

# MYSTICISM - ESSENCE OF ALL RELIGIONS

If we scan through the pages of world history, we will find that there has been a tremendous change in the life style of human beings. We are at the cross road of science and technology just as machine works fast similarly man has become a machine, he wants to finish the years work in months, months work in just a few hours. In order to go fast, get fast, work fast, cook fast, digest fast and so on, the speed of life has gone on top gear and possibilities of wrong doing has increased alarmingly. The whole world is in turmoil and chaos. There is no peace of mind and all suffer with some kind of stress and pain. We have achieved much in the field of material welfare still we are not happy! What is the reason for all this agony? The mystics try to answer this by saying that we have lost touch with our inner self. A mystic tries to realise ones true nature, ones true being and ones true purpose of life. It is in self-realization that the purpose of our whole life is hidden.

Mysticism is an immediate feeling of oneness with God, consciousness of the transcendent or ultimate reality of God. In order to understand this feeling we need to feel it. Mystics have seen God with the eyes of their inner spirit. Mysticism can help us to cope up with the present stress of technological driven world. Mysticism can be traced in every major religion of the world.

## ISLAMIC DIMENSION OF MYSTICISM

“Whither so ever you turn, thither is the face of God”

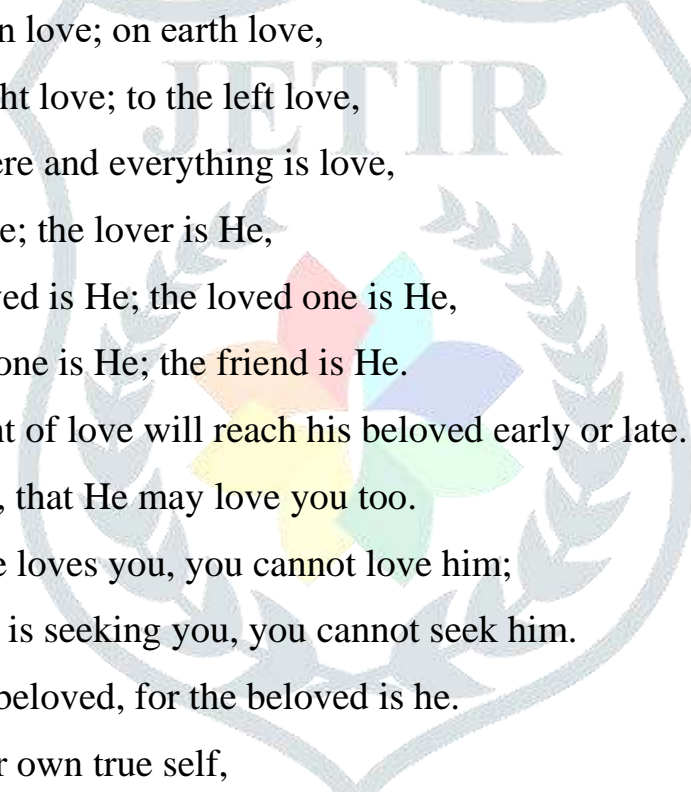
---The Holy Quran

(Surah: Al-Baqarah, Verse: 115)

Every religion has its own mythology and its own mysticism. So is the case with Islam and this mystical dimension is designated as Tasawwuf in the east and Sufism in the west. It is for this reason that a Muslim mystic is known as a Sufi. Whereas Sufism implies purity, so a Sufi is one who is on a path leading to the purity of body, mind and soul.<sup>1</sup>

In Sufism, a lover is a technical term for the lover of God. It is through this love that a Sufi wants to make God a reality. God created Adam in the image of his own love. He then created Eve in the image of Adam's love. It is clear that all the three entities God, Adam and Eve are chained together in the everlasting bond of love. All the three are attracted to each other in one or the other form. The ultimate aim of love is the union of hearts. In case of the illuminated souls, craving is the bond of love, while in case of the satanic beings it is the bond of evil.

