CHAPTER III

MYSTICISM

3 Defining Mysticism

“There is hardly any soil, be it ever so barren, where Mysticism will not strike root; hardly any creed, however formal, round which it will not twine itself. It is, indeed, the eternal cry of the human soul for rest; the insatiable longing of a being wherein infinite ideals are fettered and cramped by a miserable actuality; and so long as man is less than an angel and more than a beast, this cry will not for a moment fail to make itself heard. Wonderfully uniform, too, whether it comes from the Brahmin sage, the Persian poet, or the Christian quietist, it is in essence an enunciation more or less clear, more or less eloquent of the aspiration of the soul to cease altogether from self and to be at one with God”\(^{36}\). The word ‘Mysticism’ goes back to the Greek verb \(mueo\) (\(\mu\epsilon\omega\)), literally meaning ‘to shut or close the lips or eyes’. Hence, the mystic was considered as one having esoteric knowledge of divine things and he would keep a distinct secrecy about it. Slowly the term assumed a meaning of closing the mind to the influences of all external things so that it might be withdrawn into itself, to be fitted to receive divine illumination. So Mysticism may be defined as “the immediate feeling of the unity of self with God, it is the endeavour to fix the immediateness of the life in God as such in this God – intoxication, in which the self and the world are alike forgotten, the subject only knows himself to be in possession of the highest and fullest truth”.

3.1 Mysticism and Religion

Mysticism, thus, is not to be regarded as a religion in itself, but as the most vital element in all true religions. In this sense, it is a revolt against cold formality and torpor of all usual religious practices. Mysticism also cannot be reduced to a mere philosophical system though it has its own methodology and scheme of things. It is to be described as an attitude of mind, an innate tendency of the human soul which seeks to transcend reason and to attain a direct experience of God. Mystics hence prove that it is possible for the human soul to be united with the Ultimate Reality. Now, ‘God ceases to be an object and becomes an experience’. It is here that saints and poets fit into the realm of mystic illumination. Congar rightly says, “we have become different men. We have the same God but before him we are different men, unable to agree as to the nature of our relationship with him.”37 As men differ, religions also differ in shape and colour but spirituality remains unique. Thus Mysticism is related more to spirituality than to religion.

3.2 The Aim of Mysticism

Margaret Smith postulates as the aim of mysticism, the establishing of a conscious relation with the absolute, concentrating on an objective of Love. The only desire is to Love and there desire for union is founded neither on curiosity nor on self-interest38. That union they seek is the supernatural union of likeness, begotten of love, which is

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the union of the human will with the Divine. They seek to realize the unfelt natural presence of God in creation by entering into a personal relationship with the concealed presence which is the source of ‘being’.\textsuperscript{39} It is here that we distinguish between religion and mysticism. While religion in general separates the divine from the human, Mysticism goes beyond religion and it aspires to intimate union with the Divine, to a penetration of the Divine within the soul and to a disappearance of the individuality, with all its mode of acting, thinking and feeling in the Divine substance. Thus the Mystics seek to pass out of all that is phenomenal, out of lower forms of reality, to become being itself.

3.3 Mysticism: Basic Assumptions

There are a few assumptions we need to take note of while dealing with Mysticism.

3.3.1 Highest Knowledge: Intuition

Firstly, it assumes that the soul can see and perceive the absolute spiritual sense, the Light unchangeable. This inner sense may be described as intuition or conscious fellowship and unity with the divine. “It is a spiritual sense opening inwardly, as the physical senses open outwardly, and because it has the capacity to perceive, grasp and know the truth at first hand, independent of all external sources of information, we call it intuition”.\textsuperscript{40} Thus Mysticism denies the notion that knowledge is obtained through


the senses and ascertains that the highest knowledge is received by the spiritual sense of intuition.

3.3.2 Divine Nature
The second assumption is that every soul partakes of the Divine Nature and is akin to the Divine Reality, the Creator. So every soul is a divine spark that seeks re-union with the Eternal Flame. The Mystics realize God as the ‘foundation of the soul’s being’.

