CHAPTER-1
MYSTICISM

Mysticism, is an immediate, direct, intuitive knowledge of God or of ultimate reality attained through personal religious experience. Wide variations are found in both the form and the intensity of mystical experience. The authenticity of any such experience, however, is not dependent on the form, but solely on the quality of life that follows the experience. The mystical life is characterized by enhanced vitality, productivity, serenity, and joy as the inner and outward aspects harmonize in union with God.

NON-CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM:

Elaborate philosophical theories have been developed in an attempt to explain the phenomena of mysticism. Thus, in Hindu Philosophy, and particularly in the metaphysical system known as the Vedanta, the self or atman in man is identified with the supreme self, or Brahman, of the universe. The apparent separateness and individuality of beings and events are held to be an illusion (Sanskrit Maya), or convention of thought and feeling. This illusion can be dispelled through the realization of the essential oneness of atman and Brahman. When the religious initiate has overcome the beginning less
ignorance (Sanskrit Avidya) upon which depends the apparent separability of subject and object, of self and no self, a mystical state of liberation, or Moksha, is attained. The Hindu philosophy of Yoga incorporates perhaps the most complete and rigorous discipline ever designed to transcend the sense of personal identity and to clear the way for an experience of union with the divine self. In China, Confucianism is formalistic and anti-mystical, but Taoism, as expounded by its traditional founder, the Chinese philosopher Lao-tzu, has a strong mystical emphasis.

The philosophical ideas of the ancient Greeks were predominantly naturalistic and rationalistic, but an element of mysticism found expression in the Orphic and other sacred mysteries. A Late Greek movement, Neo-Platonism, was based on the philosophy of Plato and also shows the influence of the mystery on religions. The Muslim Sufi sect embraces a form of theistic mysticism closely resembling that of the Vedanta. The doctrines of Sufism found their most memorable expression in the symbolic works of the Persian poets Mohammed Shams Od-Din, better known as Hafiz, and Jalal al-Din Muhammad Rumi, and in the writings of the Persian al-Ghazali. Mysticism of the pre
Christian period is evidenced in the writings of the Jewish-Hellenistic philosopher Philo Judaeus.

CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM:

St. Paul was the first great Christian Mystic. The New Testament writing is best known for its deeply mystical emphasis on Paul's letters and the Gospel of John. Christian mysticism as a system, however, is derived from Neo-Platonism through the writing of Dionysius the Areopagite, or Pseudo-Dionysius. The 9th century Scholastic philosopher John Scotus Erigena translated the works of Pseudo-Dionysius from Greek into Latin and thus introduced the mystical theology of Eastern Christianity into Western Europe, where it was combined with the mysticism of the early Christian prelate and theologian St. Augustine.

In the Middle Ages mysticism was often associated with monasticism. Some of the most celebrated mystics are found among the monks of both the Eastern Church and the Western church, particularly the 14th century Hesychasts of Mount Athos in the former, and Saints Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis of Assisi, and John of the Cross in the latter. The French monastery of Saint Victor, near Paris,
was an important center of mystical thought in the 12th century. The renowned mystic and Scholastic philosopher St. Bonaventure was a disciple of the monks of St. Victor. St. Francis, who derived his mysticism directly from the New Testament, without reference to Neo-Platonism, remains a dominant figure in modern mysticism. Among the mystics of Holland were Jan Van Ruysbroeck and Gerhard Groote, the latter a religious reformer and founder of the monastic order known as the Brothers of the Common life. Johannes Eckhart, referred to as Meister Eckhart, was the foremost mystic of Germany.

Other important German mystics are Johannes Tauler and Heinrich Suso, followers of Eckhart and members of a group called the Friends of God. One of these groups wrote the German Theology that influenced Martin Luther. Prominent later figures include Thomas a Kempis, generally regarded as the author of the Imitation of Christ. English mystics of the 14th and 15th centuries include Margery Kempe and Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich, and anonymous author of The Cloud of Unknowing, an influential treatise of mystic prayer.
A number of the most distinguished Christian mystics have been women, notably St. Hildegard, St. Catherine of Siena, and St. Teresa of Avila. The 17th century French mystic Jeanne Marie Bouvier de la Motte Guyon introduced into France the mystical doctrine of quietism.

