CHAPTER V

EASTERN MYSTICISM AND THE WEST, BEATIFIC VISION IN DANTE'S THE DIVINE COMEDY, AND THE NEW CONCEPT OF LOVE IN CLASSICAL POETRY

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I. MYSTICISM, ITS MEANING, ITS ORIGIN IN THE ANCIENT INDIAN PHILOSOPHY, ITS APPEARANCE IN THE WEST THROUGH HELLENISM, ITS NEW FORM IN MOSLEM SUFISM, AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE WEST

Just as the new concepts of the idealized woman and the courtly love poetry originated in the Middle-East and finally reached the Western countries, the idea of mysticism first appeared in Eastern countries like India and China in the ancient times and finally infiltrated the Western theological doctrine and philosophical thoughts. Mysticism, therefore, is an extremely interesting subject of study particularly with regard to its place of origin, its journey towards the West through various channels and its development as a religious philosophy in different lands.

The term 'mysticism' connotes more than what is usually understood by it. In fact, no word in modern times has been more misused than 'mysticism.' It has been applied to theosophy, to spiritualism, to occult philosophy and even to the state of mind under the effects of intoxicants. It has also been used as a practice to disclaim the necessity of the doctrine, the ritual, and the discipline of the established religion. Historically mysticism has also been associated with the mystery cults of the Greeks.

The word 'mysticism' is not used by such great mystics as St. Augustine and St. Bernard. 'Contemplation' is the word they employ to denote their unique experience of God. Pseudo-Dionysius was the first person to apply the word 'mysticism' to Christian experience of God in his great treatise, 'Mystical Theology.'
Mystical experience, the attempt of the individual soul to realise the presence of God, is much older than Christianity and even the Greek philosophical thought. Some of the most profound forms of mystical thought are to be found in the Upanishads, while the freshness of the joy of the human soul in its apprehension of God can be seen earlier in the Vedic hymns. The whole philosophy of the Upanishads, which was the result of the reaction against the increasing formalism of the Vedic ritual, tends to bring to the foreground the central doctrine of mysticism, the union of the individual soul with God. The Upanishads taught the significant fact that in the highest stages of mystical life the distinction between the subject and the object, the worshipper and the worshipped, disappears. "If a man worships another divinity with the idea that he and God are different, he does not know." And in a way similar to the Christian view, Upanishads assert that freedom from the bondage of the self cannot be had through any amount of repentance and purification; it is an act of the Grace of God, which is called 'Devaprasada.'

The Upanishads, however, take us to a deeper analysis of the soul of man and the way this soul may find its way out from the bondage of the body. "This atman cannot be attained through study and intelligence or much learning—when a man wishes to attain it by himself, it can be attained. To him the atman reveals its true nature." Mysticism is the keynote of the great Hymn of Krishna The Bhagavat Geeta, and then later we find that Buddha taught some of the highest forms of mystical discipline to attain Nirvana, the final absorption of the self in Godhead.
One of the most significant statements on mysticism is to be found in the Chandogya Upanishads:

The self is below, the self is above, the self is to the West, to the East, to the South, to the North.

Truly the self is this whole universe. The man who sees and thinks and understands in this way has pleasure in the self, plays with the self, copulates with the self and has his joy with the self; he becomes an independent sovereign.

In every state of being freedom of movement is his.

This is the other God: he is your true self and at the same time the lover of yourself. 3

"This," commands Upanishad, "is what you should seek out and really want to understand, for this is the kingdom of God within you." 4

This represents pantheism at its widest; at the same time it makes room for sexual love, which is sublimated in Christian mysticism but used by the Tantric Hindus and Buddhists as a sacramental enactment of supreme love. According to this, love pervades the whole universe and unites the male and the female principles which together compose what the Hindu philosopher, Ramanuja, describes as 'the body of God,' which harmonizes all conceivable opposites in a divine synthesis of interpretation and harmony. Mr. R. C. Zaehner explains this phenomenon as "Pantheism plus love":

The way of the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Geeta in Hinduism, the way of the Mahayana in general and of Zen in particular in Buddhism, the way of many Christian and Moslem mystics, the way of what some would call 'natural' as opposed to 'revealed' religion, Pantheism and sex: the way of the so-called left-hand Tantra among both Hindus and Buddhists, the way of Timothy Leary and the Psychedelic cult. 5

In India it has long been taken for granted that sexual form are the highest (because
union and mystical love in what appears to be a sexual form are the highest (because the most natural) manifestations of the ultimate reconciliation of all opposites in the One, which is beyond all dualities—sexual union in the sphere of matter is the counterpart of mystical rapture in the sphere of spirit. Among the worshippers of Shiva in India it is represented by the love of the God Shiva for his Shakti, His power by which and through which all things are made—the creative Logos in the Hindu scheme of things. In its purely philosophical form this love is entirely spiritual but nonetheless fruitful, for the union of these two aspects of deity results in the creation of the world. "Shiva generates Shakti, and Shakti generates Shiva. Both in their happy union produce worlds and souls. Still Shiva is (ever) chaste and his sweet-speeched Shakti remains (ever) a virgin. Only sages can comprehend this mystery." 6

Thus speaks Shiva, "For my devout followers I am going to describe the gesture of lightning (Vojroli mudra) which destroys the Darkness of the world and should be treated as the secret of secrets." The details in the text allude to a technique of the sexual act without consummation, for as has been said in the Upanishad, he who keeps (or takes back) his seed into his body, what can he have to fear of death? And the chief object of this was to achieve "supremely great happiness... the joys of annihilation of the self." And this 'erotic beatitude' obtained by the stoppage not-of pleasure but of its physical effect, was resorted to as an immediate experience for entering into the Nirvanic State. The texts point out that otherwise the devout person becomes the prey of the Sad Karmic law, like any voluptuary.
About the same time Lao Tzu in China summed up the mystical traditions of his great race in *Tao Tehking*, when he gives expression to the same kind of pantheism leading to the recognition of the soul existing in the supreme Soul. Spurgeon, therefore, observes that the origin of the mystical philosophy is to be sought in the ancient religions of the East:

The thought which has been described as mystical has its roots in the East, in the great Oriental religions. The mysterious "secret" taught by the Upanishads is that the soul or spiritual consciousness is the only source of true knowledge. The Hindu calls the soul the "seer" or the "Knower" and thinks of it as a great eye in the centre of his being, which, if he concentrates his attention upon it, is able to look outwards and to gaze upon reality. The soul is capable of this because in essence it is one with Brahman, the universal soul.

A historical study of the early contacts between India and Europe reveals that at some early period the Greeks must have been in close contact with the Aryans of India. There exists a great similarity between the societies depicted in the Homeric and Vedic poems. Both worship the Gods of the 'upper air,' Father Heaven (Jupiter, Dyaus Pitar), Mother Earth, the wide expanse of Heaven (Varuna), the Dawn (Aurora, Ushas), the Sun (Surya). Similarly there exists striking resemblance between the epic era as depicted in Homer and the Mahabharata. As for example in both we have the warriors fighting from the chariot and not on the horse-back as described by the later Greeks or Rajputs.

It was, however, during the period of the great Persian Empire, which stretched from the Mediterranean to the Indus, and included both Greeks and Indians among its subjects that the former came close to the latter. There is further evidence of the early contact between Greece and India when Darius the
Great having advanced as far as the Indus, left behind a Greek mercenary named Scylax of Caryanda. Scylax's accounts regarding India and its people were used by the Greek historian Herodotus, who was born in Halicarnassus in about 484 B.C., almost at the time when Buddha died. Among many of the legends and stories that Herodotus relates are the famous accounts of the gigantic ants guarding the Indian gold, and of the foolish Hippocleides, which have been traced to the Buddhist Jatakas. Thus during the entire period of the reign of Emperor Darius there was a close link between Greece and India. Indian troops took part in the invasion of Greece in 480 B.C., while the Greek officials and mercenaries served in various parts of the Empire including India. Rapson, a well-known historian, thus observes on India's connection with Greece:

At no time were means of communication by land more open, or the conditions more favourable for the interchange of ideas between India and the West.

Such being the connection between Greece and India we have ample evidence of Indian ideas influencing and thereafter formulating the Greek philosophy. The Ionian Greeks who were known in India as Yavana (Yona) were the first to revolt against the simple eschatology of Homer in their attempt to seek, under the influence of Indian concept of soul, a deeper explanation of the meaning of life. Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Zeno, who actually laid the foundations of Greek metaphysics probed deeper for the one reality underlying all the material existence in almost the same spirit as the authors of some of the later Vedic hymns and the Upanishads had done.

Similarly, Orphism, the new metaphysical concept based on the explicit features of pantheism, actually explained the
theory that the body was immaterial and insignificant in
comparison with the soul and that the soul is imprisoned
in the body from which it seeks release. This concept,
though it originated with Pherecydes of Syros (C.600 B.C.),
was actually developed by his disciple Pythagoras, who was
born in 580 B.C., and who travelled widely in order to
study the esoteric teaching of the Egyptians, Assyrians,
and even, according to his biographer Iamblichus, the Indian
Brahmans. Gompertz, therefore, correctly observes:

It is not too much to assume that the curious
Greek, who was a contemporary of Buddha, and
it may be of Zoroaster too, would have acquired
a more or less exact knowledge of the East, in
that age of intellectual fermentation, through
the medium of Persia. It must be remembered in
this connection, that the Asiatic Greeks, at the
time when Pythagoras still dwelt in his Ionian
home, were under the single sway of Cyrus, the
founder of the Persian Empire. 9

The theory of the transmigration of the soul from body
to body, which Herodotus attributes to Egypt, is actually
derived from the Indian philosophy. For it has not yet been
proved if the Egyptians actually believed in this theory
whereas in India it formed an important creed of Hindu faith.
Mr. Rawlinson throws further light on this aspect:

It is more likely that Pythagoras was influenced
by India than by Egypt. Almost all the theories,
religious, philosophical and mathematical, taught
by the Pythagorians, were known in India in the
sixth century B.C., and the Pythagorians, like
the Jains and Buddhists, refrained from the
destruction of life and eating meat, and regarded
certain vegetables, as beans, as taboo. 10

The theory of metempsychosis shows the resemblance
between the Greek and the Indian religious thoughts. Rawlinson
cites instances of such resemblance to show the influence of
Indian ideas on Plato's philosophy:

Metapsychosis is referred to in many passages in
Pindar, and, with the complementary doctrine of Karma, it is the key-stone of the philosophy of Plato. The soul is for ever travelling through a 'cycle of necessity;' the evil it does in one semicircle of its pilgrimage is expiated in other. 'Each soul,' we are told in Phaedrus, returning to the election of a second life, shall receive one agreeable to his desire. But most striking of all is the famous apologue of Er the Pamphylian, with which Plato appropriately ends the Republic. Er sees the disembodied souls choosing their next incarnation at the hands of 'Lachesis, daughter of Necessity' (Karma personified). Orpheas chooses the body of a swan, Theersites that of an ape, Agamemnon that of an eagle. 'In like manner, some of the animals passed into men, and into one another the unjust passing into the wild, and the just into the tame.'

More striking is the parallel we have of the opening of the seventh book of Plato's Republic with the well-known simile of the cave and the Vedanta doctrine of Maya or Illusion. In Plato's Dialogues we have many an echo of the finest prayer of the Upanishad:

From the unreal lead me to the real,
From darkness to light,
From Death to Immortality.

Obviously Plato, like many other Greek philosophers, must have been influenced by the ancient Indian concept of mysticism with its emphasis on 'the supremely great happiness,' the 'joy of the annihilation of the self,' the experience of the 'Nirvanic State,' and 'the trans-substantiation of the human body,' or, to put the whole concept in another expression, to discover the True Self and 'to find the kingdom of God within the Self.'