3.3.3 Mysticism and Purification of Soul
The third assumption is that no one can attain the knowledge of God except by purification of the Self. In the book of Psalms, we read: “Who shall ascend to the mountain of the Lord? And who shall stand in the holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart”\(^{41}\). The Greek Philosopher Plotinus puts it differently when he says, that ‘as the eye could not behold the sun unless it were itself sun-like’\(^{42}\), so no more can the soul behold God unless it is Godlike. So a *sine qua non* for all mystic outbursts is a stripping from the soul of all selfishness and sensuality.

3.3.4 Pure Love
The fourth assumption is regarding the motive or guide towards the realization of mysticism, and it is pure love. The Oriental Mystics clearly propose that the great hindrance of self (selfishness) can only be conquered by love. “By love and love

\(^{41}\) Psalms 24 : 3-4
\(^{42}\) WOODS RICHARD O.P. Op.cit,21. Plotinus (ca 204-270) was a major Philosopher who is widely considered the founder of Neoplatonism.
alone can the dark shadow of ‘not – being’ be done away: by love and love alone can
the soul of man win back to its Divine source and find its ultimate goal in reunion with
the Truth.” 43 The object of a mystic’s search is always the beloved and he considers
himself as the yearning for the consummation of his love in union with the one he
loves. The term love “is to be understood in its deepest, fullest sense, as the ultimate
expression of the self’s most vital tendencies … the deep-seated desire and tendency
of the soul towards its source … Love to the Mystics, is the active expression of his
will and desire for the Absolute and also his innate tendency to that Absolute”. 44

3.4. Mysticism: The Essentials

After considering the meaning of Mysticism we are now in a position to dwell on the
essentials of Mysticism. The central fact of the Mystic’s experience is an
overwhelming consciousness of God and of his own soul: a consciousness that
eclipses all other centers of interest. This God – consciousness is the object of love
which is present in all economy of Mysticism. However pantheistic the mystic may
be, his communion with God is always personal, as it is a communion with a living
reality, a responding object of Love.

There are a few more essentials which are the acts and dispositions of the Mystic
himself, the development which takes place in him – the mystic way. The mystic way
is the process of sublimation which carries the correspondences of the self with the
ultimate in a higher level of consciousness. The procedure of the mystical
consciousness may be summed up thus. Normal consciousness sorts out some

43 GIBB. E.J.W., History of Ottoman Poetry, I, p.20
44 UNDERHILL EVELYN. Mysticism; A Study in the Nature of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness, New
Mysticism

elements from the mass of experiences faced in our everyday life and constructs from them a certain order; but this order lacks any deep meaning or true cohesion, because normal consciousness is incapable of apprehending the underlying reality from which these scattered experiences emerge.

3.4.1 Mysticism: Theological and Psychological Implications

While considering this super-consciousness we need to analyze it from two angles, one is its basic theological conceptions and the other its psychological ramifications. In the first case, there is always a reference to the three aspects of growth to God. This may turn out to be the three stages of growth through which the mystics pass as the Beginner, the Proficient and the Perfect. This spiritual process consists in other words of meditating upon the reality, then contemplating the reality and finally uniting with the reality. In this spiritual process, the one constant factor in all religious denominations is the discrimination of the three phases of consciousness each one having distinct characteristics. Philo says, “There are three kinds of life: life as it concerns God, life as it concerns the creature and a third intermediate life, a mixture of the former two”\(^45\). Plotinus refers to three descending phases or principles of Divine Reality: the Godhead, the unconditional one, its manifestation as ‘Nous’ the Divine mind or spirit which inspires the ‘Intelligible’ and eternal world; and ‘Psyche the Life or Soul of the physical universe’\(^46\).

\(^{45}\) UNDER HILL EVELYN, The Essentials of Mysticism, Article from Understanding Mysticism, p 31cfr. Philo, Legum Allegoriae
3.4.2 Threefold Process in Mysticism

The stages of the mystic way vary somewhat in different religions of the East and the West, but the threefold division in the mystic way is almost similar in both systems. These three stages are those of the ‘purgative life’, the ‘illuminative life’ and the ‘unitive life’.

