CHAPTER - VI

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In the journey of our spiritual life we can only start from where we are and what we are. This should also take into account what there is in man ideally to become and can be. With the dawn of religious consciousness the aspiring individual is driven to look inward. This helps the aspirant to spy out the strengths and weaknesses in his outward and inner life. This turning of attention inwards is the beginning of religious and mystical consciousness. In their origin they are not distinguishable. The word mysticism is used loosely in a disparaging and contemptuous manner. But competent authorities, by common consent, have considered mysticism as a genuine mode of intense religious experience.

In the process of spiritual journey overcoming of obstacles that block the aspirant's progress towards the union between soul and God is the first task. But it is not an easy task. That is what actual experience of all aspirers at all times all over the world testifies. Accordingly we find Basava and Tagore struggling to overcome the internal and external barriers blocking their path to mystic union with God. The utterances of Basava and Tagore ring with joy and affirmation overstepping all limitations of race and creed. Their utterances are full of this consciousness endeavoring to master their attention to inward looking. This is the nascent germ of religio-mystical consciousness in the embryonic form. For example, Basava addresses his own mind, thereby reflecting the behavior of mankind in general as in the vacanas wherein he lists all human failings as stumbling blocks to a virtuous and a saintly life of a search for the infinite. As Basava says:
Greed, lust, sloth, lies,
Infirmity of sense,
Roguery and fraud,
Anger and meanness and untruth—
Tear these away from off my tongue!
Why? For they bar my way to thee.
Therefore, erase all these
And sanctify the fivefold sense,
O Lord Kudala Sangama! (VB 46)

In the same spirit Tagore also writes:

The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures...

Sustained development of this consciousness of inward relationship with the infinite is difficult in the circumstances of our worldly life. Tagore says, "The consciousness of this unity is spiritual, and our effort to be true to it is our religion." Mystic quest is the development of this embryonic consciousness into fuller and deeper intensities in virtue of the fact that man is gifted with a surplus exceeding biological requirements. Tagore writes "above the din and the clamor and scramble rises the voice of the angel of surplus, of leisure of detachment from the compelling claim of physical need, saying to men, 'Rejoice.' " The aspirant's spiritual career assumes a new brightness and visibility. Basava and Tagore hold that at no stage of spiritual journey, the aspirant can ignore the say and role of the sensuous and the non-sensuous fund of energies that man is. Basava becomes critical of the role and lure of sensuous attractions in his attempt to turn his attention inwards. He asks himself a value-oriented question "Why he is caught up in this bondage to worldliness?"
Look how the ocean of this world
Swells and flings itself
Upon my face!
Tell me, is it breast-high?
Tell me, is it neck-high?

And when it comes
As high as the head,
What shall I say, O Lord?

Lord, O Lord, list to my distress!
What shall I do now, Lord
Kudala Sangama? (VB, 8)

In a similar vein Tagore is aware of the hand of the animalistic impulses and the possibility of man’s power to bring them under control. He says, “As an animal he is still dependent upon Nature; as a Man, he is a sovereign who builds his world and rules it.” Thus man is part creator of himself in alliance with the helping hand that he craves from God. Tagore is fully aware of his role and responsibility in pursuing the long-winding arduous mystic journey when he says, “The time that my journey takes is long and the way of it long.... In thy world I have no work to do; my useless life can only break out in tunes without a purpose.... The traveler has to knock at every alien door to come to his own, and one has to wander through all the outer worlds to reach the innermost shrine at the end.”

In this way we find in Basava and Tagore a struggling endeavor to find ways of controlling and regulating drifting desires aimlessly wandering. As Basava writes:

O heart, roam not about, adrift,
Like to the raven who has soared
Up to the sky!... (VB 273)
There is near identity, in this respect, between Basava and Tagore to discover the true path after unsuccessfully flirting this way, that way, another and another way. This struggle of the aspirant is more vividly described but with a painful and depressing accuracy than Tagore who gives a succinct account. In doing so both have raised the ordinary common places of life to a higher spiritual life adding new dimensions to life itself. In picturesquely transcribing the inner struggle between the temptations of the flesh and spirit both Basava and Tagore do not underrate or devalue the proper role of the senses. These struggles take their birth from the common life and are illuminated in the mystic poet's genius and are returned to the unlettered and unlearned and the learned alike. In their own way each finds his own image of the journey in these descriptions of mystic struggles. However again and again the aspirant in the mood of heart-searching self-examination regrets his plight of being caught in worldliness with a sense of liberation being far away. As a smooth sea can never make a good sailor, and as such dangers and difficulties must be there in the path of spiritual aspirant's life to make him greater and better. This is so because we seem to devote too much time and effort to things that hardly matter and too little time and effort to those that count. In his process of self-perfection the spiritual aspirant faces many obstacles internally and externally. These obstacles help to drill the aspirant in his determination to pursue the hoped for goal of his final destiny – union with God. Inspection of the inward drama of the soul reveals to him the temptations and distractions and the lure of worldly attractions in spite of uttering the name of God. He becomes aware of his plight being lost in the whirlpool of worldliness and cannot fare forward towards his goal. Basava says:
Lord, this world
Has caught me in its snare!
Save me, O save me, Lord!
All worth is gone, is gone!
Your mercy, Lord, your mercy,
Kudala Sangama! (VB 13)

When the serpent of this world
Instilled its venom into me –
They call it objects of the fivefold sense –
There was no stepping further... I
Reel and writhe and toss in pain!
But then I tell and tell the spell
'Om namah sivaya!' O Lord
Kudala Sangama! (VB 20)

The aspirant realizes that he is caught in the trap of mechanical movement of valueless, meaningless hurrying of life’s activities. He regrets that the growth of bad qualities in him has prevented him from enlightenment and unfaltering vigilance over himself and entreats God to come to his help. Basava says:

Destruction’s weed is born
In a field of growing corn:
It clouds my understanding,
It lulls my brain asleep;
O Father Linga, pluck
This weed, my vice,
That my shoot burst again
And I may grow, O Lord
Kudala Sangama! (VB 50)
The distress of sinking deeper and deeper to the extent of being drowned in worldliness intensifies the initial germ of inward looking religio-mystical consciousness, in sheer helplessness drives the aspirant to appeal to his God Kudala Sangama to grasp his uneasy dissatisfaction with his plight. The aspirant in this degree of mysticism confesses before God his good and bad thoughts and doings and entreats God to listen to his voice of agony and being lost in worldliness asks, “What can I say and do?” Equally in the same strain Tagore points out that the ornaments of worldly life’s lure and attractions prevent the aspirant’s mystic quest for union with God. The aspirant vowing to make his life simple and making it a fit flute appeals to God to fill himself with God’s music. He says:

*My song has put off her adornments. She has no pride of dress and decoration. Ornaments would mar our union; they would come between thee and me; their jingling would drown thy whispers.*

*My poet’s vanity dies in shame before thy sight. O master poet, I have sat down at thy feet. Only let me make my life simple and straight, like a flute of reed for thee to fill with music.*

*The child who is decked with prince’s robes and who has jeweled chains round his neck loses all pleasure in his play; his dress hampers him at every step.*

*In fear that it may be frayed, or stained with dust he keeps himself from the world, and is afraid even to move.*

*Mother, it is no gain, thy bondage of finery, if it keep one shut off from the healthful dust of the earth, if it rob one of the right of entrance to the great fair of common human life.*
Tagore is fully aware of the fact of the senses being tricked into following their own objects wherein they find their gratification. As Tagore says, Man's "desires are many, and madly they run after the varied objects of the world, for therein they have their life and fulfillment ... when the heat and the motion of blind impulses and passion distract it (soul) on all sides, we can neither give nor receive anything truly". Basava is even more self-conscious of the play of the lower impulses when he is inspired to devote the largest number of utterances depicting the struggle of the mind pulling the aspirant in different directions. He does so because man's problem is and must be how to utilize properly life's energies and opportunities in order to develop spiritually. As worthy of being human it must be our business to make the most out of all the potentialities and the powers in the way of dynamic perfection.

The aspirant therefore intends to make his life fruitful within the boundaries of birth and death. This is the question of what in the way of spiritual value is the achievement of life? But the obstacles are so many and so formidable that to overcome them is the great mystical achievement. Basava says that the worldliness has pervaded every cell of his being like Rahu shadowing the full moon and thus eclipsing his physical body. Not knowing what to do Basava the aspirant in all humility asks God Kudala Sangama when he shall be liberated? In his own words:

My lot is as the moon's -
A shadowy spot.
The Rahu of this world
Hath swallowed me whole: today,
My body is in a total eclipse!
When, then, O Kudala Sangama,
Will deliverance come? (VB 9)
In this predicament the aspirant has a glimpse of the possibility of escape. The aspirant is struck with grief for having lived an unfruitful life. He is not happy in this situation. There is a growing awareness of getting out of such situation. But he cannot do so. He is put on the gallows in the form of multicolored attractions of worldliness. Basava likens this to the friendship between the snake and the snake charmer. It is here that the aspirant realizes that he is his own enemy in so far as he has wasted life even though God's endowment is bountiful. He says:

Upon the gallows standing, what good to me
Your daintiest repast?
This many-colored world is like
The amity between
A snake - charmer and a snake...
One's self is enemy to self,
What chance of an accord,
O most bountiful
Lord Kudala Sangama? (VB 12)

The aspirant is caught in a snare and is perplexed as to how he should get out of it even though he is conscious of the meaninglessness of his life. He yearns to be saved and repeatedly appeals to God Kudala Sangama to protect him.

Tagore's experiences correspond to the nuances of this struggle to overcome and plead for God's protection. In contrast to the higher value being enshrined in our heart how man is ensnared by the lower attractions is expressed by Tagore as follows: "We are frantically busy making use of the forces of the universe to gain more and more power; we feed and we clothe ourselves from its source, we scramble for its riches, and it becomes for us a field of fierce competition... Our desires blind us to the truth that there is in man, and this is the greatest wrong done by ourselves to our own soul. It deadens our consciousness, and is but a gradual method of spiritual suicide".

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Thus Basava and Tagore are on the same wavelength when they have noted that the deeper they sink in lower values of worldly temptations man is his own enemy committing spiritual suicide. The agreement is closer when both hold that "man barricades himself against himself" ruining his prospects for higher God-ward journey. Also seeking to do well can make an opening by knocking at the gate. As Tagore says, "He who wants to do good knocks at the gate; he who loves finds the gate open. The trees like the longings of the earth stand a-tip-toe to peep the heaven." Thus the aspirant struggles up to be pitchforked into illuminative knowledge. Again both agree that it is the divine grace, which can show the way to the hoped-for-goal. Of course the longing is as Tagore says, for the one who is felt in the dark, but not seen in the day. However it is a setback when noisy moments of experience scoff at the music of the eternal as pointed out by Tagore. Basava voices the same thing when he says that however high you may go, as a dog sitting in the palanquin jumps at its object of low taste, so also the self indulges in lower attractions. He says:

\begin{verbatim}
As a dog riding a palanquin,
My mind, on seeing a thing,
Reverts to its natural bent.
A plague on't! it hunts for Sense!
It does not let me, O my Lord,
Remember Thee from day to day...
O Lord Kudala Sangama,
Have pity on me, so I may love
Thy feet! Oh, grant me grace! (VB 34)
\end{verbatim}

He yearns to be saved and repeatedly appeals to Kudala Sangama to protect him. Furthermore he is self-critical of the mind, which drags him this way, that way by sidetracking him from his craving to unite with God. (VB 14). There is an intolerable wrestle with his own waylaying mind by himself in
spite of his effort to drag it in the direction of his craving to unite with God. The aspirant is not able to penetrate his mystery as to how he is tortured in his struggle without much success. He thinks that God knows what is in the best interests of the aspirer. The aspirer is bewildered at the forceful influence of the great powers of the temptations to be conquered. Tagore is also facing the same turbulence of desires and the passionate impulses that require a struggling endeavor to control them. Tagore says, "The negative process of curbing desire and controlling passion is only for saving our energy from dissipation and directing it into its proper channel. If the path of the channel we have chosen runs within- wards, it also must have its expression in action, not for any ulterior reward, but for the proving of its own truth. If the test of action is removed, if our realization grows purely subjective, then it may become like traveling in a desert in the night going round and round the same circle, imagining all the while that we are following the straight path of purpose." Tagore believes that in the case of most people a large part of their energy is wasted in the negative process of fighting and pacifying energies of animal passions. Tagore thinks that if such energy can be saved for positive realization of enhancing spiritual intensity there will be progress in the mystical path. Otherwise it will be like going round and round in a circle with no gain of any value in the way of spiritual realization. Basava is no less eloquent on this point. He depicts this wasteful effort producing nothing worthwhile by means of homely illustrations pregnant with meanings, which even rustic people can understand. For example he says:

    My bhakti's like an ox
    That circles an oil-mill with no sesamum;
    My bhakti is as one who chews
    A water-sodden lump of salt!
    O Kudala Sangama Lord,
    The flaming pride
    Of having achieved, now turned
    Upon me, burns! (VB 383)
Most of the activities of men are performed mechanically as a routine with no intrinsic value gained. It is a tragedy that such men are not even aware of the meaninglessness of their routine activities. The examples just cited highlight the negative aspect of doing things for the mere show with no gain in terms of spiritual value or for that matter any value. The metaphors of the ox circling the oil mill with no oil seeds in it, chewing water-sodden lump of salt, chewing the bamboo leaf, churning water etc. do not produce any positively beneficial value. On the other hand it may promote a sense of egoism of having done something but with no spiritually productive value. Such egoism is a kind of fire, which mars spiritual effort by burning it.

