

INTRODUCTION

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Man, by adopting a theory of evolution in this constantly transforming world, has been marching towards the progress from crudity to civilization.

A man who was living in a thicket, now can build sky reaching monstrous buildings; A man who was not familiar with the uses of fire and ate raw meat has now invented thousands of things in this creation; A man who used to tie skin of animals and the leaves from the tree to cover the body. Now has reached the peak of the civilization; a man who knew only sign language and exchanged the emotions by screaming and shouting, now has claimed the peak of the emotions through language. Which is that driving force which has become a reason for the continuous progress of man? What is the goal of this perennial achievement? And from where do they get the inspiration? These are the questions arise in the intellectual mind of man and from ages he has been trying to find answers for all these questions.

When we examine all these, one thing is made clear, that is in this creation man is also a kind of animal.

But because of his physical features and internal genius he stood more outstanding and powerful than that of other animals. The 'Internal Perusal' is the reason for this continuous strife and combat of the human being. But he was not satisfied just by getting food and clothes, he looked for more attractive views in this creation.

When we looked at this outer world he has stimulated by the mysterious beauty, Raising Sun, Flying bird, floating cloud everything cautioned his sense of beauty. But sometimes it also created fear in him by being very ferocious and cruel.

Nature which was beautiful sometimes became very ferocious and nature which was quiet became terrible.

When man saw these two faces of nature, i.e., once being beautiful and quiet becomes ferocious and terrible sometimes. There aroused curiosity in him to know about multiphase of nature. Probably this curiosity made him to advance towards progress.

On one side his curiosity and intelligence became responsible for the growth of science and on the other hand his experiences and appreciation of the beauty paved the way for the growth of art and culture. All this was because of man's quest for his continuous happiness. This quest

stimulated man to move towards advancement. But as he marched, his life style, circumstances, temperament, circumference of happiness, everything started expanding and he was imprisoned and captivated within himself. This again made him to strive for freedom. This strive for freedom paved way for the birth of religion.

Swami Vivekananda said, "The effort to attain freedom underlies all forms of worship, whether we know it or not".¹

Some scholars pointed that, "History cannot point to a culture in which there is no religion".²

"We may define religion as the inward power which urges all living beings to strive to reach higher and higher stage, the highest being perfection".³

But as humanity developed even features of religion became more difficult. And religion changed drastically and brought great mutation on society. It affected the society to such an extent that man became more and more superstitious and possessed blind beliefs. Religion had built domineering castle over the society, because of which society was divided into many parts.

Man very eagerly tried to adopt the spiritual life because of many reasons. Firstly, for the betterment of his

lives and for the achievement of his ideals. Secondly, the aspiration to rise above the senses and to utilize them for a higher and proper purpose and third and the most important incentive to follow the spiritual life was to come out of the frustration which almost everybody experiences in life. In this situation man eagerly awaited for the saints and intellectual seers, who could free them from these blind beliefs and show the right path to go near to God.

One of the greatest problems of mankind is to get rid of misery, and attain eternal bliss and happiness. Almost all our actions have this motive behind them. But unfortunately any line of action we adopt results in our defeat and ruin. Our progress in science and philosophy has led to this very result. The wonder, however, is that in spite of the gravity of the problem; we do not attempt to solve it. We are thus born in misery, live in misery and die in misery. We want freedom, but all that we do leads us into captivity.

The wise men, who are referred to as true mystics or Gurus offer a definite solution. They chalk out a line of action without equivocation or argumentation. The correctness of the solution follows from the uniformity of the experience of all sages. Who spoke different languages

and lived in different times and places; and had absolutely no opportunity of collaboration, by words spoken or written.

Through the mystical path these saints and intellectual seers tried their best to unite the people and brought revolutionary change in the society. But here again we see the discrimination between male and female seers.

Almost all the ancient civilizations have withheld the contemplative thoughts of the male seers. And women have kept aloof from the spiritual and religious fields.

“..... This is a man made world. Man has defined woman as he wanted; woman is not liberated Man can imagine himself without woman But existence of woman is in order of man. So only she has been described as sexual. This means that she is just a thing a sensuality to man. Here woman is just defined as it is convenient to man; in no way it is concerned with her freedom. Being just an accident she fulfills all his wants and needs. He is the creator; He is powerful, she an ‘outsider’ and ‘alien’ only”(tr.) 4

These are the words of great feminist writer Simon Beauvoir’s written in her book, “The Second Sex”. This interpretation shows how Women have been suppressed throughout the history. In history she has been distributed in the names of cast, creed, class, community, knowledge,

power and status. In this regard emotionally, intellectually thoughts and discussions are revolving around man. We see great ancient philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Martine Luther and others who have identified woman as either complimentary or supplementary to man.