In Hindu Philosophy also we have a three fold mystic realization. In the Upanishads the heart of the reality is Brahma, “Other than the known, and above the unknown”. The manifestation of Brahma is Ananda which is the true object of aesthetic passion and religious contemplation. Life and consciousness are born from it and remain in it and return to it. Sri. Ramakrishna feels that “I do see the Supreme Being as the veritable Reality with my very eyes! Why then should I reason? I do actually see that it is the Absolute who has become all things around us; it is He who appears as the finite soul and the phenomenal world”. In Chandogya Upanishad we read “All this (World) is Brahman. Let one worship it in all quietness as ‘tajjatan’. He who consists of mind whose body is breath (spirit of life), whose form is light, whose idea is real, whose self (atman) is space, through whom are all works, all desires, all scents, all tastes, who encompasses all this, who does not speak and has no care – He is my self within the heart, smaller than a grain of rice or a barley-corn, or a mustard-seed, or a millet, or the kernel of a grain of millet: this is my self within my heart, greater

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48 ‘tajjatan’ has no meaning as such, but it is interpreted by commentators as that from which one is born, into which one is dissolved, and that in which one breathes and acts’.
49 i.e. the whole universe
than the earth, greater than the atmosphere, greater than the sky, greater than these worlds. All works, all desires, all scents, all tastes belong to it: it encompasses this entire (world), does not speak and has no cares. This my self within my heart is that Brahman. When I depart from hence I shall merge into it. He who believes this will never doubt".  

R.C. Zaehner goes on to give the following explanation after referring to the above Upanishadic verses. This passage can, of course, be interpreted pantheistically or monistically, but I do not think that such passages as these, and this is the most important, can simply be written off as a natural mystical illumination … This is not merely the identification of the microcosm with the macrocosm, the felt conviction that ‘without and within are one’: it is a tentative definition of the Godhead and its relationship to the individual. Brahman’s essence is ‘intellect’ (manas) his ‘body’ is breath, spirit or life (prana), his form is light symbolizing as always awareness and consciousness, his ‘atman’ or bodily essence is space (akasa), the infinite ether. He is the author of all things, impassible and silent. Such a being in the west is called God. This God is at the same time the atman, the ‘vitals’ within the heart where He has no magnitude. This is a definition of God as both transcendent and immanent which might almost have been written by St. Thomas (Aquinas) as well. St. Thomas does, in fact write, ‘God is above all things by the excellence of His nature; nevertheless, He is in all things ‘as causing the being of all things’.

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50 Chandogya – Upanishad, 3.14 – ‘Sarvam khalvidam brahma tajjatan iti santa upasita ---  
3.4.3 Mysticism in Christian Context

In the Christian economy of mysticism, the notion of the saints being united into Christ is prominent. They are united as members of the body. St. Symeon, eleventh century abbot of the monastery of St. Mamas in Constantinople elaborates this as follows: “If it is true that the saints become genuinely the members of Christ who is God of all and if --- they have as their duty remaining attached and united to His body so that they may be their head and they --- may be His members and the many become one body of Christ, as it were a single man, and then it follows that some, for example, fulfill the role of His hands working even now to accomplish His all holy will, making worthy the unworthy and preserving them for Him. Others are the shoulders, bearing the burdens of others or even carrying the lost sheep whom they find wandering in the crags and wild places abandoned by God. These too accomplish His will. Others fulfill the role of the breast, pouring out God’s righteousness to those who hunger and thirst for it, providing them with the bread which nourishes the powers of heaven. Others still are the belly. They embrace everyone with love. They carry the spirit of salvation in their bowels and possess the capacity to bear His ineffable and hidden mysteries. Others, again, take the function of the thighs since they carry in themselves the fecundity of the concepts adequate to God of the mystical theology. They engender the spirit of wisdom upon the earth, i.e. the fruit of the spirit and His seed in the hearts of men, through the word of their teaching. Finally, there are those who act as the legs and feet. These last reveal courage and endurance in temptations, after the
manner of Job, and their stability in the good is in no way shaken or weakened, but instead they bear up under the burden of the spirits of gifts.”