With no thought of the highest goal of life fixed man’s worldliness of spiritually meaningless mechanical activities go on breadwinning to fill, as does a pig, his stomach today and ever. He has no shame of being born again and again in the wheel of samsara and no plan to be liberated at least from now on. It is a mystery that he is not allowed to meditate uninterruptedly on the always-auspicious God Siva. Even though the aspirant is weary and worn
out it is impossible, whatever one may do, to escape the result of clinging to bodily activities of worldliness. But Basava the aspirant is encouraged spiritually to live on and on when the Saranas come and assure peace and safety. Here the aspiration is facilitated by the awareness of the Saranas' company and encouragement and enthusiasm. The aspirant knows what he sows he has to reap. He must make careful choices because he has to enjoy or suffer the consequences, which may hinder or facilitate his onward and upward journey. It is only when his progress is frustrated that, in despair, seeks the help and assurance from God and godly Saranas encouraging him to renew his spiritual effort. In exactly the same way the mystic in Tagore admonishes himself as to how he should proceed in the mystic path. He is aware of the desires sidetracking him from the true path and waylaying him so as to block his progress in spite of him. This is the wayward nature of animalist impulses. Being self-critical both Basava and Tagore take a mystic oath to overcome the lure of evil impulses. They resort to seeking guidance from God and the godly. Tagore says:

*Life of my life, I shall ever try to keep my body pure,*

*knowing that thy living touch is upon all my limbs.*

*I shall ever try to keep all untruths out from my thoughts, knowing that thou art that truth which has kindled the light of reason in my mind.*

*I shall ever try to drive all evils away from my heart and keep my love in flower, knowing that thou hast thy seat inmost shrine of my heart.*

*And it shall be my endeavor to reveal thee in my actions, knowing it is thy power gives me strength to act.¹³...My desires are many and my cry is pitiful,*

*but ever didst thou save me by hard refusals; and this*
Both Basava and Tagore are fully aware that if one is vitiated by mundane aspirations God would not respond. They are also aware that God's refusal to accept them would strengthen their resolve to vow and hold on tenaciously to the effort of cleansing the inward parts of the soul. In despair the aspirant wonders whether it was a sin to have been born at all in the mother's womb.

Basava says:

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\begin{align*}
&\text{Thou, Father, mad' st me come} \\
&\text{Blind through my mother's womb}-- \\
&\text{Through undeserving births!} \\
&\text{O Linga, is it my fault that I was born?} \\
&\text{O Linga, pray, for former births} \\
&\text{Grant thy forgiveness!} \\
&\text{Should I be born again,} \\
&\text{Thy curse on, O Lord} \\
&\text{Kudala Sangama! (VB 21)} \\
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
&\text{When shall this trouble of the world} \\
&\text{Subside?} \\
&\text{When shall my mind know peace,} \\
&\text{Oh, when?} \\
&\text{O Lord Kudala Sangama,} \\
&\text{When shall I taste the ultimate Bliss? (VB 22)}
\end{align*}
\]

In a mood of hopelessness he utters to himself when he is going to escape the misery of the prison of worldliness and cross into the lasting joy of blissful union with God. Becoming self-conscious the aspirant instructs himself to find out the cause of too much attachment to the things of the world beyond
all proportions and all propriety. It is self-search in the light of what he ought to have become ideally. It might be, he thinks, the result of what he has done earlier, he is reaping the fruits now. Otherwise he would not have been plunged into this whirlpool of worldliness. Basava writes:

What does it help to yearn
And yearn again,
Unless your fore-committed sin
Has ceased to chase you?
What helps to gaze and gaze
Upon the men of God,
Unless you have obtained
The gift, already, from the Lord
Kudala Sangama? (VB 24)

The aspirant now becomes aware that merely looking to others who have attained excellence and wishing for it will not make him realize in his own first hand intimate experience unless God endows him. He now feels none else but God can be his well wishing relative. In Basava’s words “Nobody is for anybody, So! The fallen have no friend! Then only, Lord Kudala Sangama, Art the world’s kin!” The aspirant is never tired of confessing his weaknesses and duplicity in thought, word and deed. Basava writes:

My actions go one way,
Another way my speech!
Look, Lord, there is no trace
Of purity in me!
Where action fitting to the word is found,
There, truly, Lord Kudala Sangama dwells! (VB 30)

To overcome the barriers in this regard is a greatest step in mystical way before the achievement of the final goal. This is so because worldliness pervades every cell of man in general and the aspirant in particular. It is
impossible to give voice to the infinite nuances of the struggles the aspirant is wrestling with. The aspirer is bewildered at the forceful influence of the temptations to be conquered. He is convinced that blissful union with God will not come to him merely by desiring however well intentioned he may be. Earning God's boon is felt necessary. At this stage the aspirant knows that grace will not descend unless God tests the devotee for his purity, sincerity, tenacity and firmness of faith in God. Yet the aspirant knows that his faults are infinite and that there is nothing pure in him. But he also knows that God enters the inner shrine of heart only when his words and deeds match harmoniously. Basava confesses:

Do not look, do not look into my heart;
For if you do, you will not find
A kernel there.
What do you look for in a nut
Where nothing is?
Pray, fill it with virtue, Lord
Kudala Sangama! (VB 28)

Look you, my heart
Is like a country fig:
Search it with care,
There is no kernel there!
O Kudala Sangama Lord,
It's you have made
This outer form of mine
And placed me, you,
In this imposture of a world! (VB 29)

The aspirant confessing by baring naked his soul tells God not to test him because nothing of great value except wrongs can be found in his soul. He requests God to fill him with good and great qualities.
In the same tone Tagore describes the hurt that the appetites cause to man's spiritual life when they are indulged in excessively. He says, "His (man's) appetites do not minister to his life keeping to the limits of their purpose; they become an end in themselves and set fire to his life and play the fiddle in the lurid light of the conflagration...It is dire destruction for him when he envelopes his soul in a dead shell of callous habits, and when a blind fury of whirls round him like an eddying dust storm, shutting out the horizon." When the gratification of sensuous appetites is made the be-all and end-all of man's life they set fire to his life and burn him in that conflagration ruining the prospects of higher spiritual life. The plight of the aspirant is picturesquely described in the metaphor of eddying dust storm foreclosing all possibilities of progress in the spiritual journey. Tagore holds that our different kinds of possessions such as riches, positions of power and such other mundane vanities lead to an inflated ego that bars the aspirant from comprehending the gates of the spiritual world. They drag the aspirant into the mud at bottom. As Tagore says, "He who is bent upon accumulating riches is unable with his ego continually bulging to pass through the gates of comprehension of the spiritual world, which is the world of perfect harmony. He is shut up within the narrow walls of his limited acquisitions." But no sensible aspirant would like to be mired into the sorrowful and painful momentary multiple attractions. Tagore says:

**OBSTINATE are the trammels, but my heart aches when I try to break them.**

*Freedom is all I want, but to hope for it I feel ashamed.*

*I am certain that priceless wealth is in thee, and that thou art my best friend, but I have not the heart sweep away the tinsel that fills my room.*

*The shroud that covers me is a shroud of dust and death; I hate it, yet hug it in love.*

*My debts are large, my failures great, my shame secret and heavy; yet when I come to ask for my good, I quake in fear lest my prayer be granted.*
Negatively speaking breaking the barriers in the mystic path is really
great but difficult task. Each aspirant has his own uniquely specific struggle
of experience in mastering the internal obstacles. The mystic aspirant is torn
between the pulls dragging him into the pit of lower pleasures of the senses
and his yearning to live face to face in God. He is caught in the cross currents
of lower and higher life as has been the case in Basava also. The mystic
aspirant, though he wants freedom seems ashamed to hope for it. Though the
aspirant feels that the real wealth is in God as a friend, he cannot abandon the
shallow artificial embellishments with which he has decorated himself. He
hugs them although he hates them. The aspirant is aware of his failures and
shortcomings. He does not dare to ask for his good lest shamefully he fears
that his prayer may be granted. The aspirant is in a state of conflict between
the yearning for spiritual good and the temptation not to sacrifice the
pleasures of the mundane desires. As Tagore says, “It is a fact of supreme
moment to us that the human world is in an incessant state of war between
that which will save us and that which will drag us into the abyss of
disaster.”\textsuperscript{18} The spiritual aspirant is torn between two impulses—an ideal and
an impulse. A breakthrough to a further phase of progress would be
impossible if the aspirant keeps open the doors of truth on one side and the
opposite forces on the other. As Sri Aurobindo says, “If you open yourself on
one side or in one part to the Truth and on another side are constantly
opening the gates to hostile forces, it is vain to expect that the divine grace
will abide with you. You must keep the temple clean if you wish to install
there the living presence.”\textsuperscript{19}

In a number of vacanas Basava metaphorically likens man’s nature to
the plight of a dog. To whatever height it may rise it does not very often give
up its earlier nature of hunting after the low pleasures following its natural
bent. The aspirant prays God to grant him grace. Like a dog licking the sword
for the ghee is his mind. It is not ready to give up or abandon attachment to
mundane pleasure. He prays God to rid his doggishness and enable him to meditate on God’s feet. In the words of Basava:

My life is like a dog
Licking a sword’s sharp edge
For ghee!
My mind will not forsake
The bother of this world!
O Lord Kudala Sangama,
Out of thy mercy, rid
Me of this doggish life! (VB 35)

Here is a graphic picture of mind’s tendency to follow the lead of the senses channelising their energies in different directions. They refuse to turn inward for a self-searching examination, doubting and defying and thinking always to be superior to everything else in a perverted way. Basava says:

This mind believes in you
If only you speak
According to its fancy; but dare you
But cross it, it’s your foe!
I’ll cast it into fire—
This mind, that does not trust
Kudala Sanga’s Saranas! (VB 39)

This pervert functioning of the five senses, mind, and body has destroyed the lustre, reason and courage respectively. Therefore the aspirant surrenders to God so that he may protect the aspirant by turning him in the God ward direction. He says:

The strength of the five senses
Has worn me down.
The passions of my mind have borne
My reason down.
My courage has been shattered by
The passions of my flesh.
Therefore, O Lord Kudala Sangama,
I surrender to thee. (VB 43)
Greed, lust, sloth, lies, 
Infirnity of sense, 
Roguery and fraud, 
Anger and meanness and untruth—
Tear these away from off my tongue!
Why? For they bar my way to thee.
Therefore, erase all these
And sanctify the fivefold sense,
O Lord Kudala Sangama! (VB 46)

In this vacana the aspirant after a detailed self-examination of himself finds out that greed, lust, sloth, lies, anger, meanness must be got rid of because they do not allow the aspirant to follow the Godward path. The barriers in the spiritual path are well recognized and the nascent desire to cleanse and purify the senses, the mind and the body in the inner life of the soul is acknowledged. All this corresponds to what Underhill calls the Purgative stage in the mystical path. The living first hand experience of cleansing the inward parts of the soul is something, which is peculiar to each sadhaka. Everyone has his own struggles wrestling with the temptations of flesh and mind in his own way. It is here that one is face to face with himself alone in facing the hijackers away from his true goal. Unless one spies out and controls the hijackers hiding in the secret places of mind, body and heart of man the nascent spiritual aspirant cannot proceed further and further. This preliminary stage involves details which each individual has to master in the preparation of the pathway to concentrated religious experience called mysticism. One does not accidentally slip into peak experiences beyond peaks of highest intensity. According to Basava each occasion of experience on the pathway to the union of the soul and God is a cumulative and creative experience. Whatever the stage of development each occasion of experience is complex and the fall is imminent. As Basava says,
Do not leap boughs;
Do not feed the body alone;
Do not, by giving worldlings scope, be a crazy fool!
What you call discipline is but a slippery stone... (VB 620)