As such, in Plato's Dialogues we have some of the most sublime thoughts about the relation of human soul with God, and the love of the Absolute Good, which he describes thus:

It is eternal, unproduced, indestructible...
It is eternally uniform and consistent and menocidic with itself. All other things are
beautiful through a participation of it, with this condition, that although they are subject to production and decay, it never becomes more or less or endures any change. When any one ascending from a correct system of love, begins to contemplate this supreme beauty, he already touches the consummation of his labour. For such a discipline upon this system, or are conducted by another, beginning to ascend, through these transitory objects which are beautiful, towards that which is beautiful itself, proceed as one steps, from love of one form to that of two and from that of two, to that of all forms which are beautiful; and from beautiful forms to beautiful habits and institutions and from institutions to beautiful doctrines; until from the meditation of many doctrines, they arrive at that which is nothing else than the doctrine of the supreme beauty itself in the knowledge and contemplation of which at length they repose. What must the life of him who dwells with and gazes on that which it becomes us all to seek? Think you not that to him alone is accorded the prerogative of bringing forth, not images and shadows of virtue, for he is in contact with reality, with virtue itself, in the production and nourishment of which he becomes dear to the Gods, and if such a privilege is conceded to any human being, himself immortal. 12

And the chief characteristic of this is that it is "simple, pure, uncontaminated with the intermixture of human flesh and colours, and all other idle and unreal shapes attendant on mortality; the divine, the original, the supreme the monoeidic beautiful itself." 13

Participation with the supreme beauty through contemplation, ascending through discipline to the plain of supreme knowledge, meditation leading to the ultimate knowledge and the vision of the Absolute Good that makes man immortal—these are the significant statements that give us an account of the mystical apprehension of Plato. In this mystical concept of Reality we have the distinct echo of the Upanishads that speak of Brahma identified with the Self through which alone a man may attain the illuminated consciousness:

The Self, who is to be realized by the purified
mind and the illuminated consciousness, whose form is light, whose thoughts are true; who, like the ether, remains pure and unattached; from whom proceeds all works, all desires, all odours, all tastes; who pervades all, who is beyond the senses, and in whom there is fullness of joy forever—he is my very Self, dwelling within the lotus of my heart. 14

In the centuries that followed the death of Plato and reputed Greek thinkers, Greece came closer to Indian life and philosophy. Alexander's invasion of India had broken down all the barriers between the East and the West, and the contact that his followers made was never totally lost. Alexander's successor Seleucus Nicator was glad to come to terms, after his defeat, with Chandragupta Maurya. The new alliance was cemented by a marriage between the Indian king and a Greek princess. With this began a long and fruitful intercourse between the Greek and Indian courts, which was maintained by Bindusara and Ashoka. The Greek rulers sent Ambassadors who resided at Pataliputra, the Mauryan Capital. Megasthenes, the Greek Ambassador who has given a detailed account of Chandragupta's empire, has particularly noted the striking resemblance between Greek and Indian philosophy:

In many points their teaching agrees with that of the Greeks—for instance, that the world has a beginning and an end in time, that its shape is spherical; that the Deity, who is its Governor and maker, interprets the whole... About generation and the soul their teaching shows parallels to the Greek doctrines, and on many other matters. Like Plato, too, they interweave fables about the immortality of the soul and the judgement implicated in the other world, and so on. 15

By the end of the last century before the Christian era, Indian philosophy proved most attractive in the Hellenistic schools of Asia Minor and Egypt. It is recorded that the famous Apollonius of Tyana (C.A.D.50) reached Taxila to study Indian philosophy under Brahman preceptors. Another
well-known gnostic teacher, Bardesanes, the Babylonian, learnt many interesting facts about India from an Indian embassy which came to Syria in the reign of Elagabalus (A.D. 218-22).

In the first century A.D. Alexandria, one of the most important centres of trade and commerce, also became the clearing-house of the social, cultural and religious ideas between India, and the West. Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 150-218), to whom Buddhism was well known, again and again refers to the presence of Buddhists in Alexandria and is of the opinion that "the Greeks stole their philosophy from the barbarians." Being the first Greek to mention Buddha by name, he knows that the Buddhists believe in transmigration and worship a kind of pyramid (Stupa) beneath which they think the bones of some divinity lie buried. He clearly states that "there are some Indians who follow the precepts of Boulta, whom by an excessive reverence they have exalted into God."

It was during this period that Gnosticism, as a distinct creed, developed chiefly under the influence of Indian philosophy. According to Rawlinson it was but Indian philosophy in the western mask:

Gnosticism was a deliberate effort to fuse Christian, Platonic, and Oriental ideas at a time when syncretism was particularly fashionable at Alexandria. Gnosticism has been described as Orientalism in a Hellenic mask. The great Gnostic teacher Basilides, a Hellenized Egyptian who was a contemporary of Hadrian (A.D. 117-38), definitely borrowed his philosophy from the wisdom of the East, which he interwove in an ingenious fashion into the frame-work of Christianity. Like Buddha he was a pessimist. "Pain and fear are inherent in human affairs." He had a remarkable explanation of the reason why God permitted His saints to suffer martyrdom, which is evidently based on the Buddhist doctrine of the Karma.
Thus by the time we come to Platonus (A.D. 204-270), we have ample evidence of the influence of Indian philosophy and metaphysics on the development of Greek and Hellenistic philosophical thought. Plotinus, who is not only a sincere disciple of Plato but also the exponent of NeoPlatonism, is actually regarded as the father of European mysticism in its full sense, practical as well as speculative. Born in Egypt, he studied under Ammonius Sakkas in Alexanderia at a time when it was the centre of the intellectual world, seeping with speculations and schools, teachers and philosophies of all kinds, Platonic and Oriental, Egyptian and Christian. As the founder of the NeoPlatonic School, Plotinus was anxious from the beginning of his career to be instructed in Indian philosophy. His biographer, Porphyry, has correctly recorded that Plotinus accompanied the expedition of Gordian against Sapor (Shahpur), king of Persia, in A.D. 242, in the hope that this might bring him into personal contact with Indians who would acquaint him with Oriental knowledge.

All these historical facts as well as the close resemblance between Indian thoughts and the western concepts of mysticism prove beyond any doubt the extent of Eastern influence on western thoughts. Rawlinson establishes this in an authoritative manner:

The resemblances between NeoPlatonism and the Vedanta and Yoga systems are very close. The absorption of the individual into the soul is described by Plotinus in words which have a typically Indian ring: 'Souls which are pure and have lost their attraction to the corporal will pass into the world of Ring and Reality.' NeoPlatonism also has many points of contact with Buddhism, especially in enjoining the abstention from the sacrifices and animal food. 18

The Upanishads clearly mention the process by which man
can attain the immortal self or realize the universal soul, which is to be found in the concept of the Brahman:

This Self, who understands all, who knows all, and whose glory is manifest in the universe, lives within the lotus of the heart, the bright throne of Brahman.

By the pure in heart is he known. The Self exists in man, within the lotus of the heart, and is the master of his life and of his body. With mind illumined by the power of meditation, the wise know him, the blissful and the immortal.

The moment the individual recognizes the immortal soul, he attains Reality and thus is able to forget all the limitations and the drawbacks of mortality. The human soul, thus rises above all mundane attractions, and, being united with the Universal Self, sees the light of light.

Plotinus, while explaining the process of the ascension of human soul through different stages, spells almost the same Hindu concept of the realization of the Self, when he talks of the illuminated state of ecstasy. According to him, when the soul attains this state, the One (The Immortal Self of the Upanishads) suddenly appears, 'with nothing between.' He further explains this in a way that clearly reminds us of the union as described by the Upanishads:

And they are no more two but one, and the soul is no more conscious of the body or of whether she lives or is a human being or an essence, she knows only that she has what she has desired; that she is where no deception can come, and that she would not exchange her bliss for the whole of Heaven itself. 20

Although from the first century of the Christian era, begins the history of mystical experience which has enriched both life and literature alike, the influence of Plotinus upon later Christian mysticism was immense, though mainly indirect, through the writings of two of his spiritual disciples, St. Augustine (354-450), and the unknown writer,
probably of the early sixth century, possibly a Syrian monk, who ascribes his works to Dionysius the Acropagite, the friend of St. Paul. Earlier, mysticism in the Epistles of St. John and St. Paul had reached the highest flights which Christian mysticism was ever destined to achieve.

By the seventh century, before the rise of Islam in the Near East, Christianity had already produced a few great mystics like St. Augustine, Dionysius, and St. Gregory the Great. But these mystics remained isolated and their mystical experiences were entirely personal; neither had they been able to form a school nor had they established a codified system of the philosophy of mysticism in order to create a group of followers to adopt and thereafter advance their mystical methods and tradition.

It was, however, in the eighth century in the Moslem world that mysticism, for the first time, became an institution and was consciously and deliberately adopted and owned by a group of people who expressed this philosophy in proper terminology and methods. In the eighth century in Mesopotamia we come across a group of ascetics, who call themselves 'sufis', the term by which the Moslem mystics were soon to be identified. The term is derived from 'Suf' meaning the garment of coarse undyed wool worn by Christian ascetics. The basis of Sufism is essentially Islamic as these early sufis claim to have inherited their doctrine from the Prophet and the ascetic and mystical elements mingled in a Sufi's personality. The Moslem Scholastics have embodied in their creed the aspect of transcendence; the Sufis, following this example, have combined the transcendent aspect with that of immanence, on which, though it is less prominent in the holy Quran, they naturally
lay greater stress. "Allah is the Light of Heavens and the Earth" (XXIV,35); "He is the first and the last and the outward and the inward" (VII.3); 'I have breathed into him (man) of My spirit,' (XV,29). Here we have the seeds of mysticism which later on developed into an important school.

The doctrine that inspires the early sufis may be found in the expression: Perfect detachment from 'Gods' involves perfect attachment to God, i.e., union with God through love. The woman saint, Rabia of Basra (A.D.801), the first conspicuous exponent of this thought expresses her mystic goal in a loving contemplation of God:

Two ways, I love thee, Selfishly,
And next as worthy of thee,
'Tis selfish love that I do naught
Save think on thee with every thought. 21

The doctrine of a mystical union imparted by divine grace is again stated plainly in apocryphal traditions of the Prophet, e.g., God said, "My servant draws nigh unto Me by works of Supererogation, and I love him; and when I love him, I am his ear, so that he hears by Me and his eye, so that he sees by Me, and his tongue, so that he speaks by Me, and his hand so that he takes by Me." 22

The first Moslem to give an experimental analysis of this inner life was Harith-al-Mahasibi of Basra (A.D.857); his treatise entitled Raiya li-buquu Allah, or Method of Religious observance, extant in a unique manuscript at Oxford, shows delicacy, and originality; he draws largely on Jewish and Christian sources for the purpose of edification.

Meanwhile, the Indian and Eastern philosophical ideas flowed into Europe once again in the ninth century chiefly
through Baghdad, which after the end of the supremacy of Alexanderia in A.D. 642, occupied a commanding position on the overland route between India and Europe. It was frequented by Greek and Hindu merchants. The 'Abbasids, like the Sasanians, were great patrons of literature, and had foreign works translated into Arabic. Baghdad remained the great clearing-house for Eastern and Western culture until its destruction by the Mongols in A.D. 1258. The widespread diffusion of the Arabic language, however, made it an excellent medium for the transmission of ideas from Asia to Europe. Arabic travellers and scholars like Albiruni were much attracted by Hindu civilization in the East, and transmitted it to the West. Albiruni (born in A.D. 973) accompanied Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni to India, learnt Sanskrit, and read the Hindu classics, the Puranas and the Bhagavat Geeta. All these ideas, carried home by the Arab travellers, merchants, and cultural ambassadors, influenced the Islamic as well as the Western mystical thoughts to a great extent.

Thus, in the ninth century there occurred a fusion of the thoughts of different religions and civilizations; Indian, Moslem, and Christian. The political revolution which transferred the seat of Government from Damascus to Baghdad brought Islam into immediate contact and conflict with the ideas of an older civilization; and if eventually these ideas were vanquished, yet history shows that in such encounters the victory is seldom complete. The Moslems had to deal with a widespread movement in lands where Hellenism had long been at home; where theological controversies were being carried on between Moslems on one side and Christians, Manichaecans, and Zoroastrians on the other. Though Moslem ideas became merged
in thoughts prevalent in Europe, these left their impact on European culture; particularly these helped in developing mysticism into a tradition.

