powers, for the achievement of certain ends is no more damnable than that of other forces of nature like water, heat and electricity, it is clear that the man who is out to wield these powers has not yet outgrown the urges of his earthly nature. The mystic may well possess these powers; perhaps his sovereignty over impulse and fancy and the automatic processes of the mind has already brought them within his grasp, but what marks him above all is his utter indifference to them. He has ceased to cast wistful glances at things that pass; he has fixed his eyes on truths that abide. He does not regard his love of God as a profitable investment that is going to pay him dividends in future. He loves the Real for its own sake, for he comes to see that the Real is the supreme Good, and that to take even the first step on the road to the Divine is to pass beyond the trials and tribulations that beset the lower mind.

Mysticism stands in a category apart from religious thought. The domain of the latter is accessible to the logical intellect which can define, analyse and put labels. But mystical religion is not a thinking and a labelling; it transcends the reach of the ordinary, utilitarian intelligence for it is a principle of the faith of the mystic that we can see only what we are. If I identify myself with my senses—if I regard the sensitive man as the real man—then the universe I inhabit will be dissimilar from that of the man who has come to identify his essence with a different human faculty, the intellect. Mysticism

1. "On spiritual matters we behold that which we are." (Underhill: Life of the Spirit, p. 166)
is however the highest fruition of that religious spirit which manifests itself in a wide variety of phenomena ranging from the crude totemism of primitive folk to the comprehensive vision of a Śaṅkara or an Eckhart.

There are others who regard mysticism as but a variety of religious emotional abandon. According to this view an excessivity of feeling characterizes the mystical temper. "In this God-intoxication in which God and the world are alike forgotten, the subject knows himself to be in possession of the highest and fullest truth; but this truth is only possessed in the quite undeveloped, simple and bare form of undeveloped, monotonous feeling; what truth the subject possesses is not filled up by any determination which the simple unity might unfold itself, and it lacks therefore the clearness of knowledge which is attained when thought harmonises differences with unity." We have, however, to bear in mind that a study of the great mystics reveals that they are all robust intellects and nowhere indulge their emotions for their own sake. Man is a composite of feeling, will and intellect and the feelings cannot be starved for the benefit or the greater glory of the intellect. There is moreover, always a cognitive element in feeling. The intellectual content of an attitude


2. "Whenever there is feeling, there is cognition, that is, some knowledge judgment about the world" (Hocking, Types of Philosophy, p. 178)
is judged by reference to the worth of the objects which have evoked it, and not by the absence or otherwise of emotion as constitutive of its totality. As a bare, unanalysed feeling which rises in the heart and overwhelms it, the joy of a lover on seeing his love is hardly to be distinguished from the rapture that a devotee like Tulsi feels in the presence of an image of his Master, Rama. How is the state of ecstasy of the one superior to the other? The psychological status of one is the same as that of the other. The only reply we can give is that the object of Tulsi's love is more sublime than that of the passion of mortal love. We can an emotion only when its appearance or content is not justified by the nature of the object that has called it forth. But the man whose feelings have hitched themselves to the primal source of all existence and have thus risen above the lure of the transient seductions of the world can hardly be charged with lack of intellectuality.

Mysticism has two aspects, the intellectual and the religious, and these complement and enforce each other in the genuine type of mystic. Pure intellectualism can breed philosophical systems but not mysticism and mere religiosity can dally with home-made images of the Real but can never pass beyond them to the beatific vision.

This lays bare the weakness of the psychologist. The psychologist investigates mystical phenomena merely as states of consciousness. He does not ask whether these states of consciousness point to any objective field of truth outside themselves. . . . But this is not the attitude of the mystic himself. He cares nothing for states of consciousness. He makes his all on the power of the human soul to see the invisible.

(Lyle Mythica: Albertson, p. xxxviii, Introduction P.T.O.)
The quest of the mystic thus is for that certitude which nothing can shake, for that Reality which when found transforms the ephemeral pleasures of the world into the perpetual bliss of self-finding or of the discovery of God. The road to this supreme fulfilment lies through territory which has been mapped out by the students of mysticism. Underhill thinks that there are five stages on the way to God — though she makes allowance for the large number of mystics to whom her schema does not apply. These are: (1) The awakening of the soul to the consciousness of the Divine, (2) Purgation, (3) Illumination, (4) The Dark night of the soul, (5) The unitive state. Dean Inge, however, treats of only three phases of the mystical quest and its consummation. They are: (i) The purgative life, (ii) the illuminative life, and (iii) the life of union with God. We need not tarry to scrutinize the correctness or otherwise of these maps for, apparent numerical differences notwithstanding, the classifications are not at variance with each other about fundamentals. As a matter of fact the five stages of Underhill are practically subsumed in the three of Dean Inge. The purgative state calls upon the seeker after God to disburden his mind of that passion and fear and attachment which characterize the earth-bound man. He is to cast off the sense of 'I' and 'Thou'.

1. Underhill: Mysticism, pp. 169-70
3. The purgative life is exemplified in the first two Angas of Patanjali Yoga, and कल्प (समाजाधिकारविना च) अंगांश्च तत्त्वज्ञानतत्त्वात् (कर्मकायोद्धे) तत्त्वांश्च तत्त्वात् अंगांश्च तत्त्वात् (कर्मकायोद्धे)

II. 29.
and to welcome the trials and sufferings of life as they temper the spirit and mould it into heroic shape. The man who seeks to cleanse his spirit in that way has already lifted his eyes Godward and has passed beyond the first stage of Underhill, that of the awakening of the self to the consciousness of the Divine.

Though the first phase bids the mystic to be hard on himself and to keep a watchful eye on the hosts of random fancies and desires that invade the ordinary man, the stage of purgation does not advise the subjection of self to deliberate and protracted torture. The misunderstanding of this injunction has bred many perverts both in India and the West who put not their minds but their bodies in Purgatory. In the best of Indian mystical tradition, however, the extremes of both asceticism and indulgence have been condemned, as much a course gives the mind over to the discord of opposites. The deliberate selection of certain experiences in preference to others pre-supposes a basic dualism in the nature of Reality and thus comes in conflict with the testimony of mystics all the world over.

When the Sadhaka reaches the illuminative stage the charm goes out of the pleasures of the world and the sting out of its pains. His muscles are no longer tense.

"Physical self-mortification, when practiced for its own sake, is a disguised and degraded form of sensual self-indulgence."

George Bullett: The English Mystics, p. 31.

The Bhashya: Gitā, VI: 17.
his mind no longer exercised to meet an uprush from the nether region of consciousness. His standards of valuation are reversed for his feet are planted on a higher plane of consciousness. The good life is no longer a challenge and a trial but a spontaneous expression of his transformed being.

The last is the stage of union with God. Here the film of illusion falls altogether from the eyes. The home-coming of the spirit that as an exile has had her taste of both Holland purgatory is now accomplished. The mystic has now crossed over from falsehood to truth, from darkness to light, from death to immortality. At this stage the mystics divide themselves into various categories. There are those who see God in the depths of the soul; they descend into themselves and find the One who is beyond all conceptual definition. There are others for whom the world of appearance becomes suffused with a supernal light that is to be found neither on sea nor land. There are still others whose perception is that of a Supreme Person Who lends to the soul and owns her in love. These are the Sagunites proper. For the real Nirgquisite the Absolute is altogether inapprehensible. We cannot know the Divine; we can become the Divine. The soul is here "deified." In the Sagunite mysticism which too is an authentic experience of the Divine the soul is either "married" to the Divine or draws closer to Him in the manner of a servant, a friend or a parent. Whatever type of experience, the soul is redeemed from the pitiless sway of the laws of nature which seem to be in league to thwart or to mock her, to bring to her what she does not want, to take away what she does.

1. अविष्कृत वर्ण पूजन रचाया जागरण सच्चि परशुराम ने निधित्स परम्परें सुलगे:
   न.कृष्णमद-गौरि: II.

2. Underhill: Mysticism, p. 415 (she defines him as one "for whom personal and intimate communion is the mode under which he best apprehends Reality")

3. Underhill: Mysticism, p. 415 (she calls such a one as "The metaphysical")
Mysticism affirms the capacity of man to evolve a certain dimension of his being which frees him from bondage to contingencies. It tells man that the evolutionary urge is planted in man too, but that in him nature seeks to transcend itself, not blindly, as at the sub-human ranges of being, but consciously, by turning itself into an instrument of the Divine purpose.

Thus the evolutionary process turns a corner at the human level but it does not come to a halt. The ordinary specimen of homo sapiens, swayed by suggestions, fancies, and fears, is by no means its last utterance. As ape has evolved into man, man may evolve into super-man—the mystic whose integral vision is not warped by the vocal multiplicity of things. He is the summation of the historical process, the secret meaning of the travail of time. The human species has not reached the consummation of its powers and faculties. The lunatic shows that man can sink below the threshold of normal consciousness and the genius, a Shankara or a Plotinus, testifies to the existence of higher reaches of awareness. The mystic cultivates to perfection a quality which forms the most important strand in the mental texture of all the heroes of human story. This quality is the ability to efface oneself for the sake of something

1. This view has been discussed at length by me in an article, "Science, Mysticism and Reality," published in the Prabuddha Bharata (Mayavati, Almora) (Vol. L II, Nov. 1947)
higher than the temporal self and its irrational drives and urges. The secular type of self-effacement exemplified in the lives of patriots, scientists and parents is but a pale copy of the attitude of the mystic who has expunged every trace of egoistic consciousness from his mind.

The mystic is, thus, a man re-born, the "kā" of Indian sociologists. The concept of re-birth, of the transmutation of natural, unregenerate mentality into spiritual awareness, is basic to that perennial religion to which the saints and sages of all times bear witness in their lives. The man re-born is no longer an individual with a name and a date of birth. He penetrates the fiction of empirical personality and knows what is in time is 'determined', and what is determined cannot be mine.