In the same way Tagore recognizes that "Life must for its fulfillment have its obstacles, and by continual fighting against these obstacles of matter, life realizes its own supremacy and dignity." Animals suffer pains from the attacks of the enemies. This suffering compels them to struggle against the obstacles and try to satisfy the demands of natural life. But with human beings "there is another source of suffering still deeper ... The wonder of it is that man, being born in the same world as animals, and having the same vital questions to deal with still he has something else for which he struggles and cares, though it is not quite definitely realized. It comes to us in glimpses..." Now the problem before the mystic aspirant is "to turn his inward forces into the forward movement towards the infinite from the contraction of self in desire into the expansion of soul in love." But it is a Herculean task facing many obstacles and failures in the mystic path. There is glamour of discordant desires and regrets for our previous mistakes. Tagore says, "Sighs of discontent and weariness of failure, idle regrets for the past and anxieties for the future are troubling our shallow hearts because we have not found our souls, and the self-revealing spirit has not been manifest within us. Hence our cry, O thou awful one, save me with thy smile of grace ever and ever more." What retards the forward movement towards the infinite is the narrowness of self-gratification, insatiable greed, pride of possession and insolent alienation of heart. His egoistic self defeats the aspirant's ideal self which is his soul or the true personality. This is so because man stakes his everything to gain a part gratification of narrow selfish desires. As Tagore says, "All our egoistic impulses our selfish desires obscure our true vision of the soul. For they only indicate our own narrow self." In other words selfishness of the narrow self...
is the most formidable obstacle in the path of mystic attainment. The mistakes and failures in this regard are not to be trifled with insofar as they have "strewn his path with colossal ruins; his sufferings have been immense like birth-pangs for a giant child; they are the prelude of a fulfillment whose scope is infinite." It is the prayer and the hope of the aspirant for endless perfections that sustains him in his feverish efforts. But in actual traversing of living experience it is a slippery path. "Thus our lust, our greed, our love of comfort result in cheapening man to his lowest value. It is self-deception on a large scale." This unmeaning life rooted in the ruins of the aspirant's hopes makes him stretch his hands to the heavens to feel the touch of God.

Basava's self-searching of the inner life discloses different shades of self-deception making the aspirant unfit for God's acceptance and immanence. He says:

With fraud within and modesty without.
They are the so-called holy men:
Linga says No!
For He can understand
They do not reach at all
The path of righteousness.
Kudala Sangama,
Lord of the Universe,
Unmasks the vile desires
Or those who are not one
Within and without,
And casts them off. (VB 96)

God will not accept those pretenders who harbor fraud in their heart and maintain merely a show of modesty. God knows that such holy men will not come anywhere near the path of righteousness. If one is to be on the spiritual path of righteousness one must be pure in mind and heart. If inner and outer
life does not cohere with each other God (Kudala Sangama) will reject them. Unless the holy men have a genuinely straightforward behavior illustrating these auspicious thoughts, it is difficult to prove fitness for acceptance by God. Basava points out that the soul is the master of the aspirant’s life and mind. If the master is not alert to face and avoid the tricky robbers in the form of temptations most likely he will be hijacked. A mere ostentatious show of life leaves the aspirant away from the path of spirituality. A life of arrogance and pride cannot trick and deceive God to show his mercy without which the aspirant cannot achieve a successful breakthrough to the promised land of blissful union with God (Lingangasamarasya). The pathway to union with God requires on the part of the aspirant sincerity, honesty, and intense effort aspiring after union. A mere mechanical show of ostentatious religious rituals, however long practiced will not prepare the aspirant for a genuine spiritual progress. As Basava says:

How long so ever a stone
May lie in water, can it
By soaking turn soft?

However long I worship thee,
What boots it, if I lack
A resolute mind?

My plight is like a spirit’s
Guarding a treasure trove,
O Lord Kudala Sangama! (VB 99)

Without a resolute mind the practice of so-called spirituality is like spirits guarding treasure trove. Such men can hardly claim to know the glory of God (Kudala Sangama). They are compared to a harlot with a child. She can neither satisfy the child nor the voluptuary when her intent is fixed on lust for money. In a series of vacanas Basava gives a picturesque description of the mind being pulled in different directions. Consequently such a person goes
on changing his behavior like a weathercock. If one is lost in the trappings of religion and the indulgence of senses then there is no any gain facilitating spiritual process. Straying away from the pathway to God will make it difficult for the aspirant to escape the steep perdition’s path. Thus if there is no single-minded purpose and devotion to God, bondage of the world cannot be avoided. Of what use is it to wear Linga if one cannot know the Saranas and the path of reaching Siva? Therefore what is required is deep devotion to God Linga like the fidelity and complete surrender of a chaste wife to her husband. Basava says:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The wife unloving of her mate,} \\
\text{The bhakta who has no faith} \\
\text{In Linga—O great God!} \\
\text{It is the same} \\
\text{Whether they are or no!} \\
\text{O Kudala Sangama, it's like} \\
\text{Loosing a calf that will not suck} \\
\text{To a cow that will not yield her milk! (VB109)}
\end{align*}
\]

If that relation is not there whether they are or no is the same. It is like a calf that is not ready to suck and cow, which is not ready to yield the milk to its calf. Each is irrelevant to the other. They thus become isolated and independent. Consequently there will be no relation between man and God and the world making spiritual religion impossible. It follows that relations are fundamental in the nature of reality. Basava points that “The bhakta ignorant of Truth, tires: but does Linga tire?” In their mystic quest Basava, and Tagore shun fake sincerity and self-deception. In the words of Sri Aurobindo “If behind your devotion and surrender you make a cover for your desires, egoistic demands and vital insistences, if you put these things in place of the true aspiration or mix them with it and try to impose them on the Divine Sakti then it is idle to invoke the divine grace to transform you.”27 In
the absence of genuine devotion and total commitment to the ultimate goal Basava compares the plight of the aspirant to the vicissitudes of a married woman committing adultery and then being ashamed of it wants to escape by going to a broken wall and there being bitten by a scorpion causing her to shout. Hearing her shouts the night guard disrobes her and puts her to deeper shame and when she goes to her husband he thrashes her. This is how Lord Kudala Sangama collects his fine. (VB 111)

As Tagore also writes:

*My heart is like a flute he has played on.*

*If ever it falls into other hands,*

*Let him fling it away,*

*My lover's flute is clear to him.*

*Therefore, if to-day alien breath have entered it and*

*Sounded strange notes,*

*Let him break it to pieces and strew the dust with them.*

“So we find that this man also has his disgust of defilement. While the ambitious world of wealth and power despises him, he in his turn thinks that the world touch desecrates him who has been made sacred by the touch of his lover.”

Thus both Basava and Tagore have recognized that straying away from the path of right vision and conduct is not acceptable to God. Knowing that God tests him for his sincerity and commitment to God union, the aspirant becomes self-critical of his waywardness and implores God to do him justice by protecting him. The aspirant knows that the flow of God’s grace is impartial with no favoritism to anybody. But the benefit of this showering of grace depends upon the aspirant’s cultivating fitness to receive it. As the aspirant Basava says:
To such as love do I recount
My weal and woe:
But, God, why should I tell
To such as do not love?
Like rainfall on a brackish soil,
How can they know my weal and woe?
The kinship that's not soaked in us
Is like a painless wail!
Therefore, O Kudala Sangama Lord,
Save for Thy Saranas, my lips are shut. (VB 455)

On his own the aspirant feels like a stone-hard soil that does not absorb the raining grace of God. "Appealing to people who do not appreciate my painful agony in thirsting for God I can only appeal to", say the aspirant Saranas — God's devotees.

In the same strain Tagore points out that whatever the words he sings the pain of traveling in the face of the obstacles all day cried through them for God's grace. Tagore believes that the living current of religious movement flows through simple hearts. In his own words:

I had traveled all day and was tired; then I bowed my head
Towards thy kingly court still far away.
The night deepened, a longing burned in my heart.
Whatever the words I sang, pain cried through them ---for
Even my songs thirsted ---
O my lover, my Beloved, my Best in all the world.30

Likewise Basava points out that he behaves like worldly-minded and logically minded people and that there is no straightforwardness in him. As he confesses:
Meeting a man of the world,
I jest and sing;
Meeting a dialectic man,
I jest and sing;
Spontaneous good is not
In me, O Lord;
Neither, O Father, real piety.
Had I a singleness of heart,
Why should you not, O Lord
Kudala Sangama,
Have pity on me? (VB 286)

Criticizing himself for playing to the gallery Basava the aspirant assures himself that God shows mercy only to the simple and the single minded heart of the aspirant. Similarly in his Crescent Moon Tagore brings out the beauty of child-like qualities that make us forget our worldliness and sustains and uplifts us by transforming our souls with novelty of spiritual illumination in utterances full of passionate sincerity appealing straight to our heart. Tagore believes that children are incarnations of god-like qualities preventing our hearts indulging in worldly matters and becoming miserable. The smiles on the lips of the child and the freshness blooming on their limbs make our hearts pervade with tender love, purity, truthfulness, innocence when the mother was a young girl is brought out in the following poem:

You were hidden in my heart as its desire, my darling.
You were in the dolls of my childhood's games;
and when with clay I made the image of my God every morning, I made and unmade you then.
You were enshrined with our household deity, in his worship I worshipped you.
When in girlhood my heart was opening its petals,
you hovered as a fragrance about it.

Your tender softness bloomed in my youthful limbs
like a glow in the sky before sunrise.

Heaven’s first darling, twin-born with the morning light, you have floated down the stream of the world’s life, and at last you have stranded on my heart.

As I gaze on your face, mystery overwhelms me;
you who belong to all have become mine.
For fear of losing you I hold you tight to my breast. What magic has ensured the world’s treasure in these slender arms of mine?31

The subtleties and the nuances of the mystic quest are peculiarly coloured by the individualities of Basava and Tagore.

Our authors point out that practice of any rituals like smearing ash on the forehead or counting beads or shouting in the name of God would be of no use if there is no simplicity, sincerity, spontaneity, straightforwardness and good at the heart. Basava writes:

You need not buy the ash
That’s found in the hearth:
You smear it as you please!
But what price smearing unless
There is good in your heart?
Lord Kudala Sangama
Approves not the braggarts who
Protest too much! (VB 114)
Tagore echoes the same:

\[
\text{I Do not know what manner of God is mine.}
\]

\[
\text{The Mullah cries aloud to Him: and why?}
\]

\[
\text{Is your Lord deaf? The subtle anklets that ring on the feet of an insect when it moves are heard of Him.}
\]

\[
\text{Tell your beads, paint your forehead with the mark of your God, and wear matted locks long and showy: but a deadly weapon is in your heart, and how shall you have God?}\]

Though both Basava and Tagore protest against the tyrannical observance of rituals they have recognized the importance of rituals in heightening the intensity of religious emotion guaranteeing vividness of religious feeling. It is the greatest discovery of the human mind to have invented religious rituals to sensitize the human organism. The rituals are meant to evoke appropriate emotional responses in search of the infinite, God transcending ordinary senses. Our ordinary senses and mind have to be purified and disciplined so as to produce devotional moods of penetrating sincerity and commitment to the emergence of the experience of blissful union with God. But the tragedy of the repeated practice of rituals is that they degenerate into mechanical routine devoid of genuine feeling. Here Basava says:

\[
\text{What if the well-frame bend its head, Does it become a Guru's devotee?}
\]

\[
\text{What if the pincers fold their hands, Do they become a humble minister?}
\]

\[
\text{What if a parrot read? Does it Become a theologian?}
\]
How can the votaries
Of the disembodied god
Know why these have come,
How great is their worth-
The Saranas
Of Kudala Sangama? (VB 125)

Mere protesting words without value of goodness at the core of being intrinsically realized is like the parrot repeating words mechanically.