The foundation of a complete theory and practice of mystical religion was laid by the Sufis of the ninth century. Dhu l-Nun of Egypt introduced into Islam the idea of gnosis (ma'rifah), a knowledge given in ecstasy which differs altogether from intellectual and traditional knowledge (ilm).

Being asked how he knew God, Dhu l-Nun replied, 'I know Him through Himself,' and, like Dionysius, he declared that 'God is the opposite of anything you can imagine;' and that 'the more one knows God, the more one is lost in Him.' At the same time the Persian mystic Abu Yazid (Bayazid) of Bistam, appears to have come under the influence of Indian monism, for he developed the doctrine of fana (the passing away of the self); and its positive counterpart, baga (the unitive life in God), was added soon afterwards. He became the legendary hero of the later sufis and the following sayings of his became the most significant ecstatic ejaculations for the mystics:

Subhani 'Glory to me, and,' I came forth from Bayazidness as a snake from its skin.
Then I looked. I saw that lover, beloved and love are one, for in the world of Unity all can be one. 23

But the man who shocked the Muslim world by his mystical doctrine set in his book Kitabul-Tawsir was al-Hallaj, the person who was executed for his declaration 'Ana'l Huqq' 'I am God.' According to Hallaj, God, who in essence is love, created man after His image at the end so that his creature, loving him alone, may suffer a spiritual transformation, find
the divine image in himself, and thus attain union with the divine will and nature. The term hulul, which he used to denote it, was associated in the minds of his co-religionists with the Christian doctrine of incarnation. He does not appear to have attached this meaning to it in his own case, yet there are other parallels of an extraordinary kind which mark him out as the nearest of all Moslem mystics to the spirit of Christ. For him, "the saint in union with God is superior to the prophet charged with an external mission, and the model of the saintly life is not Mahammed, but Jesus, the type of glorified humanity, deified man, whose personality, transfigured and essentialized, stands forth as the witness and representative of God, revealing from within himself al-Huqq, the Creator through whom he exists, and the Creative Truth in whom he has all his being." Moreover, Hallaj conceives of the mystical union as union with the creative word Kun (Be), which in the Quran is appropriated to the birth of Jesus and his Resurrection, a Union obtained "by means of close and fervent adhesion of the understanding to the commandments of God." Hallaj lived and died for the inward call in him that enabled him to see the mystery of the divine Lordship. His mystical verses reveal a kind of intimacy and tenderness which have touched many of his followers. The following few lines are remarkable for their feeling of union with his beloved:

Betwixt me and Thee there lingers an 'it is I' that torments me.
Ah, of thy grace, take away, this 'I'
from between as I
I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I,
We are two spirits dwelling in one body.
If thou seest me, thou seest Him.
And if thou seest Him, thou seest us both.
There appeared in the century following the death of Hallaj, systematic and general works on Sufi doctrine, such as the Kitabu-1-Luma by Abu Nasr al-Sarraj and the Qutu '1-Qulub by Aben Talib al-Makhi, which preserve valuable materials drawn from sources that have been lost. After al-Hallaj, another important Sufi was Abu Said (A.D. 967-1049), who appears to have drifted towards pantheism. In his view, union with God is not an occasional or intermittent experience, but the permanent result of extinction of the individual self and assumption of the divine nature. During his time there took place a great conflict between the two opposing schools of thought regarding the essential creeds and beliefs of mysticism. The men who intervened timely was Abu Hamid Ghazali (A.D. 1058-1111), who is known to the medieval Europe as Abuhamet and Algazel. As he turned to the mystic way revealed in the writings of Harith al-Mahasibi, he discovered the truth which he himself has expressed in these words: "I saw plainly that what is most peculiar to them (the Sufis) cannot be learned from books, but can only be reached by immediate experience and ecstasy and inward transformation." At the age of forty he finally left Baghdad.

Ghazali made a great contribution to the mystical thoughts by declaring that the truth lay with the mystics—the Thva. He brought the different circles of Moslems within the fold of Islam; for, to him, the revelations bestowed on the saints supplement those of the prophets as the source and basis of all knowledge. In his book Mishkatu '1-Anwar he declares that "Allah is the Sun, and besides the sun there is only the Sun's light." Thus with Ghazali an epoch in the history of sufism passes away.
Hitherto, the mystics had in the main, represented the idea of an intimate relation between God and the soul as opposed to that of formal worship based on authority and tradition, and this they combined with the theology constructed partly from the Quran and partly from materials which had come down to them from Aristotle and NeoPlatonists. But later the binding power of Islam grew feebler, and the foreign elements gained ground until the collapse of the caliphate left them in full possession of the field. It is perhaps for this reason that Zaehner says, 'Indian and NeoPlatonist ideas were to invade it later to such an extent that though the framework remained Islamic, the content retained almost nothing of the orthodox Islam.'

The result of all this was the development of a pantheistic philosophy which found an ardent exponent in Ibn'l-Arabi (1165-1240), who exerted a great influence on the exponents of mysticism in the East as well as the West. He was born at Murcia in Spain and died in 1240 at Damascus. His system of universal philosophy is embedded in an enormous mass of writings of which the most celebrated are the Futuhat al Makiyya, (Mecan Revelations) and the Fusuusu al-Hikam (Bezels of Wisdom), works which would astonish every one because of their original, speculative, intellectual, and imaginative power. He is a thorough-going monist, and the name given to his doctrine, ahdatu 'l Wajud (the unity of existence) justly describes it. To him all things pre-exist as ideas in the knowledge of God whence they emanate and whither they ultimately return. Further, he holds that Man is the microcosm in which all the divine attributes are united and in Man alone does God become fully conscious of Himself.
This doctrine, fusing together the elements derived from Gnosticism, NeoPlatonism, Christianity and Indian sources, occupies the central place in Ibnu 'l-Arabi's system. It is essentially a Logos doctrine. Divinity is objectified and made manifest in the true idea of humanity of which Adam was the first incarnation. The perfect Man (al-Insan al-Kamil), as the image of God and the Archetype of Nature, is at once the mediator of the divine grace and the cosmic principle by which the world is animated and sustained. There are many Christian echoes in Ibnu 'l-Arabi; he shows a peculiar sympathy with Christianity and applies the word Kalima both to Jesus and Mohammed. Further, he gives us a universal idea of the Divinity, as to him, a true mystic will find Him in all religions:

My heart is capable of every form;
A cloister for the monk, a fare for idols;
A pasture for gazelles, the votary's: kaba,
The tables of the Torah, the Quran.
Love is the faith I hold, wherever turn
His camels still the one true Faith is mine. 29

The intellectual ground-work that Ibnu 'l-Arabi laid in the thirteenth century in Spain became the chief source of the main thoughts of mysticism that developed later on in the East. Under the influence of his thoughts, the later Sufi becomes the complete theosophist and hierophant from whom no mystery is hidden, the perfect man who identifies himself with God or the Logos. It also gives enough scope for speculations, imaginative creation of the vision of the Beloved, and the expression of the longing and yearning of the soul for union with the eternal soul. The great mystics of the East like Ibnu 'l-Farid, Jâhâlu-ddin Rumi, and Nizami have expressed in almost an erotic form of poetry their search for the transcendental truth and have created the imaginative
world suggesting the infinite and the inexpressible, the world which is also capable of tuning the soul to heavenly harmonies and of preparing it for the highest mystical experience. Mysticism in the Eastern world after this became a very important aspect of Moslem philosophy and theology as well as a significant practice of the way to seek the Divine Truth.

But the influence of mystical thoughts in general and that of Ibn 'Arabi in particular was very great in the West in the medieval time. He certainly influenced many of the Christian medieval schoolmen and as is discussed in a later chapter he had a great influence on Dante chiefly in his design and concept of the divine comedy. Commenting on these influences of Moslem Mysticism on Christianity Mr. R. A. Nicholson observes:

Concerning the problems of mystical psychology and speculation the West can still learn something from Islam. How much it actually learned of these matters during the Middle Ages, when Moslem Philosophy and Science radiating from their centre in Spain spread light through Christian Europe, we have yet to discover, in detail, but the amount was certainly considerable. It would indeed be strange if no influence from the source reached men like Thomas Aquinas, Eckhart, and Dante; for mysticism was the common ground where medieval Christianity and Islam touched each other most nearly. The fact is found on history as we shall see. It explains why the ideas, methods and systems produced by mystics—Roman Catholic and Moslem of that period seem to bear the stamp of one and the same spiritual genius. 30

Similarly, Davis comes to the same conclusion on this subject:

Sufi poetry has greatly influenced Western thought. Many of the German mystics wrote as the Sufi poets had written before them. Particularly might be mentioned Eckhart, Tauler and Suso. 31
The most significant outcome of the mystical search for the Divine Truth or the Supreme light was the development of the highly refined rhetoric that gave rise to the Mystical poetry in the East as well as West. Symbols like the 'Veiled Beauty,' 'the chaste Beloved,' 'the Form of the Light,' and 'the Divine Light' were now used to express the hidden or mystical thoughts. Here it may be noted that according to Mohammedanism, a finite creature can only love what is finite. In order, therefore, to express that love of the divine which they believed themselves to be experiencing, Arab mystics of the twelfth century had to resort to symbols having secret meanings. It was precisely the desire for the union of the creator and the creature that symbolism was employed in the erotic religious language of Arab mystic poetry. It is significant to note that the symbolism employed by the poets caused them to be accused of holding a disguised Manichaeism, and the charge cost al-Hallaj and Sharawardi their lives. It is equally poignant to note that two of the great Western mystics, Mister Eckhart and John of the Cross, were accused of the same charge.

The religious mystic and the mystic-poet have many things in common, their search for Reality and their method of communicating the richness of their experience through artistic and highly imaginative language, for we must remember that the mystics have given to the poet a large number of poetic similes and metaphors, such as, the 'Desert of God head,' 'the kin of Christ,' 'the cloud of the unknowing,' 'the marriage of soul,' 'the Divine Dark,' and 'the Beatific Vision' — to name only a few.
The Chief doctrine expressed in the mystic themes of Arabic mystical poetry may be found in what Suhrawardi speaks of lovers as being Brethren of the Truth. This was the name given to all the mystic lovers who were at one with their beloved in a mutual idealization and who came to form a community analogous to the Catharist Church of Love. Mystics of the illuminative school of Suhrawardi were inspired by Persian Manichaeism, and recently discovered documents relating to their faith contain a fable about a lovely maiden who awaits the true believer at the far side of the Bridge of Sinvat. When he appears, she says to him: 'I am myself.' According to some interpreters, this lady of thoughts is no other than the spiritual and angelic part of man—his true self. Further, in Arab mystical poetry Num is a conventional name given to a man's beloved, and here it means God. Moreover, under the influence of Eastern poetry, the Western mystic poets have used system of salutation—the initiated wish to give on approaching the Sage. The latter gives the first salute, and this becomes an important convention of poets like Dante and eventually of Petrarch. All these poets attach extreme importance to the salute given by the lady, and their doing so is easily understood if we bear in mind the two senses of salutare e.i., 'to greet' and 'to save.'

Above all the eulogy of a death due to love is the leit-motif of Arab mystical poetry as Ibn al-Paridh has expressed:

The repose of love is a weariness; its onset, a Sickness, its end, death.
For me, however, death through love is life,
I give thanks to my Beloved that she has held it out to me.

Whoever does not die of his love is unable to live by it.
Likewise al-Hallaj wrote: "In killing me you shall make me live because for me to die is to live and to live is but to die." To these mystic poets death is the 'light of illumination,' the vanishing of illusory forms, the Soul's Union with the Beloved, a communion with absolute being. Hence for Arab mystics, it is Moses, who symbolizes the greatest of Lovers, because in having declared on Sinai his wish to see God he is held to express his wish for death.

This is also the very cry of Western mysticism. St. Teresa's ejaculatory prayer was "I die of not being able to die."