Mysticism as the highest fruition of the religious spirit in man is to be clearly distinguished from theological speculations. The mystic is not a man with a clear intellectual grasp of the nature of the Real. In other words, mysticism is not to be confused with mental cogitations or verbal and paper arguments about the validity of the theistic belief. It is primarily an art and can no more be learnt by scriptural and exegetical studies than painting can be learnt by conning.

1. "All that we see is the operation of causes, and so much the worse for us if we see in this fatefully determined nexus our self." (Comarowamy: Hinduism and Buddhism, p. 80)

2. " Attempts to limit mystical truth... by the formulae of any one religion are futile." (Underhill: Mysticism, p. 96)
text-books on fainting. The mystic does not inflate himself with religious thoughts and mental idealisings. He does nor deceive himself into thinking that he, too, is a lover of God. This is what marks him off from the complacent crowds of conformists who think that by going to churches and temples and repeating certain sacred formulae they have done their duty by God and can proceed to their daily routine of lying and cheating and making money with a clean conscience. The mystic thus is no friend of orthodox literalism which drives the flocks of the faithful like a shepherd. He recognizes the worth of institutionalized forms of religion though he does not set much store by them since institutions often block the way of the spírit. As we shall see, Hindi mystics divide themselves into two schools on the basis of their approach to institutionalized religion. The sane mystic never forgets that such authority as institutions possess is derivative, and that the only irrefutable witness is that of the genuine mystic experience.

Is the mystic experience authentic? Is not the person who claims he has such an experience making an untenably tall claim? Is he not confusing an objectively valid truth with an ephemeral mental hallucination?

"(Theology) is a deliberately schematic representation of reality, a flat and sometimes crude symbol of great landscapes, rushing rivers, awful peaks."

Underhill: Mysticism, p. 123.
What is essential is this that we should not let the pragmatist of our day say the last word on mysticism, namely, that it is a vague tenuous mental experience accessible to visionaries but useless for the practical business of life. This attenuation and impoverishment of the meaning of the word has come about because of the democratism of our day which regards the higher man as a freak and spiritual consciousness as an airy nothing. Music is real and there is a strange transporting power in the concord of sweet sounds but we know that a deaf man is not to be approached for sitting in judgement on it. Similarly the arm-chair criticism of the modern positivist and pragmatist that mocks at mysticism as moonshine cannot invalidate the experience of the mystic. There is nothing that the mystic holds back; he affirms that the goal is accessible and there is a way thereto, but no one who is not prepared to tread the way should have the right to have a fling at him. We do not question when he says that his conclusions are based on his experimental experiments in the laboratory. He has a technique which has yielded results in his hands. The mystic too has a technique, a way which he claims leads to where he stands. We can know what lies at the end of the way by following it ourselves; unless we do it our criticism is vain and groundless.

1. "But why then try to judge things into the sense of which one is unable to enter and exhibit the back of a blind man distempered on colours?"
   (Austen: The Significance of the Indian, p. 37)
2. "Philosophy-eventuates in vision, and for the realization of this vision certain disusive meditations as well as practical disciplines are necessary."

The paradox of the Atmanistic type of mysticism consists in this that the Real with whom the mystic claims to be in contact, though transcendent to his normal ego, is not exterior to his self, but is in some indefinable way identical with his innermost essence. Indefinable because how can one define that which, when realized, seems to be consubstantial with the self. That is why many mystics describe the experience as self-discovery— as the falling away of those sheaths which wrap our real self from us and lead us to believe that the objective phenomena of life, mind, and matter are authentic in their right and concern our real self.

This real self is of the nature of Pure Awareness and Existence and freedom, unidentified with the states of the body, or the mind, shape or size, colour or smell, which are all objects pitted against it and constitute non-self. The Self is the enduring substratum on which the flux and phantasmagoria chase each other in eternal hide-and-seek. This self-realization of the mystic is no frail gossamer spun by wandering minds but is a proven fact which no amateurish criticism can blow away. The ignorance that divides the known from the known is transcended in this experience. The mystic may be a Bhakta, an Atmajnani or a Karmayogi; it is of little importance what label we apply to him. The pith of the matter is that he has seen the supernal reality from whom the processional of life emerges, in whom it stays, and into whom it is dissolved.

1. जन पर्याते नगरं बिशंकरं न सुधृंगं गाधं न प्रक्षे प्रभा।
समस्तस्तु तरसेः तृंगवं स्वच्छं नां जनसमुस्तं भोगुभव॥
रोकतांतरः अंगरेजास्व त च चतु: ॥ ५७॥
If we take human experience in its totality we see that science mutilates it before dealing with it. It is abstract in the sense that its concepts are conditioned by the methods proper to the scientist, and these methods can take account only of the measurable, quantitative and computable aspects of things and have of necessity to leave out, and thus relegate to the background those qualities which refuse to be so treated. Their correspondence with the integral reality of a thing which is thus broken up into primary, secondary and tertiary qualities by this arbitrary procedure can not be complete. The lips of science are dumb before the so-called secondary and tertiary qualities of things, before the artistry of nature when, with wizard fingers, she weaves the rainbow or kindles the nightingale into serenades to the spring. It can submit a meticulously correct account of a flower in terms of its pollen and petals, stamen and anther, but cannot tell us why it makes the poet break into songs dripping with honey. There is some secret beauty in the flower which it will unbare only to the loving gaze of a poet. Science is correct but not true; it informs but does not vivify. It is vain to say that the lyrical gush is something entirely subjective for, psychologically, Shelley's Ode To a Skylark is on all four with Einstein's Theory of Relativity. For in both cases we find

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Alexander Church: Man the Unknown (Pelican, p. 256)
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the human mind reacting to certain features of the cosmos and achieving a certain reverence. The features of the universe which evoke the reverential or rapturous reactions of a mystic are as integral portions of the existential reality as those to which the scientist and the mathematician respond.

In science, moreover, the conception of personality is thrown overboard. A vicious man can perform an experiment in physics as well as the greatest of physicists. This is not so in mysticism which is the purest form of religion which puts the accent, not on externalia but on the personal experience of the Supreme. The mystic experience is open only to those who have cleared their hearts of all cant and callousness and who are exemplars and patterns of purity. In science our knowledge is of an indirect kind; we know about things but cannot know them in their innermost core and essence for the scientific method erects impermeable walls between the subject and the object.

The trouble with our age is that our definition of "experience" and "the real" and "the Useful" have been arbitrarily narrowed down. We restrict the range of experience to its sense-bound variety. What is revealed to the sensitive consciousness is for us real. The useful and practical is that which shapes the environment nearer to the heart's desire of the 'empiricist'. But there is an

1. "Science appeals to facts but when in full fact is determined by a criterion, i.e. a principle of valuation, which is based upon a pre-judgment as to what shall be called fact (that the sensuously observable is fact)."

Urban: Humanity and Deity, p. 46 (George Allen and Unwin)
underlying similarity between both science and mysticism. Both believe in techniques and the validity of the results of following those techniques. There is a path that leads to the "inward glory" of the sage, the calm of the Absolutist and the ecstasy of the Bhakta. The experience that the mystics arrive at by following this way is self-validating. It is worthwhile and no amount of logic-chopping can shake the certainty of one who has attained to the mystic state. If we are sceptical about the deliverances of the Bhaktic or the absolutistic consciousness we can should first submit ourselves to the disciplines which they prescribe. We shall wave aside the scepticism of a layman who impugns these conclusions of a scientist which have been arrived at after laborious experimentation. The conflict between science and mysticism is not, therefore, a conflict between superstition and delirious dementia on the one hand and truth and knowledge on the other, but between two different types of knowledge, each independent of the other and acquired following a specific procedure laid down by its exponents. There is no reason why we should pause to weigh and consider the views of a person who on account of lack of faith or of the flabbiness of his spiritual muscles dare not bring himself to scale the mystic heights but stands at the base and hurls verbal flings at those who are performing the miracle.

"Mysticism takes its stand on verifiable truth and not on the smoke solution of credal puzzles. It is not opposed to science and reason."

Rabindranath Tagore: Eastern Religions and Western Thought, p. 294
If we probe deeper into this matter we shall see that science owes its glamour and prestige more to those inventions which have enabled man to control nature than to any positive contribution to the elevation and happiness of man as a moral and spiritual being. The supersonic planes, high explosives, the extension of the dominion of man over the animal kingdom, skyscrapers and the achievements of modern medicine, testify to the practical results of the worship of science. It has, however, become a commonplace that this unlimited pursuit of power, uninhibited by any considerations moral or otherwise, has not given man any control over the titanic forces that he carries within, and that this has led to various complications in psychological, social and international fields. These are able to lift human nature above the level of clever animalism and redeem it from the pressing round of distractions and futilities. But the practical results achieved by following the technique of the mystics are not to be despised. The peace that passeth understanding, and cures us of all discord, the heart's liberation from the blind stress of hope and fear, the inalienable joy that the world can neither give nor take away, the love that radiates good-will to all quarters—these are the fruits of the mystic technique just as technological triumphs, imposing masonry, and

"Science in the West has got out of hand, because the West has all but lost the spiritual resources which alone can supply the proper controls."

and the marvels of electronics are the results of the scientific technique. Logical arguments cannot startle him whose perception is anchored in facts of experience. Nothing can controvert the fact of experience. Though the mystic experience is unwordable, yet the mystic has to verbalize it in order to point out the pathway to those who are lingering in the shadows of the world. Here the need for symbolism arises. Symbolism has its origin in the fact that there are various levels of being—physical, mental, aesthetic, intellectual and spiritual—experiences of subtler ranges of being can be made to the grosser type of man by being bodied forth in figures and images drawn from the realm of sensible phenomena which are easily available and identifiable by the common run of human beings. It has its justification in the fact that these levels of being are not altogether disparate and incommensurable but, being emanations from a single source, are linked each to each by invisible threads and can thus represent each other analogically. These symbols are not set up arbitrarily but there certain definite principles governing their origin, development, and interpretation. But whatever the circumstances that attend the origination and development of a symbol it owes its vitality to certain values which are accepted by the society wherein it has taken root. Thus the mystic symbol is meaningful only to those who grant the presuppositions of the mystic philosophy that there is a deathless and ageless Reality that lends meaning to the vanity fair of the world, and that the supreme achievement of man is to win union with that Reality.