Since man is an organic process of dynamic self-development of experience, it is difficult to draw hard and fast line of demarcation between the various phases of religio-mystical consciousness. In a rough reckoning Basava conceives the mystic way as comprising of six phases of complex composite wholes of Spiritual experience. It is called Satsthala marga. Every such experience at all levels is a cumulative and creative experience resulting in novel composite wholes. This Satsthala marga is an attempt to account for the genetic development of ever-intenser and ever-deepening and ever-widening spiritual experience as a process of self-fulfillment of man and God in and through their interplay ripening into dynamic self-perfection or active union of each in the other, best described as Linganga samarasya — Mystic experience par excellence. This process of concrete experience is propelled upward and onward by the spontaneity of the aspirant’s psychic eros and the divine eros, which by their own creativity ever enter into the new phase of itself. As the aspirant by the purity and intensity of his efforts progresses from his side, conversely God on his part descends appropriately in accordance with his law —

The mind bears witness to the mind:
Is father linga not enough?
As our mind is, so Thy glory is:
This never fails, O Kudala Sangama Lord! (VB 646)
It is the converse process where the aspirant and God approach and enter into closer and closer relation ripening into lingangasamarasya. Each is drowned in the other. Each actively enjoys the other equally. Basava distinguishes six stages of Mystic Way as follows: Bhakta, Mahesha, Prasadi Pranalingi, Sarana, and Aikya sthalas. Corresponding to these stages the six lingas are: Achara linga, Guru linga, Siva linga, Jangama linga, Prasada linga, and Maha linga. The aspirant through these various stages realizes intrinsic values: Sadbhakti, Nishta bhakti, Avadhana bhakti, Anubhava bhakti, Ananda bhakti, and Samarasa bhakti respectively. Satsthala marga is the concrete illustration of the theory and practice of Basava’s religious experience culminating in lingangasamarasya - mystical experience par excellence. In accordance with individual differences and their vocations (kayaka) it is open to all. Each one can reach this goal in and through this six-fold method. It is an organic process of experience involved in the self-development constituting the self-perfection of soul’s existence. In the progressive upward and forward development of the aspirant’s spiritual experience no hard and fast demarcating line can be drawn. Every moment of experience is a concrescent process, which is cumulative and creative of novel composite wholes. This upward and forward genetic development of the aspirant’s spiritual experience goes on becoming more and more complex. It is the concrescence of the data received, the way in which it is received, reacting to it in accordance with the decision of the aspirant as regulated by the ideal aim endowed by God. At all levels each experience is the consolidated outcome of novel composite wholes that become potential data for successive occasions of experience.

In the first Bhakta stage the aspirant turns inwards becoming vaguely aware of reaching God-union after withdrawing from the life of worldliness. As he progresses in the Bhakta stage the elements of Mahesh, Prasadi, and Pranalingi can be seen. Similarly when he proceeds to Mahesh stage the
elements of Bhakta, Prasadi, Pranalingi, Sarana, and Aikya are said to be present. Similarly in the progressive path of Prasadi stage Bhakta, Mahesh, Pranalingi, Sarana and Aikya are seen to be present. In the same way Pranalingi stage cumulatively includes the elements of Bhakta, Mahesh, Prasadi, Pranalingi and Aikya. The sixth stage of Aikya embodies Bhakta, Mahesh, Prasadi, Pranalingi and Sarana. In this way as the aspirant Basava's evolutionary development proceeds, we find Basava describing his own bhakti experience growing in fullness. The earlier ones are not left behind. Elements of each sthala are interwoven in all the other stages. In this spiritual journey from Bhakta stage up to the Aikya stage of mystical union with God there is fusion of theory and exemplification in practice. Here there is the acceptance of the world without having to reject any of the things offered. Only the limitation and scope of each element is the skill, which Satsthala determines. In this there is no scope for blind faith as it is done on the basis of thoughtful reflection about the ultimate aim of man's life.

To realize thoughtfully the potentialities the aspirant re-orients himself by changing his outlook of worldliness. Here Basava says:

- *It's like the secret fire*
- *Hidden in water;*
- *Like the flavour of the sap*
- *In the tender plant;*
- *Like to the perfume*
- *Within the bud;*
- *Like a maiden's love,*
- *O Lord Kudala Sangama!* (VB, 01)

This is the first stage where the aspirant must have a sense of direction in conformity with his potentialities. It requires transcendence of worldliness and turning inward. Here the starting point is the desire to know, to feel, and realize God-union. In some form teacher's guidance enables the aspirant to
realize that bhakti or firm devotion to God Siva is the key to reach his ultimate goal. The distinguishing characteristics of this Bhakta Sthala are as follows:

Unwavering faith and devotion to one God, Supreme Siva “God is but one, many His names.” (VB 613). This one God is offered by Guru in the form of Isthalinga. The aspirant has to meditate it as relevant to his conduct in the form of Acharalinga. Thus it leads to a pure and chaste life in the Bhaktasthala. The aspirant knows that he is distinct from God who is other and greater than himself. It is the object of his devotion called Sadbhakti.

As the aspirant progresses to the next higher stage of Maheshasthala this Sadbhakti grows into Nishta bhakti. The form of God meditated upon here is called Gurulinga. The aspirant would have conquered egoism, passions and temptations. Devotion is predominant here with a higher degree of purity and intensity. The features of Bhaktasthala are cumulatively present and are rigorously observed. As Basava says:

The Sarana must have the constancy to say,
‘I will not have another’s wealth’;

The Sarana must have the constancy to say,
‘I will not have another’s wife’;

The Sarana must have the constancy to say,
I will not have another god:

The Sarana must have the constancy to say,
‘linga and Jangama are one’;

The Sarana must have the constancy to say,
‘Prasada is the Truth’;

Lord Kudala Sangama disdains
Such men as have no constancy. (VB 676)

Here Basava speaks of the purity of moral conduct and freedom from desires that hurt soul’s progress. As Dr. Nandimath says, “...Moral conduct, pure
devotion and freedom from desire enhance the soul’s purity and facilitate its elevation to a higher stage.”

All the features of earlier stages have to be observed more rigorously and zealously than before. This more intensified bhakti is called Avadhana bhakti. The form of God to be meditated is called Sivalinga. Now it is the duty of the aspirant to be fair to himself and his God and all others. He must perform actions with a sense of detachment, duty for duty’s sake with no desire for fruits. The aspirant takes whatever comes to him as the Prasada of Siva or as the gift of God’s grace.

Though bhakti, jnana and action are blended in all the stages from beginning to end kriya or action gets the upper hand in the first three stages. The distinctness of soul and God is maintained in these stages. In the last three stages jnana gets the upper hand. The relation between soul and God becomes more and more closer and intimate. When the aspirant gained Prasada God came into sight and yet perception of God was dim and distant. In the Pranalingi stage the realization of prana is the same as atma gaining inner illuminating light. The value realized in this stage is Anubhava bhakti. God functioning appropriately to this stage of spiritual progress of the aspirant is called Jangama linga.

The next higher stage of spiritual progress is called Sarana sthala. Here the aspirant completely surrenders to Siva. Bhakti assumes a higher form of devotion involving self-surrender. Here the aspirant is in intimate communion with God. Appropriately to this stage the functioning of God is called Prasada linga and the value realized is called Ananda bhakti.

The last stage in this six-fold way is called Aikya sthala. It is used in the sense of Moksha the ultimate goal and destiny of the individual soul. It is a blissful union where individuality and consciousness according to Basava are not lost. This union is expressed in the metaphor of the union of husband and
wife in the Samarasanubhuti. It is an ineffable experience expressible only in
terms of metaphors and similes – the best that is possible. This is the ripening
of the aspirant's spiritual journey into the fruit of mysticism. This realization
is a process, a becoming, and the fact of union—a ripened fruit of mystical
element.

In a nutshell, Basava gives the characteristics and the achievements of
the aspirant at every step in the following vacana:

How can I claim to be
A Bhakta, unless
I leave off worldlings' fellowship?
How can I claim to be
A Mahesvara, unless
I cease to covet another's wife and goods?

How can I claim to be
A Prasadi, unless
I shed all pain and pine?
How can I claim to be
A Pranalingi, unless
My breath is stilled?
How can I claim to be
A Sarana, unless
My senses are erased?

How can I claim to be
An Aikya, unless
I am free from birth and death?

I'm ignorant
Of the present time that makes
Of the impossible, possible!
O Kudala Sangama Lord,
I render service as
A servant of Thy Saranas! (VB 509)
Competent writers on Western mysticism like Ms. Underhill have analyzed mystic experience into three stages: 1) Purgation 2) Illumination and 3) Unitive. This account of mystic experience is too sketchy to faithfully describe the living concrecent process that takes place specifically in individual mystics. It is here that Basava's account of the concrete mystical experience as it takes place in the first hand experience of mystics in general and each mystic in particular is vividly highlighted in a detailed manner. It is an imperishable merit of Basava to have x-rayed the inner spiritual journey to self-perfection. Throughout, it is Basava describing his spiritual journey in all the six-fold stages and many sub-stages. This is so because “our experience is made up of composite wholes more or less clear in the focus, more or less vague in the penumbra and the whole shading off into umbral darkness, which is ignorance.” Each experience is too complex to be classified into three or six, eighteen or thirty-six, hundred and one, or two hundred and sixteen stages as the case may be. Our experience is composed of labyrinthine layers in turn made of many components. Our description of this concrete experience in conceptual terms can only be abstract and asymptotic in its approach.

An elaboration of the technicalities of these various phases of the relations of the aspirant and the God is not relevant here for our purposes. This is so because they are specific to the account of Basava's mystic journey. Here we are more concerned with the generalities discernible in the comparative study of both Basava and Tagore. The mystic experiences the rich wealth of integral experiences too deep and complex for words and stages to be distinguished. The mystic expresses such experiences in terms of the metaphor of stream running into stream with open-ended meanings and perfections of value. Non-literal language is an essential tool to articulate the mystic experience. Such language points to experiences transcending those characterisable in words. It is meant to sharpen spiritual perception. In
general terms the mystic way is spiritual perfection involving a process of passing through various phases, each phase being cumulative and creative in character and incarnating itself into the next novel composite wholes of experience in the manner of a stream running into stream which goes on swelling in width and depth of intensity. The progress in the mystic way involves looking inward, self-control, self-criticism, depression and dissatisfaction, self-regulation, self-discipline, self-knowledge and the ideal towards which the aspirant aspires to reach.

In contrasting the life of animals and describing man's predicament Tagore writes: "For all other creatures nature is final. To live, to propagate their race and to die is their end. And they are content. They never cry for salvation, for emancipation, from the limits of life,...They are not ashamed of their desires, they are pure in their appetites for these belong to their complete life. They are not cruel in their cruelties, not greedy in their greeds; for these end in their objects, which are final in themselves. But man has a further life, and therefore those passions are despised by him, which do not acknowledge his infinity... In nature we are blind and lame like a child before its birth. But in the spiritual life we are born in freedom." This looking inwards makes him aware of the pulls, obsessions, public difficulties, private compromises and various shades of self-deceptions. By means of his self-control, self-discipline and self-knowledge the aspirant intuitively observes the machinations of the lower impulses. He must cleanse and purify these passionate impulses. As we have described above this is no easy task since the aspirant has to renounce what is most dear to his superficial self. In her book *Practical Mysticism* Ms.Underhill describes this condition of the aspirant's mind indulging in its old habits, old notions, and old prejudices in the following words: "His mind is full of little whirlpools, twists and currents, conflicting systems, incompatible desires. So, too, a deliberate self-simplification, a "purgation" of the heart and Will is demanded of those who
would develop the form of consciousness called “mystical”. All your power, all your resolution is needed if you are to succeed in this adventure: there must be no frittering of energy, no mixture of motives.”36 Thus if the aspirant’s spiritual progress is to be attained the aspirant must renounce through self-discipline the obstacles waylaying him. Through his sincere commitment and tenacious yearning the aspirant pursues his godward journey in spite of depression, failures and helplessness. He turns for help from powers other and greater than himself. The real spirit of folk religion of Bauls lures Tagore to say “How the spirit of man, by making use even of its obstacles reaches fulfillment, led thither, not by the learned authorities in the scriptures, or by the mechanical impulse of the dogma-driven crowd, but by the unsophisticated aspiration of the loving soul...Gods manifest shower falls direct on the plane of humble hearts, flowing there in various channels, even getting mixed with some mud in its course as it is soaked into the underground currents, invisible but ever-moving.”37 As elaborated earlier Basava would whole-heartedly endorse what Tagore has described the aspirant’s journey so far. The following stanzas of folk song give voice to the aspiration of all simple spirits:

 Ah, who is this whose arms enfold me?
Whatever I have to leave, let me leave; and whatever I
Have to bear, let me bear.
Only let me walk with thee,
O my Lover, my Beloved, my Best in all the world.
Descend at whiles from thy high audience hall, come down amid joys and sorrows.
Hide in all forms and delights, in love,
And in my heart sing thy songs,-
O my Lover, my Beloved, my Best in all the world.38
Indeed it is a hard task to discipline the unstable moods and obsessions, feverish alternations of interests and apathy, conflicts and irrational impulses characterizing the lower self. It is by constant drilling and re-orienting these energies of vital nature in the light of a dim apprehension of a higher and ideal self in oneself that can make forward and upward progress possible. Such re-orientation and self-adjustment is peremptorily necessitated by the sense of the higher life. This is so because fluctuating between the attractions and claims of lower and higher life would not make peace possible unless the opposition between them is overcome. Self-control, complete devotion and courage to stand up in support of the higher life are important in developing mystical experiences. Influences of other saint thinkers; moods, inspirations and supernatural grace have also their role in determining the course of spiritual life. The ups and downs of this journey produce pleasure and pain alternating in the developing soul. The struggle of the self is to disentangle itself from the snares of temptations. It is the freedom, spontaneity and originality of self that keeps up the effort oscillating between light and shade of experience. Though there is fluctuation the goal is fixed. In the moment of transformation the eyes are “opened for an instant: obtained, as it were, a dazzling and unforgettable glimpse of the Uncreated Light. They must learn to stay open: to look steadfastly into the eyes of love...the divine glimpse and beam of joy ariseth in the soul, being a new eye, in which the dark, fiery soul conceiveth the Ends and Essence of the divine light...”