These and many are the parallels between the Arab mystical poetry and that of the West revealing the great influence the former poetry had on the latter. Many of the Spanish as well as the Western poets have written poetry that shows the influence of the Eastern poetry and philosophy both in its themes and symbolical forms. One of the most significant among these is Ramon Llull. (1233-1315)

He was a man who never stopped writing; his first book which he composed in Arabic and then translated into Catalan, contained a million words. There is only one other work, that is to be noted here—a short mystical prose-poem entitled The Book of the Lover and the Beloved. In form it is made of a series of short unconnected paragraphs which refer to four characters: the Lover, the Beloved, Love, and the Fool. Written in very simple language, in a type of prose that is sometimes rhymed, it has a strange and penetrating quality that reminds one of the great mystic poets of the East:
The birds sang the dawn, and the Beloved who is the
dawn awake
And the birds ended their song and the Lover died 
for his beloved in the dawn.
They asked the lover, who is thy beloved?
He answered. He who makes me to love,
Long, pine, weep, sigh, suffer and die. 32

Commenting on the overtone, the rhythmic form and 
the symbols of these lines, Brenan observes:

One will see, I think, where this comes from, 
if one opens the Dewan of Jalal-ud-din Rumi, 
the great Persian Sufi Poets, who lived in 
the same century. Romen Llull knew Arabic 
much better than he knew Latin and was well 
versed in Sufi philosophers such as the 
Murcian, Ibnudl-Arabi, he often speaks with 
admiration of their devotional practices 
and indeed he tells us that he wrote this 
book 'in the Sufi manner.' Its coloured 
allusive style, tender mode of feeling and 
Pantheistic mysticism all breathe the spirit 
of the Persian East. 33

Similarly the Eastern mysticism also helped the West 
in the formation of new cult and system of thought in 
Christianity itself in the Middle Ages. For instance, the 
Franciscan Movement with its message of freedom and love 
was entirely a new thing in Christianity at that time, for 
since the beginning of Dark Ages Christ had been thought of 
chiefly as the terrible judge who would appear and condemn the wicked on the Last Day. The Fransciscan Movement was 
started to replace the wrath of the Divine by the supremacy 
of Divine Love, and a close investigation again shows that 
there was actually a Christian form of the Sufi doctrine of 
brotherhood which during the past few centuries had been 
making its way westwards from India and Persia through the 
Arab mystical thoughts.
Hence it was, from India in its earliest form, and then from the Near East that mysticism emerged as an important metaphysical thought and with the final confluence of other systems of thought like NeoPlatonism, Manichaeism and Christianity in the eighth century that this system was crystallized into the most significant revolutionary thoughts of the medieval life and religion in the West which, from the twelfth century onward, begins to sing of the new passion of love in the newly acquired symbolical language and form. Dante, the most reputed philosopher, who represents the Medieval Europe, becomes in his poetry the major Western poet to express in the manner, form and symbol of the East.
II. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE LOVE-LYRIC IN ITALIAN POETRY UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ARAB POETRY: DANTE AND BEATIFIC VISION IN THE DIVINE COMEDY

The new theme of Love, the concept of idealized woman, and the search for the union of soul through a veiled Beauty, were as conspicuously absent in Italian poetry before the twelfth century as they were in Greek as well as Latin poetry. It was Frederick II of Sicily, who actually supplied materials as well as inspiration for the rise of the new love poetry in Italy. Himself a poet whose Italian poetry won Dante's praise, he inculcated first in Sicily and later in Italy a genuine love for Oriental poetry and Arabic studies. The love poetry of Provence and Islam entered his court and was taken up by the young nobles who served there. His curiosity for the secrets of Islamic knowledge was so great that he sent his scholars all over the Islamic countries to collect works in Arabic in order to render them into Latin. Much of this Sicilian verse, which was steeped in Oriental spirit and conceived in the fashion of Arabic poetry, was translated into Tuscan, and was an important factor in forming the school of poets that culminated in Dante.

His kingdom was regarded as the first modern state in Europe, and the most significant fact about it was that this place became the most important centre of the East-West contact. It is from this place that much of the Arabic culture, Arabic language, Arabic literature, particularly Arabic poetry, infiltrated into the whole of Europe. But his contribution to the development of Italian poetry was most significant, for, as Will Durant observes, "It was at the Apulian court of Frederick II that Italian literature was born. Perhaps the Moslems in his retinue contributed some stimulus,
for every literate Moslem versified. Some years before Frederick's death in 1250 Ciullo d' Alcamo (c. 1200) wrote a pretty 'Dialogue Between Lover and Lady' and Alcamo, in Sicily, was almost wholly a Moslem town."

The historians further affirm that as Frederick's court travelled through Italy he took poets along with his retinue, and they spread their influence in Latium, Tuscany, and Lombardy. His son Maufred continued his patronage of poetry and wrote lyrics that Dante praised.

It was during this time that the Tuscan poets felt the influence of Arabic mystics who saw God in beauty and wrote love poems to the deity. The minds of the Western poets during this time was seized by the concept of God as supreme love and light presented by the Arab mystics. Mysticism here appeared as the religion of love. Davis has explained this very well in the following words:

We do not love a woman merely because she is pretty, possesses a pleasing mannerism. We love her because, in an indescribable way, she sings a song we alone can fully understand, a voice that lifts up our soul and makes it strong, we follow that invisible figure from land to land, from heart to heart, from death to life on and on. When love loves Love for its own sake, when the self is dead, we shall meet Him. We shall find the Beloved to be perfection—the realization of that strong desire that made us lose ourselves in others. The more we lose ourselves in God, the more we find him. Man and women love and die. But love is a Divine Essence working through and through innumerable lives for its own eternal glory. Personality is limited only to the finite world—perhaps a phase or two beyond the grave. If it is wholly physical then it dies with the death of the object. If it was infinitely more than that, if it was the love of Goodness and purity, and the Beautiful it lives on for ever... But the love of the All Good, All Beautiful remains, and when such is found in earthly love it is God finding Himself in you, and you in Him. That is the Supreme teaching of sufism, the religion of love. 35
It is here that we have the concept of the bea\textsuperscript{st}ific vision which the Arab mystical thoughts contributed to European poetry. It is not, as Will Durant says, "by a strange marriage of metaphysics and poetry, came the dolce stil nu\textsuperscript{o}vo, or 'sweet new style',"\textsuperscript{36} but through the Arab mystic poets who expressed the basic idea of beloved playing a major role in man's search for the Eternal. Thus the mystic says regarding woman:

Woman is a ray of God, not a mere mistress.
The creator's self, as it were, not a mere creature. \textsuperscript{37}

And on Love:

'Lo! I will cherish the soul, because it has a perfume of thee. Ev\textit{ery} drop of blood which proceeds from me is saying to Thy dust, "I am one colour with Thy Love, I am a partner of Thy affection." In the house of water and clay this heart is desolate without thee; O Beloved, enter the house or I will leave it.\textsuperscript{38}

And on Soul's yearning:

"O, Soul, if thou, too, wouldst be free,
Then Love the Love that shuts thee in.
'Tis love that twisted every snare;
'Tis love that snaps the bond of sin;
Love sounds the Music of the spheres;
Love echoes through Earth's hardest din."\textsuperscript{39}

The earlier Italian poets before Dante attempted the new idea, which they derived from the Arab Mystical poets of Sicily. Guidio Gainizetho(1230-75) of Bologna, whom Dante saluted as his 'literary father', rendered into poetry the new philosophy of love in a famous canzoni of the 'Gentle Heart', where he asked God's pardon for loving his lady on the ground that she seemed an embodiment of divinity. The new style was carried through north Italy by Lapa Gianni, Geide Orlandi and others. It was brought to Florence by its finest pre-Dantean exponent, Guido Cavalcanti (C.1258-1300), one of the close friends of Dante. Guido was an Averroistic freethinker and
was much interested in the new style of poetry giving a novel treatment to women. As Dante himself says, he wrote *The Divine Comedy* in Italian as he (Guido) desired, and also imitated his canzoni. They were really Dante's predecessors and earlier masters.

Instead of going in for frank sensuality which they found in the Provencal singers, the Italian poets attempted to depict women as embodiments of pure and abstract beauty or as symbols of divine wisdom or philosophy. But none of these early poets was able to breathe the pure spirit of mysticism into his songs. The use of the image of the poet's love as a symbol for the expression of his poetic ideas and as an agent for the progress of his soul towards the Divine Vision was not successfully developed by any of the European poets before Dante.

The first significant Spanish-Arab poet who raised this concept to a greater height and transformed his earthly love into ideal love through his lady was the famous mystic poet Mihyuddin Tbn 'l-Arabi, who was born in Murcia. As a mystic, Ibn-Arabi believed in the unity of existence, that beings have no existence except in what they obtain through the participation in Absolute Being. He too loved a girl, the beautiful and accomplished daughter of Makinu'ddin, called Nizam; the lady is celebrated in his poetry as an ideal woman; she is really a predecessor of Beatrice and Laura, the combination of the generic and the timeless with the individual in a specific time and place. The nearest thing to this form of literature would be St. Teresa's *Life* rather than the confession of St. Augustine in whose consciousness the spectacle of the visible quickly vanishes. What we
actually find in Ibn Arabi's book, *The Interpreter of Love* is that Ibn Arabi fuses his longing for eternity with his own existence; and in his existence we are shown his person in its most detailed and evanescent aspects; it is mystical and at the same time has its genesis in a specific time and place—here he gives us his feeling of the presence of Nizam within the book. Thus it was possible for a sufi like Ibn 'l-Arabi to combine mystic pursuits with the passion for a beautiful woman.

Whereas in the religious and moral literature of the Christian Middle Ages the woman symbolized sin, in the Arabic literature of that period and in the same place, the woman was often an incentive on the journey towards God. This is how Ibn 'l-Arabi, the Spanish poet of the thirteenth century, established a new image of woman when Arabic poetry was being widely imitated though Orthodox Christianity was trying its best to uproot the Moorish existence from the West.

This actually posed almost a challenge for Dante. In the Christian world in the thirteenth century woman was still regarded as a gateway of sin. St. Thomas deals with woman in this way. "In the *Roman de la Rose,*" says Dante, the philosopher moralist dominates and we have a view of love between the sexes that is quite similar to that of Thomas. The only reason for sexual intercourse is procreation; any other involvement with women is dangerous." Jean more than his predecessor makes in his portion of the poem frequent and fierce attacks on women.

But the influence of the new poetry developed in Spain and the impact of ideal concept of woman propounded by the
Eastern mystics were too strong and had too deeply penetrated into the European Society to be distinguished by the Christian attitude towards women. Dante had to tear himself away from orthodox Christian dogmas in order to establish in Italian poetry the new image of idealized woman and for this he naturally turned to the poetic tradition that had been long established in Anadalusia, had flourished in Sicily, penetrated into the Provencal poetry and had now infiltrated into Latin literature. It was indeed, under the influence of Eastern mystics and with the specific purpose of establishing the new image of woman that Dante designed The Divine Comedy.

In turning from the Thomasian view of woman to the Eastern concept of idealized woman Dante is able to affirm secular love as the first stage of divine love. If a woman's beauty reflects heavenly beauty, if her power to refine man comes from God, then it is by seeking the same source of that beauty, not by rejecting her, that man can reach God. Dante accepts the attraction he feels for physical beauty and ascribes it to the reflection of a higher beauty so that he is able to preserve his love for a woman without letting it come in the way of his love for God. In Paradiso of The Divine Comedy he suggests that man can perceive the divine light only through the mediation of woman until the end of his journey. Here Dante simply echoes the eastern mystic:

0 Thou who art my soul's comfort in the season of sorrow
0 Thou who art my spirit's treasure in the bitterness of death!
...  ...

hence in worship
I turn to thee.
By Thy grace I keep fixed on Eternity
My amorous gaze. 41
What appears unusual to the Western people is Dante's view of love that human love between man and woman is not just a figure for the love of man and God, but a necessary step towards that love.