1. These symbolic ideas and images are taken not only from the outer sense intuitions but also from
The soul that has attained to mystic ecstasy sheds all egoism:
It is entirely passive, soft clay in the hands of the Divine.
There is nothing that the emancipated soul can call its own,
for she comes to see that even her most cherished possession,
her ego, is Another's property. She also knows that though her
own will has been merged in Another's will, the dispensations
of this higher will are altogether beneficent. That is why the
ills of life no longer lie heavy on her, for she is aware that,
through rain and shine, the ever wakeful Steersman is at the
helm.
The self-surrender of the ego is the culmination of the
mystical endeavour. The ego lives in time, it contemplates
its past achievements with glee and thinks of its previous
failures not without a sense of grievance against the
malice of fate or environment. It forgets that even in the
life of unregenerate mundanity self-surrender in one form or
the other is essential. We have to surrender ourselves to the
conspiracy of circumstance, the dispensation of destiny or the
will of those who are superior to us in the esteem of the
world, or even to the intractable forces of the mind that
whirl us about much against our will. The ego is the Asuric
part of the psyche. The Bhagavad-Gita makes mock of those who
are the victims of this egoism, and in their efforts to inflate
it draw up elaborate plans as to how they are going to make
short work of their enemies.

1. रामय ब्रह्मांकुण्डृ गुर्ज्जर गुरुदेशन।
रामस्तिप्रवीणे बनवयो उपनिषद्।
प्रस्तुत जन्मा केन शुद्धी जगतार्थम्।
रूक्षतोत्सरं स्वरूप सीता प्राप्तः गुरुः |
पुनःसुमुखः गीता श्रवणम । १३४
Like intellectual, moral and aesthetic activities, mystical activity, too, is one of the attributes of human consciousness. It is as authentic and its fruits as indubitable as those of the activities named above. The object of this activity is no more hallucinatory than the objects of aesthetic or moral sense. Like the intellectual and the moral sense, the mystical too can be cultivated and deepened. Art can turn material objects into sacraments; it can impregnate them with meanings which belong in the first instance to the human mind. But mysticism does for our day-to-day activities what art does for the insentient media it uses for its purposes. Mysticism charges the ordinary transactions of life with divine significance. There are individuals in whom the moral sense exists in a rudimentary form or does not exist at all. But this does not cast any doubt or reflection on the genuineness of the moral sense as such or its vital role in the conduct of human affairs. Similarly the rarity of the mystical phenomena need not lead us to think that they are the freaks of nature or that the mystic is an oddity.

The place of asceticism in the mystic regimen has often been debated. Some sort of asceticism, however, is essential for the successful conduct of the secular life lived on the level of instinct and reason. Even as proficiency in athletics presupposes mortification in one particular direction, so mysticism calls for the inhibition of certain drives and tendencies of our nature.

"It seems to be that the principle of all virtue and excellency lies, in denying desires not authorized by reason."

Locke quoted in 'Ethics' (Becky and Ishl), p. 221.
unenlightened nature. We are to withdraw from the sphere of likes and dislikes and get at the pure, unimplicated essence of our nature. This means that we have to repudiate not only our attachment to the material appurtenances with which we come to identify ourselves, but also our very self, this ego who is the author and enjoyer of our private world. The dedication becomes complete with the dedication of the ego. The 'Nirgunite' of the Shankara school calls for the utter repudiation of the ego as the ego is just a name and a form, a sound without an essence. The Sagunite would however first arrive at the true nature of the ego as a portion or ray of the Divine Glory and then he would consecrate it. But mortification or asceticism is necessary in both cases. It is, however, essential to note that in all healthy manifestations of the mystical spirit it is not the body that is hauled over the coals but the conceit of an ego: a self-existent 'I' that usurps the station of the true Self. It is not the body that sins but the ego or the consciousness that stands identified with the ego. It is not the senses that screen heaven from our view. To the Vaishnave the whole of universe is the forthshining of the Lord. The same type of mysticism does not believe that it is only by pillorying the senses that we attain to beatitude. Prudish contempt of the world is only a morbidity.

What theologians call 'sin' pertains not to the body as such but to the ego. Sin in its essence is self-assertion, the assertion of one's ego as a self-existing absolute and the centre of the universe.

George Bullett: The English Mystic, p. 31.
It is the mind with its ceaseless chatter and hopes and fears and imaginings that has to be stilled. The mystic should steer clear of both excessive indulgence in the pleasures of the senses and the masochistic tendency to inflict torture on the erring mind and the physical appetites. The mystic in his fulfilment comes to look upon the senses as so many windows that open upon the temporal manifestation of the a-temporal Reality. While asceticism is essential to the achievement of the mystic state, true asceticism consists in the mortification of hope and memory. It is these that bind us to the world and create it anew for us from moment to moment. It is because of them that the mind is always in a state of ferment or unquiet. The distractions to which they give rise are the chief bars to beatitude; these disperse the mind and make the personal integration of the Sadhaka impossible. Asceticism is meant to establish the ascendancy of the mind over the physical body but this ascendancy is not achieved by crushing the body. Asceticism can thus be defined as the application of certain well-defined principles to the task of the re-making of man. Our energies are to be integrated round a new focus. We are to achieve a new orientation of our faculties. The Old Adam takes a lot of killing. The battle between the old creaturely self with its ingrained carnal appetites and the new self who struggles to be born is relentless. The need for asceticism consists in the fact that we have to muster all our strength so that the nascent urge towards the spirit is not strangulated and the natural man does not come out triumphant.
Love is the anti-thesis of egoism. He who loves has necessarily to shed the ego and go out of himself to what he loves. Love is an urge towards unity. The mystic experience is ineffable but mystics in an attempt to intimate its nature often resort to the language of carnal love. This symbolism drawn from the sphere of love is found in mystics the world over. It is wrong to regard this symbolism as a veiled expression of repressed sexual longings. We have inevitably to draw upon the objects and transactions of the empirical world to adumbrate the spiritual verities, the reality of the trans-empirical. The lotus rising from the mud and unfolding itself to the light of the sun is regarded in Indian symbology as a symbol of the soul that tries to disengage itself from its material vesture and turns towards the Lord. Here the symbol is drawn from the realm of botany. Similarly the language of human passion is used to shadow forth the love of the soul for her Lord, for the love of man for woman and of woman for man is the most imperious of all the forms of love. The soul bound to the Lord in wedlock no longer remains barren. Spiritual life is essentially creative; it releases hidden springs of energy. It is the nature of spirit to pour itself on matter and to try to shape it to its own purposes. This creativity is exhaustless. Time is no impediment to its reach across the ages. The love of Tulsi for

1. See infra, pp. 63 ff.

She says: "It was natural and inevitable that the imagery of human love and marriage should have seemed to the mystic the best of all wings of his own "fulfilment of life," his soul's number, first to the cell, finally to the embrace of perfect love."
Rarna continues to impregnate the succeeding centuries. It is not that he lifted passion-driven minds to the plane of devotion in his own times only; he continues to do it even now. Creativity is of two types: these may be termed physical and spiritual. The coming of offspring after the marital union is an instance of the first type. The range of spiritual creativity, however, is wider. When the spiritual seed cast into the mind of Kabira by Ramonanda flowers in the form of Bhakti, or when Vallabha re-makes the supplicant Surendra in the image of the Lilavadin we see the creativity of the spirit. The human soul impregnated by the spirit gives birth to kindred souls aspiring to a like dedication. The mystic soul bears the seed of the Lord within. When the says that in the spiritual realm is the only male and all other souls are females, he is not using a figure of speech only; he is giving expression to a profound spiritual truth. The spirit thus seeks to spiritualize matter or its material environment. The mystic is not a quiescent being content to sneak into a corner of the sheltered from the storms and stresses of life. His spiritual experience brings to him a new accession of power. Not only is he himself lifted to a new level of joy and vitality and enhanced consciousness, but he irradiates whole societies as the spiritual orders founded by many mystics testify.

1. अन्त्य समागम सा शिशु एवो लोकोऽरि उदे
   जिल ने उद रे दे से से लोहिति होईः
   (भागवदगीता, तत्व, पंक्ति, 135)

Vallabha’s commentary on the Bhagavata 26.2 expresses the same view (Vide Subodhini on the Bhagavata 8.26.2)
It is a commonplace to say that mystic knowledge is different from sensible and conceptual knowledge. This experience brings total satisfaction; will, feeling and intellect so often at war with each other, are herein integrated. To say that it is an experience means that it is not an opinion caught at second hand and pinned to the lips nor a theory excogitated and formulated by the intellect. The experience of the mystic brings grist to the mill of the philosopher; mystical philosophy, that is, is but the shaping given to the raw material provided by the mystic.

The mystic is primarily a practical man; he defines a goal to himself and then presses into service the means requisite to reach it. Outwardly and to the eyes of the worldlings he may appear to be an idler, but this is an entirely misleading idea. The man who battles against the impulsions of desire and instinct is as great a fighter and actor as any that the theatre of worldly action has to show. Mysticism is not the pursuit of amiable soft and sentimental people who want to add to their experience of the world the experience of Divine Reality, but are unwilling to pay the cost. The joy of the mystic is not the uninhibited emotional indulgence of one who has been treated kindly by fate. The literature of mysticism is full of warnings against the seductions of sense life that the traveller on the Mystic Way has to face. No mere dilettante can do it.

1. "This apparent stillness which the ignorant take for inactivity, actually represents the most real and intense state of activity conceivable, for it is indistinguishable from the Activity of Heaven itself."

Marsilio Ficino: *The Active Life*, p. 7
Love is the top note of mysticism. The love of the mystic has, however, nothing to do with the carnal suggestions that go with the word. Love here is the urge that drives the soul homewards.