By its pursuit of spiritual freedom, sometimes at the expense of theological formulas and ecclesiastical discipline, mysticism may have contributed to the origin of the Reformation, although it inevitably came into conflict with Protestant, as it had with Roman Catholic, religious authorities. The Counter Reformation inspired the 'Spiritual exercises' of St. Ignatius of Loyola. 'The practice of presence of God' by Brother Lawrence was a classic French work of a somewhat later date. The most notable German Protestant mystics were Jakob Boehme, author of 'Mysterium Magnum (the Great Mystery), and Kaspar Schwenkfeld'. Mysticism finds expression in the theology of many Protestant denominations and is a salient characteristic of such sects as the Anabaptists and the Quakers.
In New England, the famous Congregational divine, Jonathan Edwards, exhibited a strong mystical tendency, and the religious revivals that began in his time and spread throughout the U.S. during the 19th century derived much of their peculiar power from the assumption of mystical principles, great emphasis being placed on heightened feeling as a direct intuition of the will of God. Mysticism manifested itself in England in the works of the 17th century Cambridge Platonists; in those of the devotional writer William Law, author of the Serious Call to a Devout and Holy life; and in the art and poetry of William Blake.

CONTEMPORARY MYSTICISM:

The 20th century has experienced a revival of interest in both Christian and non-Christian mysticism.

Early commentators of note were the Austrian Roman Catholic Baron Friedrich Von Hugel, the British poet and writer Evelyn Underhill, the American Quaker Rufus Jones, the Anglican prelate William Inge, and the German theologian Rudolf Otto. A prominent nonclerical commentator was the American psychologist and
philosopher William James in ‘The Varieties of Religious Experience’ (1902).

In non-Christian traditions, the leading commentator on Zen Buddhism was the Japanese Daisetz Suzuki; on Hinduism, the Indian Philosopher Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan; and on Islam, the British scholar R.A. Nicholson. The last half of the 20th century saw increased interest in Eastern Mysticism. The mystical strain in Judaism, which received particular emphasis in the writings of the Cabalists of the middle Ages and in the movement of the Hasidim of the 18th century, was again pointed up by the modern Austrian philosopher and scholar Martin Buber. Contemporary mystics of note are the French social philosopher Simone Weil, the French philosopher Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and the American Trappist monk Thomas Merton.

Mysticism is a way of spiritual life, which binds all humanity together. It is not enough merely to know what the different philosophers, the Christian, the Muslim, the Jain, the Buddhist, the Vaishnavite and the Lingayat ascetic propound for the attainment of God; it also is necessary to
analyse what lies behind these philosophies and these religions.

Mysticism is the philosophy of God realization, which implies and involves the faculty of intuition. And intuition is a faculty of super sensuous experience which is aroused in man by proper spiritual initiation and practice.

It is concerned with what might be called central instead of peripheral, initiation. It is not the external sense-experience that counts; it is the experience that is generated inside us in our institutional process, that is, in the process of following the path of God. Intuition is something which transcends physiological support in what purports to be central initiation. Then there is an element of super sensuousness in this intuitional experience. The normal experience is connected merely with our sensuous nature. But this mystic experience is super sensuous, as Hindi mystic have put it, walks without feet, hears without ears (Tulsidas) (binu pagacalai sunai binu kana----); a blind man sees all things (surdasa) (andhe kun saba kuca darasai----). The samething has been said by many Kannada mystics. So, intuition, super sensuous experience and
central initiation are involved in the evolution of mystical experience.