Things moved in such a way that, like Ibn Hazm and Ibnu 'l-Arabi, Dante too in his young days happened to see a young lady who won his heart and became later for him a deity stronger than I who, coming, will rule me. Nine years later he again saw this lady when both of them were at the age of eighteen. She appeared to him 'dressed all in pure white, ' and, as Dante himself records "she saluted me with so virtuous a bearing that I seemed then and there to behold the very limits of blessedness ... I parted thence as one intoxicated ... There, for that I had myself in some sort the art of discoursing with rhyme, I resolved on making a sonnet." Perhaps it was under the intoxication of his love for Beatrice that he composed in the next nine years the sequence of sonnets and commentaries known as La Vita Nuova (The New Life). In 1289 she married Simone De' Bardi, but this had obviously no effect on Dante, as he continued to write poems about her, without mentioning her name. A year later Beatrice died at the age of twenty four, and Dante mourned her death in an elegy, using her name for the first time in his poetry:

Beatrice is gone up into high heaven,
The kingdom where the angels are at peace,
And lives with them, and to her friends is dead.

Thus Dante launched upon his great epic in Italian language with a definite plan and a design in mind. It was to be in three canticles, each of thirty-three cantos with an extra canto in the first canticle to make it a round hundred.
It was indeed most painstakingly planned. But apart from the form of the poem, the theme, the mode of expression, the use of symbols, and the allegorical and philosophical bearings are important. The poem, as Dante declares, has a purpose; it belongs to the genus philosophy and its aim is morality. As such he points out three meanings which sum up the total importance of the poem: the literal, the allegorical, and the mystical. Dante himself explains the allegorical implication of the poem:

The subject of the work according to the latter... is the state of souls after death ... ... But if the work be taken allegorically its subject is man, in so far as by merit or demerit ... he is exposed to the rewards or punishments of justice... The aim of the whole or and the part is to remove those living in this life from a state of misery and to guide them to a state of happiness. 443

The poem, of course, suggests various levels of meaning. It explains the meaning of the life of Dante. In the epic of his life, his exile may be taken as hell, the period of his studies and writings may be taken as his purgation, his hope and love are his redemption and bliss. In a broader allegorical sense, the Inferno suggests man passing through sin, suffering, and despair, the purgatorio is his cleansing through faith; the paradise is his redemption through divine revelation and unselfish love. Similarly, Virgil, who guides Dante through hell and purgatory, stands for knowledge, reason, and wisdom, which can lead us to the portals of happiness; only faith and love (Beatrice) can lead man to heaven. These are in a broader sense, the general meanings that people read into the poem revealing very well the thirteenth century Christian religious outlook on life in this world and hereafter.

This great epic which Dante completed three years before
his death and which may be regarded as the epitome of Dante's life, learning, theology, philosophy, science, and knowledge of Middle Ages, has also more elements of Islamic theology, Oriental influences, Eastern mystical philosophy, Arabic concept of the cosmogony, Koranic description of the furies of hell, the prophet's experiences of his ascension into the heavenly world, the Arab-Spanish poets' account of the choirs of angels singing hymns to the Divine Grace and the various Persian and Eastern legends of ascension than what is usually found by the casual reader.

This theory of the Islamic influence on Dante has met with mixed feelings in certain critical circles, particularly on the grounds of the lack of sufficient evidence of direct transmission. Will Durant, who admits the impact of the Moslem poets in providing literary stimulus to the Apullian court of Frederick II, is not inclined to accept this theory, observes: "So far as we know, none of these Arabic writings had by Dante's time been translated into any language that he could read." 45

Will Durant, nevertheless, forgets some of the basic facts regarding Arabic studies, which attracted the Christian and Jewish philosophers and scholars of the medieval period. Thousands of Arabic works were translated into Latin during this period, and Frederick II appointed some of his Latin scholars to render into Latin a large number of Arabic works on specific subjects. Moreover, a Latin translation of the Koran was undertaken by Abbot of Cluny, Peter the Venerable, who appointed at his expense an English scholar Robert of Kelton for this purpose. With this translation completed in July, 1143, the West had for the first time an opportunity for
the serious study of Islam. In the University of Padua a Latin scholar had been appointed chiefly for the teaching of Arabic studies and for rendering Arabic philosophical commentaries into Latin. By 1230 when Roger Bacon reached the University he found to his great surprise, that the Arabic philosophical works were catching up with the European imagination. He found that the name of Avicenna was quoted beside that of Augustine, and even St. Thomas used Arabic philosophy to refute some of the Moslem views. Above all, Dante's teacher Brunetto Latini was himself familiar with the Arabic studies and traditions on which he based his Life of Mohammed. Latini was the Florentine ambassador to the court of Alfonso the wise in 1260 and under his supervision a large number of works of Arabic sources was compiled into Latin; he himself wrote a number of semi-oriental works on different subjects. All these were made available to the whole of Europe, and Latini himself showed great interest in making these available in his country. Dante has admitted that he gathered all the science and knowledge from his teacher Latini and used them in his general design of The Divine Comedy. With all such evidence it would be simply improper to reject the influence of the Arabic world on Dante.

Moreover, the influence of Islamic theology had infiltrated so deeply into medieval scholasticism that it was extremely difficult to separate one from the other. In his study of Islam and Christian theology, Dr. Sweetman has pointed this particular phenomenon:

There are parallel development in theology between Christianity, Judaism and Islam. As soon as we cross the line from the scriptural and traditional content of the three to the general questions proposed to rational thoughts and statement, couched in
philosophical terms, this becomes quite obvious. The medieval interaction of philosophy and theology in the complex, i.e., of Ibn Sena, Al Ghazzali, Ibn Rush, Aquinas and Duns Scotus for investigation. 46

Dr. Sweetman too observes:

What we find when we make cross reference between Islamic and Christian scholasticism is that Ibn Sina is more favored by Dun Scotus and the Franciscans, and Ibn Rushed by Aquinas and the Thomaists in spite of the clear opposition of the latter to Ibn Rushed in many important matters. Illustrations of this are that Aquinas follows Ibn Rushed in arguing that being and One are identical in regard to existence and substance in one perse, whereas Ibn Sina regards ens and unum as additional to substance. 47

All these present one with the simple truth that intellectual communication was carried on, over a long period of time, between two races living in daily intercourse with each other. If we take the literary parallelisms as well as the historical background into consideration, we find it extremely difficult to have any doubt on the influence of Islamic studies on Dante. Discussing this problem Nicholson correctly concludes:

In short, the parallelism, both general and particular, reaches so far that only one conclusion is possible. Muslim religious legends, e.g., the Miraj or Ascension of the prophet together with popular and philosophical conceptions of the after life derived from Muslim traditions and much writers as Farabi, Avicenna, Ghazali and Ihnu 'l-Arabi must have passed into the common literary stock that was accessible to the best minds in Europe in the thirteenth century. 48

Obviously, Dante used all these materials available to him directly or indirectly through his Oriental oriented teacher Latini and Oriental minded philosophers.

Dante chose to write this poem with a specific purpose, e.g., to establish in Italian poetry the dolce stil nuovo
with the idealized image of woman and for this he had to turn to the Arab Mystical poetry. The vision of Dante's Beatrice is certainly based on the concept/earlier Arabic predecessors, Num and Nizam, although Dante had to recast his lady into the Christian frame-work of the thirteenth century.

The main allegorical design of the poet, his journey though the *Inferno*, the *Purgatorio*, and the *Paradiso*, is based on the theme of *Ascenion*, which relates an important experience of the prophet regarding his miraculous journey to heaven known as the *Miraj*. During the six hundred years before Dante wrote his great epic, the Islamic legend had appeared many times in different versions. Thus we had the Persian legend of Arada Viraf's ascension to heaven and the Moslem legend of Kaikaus derived from a phalavi text of 881. All these were more or less based on the legend of the prophet's ascension to heaven and were available in almost all the Islamic countries as well as the places ruled by the Moslems. Dante's *The Divine Comedy* is based on the whole episode of being awakened by an unknown guide, the ascent of the steep mountain; the visit to hell and paradise with an interpreter and the final apparition of the Divine throne as described in the *Miraj* of the holy prophet. The *Miraj* theme, therefore, serves as the basic foundation on which the structure of the entire poem rests.

Dante gives a vivid and graphic picture of hell and chiefly he dwells on the furies of the *Inferno*. It is a region of total hopelessness: 'All hope abandon, ye who enter here.' He paints in grim colours the dark and frightening abysses between gigantic murky rocks, streaming, stinking marshes, torrents, lakes and streams, brands of fire, howling winds,
and petrifying, cold regions, and amidst all this he finds
tortured bodies, grimacing faces, and blood chilling screams
and groans. Now we find that all these descriptions are
identical almost in minute details with those of hell in the
holy Koran. None of the works of the medieval times,
religious or secular, not even the Bible, has dealt with the
details of hell as depicted in the Koran, which primarily
aims at instilling a sense of fear against the furies and
fires that await the wicked in the hereafter. And we find
that Dante too gives an elaborate account of these furies with
almost the same purpose, as he declares that "its subject is
Man, in so far by merit or demerit ... he is exposed to the
rewards or punishments of justice."49 Herein Dante reveals
the basic purpose of the Islamic scripture in its description
of hell, its allegorical meaning, and its ethical intention.
Miguel Asin Palacios, dealing at length with this subject,
points out the influence of Islam on Dante and the details
that actually helped him in the general design of this epic.
He finally concludes:

Six hundred years at least before Dante Alighiri
conceived his marvellous poem, there existed in
Islam a religious legend narrating this journey of Mohammed to the abodes of the afterlife. In
the course of time from the eighth to thirteenth
century of our era—Moslem traditionalists,
theologians, interpreters of the scriptures,
mystics, philosophers and poets—all united in
weaving around the original legend a fabric of
religious narrative; at times these stories were
amplifications at others, allegorical adaptations
of literary imitation. A comparison with the
Divine Comedy of all these versions reveals many
points of resemblance, even of absolute coincidence,
in the general architecture and ethical structure
of hell and paradise in the descriptions of
torments and rewards, and the general line of
dramatic action; in the episodes and incidents of
the journey; in the allegorical significance, in
the role assigned to the protagonist and to the
minor personages; and finally, in the intrinsic
literary value. 50
Besides the legend of Miraj and the scriptural accounts of hell, which contribute to the basic structure of The Divine Comedy as proved by Palacios, the philosophical thoughts of some of the outstanding Eastern philosophers have also been made use of by Dante. The foremost among them is Al-Farabi, who made the epoch-making distinction between a necessary and a contingent being, and for the concept of the universe created by and not merely emanating from, God, and thus casually depending on Him. He made a fusion of the Aristotelian and Neo-Platonic metaphysics very similar to that effected by Augustine, and this idea precisely has helped Dante in projecting the concept of God as the Divine Essence in relation to existence. But Dante works on the progress of soul chiefly on Avicenna's principle of struggle for self-development by reference to an ideal. Everything in the world is imperfect and being imperfect it strives for its completion and perfection. This will or striving for perfection is the secret of growth and is named Love. The perfection it aims at is called Beauty—the most perfect and the best. Needless to say, this concept of perfection forms the core of the entire philosophical system of The Divine Comedy.

Al-Ghazali, another notable philosopher and mystic, holds that God can be mystically apprehended only in a state of ecstasy. St. Thomas Aquinas has drawn heavily upon Al-Ghazali, and among the various arguments and conclusions on which both Thomas Aquinas and Al-Ghazali agree, are the ideas of contingency and necessity as demonstrating the existence of God, the Unity of God implied in his perfection, the possibility of the beatific vision, and the divine knowledge and the divine simplicity.
Obviously, when Dante could not get the necessary concepts from the Christian philosophers, he turned to the Eastern philosophers like Al-Ghazali and others for working out the general design for the successful use of the Beatific vision in his great poem. Finally, we have Averroes, whose philosophical commentaries had become during the Middle Ages almost the official philosophy of Italy in general. Averroes's devotion to one single purpose, that of presenting Aristotle whole and pure, to the world made him one of the greatest philosophers of both the East and the West. It is to Averroes that Dante owes his conception of God as Light and Love (the love that moves the sun and the stars), the concept that Arabic philosophers had derived from Aristotle and had used extensively till it was purified by Averroes. Dante places the two philosophers of the Islamic world, Avicenna and Averroes, in limbo along with Aristotle, Socrates, Plato, Virgil, and other great Greek and Latin poets of the ancient world. The very fact that among so many great philosophers and poets, Dante gives a commendable line to Averroes, who made the great commentary, reveals the impact of the Eastern philosophy on him.