In true love it is the whole self that is involved and not merely a fragment of the psyche. It is this love that distinguishes the mystic from the ascetic and the flagellant. Wherever there is an irresistible and imperative urge towards an object, there love is present, no matter whether it is manifested at the emotional level or not. Even the Nathist may be said to love the Real in its original uncorrupted state; Nathism courts suffering not for its own sake but for the sake of Śiva. But the Love of the Nathist is arbitrarily circumscribed; in refusing to admit the world to love's grace he erects a barrier between the spirit and matter and associates evil with the latter.

The severe discipline that mysticism entails becomes easy of acceptance because of this love. By love we seek to draw near in thought and action to the object of love. All worldly love is but a pale copy, a pinchbeck version of the ideal love of the mystic. The love of God does not come to those who are swept along by the tidal wave of passion. It demands the integration of will, knowledge and feeling. More often than not worldly love blurs the judgment, leading us to invest the beloved with qualities that simply are not there. With the fading of passion the colours wear away and there is a return to the greyness and monotony of the commonplace. The perceptive faculties of the

The Nathist is a lover in the sense in which the grace of the Self in Bhakti. "बहुविधशाक्तियों स्वयंनिरेक्षरिणीयें" (Pārashar Upaniṣad, Verse 32)

The orthodox Vaisnavas, however, won't entertain the claims of the Nathist as a lover.
mystic are as sharp as love is intense. He distinguishes the transient from the Eternal and gives his love not to ephemeral but to the Abiding Reality.

Love is fundamentally a form of desire but is like the sun whose dawning quenches the lesser rushlights of worldly passion and seeking. In desire is the spell cast by the object of desire and consequentially there is a conative urge seeking union with this object. This love becomes the motive force behind our actions. Our energies become harnessed to that end.

The urge of desire is operative throughout the realm of nature. According to Manu behind all action is the impulse of desire; except for this desire none engages in action. Only when this desire force is hitched to the Divine does it give birth to the mystic experience. It is this Love that sweeps and garnishes the inner house and sets it in order. Under its command, the intellectual faculties become purged and recognize the true Object of all knowledge. Our will is vivified and presses towards the true Object of all seeking. Our feelings, drained of all that is gross and earthly, become consecrate to the supra-temporal Beauty that lends its charm to the objects in time and space.

In love all the energies of the soul are oriented towards the Eternal. Quickened by this love we seek to unite ourselves to the Source of our being and try to bring our will into accord with His will. In this self-surrender lies our fulfilment.

"There, in our instinctive nature, which, as we know, makes us the kind of animal we are, abides that power of loving, which is, indeed, the power of living."

Underhill, The Life of the Spirit and the Life of To-day, p. 156
2. एकत्रीय स्वाधीनता तत्काल से अद्यक्षर्ता। विशेषतः मानवीय, 1933, 11, 2-4
II. THE NIRGUJNITE EXPERIENCE: THE WAY

All Nirgujnite mystics are eloquent of the praises of the Guru, and this is as it should be for the Guru was the man who had done the wandering and arrived at the goal which was beckoning the disciple-pilgrim. The Nirgujnite mystic was in earnest and his philosophizing had only a secondary and marginal value. He did not seek to stimulate the emotions or to indulge in intellectual pyrotechnics. That is why Nirgujnite poetry lacks ornament and the graces known to belles-lettres. Their verses are the records of their spiritual experience.

Their sole aim being to know God they had necessarily to seek out the enlightened soul who knew the right way to the goal. Then they speak of the Guru their language becomes vibrant with emotion. The Guru provides nutriment for the spiritually hungry aspirant. The Guru has attained to the status of the Self, the Existent; he has risen above passing appearances and stands identified with sole existence that supports the contingent transactions in time. The Supreme Existence is also the Supreme Good and the cure-all for all privation.

The Guru is no longer in any conditioned domain whether of senses, of mind or of intellect. He is the Lord Himself imaged in the human frame. Therefore in worshipping the Guru one is not bowing to any mortal but the immortal who uses all mortal things as His symbols. The Guru is a Guru not because he is a man so and so but because he is no longer involved in the accidents of personality.

2. Sundaram (Bhakti), B. D. (B. P.), pp. 1-10 (Bhakti), P. 152
3. The Guru tells the disciple to escape all worldly. K. G. P. 2 (14)
The selection of the Guru was to be made with great care for in an age when the Guru was a synonym of Divinity the office was bound to attract not a few charlatans who wanted the glory of Guruhood without paying the price for it. But the Guru had to exercise not a little caution in selecting his disciples. Every body is not fit to become the recipient of spiritual knowledge. This knowledge loses its efficacy when imparted to a person who seeks it for ulterior motives. In order to deserve it we have to surrender our most cherished possessions, our own ego or personality and those who seek it for the aggrandisement of that very personality which is to be surrendered are not likely to profit much by it.

The disciple is to lay bare his whole being before the Guru. The Guru is the lighted flame at which he is to kindle his own lamp. The debt that Kabir owes to his Guru cannot be redeemed for how is he to find anything of equal value to the gift called Rama made by the Guru? The Guru is a fine marksman whose shaft has pierced the heart of Kabir. He is now dumb because the experience he has had through the grace of the Guru is past all rendering in human speech; he is deaf because the outer noises of the world no longer reach him. The redemptive shaft has crippled the mind for it does not now move about seeking its good in the quicksands of outer experience. It is now still with its fancies laid to rest.

2. K.G. p. 4 (32), Kabir makes his self in the game of love.
The Guru brings to fruition the latent seeds of spirituality. Maya is a lamp and men are moths who go wheeling round it in multitudinous madness; it is only by the grace of the Guru that a few are saved from the flame. The meeting with the Guru rids the disciple of all specificity of name and caste. Gobinda and Guru are one; this body, the generator of the conceit of I-ness, is the dividing veil between the two. When the illusory character of this veil is seen, the supreme identity is unveiled. It is the Guru who calms the fever of mind and discovers its real nature. "The Guru is the figured Lord; don't take him for a mortal. Those who identify him with his physical vesture are no better than animals, that is, as dull of perceptions as animals. They are unable to penetrate the mortal body of the Guru and see the Immortal behind. The Nizamites' adoration of the Guru verges on idolatry. They, however, are not idolaters in the accepted sense of that word. An idolater is one who thinks that the image and its content are identical. But the Nizamites never confuse the essence with its material embodiment.

There must be someone to bear witness to the truth of the spirit. Such a one transcends the reach of mortality and thereby goes out of the reach of all that pertains to the accidents of empirical personality. The Supreme truth is beyond the grasp of creaturely modes and of perception.

1. K.C. p.3 (20), The Guru as Redeemer, or Healer, p. 165, p. 22
2. K.C. p.2 (14)
3. K.C. p.2 (26)
The possible personality of the Guru stands in the same relation to him as does a stone image to the deity it represents. The stone image is an intimation of a significance that cannot be seized by the eyes. The personality of the Guru too is the vehicle of a trans-empirical meaning — the Supreme Godhead. As long as we regard ourselves as little creatures we stand in need of someone who is Guru, that is great. When we are cured of our finitude and have emptied our minds of all notions that belong to the sphere of relativity, both the Guru and the disciple are seen to be part of the phena-menal process.

The reason for the devotion of Sikhs to the Guru is far to seek. The word of the Guru was the open sesame to the fullness of knowledge. Illiterate as they were in the conventional meaning of that word, and subject to other social disabilities, it was the Guru who enabled them to overcome the world and its spells. But the institution had its risks. It was probably the perception of these risks that led Guru Gobind Singh, the last of the Sikh Gurus, not to nominate any man as his successor to the spiritual leadership of the Panth. It was the Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred collection of songs edited by Guru Arjuna, that was hence forward to serve as the Guru.

The assignment of the role of a Guru to a book contained in itself a great spiritual truth. It meant that the real Guru is not made in any human likeness, that he is simply a channel for the transmission of impersonal truths, and that any thing that imparts that truth, be it a book or a human being, is the Guru.

1. The "flesh-and-blood" form is but the outer wrappings of the real Guru. The form obscures the godly character of the Guru. The real Guru is "trans-form," beyond the empirical manifestation.

2. Dadi, p. 1. 3. K. P. 3


The Guru is the saviour par excellence; he does not add anything to one's earthly assets but even then he accomplishes the miracle that the worldlings suppose can be accomplished only by wealth and large estates; he raises the poor ailing creature of the earth and makes him in the image of the Lord or the Lord Himself. He seizes the disciple being carried along the whirl of the world and brings him ashore. He is the donor par excellence in a world crowded with beggars, begging for money, food, honour, secular learning. The Guru recovers for the Jiva his lost status and restores him to Brahmanhood.

The Guru dispels that darkness which makes us stumble through the world. It is through the grace of the Lord that one comes across a Guru of the right type. He who fulfils our material needs cannot afford us any protection against the troubles which are the outcome of our ignorance. As a matter of fact all fulfilment on the material plane is transient, and is followed by privation in one direction or the other. It is the gift of knowledge alone that ensures us against the stress of unfulfilled cravings and enables us to cultivate the higher virtues of love and detachment. It is the Guru who leads us to see that real love can be cultivated only by those who are detached. All other forms of so-called love are the various guises worn by passion.

It is as Patanjali puts it the Lord himself who is the ultimate Guru in all Gurus. It is by renouncing the values of the lower path that the Guru becomes what he is. He invites the disciple to a like fulfilment.

2. K.6. 2 (12)
3. K.6. 2 (13)
The Guru initiates the disciple into a discipline the first step of which is Nama-Sumirana or the remembrance of the name of the Lord. Medieval mystics emphasize the importance of remembrance again and again! When we are lost in the feverish activities of the world it is this remembrance that brings us back to the primal verities of existence and tells us that there is an encompassing Presence who is the law of our being and activity. According to Kabir even aeons are incommensurable with the splendour of the single moment when body, mind and speech are stilled in recollection. To Ddu the name of Ram is a wonder working herb that cures the stricken mind of countless affections. But the recital of the name is mere wagging of the tongue unless it symbolizes the love of the Lord within. The potency of the name as specific for worldly ill is unmatched. Even the practice of austerities is not as efficacious. It dissolves the being of the disciple in that of the Master.  

