains the true home." 2

1. कबीर यु जग उन-कर नहीं, बिन वान बिन श्रीकर
कान्हु जा यै बाहियां, जन भरकां दीर क. ५. ॥ (15)
अनुठुँ बुद्ध भी हुबुद्ध कहै, माटे है मन मौर
बसक अधीरा बाल का, कु छ जुल में कु छ गोर क. ५. । (1)
कबीर जोरात आपर हं, दिन दूस रुद सू पर बजातु।
ए पर पहुँच ए गही बुद्रीर न दूबेआ झा। क. ६. । (1)
कबीर थोड़ा जीवन, माटे बुदे मुंगए।
सबही उभा में रहिए गया, राव रंख सुहितसं। क. ६. ॥ (15)

2. Poems of Kabir, p. 69
He is dear to me indeed who can back the wanderer to his home. Why should I forsake my home and wander in the forest? If Brahman helps me to find truth, verily I shall find both bondage and deliverance at home. 

Here the puritan and the ascetic stand reproved. It is no part of mis-

tody to think that one particular state is nearer to heaven than other. The language of some of the poems in this selection show them to be of later authorship but even these would not have been gathered on 

Brahma if his gospel had not come to be identified in the minds of 

at least some of his followers with the stand-point referred to above. 

Tagore's Rabindra thus represents an advanced stage of realization 

where the tensions of moral life have been outgrown. It is this 

Rabindra who inspired Tagore to sing of the "festival of the world." 

He, too, refuses to regard the senses as the message-bearers of evil 

who should be castigated for revealing the glory of forms. 

"Deliverance is not for me in renunciation. I feel the embrace of 

tragedy in a thousand bonds of delight........I shall never blot the 

doors of my senses. Thy delights of sight and hearing and touch will 

bear thy delight." 

The Lord has given me for self-delight. The human soul is not a "conception" of ignorance, but is a form taken by the Lord to see the various play of His creative hands. 

"My poet, is it thy delight to see thy creation through thy eyes and touch at the portals of my ears silently to listen to theirs and 

eternal harmony........Then give me myself to me in love and then feel the entire sweetness in me."

1. "Pearl of Rabindra," pp. 56-47, 50  
2. Gitanjali, 18 (song)  
3. Gitanjali, 73 (song)  
4. Gitanjali, 65
This book recaptures a mood of Kabir. "Neither I be in the temple, nor on the balcony, in the camp, or in the flower-garden. Tell you truly that every moment my Lord is taking His delight in me!"

Zoroastrian conviction that the Supreme is a Person, responsive to love and Himself leading in love, to accept and embrace the human soul brings him very near to the Jainite Bhaktas. It is known that he does not agree with the orthodox interpretation put upon what is known as the theory of Avatara but his position is in fundamental accord with the implications of that theory. From the belief in the personality of the Real to Avatarhood is but a step. "But we call nature is not a philosophical abstraction, not cosmic, what is revealed to me as nature."

This "nature" in science as well as in art, is conditioned by our human modes of apprehension. But it does not thereby become a subjective fancy. Similarly the Absolute, when known by the personal consciousness, becomes a Person, reveals Himself as Hari, to Jaina and to Tulsidas, but does not thereby become a creature of human make. When Tulsidas that "Infinite is Hari and endless are the tales of Hari" he knows that the Real transcends history. To the scientist man may be the sum of certain determinate physiological, chemical, biological, and mental processes irreversible in their "neutral continuum" but that does not prevent him from cherishing personal feelings of love for those he loves.

1. Poems of Kabir: Song LV, p. 60

2. Religion of Man: pp. 114-15

3. "This can only be relevant to God who is God and man at the same time, and if the first be blended for being and a non-person, then man is to be blended for being man, as the love for loving has belonged as a person, instead of as a principle of psychology" (ibid., p. 119).