Murshid Muzaffar Ozak Al-Jerrahi says:

The logo of the Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR) is a watermark in the background. It features a shield-like shape with a central starburst or flower-like design in various colors (red, yellow, green, blue, purple). The word 'JETIR' is written in large, bold, capital letters across the center of the shield. The shield is surrounded by a laurel wreath.

“In heaven love; on earth love,  
To the right love; to the left love,  
Everywhere and everything is love,  
Love is He; the lover is He,  
The beloved is He; the loved one is He,  
The dear one is He; the friend is He.  
The knight of love will reach his beloved early or late.  
Love him, that He may love you too.  
Unless He loves you, you cannot love him;  
Unless he is seeking you, you cannot seek him.  
Love the beloved, for the beloved is he.  
Love your own true self,  
For your own true self is also He.”<sup>2</sup>

Our beloved God is our creator. He loves his creation. He also likes his creation to recognize Him. If we really want to recognize Him then we have to tread on the way of the mystics, which is known as Tasawwuf. It is the way of love and this way cannot be determined through reading but it is to be experimented by anyone himself or herself. For example, we can know the house and what it contains only by entering into it. This house is our heart and having installed God in the house, it is undeserving for a man to accommodate anything else in it.

Salutations to our master, the glorious Prophet who says:

*“He who knows his own self, knows Allah”*

Remember then that your heart is the sacred abode of your beloved God.

A Sufi creates harmony, lives in harmony and offers harmony, because he is always trying to establish harmony between mind and matter. Baba Guru Nanak Sahib speaks about the Sufis in these verses:

Seer ones, in whose heart dwells God;  
 Whose inner shrines are lighted with the lamp of God.  
 One, who speaks and thinks of none other than God.  
 Sees and feels none other than God!  
 In and around, all the time everywhere,  
 Verily such are the chosen Sufis of God.<sup>3</sup>

In order to create harmony and balance, the Sufis seek knowledge of the outer or inner life. After finding the purpose of life they try to realize that purpose. It is a process of awareness, which can lead to the status of the angels. The final stage is believed to be the merger with the divine creator.

When someone asked Murshid Inayat Khan as to what kind of religion, this Sufism was, he replied: “It is the religion of the heart, the religion in which the thing of primary importance is to seek God in the hearts of mankind”. Explaining further, the Murshid Inayat Khan said that there are three ways of seeking God in human heart. The first way is to recognize the divine in every person, with whom we come into contact. The second way is to think of the feelings of those who are out of sight and sympathize with them. The third way is to realize that love is the divine spark in one’s heart and this spark has to illuminate the path of one’s self.

Murshid Abubabaji, in one of his birthday messages to his devotees says:

“Do not forget that all the religions are sent by one and the only one God. The main message of all the religions is basically the same. Different religions were born in different historical periods to suit the mankind of that particular geographical environment. If I may be allowed to explain I would say, Hinduism the religion of ancient India flourished in the geographical background of a fertile plain with perennial rivers with blue sky and green fields enriched with grain. The Vedic Indians prayed to the forces of nature. They felt the presence of Brahman in nature and they realized the eternal. The Supreme Being is omnipotent & omniscience. As I have said before, I again repeat that the wrong interpretation of the spiritual teacher drove human hearts from God & nature, as they emphasized on undesired rituals & meaningless superiority. Although the teaching of Upanishad has uncompromisingly said that, Anandam Brahma – Happiness is God. The place of religion in man is to bring peace and happiness, if that is gone, then religion is meaningless. This degenerated state brought the universal teachings of Lord Buddha. It was the social environment of that period of “Aryavarta”, where love and understanding had disappeared from the human heart at that period.<sup>4</sup>

God also sent His messenger Holy Prophet Muhammad to the ever divided people of Arabia, the desert land to preach mankind the necessity of understanding the reality of one and only one God and the brotherhood of man.

God is all pervading reality – omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. He has created the world so that all sections or individuals live in harmony, beauty & love. His laws – moral and material are inherent in the conscience of man, no other agency can teach him. The violations of divine laws bring misery and fulfillment of these brings joy and progress. Divine laws know no vicarious dispensation – every soul has to bear his own cross; “As ye sow, so shall ye reap” is the law. No Guru or prophet or Avatar can on his own save us from the penalty or transgression or sin that we commit.