How is it possible to name the Nameless? The Nameless is manifested as the name. The name is not a meaningless sequence of sounds. There is a close link between thought and language. The utterance of the name disposes the mind to noble attitudes, and unless we choose to play a part disposes the mind to contemplative virtues. The Nirgunites are a harder task before them than the Gurmukhs. They are in principle opposed to the worship of the Form Divine. But the mind cannot function in vacuo. The formless and nameless God is for us merely a concept without to correspond to it in what we regard as the real world. Having been deprived of the support of the form, the mind of the Nirgunite attaches itself all the more warmly to the Name.

1. K.G. Pp. 4-7; Dadu, Part I, p. 17-29; Nalichadasa, Pp. 33-34 (b. 27); K.G. 5 (8), p. 41
2. S.B., Part I, p. 79 (7)

3. Ibid., p. 7 (9)

4. The culmination of this Sadhana consists in the apprehension of the supreme identity.
The name of the Lord is love, the foundation remedy for all earthly ills. Here the Vijnānīs and Sankśiptas are at one. The name awakens the soul and also the mind. It is the one effective antidote against the poisons of egotism. The name is the priceless treasure of those who are poor in the esteem of the world.

One has come here to understand till the fields of the name and in is sure that he is going to reap a rich harvest. The name is the fruit of meditation. The name is in the kāla, and in and the name is the preacher. All the ceremonies of worship finds its fulfillment in the chanting of the name. The name reduces to dust and ashes the boundless sins of the soul.

The name is the fifthtouch. It turns the iron of enmity and consciousness into the gold of Divine love. This collection not only leads to the doorstep of the Lord; it depicts the being of the Bhūta in the being of the Oṁ Name.

In the earlier stages the uttering of the name does not lead to finer attitudes and curb its vagueness. But the physical act comes in fullness of time to become a habit of the mind. The mind remains exposed in Divinity even though no articulation takes place. All conceptual activity is at an end.

1. Bārī, pārv I, p.22; एकादश मौलिक, p.35 (94 71), p.2 (11)
2. Ibid, p.23; S.B. pārv I, p.108
3. K.G. p.201, या 333
5. S.B. pārv I, p.108
6. K.G. p.5 (8). It has been referred to on p.33
Many of the sayings of these mystics are meant to cure men of a real, self-existent world which has such absolute power over the unregenerate mind. These sayings are known as ‘Caution’ or ‘Warnings’ for they warn us against the seductive character of those ephemera which encase our time and attention and bar our progress to enlightenment. "The bones are on fire like wood, and the hair are on fire like grass; Kabira is sad on seeing the whole world aflame." We are here reminded of the first sermon of the Buddha where he sees the entire world engulfed in the flames of mortality, and bids us escape while we may. The recognition of the world as a name writ in water is fundamental to the conduct of the consecrated life. Men are full of questions about the nature of reality and happiness but for most of us it is all a mental luxury and we seldom seek to go beyond the domain of vague fancies and desires. With most of us the transience of the world is too self-evident a proposition to merit any attention. But these are the only questions worth asking in a world where real happiness seems to elude the grasp of almost all of us. These are the first and the last questions and return to haunt the contemplatives of every age and demand urgent answers. What is the nature of Life Eternal? How can man escape the lot of those time-bound souls that glory in their bondage and have no intimation of what it means to win release from becoming. Unless we have learnt to quibble about optimism and pessimism we come to see at one stage or the other of our journey through life that the saints put the only correct questions to the strange universe in which our lot is cast and that their criticism of the ways of the ordinary man is just.

1. "All things, O Bhikkhus, are on fire. And what, O Bhikkhus, are are all these things that are fire? The eye is on fire, ears are on fire, nose is on fire, tongue is on fire, body is on fire, mind is on fire, impressions received by the eye are on fire, and whatever sensations—pleasant, unpleasant or neutral—originate in the impressions received by the eye, is likewise on fire." And so on with ear, nose, chin and other senses. [Mahāvagga, I. 21]"
They tell us that life is a great opportunity and that we should not waste it on trifles. They dwell again and again on the fleeting character of the pleasures of the world which constitute for most of us the quintessence of happiness. For them these are the traps of maya.

It is in the Lord alone that we can find abiding happiness. As long as we choose to live in the world of claims and counter-claims and find our happiness in the partial satisfactions that ordinary existence brings us, we shall remain the victims of pleasure and pain. While we give our time and energy to the fleeting pleasures, pains will be waiting for us round the corner. The fancies which arise in the mind and chain it to time are symptoms of inner sickness.

They were, however, no cynical martyrs to virtue. They had not killed out their feelings and turned their lives into a pack of negations. But for the Sadhaka the world is 'Jada', insentient, and therefore irresponsible.

It is therefore, foolish to waste our feelings on it. But their love for their Lord is intense. The love of the Lord is no mere dilettantism nor is it a plaything of sentiment. Only the brave soul can dare it, she who counts the world well lost if love be won. This way is hard to tread unless one casts off the burden of the ego, and travels light.

The lover is not a weakling indulging in sentimental drivel, but is the pattern warrior who enters the lists against the temptations and passions and bears away the Pearl of great price.

1. संत्र सन, बैं, गरे रफिसर, हृदेस, दंग ् ्सर मान।

2. दूरी प्रिंस धर का, नाम, रणम - रणम।

3. और नूर परण ए, नाम, रणम - रणम।

P.T.O.
e u the Sadhu and the soldie rre the exemplars of virtue. Tim cowards tremble when they see the Sadhu fight for life immortal. Self-naughting, the living death, which is but another name for life immortal, has to be practised unfailingly. These mystics too aspire to the condition which to the world is nothing but to the wise everything. "The death from which the world shies away brings me joy; when shall I die and find the fullness of joy?"

This death means release from that egoism which condemns us to the illusion of a separate individuality, with boundaries sharply defined, that has to work out its destiny all alone. He who does not choose this living death dies momently for he looks for his essence in his physical vital and mental appanages which are subject to decay and death.

We have to remember that the problem which mystics seek to solve exists for all human beings but most of us remain so stuck up in the grooves of convention that we bypass it. The problem is one though it is phrased variously. The temporal scene spread out before our mortal eyes is highly enigmatical. The efforts of ordinary men to attain to inalienable certitude and joy are pitifully inadequate.

All human life, whatever its seeming success and glamour, is stalked by tragedy. Death is king over all. Again the problem presents itself as one of finding the perennial source of the world whose creativity never comes to an end though the seeming triumph of death is so complete. We are all invited to probe this ultimate mystery though the invitation reaches us in various ways.

1. K.G. p.68, ना\ त्रय देवा, देवा, देवा p.69 (11)
   Also Surdas Bilasa, p.135 (65, 12)
2. दूरी जाते, अजीन थे, कौशिक ज ताक चढ़े। द्वारा तांतरिकमहताशिरोमयवर तर देवसे तर कली पुलके चढ़े चढ़े, खुदेरे धीरे धीरे मलान। तो मनाच बनाच गाय, रम तुम्हारे दितान कोसी सहा (32-33)
3. K.G. p.69 (13)
The saints do not care to elaborate the metaphysics of Maya; it is for them primarily an ethical category. She is the great enchantress that inveigles the souls of men into evil ways. The world is its slave and serves her for the paltry wages of sense-delights. It is her nature to betray those who are fool enough to walk into her trap. She befools the mind and drugs the consciousness of men with her vicious charms. The more we pursue her the more she eludes our grasp. Egoism is the root of Maya and to renounce the world and its delights is not enough unless we loosen the grip of this 'ahamkara' on our minds. She is fed by passion for women and wealth. She chains us to the world with hopes and fears and makes us see the many where there is only the One. Not to realize the transient character of the products of Maya let them sway our hearts is the mark of unwisdom. Those who are handcuffed to the world by Maya become strangers to that freedom which is the reward of wide-awake Sadhana. Maya pursues those who pursue the seductive appearances of things. All are game for her: the prophet-s, the Munis, and the ascetics of the forest. Brahman, Visnu, and Mahesha are brought into existence by Maya which means that the birth, death and sustenance of the world are mere deceptive appearances for those who have realized the truth of the changeless Brahman. In Vedanta, too, we know, that Brahman is not to be defined with reference to its creative or preservative activity; these are regarded as accidental attributes of Brahman. Recurrent themes of Nirguite didacticism—the transience of the world, the spurious

1. K. G. p. 33 (6-4)
2. Dāru, I, p. 118 (24), 119 (40)
The mind of man in its unenlightened condition, is according to these mystics, his greatest enemy, though nominally man's it is a willing tool in the hands of divine will for bringing about the downfall of its so-called owner. It is incorrigibly restless and resists all attempts of the soul to bring it to an understanding of its own folly. It is always throwing up multitudes of fancies and getting lost in them. The problem before the mystic is the subduing of this mind; and the swarms of its buzzing fancies. The mind and its objects between themselves conspire to keep a man from enlightenment. The conquest of the mind is absolutely essential to the winning of the supreme beatitude. For it to be no better than that of dazed and driven cattle as long as mind continues to be in the middle. Be alone in meditation from this mental cell you have broken free from hope and fear, and hope and fear are the twin activities of the mind in the state of world. It is the life in with the conversations of the mind in a hypnotized creature. One is sure that his truth into his own form has gone waste for he gave the mind absolute. It 'traveled' and let the answer rest on the track of their desires. But with all its flattery and chronic restlessness the mind cannot make the world in accordance with its desires. Its step cannot continue to trample to the earth. The universe continued to cool at the. This is the one thing man to lead his mind to have done with scholars and designers.'