Among the psychological characteristics, of mysticism, special mention may be made of continuity. Spiritual experience must not be discontinuous. If it comes once in a while and leaves you off, and if you do not get it again and again, it is no spiritual experience at all. This continuity is also attended by the process of growth. We should not be idle or rest content merely with the intuitive experience we have; that experience must grow from day to day and from year to year, and the ultimate result of the growth of this kind of super sensuous experience would be a sort of reality. The hyperbole never meets the asymptote, but goes on approaching it continually and meets it at infinity. It is in this way that the Sadhaka or the spiritual aspirant tries to approach God.

As regards the metaphysical aspect, no experience can be called valid or real, unless at the same time it is universal and necessary. Such universal and necessary experience is objectively valid. So universality, objectivity, necessity and validity all these marks are present in the mystical experience. Finally, in regard to the most
authentic criterion of mystical experience, it is to refer to the three well known epistemological theories, namely; Idealism, Realism and Pragmatism. The first stresses on coherence, the second, correspondence or independence, and the third, satisfaction. On the one side, satisfaction leans towards the pleasure of the hedonists, and on the other towards the beatification of the mystics.

The philosophy of beatification involves a sort of catalepsia. Catalepsy; it is one finger, five fingers, open palms, the one hand being entwined with the other. Such holding together is represented in mystical experience also, by the experience of the eye supported by the experience of the ear, tongue, skin, movement and so forth. This is what the stoics used to call catalepsia, it is this kind of binding together and integration of super sensuous experience that constitutes absolute beatification. Beatification might be looked at from six points of view; from the metaphysical and mystical, and from the ethical and axiological. Whatever the point of view, it is beatification that constitutes the ultimate end, and it is this that has been aimed at by all the mystics of the world. It is this ideal of the enjoyment of perfect bliss which binds the community of saints together.
The word mysticism has got many different meanings. It means secret, enigma, confidential etc., But in encyclopedia it is described in this way. Mysticism appears in connection with the Endeavour of human mind to grasp the divine essence of the blessedness of actual communion with the highest. The first is the philosophic side of mysticism, the second its religious side. The first is theoretical or speculative, the second practical.

Here it is described in two ways one is philosophical and other is religious. In a philosophical view there is a thirst for knowledge. There is inquiry and exploration where as in a religious view they assume a form. Everything becomes manifest and realization is there. Here the same truth has been sought in a two different perspective. When man opened his eyes he was wonder struck to see the form and true appearance of this world. So, tried to find out the hidden mystery of this world. In this Endeavour he sought three paths.

In the first way it is debated that intelligence alone will help you to find out the truth about the existence of this world. And the knowledge which has attained through intelligence will resolve the experiences of human beings.
So, the view which has wholly depended on intelligence is called rationalism.

The second way has thought little higher where it is argued that intelligence alone is not enough to know the truth along with that even experiment and examinations are needed to get the whole knowledge. So experiences are main source to attain knowledge. This argument is called as empiricism.

These two rationalism and empiricism together will help us to get a little knowledge but to get an absolute knowledge these are not sufficient.

There is a notion which is not be accessible by just intelligence, experiments and experiences but alerts the heart and mind. That notion alone will give answers to the serious problems faced in the life. The notion that throbbes in the heart and mind is called as mysticism.

So this mysticism is felt and experienced throughout the world by great personality but ways may be different from person to person and from nation to nation.

Mysticism is the ‘immediate feeling of the unity of the self with God: it is nothing, therefore, but the fundamental feeling of religion, the religious life at its very heart and centre.’1
Mysticism is religion in its most concentrated and exclusive form. It is that attitude of mind in which all other relations are swallowed up in the relation of the soul with the God.2

Mysticism denotes that attitude of mind which involves a direct, immediate, first hand intuitive apprehension of God.3

So when we study these statements mysticism is nothing but ‘God’ ‘soul’ and ‘relation of the soul to the God.’