A woman's spiritual desires are suppressed and her mundane affairs are made impenetrable. Thoughts of great saints seem not to have impressed and effected to lesson the discrimination prevailing between man and woman. In the world woman is just a female nothing else. She is not born but always becoming.

In the history of men we see majority of male scientific thinkers, philosophers and saints. On this path of achievement we see only countable number of women. This is not accident and surprising. In her search for truth man has not become successful completely to suppress her intellectual thoughts. In the midst of all these circumstances we see some great women mystics, saints and intellectuals. Who have proved themselves competent to men. In the time limit of thousand five hundred years we see many woman thinkers, writers and philosophers in the world. Although there was a difference in their thoughts and philosophy all had the same kind of concern

for humanity and all eagerly wanted to develop the society of their contemporary. In spite of the opposition posed by man all these woman writers, thinkers and philosophers withstood against the opposition.

In a contorted history which disclaimed the existence of woman, many female mystic saints gave noble message, thought of welfare of whole humanity, and composed valuable mystic literature. They have transcended the language, time and nation and have become relevant even to this day, even after many centuries.

In the span of these thousand years in India and in other nations we see many female mystics. Though there were scant differences in their philosophy, ideology and theory we see same kind of intense longing for truth, had concern for humanity and upliftment of the people. It is really surprising to see that, though they got harsh and negative reactions and responses from the contemporary society, they expressed similar kind of immutable, unaffected and detached kind of attitude.

Altogether it is believed that in this game of rise and fall, women have won now and then. Being victorious she has stood aloof and has laid a strong basement and has left their footsteps, which have proved to be beneficial for the

intention of emancipation and liberation of contemporary women.

To mention a few in this regard we see Akkamahadevi in 12th century from south India who began to talk, to debate and to write about her ascetic experience. In the same way Emily Dickinson in the 19th century of America began to express her views being a recluse. Both of them chose the idiom of poetry to express themselves. The society dominated with men, amazingly looked at them. Their poems represent the voice of the women folk, their problems to some extent, are similar in both the cultures. In the context of the present day dissipated world one can feel a necessity to perceive the status of woman in society. She has to preserve her individual calves and compete with men in search of her identity.

Though Akkamahadevi and Emily Dickinson belong to different times, place and culture they provide similar thoughts in their writings. Akkamahadevi has written Vachanas while Emily Dickinson songs and hymns. The Vachanas are written in free verse form. They intend to correct the follies of men and women and hence of society in general. The songs of Emily show her gradual growth into a mystic.

The first chapter deals with the meaning of Mysticism in broader perspective. Mysticism is a means of a person who seeks anticipation unity with deity through intention contemplation and who believes in spiritual apprehension of truths beyond understanding. The term mysticism occurs in connection with the endeavor of the human mind to grasp the ultimate reality of things, and to enjoy the blessedness of actual communion with the highest. The first is the philosophic side of mysticism, the second its religious side. The first effort is theoretical or speculative. Where as the second empirical based on supremeness not on their and devotional.

The thought that is most intensely present with the mystic is that of a supreme, all-pervading, and indwelling power, in whom all things are one. Hence the speculative utterances of mysticism are always more or less pantheistic in character. On the practical side, mysticism maintains the possibility of direct intercourse with this being of beings-intercourse, not through any external media such as an historical revelation, oracles, answers to prayers, and the like, but by a species of transfusion or identification, in which the individual becomes a "partaker of the divine

nature". God ceases to be an object to him, but becomes an experience.

Mysticism therefore differs from ordinary pantheism in that its inmost motive is religious, whereas religion is ordinarily occupied with practical experiences and develops its theory referring to ethical codes, Mysticism predominantly displays speculative bent, starting from the divine nature, taking the symbolism of religious feeling as literally or metaphysically true, and straining after the present realization of an ineffable union. This union is a passive experience, to something which comes and goes in time, and which may be of only momentary duration.

Thus, mysticism involves the perception of a divine unity behind the ordinary physical world. The mystic sees a divine unifying life in all lives and considers all things in the phenomenal world as manifestations of the one divine life.

Mysticism in poetry gives prophetic vision. Poets who are mystics try to find out the relation between life on earth and life in the other world. But the concept of mysticism differs from one poet to another. Wordsworth's mysticism is deeply rooted in his conception of nature. For him nature has life and joy in herself She is the

manifestation of an active principle, which has its noblest seat in the mind of man. It is not the beauty of nature, which has brought him joy and peace, but the life in nature. He himself has caught a vision of such a life in every object of nature. He knew it and felt it, and it transformed the whole of existence for him. That is why Wordsworth said, "The god in man and in nature is one". Shelly has believed in soul of the universe, a spirit in which all things live and move and have their beings.