Moreover, The Divine Comedy also offers a comparison to some of the earlier versions of the legend of Miraj. Abu l-Ala-al-Maari (he died in 1058) gives an account of the tour of heaven and hell in his book Riasalat al-Ghufran. Here he pictures Iblis (Satan) bound and tortured in hell and Christian and other infidel poets suffering, and at the gate of Paradise there is a houri or beautiful maiden who has been appointed his guide. Dante too gives almost the same description of the hell and his meeting with an angelic figure at the
gate of heaven (Beatrice); the Moslem poet puts the Christians in hell and it is but natural for Dante to assign Moslems including the prophet to hell.

Above all, a comparative study of the Spanish poet Ibn 'Arabi's work Fatuhat and The Divine Comedy presents many close parallelisms and similarities revealing the most convincing proof of Ibn 'Arabi's influence on Dante. Many peculiar features of Ibn Arabi's descriptions of Hell, Paradise, and the Beatific vision are reproduced by Dante with a closeness that can scarcely be fortuitous. "The infernal regions, the astronomical heavens, the cycle of the mystic Rose, the Choirs of angels around the focus of Divine light, the three circles symbolizing the trinity—all are described by Dante exactly as Ibn 'Arabi described them."51 Dante tells how as he mounted higher and higher in Paradise, his love was made stronger and his spiritual vision more intense by seeing Beatrice who grew more and more beautiful. The same idea occurs in a poem of Ibn 'Arabi, who describes the meeting as follows:

Meeting with Him (the Beloved) creates in me what I have never imagined...
For I behold a form whose beauty, as often as we Meet, grows in splendour and majesty.
So that there is no escape from a love that increases in proportion to every increase in His loveliness, according to predestined scale. 52

Like Dante's Beatrice Ibn 'Arabi had his mistress Nizam whom he loved and for whom he wrote a few mystical odes. Owing to the scandal caused by the odes written in honour of his lady, he wrote a commentary on them in order to convince his critics that they were wrong. It is most interesting to find that like Ibn 'Arabi, Dante too wrote sonnets in honour of his beloved Beatrice, and that these too created some kind
of scandal for his lady. As such in Convito Dante declares
his intention to interpret the esoteric meaning of the
fourteen love songs, which he had composed at an early date,
and points out the erroneous belief that they dealt with
sensual rather than intellectual love. Thus there are many
instances of parallelism between the works, which would lead
one to the only conclusion that there is great resemblance
between Dante and the Murcian poet Ibnu'l-Arabi; Asín presents
this view in the following words:

Moreover it would be difficult to find two
thinkers whose poetical and religious temperaments
are so alike as those of Dante and Ibn Arabi for
the resemblance extends not only to the philosophical
thought, derived from the illuministic school of
Ibn-Ma'-rra but also to the image by which they
are expressed. Nowhere is this seen more clearly
than in the Convito and the Treasures. Conceived
and composed in the self-same manner, these works
were written with the same personal objects, and
both authors follow the same method in the
allegorical interpretation of the amorous theme
of their songs. The share due to Ibn Arabi —
a Spaniard, though a Moslem, in the literary
glory achieved by Dante Alighire in his immortal
poem can no longer be ignored. 53
An analysis of the classical love poetry reveals that almost all the poets wrote in the Greek tradition on the subject with slight variations here and there, and that such poetry dealt with physical desire or mere sensuality. The general attitude to love expressed in this poetry may be described as superficial, gracefully frivolous, and titillating to the senses. The poems are sheer exercises in sexual epigrams written either to serve as sexual stimulants or to express a kind of cynical and sceptical attitude towards the fair sex. The entire poetry is steeped in a spirit of lust and desire for physical satisfaction. What is rather striking, while dealing with the charms of physical love and beauty, the poems fail to instil a sense of reality, a sense of the living, and a spirit of the real experiences of love and sex. Hence they remain artificial and superficial with genuine sign of the basic emotion of love.

In his assessment of Latin poetry, Quintilian, the critic, finds the absence of love lyrics very conspicuous and remarks that in the realm of this form of poetry only one poet was worth reading, i.e., Horace. According to him, the genuine Roman had little aptitude for this kind of lyric poetry, choral and personal, set to the accompaniment of music. "There is" says Laidlaw, "little satisfaction in looking for any origins of Latin lyric in Latium." The most illustrious poets of Latin literature failed to write any kind of poetry that could be termed as Dolce Stil Nuovo, and the best attempts, if any, resulted in the experimentation of a variety of metres and erotic epigrams. Many critics have
simply shown their sense of surprise without assigning any reason at the total absence of the sentiment of love in the whole of classical poetry from the beginning to the end of eleventh century.

The issue involves an investigation into the attitude of the people of this age towards two important questions: their concept of love and their attitude to woman in general. The Romans have been chiefly influenced by the Greeks in this sphere, for though having two concepts of love, namely, Eros and Agape, the Roman chiefly followed Eros. Their goddess Aphrodite was a goddess of immorality inviting people to adultery. Later this goddess changed into Venus associated with lust in the Roman period. The Greeks dealt with sexual as well as homo-sexual love, and the woman did not bear a high place in their civilization. Hence the Greeks were very sceptical of love as is revealed in these lines of Sophocles:

Love is not love alone,
But in her name lie many names concealed:
For she is Death, imperishable Force,
Desire Unmixed, wild Frenzy, Lamentation.

This observation also explains how in the Greek civilization and in ancient literature love was regarded as a wild passion, an attitude associated with the Demonic love. "In ancient literature," says Lewis, "love seldom rises above the levels of merry sensuality or domestic comfort, except to be treated as a tragic madness, and which plunges otherwise sane people (usually women) into crime and disgrace. Such is the love of Medea, of Phaedra, of Dido, and such the love from which maidens pray that the gods may protect them."
Things did not improve at all with the advent of Christianity, for with the introduction of this new religion, love was simply banished from the society. To St. Paul, love for man meant the fire in life and as such woman was to be pushed back to the hearth. Similar was the attitude of the clergymen towards woman and sex. The Christians had always more success in their efforts to repress and 'contain' the sexual instinct than in their attempts to cultivate and regulate eroticism for spiritual purpose, even within the bounds of marriage. Even in the birth of Jesus they saw the absence of sex. Thus castigated as the enemy of spiritual life, tolerated but only within the limits of the strictest consecrated marriage (all aspects of love being left undisguised and very summarily condemned under the labels of lust and shamelessness or spiritual herlotry) human love, passionate love, devotion to the instinct of love — all these were not only neglected in the ancient Greek and Roman civilizations but also were regarded as the sources of all problems and evils, for the society as well as for the individual.

Moreover, as has been pointed by D. Rougement, no original poem or treatise on love, not to speak of the divine aspect of love, was written. To the Greek, sexual love seemed reduced to an obscure animality. Marriage raised only problems of inheritance and consanguinity that were often preposterous, justifying divorce caused by interest but never by sentiment. 56