4. "हरि, अर्नेत देवरथा, अर्नेता कहरी तुरारंत, बुधपीढ़ सब संसा। भारतो बालांको प्रथम। प. T. O."
To the thinker He may be the relationshipless Absolute but to His devotees He is what love makes Him to be. The Lord descends and assumes mortal form for love of His devotees, to heal their broken hearts, to undo the bonds that drag them to mortality and to give them the joy of participation in His earthly Lila. Tazes, too, sees behind the cosmic movement the impulsion of love divine. The Lord is anxious to please the Jiva; hence it is that flowers fill their cups with honey and waves sing in concert. "When I bring to you coloured toys, my child, I understand why there is such a play of colours on clouds, on waters, and why flowers are painted in tints — when I bring coloured toys to you, my child." It is this personal will that builds out of the atoms, molecules, and electrons of science the worlds of art, poetry, and human relationships. Tazes sees in the world of nature the Sagunites see in the historical process. If the meanings that the Sagunite discovers in history are merely fancies originating in his mind then his mind, too, is a part of nature and as such as any other fact that science may take account of. Becoming consists in the emergence of the Many out of the One, in the expression of love in law, in the reaching out of Ananda for Brahma. Mukt is not the dissolution of the Many or the extinction of form but the perception of one infinite Ananda behind the forms of love behind the law. Becoming is not the negation of Being but its expression.

1. See supra p. 186, 189.


3. "

4. "The immoral Being manifests itself in joy, form... This abounding joy is realized itself in form which is law".

Śūdrāma: p. 104.
"Makti is the eternal bond of union between the Infinite and the finite soul, because love is ultimate, because it is an inter-relation which makes truth complete, because absolute independence is the blankness of servility. The finite soul has to surrender itself but that does not mean that it is swallowed in the unfeatured sameness of the One. Its self-surrender means, negatively, the resolution of that ignorance which makes it appropriate attributes belonging to the phenomenal flux; and positively, the recognition of its absolute dependence on the Infinite. In reconciling Advaita with Bhakti and regarding Makti as a state of union in affective love, Tājora falls in with the tradition of Vallabha and Sura. In Suddhādvaita too Makti consists in liberation into the eternal līlā of the Divine with emancipated souls stripped of all trace of ignorance. Sura and other devotees of the Astacchāpa school do not desire the freedom of the Knower (Jñāni) for whom all distinctions are conjured up by ignorance and are abolished in the Absolute. In this līlā both the joy of union and the pangs of separation are welcome. In Tājora and Sura both the minds find a moving expression.

In the night keep hidden in its gloom the petition for light even thus in the depth of my unconsciousness rings the cry— I went Thee, only Thee."

1. Tegner: The Religion of Man, p. 190

2. Astacchāpa Anv Vellakke Srimandāya: P4. 466-67

3. Gāthājīlī: 38
"The great pageant of time and me has overspread the sky, With the
tune of thee and me all the air is vibrant, and ages pass with the
hiding and seeking of thee and me."

Tagore, like the poets of Aesop, approaches the Lord in various
roles: as a servant, a friend, a beloved, and as a seeker of inward
peace and truth. We have seen that this attitude lifts such relation-
ships from the plane of social convenience and instinctual urgency
to that of a divinely ordained dispensation. We see the Lord not
only in hours set apart for worship, for the singing of psalms and
the waving of flower-stems, but also in those bonds of love which bind us
to our fellow-men. The philosophy behind the attitude of Child Jesus
is clear to the mind of Tagore: "In the man who is good we feel him,
in the son who is true we know him, in our children He is born again
and again, the Eternal Child." The Lord of Psalm 134 bears the fruit
of the protection of the good and the punishment of the wicked. He is
the watchful hero who will not let anyone defy the law
that keeps the world together.

1. Gitanjali: p. 71
2. "I tramp by the edge of the far-spreading wing of my song thy
sea which I could never aspire to reach,
though with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee
friend who art my love." (Gitanjali, Songs, also 4 and 30)
3. "In the early morning thou wouldst call me from my sleep
like my own Comrade and lead me running to glade
(Cited, 97)
4. "And for this, thou who art the King of kings hast decked
thyself in beauty to captivate my heart."
(Cited, 56, also 52, 74, 13 and 18)
5. Ibid. No. 27, 28, 31, 35, 36, 38, 39.
6. Personality, p. 28 (Macmillan, Indian Ed.)
The Lord of Love is 'Ahura' — He is concerned not as much with
making the world safe for law and virtue as with flooding it with
His creative joy and beauty. His is the music of the flute, not the
twang of the bow. He admits the soul drenched in love to His lila.
This lila means that the world is not an iron chain of cause and
effect, but the self-unfolding of Divine Delight. Tagore, too, is
aware of both the aspects of Divine nature.

"Then caste 'drench the mind with delusion and dust, thou Holy One,
then maketh, come with thy light and thunder. But it is the Divine
as the dispensation of joy, that holds his attention most of the time.
The Lord is a 'Gosht'. He finds His joy in creations of joy and
soul

"When thou considerest me to sing, it seems my heart would brine
with pride, but I look to thy face and tears come to my eyes.