Again life is a relationship; as we are the rays of the same sun of reality. We are ultimately one, irrespective of caste, creed, color, and sex. Hence, one should try for good of all. Deviation from this principle brings wars, enmities and fractions in human society.

All life is one and we have no right to destroy or be cruel to the living beings. All religions emphasize this point but the followers of religion go astray for their own selfish and material benefits.

Sufism is not a new religion but only the mystical dimension of Islam. Its doctrines and methods are totally linked with the Holy Prophet and the Holy Quran. However, it is a fact that the majority of Muslims are not Sufis. In order to understand Sufism, let us first understand Islam. In fact, Islam is not a new religion, but the same truth that God revealed through all His messengers to every nation, prior to the advent of the Holy Prophet, as such, the Quran lays down that “There is no compulsion in religion”.<sup>5</sup> While traditional Sufism is outwardly confirming, it is inwardly free. For a Sufi, the Shariah is not enough or an end in itself. However, this freedom enjoyed by the Sufis is not total and secondly, Sufism is not and cannot be orthodoxy. As such, it has found its expression not only in the mental form of metaphysics but also in arts and crafts, poetry and literature and in painting and visual arts.

Murshid Inayat Khan has rightly said that Sufism is neither a dogma nor a doctrine; it is neither a form nor a ceremony. It has never in any period of history been a religion, rather it has always been considered as the essence of every religion and of all religions. It can be traced in any religion of the world including Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Sikhism, Confucianism, Taoism and Islam.

Nasrollah Fatemi says that Sufism was the anti-thesis of arrogance, intolerance, hypocrisy and inhumanity. A Sufi wants to create a renaissance of man’s spirit, through which he might lead a simple, innocent, happy and harmonious life.

Murshid Inayat Khan, while relating the term Sufi to the Greek word Sophia meaning wisdom, says that no better explanation of Sufism can be given than by saying that any person, who has knowledge of both outer and inner life is a Sufi. The present day Sufi movement is a movement of numbers of different nations and races united together in the ideal of wisdom; they believe that the wisdom doesn’t belong to any particular

religion or race, but to the human race as a whole. The cardinal doctrine of Sufism is called 'Wahdat-al-Wujud' which means, the transcendent unity of being or oneness of being. It means that there cannot be two independent realities or beings. God is the ultimate being and reality and God transcends everything. As such, a Sufi sees God everywhere. Prince Dara Shikoh, son of the Mughal emperor of India says that the science of Vedanta and the science of Sufism are one. It is for this reason that the scholars are one. It is for this reason that the scholars find that the Sufi doctrine of Wahdat-al-Wujud is almost equivalent of the Vedanti Advaiti.

From time to time a revelation flows like a great tidal wave from the ocean of infinitude to the shores of our finite world and Sufism is the vocation and the discipline and the science of plunging in the ebb of one of these waves and infinite source.

The human body is sustained by consciousness or (Sirr), which is composed of eight faculties:

1. Intelligence or Aql
2. Judgment or Wahm
3. Concentration or Fikr
4. Imagination or Khayal
5. Perception or Musaverah
6. Memory or Hafizah
7. Recollection or Mudarak
8. Soul or Nafs

Every seeker or an aspirant has to conduct experiments within his mind and find the divine truth, which is veiled from the eyes of the ignorant know that Aql-i-Awal, or the first conscience is the divine conscience, which rules over the secret of Allah. Then we have the Aql-i-Kuli, which means the human conscience. The divine conscience can be compared to the sun and the human conscience can be termed as water, which has the capacity to obtain the reflection of the sun.

The soul or the Ruh does not leave its own centre even after settling in the human body. She lives in her own place and only keeps an eye on her temporary settlement of body. As it merges into body, it is difficult to know its real nature. This very soul is a lever for good deeds or bad deeds. As elevated and saintly soul raises the body to highest spiritual level and he or she can do wonders. A corrupted soul makes the body its prisoner and extra evil acts from its operation.