He wishes for the fusion of his own personality with this spirit, the essence of his worship and adoration. Shelly, like Blake too has regarded the human imagination, as a divine creative force, and it is his union with the divine ideas, spirit of beauty and of love, from which a new universe is born. T.S. Eliot's Mysticism is catholic bound. He advocates the religious knowledge to be gained by mystic ways. Martyrdom of Becket is a Mystic experience. W.B. Yeats discovers Mysticism in the ferocious appearance of Christ.

Emily Dickinson and many more writers believe in the utmost power that exists beyond human limitations. They too are regarded as mystics. In Indian context we see religious side of the mysticism. In 12th century there was a

"Bhakti movement" in south India, where Sharanas like Allamaprabhu, Basavanna, Chennabasavanna, Akkamahadevi surrendered, and tried to identify themselves with God, a Divine Being. In the 16th century we see great mystic Meerabai. She too surrendered herself to the will of God. In the modern era Kuvempu and the contemporary poets had a great trust and belief in the presence of divine spirit in nature.

One can realize at once that there is a difference of attitude, point of view, and character, as well as the aim, between mystics and poets. For poets the imagination, the creative spirit of man, is of utmost importance. It is found that the progress of the religious mystic is towards illumination, while that of the poet is towards intuition. Both work from the world of reality, toward the realm of essence, from the microcosm to the macrocosm. Both have intense and accurate perception of their surroundings; there is nothing vague or floating in their perception of reality. It is indeed as though they see through, not with, the eye, but with the intuition. They are filled with love for the beauty they perceive in the world of time-"this remarkable world" as Emily Dickinson called it, and considering death neither fearful nor morbid, how could they be, since they feel

immortality behind it? They document life's fearful limitations from which they suffer, but they do not mix self-pity with the account of their suffering, which they describe, in close detail. They see the world in a grain of sand and heaven in a wild flower and now and again they bring eternity into focus, as it were in a phrase of the utmost clarity.

The second chapter focuses on the life and works of Akkamahadevi and Emily Dickinson. Both of them popularly known as mystics. Though both belong to different time, place and culture; both, in a way, carry a similar attitude towards life.

The life of Akkamahadevi is unparalleled in the religious history of the world. Born in a tiny village of Udutadi at the western part of Karnataka during 12th century, she had emerged as a saint. Her parents were great devotees of Shiva. Ever since her childhood Akkamahadevi developed a spiritual attitude to life. But once king Koushika, returning from a hunt, saw beautiful Akkamahadevi and instantly fell in love with her. The king set a marriage proposal to her parents. Moreover Akkamahadevi had already refused many proposals saying that she was already wed to god, Chennamallikarjuna, she

was in spiritual pursuit. She denied the material progress and needed a divine pleasure of communion with god.

The road to her spiritual search was not easy. While she was in her pursuits she came to kalyana and participated in the discussions held in Anubhava mantap. Kalyana, then was a place where Basavanna along with sharans established Anubhava mantap, Which was a spiritual parliament. The sharanas participated in the discussions freely; they talked on equality and Dasoha, of all kinds. The whole atmosphere of kalyana enabled Akkamahadevi to continue her search for Chennamallikarjuna. She was influenced by the thoughts of Basavanna, Allamaprabhu and other founders of Sharana principles of life. From here continued her journey towards the plantain grave (kadaliyabana), on the mountains of Srisailam. After hazardous penance she met her divine lover. At last she achieved the consubstantial union with Chennamallikarjuna and became a great mystical saint.

Emily Dickinson lived in the 19th century. She was an American poet. She too had similar experiences.

Emily Dickinson was born on December 10th 1830 in a small American town called Amherst. Her father, Edward

Dickinson, was a lawyer, a congressman, a trustee and treasurer of Amherst College. He was a man who was guided by the stem sense of duty, never allowed his emotions to interfere with his role as a responsible leader of the town and ruled his house like an absolute monarch, rearing his children with a firm conviction that they would become Christian citizens.

With all this background, Emily was educated mostly at home Except for a year. Emily probably had few male companions. Amongst them, Benjamin F. Newton was one. But his death in 1853 left her shaken, who was a possible lover. A year later, while her father was in congress, she traveled to Washington. During this trip she visited Philadelphia where she met, and was believed to have fallen in love with a married pastor or a clergyman by name Charles wads worth who went on an assignment, to San Francisco with his family. After his departure, Emily began to withdraw into her house and into herself; even her parents and family members were responsible of her peculiar personality.