"I know thou taketh pleasure in my singing. I know that only as a

singer I can before thy presence......

Drunk with the joy of singing I forget myself and call thee friend
who art my Lord." 4

1. This relates to the twin aspects of Divine nature that love
sustains the world law and brings joy and peace to
the dedicated heart,

2. "Ama Naath Sem Vahinahi Mauti Jaye

3. Giligoli, Song 37, 8.31

4. Giligoli, Song 2
Ishvani, though not as widely known as Shankara or
Adi Shankara, stands among the great teachers of India.

teaching is the real spirit of the Advaita tradition.

According to him, self-knowledge is the aim of life. It is only the self
that can end the cycle of ignorance and of the cycle of life which
it bears. There are many claimants to the title and sovereignty of
the Self. The empirical world claims this title most confidently,
and it is on acknowledging this claim that, whatever our
verbal professions, God, as a transcendent, sovereign power other
than man, and controlling his destiny from without, is for the theist,
synonymous with the Self. Shankara, however, regards the claim of God
and the cycle of life as the same as the cycle of life.

Describing the same rigorous criterion for judging the Self as the Vedic self, he says that
it must be eternal, unchanging and intransitive: self-manifest. None but
the Self can measure up to this standard. The soul, God and Self are
objects of the waking self and cease to be in sleep. But the Self is
self-manifest: it does not require any agency other than itself to
manifest its existence. This Self is to be distinguished from
the empirical self, which is either a timeless passage of senses,
thoughts, words and passions thrown together full-felt under the

"The world, the soul and God are three in one; and imply the
other two: if there be a world, there must be an embodied
self to enjoy it, and God to take care of both; all three
are confined in one bond of relativity; if one be real all
three must be real; if there be reasonable doubt about
the reality of the one, there doubt equally affects the
other two."

(Meditation, p. 90)
A form of consciousness becomes a pattern of habits, anger, sleep
and desire organized by desire for the realization of a finite end.
The illusions of subject and object, mind and world, self and God,
arise within this ultimate consciousness known as the Self. To know
it is to be it, for self-knowledge differs from ordinary existential
activity which consists in the discovery of predicates for subjects.

Rāmasūrya follows the 'Naiyāyika' method of the Upaniṣads. He
takes those objects of the phenomenal world with which we ordinarily identify our
selves or into which we merge our self-existence, and seeks to establish
the falsity of this identification. All the constituents of the ego
are taken apart and cast into the flux of the non-self. The individual
mind and the world rise and fall together but the self that transcends
them both know no vicissitudes. It is wrong, moreover, to talk of
achieving this self as if it were one object among other objects,
calling for effort on our part before it becomes ours. We are already
this self-only our errovered consciousness remains lost laboring
under the illusion that the objective is the real keeps us from
plunging into the scope and recovering the pearl of our self-hood. It is
beyond the reach of vital, mental, and intellectual activity. It is
inaccessible to the motives that draw us into the strife of minded
creeds and deliver us into the hands of destiny. No predicate can
bring out its nature nor are the categories of the intellect adequate
to its transcendence.

1. "The world and the mind arise and fall together...that which
in which they two have their rising and setting."
(Ramana Maharshi, quoted in Yoga, p. 25)

2. Bhādarāyana up. IV 1.92

3. "We are not to become the real self, we are this."
(Chaitanya, p. 19)
Since no predicate applies to it, it is neither a doer nor a non-doer.

The concept of agency belongs to the ego. Dharma finds little to choose between the state of a householder and that of a Vanaprastha. If I regard myself as a Vanaprastha I identify myself with certain sectarian attributes which belong to the body or with certain bright "Sattvic" states of the soul, but I am thereby no nearer to the Self. "As a householder you have the notion I am a householder; if you become a recluse you will just change it for the notion I am a recluse! What is gained by the change?"

The cause of our sufferings is in our selves. Vácana ceaseless thought which is not divorced from feeling is the cause of all our sufferings. This is evidently the traditional view large, though in its own way it takes up into itself the other two ways of approach to the Divine, Bhakti and Karma. All devotion is devotion to the Self for the God of the theist and His Incarnations are but forms of this formless, universal Essence. As long as I regard myself as a person invested with name and form, the God I worship will necessarily be the God of the theist. But as soon as the truth of this Self as the Reality enfolding and underlying soul, world and God is recognized, forms are transcended and God merges into the Absolute Self. For Rama the way of the Vaisnava is, thus, necessarily, not the way of perfect enlightenment. The Vaisnava repudiates the grosser attributes of the Self like body, pútha and mind as these obscure the essence of the Self, but he wants to preserve his individuality, in however attenuated a form, even in prapatti or absolute self-surrender.