A mystic is one who experiences what he or she thinks is unity with God. For the mystic this is the ultimate perspective, the most utterly sane insight; for some psychiatrists it indicates mental instability. Mystical enlightenment may come as the result of long meditation, or it may drawn as a complete surprise. In any case, it leaves its recipient profoundly changed.

The mystic typically goes through stages variously counted and named by different observers; a) a preparatory stage, sometimes divided into conversion and purgation, b) an illuminative stage in which he or she literally sees the light, and c) a fully unitive stage of oneness with God. Sometimes between the second and third stages there may be a loss of a sense of the divine (the loss called the “dark
night of the soul"), and some Eastern mystics speak of a final stage of dissolution of human selfhood. The progression onward in Mysticism is called the mystic way.

The essence of mysticism is love. William James gives the characteristics of mystical experience as a) ineffability, b) knowledge-giving quality, c) brevity, and d) passivity. Anglican writer Evelyn Underhill emphasizes that Mysticism a) is traditionally active and practical, b) has exclusively spiritual aims, not concerned with exploring or improving the world, c) has God as the personal object to be loved, rather than known about, and d) produces a remaking of character through the releasing of a latent form of consciousness. This is a qualitative awareness, easily distinguishable from any others by anyone who has the experience. Richard M. Bucke, a nineteenth-century Canadian psychiatrist, in his classic cosmic consciousness, impressively presents many cases of mystical consciousness.

There may be no more misused word than mysticism. It often is confused with magic or spookiness. Using the term correctly, many advocates of mysticism claim that mysticism is the great common denominator of all
religions. However, some scholars maintain that mysticism is significantly different from one religion to another.

Basically, there are the ways of the priest, the prophet, and mystic. The priestly, or sacramental, path emphasizes sacred objects and formal observances. The prophetic approach stresses revelation, receiving messages taken to be directly from God, and often denounces religionists for falling away from divine ways. The primary meaning for prophet is one who speaks out; only secondarily does it relate to one who foretells the future. The mystic way is the way of personal union with the divine, most commonly held to be God, but sometimes relating to a similar sense of oneness with one’s soul or with nature. A roughly similar way of classifying religious types refers to ways of rites and works, knowledge, and piety or devotion or mysticism. Each religion tends to favor one of the three emphases over the others.

The beginnings of Indian Mysticism may be traced to the Vedas. In these religious texts we find a number of hymns addressed to the Gods by the vedic seers (Risis) experienced blissful visions of their favorite deities by intuition and not by either perception or by inference. We also learn that by meditation the seers felt absorbed in the
divine essence. In such a state they experienced not only complete identity with the deities but also enjoyed supreme ecstasy.

The essence of mysticism, namely, the intuitive apprehension of the supreme and the consequent experience of ecstasy formed the subject matter of the Upanishads also. In these great philosophic texts it was pointed out that the self and supreme were non-dual and that it should be man’s earnest endeavor to experience this spiritual state. Such an idea is clear from the brief but the effective statements like, ‘This Brahman is the self’4, ‘That thou art’5, ‘I am Brahman’6 and ‘Brahman is consciousness’7. The nature of mystic experience is beautifully portrayed in the Svetasvatara Upanishad which says; “His form is not to be seen, no one sees Him by the eye. Those who know him by mind as dwelling in the heart become immortal’8.

A Mystical vein of thought has been present throughout the development of Indian philosophy since the Vedic days of Upanishads.

The Upanishadic Mysticism was a naïve philosophical mysticism. It was not incompatible with
queer fancies, strange imaginings, and daring theories about the nature of reality. It was the mysticism of men who lived in cloisters far away from the bustle of humanity and who, if they permitted any company at all, permitted only the company of their disciples. The Upanishadic mystic did not come forward with the deliberate purpose of mixing with men in order to ameliorate their spiritual condition. But the mysticism of the middle age was different from the mysticism Upanishads. The mysticism of the middle age was practically a devotional mysticism. It hated all philosophical imaginings as useless. We may say that as we pass from Upanishadic mysticism to the mysticism of the middle age, we see spiritual life brought from the hidden cloister to the market place.