This being the attitude of the Greek and Roman people towards love and woman there was no convention, nor even the idea, of treating a woman in an idealized manner
in classical poetry. Even if a lover writes to his girl, he simply ends in obscenity as may be seen in the following poem:

```
I would not lie in praising you, lady,
for all the gold in the world,
Because it would shame both of us
By God I would not say that you have
The perfume of India a Sheba in your mouth:
Nor that your hair is finer than gold;
Nor that love dewells in your eyes;
Nor that from these the sun takes its splendour,
Nor that your methods make rivers flow in the brothel.
I simply say that you are demimonde rather than
that you may be a lady,
And that you have as much grace as would make
a hermit throw off his monkish cowl.
But I do not want to say that you are a goddess
You do not piss orange-flower-water for urine.
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This poem modulating dexterously from bluntness to obscenity, reveals very well the way the classical poets treated woman and love in their poetry. Sometimes in Greek poetry a poet is found writing a soliloquy in which the poet himself defines to his own satisfaction the mistress (or boy) who will incarnate his ideal, and the ideal almost invariably pertains to the physical. The classical versions of this theme tend to a kind of practical sensuality as is seen in Rufinus's epigram:

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Take not to your arms a woman who is too slender
Nor one too stout, but choose the mean between the Two.
The first has not enough abundance of flesh, and the second has too much.
Choose neither deficiency nor excess.
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Thus the whole of Greek love poetry deals with themes that express mere physical desires without having any sense of the idealised or romantic concept of woman. While expressing a strong sense of scepticism of love and contempt for woman, these poems are epigrams on sex and sensual
desires. The same treatment given to love and woman may be seen in the entire Roman poetry which follows, more or less, the same line, ideas, methods and treatment as was adopted by the Greeks on these subjects.

Many passages from Plautus's comedies show what love was in the Republic of the second century B.C. They always paint the same picture — wild sensuality as we find revealed in the Pseudolus:

The constant love we share and wear so near
Our fun and games and talking lip to lip,
the closely strained embrace of our amorous bodies,
the gentle little bites on tender mouths,
the wanton pressure of tiptilted breasts
ah, all these pleasures which you share with me are broken, wasted, ruined now for ever. 59

Among the poets whose work survives, the first to deal with love is Lucretius. His work is a didactic poem which attempts to expound the doctrines of his master Epicurus. He invokes the supreme godhead of Venus, but at the same time he warns humanity of the results of love:

From lovely faces and fair coloured flesh
nothing comes which the body may enjoy,
but flimsy little images, hopeless hopes
which the wind often seizes and carries away.60

He advises men to shun ladies:

But let her be as lovely as a dream
let venus majesty reign in her yet
Yet there are others; we once lived without her
We know she lives the same as the ugly woman.

Catullus is the first Roman love poet in the sense that, he was the first Roman to give artistic expression to the experience of his innermost heart. The famous love scene between Septimus and Acme should be quoted here:
Septimus held his feme close.
Close to his heart, saying my dearest,
unless I love you desperately,
constantly, always, for ever, more than
in the fondest lover in the world,
may I be dropped in the African desert
to face a green-eyed lioness. 61

There is another love-lyric almost equally charming:

Jurentius, if I might kiss
your honey sweet lips as I liked,
I'd kiss them both; five hundred
thousands of kisses, have never enough
not even if our kisses grew
thicker than barley in Africa. (F
(From No. 48)

The art of Catullus is far purer, more spontaneous,
and truer than that of any poet who followed him or of any
who preceded him. It is true that modern taste sometimes
finds his works very coarse and indecent. Nevertheless his
very coarseness is naive unlike Ovid's lewd and sophisticated
indecency. He was one of the great poets of the world, this
ardent, unhappy lover, who did not dissolve into sentimentality
but fought like a man against his hard fate. He was born
in Verona in 87 B.C. and came to Rome while still a young
man. There at the age of 26 he met the beautiful lady Clodia,
whom in his poetry he calls Lesbia. It was then at the
beginning of his love, that he wrote the most famous of all
his poems:

My Lesbia, let us live and love;
Give not the half of a brass farthing,
for scandal talked by grim old man.
Suns disappear and again return -
When our brief light burns down and dies
darkness remains and an endless sleep.
So kiss me now a thousand times.
Kiss even a hundred a thousand more.
again a hundred and a thousand
Then when we come to thousands of thousands,
Lose the account, forget the sum
Envious people could injure us
if they but know of our million kisses
(Poem No. 5)
We have many such beautiful poems in which Catullus has expressed the joy, bitterness, and even disillusionment in his love for Lesbia. In one of his last poems he says how he fell from Lesbia's favour and he tries to console himself in bitter words.

The poet died young, probably his unhappy love broke his heart and killed him. There are other verses which relate his experiences of sexual enjoyment with other women of lower rank than Clodia. He also wrote tender verses to a beautiful boy known as Juventias. This shows Catullus as a man of homosexual character. Although one of the finest lyric poets, Catullus too is unable to rise above mere sensuality and physical charms of his love. All we can say is that he does not seem to have a sceptical attitude towards love nor does he think of his love in an obscene way. But the sheer celebration of sensualism and ravishment of physical enjoyment are all the same there in his poetry.

It would seem clear that the character of Virgil was also homosexual. His Aeneid is much more than an interesting and lengthy epic. Virgil describes the love of Dido in an excellent poetic way. The fourth book begins thus:

The queen was wounded sorely: the deep passion fed on her lifeblood, burnt her with secret fire, She brooded on the hero's chivalry, and noble birth, his face and words remained deep in her heart, and passion wrung her limbs.

At last, on a hunting expedition they make their alliance:

That day was the first cause of death and anguish fame. Now Dido careless of her name and fame, no longer purposes a secret love, but calls it marriage, and so she hides her sin. 62

Although Virgil is revealed as a good love poet in this epic,
he is unable to raise love to a dignified or divine level of passion, for he, like other poets, makes love the cause of death and anguish.

Horace is chiefly known as a poet of satire. His opinion on love was that man should not fret over women, when he could enjoy them easily. Hence his love poems strike us as artificial and insubstantial. All the women he addresses or portrays are lifeless and artificial. The women who occupied his attention from time to time were slaves, harlots, and prostitutes. The well-known erotic satire (12) gives what seem to us to be cynically exact instructions for attaining brief sexual pleasure without danger to honour or disturbance of comfort. Horace says:

Cease hunting married game; trouble and grief more often come to you than real enjoyment (Book 1, 2)

A prostitute is always available, and she is generally quite as pretty if not even prettier:

Lying close to me, willing side to side, she is a princess, flaunts an ancient name; I need not fear a husband interrupting me in my pleasure, shouting, smashing locks and the house a pandemonium, dogs barking, Slams, cries, the woman jumping from bed, the confidants weeping with terror, afraid for her back, the wife for her dowry, me for myself. 63

To conclude, Horace has more to say for the men of ripe years than any other Roman poet.

Tibullus was another poet who could sing of his love for women, with real beauty and distinction, and also could admire handsome boys. Hence he too was homosexual by nature. He has talked of one woman whom he called Delia. He dreams of the rapture of calling Delia his own for ever:
How sweet to lie and hear the gale
holding my mistress to my heart,
or when the rainy south wind pours
to sleep in safety from the storm. 64

Tiibullus wrote many elegies and in some of them he sang of country life, its manifold activities and also of his boy Marthus whom he loved and about whom he has written in many of his poems.

Sextus Aurelius Properticles was one of the greatest Roman elegiac poets who came from Assisi. He was born in 50 B.C. He was one of the group of poets who gathered around Mascenas; and Horace and Vergil were his friends. He brought out his book of poems when he was about 30 years of age: it was named Cynthia, which was the pseudonym of his mistress. These love-elegies which were inspired by his mistress Cynthia, were well known and most of the cultured ladies of Rome read them. Cynthia's real name seems to have been Hestia. She was a woman with wild passion and it seems she had many lovers with whom she spent her nights. She was a common subject of talk in the town, yet Propertius loved her with great passion and celebrated her in many of his finest poems. His charming elegy is deservedly famous as it points the picture of Cynthia sleeping:

I saw my Cynthia breathing quiet slumber,
resting her head on gentle yielding arms. 65

In another elegy of love he expresses his great rapture and triumph of love by saying:

Happiness, happiness; blessed night and bless you
bed, changed to heaven by my happiness;
What happy talk we had, the lamp beside us;
and what a happy struggle in the dark;
For now she wrestled with me baring her bosom,
and she closed her shift to make a truce
My eyes were heavy with sleep; she kissed them open and whispered, lazy sluggard lying still; How often our arms slipped into new embraces; how long my kisses lay upon your lips.

When Cynthia turned unfaithful to Propertius, he was deeply wounded and his passion of love ended in pain. Later, after she was dead, he wrote a poem of sad forgiveness. The shade of Cynthia appears to him and he addresses her thus:

0 treacherous; always a faithful lover; can you surrender this to sleep so soon? 67

Propertius was a great poet, and his influence on the succeeding Roman poets has also been immense. He influenced even a poet like Goethe, who loved him and admired his poetry.

Among the most important Roman poets was Ovid, a poet who was better known than all the Roman poets. Even today his influence is great and he is widely read, particularly because men take more pleasure in an attitude to love which is superficial, gracefully frivolous, and titillating to the senses, than in the tragic seriousness with which Propertius spoke of his passion.

Ovid was in his way a great erotic poet, but in his work there is no flowering of true, deep, and natural experiences as there is in Catullus and Propertius. He must have had many erotic experiences, but we never feel in his poetry that love is the experience of a life-time; we never feel that love shook his soul to its roots and compelled him to say what he felt.

It is in keeping with Ovid's character that he wrote
the Art of Love — a sophisticated manual of hedonism, which is very nearly a frankly pornographic manual in the methods of physical love. In this book love never has the great and overwhelming dignity, which sanctifies or ruins man's life. That idea would have appeared merely funny to Ovid. Love is rather a method for obtaining fleeting pleasure from a disgusting necessity. This attitude is nothing but absolute frivolity.

As a young poet of twenty-two, Ovid produced his first work, the Amores (43 B.C.). It is generally agreed that these frivolous and graceful elegies do not describe any deep spiritual experiences. The poet does describe a mistress in them. She bears a pseudonym 'Corina,' derived from Greek Lyric poetry, but, as Ovid says, any one of several girls might think that she was the heroine of the poem. These skilful and elegant poems are no more than a collection of themes from Alexandrian poetry, which was then very widely known and had an influence over every Roman elegiac poet.

Here is a poem (1,5) which expresses the highest raptures in love's consummation. This poem quoted here and Propertius' Poem No.15 reveal the difference between the latter's lofty passion and Ovid's skilful voluptuosness:

Hot summer, the day had passed its Zenith, and I reclamed at ease upon my bed. Corina came to me, in a shift, ungirdled, her hair parted along her ivory neck. Semiramis looked thus, that lovely lady, and laid the beloved of all men, I tore her shift away, though it was flimsy, and though Corina struggling to wear it still. And while she struggled—with no mind for winning She dropped her arms and lost an easy fight. Now when she stood before my eyes uncovered. I found her body faultless everywhere.
What graceful arms I saw and touched
what shoulders;
how sweet her breasts, ready for an embrace;
beneath a moulded waist, what a smooth belly;
what a rich flank, and what a slander thigh;
why should I not enjoy her beauties? she was perfect
I pressed her naked body to my own
who does not know the rest? It ends in slumber.
Ah! may I often have such afternoons. 68

All in all, we can say that the tendency of *Amores* is similar to that of Ovid's later masterpiece, *Ars Amatoria*.
The poet further says to himself.

Girls who desire their bridegrooms—they should read me,
And callow youths, touched by their strange first love
Come, maidens, turn hither your lovely faces,
And hear the songs which bright love teaches. 69 (ii,1)

In *Amores* Ovid again sums up his view of woman:

She is chaste who has no wooer.
Unless she is a bumpkin, she will woo. 70 (1,8,43)

All these would seem to show that Ovid was a sophisticated voluptuary in his attitude to love, though, as he says, he was thrice married.

Ovid had as models not only the Alexandrians but also such poets as Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius. We may, therefore, give ready credence to his assertion that his erotic poetry is simply more or less playful imagination with the reservation that his character influenced him in favour of erotic poetry as such.

His greatest work is *Ars Amatoria, The Art of Love*, in which according to Paldamus, Ovid provides a complete manual of amorous tactics. Lover and beloved are like rival chess players: they are both intent on the game,
and their only interest is to see which will discover a weakness in his opponent and cry Checkmate. However it should not be forgotten that Ovid says with much emphasis that the work was not written for married women or chaste girls, but in order to give instruction about the pursuit of light ladies. The point of the book, then, is pure eroticism, the art of enjoying women or other woman's body as fully and delightfully as possible. Perhaps no other classical book of the same type shows more clearly the true aim of erotic activity in ancient times, i.e., sexual pleasure.

The first book of Ars Amatoria gives instruction for winning a woman's love. Ovid believes that it is generally easy to win a girl's love:

The birds will leave their songs in spring, the crickets be dumb in summer, dogs will flee from hares sooner than women flee from tactful wooers. Although she seems unwilling, yet she will

And so

Come then, take heart, you will conquer every woman, hardly one in ten thousand will refuse. Refuse or not they will love you more for asking. (ib.343)

He gives some interesting advice to lovers on their personal appearance:

Neglect suits: a man's beauty . . .
Let cleanliness be yours, and healthy brownness. (ib,509)

He adds similar advice for women:

And styles are manifold. Consult your mirror to choose the mode which decorates you best. A narrow face demands divided tresses ... Round faces need a knot above the forehead to bind the hair and yet reveal the ears . . . (iii,105)
He counsels every girl to master singing, dancing, and other arts of amusement. He also wants the lovers to know the art of deception. Then he says that the lover must abandon shame, when he reaches the critical point:

A skilful lover blends his words with kisses and you must take them, if she will not give, perhaps she will fight at first and call it outrage for all her fighting, still she hopes to lose.

Only beware you must not kiss her roughly or make her weep at your brutality.

And after kisses if you go no further, you are unworthy of kiss.

Surely a kiss is near the last fulfilment:
To stop would be not virtuous but dull.

Although they call it force, they love the forcing, they love to be compelled to give themselves

If Venus takes a girl by storm she loves it and takes outrage as gladly as a gift

But if a girl escapes an ardent lover, she may look happy, but she will be sad.