The soul and the body resemble two lovers until human beings keeps his body fit, the soul would love it and when the body gets rotten, the soul starts thinking of departing to its own original place, so as to obtain joy. A time comes when the soul finally decides to leave the body and that is termed as death. To a mystic, or to a Sufi, the day of death is not the day of mourning but the day of joy, for he will meet his beloved God on this day.

Murshid Kareem compares human heart with Arsh or the divine throne. Here sits our creator, the merciful and compassionate. God has made the heart the centre of concise, light and its mercy. It has two doors, one leading to the heaven and the other leads to the hell. It is upto us to open any door we like. A human heart is like a mirror on both sides, one side reflecting the divine and the second side reflecting the evil. It is upto us to get both sides this mirror illuminated through the light of the God. Allah the Lord of majesty has decreed that he cannot be accommodated in the cosmos but in the heart of the lover.

According to the master, Rumi we have been separated from our creator, which has resulted in our anguish. We hear the complaints of the reed which says that ever since I was parted from the root, my lamentation causes men and women to weep. It means anyone who is separated from his origin has to suffer.

All of us, who were created in the image of God, can regain our lost status, if we mean it. We have to understand that the creator and the creation are one despite separation, the Sufis are not afraid of death because it means meeting the beloved after separation.

It is to be understood that our God revealed His divine secrets through his messenger. They were raised among all nations and among all people. They are known as Prophets, Apostles, Avatars and Messengers. Adam manifested repentance and habituated this earth. Buddha was noted for renunciation and left his kingdom to seek illumination of the heart. Abraham resigned to his fate and offered his son at the altar of sacrifice. Krishna was noted for action while Moses kept steadfast to God. Our master, Jesus stood for hope. Similarly our glorious Prophet was noted for zikr, which is more than the prayer to Allah. It is communication between man and God.

As our creator is known by numerous names, and is not bound by any etymology or definition. We can remember God by any good name we like. The remembrance of the lord's name is known as zikr among the Sufis and simrun among the Hindus.

Imagination is the basis of the existence of God & hence our lord has become a reality for us. Imagination is the creative faculty of mind which converts itself into external objects not present to the senses. This very imagination is the basis of all worlds. Every idea is bound to materialize into some concrete image or shape in the future. Every human being and every living creature is enslaved by imagination. Persons with material bent of mind imagine themselves rich. A student, who is absorbed in studies, imagines or conceives his success in examination. In fact the basis of life is imagination, nay, our life is also imagination. Even this world is imagination. Anyone who imagines himself in the company of God will surely find His grace. He is an illuminated person, who may show you this miracle.

In the same way, when a scientist or an inventor contemplates or imagines his imagination materializes into a discovery or invention. Same is the case with a mystic who contemplates on his God. The process of enlightenment covers his mind, heart and soul with the result that he becomes a super mind.

Eternal is the God of all humanity who has spoken to Hindu, Buddhist, Jew, Taoist, Parsee, Christian, and Muslim etc. No people or nations have been excluded from



receiving guidance from the source of ultimate reality, which is one, but has many expressions when mind is freed from worldly preoccupation, it is possible to draw ourselves closer to the source through the medium prayers and supplications.

Every religion teaches us some sort of a ritual prayer and its main aim is to beseech a favour or a reward. Prayer means a solemn request or a thanks giving to God and this practice is as old as humanity itself. Prayers have a power to bring solace to the practitioner. In the doldrums of our anxieties, worries and difficulties, it is essential to perform some kind of a prayer. Once imagination has helped a man to bring the presence of God before him, God is awakened in his own heart. Then every word of prayer he utters is a living word.

God is the Creator, the Protector, the Preserver, the Reckoner, the Guide, the First and the last. He is the possessor of science and wisdom. He is glorious and great and possesses supreme excellence in goodness, beauty and sublimity. His blessings are open to all creatures and he is not partial in his bounties. He listens to our supplications and wards off impending troubles.