Before, however, mysticism could be brought from being the private possession of a few to be the property of all, it must pass through the intermediate stage of the moral awakening of the people to the sense of duty, which would not be incompatible with philosophical imagination on the one hand and democratization of the mystical experience on the other. The task of which indeed was accomplished by the Bhagavad-gita. Because it laid stress on the doing of duty for duty's sake and this is the central thread which
strings together all the variegated teaching of the Bhagavad-Gita. The doctrine of immortality the way of equanimous yogic endeavor; the hope for sinners as well as saints, for women as well as men; the superiority which it declares of the way of devotion to the way of mere knowledge and finally, the universal immanence and omnipotence of God and these teachings supply merely side issues for the true principle of moral conduct which finds its justification in mystic Realization.

So the Bhagavad-Gita had not yet lost hope for reconciling all these philosophical issues in a supreme mystical endeavour in these respects, the mysticism of the middle age offers a contrast to the mysticism of the Bhagavad-Gita. Except few the entire tenor of the mysticism of the middle age is for the practical enlistment of humanity, irrespective of any philosophical questionings, and with probably a strong, if not even a slightly perverted, bias against philosophical endeavour to reach the absolute. We may say infact that as the mysticism of the Bhagavad-Gita rests upon a philosophical foundation; the mysticism of the middle age rests upon itself, involving no aid from any philosophical construction whatsoever.
The theme of Mysticism was continued in the Bhagavadgita. Indeed some thinkers are of the opinion that the ‘Gita is a gospel of mysticism’. Such yogins have a state of ecstasy; and during this state they have knowledge of things, however subtle or remote they may be, solely through their own mental power.

There were a number of great mystics in India from early times. Some of the important ones among these were: Goswami Tulsidas, Bkakta Mira, saint Pattinathar, Saint Tyagaraja and Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. And to this list of great Indian Mystics should be added the name of Sri Basaveshwara and his followers Channabasava, Akkamahadevi and others. Who lived in the Karnataka country in the 12th century A.D. Basaweshwara was a great religious reformer and was responsible for the development of the Virasaiva faith which believes in the worship of the omnipotent Shiva as the only God. Ho possessed great spiritual powers gained from the practice of mysticism. He described very vividly the signs of ecstasy that can be noticed in a devotee while experiencing a mystic vision of God. The gift of experiencing mystic delight could come only to a person who led a moral life. So Basaweshwara in his sweet and profound sayings emphasized this point and
called upon all the people belonging to the Virasaiva faith to become morally pure.

Basavanna founded a new cult of Saranas who realized the divinity in their work and in their way of life. Many a disciple gathered in the Anubhava Mantap and founded a new philosophy based on empirical ideas. The mysticism of saranas is traced from their new practices- Panchacharas, Astavarna and Satastala. All the saranas advocated the dignity of work, which is a way to mystic experience.

The trend of mysticism of India has got a history since from vedas and Upanishads. There are few examples in Rigveda to show that few women have written some religious words of counsel. In Upanishad we see Maitreyi and Katyayini who were great spiritual disciples. We also see a great spiritual disciple Gargeyi who faces a great conversation with absolute wise man Yagnavalka. In the 6th century equality and freedom are experienced from the influence of Jainism and Buddhism. So only the book “Therigaatha” has been a collection of great contemplation of 73 female Buddhist monks. The Digambara school of Jainism disqualified woman from the attainment of salvation, It further held that she could hope to attain
salvation only after taking birth as a man. Buddha though
did not deny salvation to women was reluctant to admit
them to the female order of Bhikkshunis.