Such illumination is a matter of degree. The awakening of the transcendental self in the aspirant's organic process of development initiates this change of consciousness called illumination. As a result of long and complex acts of purification the self gathers together scattered energies of the lower self and orders them on the basis of intimations received in that awakening. It is in this way that the aspirant apprehends another higher order of reality. Underhill describes “Such a beholding, such a lifting of
consciousness from a self-centered to God-centered world, is of the essence of illumination."40

In the spontaneity and simplicity of his spiritual yearning Basava realizes that God is impartial in his dealings with man and his world when he says:

_settings up a large shop on the earth,
Our Mahadevasetti, the merchant, sits.
He speaks at once if your mind is one;
He doesn’t at all if your mind is in two.
He does not lose a single pie,
Nor earns, too, even half a pie...
Behold, O Mother, how wise he is,
Our Lord Kudala Sangama! (VB 115)

In a spiritual development aspirer realizes that this world is a large shop set up by God abiding by his own law of justice. God is metaphorically referred to as Mahadevasetti sitting in this shop as an honest merchant giving each activity of man and the world what it deserves, neither more nor less. If the world and its creatures were on the same wavelength as that of God’s mind then God would respond at once. Otherwise God will not respond if the worldly creatures are double minded. The aspirant now realizes God’s weighing balance is so sensitive as not to gain or lose, in disbursing the deserts of creatures’ actions. In all this the aspirant is convinced of the sharpness of wisdom of God Kudala Sangama. From now on, the aspirant cautions himself to become more and more circumspect in his activities. Furthermore, Basava thinks that a living faith in God is necessary to evoke God’s response. His words are:
They neither believe nor love,
Yet invoke him in vain—
These men of the world
Who know no faith!
If they invoke him with faith
Does he not respond?
So says our Lord Kudala Sangama
To those who call on Him in vain,
Without faith or love:
“Blow, blast you horn
Till your lungs burst!” (VB 116)

It is the loving faith and the sincere calling and prayer that lures God to respond. The aspirant is aware of the fact that the worldly people neither love nor believe but merely invoke God in vain. Severe penance on their part may not bring nearer God. It would be futile without sincere faith. According to Basava it is like striking at the anthill that will not kill the serpent inside. Inner purity of heart and head makes the aspirant acceptable to God. The more intense the yearning and faith the greater is the fitness to earn God’s response in awakening the aspirant’s fitness to shower His grace. In Basava’s conviction the purity of heart cannot be attained if one is filled with lust, anger, greed, infatuation, pride and jealousy. (VB 118) Even while purity of heart and head is a prime requisite for the progress on the mystical path the aspirant feels the necessity for the company of Saranas (men of wisdom) with a pure heart. One must altogether avoid crooked, ill-intentioned people with a vicious heart in the manner of avoiding poisonous snakes. The company of Saranas most likely illuminates the aspirant’s mind and heart. The aspirant is awakened to discriminate what is and is not helpful to his spiritual progress. It is difficult to bring out the full meanings of the metaphors used by Basava to describe this situation. For example:
When hungry, will you suck  
A poisonous nut?  
When thirsty, will you sip  
A poisonous drink?  
Because quicklime has  
The same colour as rice,  
Are you mad to eat  
Because they look alike?  
And could Lord Kudala Sangama  
Love the unrighteous ones  
Who never tasted of  
The quintessence of Linga? (VB 120)

In these rhetorical questions a negative answer is already implied. The aspirant realizes that God loves not the unrighteous ones. The true spirit of mystical religion is concerned with one's own dynamic inner self-development. The aspirant's passionate longing refuses to be satisfied with the duplicates or the substitutes of the really true ultimate aim of his goal blissful union with God—Lingangasamarasya. The things that look alike may not be the genuine things to be sought after.

In much the same way Tagore's restless search for the Great Beyond is expressed in the following poem:

I am restless. I am athirst for far-away things.  
My soul goes out in a longing to touch the skirt of  
the dim distance. O Great Beyond, O the keen call of thy flute!  
....Thy breath comes to me whispering an impossible hope.  
Thy tongue is known to my heart as its very own.  
O Far-to-seek, O the keen call of Thy flute!...  
I am listless, I am a wonder in my heart.  
In the sunny haze of the languid hours, what vast  
Vision of thine takes shape in the blue of the sky!  
O Farthest End, O the keen call of thy Flute!  
I forget, I ever forget, that the gates are shut every  
Where in the house where I dwell alone.41
In this poem the aspirant's inmost being responds to the call of the flute of the Great Beyond. In the face of the distance far away from his goal the aspirant also addresses his lack of energy and enthusiasm while he is wandering away after other things. Tagore's apt words here are:

Whoever heard his Music-call  
Rush he did fearless of fall  
Into the perilous pool, sacrificed  
All worldly goods and smiling prized  
The roar of death as a song.

In all humility both Basava and Tagore have recognized their limitations in the preparation for the ideal of inward perfection. For example:

The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day.  
I have spent my days in stringing and in unstringing my instrument  
The time has not come true, the words have not been rightly set; only there is the agony of wishing in my heart.  
...I have not seen his face, nor have I listened to his voice; only I have heard his gentle footsteps from the road before my house.  
...but the lamp has not been lit and I cannot ask him into my house.  
I live in the hope of meeting with him; but this  
Meeting is not yet.

In his self-examination Tagore finds that his preparation for the meeting of God is not enough. It is, as it were, an impotent wishing without any knowledge illuminating his mind. At the most he has heard the sounds of gentle footsteps of God though he has not seen or heard Him directly. Both Basava and Tagore are guided by the truthful utterances about experience of the ancients though they are critical of the mechanical practices of rituals. So
Tagore says, "readers will have an opportunity of coming into touch with the ancient spirit of India as revealed in our sacred texts and manifested in the life of to-day." Both Basava and Tagore are not blind admirers of traditional culture. They adhere to what can stand the test of rationality and the truth of experience. In the same spirit Basava holds the utterances of ancients as valuable when he says:

*The words of the pioneers, lo!*
*Is the philosopher’s stone!*
*You must have faith in Linga,*
*Sadasiva by name.*
*As soon as you believe, behold,*
*There’s victory!*
*To the lips bitter, to the belly sweet—*
*Kudala Sanga’s words*
*Are like eating neem. (VB 171)*

When the words of the Pioneers
Are like a stream of milk
With jaggery for its ooze
And sugar for its silt,
My reason is as one
That digs a well apart,
To drink a brackish water, Lord
*Kudala Sangama! (VB 290)*

Accordingly Basava appeals to God to guide him in the manner of a blind man is guided by the staff in his hand. There is an awareness of God in every vacana uttered by him. As he progresses in his mystic way this awareness becomes more and more intense. The aspirant’s passionate longing becomes illuminated by this awareness of God. This awareness of God in the aspirant is the real light of knowledge in his mystic path. Basava says:
How fared the triple wisdom that you call
Dog-wisdom, the wisdom of the elephant,
The wisdom of the hen?
O Kudala Sangama Lord,
All wisdom which is ignorant of Thee
No wisdom at all! (VB 798)

Look, Sir
By dint of knowledge, ignorance goes!
By dint of Light, must darkness go!
By dint of Truth, untruth!
And iron's no more iron when
It knows the alchemic stone!

O Kudala Sangama Lord,
By dint of Experience
Of Kudala Sanga's Saranas
My mind must cease! (VB 841)

The aspirant thinks that God comes to him in and through the men of wisdom who are thought to be same as God. Basava deems the Saranas to be God himself and says “Thinking the movement of thine own | Is but Thyself. I rest | Thy humble servant, Lord | Kudala Sangama” Similarly Tagore appeals to God to “Kindle the lamp of love with thy life”.

However the success in this mystical enterprise depends on intense integral aspiration after the God-union. Also the integral rejection of all that is a barrier in the positive effort is equally essential. The conditions for achieving intensity and siddhi is aptly described in Aurobindo’s words thus: “The first determining element of the siddhi is, therefore, the intensity of turning, the force which directs the soul inward. The power of aspiration of the heat, the force of the will, the concentration of the will, the perseverance and determination of the applied energy are the measures of that intensity...
the mere idea or intellectual seeking of something higher beyond, however
strongly grasped by the mind’s interest, is ineffective unless it is seized on by
the heat as the one thing desirable and by will as the one thing to be done".45
It is a matter of actual living experience, not a mere imaginative idea. Each
aspirant has to do it himself. It is an individual undertaking of first hand
experience. The aspirant who seeks the Divine must consecrate himself to
God and to God only. It is a feeling of inner soul’s need. It must be utterly
sincere. Everything else must be so arranged as to help the aspirant to put in
touch with something new in the progressive path. It must spring as a flame
from the heart. The vacanas are an expression of an aspiration flaming forth
from the heart. They are not “thought out,” words set to experiences. The
experience comes wholly formulated with the inevitable words and
metaphors. Adoring or worshiping without a true spirit of love is like
pictured loveliness giving no joy in embrace. Basava says:

A worship without love
And an unfeeling act,
Behold, my brothers, is
A pictured, loveliness
(No joy in its embrace),
A painted sugar-cane
(No relish in its taste),
O Kudala Sangama Lord,
Without sincerity
It is no piety. (VB 126)

The metaphors of thief sentenced to death eating to fill his stomach, the sheep
eating tender mango leaves brought to decorate festival occasion, the frog
under the shadow of snake facing imminent death and yet desiring to catch
the fly in flight are numerous examples of the aspirant’s nascent struggle
from the start till the attainment of mystic union. But the true spirit of mystic
enterprise cannot dawn until and unless the aspirant’s greed abates, anger cools; self-deception, foul words cruelty and fraud depart. There is no chance of the aspirant meeting in union with God unless the aspirant sees through the darkness of too much worldliness. Basava writes:

Unless your greed abates, your anger cools,
Unless foul words and cruelty and fraud
Depart, what is the chance to meet
Between God and you? Avaunt, you fool!
Unless the darkness of this world’s malady
Clears up, where is the chance to meet
Between Lord Kudala Sanga and you, you fool? (VB 131)

Looking deep inward the aspirant comes to know that the world of Gods and the world of mortality are not elsewhere apart from the world in which the aspirant finds himself. Within this world itself there are infinite or different planes of existence. Whatever is, must be found as given in one’s experience. Here Tagore says, “We can never go beyond Man in all we know and feel.”46 So God is not to be sought elsewhere but only in this world of aspirant’s body and soul. As Basava says:

The Linga can be seen
Mirrored in the bhakta’s face,
Because the God
Embodied in the bhakta has
A winkless eye.
Lord Kudala Sangama
Dwells altogether in
The heart of the bhakta’s words. (VB 145)
When the master comes,
As a god who has taken a bhakta's form,
Draws near his devotees, tell me is it
becoming for the servant to be
On the cot?
I take my pledge: in case
Lord Kudala Sangama should come as
Jangama,
I'll never ascend the cot! (VB 395)

The mystic sense of the aspirant prehends God in the form of bhakta and his utterances. In the same vein the mystic muse of Tagore seizes upon the light of God's music illumining the world overcoming obstacles and rushes on endlessly in bafflement. Tagore says:

I know not how thou singest, my master! I ever listen in silent amazement.

The light of thy music illumines the world. The life breath of thy music runs from sky to sky. The holy stream of thy music breaks through all stony obstacles and rushes on.

My heart longs to join in thy song, but vainly struggles for a voice. I would speak, but speech breaks not into song, and I cry out baffled. Ah, thou hast made my heart captive in the endless meshes of thy music, my master!47

That I want thee, only thee—let my heart repeat without end. All desires that distract me, day and night, are false empty to the core.

As the night keeps hidden in its gloom the petition for light, even thus in depth of my unconsciousness rings the cry—I want thee, only thee.