The church in St. Paul’s words is the ‘body of Christ’ is paralleled in the above description of St. Symeon’s equation of the different virtues with the limbs and organs of the human body in his picture of the “Complete man in Christ”. In fact this picture is not accidental. The church and the individual Christian reflect each other as macrocosm and microcosm, the great world and the small. St. Symeon clearly proves that all the saints are in mystical union with God. The holy Bible elaborates this aspect beyond doubt. Even when the disciples were in the world Jesus told them, “Do not rejoice in this, that the demons are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven”. This shows that already there is a bond of union between the heavenly enterprise and earthly disciples. The saints are thus already members of Christ, are in the process of becoming one body with Him and that this process continues indefinitely. Jesus Himself recalls this unbreakable and indivisible union when he says to his disciples “I am in my Father and you in Me, and I in you” and again “I do not pray for these only, but also for all who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one”. Jesus assures them concerning the mode of their mystical union thus “Even as you Father, are in me and I in you, that these also may be one in us”. He continues and makes the concepts very clear “The glory which

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53 Romans 12: 4-5
54 Luke 10:20
55 John 14:20
56 John 17:20-21
57 John 17:21
you have given Me, I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I
in them and you in Me, that they may be perfectly one".58 “Father, I desire that they
also who You have given Me may be with me where I am, that they may behold My
glory, which You have given me in your love for me before the foundation of the
world… I made known to them your name and I will make it known that the love with
which you have loved me may be in them as I in them”.59 In these words Jesus reveals
the depth of the mystic union and the infinite transcendence of super abounding glory.
In fact this mode of union transcends our intelligence and our understanding.

The concept of union between the bride and bridegroom is well narrated as a mystical
union of the soul and God by saints of the east. St. Symeon discusses this in great
detail in the first Ethical Discourse.60 Jesus taught his disciples that the saints may be
united to Him somewhat in the way that He is united to His Father. St. Paul describes
this union in terms of that which a man has with his wife. “Wives, be subject to your
husbands, as to the Lord. For, the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head
of the church, His body, and is Himself its Saviour”.61 He who loves his own wife
loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it,
as Christ does the church, because we are members of His body, of His flesh and of
His bones.”62 St. Symeon goes on to discuss this union with a comparison between
the case of Adam and Eve and that of Christ and the Church. Just as Eve was taken

58 John 17: 22-23
59 John 17:24-26
60 Cfr. GOLITZIN ALEXANDER, St. Symeon the new Theologian – “On the Mystical Life : The
   pg. 47 ff.
61 Ephesians 5:23
62 Ephesians 5:28-30
from the flesh and bones of Adam and the two were one flesh, so also Christ gives Himself to the church to the extent of communion of His flesh and bones. He told his apostles after His resurrection “Handle me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have”. From the same flesh and bones He gives his disciples to eat, and through this communion makes the church too one with Him. St. Paul while referring to the detachment of the bridegroom from his parents, envisages this as an urgency of the bridegroom to have communion with Christ. It is for the sake of Christ that a man shall leave his father and mother and is joined to his wife, that is the Church, and the two shall become one flesh clearly meaning the flesh of Christ. St. Paul adds to explain further to show that this meaning of the text is spontaneous and not a forced reasoning, he says “This mystery is a profound one, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the Church. “Truly this mystery is great – and beyond great! – and so it will always be, because the same sort of communion, and union and intimacy and kinship which the woman has with the man and the man with the woman, such – understood in a manner adequate to God and as transcending our reason – is the relation which the Master and Maker of all has with all the Church, as with a single woman: blamelessly, ineffably, inseparably and indivisibly united to her, being and living with her as with the one whom He loves and holds dear. Thus in turn the Church, united to her most dear God, joins herself to Him as the whole body to its own head. As a body cannot live at all without being attached to its head, then neither can the Church of the faithful – I say, rather, of the sons of God whose names are inscribed in heaven – in any way be a proper and whole body for God without her

63 Luke 24:39
64 Ephesian 5:31
65 Ephesians 5:32
head, Christ God Himself, nor can she live the true and imperishable life without being fed by Him with her daily and substantial bread. From the latter comes life and growth into the perfect man, into the full measure of the stature of His fullness\(^\text{66}\) for all those who love Him.\(^\text{67}\) This specific type of mystic union is real and unique in Christian spirituality wherein the saint acquires an ecstatic union with God and he becomes a single body with and in Him and elevates himself to that unique power and glory of the Divine.