Elsewhere Ovid says, 'Love hates the lazy,' and he often compares a love affair to a military service (e.g. A.A.i,33). Finally, at the end of second and third books, the poet gives some intimate advice on the technique of the sexual act and all its preliminaries. From these verses the reader can reasonably draw a conclusion that such a work is a textbook on sex.

Ovid evidently found quite soon that people were not in general agreement with his Ars Amatoria. Hence he wrote Remedia Amoris, (Remedies for Love) his next work, in which very pleasant and often quite vulgar and ridiculous accounts were given. As such he remarks:

Critics have lately pilloried my writings, because they held my Muse for Wanton and gay.

But fundamentally it seems that he wrote Remedies of Love from a certain feeling of uneasiness, a stricken conscience.
The tone of the poem is frivolous and, at times, farcical and disgusting. Here the poet encourages the lover quite seriously to invent physical blemishes in his mistress, or to weaken his sexual power by intercourse with other women so as to become impotent with his own mistress, or to have intercourse with her so often that eventually he is nauseated and so on. Its details have more to do with sexual knowledge than poetry.

The loveliest composition of the versatile poet — a work which is even today read and known throughout the world is the Metamorphoses, or Transformations. It consists of stories, which are partly erotic, taken from Greek legends of gods and heroes. Ovid here shows his powers of rapid and convincing narrative, vivid description, and almost naturalistic accuracy in the depiction of every conceivable character and situation from the idealistic point of view. There are many such tales full of poetic beauty and charm. Some of these are Apollo's love for the disdainful Daphne and his vain wooing, (if Mel. i, 463 sq.) the tale of Ventumnus, the god whose appearance changed at his will and his courtship of the gardener Nymph Pomona (if xiv, 623 sq), the tale of Mercury in love with Herse, and also the tale of Hermaphrodite, which relates the interesting story of Hermaphrodite from the union of the lovelorn nymph Salamis with an innocent boy. These and other tales, like the one of Narcissus, make the Metamorphoses one of the most popular Roman works. This work of Ovid, however, cannot be related to the tradition of love poetry as it hardly contributes anything to this subject. At best the work may be regarded as a series of mythological tales
There was the Roman fabulist Phaedrus, who came from Macedonia. His fables contain some interesting erotic materials. But in his poetry we have also humour and wit.

There were a few minor poets who also wrote on the theme of love. Although these poets attempted to express their feelings in verse, they could hardly raise love to a high or dignified level. There was another collection of the poetry of the Augustan age known as Periæpeia. This included chiefly very vulgar and cheap verses that loose people usually scribe on the walls of the deserted buildings and dwellings. Thus these minor poets made little contribution to the tradition of love poetry; neither did they treat love as a noble passion nor did they reveal the idealized concept of woman in their poetry.

Among the literary works of the Neronian period there are some dramas by Seneca, although it is not certain which Seneca is their author. Almost all these dramas contain erotic themes, and their author misses no opportunity of describing all sorts of horrible cruelties. The audiences which delighted in the bloody sports of the amphiﬁtheatre were charmed by rhetorical treatment of wild passions and savage brutalities. Among these plays are Medea, Octavia and others. The dramas attributed to Seneca are not alone in their cultivation of swelling rhetoric and grisly horrors. These were the form and matter of Silver age Poetry, and they were rendered into the epic form by Seneca's nephew, Lucan, in his grandiose poem of the Civil war Pharselia. Here Lucan spends all his energy on depicting the horrors
of war with a circumstantial vividness, which at times becomes positively repulsive. In these works Lucan also gives us a true and touching picture of the stoic conception of love and marriage. Being a stern stoic, he often dilates upon common places of stoic teaching; he praises the carefree sleep of the poor and condemns luxury and sensuality.

Another important Roman poet who has dealt with this subject is Martial, a better known contemporary of Statius. He should be considered chiefly as an authority on sexual life in Rome, for he is a mine of information. He knows and speaks of all possible varieties of sexual conduct from the normal love of man and woman to the most sophisticated and bizarre practices of voluptuousness, though he protests that he was not a mere sensualist — 'My page is wanton, but my life is pure.' He came from the little Spanish town to Rome and tried to win a position as a barrister but soon he gave up law because he was more attracted towards poetry.

Lessing has proved that Martial was never married whereas Ribbeck says, "Happiness and pain Martial knew, but he seems never to have known heartfelt love even for a moment." Indeed, he was strongly homosexual, though, he had also several women as his mistresses. He was not particularly devoted to the love of women and there is a significant confession of this in the following poem:

For a whole night, I had a wanton mistress:
her lewd inventions were beyond compare.
Exhausted, then, I asked for something boyish,
she gave it me before I'd said my say.

(ix,67)

A younger contemporary of Martial was the satirist, Juvenal. As Lessing says, the life of this man is to be
found in his poetry. His insight is profound and acute, although it entirely lacks humour. He knew all the evils of his age. Above all, he knew and condemned all the aberrations of sexual conduct. In his criticism of the sexual conduct of his age, he remains the friend and admirer of the beauty of boys and women. But his whole attitude is one of unqualified pessimism and disgust, even for the poetry of Propertius and Catullus he has not the slightest sympathy.

He never believes that in his age there were things like chastity and honesty. According to him:

> It is a hoary custom now, to shake a stranger's bed and spurn the gods of marriage. The iron age produced all other crimes, but even in an earlier age appeared cruelties.

Hence he advises the really clever man, never to marry. He was naturally a convinced woman-hater; he detested and despised not the woman of one age, but women in general. Actually for all his misogyny and pessimism, Juvenal is basically a member of the stoic and aristocratic opposition. He would always go for a sound mind in a sound body and add the moralist's common place:

> Virtue alone guides men to a peaceful life.

( x,364 )

Finally, we may consider the poet Apulius who has also added to the Roman expression of sheer sensuality. He was a curious and versatile author of the second century A.D. He is chiefly known for his peculiar relationship to the Oriental mysticism of the Isis-cult and other religious phenomena of his time. He was born in the African Military colony of Madaura and later travelled to many of the European countries. This breadth of experience is reflected in his principal work, the *Metamorphoses* or *Transformations*. It
is filled with a multitude of episodes, charming short stories, little melodramas, and gross anecdotes, in which every reader will find something to his taste. Here we have many varied themes, which it introduces in quick succession. The frame-work is almost wholly derived from an old Greek story, which Lucian had also used in his story, Lucius or the Ass. It describes the adventure of one Lucius. Apulius has included many fine tales and episodes like the charming scene of Cupid and Psyche and the humorous anecdote of the carpenter and his wife (Book ix(5), which was also used by Chaucer. Similarly, the tale of Charite and her Tlepolemus in Book vii is a complete little novel in itself. Hence this book contains all kinds of things, and Rebeck has correctly said this to be a kaleidoscope of sensuality and barbarity with the power to madden or enervate those who gaze at it.

Such poetry continued to be written till the end of eleventh century, and no concept of an ideal woman or of divine love substituting the mere physical desires and the practical ideas of sex could be noticed in the classical love lyrics during this period. There were, however, a few dream poems in which we had the phantom of a woman as may be seen in Petronius Arbiter's song depicting a girl of his dream:

With your lovely hair, winning youth and fair face,
sweetly you gave me carressing kisses while I slept.
If I cannot see you again waking, I pray,
0 sleep,
that you keep our lives united as before.
It may be regarded as a conventional dream poem, but the girl has no tangible form and the poet clearly doubts the possibility of her incarnation. Besides, the sentiments expressed in the poem fringe round the same kind of physical charms and sensual satisfaction.

In spite of their best attempts the poets of the medieval Latin lyrics failed to rise above the sensual experiences and to take love to a higher level that could make it what was later known as the passion of love or the Tenzion in love.

It is only after the twelfth century that there appears the new theme, the new concept of love, and the new idealized image of woman which revolutionizes the medieval love poetry and gives a vital impetus to the European love lyrics. The question once more arises as to whence came this new theme, new spirit, and new image that completely took poetry away from the conventional and superfluous expression of sex and physical charms and added a new dimension and dynamic spirit with which started a new epoch of artistic, philosophical, mystical, and divine treatment given to love and woman in poetry.

But when we turn to the Arab-Spanish sources, particularly to the Hispano-Arabic poets and writers, we find ample evidence of the elements that characterize the new passion of idealized love. It was this influence that changed the course of European poetry in the medieval time.

This becomes clear if we study the third chapter.
of a prose treatise on love written by one of the most famous Spanish-Arab writers, Ibn Hazm. A.R. Hykl, who has made an intensive study of this poet — philosopher and has also translated the famous work known as Dove's Neck-ring, (Tawq-ul-Hamama), summarizes the chapter as follows:

Every love must have a cause which is the origin of it. The most unbelievable of these is the one I was told by a friend who saw a gariya in a dream and became passionately enamoured of that vision. I remonstrated with him saying, 'It is a great sin of yours to trouble yourself about something unreal, something non-existent. Do you know what she is?' He said, 'No by God,' and I said, 'You are weak of judgement; if you love someone you have never seen, and if you had fallen in love with an image one sees in the bath-houses, I could have more excuse for you.' And on this subject I composed a poem from which I quote.

Would that I knew who she was and how she travelled at night;
Was she the sun-rise or was she the full moon
Was she an idea of the mind, created by its power of imagination,
Or an image of the spirit, created in me by thoughts.
Or an image shaped in the soul of my hope
And my eye had the illusion of having perceived it
Or all this has not happened and it was occurrence
By which God's decree has brought to me the cause of my death. 73

"Here," says Mr. H.M. Richmond, "there is something present which is wholly alien to the classical love poetry — a spirit of objective, intellectual analysis of the experience, appropriate to the author who was more famous as a philosopher of religion than as a poet. Here indeed, in such a man's treatise on love, is a prototype for the theologically oriented love poet of the Middle Ages." 74

How the whole Arabic tradition subtly modified the European love lyric is a part of an elaborate pattern. It
is from such non-classical formulation as Ibn Hazm's analytical treatise on love that the European poets revolutionized the medieval Latin poetry and established a new tradition. Here we may very well refer to a curious madrigal by Ronsard who may well have drawn on even more varied sources to condense this new pattern as revealed in these lines of his:

That man is very foolish who loves what he does not know. I love and never see what I love, I dupe myself with a deluding thought, I am a slave who does not know his master. Mere imagination makes me feel as if I suffer greatly. The eye can fail and the ear the same, but the name of the senses brought about by love I have neither seen nor waved or touched. What provokes me is hidden from my eyes, the wound in my heart arrived without an account.

Here as in Ibn Hazm's poem we have the theme of exploring a future mistress having a sense of the complexity of human awareness. We have also a fine repudiation of the conventional appreciation of physical beauty and charm and a new rhetorical style to be found in both the Spanish-Arabic and Latin love lyrics. Poems, however, on dream image come to take more tangible and better form of expression in a realistic sense as may be seen in another poem of Ronsard:

These long winter nights, when the indolent moon moves her chariot so slowly quite round, when the cock is so slow to announce the day to us, when the night seems like a year to the uneasy soul, I would have been dead with weariness without your deceptive image.

Here we have the image of the future mistress who is to bring in the *dolce stil novo* of the Latin Lyrics. But more than this, we have a kind of tenderness, a delicate sentiment, a sense of longing or feeling of human awareness, which we have already seen in the Hispano-Arab poets, in
the pure poetry of the troubadours, something which is conspicuous by the absence of the superficial and artificial poetry of the earlier Latin Poets. The poems now written no longer serve as mere sex stimulants, but, while arousing the feelings for the appreciation of physical charms, they, at the same time, sublimate sex to a higher and philosophical comprehension of the role of love in life.

Thus by the time we come to Dante we find that the love poetry has already found its image, and this new image of woman now comes to play a very important role in the medieval European poetry. Dante not only accepts and adopts the New Style but also, while marking a break with the earlier poetry, contributes immensely to the new concept. With him the idealized image of woman is firmly established and dominates the subsequent European lyrics. Dante's greatest contribution to the new rhetoric is that he, like his Hispono-Arabic predecessors, associates charms, virtues, delicacy, grace, tenderness and an innate awareness of human experience with the image of woman as may be seen here:

So sweet and virtuous my lady seems when she greets others that my tongue becomes tremendously silent and eyes do not dare to look. . . . She shows herself so gracious to those who admire her that through the eyes she gives a peace to the heart which cannot be understood until it is experienced. And it seems that from her lips flows a gentle spirit full of love which goes to the soul. 77

Dante's view of the effect of a woman's beauty on susceptible admirers as well as his treatment of love in idealised tradition are immediately picked by his followers as may be noticed in a poet of no less importance than Petrarch. Though less dynamic than Dante, having an inferior
understanding of the complexities of human life, Petrarch gives in his works on love a good scope to study the development of love poetry in the medieval time, as may be seen in the following poem:

When the mistress's image arrives through the eyes to the bottom of the heart, every other departs thence and the power which makes up the soul leaves every limb set almost lifeless. And from this first miracle is born a second that the expelled soul, fleeing voluntarily, arrives in the place (the beloved's body) where it makes its amends and its happy exile. Whence it comes that a deathly pallor appears in two faces because the vigour shown by live people is no longer in any place where it had been. And of this I bethought me on that day when I saw two lovers transformed in face as I used to be. 78

Herein we have the new image of woman who becomes the centre of the medieval love poetry after the twelfth century. Petrarch imitates the technique and concept of Dante, and with him the new tradition gets a new lease of life and acquires greater vigour, as a result, the new influence is kept alive up to the Renaissance.

Thus for the classical poets before the twelfth century love was at best defined as the physical satisfaction of sensual desire — love poetry became conventional being based on the celebration of the physical charms of woman — whereas after the new influence set in, it became an expression of a tension of mental attitudes with a complete sense of human awareness far exceeding in scope the initial sexual urge and its motivations.

When this new awareness reaches the Renaissance poets, they are at once amazed and delighted to find the complex
and numerous possibilities that the new concept offered for a dramatic, psychological, and realistic treatment of love based on the works of Ebreo, Varchi, Elyot, Bright, Burton and others.
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