1. खालक अति (नमूना), प. 1.6 (केन्द्र, लोग तथा विषय या संस्कृति) ।
2. खालक, क. 9. (१३), संहेक, 62 (२०), बदू, I, p. 109 (४३, ४५, ४५)
3. बदू, 56 (१७)
4. बदू, I, 105 (३२), 106 (३३, ३४, ३६, ३७)
"Your will will never have its way. If ghee could be churned out of water everybody would butter his bread on both sides. The
life of man remains an empty succession of meaningless moments
as long as the fancies of the mind, rising and bursting like
bubbles, are not integrated to some pattern. To identify ourselves
with these fancies is to invite psychological disintegration. This
identification with every moment of the mental process
gives rise to a series of birth and deaths. As soon as a
thought, emerging into the foreground of consciousness, is appro-
priated, the subject is born, but with the perishing of the
thought the following moment he too ceases to exist. This is
the wheel of transmigration which shuts off the vision of eternity.

He who can tame the mind is of all men the most valiant.
The unmortified mind cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. The
taming of the mind is accomplished by an unrelaxing control
of thought, will, and feeling. The Sadhaka has to become a
ruthless censor. The practice of mortification consists in giving
'entree' only to those thoughts and feelings which are harbinger
of grace. There are thoughts which make the soul sink deeper into
ignorance; there are others that lead to the higher realms of light.
There are feelings which lead the soul to the charm of
temporal objects; there are others which arise in response
to the perception of Intelligible Beauty. There are
again acts of will which emphasise our separate egohood,
while there are others which affirm our faith in the under-
lying unity of all creatures. The mind of the Sadhaka is trained

1. S. B. I 56 (16) "भर मनोदर धारणे तौ तिया न हैया।
जौ पाती बी तीर्थं, दुबा त्राय न कोय।"

2. K. G. 68 (3). S. B. I, p. 55, "अन पर प्रसवाहें है यो मनौ तीर्थो एक।"
Sūk. I, p. 103 (7), "तीर्थां त्य यो मनौ तीर्थजनतित न चलो देस।"
Sundara Bīrāga, p. 135 (8, 9), p. 136 (11, 12), 137 (13)"
to admit only those thoughts and feelings which help the soul in its progress towards enlightenment.

Mind is the product of nescience. Pure Consciousness on being dualized becomes the mind. All mental processes are so many transactions between the subject and the object. The subject-object relationship is its hallmark. Mind is the phenomenalization of consciousness, the seed-bed of diversity. We become creatures of the mind when its fancies, ideas, notions, images and churn-habits, borne upon its stream like so much foam, become for us the whole of reality. As the Self is the principle both of salvation and bondage so is the mind.

This mind is identical with the empirical self when it reaches out towards objects. As soon as it is released from the subject-object complex and sheds all notions about its identity and destiny, it becomes the Self, the Atman. The Nirgunite saints as we have seen condemn the erratic and sensual mind of worldlings. In the state of bondage it follows all the fancies of its masters, the senses. Triply bound in 'sattwa', 'rajas', and 'tamas', its state is that of a see-saw. Mere mental peace is not the goal of the Sadhaka for like all states and things subject to causes other than themselves it is unstable. One tires of this mental quiet, regards it as boredom or listlessness, and is tempted to unenlightened activity by the lure of 'rajas'. This 'rajas' which gives the impulse to ego-centric activity is in its turn followed by 'tamas', inertia, melancholy, dullness. The sage seeks a mind which the oscillations of the Guna-bound cannot affect. This is the state of Self.
The mind is for the Nirguhtie saints the trickster par excellence. Most of them are aware more of the defilements of the mind than of its status in enlightenment. They warn the aspirant again and again against the passions that cloud the uneasy mind. Its conquest is for them the supreme achievement. They pity those who having assumed human garb are unable to con the secrets of this protean creature. He is valiant indeed who is in the saddle and rides the mind. If the mind is untamed no adherence to conventional morality will bring us nearer to the goal of human existence. "Now it is dead, anon it is alive and kicking; in a moment it ranges the vasts of space; you don't know when it departs and you can't see when it returns. Such an ugly customer is the mind. Intent on its fancies it heeds not the advice of the Guru or the sage or even that of the worldly-wise. The Scriptures it defies. The mind is a rutting tusker. How can it pass through the strait gate of Bhakti? The saint as a representative of the common man often despairs of bringing the mind to heel. This very mind, however, becomes Brahman as soon as it realizes its real nature. He who holds the mind in check is the captain of his own fate.

1. Sundara Bilasa, p. 57 (7, 8)

2. *Pali 1, 103* (7) [i.e. *Pali I*, p. 103, *Pali* (7)]

3. Sundara Bilasa, p. 56 (3)
It is the realization of the real nature of the mind Self that dissolves the mind and reveals it for the phantom that it is. The Nairgunikte would thoroughly agree with the well-known remark of the Christian saint that to ascend to God we have to descend into the self and to lift the veil that hides it from our knowing. Contemplation on the self brings us to the threshold of the Divine and redeems us from the urgencies of our lower nature. The first step towards this self-discovery consists in distinguishing the self from what is ordinarily taken for it, namely, the body and its psycho-physiological continuum. "Atman is one and uncomounded, the body is a composite of many elements; Atman is the controller, the body is subject to its control. Atman is pure and of knowledge all compact, the body is impure and made of flesh; Atman is the light that illumines all empirical objects including the body. Atman, again, is an existential, it is eternal; the body is transient. He is a fool indeed who confuses these two absolutely disparate entities. Among the Nairguniktes this idea finds its most eloquent expression in Sunderdas. We are warned against identifying our essence with the senses, the mind or the intellect. "It is the body that is fat or lean, cold and heat afflict grief and delusion are the attributes of the mind; thought is the function of the intellect; it is the Citta that is subject to egoity; the Self is the stimulus behind all, the observer of all, but is involved in none of them."

1. देखि तुलना अामें, देखि तुलना अामें, देश ही जोवान अामें, देखि बृह उपरो देखि ही बॉर्डरेल, राख दिवे माधि देहें, शुरू भरते ऐसे बुद्धि नाबो
2. शैल्द, 105(13)
3. सुंदरविनोत, 102-103 (पर 6). He is full of passages placarding the distinction of self from his self.
The senses are on the track of objects, and you are on the track of the senses. It is on account of ignorance that you find yourself housed in the body. Whatever affliction visits the body, you appropriate it to yourself, and thus you suffer. "I am cold, I am warm, I am blind, I am lame, I am deaf, I am mute." You become thus the victim of illusion, borne helpless on the stream of Samsara.

The supreme state cannot be attained unless we die to the life of claims and counter-claims. To assert the claims of the ego is to raise a barrier between oneself and others. It is to fall from that spiritual status where the distinction between oneself and others is dismissed as a fancy of the creaturely mind. Christ said, "He that shall keep his life shall lose it." This is the inexorable condition for winning Life Immortal. We have to ascend from the soul to the spirit, from the mind with its fancies and aspirations to the still calm of the Self. We have to invite Death to this tenement of the body and ask him to make short work of the swarms of hopes and fears crowding there. Kabir hails that death before which the world quails.

Death in life has to be welcomed by those who would achieve the Vision Splendid. The vision is not a post-mortem phenomenon but is the reward of those who have renounced the time-bound ego and passed into the timeless consciousness of Pure Self. He awakes from the somnolence of earthly life. This awakening is to another dimension of life, to that Eternity which interpenetrates time.

1. Sanātana Dīnākara, Ninth Century, p. 111 (11), 119 (37), 118 (36)

2. K. 9, 164 (1) "अचिन शृद्धक शोभन"
The basic truth of Vedanta that the Divine and the human are in essence one and the same reality condemns the phenomenal ego to the status of an illusory appearance. All our efforts towards pampering this ego, providing for it, and guarding it against evil, all our hopes and fears which are born out of the conviction of its reality, are seen to be airy nothing once we accept this doctrine. In there is the explicit recognition of identity and of the consequences that follow. This is the rope of the notion of mine and thine with which the world stands bound. The fool feels elate; "I am the doer of good acts; the merit thereof is mine." But he does not waken and see through the illusion of this agency. This self desires to appropriate what is alien to it and at once comes to grief. This is the concept of I-ness which turns into the individualized soul. I am learned and of noble birth; I am a clever scholar; I am a stupid man of low breeding; my father was of ignoble birth; I am a king; my glory has spread to all the quarters; I am a beggarly pauper; such are the fancies that beset the ego. Sundara says "It is this ahankara which is the creator of Jiva; when this conceit goes there is nothing but Brahman left." The dissolution of this I and the forthshining of Brahman are two sides of the same fact. Dadu says; "As long as this I lasts, the 'Other' also appears; as soon as this I vanishes, the 'Other' too falls to the ground. As soon as the veil of 'I' is rent I become what I was."

1. केर रेत वा अश्री वेणू बेला तलाट 
   एकदेशं देवतां के नारी, p. 8 (70/12-4) क. ए. 79.38 (22)
2. मे कुंदली निबाधी नंदे उनमि नुस, मे गे पुत्र, अन्तरीमे गे मे जीवाखारे।
   मे के राजमे जीन, पितृ नरेंध्रन, अमृत द्वारा अमृत, अग्नि ने धारण।
   कुमार मर अभयारे री मे अशी यो, अस्मात गे भई, तुम्हारा अनुभव के।
3. मे नाशि तब ना मे, मे आश्री श्रेयं यो,
   मे यदु दिन रत्ना, अबाप्पु था बुझु तहि। वृष, ए. 85.50 (48)
Strait is the gate to the supreme fulfillment. "When I am there there is no Rama and when Rama is there I cease to be. The filth of I-ness cannot be washed even with a thousand dips in the waters of the holy Tirthas. One may act ever so feverishly but this filth will pile up. It is only the Knower who can tell how it is to be washed off.

To court life-in-death means to evaluate the world afresh, to see, as the Bhagavad-Gita puts it, "the light where there is but night for the world, and to find the day of the world to be darkness." It is to repudiate that empirical personality the aggrandisement of which is the objective of all our efforts.