### 3.4.3.1 Divine Ecstasy and Beginning of Glory

Eastern Christian theologians especially St. Symeon characterize this ecstasy as a gate to divine glory. He says “Now, you must realize, that all this is only an elementary introduction in piety for novices, for those who have stripped themselves for the contest of virtue. Whenever someone perseveres unswervingly to that vision, not knowing what it is, it is opened to him. And what is opened? Heaven? I do not know. The eye of the heart? Again, I do not know whether to say the one or the other. Yet, by that light and within the house of the soul – I mean clearly this tabernacle of flesh – that wonderful light beyond brightness enters in and lightens him according to the measure which nature allows. And, when he has thus further preserved so that, little by little, he becomes used to the light and lives as he had always been within it, then, if I may put it so, that which follows may be reckoned as this: he both sees and knows, is initiated into and taught wonders upon wonders, the mysteries upon

\(^{66}\) Ephesians 4:13,14

mysteries, and visions upon visions. And if he were to want to write them all down, there would not be enough paper or ink to suffice him. I think that he would lack the time even to tell of these things in any detail. Indeed, how can he, in any case write down which can not be spoken, but which is entirely inexpressible and ineffable? Now, as in the light or – better – as united with it, and as no longer in ecstasy, he instead comes to perceive himself and what is his own. He sees his neighbours as they are in their own right. He knows and predicts that, when he comes to depart this prison, in particular, after the general resurrection, he will also look upon that unwavering light as it is, and that all the good things within it “which no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him”\(^68\) will be revealed to him the more clearly through the same light within now and by which he is illumined. We shall not be deprived THEN of knowing or seeing, but, as we have demonstrated above, according to the measure which each has of the radiance and vision of the light, both the knowledge of one another shall grow ever greater and more clear in joy inexpressible and rejoicing forever and ever. Both the prophets of the Old Testament and many of the saints of the New Testament have witnessed to this in their deeds, calling by name those whom they had never seen and recognizing indeed those whom they had never known before”\(^69\)

3.4.3.2 Mystic Ecstasy: The ‘Ineffable Speech’, Pauline Mysticism

A very cute expression of mystic experience in Christian mysticism is elaborated by St. Paul – in the essence of “ineffable speech”. St. Paul is certain about the experience

\(^{68}\) I Corinthians. 2:9

of the visions and revelations of God. “I know a man in Christ, who fourteen years ago was, caught up to the third heaven – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. And I know that this man was caught up in Paradise – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter”. This mystic ecstasy is based on his experience of ‘rapture’ in the “third heaven” and the hearing of “ineffable speech”. St. Symeon brings out the essence of the “ineffable speech”. In order to explain the essence of this speech he develops an analogy between the human soul and the Holy Trinity and draws the conclusion that St. Paul enjoyed a single perception of the divine glory – a perception wherein vision is the important element but where all the other senses are fulfilled as well. St. Paul saw and heard and tasted and smelled and felt – the one light which is God.

“Speech” in the Bible means “Word”. Say the ‘word’ and my servant will be healed. In the book of Job, we have “say a word against God, and die.” Men’s speech and words are both spoken by their mouths and heard by their ears. But God’s speech and word, coming from His mouth are entirely unutterable for human tongues and are entirely inaccessible to human perception. And this is the content of the “ineffable speech”. But with the assistance of divine revelation an attempt at an interpretation of the ineffable speech is worth the task.