As the storm still seeks its end in peace when it strikes against peace with all its might, even thus my rebellion strikes against thy love and still its cry is—I want thee, only thee.48
Elsewhere Tagore says “I felt sure that some Being who comprehends me and my world was seeking his best expression in all my experiences.” In an introspective mood observing the inward drama of the soul Tagore finds in himself discordant notes, storms of passion seeking end in peace and the struggle of his heart that longs with strong determination “I want thee.”

Any progressive spiritual experience must have at its core a truly real feeling of love tenaciously held on with sincerity, penetrating sincerity. As Basava says:

\[
\begin{align*}
E'er & \text{ since the fellowship of Desire has ceased,} \\
I've & \text{ known no other fellowship, O Lord!} \\
Now & \text{ that I've loved Thee so, parting is hard:} \\
Hearken & \text{ to me, O King of the smiling face,} \\
O & \text{ Kudala Sangama Lord,} \\
I'll & \text{ break Thy heart and enter it! (VB 487)}
\end{align*}
\]

To see them is 
My heart's delight; 
And doomsday when I do not see! 
Behold! day follows night, 
Night follows day: 
How, lord can I spend my days 
In uttering humility? 
It is as if I had to bear 
The burden of an age 
Rather than grieve 
For parting from 
Kudala Sanga's Saranas, 
Look, Lord, I welcome death! (VB 370)
As Tagore also says:

\begin{quote}
It is the pang of separation that spreads through the world 
and gives birth to shapes innumerable in the infinite sky.
It is this sorrow of separation that gazes in silence 
all night from star to star and becomes lyric among 
rustling leaves in rainy darkness of July

It is this overspreading pain that deepens into 
Loves and desires, into sufferings and joys in human 
homes; and this it is that ever melts and flows in 
and this it is that ever melts and flows in songs 
through my poet's heart.\end{quote}

The aspirant would feel a sense of alienation and separation from God. This separation from God makes the aspirant feel hungry for God in the manner of a chaste wife away from her husband. This separation makes the aspirant constantly to dwell on God's absence in the manner of a beloved thinking of her lover and waiting for him. The agony of separation from God draws the aspirant away from worldly things and makes him meditate on the good and great qualities of God. The typical example of this experience of God in separation is illustrated as in Bhagavata Purana's untutored Gopis meditating on Krishna when they are away from him. If the separation were absolute they would be burnt in the fire of the pangs of separation. Both Basava and Tagore speak of the same thing in applying it to the aspirant's intense search for the infinite. This is so because human experience of longing is the nearest in intensity of love of God. In separation the longing for the not-yet prepares the aspirant for the hoped-for blissful union with God. This \textit{viraha} experience of God is described in the following words of Tagore: "I was sure that these (vaishnava) poets were speaking about the supreme Lover, whose touch we experience in all our relations of love—the love of nature's beauty, of the animal, the child, the comrade, the beloved, the love that
illuminates our consciousness of reality.”51 Both Basava and Tagore spiritualize the sensuous and the non-sensuous potentialities of man. They have recognized the proper spiritual role of the body. For example, the aspirant is asked not to misuse the body and take it as the Prasada of God. Basava’s words here are thus:

Renunciation is to say
‘I do not want’; to say ‘I want’
Is body’s foible.
What matters where a thing may be?
To offer Linga what comes wherever you are
And to enjoy it, that is discipline.
The consecrated body, come
To gratify Lord Kudala Sangama,
Must not suffer (VB 774)

Both Basava and Tagore have considered the human body as the moving temple of God to be kept pure worthy of being God’s dwelling place. As Basava says:

The Pioneers’ word
Is meant for the Pioneers:
It’s Greek except to those who know
O Kudala Sangama Lord,
Through experience of Thee,
My wheel of births has ceased! (VB 842)

Tagore says that “the individual’s body is itself the temple, in whose inner mystic shrine the Divine appears before the soul, and the key to it has to be found from those who know...But this human body of ours is made by God’s own hand, from his own love, and even if some men, in their pride of their superiority may despise it, God finds his joy in dwelling in others of yet lower birth.”52 In these sayings the aspirant’s mystic sense renders intelligible the spiritual perception of the immanence of God in all things. All this is characteristically in the total spirit of Indian sensibility.
The spiritual journey along the mystic way is not smooth and straight-line progress. At every level relapse into old state is imminent. But the unresting human spirit energizes the human endeavor to pursue the hoped-for-goal of human destiny. But it is more painful to relapse into earlier habits of sensuous temptations after having tasted the vision and presence of God that had illuminated the aspirant's mind on a higher level. Ms. Underhill calls it the Dark Night of the soul. She says, 'on its psychic side, partly a condition of fatigue, partly a state of transition, is borne out by the mental and moral disorder which seems, in many subjects, to be its dominant character. When they are in it everything seems to go wrong with them. They are tormented by evil thoughts and abrupt temptations, lose grasp not only of their spiritual but also of their worldly affairs...In their own words "Trials of every kind," "exterior and interior crosses," abound.' Underhill cautions us to beware of generalizing as uniform experiences of any of the phases in the mystic way including Dark Night of the soul. In other words, each mystic aspirant passes through, in his own way, according to his measure of grasping the spiritual destiny and the effort of traversing along the mystic way intermittently being plunged in darkness and desolation.

The subtle nuances of this Dark Night of the soul are many and varied in Basava and Tagore. This is so because the experiences of the aspirant along the path of mystic journey differ according to their measure of intensity of effort and equipment, spiritual environment which support him. Both Basava and Tagore were fortunate in having had a rich unparalleled spiritual heritage. They assimilated and renovated it in the light of their own intuitive experience always centering their attention on the truth of experience of ultimate reality. Even so they have had to face ups and downs in the jungly, muddy and dark spiritual path. In this respect all people are not on the same
level. Individual differences are inevitable. Some people seem to realize continuously and at a higher level. Others proceed at a very slow pace and may be lost in the failure of attention to look inward in the absence of the proper sense of values. Those who are able to discriminate the why and the how of a fruitful life worthy of humans, will know in their sense of proportion the importance to be given to the demands of the sensuous and the non-sensuous potentialities of man. That depends on the concern for the ultimate aim of life. In this respect Basava and Tagore have visualized union with God as their ultimate aim however vaguely and imperfectly they may have sensed it. We have seen how this mystic journey in the inner life of man follows circuitously, haltingly and often illogically facing the obstacles and overcoming the barriers with all their heroic zeal. This being so, it has been already pointed out that mystic consciousness is not growing uniformly. The aspirant cannot have constant illumination of his mind in so far as detached thoughts would flash out in idle moments, illuminate passing phase of reflection, and would then perish and be forgotten. In addition to that being the case, human life is swayed by emotions, passions, comforts and discomforts, perceptions, hopes, fears and purposes. Animal passions such as love, sympathy, ferocity, appetitions and satisfactions, and the more distinctly human experiences of beauty, truth constitute the primary factors of our experience. It is these factors, which are required to be cleansed, purified and re-oriented by adjusting them to serve the ultimate aim of life — God-union-Lingangasamarasya. We have elaborated so far how Basava and Tagore by a process of heart-searching self-examination, and through self-control and self-knowledge can have a glimpse of God’s presence in them. This glimpse and illumination of mind are thrown back upon old habits of temptations, by the fickleness of mind’s tendencies. Basava describes this in the following vacanas:
If he says he will come and does not come,
I wait, looking this way and that.
Whom can I send, to whom
Shall I abase myself?
If Kudala Sangama's Sarana fail to come,
I send my life in search of him! (VB 737)

After the Lord has made me come
Unto His bed and lain with me,
Should I still fear?
I am a woman all over gold:
After the touch of the alchemic stone
Would there be iron still?
But if Lord Kudala Sangama
Should spurn me, should I not die? (VB 738)

Sensing and waiting for God to come and if the Lord rejects him the aspirant in despair and desolation asks 'should I live?' Consequently the aspirant's mind tricks him with a doubt and plunges him into the temptations of old habits when Basava points out:

As long as, letting go, you look behind
Once more, and hesitate
In your desire to wed,
That is adultery: it's certain hell
This is my test, O Kudala Sangama Lord:
Another's wife is Thine own queen! (VB 755)
Look, brothers! In the course of time,
Devotion was reduced to half!
Look, brothers! The first day,
The touching of the brow,
The second, touching of the hand,
The third, a witless nod!
If you persist
In what you have begun
Our Lord Kudala Sangama
Will lead you to your goal;
If not,
He'll sink you in midstream! (VB 220)

It is this Dark Night of the soul, which Tagore also brings out thus:

Art thou abroad on this stormy night on thy journey of love, my friend?

The sky groans like one in despair.

I have no sleep to-night. Ever and again I open my door and lookout on the darkness, my friend!

I can see nothing before me. I wonder where lies thy path!

By what dim shore of the ink-black river, by what far edge of the frowning forest, through what mazy depth of gloom art thou threading thy course to come to me, my friend?

If the day is done, if birds sing no more, if the wind has flagged tired, then draw the veil of darkness thick upon me, even as thou hast wrapt the earth with the coverlet of sleep and tenderly closed the petals of the drooping lotus at dusk.

From the traveler, whose sack of provision is empty before the voyage is ended, whose garment is torn and dust-laden, whose strength is exhausted, remove shame and poverty, and renew his life like a flower under the cover of thy kindly night.

The aspirant is overcome by darkness of despair and is unable to see through his path to God even though he is alert to keep his mind open to receive God who is threading the course to come to the aspirant. Tagore points out that the traveler's provisions are empty and that his garment is torn and dust-laden and that his strength is exhausted before he reaches the end of his
journey. This is so because the depth of darkness is unable to negotiate the trammels and weariness that have overtaken the aspirant. The darkness within and without makes the aspirant see nothing before him. It is the Dark Night of the soul making the aspirant wonder as to “where lies thy path?” Though the aspirant has lost his way he has not lost his trust in God who is not despair. As the day closes birds and wind stop their activities, drawing as it were a thick veil of darkness. The aspirant acquiesces in the flagging spirit of illumination after its daylong work. As Tagore says, “In the night of weariness let me give myself up to sleep without struggle, resting my trust upon thee.” Though the mystic is plunged in the Dark Night of the narrow self walled up by the desire for the things of the worldly life he is resting his hopeful trust in God. The aspirant being tired has gone to sleep. So he could not wake up though God had come and sat by his side. The mystic aspirant agonized by this failure reproaches himself when he says:

He came and sat by my side but I woke not.
What a cursed sleep it was, O miserable me!
He came when the night was still; he had his harp in his hands, and my dreams became resonant with its melodies.
Alas, why are my nights all thus lost? Ah, why do I ever miss his sight whose breath touches my sleep?

The mystic aspirant feels wretched for his cursed sleep, which failed him to wake up to God’s presence even though the night was still and the music was melodious. He regrets his blindness, helplessness and tiredness for having failed to recognize Him although many such nights had passed. Idle dreaming and making the dreams resonant with melodies keep open hopefulness for further journey. It is as if his spiritual sense is anaesthetized. The aspirant feels as though further light is blocked. It is, as it were an opaque glass, which shows a dim figure from the other side but no clear
discriminable sight. The veil of night drawn by God, the mystic temperament feels a certain energizing for the renewal of “its sight in a fresher gladness of awakening.” That is why the mystic in Tagore asks:

Light, oh where is the light? Kindle it with the burning fire of desire!

There is the lamp but never a flicker of flame,—is such thy fate, my heart! Ah, death were better by far for thee!

Misery knocks at thy door, and her message is that thy lord is wakeful, and he calls thee to the love-tryst through the darkness of night.

The sky is overcast with clouds and the rain is ceaseless. I know not what this is that stirs in me, --I know not its meaning.

A moment’s flash of lighting drags down a deeper gloom on my sight, and my heart gropes for the path to where the music of the night calls me.

Light, oh where is the light! Kindle it with the burning fire of desire! It thunders and the wind rushes screaming through the void. The night is black as a black stone. Let not the hours pass by in the dark. Kindle the lamp of love with thy life.