In the 6th and 7th c A.D there has been a
Shaiva and Vaishnava Bhakti movements in southern parts
of India especially in Tamilnadu. These movements gave
great contribution for the mystical attitude for women. In a
famous 63 Nayanars Karikalama stands prominent and
among twelve Alas, Andal is notable. But later in a
medieval period status of woman was pitiable, because of
supremacy of Hindu religion and the firm changes made in
a cultural heritage of India. Polygamy, child marriage and
lack of education restricted life of woman to family. She
was unqualified from the spiritual achievement and
attaining the knowledge of the soul. She became puppet in
the hands of male dominated society.

But Shivasharanas of Karnataka in the 12th century A.D.
stood against all these tangles faced in the society. There
was a social-religious movement in Kalyana against the
evil discriminations of caste, creed and sex. Spread across
the country and attracted hundreds and thousands of
likeminded and right-thinking people including women.
Kannada mystics evidently divide themselves into two schools, the saivite and the vaisnavite. A real mystic, however, is he who is neither a saivite nor a vaisnavite.

We can see some parallels between the great Kannada mystics and many of the mystics of the world. For example, if we take the Greek philosophers such as Socrates, Plato and Phaedo, they are present in the Anubhava Mantapa at Kalyan. Prabhudeva representing Socrates, Basaveshwara representing Plato and Cannabasava representing Phaedo. Then the dialogues in ‘Sunya Sampadane’ are planned very much on the lines of the platonic dialogues. The great saint Sarvajna in his characteristic antithetical manner of expression has his parallel in the Greek philosopher Herakleitos.

If we go to the Christian period, we shall see that corresponding to the four great representatives of Christianity in the development of Christian thought, namely, Jesus Christ, St. Paul, St. Augustine and Martin Luther. We have among the Karnataka mystic’s their representatives in the personalities of Prabhudeva, Basava,
Siddharama and Channabasava who adorned the Anubhava Mantapa.

If we go to the Maharashtra mystics, we find the same parallels. Basaveshwara occupies the same place in karnada mysticism which tukarama occupies in Maharasthra mysticism. Because they both have the same fervent attitude towards God which enables them to approach him directly. If Basaveshwara may be regarded as the Tukarama of Karnataka mysticism, Channabasa may be likened to Ramadeva. He is the disseminator of faith, the active worker and the organizer as Ramadasa. Further, the great maharashtra saint, Ekanatha, who is both a philosopher and a mystic, has his parallel in Jagannathadasa. Among the Vaishnava Saints and Nijaguna sivayogi among the veerasaiva saints. They are as great philosophers as they are mystics. Still further, Kanakadasa closely resembles Cokhamela as both of them were great God realisers and both have given a vivid expression to their direct spiritual experience. As a poet, however, Kanakadasa is superior to Cokhamela and finally, very peculiarly the two saints of the same name, Mahipati, occupy the same mystical philosophy. The two are great intellectual personalities, great mystics, great pietas, but unfortunately not much is
known about them. Nor have their writings been studied. Among the woman mystics Meerabai and Akkamahadevi could be brought together. Meerabai worshipped lord Krishna whereas Akkamahadevi worshipped Lord Shiva.

Between Karnataka and Hindi mystics also Purandaradasa occupies the same position in Kannada literature which Tulasidasa occupies in Hindi. They can hardly be surpassed so far as their literary ability and poetic genius are concerned. Another poet, the great Vijayadasa of Kannada literature, has his parallel in Surdas. Both of them are Saguna worshippers and both of them are good musicians.

Then kanakadasa of kannada mysticism has his parallel in Raidasa in this part of the country. Raidasa is a very fine personality, a wonderful poet with mystical experience, so also is Kanakadasa then there is some parallelism between Sarifsaheb of Sisunala, a place near Dharwar, and Kabir, the great mystical poet of Northern India. Both of them are Mohemedans, and they speak about the same kind of mystical experience. Though it is true that Kabir stands on a higher level. There is still another pair of saints, though they are not so well known. Sarpabhusana, one of the
greatest of Karnataka mystics, has an exact parallel in Caranadasa among the Hindi mystics. Just as Caranadasa carried on the tradition of Kabir in Hindi literature, similarly Sarpabhusana carried on the yogic tradition in Karnataka mysticism.