1. *Und.* p. 111
2. *II.* p. 105
His express purpose is to enter into the Lila of the Divine but for Ramapati all this talk of Lila and celestial Vaihnatha and Gopi-energies is but 'mythologizing', mere tricks of the self to keep itself "alive" and kicking. "They contend that if the soul becomes God there will be no enjoyment, just as one cannot taste sugar if he himself becomes sugar; therefore they want to be separate from God and enjoy Him. Is God inert like sugar? If the surrender be real and complete how can there be any separateness? They say that if the individual soul be surrendered to God, then the soul is a body of God, and the latter is the self of that soul-body. Can there be a soul of a self? How many selves can there be?"

The Vaisnavas are thus good poets but make bad philosophers. Their definition of the self keeps varying and leads them to make it a content of objective consciousness. Their participation in the Divine Lila is a form of narcissism or self-love.

We have discussed the truth behind the Vaisnava creed. Ramapati does not tell us how can the Self that is the residual Reality that we arrive at by abstracting from body, life and mind re-absorb the objective side of experience, and thus become the All. The problem, no doubt, is insoluble, and Ramapati, ultimately, has no position to defend as his appeal is to experience, and this side of experience there can be a good deal of logic-chopping but little certitude. As soon as we agree to discuss the truth of the Self we contradict ourselves as soon discussion takes place on the plane of relativity. There is no doubt a spiritual power...
Reality underlying the phenomenal show but the Vaishnavite might well say that to call it Self is no better than to call it Rama or Krishna for ultimately Self too is a category of the phenomenal world. To name the Highest Reality as Self is to describe it in terms of what is revealed to empirical consciousness. Pure Vedanta has often been held to preach a gospel of abstention from action although this interpretation has as often been disputed. Whatever theoretical justification for action we may derive from the gospel of Ramana there is no doubt that it is likely to be construed as a doctrine of Vairagya. No Sadhana can come to fulfilment without Vairagya but in our land this has come to be identified with a recoil from physical and visual activity. It may be said that the Vaishnavas range of re-awakeness is wider because it provides for the needs of a larger number of psychological types. Vairagya is the way of the intellectual aristocrat.

In his rejection of the theory of Divine incarnations and of the Vishwarupaoterentral attendant atheistic worship Ramana is at one with the saints of the Nyingmat school. 2 The saints too lay great emphasis on self-realization but more as an instrument of union than an end. For the saints Bhakti represents an equally high stage of realization with Jnana. This emphasis on Jnana can raise, particularly in the case of Ramana, problems about their position in and to both these ways of approach. Ramana, however, disagreed with the way the saints have tried to effect a problematic between Jnana and the orthodox types of Bhakti. 3

1. supra p.93
2. supra pp. 45
3. In Bhakti is for him only a transitory truth. Ch. Mahayana, p.72.
Bhakti is irretrievably committed to the dualistic position. It is true that the dualistic level is not transcended in ordinary Jnana or empirical knowledge. To the knowledge situation as it comes up in the context of daily life both the knower and the known are essential. But the Jnana of Ramana does not depend upon the existence of these two terms. The saints, situated as they were, could not have given us a critique of Jnana and Bhakti. They, however, take care not to confuse their Bhakti with mere gush and their Jnana with conceptual knowledge.

A Guru is necessary as long as the true inner meaning of the teaching is not realized. But the distinction of 'Guru' and disciple belongs to the level of relativity and as soon as the truth descends the distinction ceases to be valid. Ramana himself had no outer Guru, that is, a Guru embodied as a human being. The real Guru is the Self and to confuse this Self with the human form of the Guru is to perpetrate Idol-worship. 'God, the Guru and the Inner Self are the three successive forms of the one and the same truth.' "The Guru" says the sage, "need not have a human form." The saints too were aware that the real Guru is not involved in the accidents of personality, but the cult of personality seems to have established itself in the later developments of Nirgunite mysticism.

1. "The Sage is more than the real Self of the disciple.

2. vide supra p. 28

3. Parabhasha Chintavadi: Sahasra, p. 16