“And God hath set some in the Church,  
First Apostles, secondly prophets and  
Thirdly teachers.”

- 1 Corinthians

In the Hindu spiritual hierarchy, a teacher is termed as guru and his disciple is known as Chela. According to Swami Gitananda, the role of a Guru is that of a “friend, philosopher and guide” as that of Sri Krishna with his deranged disciple Arjuna, as given in the Srimad Baghavad Gita. As a friend the guru can touch upon matters of ego. Asmita, probe into the vanities of the Vasanas; as philosopher and then guide the student through the maze of Samskaras, habit moulds or psychic conditioning until the Chela is put into touch with the “Guru within”. A teacher in the Sufi terminology is known as Murshid and disciple is called as Murid, and the initiation ceremony is termed as Baiyyat.

The way to the beloved God is to be ascertained from the Master. For this, it is

essential to enter into a pledge with the Murshid, which is designated as Baiyyat. A disciple has to seek guidance with patience, sincerity and true submission. The master has to accept the responsibility of guiding the disciple in the path of Marifat.

Is it necessary to go into the Baiyyat at the hands of a Murshid? When this question was put to Gurumaye Chidvilasananda, by a disciple, she replied:

“You need a guru for all kinds of knowledge. Our first guru is our mother. We learn from her how to eat, how to drink, how to walk and so on. Then we go to school. The teachers in the school are also our gurus, because they give uselementary knowledge. In the same way, for the knowledgeof the self, for realization of the self, it is necessary to havea guru. To obtain complete knowledge in your daily life,you need a living guru”<sup>6</sup>

No true believer will deny that experience or even mystical experience has a place in Christian life. For instance, the divine events that bring a sinner to salvation could be described as a mystical experience. A mystical experience could be an evangelism tract that was picked up or someone randomly entering a church out of desperation and hearing a gospel presentation or even standing in line in a grocery store next to a believer. Other mystical experiences could be a definite answer to prayer, an unexpected provision, or a season of spiritual renewal. However, these mystical experiences might rather be described as “God’s supernatural work in everyday life.”

“Mysticism is the idea that direct knowledge of God or ultimate reality is achieved through personal, subjective intuition or experience apart from, or even contrary to, historical fact or objective divine revelation.”<sup>7</sup>

## CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM

“Mysticism is the belief that spiritual reality is perceived apart from the human intellect and natural senses. It leads for truth internally, weighing feelings, intuition and other internal sensations more heavily than objective, external data. Mysticism ultimately derives its authority from

self-actualized; self-authenticated light rising from within its source of truth is spontaneous feeling within. Its source of truth is spontaneous feeling rather than objective fact.”<sup>8</sup>

St. John of the cross was a Carmelite priest (religious order of monks found in Mt. Caramel, known for their contemplative prayer) in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. He authored the mystically coined term, “dark night of the soul”, in a poem and commentary of the same name. In his poem and commentary, St. John depicts the mystical development of the stages of the souls union with God. The “dark night of the soul” represents the mystical purification of the material and physical desires and senses. In addition, it describes the ten steps on the ladder of mystical love and union with God. Christian mystics today still use the term the “dark night of the soul” in their mystical purgation of the soul in order to achieve a mystical union with the God.

Ignatius Loyola (16<sup>th</sup> Century) was the author of “Spiritual Exercises” which were ritualistic meditation, contemplative prayers, fasting and various mental exercises in order to achieve spiritual illumination. The exercises were to be carried out over a period of 28 – 30 days. Ignatius Loyola founded what was called the “Society of Jesus”, who were especially known for mystical practice of “Contemplative prayer”. Contemplative prayer is not the normal idea of the prayer in Bible. Rather it is the mainstay of ancient and modern mystics by which they are able to experience oneness with God.

A more contemporary Christian mystic would be Evelyn Underhill who authored a book “Mysticism, a study of nature and development of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness. Initially an agnostic with an interest in Neo-Platonism, she eventually became an Anglo-Catholic with strong learning’s towards mysticism.