By the time she was thirty-two she had already given the picture of recluse body. By 1870, she hardly went out. When her father died in 1874 and her mother became

paralyzed a year later, she was scarcely seen anymore. Indeed her father's death put the final seal on her seclusion. Throughout the remainder of her life she never stopped recording the terrible sense of anguish that his death caused in her heart. After this shattering event Emily again drew comfort from the friendship of Judge Otis Lord, a friend of her father. Who was eighteen years older than Emily. But his wife's death in 1877 turned their friendship into love. She would have married him, if he had not died. The spring of Dickinson's life was dried up. Then she restricted herself to her father's ground, and few of her selected friends. She talked to the visitors through a half closed door and became a mystic. Infact her seclusion and introvert nature enabled her to become mystic.

In the third and fourth chapters discussions are made upon the characteristics features of mysticism in their poetic works. Akkamahadevi was a true mystic. She had the firm and selfless love concentrated on god or divine power. When she threw her garments and clad herself with the sky, undisturbed with the mind's eye turned inwards in contemplation of Chennamallikarjuna, she moved towards Kalyana. She looked like a divinity in the garb of a human figure. People stood stunned before the eye piercing

spiritual luster of this woman. She was a divine lover and regarded herself as Chennamallikajunas beloved and wife. Turned away from the pleasures of mundane life and surrendered in the invisible divine power. Her feelings reached such a great height, intensity and absorption that it could not be considered as an ordinary love but divine love of a mystic. Through her Vachanas she expressed her longing, loneliness, raptures and heartbreak. Like a young bride, awake yet unsatisfied; she drew in her fancy little pictures of the marriage rite, complete with -areca, rice and coconut.

She like a true lover dreamt of her lover day and night, waited, pined, withered in his memory. God, Chennamallikarjuna was not just a symbol, but a person, a beautiful person. Who is her predestined bridegroom. Her God is all powerful for he conquered not only Kama and death but Brahma and Vishnu. He is incomprehensible to the scriptures, he created the world for his own sport and it is only when he has had enough of it that there will be an end of Maya- the manifestation. Meanwhile though immanent, as close to us as water and milk when mixed, he is not to be identified with nature- like water, he gives everything its flavour, but is none of them himself. He is a

cunning, tricky God too. His abode is a mystery, but though he cannot be found, a simple prayer can easily reach him: "Siva, Siva" is more than all mantras, major or minor.

We could see her passion, eagerness and ecstasy towards lord Chennamallikarjuna in most of her Vachanas. Infact, each Vachana of hers is a little poem in itself She has spoken with complete conviction when she has said that the dust from Siva's feet is her aid to beauty, his kiss a feast, his coaxing words her tambulam, his passion her toiletry. And her naked state is a "splendid robe". She has arrayed herself in the splendor of Chennamallikarjuna, then like a true mystic. In a respiring eagerness she requests everyone in nature, - to the bees, the mango trees and the cuckoo and the moon to give her a call if they happened to see her lover. Like a true mystic she always speaks of spiritual marriage with the lord. With all these views she has torn the age-old restrictions under which women had been kept under the thumb in the name of religion. She was indeed a more assertive, more firm and more courageous who showed to the world that women were in no way inferior to men. She always sought unity with the divine being.

Emily Dickinson's devout concern with the problems of life, death and immortality has led to the view that she is a mystical poet. When Dickinson shut herself away from the world and lived as a recluse, the world thought it's all because of her unsuccessful love affairs. But that was not the only reason her poetry itself reveals her as a mystic in the true sense of the word, a person of far keener perceptions than the people of the mundane world around her.

Her most of the poetry seem to manifest a sincere and abiding faith in god. She believed in god and in spiritualism. Death and heaven were the two thoughts, which are almost used as obsessions. But she never desired a communion with the divine which the mystic longs for. The great mystic need not be conventional in religion. Often it is the other way. In their clear perception of truth, mystic poets do not require the help of dogma. One important thing that strikes the reader of Dickinson's poetry is her spirit of religious unorthodoxy. She made it clear that she relied more on her soul; to lead her to the ultimate reality than all the sermons and the church goings that conventions religion recommends.

Emily Dickinson discarded reason and like romantic poets, especially Blake and Coleridge, she relied on intuition and imagination. This imagination leads on to the vision of truth. Hence romantics relied more on imagination than reason. Likewise Dickinson's thoughts too were imaginative and entirely based upon sensory experience. She saw death as inevitable, its experience indefinable, except in terms of what we know on earth. She thought union with god was to be reserved until death.