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70 II Corinthians. 12:2-4
71 Logos
72 Matthew 8:8
73 Job 2:9
Mysticism

In the Christian context we know the ‘Word’ means nothing other than the Son of God, Jesus Christ; And the Father’s mouth that utters the ‘ineffable speech’ none other than his holy and consubstantial Spirit. Instead of the Holy Spirit the Prophet says “For the mouth of the Lord has spoken”\textsuperscript{74} Here God’s mouth is the Holy Spirit and the speech is the ‘Son’ the ‘Word’. St. Symeon elaborates thus “Just as our word, closed up within us, cannot come out unless we open our mouths, just so unless God’s mouth, which is to say His Holy Spirit, opens up by virtue of the illumination which comes to pass in us – though it is not the spirit who opens up, but our mind which is illumined by Him – the Son and the Word of God is neither seen, nor made known, nor indeed revealed at all to our senses of sight and hearing”\textsuperscript{75}

The ‘ineffable speech’ which St. Paul heard is nothing other than the mystical and truly inexpressible contemplations, the transcendently splendid and unknowable knowledge given by the illumination of the Holy Spirit i.e. the invisible visions of the glory and divinity. It is the divine light which transcends all knowledge of the Son, the Word of God. These contemplations are revealed more manifestly and clearly to those who are worthy of them. It is further the inaudible auditions of unutterable speech in short the “ineffable speech” – i.e. the son of God, declared by the Holy Spirit and by His illumination or vision revealed to those who are worthy.

\textsuperscript{74} Isaiah 1:20
\textsuperscript{75} GOLITZIN ALEXANDER, St. Symeon the new theologian On the Mystical Life, The Ethical Discourses, Vol.1, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY 10707 – 1699, (1995), pg. 121
3.4.4 Three: Phase Process in Christian Mysticism

Most of the Christian Mystics envisage three phases in mystic process. A discussion of the thoughts of a few medieval catholic mystics would throw light on the Christian mystic process. According to Richard of St. Victor, the famous Psychologist, there are three phases in the contemplative consciousness. The first is the ‘dilation of the mind’, in which the vision of the world is deepened and made vast. The next is the ‘elevation of mind’ in which we behold the realities which are above ourselves. The final stage is that of ‘ecstasy’ in which the mind is carried upto contact with truth in its pure simplicity. Jacopone da Todi, a poet and contemplative, describes it in the symbolism of three heavens. Firstly as the mind achieves self-conquest, a ‘starry heaven’ of variety is revealed. The next vision is of ‘crystalline heaven’ of contemplation having a certain rhythm of divine life. Finally, it reaches the ‘hidden heaven’ where it has the unique vision of imageless reality i.e. God. Ruysbrock another mystic expresses his experience of three orders of reality, the natural world76, the essential world77 and the super essential world78.

The scholars on mysticism especially Evelyn Underhill refer to another mystic, Jacob Boehme who points out three peculiar principles in the Divine Essence. The first he calls the “deepest Deity, without and beyond Nature”; the second aspect is its manifestation in the “Eternal Light-world”, and the third is the “outer world” in which we dwell in accordance with the body which in fact is a manifestation of the Eternal.

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76 The world of struggle
77 Where God is known through intermediaries
78 Where above and without reason, the soul is united to ‘the Glorious and Absolute One’
Thus Boehme interlinks the three aspects as though they are latent in a single man. He says “if one sees a right man, he may say, I see here three worlds standing.”\(^{79}\)

Dionysius the Areopagite, a Syrian monk of the fifth/sixth century who tried to combine Neo Platonism and Christian theology, outlines a threefold way to God. The first is the way of ‘purification’ wherein the mind gathers true wisdom. The second is the way of ‘illumination’ in which the mind by contemplation is kindled to the burning of love. The third is the way of ‘union’ in which the mind by understanding, reason and spirit is led up by God alone.

### 3.5 Mystic Experiences

Another important feature in the study of mysticism is the experience felt nourished and achieved in mystic encounters. Prof. Zaehner distinguishes three categories of mystical experiences:

1. Panenhemic or nature mysticism is a special kind of experience which is a sudden rapport with nature often arrived at in a striking and intimate way.

2. Monistic Mysticism relates to Advaita, Shankhya Yoga, Buddhist, kind of experience. It is the realization of the eternal oneness of one’s own soul.