The loss of the lower, phenomenal self is the unfoldment of the real Self. Dadu says, "I remain in the grip of mortal fear. He who is no longer anyone is afraid of none. Dadu, equate your self to nothing and rest in thy Lord.

The super-historical is the true home or environment of our soul but this truth is discovered only if we outgrow our obsession with the demands and cravings of our earthly nature. This obsession with the temporal is well defined in the Bhagavad-Gita. "This is what I have won to-day; to-morrow I shall win to other goals. This much of wealth is mine; more will be pouring in anon. That enemy I have laid by the heels; the others too will be brought low soon. There is none to challenge my greatness. I am rich and noble and eminent." To achieve reborn-ness we have to shed this ego and its mean calculations.

1. न जग राज सत्स न रत्स, सं रत्स राज सत्स।
   न जग सत्स सरस, सं सरस सत्स। (151) ।
   Sadaa regards the haughting of self as the supreme fulfillment. B.B.P. 335
2. The Bhagavat-Gita, II. 69

3. ब्रजवर्ष में भुगवर्ष, गांव की क्यों मांगी।
   क्या गांव की ग्राम, राज; सामुदायिक गांव। (15) B.B.P. 50
It is clear that these saints require intellectual articulation of spiritual ideas is not enough. They were out in quest of the whole truth and could not remain content with an intellectual grasp of the nature of Reality. Their fundamental achievement consists in the reconciliation of Vedanta with Bhakti. For the orthodox Vedantin of Sankara's school there was no question of any compromise with the exponents of Bhakti. Bhakti is for Sankara only the vestibule to knowledge. It is meant only for those souls that have not yet graduated in the school of knowledge. The Advaitic discipline is primarily the discipline of Jnana. It is addressed only indirectly to the feelings. The world is born out of wrong perception. Mere Bhakti cannot rectify this error. We have not to effect any change in our environment. It is our view of ourselves that has to be modified in order to win 'anubhava' or integral experience. This 'anubhava' is for Sankara Jnana which is not the knowledge of the detailed multiplicity of the world but the experience of that Atman which is Brahman, of that bed-rock Fact which is the primitive datum of thought, and without which phenomenal knowledge cannot even take the first step forward. The saints are well aware of the futility of that knowledge which is a relation between the Knower and the Known and is a function of the intellect.

The Nirgunite would thoroughly endorse the Upanishadic proposition that Moksha Moksa cannot be had without knowledge but this knowledge is not the conclusion of an argument. It is no doubt the knowledge of Brahman that is emancipative, but Brahman and Brahman-knowledge are one. Here essi is exhausted in the percipii. 1. "Religious Consciousness with its distinctions comes to an end when the goal of it is reached".

RadhaKrishnan, Indian Philosophy, Vol. 17, p. 650
The saints advise absolute confidence in the Lord and his ways for this confidence means that what God ordains in his omniscience is always better than what man chooses. We don't know where our real interests lie and go after things, thinking that they can win us lasting happiness but disillusionments come thick and fast on those who believe in the potency of the individual will. Failure is hailed by these saints as it often twists us round to see the truth while our eyes are fixed on the illusive phenomena of life. The more the world turns its face from the nearer I go to the real good. If God is overhead proof against all harm. They have no worry on their account for having surrendered all they rest content in their utter insignificance. "I am his servant and shall come to no ill. If a "Pativrata" (the woman who remains faithful to her husband through all the vicissitudes of fortune) has nothing to cover her body, the shame is entirely her lord's. This attitude is but the necessary corollary to the injunction to put the ego to death. Self-surrender is the way to sanctity. We are once again reminded of the significant symbol of Sati. This Sati is the symbol for the soul who has killed out personal longings, hopes and fears, and has mingled herself with the Master. The soul who has become a Sati is released from all definition. This ritual of self-immolation cannot be consummated without ardent love and adoration. The Sati has to cast out all fears and fancies and strip the mind clean of the foulness of desire. There is one sovereign idea in her mind, now, that she has dedicated herself, soul and body, to her Lord, and that there is now no divisive veil.

1. लोकल गुणान संवरण संबंध जय राय रेवुरंग्रण 1 क. ज. 1999, प. 34.

2. क. ज. , प. 20 (17)

3. सुधूरा गिटारा, प. 8 (1, 2)
The saints are fond of moral exhortation. We have however to bear in mind that they were fully qualified to be preachers. They bore witness in their lives to the truths which they preached. It is only the pure in heart who can see God. That is why they laid more stress on the virtues which purge the affections and make the heart a fit vehicle for Divine grace. Their followers, moreover, were mostly simple folk with no pretensions to learning and intellectual subtlety, and the best way to bring them to a knowledge of higher truths was not to confound them with metaphysical theories and discussions but to prescribe a course of strict ethical discipline. Mysticism, as we have seen, is a practical way of winning Divine knowledge and prefers an ounce of practice to a ton of verbiage. The metaphysician may have a better grasp of principles and reason things out to a more convincing conclusion, but if he means business and is not spinning theories merely, he too has to observe the commonplace precepts of morality which are the first steps on the mystic path.

These exhortations may strike the sophisticated as naive but we have again to bear in mind the sort of audience which the saints addressed. The recurrent theme of the saints is the transience of this life and the great opportunity it offers for the love and service of the Lord. They warn against mixing with those who are engrossed too much in the affairs of the world and for whom God, morality and the discipline of the higher life are mere abstractions having no bearing on the practical issues of life. Lust, greed, and malice against fellow-beings are the other dangers that beset the path of the aspirant and we are warned against nourishing them.
The disciple is asked to cultivate a reflective bent of mind and to meditate on the deceptive nature of sense-delights which bring pain in their wake. To distinguish between friends and foes is the mark of folly for it shows that we have not yet learnt to see all things as existing in and by a single essence. Many of them exhorte their followers to shun the company of women. This may be unpalatable to the modern consciousness but we must realize that the ascetic strain was quite strong in many of them. But this asceticism was never an end in itself for them. On the other hand, they condemn the extremes of mortification to which the Nathists went. They prefer the unfeigned, unquestioning love of the Lord to austerities and self-mutilation. They emphasize the cultivation of those contemplative virtues which enable us to separate the wheat from the tares. They condemn the fool who throws away the great opportunity offered by human life and fails to rise from level to level of spiritual endeavor and fulfilment.

We should live in the world as the tongue does in the mouth. It doesn't go greasy even after consumption of quantities of ghee. They call upon us to distinguish between the essence and the accident, the one Reality and its diverse manifestations. These multitudes of scholars, soldiers and sages are but the various guises of one inhabiting Reality. Their humility before the Lord is touching. He is the father and the mother, and if there is any deficiency in the child, then it is the parents' fault.

1. Their 'Bānīs' have often a section entitled 'परंपरा', 'प्राचीनता'. This seeks to instill into the mind the pre-eminent of virtue, the transient of the world, the supreme status of Rāma, the sovereign importance of Bhakti and other innumerable graces of the dedicated soul.
   S.B. I, p. 52; K.G. p. 55;
   Sundara Bījās, p. 101ff. 
   Veda I, p. 180ff.

2. Sundara Bījās, p. 51
   K.G. p. 39 (1, 2). Also pp. 40 and 41. P.T.O.
Moral virtues are necessary for the conduct of life. Honesty, gentleness, truthfulness are the very cement of the social fabric. Societies would fall to pieces without them. But the saints do not want us to practise these virtues for keeping up appearances or for the achievement of any social prestige. It is for the achievement of the Supreme Good that annuls the lure of temporal goods that we are to cultivate the moral virtues. These virtues are instrumental to the achievement of that supreme state which is above both virtue and vice. They put the emphasis again and again on the unassuming service of the Lord. There is no doubt a measure of monotony in their treatment of moral themes but we must take our saints for what they are and should not expect them to cater to our love of romance and variety.

The love of God is the cardinal virtue. All other virtues are but various aspects of this supreme grace. This love, however, must reign supreme in the heart before it can become the source and mother of other kindred graces. This love drives out the lesser passions even as sun-rise renders other lights nugatory. When the love of the Lord consumes us we become indifferent to the charms of the world. “We need not wear ourselves out in battling against the passions; Vairāgya is a by-product of love divine. We don’t have to exert ourselves to attain that detachment from the mutable goods of this life which makes us proof against the vagaries of fortune.

We need not subject ourselves to a course of lectures on social education to realize the importance of love and sympathy in our dealings with others. He who loves the Lord spontaneously radiates love to all other beings who exist in and because of the will of the Lord.

1. रे या आले जय श्री कैलास तपो जोग जैसा आश्वासन - क. ए. प. 136
2. नेवाल है तर तेज श्रीकृष्ण तप पूर्ण-दोहा - उपनिषद, प. 217

2. Most of the sayings under these heads in the Shri, तालकल, बिनमूर्ति, गुरुध्वजसह, भक्ति गीर्जाकृति, पृ. 10.
The ascetic who believes that by putting the senses in the pillory he is taming them often drives them to seek vengeance in unexpected ways. Both the hermit and the hedonist are "escapists" for escapism consists in assigning more value to one set of temporal conditions than to another, and pre-supposes a world-view which negates the very fundamentals of mysticism. The environment, according to the mystic, is always the shadow cast by the self; it is easy to flee from the environment but difficult to flee from the self. It is our "vasanas" that drive us like a horse stung by a gadfly. To purge the heart of "vasanas" is to discover liberation here and now. The mystic refuses to define his position as one of acceptance or of rejection.

Kabir's heart is set on that which is midway between acceptance and rejection. "The middle station is the gateway to liberation," says Dadu, "it is the part of wisdom neither to grasp nor to abandon."

The "Middle Way" is an ethical as well as an ontological concept. Ethically, it enjoins upon the Sadhaka to renounce all extremist positions and practices. Ontologically, it asks us not to become dogmatic or particularist for to particularize is to negate, and to conceive is to falsify. To hold to a viewpoint is to fall into the trap of dogma. We may assemble any number of such viewpoints but all of them carry the taint of subjectivity. However subtle and far-ranging our thought may be we cannot transcend the level of opinion.