Many of Emily Dickinson's poems are certainly related to the creator, the redeemer, with death and immortality. These are the themes, which might be described as mystical in nature. Her poems on these themes are the fruits of a very deep insight and an intense emotional nature, she also wrote many of the love poems. Here we could see her romantic attitude, turbulent passion, anguish of separation from the loved one, and renunciation in love and the spiritual victory thus won. Along with these themes even she wrote about nature, mortality, immortality and death. In the poem- Because I could not stop for death. We could see the idea that calm acceptance of death is a way of conquering death. Throughout her life, she was preoccupied with death. Sometimes her attitude towards

death is that of awe and fear; at other times she seems to be in love with death and regards it as a gateway to eternal and permanent rest. Sometimes death offers Dickinson a fine escape from the ills of life. When the dark clouds gathered in her mind's sky and the thunder crashed, she wished to die:

Like a true mystic, she never feared death, because like them, she too believed in the existence of life after death i.e. immortality. She believed that immortality is the reward for human beings who face death calmly and boldly. The idea of immortality hovered round the poet and saved her musings on death from becoming morbid.

Her songs and hymns were the expressions of her mystical growth. She revealed in many of her poems mystic vision that of other mystics like Blake, Wordsworth, Shelly, Coleridge and the others. A glance at her themes reveals an extreme preoccupation with the effect of death, the nature of the soul, and the problems of immortality, the possibility of faith, and the reality of god. Which altogether make her a great mystic.

In the fifth chapter similarities and disparities between Emily Dickinson and Akkamahadevi had been discussed. On the first hand both are women writers and

both are mystics, like Blake and Wordsworth who believed in diversity in nature, both are able to find that potentiality in each and every object of nature. Akkamahadevi calls Chennamallikarjuna as the lover and the husband but not as the guru. And for Dickinson death is a lover and it is the finality and she has personified death in the poems.

Even their writings were similar. Both wrote poems in small stanzas. Akkamahadevi called them as vachanas and Dickinson as hymns and songs; the vachanas in a way are songs. Both sang these songs from the soul. Both of them led a secluded life. Their struggle and suffering made them to grow from mundane to mystic level. Both have discussed the same themes like, death, love, soul and immortality in their songs. The picture that emerges from their songs is that of a saintly recluse, who defied the conventions of society and rebelled against the tenets of formal religion.

Most of their poems are microscopic structures, which can accommodate into them the whole range of macroscopic experience in the life of the poet. Both have minimized the big things. God becomes "papa above", and "a noted clergyman" to Emily Dickinson. "Lover" and "the eternal husband" to Akkamahadevi. Both have written love

poems. In which we could find their romantic attitude, turbulent passion, and anguish of separation from the loved one. The renunciation in love and spiritual victory are thus won by both of them.

For Akkamahadevi mysticism is the religion as the experience. But Dickinson does not go beyond the world of communion with the higher principles. Death is an escort to her. For Akkamahadevi there is no difference between death and God She always wanted communion and merge with God. Dickinson viewed Christ with some symbols but not with person of Christ. She writes with strong appreciation with a sense of detachment. There is faith certainly, and religious conviction. But nowhere is there that complete dedication in the search for perfection. But in Akkamahadevi we see full surrender and complete identification with her lover.

She regards herself as a Chennamallikarjuna's beloved and wife. But for Dickinson God is very personal one, to be treated like a friend, praised for his good deeds and chided for faults. She treats God as an intimate kinsman and calls him 'Jupiter, my father', and 'burglar and banker', 'old neighbour' and 'papa above'. Her attitude to god and religion is basically ambivalent. But

Akkamahadevi's attitude to god and religion is firm and regards God only as a divine and perpetual husband.

The aim of this thesis is to evaluate the poems of both Akkamahadevi and Emily Dickenson and to discover common points of mysticism to establish harmony and oneness between two cultures. The present age needs a study of intercultural relationships; in this connection my study of the vacanas of Akkamahadevi and songs of Emily Dickenson's shows someone mystical path to discover the oneness of mankind. Mysticism helps to know and interpret the integrated personality of the women writers in general.

NOTES:

1. *Complete work of Vivekananda: Voll*
2. Charles Conant Josey: *Psychology of Religion*.
3. Shivapade Sundaram : *Saiva school of Hinduism*.
4. N.Manuchakravarthi; “*Bharateeya Strivaada*;
Introduction, P.No.3.
 - Dr.Shanta Imrapoora: “*Dharma-Mahile Mattu Samaja*” Chetana Prakashana, Dharwas, 2001.
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 - Parameshwara Bhatta.S.V: “*Akkamahadevi*” Prasaranga, Mysore University, 1982.