3. Theistic mysticism is attained strictly in Christian, Muslim and other theistic contemplation. It is the ‘mysticism of the love of God’.\(^{80}\)

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\(^{79}\) WOODS RICHARD, *Understanding Mysticism*, p. 32.

\(^{80}\) cfr. WOODS RICHARD, O.P. ed. *Understanding Mysticism*, p.79.
3.6 Semitic Mysticism

Before concluding the session on the general discussion on Mysticism, a brief outline of mysticism in two religious denominations of Syriac context, Jews and Muslims also is discussed.

3.6.1 Jewish Mysticism

Jewish mysticism (Kabbalism) attempts to interpret the religious values of Judaism in mystical terms as: “Oh taste and see that the Lord is good”\(^81\). This is the net result of all Jewish Mysticism. A Jewish Mystic experiences the manifestation of the living God, in His acts of Creation, Revelation and Redemption. The Jewish Mystics ascertain their living in the presence of God, the God of the Bible, the embodiment of everything positive. He also entertains the idea of an unknown God in the depth of the His own self. The Kabbalists express this depth, according to Gershom G. Scholem as “the depth of His nothingness”\(^82\). The Jewish Mystics were very much inclined to symbols which finally led them to the two fundamental Jewish culture of Halakah and Aggadah, i.e. Law and Legend. Both of them were divine manifestations, beyond philosophical enquiry or juridical analysis. Joseph Gikatila and Zohar in Gates of the Path give this interpretation to the verse in Psalm 130:1 - “Out of the depths I have called unto Thee”. They mean not “I have called from the depths (where I am) but, “from the depth (in which Thou art) I call thee up”\(^83\). The Jewish Mystics are always in constant rebellion with this world. This attitude leads to another conflict between

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81 Psalm 34:9
83 WOODS RICHARD ed. Understanding Mysticism, p.163
Jewish Philosopher who denies the existence of evil and the Kabbalist who strongly upholds the sense of the reality of evil. A final observation on Jewish Mysticism is its predominance of masculinity. Both historically and metaphysically it is a masculine doctrine made for men and by men.

### 3.6.2 Islamic Mysticism

The mysticism of Islam is referred in Arabic, Persian and Turkish by ‘Sufi’ – referring to the mystics who profess Mohammedan faith. Etymologically Sufi is derived from Arabic root which conveys “purity”, meaning “one who is pure in heart”. Another explanation for this name is on account of their woolen (ṣūf) clothing that resembles a Christian monk’s garments.\(^\text{84}\) The earliest Sufis were basically ascetics who depended entirely on the will of Allah, submitting themselves completely and unquestioningly to the divine will. Mysticism in Islam puts its foundation on self discipline leading to possess and to be possessed by nothing. In its highest articulation, the Sufi dies in God and by dying he lives in God. Later arose various sects in the Suffist tradition as Murjites, Adarites, Barites, Mutazilites and Asharites on the basis of their influence from Greek theology and philosophy.\(^\text{85}\)

### Conclusion

We may conclude from the analysis of Mysticism that all mystical experiences ultimately meet in a single point; but that point assumes widely different aspects according to the mystic’s religion, race and temperament. All the great types of

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mysticism have something in common, each is marked by peculiar characteristics resulting from the circumstances in which it arose and flourished. For poets and philanthropists mysticism is based on the realization of Nature. So the inevitable question is, whether mysticism can be communicated aesthetically or poetically. Some literary critics like Dr. Johnson, T.S. Eliot and T.E. Hume challenge even the very idea of devotional poetry. This is because the state of mind in the attitude of prayer is a higher one than what poetry can offer. However, Ernst Cassirer speaks of an inherent power of poetry itself exploited by a poet mystic. “Thus all mysticism is directed toward the world beyond language; a world of silence … The spiritual depth and power of language is strikingly evinced in the fact that it is speech itself which prepares the way for that last step whereby it is itself transcended” Rabindranath Tagore is the foremost of all mystic poets and his Gitanjali is a transcendental piece of mystic poetry.