Tagore thinks that something in the heart of the aspirant stirs him to pray for light and guidance from God. The aspirant would even prefer death to being in a state of dark night of despair and desolation. In the enveloping darkness of night inside and outside, the aspirant does not know the meaning of stirring that is in him. Momentary flashes plunge him into deeper gloom. His heart gropes in the direction of the music that comes in. he does not wish to waste his life in darkness. He prays God to kindle his heart with the burning fire of desire. He appeals to God to light the lamp of love with Godly qualities. The aspirant is fully aware of the power of obstacles to penetrate the inner shrine of his heart. He wants to be freed from the obstinate trammels thinking that God is the final refuge of his struggling endeavor. His
attachment to the worldly things, he cannot give up. At the same time he wants to love and live the progressive path of mysticism. He takes great pride in building the wall of worldliness all around though he is not able to see beyond the darkness that the wall causes. This situation of the aspirant is described in *Gitanjali* poem 29. With the best of care for sight of the aspirant’s true being the sense of pride overwhelms him and makes him weep in this dungeon. It makes him avoid the presence of God, which he cannot escape. He places before God the narrowness of little self, which knows no shame. Being a prisoner of wealth and power is his Dark Night of the soul. As a prisoner he is caught up in this unbreakable chain of worldly temptations. *Gitanjali* poems 23 to 33 bring out clearly the plight of the Dark Night of the soul, which the mystic aspirants most often have to pass through. Spirituality in human nature being the same everywhere at all times and places Basava whole-heartedly would endorse this account of the Dark Night of the soul. In a number of *vacanas* Basava continues to describe the aspirant’s plight of being plunged into old habits of temptations which draw a veil of darkness that covers and records the aspirant’s onward and upward progress on the mystic path. Basava says:

*Some care for body, others for the soul;*
*Some for the heart, and others for their word:*
*Amongst Kudala Sanga’s Saranas,*
*None cares for Pranalinga, except*
*Marayya of Tangaturu. (VB 807)*

*When pride has seized you quite,*
*How can the Linga come to you?*
*By not admitting pride in you*
*Your body must be deified.*
*Mark you, Kudala Sangama Lord,*
*It’s only when you have no pride*
*That you can live in Him! (VB 801)*
Most people are lost in their worrying about the desire of the body and earning of livelihood for life’s continuity. Some others are worried about their emotional cravings, still others about their disparity between words and deeds. This is how their sense of mystic consciousness is eclipsed and plunges them into the darkness of despair and desolation. Only the real mystic saint Tangaturu Marayya who has crossed this opaque screen of worldliness can enter into the realm of mystic union. Only those mystic aspirants whose personality is made of the loving devotion can hope to realize God-union says Basava. The greatest obstacle in the realization of God is egoism. It blinds the aspirant to the higher phases of spiritual attainments, imprisons him in his little self, which cannot see beyond its nose. It sets him away from God his true objective. It is a veil of opaque glass. Basava thinks that the mystic aspirant’s mind being enamoured, slips into wealth, gold and such other treasures, when they come by accident. Basava’s own words are:

Who can attain, good Sir,
Disinterestedness in respect of gold
And courage in the face of death?
If a treasure comes by accident,
There's none who will refuse;
If death should come by violence
There's none who'll say,
'I never prove false?'
Freedom from greed and fear belongs,
O Kudala Sangama Lord,
To none else but Thy devotees,
So dear to Thee! (VB 854)

Would you be filled
With real virtue fit for a Sarana,
How can you get experience
Unless you leave
Goodness and passion, anger, ignorance?
Unless you leave malice and vanity,
Unless you leave
The tainted body, bound
With six pernicious passions and ten airs?
It is beyond the unrighteous man,
To attain the gentleness of the Saranas,
The practice of faith, true vows,
Without renunciation of the world:
That is reserved
For our Kudala Sanga's Saranas! (VB 855)

The aspirant is overcome by greed and fear whereas a genuine mystic aspirant must have attained freedom from them. It is only those who have crossed this opaque dark night of the soul, can attain disinterestedness in these worldly things. Only those who have attained real virtue can qualify to embark upon the higher phases of mystic consciousness. It is incumbent upon the aspirant to have given up, leaving no track of anger, malice, vanity, ignorance and such other obstacles. Only those who have crossed these obstacles by means of a genuine sense of renunciation are qualified to proceed further on the higher phases of mystic path. Again Basava says:

*The middle bodies cannot know*
*Where Siva dwells;*
*Nor can the bygone bodies know*
*Siva's beginning or his end;*
*Since bodies born in time can never know*
*Siva's full majesty, they're all*
*Subject to time and to the curse of birth!*
*O Kudala Sangama Lord, make me to live*
*To serve Thy Sarana,*
*Oblivious of the body prove to doubt!* (VB 879)

*How is that one shuns to know*
*That which is known, good Sir?*
*How is it one refuses to forget*
*What is forgot, good Sir?*
*Lord Kudala Sanga alone knows*
*The mind that knows and then forgets!* (VB 883)
Here the weaknesses of the various temporal bodies of the mystic aspirant do not enable the pilgrim to know and experiences God Siva in his full splendor and glory in so far as they are subject to the ravages of time. Being helpless the aspirant entreats God to make him forget about doubts and weaknesses of the body. Even so he asks how is it that he cannot know what is known and that he refuses to forget what is forgotten. He wonders God only must be knowing that mind which knows and forgets. In vacana number 908 he says:

Although there was the eyesight in the eye,  
Why couldn't they see, O Lord?  
Though hearing was within the ear,  
Why couldn't they hear, O Lord?  
Though smell was in the nose,  
Why couldn't they smell, O Lord?  
Though taste was on the tongue,  
Why couldn't they taste, O Lord?  
Though touch was in the limbs,  
Why couldn't they touch, O Lord?  
Although the soul was in their life,  
Why couldn't they love, O Lord?  
Since in the body corporal traits persist,  
It cannot solve the mystery  
Of the riddle Thou hast set,  
O Kudala Sangama Lord! (VB 908)

The mystic aspirant is baffled by the powerlessness of the various senses, being fit as they are, are, yet unable to perceive their suitable objects, in so far as corporeal traits persist in the body. The aspirant feels unable to solve the mystery of the riddle thought to be set by God.

The mystic aspirant, introspecting his inner life as to what he really is, has been and what he really ought to be finds himself immersed in remorse, depression, desolation, agony, insecurity, fear, grief, forlornness, wilderness of suffering and sorrow, distress of helpless plight, mortal dread of the
temptations and allurements of the material world, and intense dissatisfaction with himself – all these shaking the very foundation of his being. This Dark Night of the soul makes the aspirant feel bitter about the chances he has lost in moving forward and upward on and on. It is the limitation and incompleteness of creatureliness on the one hand and the stupendous greatness of God on the other that oppresses and depresses making the aspirant feel his smallness. A wider study and reflection on ancient mystic saints’ sayings and a living company of such men of wisdom in the present, convinces the aspirant that a major effort to be pure in the future assures him of the accessibility of God and his grace. It also makes him learn to pine for the God-union. Basava says:

Mother, what tidings shall I tell
Of my household lord!
The cunning of the body he abhors;
Unless I pick the foulness in my eyes,
He will not let me see him; unless I wash
My hand, he will not let me touch;
Unless I wash my feet,
He will not sleep with me!
Because I washed myself
All over, Lord Kudala Sangama
Has taken me to His bed! (VB 911)

The purity of body, head and untutored heart makes him believe in the accessibility of God further. The aspirant believes in God’s sensitive response to pure devotion or bhakti. Basava writes:

Do not make search
Along the beaten path.
Bring nothing for a price.
Say once; and lovingly:
‘To Siva I bow.’
Say but one word
And you are free
Lord Kudala Sangama
Has a weakness for
True piety. (VB 180)

But how to achieve this bhakti? We all know to love the pleasures of the senses. But love is of a different sort. It transcends sensuous love, which is tormented by diverse things like not getting the things that the narrow self hankers after. But the larger self of the aspirant places before God that the lust for flesh is his weakness and that there is nothing pure in him and God tolerates with his infinite patience.

God is watchful about the devotees’ well being when he hears the devotees’ heartfelt wail and cry of agony and despair poured out in full sincerity. This God forsakenness and grief, as it arises in the aspirant touches and evokes God’s sympathy. This engenders intense love and yearning towards God. But God on his part tests the aspirant, as we have noted above, for his sincerity. It may give us the impression that God plays the game of hide and seek when he proves evasive. This situation intensifies the aspirant’s unfulfilled love. Love outgrows the feeling of the soul itself enveloping God, the great, the infinite. Though God is compassionate to all he is not unwise to waste his loving grace on those who do not want him. He would wait with infinite patience for a creature to turn Godward. God is the persuasive agency who never entertained hatred against even the worst evildoer. But God’s initiative seems to be conditioned on the initiative of the soul. But how does the aspirant cross the threshold from darkness into the higher life of ecstatic union? It is the common belief of all mystics that their total helplessness and agony of separation from God can only be overcome by the grace of God. Both Basava and Tagore in line with ancient tradition have felt that only those whom God loves can be lifted out of the plight of Dark night of the soul. Basava says:
Mark you, O Lord:
That thou dost love me, my merit is,
That Thou dost not, my sin.
In the whole world, O Lord,
Thou dwell'st for ever and aye;
He only knows Thee
Whom Thou dost love:
'Devotion comes of Grace,
Grace of Devotion, as
From sprout the seed, seed from the sprout.'
He alone is fortunate,
And holy to the world,
Whom Thou hast loved,
O Kudala Sangama Lord! (VB 505)

Tagore also writes: "The Paramatman, the Supreme Soul, has himself chosen this soul of ours as his bride and the marriage has been completed."58
The true spirit of ancient tradition is threading the course of mystic life in Basava and Tagore as can be seen all through their work. For example, Tagore writes "To me the verses of the Upanishads ... have ever been things of the spirit, and therefore endowed with boundless vital growth; and I have used them, both in my own life and in my preaching, as being instinct with individual meaning for me, as for others, and awaiting for their confirmation, my own special testimony, which must have its value because of its individuality."59 Accordingly, to come out of the Darkness of depression the Upanishad says:

This Soul (Atman) is not to be obtained by instruction,
Nor by intellect,
Nor by much learning. He is to be
obtained only by the one whom He chooses;
To such a one that soul(Atman) reveals his own person. (Tanum Svam)60.
In sheer helplessness of his struggle to come out of the agonizing dark, despair, depression, and forsakenness, the aspirant surrenders himself to God. As Basava says:

*Thine are my weal and woe;*

*My loss and gain are thine!*

*Thine too my honour and shame:*

*O Lord Kudala Sangama,*

*How can the creeper feel the weight*

*Of its own fruit? (VB 60).*

Here the aspirant’s ordinary self is subordinated to the higher self of God establishing a new personality and novel method of feeling and action. Narrow consciousness of the little self is replaced by wider consciousness. This wider and higher consciousness has been struggling for supremacy throughout the whole mystic way. The inmost depths of the soul are called into play attaining to light and freedom to have faith in the Divine Self. In the words of Ms. Underhill: ‘“That secret and permanent personality of a superior type” which gave the surface – self-constant and ever more insistent intimations of its existence at every stage of the Mystic’s growth his real, eternal self – has now consciously realized its destiny: and begins at last fully to be. In the travail of the Dark Night it has conquered and invaded the last recalcitrant elements of character. It is no more limited to acts of profound perception, overpowering intuitions of the Absolute: no more dependent for its emergence on the psychic states of contemplation and ecstasy.”

Now that the aspirant has come out of depression with the help of the wisdom of the sayings of ancients and entreating God’s grace, he is put on the verge of direct experience of God. With no fear or favor the aspirant tells God to come to him and dwell in his heart. Otherwise the aspirant endears to God to know him at least for what he is.
Love me if you would love; if not,
Do understand me, O Lord, aright;
When I imbibe the light of Linga, Lord,
Do understand me aright;
I have become, O Lord,
In Lord Kudala Sangama,
Part of Himself! (VB 845)

When once the writing on your brow has said,
'I bow to Thee, O Siva!'
It cannot be unwrit! The brand
Upon my breast, the letters on my head
Have said:
'O Kudala Sangama Lord, I bow to Thee!' (VB 886)

The aspirant wants God to accept him with whatever little purity and perfection he has. The art of heart in joining and uniting with God is something, which cannot be exhibited as a matter of good conduct. It is like the bud blooming without asking the florist. The mind bears witness to the touch of taste to the tongue. (VB 848)

The mystic renewal begins as Tagore says, “From now I leave off all petty decorations. Lord of my heart, no more shall there be for me waiting and weeping on corners, no more coyness and sweetness of demeanor. Thou hast given me thy sword for adornment. No more doll’s decorations for me!”62 It is the sword, which God has given to cut asunder all attachment to the objects of mundane life, so that there shall be no fear left for the aspirant in this world. It shines like the pure flame of being burning up earthly sense with one fierce flash. Here Tagore says:

Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full. Thus it is that thou
Hast come down to me. O thou lord of all heavens, where
Would be thy love if I were not?
Thou hast taken me as thy partner of all
this wealth. In my heart is the endless play of
thy delight. In my life thy will is ever taking shape.