Underhills idea of mysticism was:

“Mysticism is practical, not theoretical, mysticism is an entirely spiritual activity, the business and method of mysticism is love and mysticism entails a definite psychological experience.”

At the time and still today the subject is associated with the occult, magic, secret rites and fanaticism, while she knew the mystics throughout history to be the world's spiritual pioneers.

Evelyn Underhill outlined five stages for entering into the way of mysticism.

- a. Awakening of self - understanding the soul's true nature and purpose.
- b. Purgation of self - stripping all material and physical things from the soul.
- c. Illumination – mystical, not intellectual process of understanding the eternal.
- d. Dark night of the soul – process of life's removal of everything but God.
- e. Union – mystical and ecstatic oneness with God's incomprehensible light.

Though there may be differences, these stages are universally accepted as the stages of Christian Mysticism.

“Mysticism, according to its historical and psychological definitions, is the direct intuition or experience of God; and a mystic is a person who has to a greater or lesser degree, such a direct experience – one whose religion and life are centered, not merely on an accepted belief or practice, but on that which the person regards as first hand personal knowledge.”<sup>9</sup>

- Evelyn Underhill

A mystic is a lover of God who pursues the beloved from a deep realization that life as a Christian is evolving as the soul moves towards its fullness and destiny in relationship to God to travel into the world of Christian mystic, one must discard concepts such as ego, pride and spiritual materialism in favour of adopting a sense of humility and hopeful expectation. It is to begin a great and stirring adventure that moves the soul from kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God. The qualities that mark the Christian mystic includes devotion to Christ, being humble and without spiritual pride, refraining from judgement and trusting that God speaks to the heart of each person in a way and time of God's choosing. A Christian mystic is transformed and transforming; the transformation

is an ongoing process, an unfolding of the soul. Not accomplished in a single step, one continues in humbly seeking the kingdom of heaven.

According to Ursula King, a renowned professor of religious studies and spirituality.

“The story of the Christian mystics is one of an all-consuming, passionate love affair between human God. It speaks of the yearning, a burning desire for the

Contemplation and presence of the divine... This yearning is a candle by the fire of divine love itself, which moves the mystic in their search and leads him, often arduous journey, to discover and proclaimed the all – encompassing love for God for humankind.”<sup>10</sup>

A Quaker, Richard Foster, has authored one of the most influential books on Christian Mysticism called “Celebration of Discipline”. The book was written in 1978 and has sold over a million copies. It was named by Christianity Today as one of the top ten books of the twentieth century. The book promotes the inward discipline of Christian Mysticism such as prayer, fasting meditation and study in the Christian life. It includes the outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission and service and the corporate disciplines of confession, worship, guidance and celebration. In one sense, these disciplines seem no different from the disciplines for which the average evangelical Christian strives. However, Foster’s goals and meanings are completely different from those of the average evangelical. For instance, typical of Christian Mystic literature, Foster’s goal is the Mystical union of oneness with God.

“As we did this, over time we began experiencing that “Sweet sinking into Deity” Madame Guyon speaks of it, very honestly, had much the same feel and smell as the experiences I has been reading about in Devotional Masters.”<sup>11</sup>

These disciplines are not intellectual but are the keys to mystical experience. Furthermore, these are the same disciplines used by the Christian mystics (Devotional Masters) listed below. Foster applauds and quotes them all.

The components of Christian Mysticism are contemplative prayer, Meditation, Disciplines and Labyrinth.

When believers hear the word “prayer”, they instantly have an affinity towards the word. After all, prayer is the believer’s communication with God. It would not even be wrong to say that the believer fellowships with God through prayer. Evidently, Christian Mysticism is not content with the Biblical idea of prayer and practices what is called contemplative prayer.