Ethically, the position derives naturally from both the Advaita and the Madhyamika traditions. "The Advaitist, having achieved the ultimate vision, refuses to fall into the trap of outer dualities. The Madhyamika, too, is so called because he has discarded the conceptual approach to the problems of ethics and metaphysics."

1. S.B.1, 479(3) "ते हृदय वधूरे ना गई, खाला सम बिचारे"

2. Dadu: Purvi, 1570 "हर्ष तेज दोभिन, ज्ञान बरसे, विनाश न कीर्ति, राज्य वार िड़े है प्रति, मृति विचार निशो".

3. Nishti: "The Madhyamika disproves the opponent's thesis but does not..."
The accent on Bhakti is what distinguishes the Nirgunites from the Siddhas and Nathas. It is the love of the Lord that is the supreme agent of redemption. While knowledge wastes its time in intellectual juggling and endless disputation, love can confidently walk into the sanctum of the Lord and prevail upon him to disclose the secrets of his Lila to the beloved. For the lover of this Lila, the world is no longer a procession of phantoms emerging from nothing and dissolving into nothing. It is the overflowing of His self-delight in playful movement and this high revel of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting. The soul of the Nirgunite yearns to enter into this Lila. To one who is drunk with this Lila, God is no longer a dread monarch throned high above the world in matchless splendour and majesty. Yoga, Japa, and the numerous ways devised by human ingenuity to torture the lower self into submission become useless for him who has been able to win this love. Such one remains intoxicated though he empties no wine cups; he is invincible though there are no armies to back him. The lover sees the beloved in all places, high and low, in all forms, fine or foul. The gyrating moth does not pause to consider whether the flame is burning in the house of a Cāndāla or a Brāhmaṇa. This love itself is redemption; the deliverance sought after by the Jenner holds no charm for the Bhakta. Those who are learned in the Vedas and the Qu'ran are not learned enough to spell out the letters of love. This love is the consummation of human effort though it is itself effortless and spontaneous. Here we find all the ecstasies and yearnings of human love but keyed to another pitch. Various they sing of its redemptive action and joy in this vale of tears.

1. Syme and Underhill, Songs (Poems of Kālidāsa)

2. Cūḍāmaṇi p. 153 (2, 3), parva I.

3. Kālidāsa p. 37 (18); Cūḍāmaṇi p. 9 (42), p. 13 (43), p. 5 (44)

4. Kālidāsa p. 19 (7), p. 83 (2); Cūḍāmaṇi p. 20 (44, 4.1)
What distinguishes the Nirgunites above all is the emphasis they lay on experience. The authority of experience is the highest of all. The Nirgunites do not aim at intellectual clarity, emotional transport, or metaphysical subtlety. They seek to be born anew, to integrate their energies around a new focus of interest. It is not the conversion of an aspect of the mind they seek. There are many of human consciousness but the mind has to transcend all of them in order to arrive at its true nature. The five Upanisadic sheaths (the material, the vital, the mental, the intellectual, and the blissful) may be regarded as the five stages of the journey of the self towards the Self. The homing mind, the mind crossing stage after the stage of the journey to reach its destination beyond the Anandamaya Kosha is the pilgrim and when it arrives at its goal it is re-christened the spirit. Real heroism consists in making the self embark on this homeward voyage. We suffer as long as we wander in the alien realms of mind, matter, life and intellect. The Nirgunites however, don’t advise us to maltreat the body for the higher elevations cannot be reached if the lower levels conspire to pull us down. We suffer from a chronic dissatisfaction, things which promise to cure us prove to be liars. We have to bear in mind that life and mind don’t constitute our essence. We have to recollect our true nature. The Nirgunites lay stress on this collection. The sheaths of obscuration have brought about the fall of Jivaharkata Brahma into Jivaharkata.

We have to get at the light which shines undimmed behind these layers. We become what we are aware of and if our attention is directed to the realm of the manifold our mind and we sink deeper into ignorance.

1. Tejvan Prakash (3)
2. K. G. pp. 4-7; Badar I, pp. 17-29, S. B. I (Malukadss), pp. 100.
3. Sundaram Pilani, pp. 94(3), p. 96(10-13)
The Nirgunite mystics who were mostly drawn from the lower classes had not known the transforming power of tradition. They made mock of institutionalized worship and their own disciplines to awaken the spiritual sense. They are emphatic that mere mouthing of mantras and mechanical adherence to dogma cannot bring about the miracle of transfiguration which true religion seeks to bring about. Kabir's is the most emphatic voice of all in pointing out the inanity of that formalism which often smothers the true spirit of religion. Of the numerous cults and sects that flourished in his day and laid claim to absolute truth there is none that escapes his searching eye. He unfailingly puts his finger on the ailing spot. The Vaisnavas, the Shivas, the Sakta, the Jaina's, the Nathists—all have their weak points exposed.

They are castigated wherever they depart from the fundamental truth and sacrifice the end for the means. Such protestant voices have often been heard in this country. The Upanisads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Jaina and Buddhist movements and the various schools of Illuminati who went beyond the pale of society in their search for truth have protested against the deadening of the true spirit of religion which leads to the rule of the formalist and the precision in the field of Sadhana. It is because these fresh streams have often mingled with the stagnant pools of religiosity and formalism that India has borne rich spiritual fruits through the centuries.

Kabir, Nānaka, Dadu and Sundar Dasa are prominent among those who tried to recover the essence of religion from the envelope of organised ritual and sacramentalism.

1. In the section entitled निगुण, निगुण, the Nirgunites assail the orthodoxy of the day:
   - निगुणित्वानिष: पृ. 35 ff., इत्य 1, पृ. 153 ff.
   - पारिवर्त: पृ. 64 ff.
   - पृ. 5, 24, 28
2. निगुण यावथ: पृ. 46 (16), पृ. 96 (47, 24)
3. इत्य: प. 190, 173, 308
4. शत. प. 43 (13, 14)
We have observed that the core of the 'Virgunites' quest is the experience of the Divine. But the effort to communicate that experience and to perpetuate gives rise to worship, cultus and institutionalized religion. This is the paradox of organized religion that mystic experience can neither with it nor without it. Organized religion is the crystallization brought about by a scientific process of coding of what mysticism had poured into the soul of man. Through religion all men get a little of what a few privileged souls possessed in full: who went the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Summon the necessary strength to penetrate the integument of form and ceremony and to arrive at mystical experience. Others however remain content with various forms of symbolisms at one, two, and even three removes from reality. The Virgunites however present the truth of at institutionalized forms that contains the well-spring of pure experience. While symbols can be helpful to those who are aware of their true nature and function, they often block the way of the ignorant who mistake the means for the end, symbol for the referent, idol for the true Lord. In all religion we find this recurrent conflict between orthodox, entrenched fundamentalism on the one hand and the witness of the protestant on the other. Around the Virgunites lay the rich heritage of symbolisms of a diversified religious tradition embodied in words and stone and colour and multiplex ritual.


(Translated by R. Ashley Auton and Cloudesley Breton; Doubleday Anchor Books.)
me such a threat if you can; for this is the Yama-pavita which the spirit in need of."

The physical dance is but a gateway to the truth of the Inner Dance.

"Prana-Viha: full chime

All other dancing is a vain pleasure.

Let confidence be the instrument and devotion the tambourine.

To win joy and everlasting aspiration

Perform this devotion and this service

and keep time in such dancing.

It is a social custom recognized in Indian orthodoxy to purify the house of Sutaaska - the bane supposed to attach to a family on the birth of a child. On the birth of a son Sutaaska was asked to have this ceremonial purification performed. But Sutaaska has no faith in such a ceremonial where the performer goes through certain physical gestures and ablutions but which leave the mind as unpurged as ever.

"Covetousness is the Sutaaka of the mind and lying of the tongue, casting a lustful eye at another's wife, beauty and riches that of the eyes and the Sutaaka of the ears in hearing the vain noises of the world. With these impurities man goeth tied hand and foot to the City of Yama. All superstition is Sutaaka for it recognizeth the truth of things other than the One. Birth and Death are the order of God by whose will are the comings and goings. No Sutaaka sticketh to those who have comprehended the truth."

1. Aara di Van, Mahale I, Sh. 15(1)
2. Aay Aara, N. I. Sh. 2(5)
3. Aara di Van, Mahale I, Sh. 18(2) and 18(3)
The Puranic religion with its elaborate pantheon and vast ritual embracing pilgrimages, fasts, scriptural recitations, idol worship, and faith in the incarnatory forms of the Lord, was the stronghold of orthodoxy. But the ordinary man who went to the temple prayed the gods, waved the thurible, and bowed to the temple priests, out of a mechanical allegiance to the formalities of traditional religion and had forgotten the import of it all. We have to bear in mind that orthodox Brahmanism was aware of the provisional character of ritual, formularies, and dogmatic theology, and knew these to be but stairways to the ultimate perfection. The problem before the traditionalists was how to rouse the common man out of his spiritual lethargy and to give him a clear conception of means and ends. When the inner significance of traditional symbolism is overlaid, lost or forgotten, there are two ways open to the spiritual leadership of society. They can either try to recover the esoteric significance and bring it home to the people, or, in the alternative, they can overthrow the traditional symbology and try to establish a new one in its stead. The Nirgunites chose the latter way. They are not to blame if they thought their own way the best.

But while recognizing the sincerity of their criticism, we must not forget the paradox of the human situation that man in his ageless quest for the Eternal can do neither with forms nor without them. It is only to that class of half-learned and crafty priests who came to trade in religion that their criticism is applicable. There is no doubt that due to their social standing and their anxiety to bring the healing doctrine to the masses, the Nirgunites came more often in contact with the ordinary run of Pandits, Mullahs, and Yogis who had hardly the ability to distinguish the essence of religion from its outer shell.