And for this, thou who art the King of kings hast
decked thyself in beauty to captivate my heart. And
for this thy love loses itself in the love of thy lover,
and there art thou seen in the perfect union of two.63

The mystic aspirant asks where dost thou stand behind them all, my lover,
hiding thyself in the shadows?

After having overcome attachment to worldly things and feeling the
pangs of separation the aspirant waits with eagerness hungering for God’s
arrival. The aspirant waits and waits in the hope that God comes and ever
comes. This waiting in separation from God increases the fondness of love
dreaming the sudden splendor of God’s coming— all the lights ablaze and
people around standing agape. God’s coming down is to raise the aspirant
above the dust. It is the goodness and greatness of God to have made the
ragged beggar girl (aspirant) sit by his side putting her to tremble with shame
and pride. (Gitanjali 41) Most often, in Tagore the mystic sense is kindled by
the varied splendors of nature in all its rich variety—trees, birds, flowers,
sun, moon, stars, children, light, sea-waves and so on amplifying a mystic
panorama of life. This makes Tagore to praise God’s glory. Tagore says, "You came down from your throne and stood at my cottage door. I was
singing all alone in a corner, and the melody caught your ear...and with a
flower for a prize you came down and stopped at my cottage door."64 This
arrival of the God at his door brings joy deep in the heart of the aspirant.

The aspirant says that God’s loving presence would lose its meaning if
the aspirant were not a real being. God’s loving nature and his love for the
aspirant would be meaningless if the existence of souls were not an ultimate
reality as real as God on the ontological level. Unless finitudes were true and real, God’s infinity would have no meaning. God functions by being an indweller of soul and also oversees the aspirant’s will. The soul is aware of the endless play of God’s delight in its heart. This is how God has captivated the aspirant’s heart. In this way each is absorbed in the other enjoying perfect union. In the next poem Tagore continues to describe God conceived as the light, which fills everything in the world and spreads mirth and gladness in the heart of the mystic. Tagore says:

Light, my light, the world-filling light, the eye-kissing light, heart-sweetening light!

Ah, the light dances, my darling, at the center of my life; the light strikes, my darling, the chords of my love; the sky opens, the wind runs wild, laughter passes over the earth... The light is shattered into gold on every cloud, my darling, and it scatters gems in profusion.

Mirth spreads from leaf to leaf, my darling, and gladness without measure. The heaven’s river has drowned its banks and the flood of joy is abroad.65

These utterances of Tagore conceive God as manifesting in the whole of the cosmos in general and the heart of the mystic in particular. This immanence of God sweetens the heart by spreading mirth and gladness boundlessly diffused all around. It spreads laughter everywhere in the world. The light of God strikes chords of love. God’s light of love is a river flooding and crossing the barriers of the riverbanks. Such is the relation of the ineffable infinite expressing through the finite and overflowing it with joy. Tagore says “The revealment of the infinite in the finite, which is the motive of all creation, is not seen in its perfection in the starry heavens, in the beauty of the flowers. It is in the soul of man. For their will seeks its manifestation in will, and freedom turns to win its final prize in the freedom of surrender.”66
From now on the activities of the mystic are not sullied by selfish motives. The fear of the unknown does not bother him in so far as God as the light illumining mystic’s life pervades all the intimate associations of our life. This touch of God infuses simplicity, innocence—the child-like qualities in the mystic who never wishes to lose them. The mystic’s experience of bliss overflows into songs in the service of God. This service is the last gift of God. However, God in himself is one. God is many in manifesting Himself in creation. With this consciousness the aspirant’s yearning intensifies for union with the divine. The aspirant consecrates himself with a deepened commitment feeling God’s presence everywhere singing in praise of God. The aspirant feels in full faith that God dwells in him and rules his being. The aspirant feels that all his illusions have been burnt into illumination of joy by the grace of God and that all his desires ripened into fruits of joy. (Gitanjali 73)

The aspirant feels that what all he enjoys is the gift of God. But the ultimate purpose is to unite with God. So in all humility and devotion Tagore writes “Day after day, O Lord of my life, shall I stand before thee face to face...”67 Even so the aspirant feels he is not one with God suffering the sorrow of some distance of separation from God. He has the faith that some day God brings about the fruition of his life. Ultimately the aspirant believes that God’s blessing will come to him as his reward. The aspirant takes it that he is on probation for being taught deliverance. He believes that the joys and sorrows are of his own making by his separation from God. Now comes the messenger of God, namely death. The aspirant has nothing except his forlorn self to offer to him when he says: “Oh, dip my emptied life into that ocean, plunge it into the deepest fullness. Let me for once feel that last sweet touch in the allness of the universe. No more noisy, loud words from me—such is my master’s will. Henceforth I deal in whispers. The speech of my heart will be carried on in murmurings of a song.”68 In the evening of his life when
death is at his door as a guest the aspirant welcomes him by surrendering with all good and bad things, the earnings and gleanings that have constituted his earlier busy life.

Tagore accepts life and death equally enthusiastically as the mother takes away naturally the crying child from the right breast to the left in the very next movement. Tagore believes that death is not destruction but completion of life. Therefore he is willing to follow with the same enthusiasm and preparedness of a bride accompanying the bridegroom, after the wedding in solitude of night. Now Tagore shedding worldly baggage vows to possess the things that he had hoped for when he says: “Things that I longed for in vain and things that I got-let them pass. Let me but truly possess the things that I even spurned and over looked.” Having said goodbye to worldly baggage, Tagore says, “Ask not what I have with me to take there. I start on my journey with empty hands and expectant heart.”

Friends wishing he tries his good luck but Tagore is aware that he is not a sanyasi. So with all embellishments of a wedded life and glory and no fear in heart, he wants to meet his lord being no stranger to this world feels at home in it and says “Even so, in death the same unknown will appear as ever known to me. And because I love this life, I know I shall love death as well.” Being almost in death-house Tagore thinks everything in the universe is bound to the feet of God. That makes him to find a breakthrough to a sudden sight like a revelation. This is the preparation for reunion when Tagore says “But I shall be wise this time and wait in the dark, spreading my mat on the floor; and whoever it is thy pleasure, my lord, come silently and take thy seat here”.

Basava and Tagore believe that love is the highest bliss attainable by man and it is that which leads him beyond himself uniting him with the All. Tagore supports it from the examples of Brahadaranyaka Upanishad saying that
'Father loves the son and husband loves the wife not because of the son or wife as such but because of the truth of existence of Paramatman, the supreme soul is in all. Tagore concludes his book *Sadhana* with rhetorical questions implying the obvious answer. "Where can I meet thee unless in this my home made thine? Where can I join thee unless in this my work transformed into thy work? If I leave my home I shall not reach thy home; if I cease my work I can never join thee in thy work. For thou dwell'st in me and I in thee. Thou without me or I without thee are nothing...yes, here is this everlasting present, not distant not anywhere else." Since the mystic experience of God union is too deep to be expressed in simple words, Tagore has recourse to metaphors borrowed from the Upanishads in addition to his own – light, river, lover, boat, child, flower, sky etc.

After having passed through the various stages and intensities of experience Basava climbs the ladder of mystic experience and reaches the peak experience of *lingangasamarasya*. As in Tagore *bhakti* or loving devotion is central in the various stages of mystical development, it is true of Basava also. The various intensities of loving devotion as noted above are: *Sadbhakti, Nishta bhakti, Avadhana bhakti, Anubhava bhakti, Ananda bhakti,* and *Samarasa bhakti*. Guidance from God and the teacher have facilitated yearning and higher intensities of the aspirant's realization of mystic union *Lingangasamarasya*. As Basava says:

\begin{quote}
Greater the mystical experience  
Which means a common love,
A common art, a common joy.
No one has cared to know  
What may be less
The truth of those who have a Guru--let be  
The ones who have not one—
Is like the man who tests a stone—
This much, no more! (VB 927)
\end{quote}
What boots in your Linga worshipping
Unless you have a common love,
A common art, a common joy?
What boots your Linga-worshipping
Unless, by worship of Lord Kudala Sangama.
You merge in Him as stream in stream? (VB 929)

As the aspirant progresses in his mystical experience he begins to enjoy a common love and a joy and love in a higher measure and this goes on increasing if one has a Guru to guide him. The net result of such adoration and worship of linga is soul-God-union. Here soul and God equally enjoy each other, love each other, enter into each other in the manner of stream running into stream. In the end, though there is no end to this dynamic perfection as stream (soul) runs into stream, (God) Basava describes this Lingangasamarasya in a number of vacanas when he reaches the Aikya sthala.

Basava says:

I know not, Lord,
What earth and sky and ten directions be.
I know not Lord,
That linga holds the entire world.
In the delight of Linga's touch,
O Kudala Sangama Lord,
Exempt from sense of difference,
Like hailstone fallen in the sea,
I say again and again, God! God! (VB 941)

The whole world enters into God linga and the touch of linga is so delightful that the aspirant does not remember his identity in the manner of a hailstone fallen into the sea and yet the aspirant recites the name of God again and again. Basava writes:
Upon this mortal world, O Lord,
Through error was I born,
Through error did I call by name
Linga, who is for me
No presence nor yet absence of a thought
And yet exists; whose every part
Is Jangama;
For him I cooked and served the food I have;
To this Prasada I say Hail;
It's neither sweet nor lacking taste!
In that Prasada have I merged,
Mark that, O Kudala Sangama Lord! (VB 943)

The aspirant rightly or wrongly is born in this world and calls God Linga by name. Though he has no knowledge of presence or absence of God, yet God exists. This God is a composite reality made of moving things. The aspirant achieved values of different intensities and offered to God as naivedya, which is received by him as Prasada. The aspirant thus feels that he is united in this Prasada of God. Basáva further says:

How shall I say, O how
One breaks up into two?
How shall I say, O how
Two join together in one?
How shall I speak, O how
Of the integral absolute?
Lord Kudala Sangama, all bountiful,
He alone knows! (VB 947)

In this vacana the one becomes many and the many become one and it is difficult to describe the all-bountiful integral wholeness of God Kudala Sangama. The mystery of this union of many into an integral whole the aspirant says, God alone knows. Basava says:
I was greater than the greatest that there is
In the grand Absolute, sublimely great.
How can I tell the way the word
That I'm within the lofty light
Of Lord Kudala Sangama
Was turned to silentness? (VB 956)

In this vacana the aspirant soul and God are conceived in the metaphor of light. God is sublimely greatest. The aspirant is greater than this and is unable to say how he is in that lofty light and thus had to remain silent being aware of his existence in God. In these various vacanas Basava could only convey, to the extent possible, by means of metaphors.

Both Basava and Tagore have realized the ineffability of mystic union of soul and God. It is only through the language of metaphors, symbols, and images that some communication is made possible leaving the rest to one’s own direct experience. Both have strengthened their medium of communication by quoting the Upanishadic intuition yato vacho nivartante apprapya manasasah.

Where from words turn back,
Together with the mind, not having attained—
The bliss of Brahma he who knows,
Fears not from anything at all.47

Now it remains for discussion, the status of the aspirant’s soul in the mystic – God – union. Here there are two schools of interpretation, generally among the students of mysticism. One school says that there is complete identity of the soul merging in God so much so that it is blotted out of existence. In our opinion both Basava and Tagore maintain that the soul retains its distinction in the mystic’s – God – union. For example, Basava says in the above quoted vacanas of mystic union that they equally enjoy each
other, love each other and enter into each other. Each exists in the other. In *vacana* 941 even though like hailstone fallen in the sea the aspirant’s ‘I’ says *Siva Siva* (God) repeatedly. If the aspirant’s soul were annihilated how could it equally enjoy or utter the name of God? “In *vacana* number 956 Basava upholds the dignity and sanctity of the individuality of the soul when he says how can I tell the way the word I’m within the lofty light of Lord Kudala Sangama was turned to silentness?”

In the same way Tagore also holds the reality of love and that of soul in the mystic union when he says, “Thus it is that thy joy in me is so full. Thus it is that thou hast come down to me. O thou Lord of all heavens, where would be thy love if I were not?”75 Tagore is aware of the view that the soul completely merges in the infinite losing its self but he calls it an extreme form of mysticism. Tagore himself in line with Indian mystics says “But such an ideal of the utter extinction of the individual separateness has not a universal sanction in India.”76 Holding that man cannot be deprived of his distinctiveness Tagore writes “We are absolutely bankrupt if we are deprived of this speciality, the individuality, which is the only thing we can call our own; and which if lost is also a loss to the whole world. It is most valuable…”77

Thus we find that both Basava and Tagore uphold the dignity and sanctity of the soul as ultimately real in the scheme of things. It is this soul which has traversed along a long, hard and arduous mystic path of God-union and elaborated in the foregoing exposition.
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