Further an astronomical parallel has also been made. In which Prabhudeva is like Akasa or the Sky, in which Basaveshwara is the Bhanu or the Sun. Cannabasava is Chandra or Guru, and Akkamahadevi is Arundhti. Whether this parallelism is possible or not but these four great mystics are like the luminaries in the heavens, illumined spiritual life in the southern part of the country.

All this makes it clear that no great work is accomplished except by mutual co-operation and help. The same is the case with the development of great spiritual ideals which each one of us wants to realize. Unless there is co-operation and common Endeavour nothing great can be achieved.

A General mystical way of the western mystics could be compared with the ways the veerashaiva mystics followed
as Satastala. Conventional analysis of mystical way is as follows: The soul undergoes a purification (the purgative way), which leads to a feeling of illumination and greater love of God (the illuminative way); after a period the soul may be said to enter into mystical union with God (the unitive way), which begins with the consciousness that God is present to the soul; the soul progresses through a time of quiet and an ecstatic state to a final perfect state of union with God (spiritual marriage). Later in this process there is an experience (the thick night of the soul).

The Veerashaiva metaphysics too followed six stages of mystic experience for attaining mystic stance. It is believed that one who attains this stage, naturally gains some powers which may be called mystic powers.

The goal of Veerashaiva religion is to remove the barriers so that man may experience unity with God. This way of liberation is classified into six stages, which all have their own spiritual characteristic this system, which is typical of Veerashaiva is called the Satsthala siddhanta- the doctrine of the six phases.

The first phase is the Bhaktasthala- the phase of the devotee, obvious going along the path to final liberation.
always starts with devotion. The distinction between soul and God is experienced in that stage as very great and the only means to reach God is devotional surrender, together with the observance of moral prescripts in order to overcome the power of desire.

The second phase is called Mahesvarasthala- the phase of the master. Here devotion is still very important; but the emphasis is on discipline and endurance. The devotee must resist all kinds of temptations.

Then comes the third phase called Prasadisthala – the phase of the receiver of grace. The devotee has experienced the divine grace and so he is able to devote his whole life as an offering to God.

The fourth phase is called- Pranalingisthala – the phase of the linga in the life – breath. Now, the devotee experiences that the linga is in his own life breathe. God dwells in his soul. Gradually, the distinction between soul and God is decreasing. That is especially clear in the next stage.
The fifth phase is called as Saranasthala – the phase of the surrendered. In the figurative language of veerasaiva literature, this stage is often described in terms of marriage. The devotee being the wife of the lord. Complete surrender is the characteristic of the Saranasthala and this is regarded as so important that ‘Sarana’ even became an equivalent for ‘accomplished devotee’ or ‘Saint’ in veerasaiva terminology.

The last phase must be reached Aikyasthala – the phase of union. In this sixth stage, the devotee attains consubstantial unity with the divine. Soul and God are no longer separated. And the devotee experiences the ultimate liberation (mukti). The cycle of rebirth has stopped. The soul will not transmigrate again, but is forever united with the linga. This ultimate goal is indicated with the word ‘Bayalu’ or ‘Sunya’ which is not similar to the Buddhist concept of ‘Nirvana’. Everything is there in Bayalu but nothing is there in Nirvana.
NOTES

3. Dr. R.D. Ranade – Mysticism in Maharastra.
4. ‘Ayam atma Brahma’ (Brhadaranyaka Upanishad)II5,19.

5. ‘Tat Tvam asi’ (condogya Upanishad) VI. 8.7.
6. ‘Aham Brahmasmi’ (Brhadaranyaka Upanishad) I, IV,10.
7. ‘Prajnam Brahma; (Aitareya Upanishad) III, 1,3.
8. Svetaasvatara Upanishad (IV-20)
   - Sri Aurobindo introduction to the Upanishads.
   - Enclyclopedia: p.no.51