For the Christian mystic, the emphasis is on the word “Contemplative.” In the book, “Mysticism” (Pg. 25) Georgia Harkness explains, “among the church fathers (mystics) ‘contemplation’ was the usual term to designate what was later to be called mystical experience.”<sup>12</sup>(Pg. 25) so contemplative prayer is a means to gain a mystical experience. Contemplative prayer is not a practice of thinking; but rather it is a practice to empty the mind. Gary Gilley comments,

“Through contemplative prayer the person is to empty his mind (detach) then fill it with imaginative experiences, who will find in the silence of our souls, resulting in God becoming the source of our words and actions. Sounds attractive to many, even if no such teaching is found in scripture.”

“- Mysticism” Part-3

Some of the methods for contemplative prayer have their roots in eastern religions. Gary Thomas explanation of the technique for contemplative prayer is akin to yoga.

“Choose a word (Jesus or Father, God or Allah, for example as a focus for contemplative prayer. Repeat the word silently in your mind for a set amount of time until your heart seems to be repeating

the word by itself, just as naturally & involuntarily as breathing. But centring prayers is a contemplative act in which you don't do anything; you are simply resting in the presence of God.”<sup>13</sup>

The idea of meditation is so closely linked to the idea of contemplative prayer that some mystics use them interchangeably.

“We must be willing to go down into the recreating silences, into the inner world of contemplation. In their writings, all of the masters of meditation strive to awaken us to the fact that the universe is much larger than we know, that there are vast unexplored inner regions that are just as real as the physical world we know so well. They tell us of exciting possibilities for new life and freedom. They call us to the adventure, to be prisoners in this frontier of the spirit.”<sup>14</sup>

Simply stated, contemplative prayer is meditation and is often called meditation. In addition, the same process of detachment and attachment are implied in meditation.

“Christian meditation is an attempt to empty the mind in order to fill it”<sup>15</sup>

We have already touched on the idea of emptying one's mind under 'Contemplative Prayer'. The question before us is with what are we to fill our empty minds. Christian mystics say that we are to fill our minds with our imagination and astral projections. Christian mystics say that we are to fill our minds with the God within. Other Christian mystics say we are to fill our mind with revelations and messages from God. Meditation produces numerous spiritual benefits for the believer: Wisdom, insight, understanding of God's will, restraint from sin and spiritual fruit.

For Foster, spirituality and sanctification are all about the “discipline”. When he speaks of “discipline”, he is not referring to the character quality of discipline, which the believer must have to read his Bible, pray, attend church and serve in ministry. Rather Foster's “disciplines” are a series of twelve disciplines, which transport an individual into a mystical experience with God and increase spirituality.

## MYSTICISM IN HINDUISM AND BUDDHISM

“...twelve disciplines in three groups: the inward disciplines of meditation, prayer, fasting, and study; the outward disciplines of simplicity, solitude, submission, and service; and the corporate discipline of confession (meaning accountability), worship, guidance and celebration.”<sup>16</sup>

Foster's disciplines are comprised of repetition mantras, mystical encounters and revelations. Foster believes the mere repetition of mystical mantras, even if not believed will bring about transformation. Labyrinth – a path to find one's way. According to Dr. Lauren Artress, Executive Director of Veriditas, the world-wide Labyrinth Project, is a tool for healing, spiritual awareness, and global peace. The patterns of the Labyrinth are similar in design and conception to the mandalas of south Asian Buddhism, which are physical representations of the spiritual realm designed to aid in meditation. Labyrinth blend their visual symbolism with the process of walking, which is similar to the Japanese Zen practice of Kinhin, literally 'walking meditation' where all of the attention is focused on the process of each step, one foot in front of the other, and the breath is controlled and regulated. Both of these techniques are used in Buddhist meditation which combines the elements of calming and insight into the single goal of Samadhi or awareness.

The purpose of Labyrinth is to capture a mystical experience in self-actualization. There are three stages to walking the Labyrinth: Purgation, Illumination and union. Purgation is the first part of the path where the details of everyday life are shed, and the mind is made open. Illumination is the time spent in the centre of the Labyrinth, quietly praying and receiving whatever wisdom is forthcoming to re-enter the world and actualize the new sense or knowledge gained in the Labyrinth.

Somehow, we have it in our minds than unless we are having a mystical and emotional experience, we have not has a true experience with God. There are disciplines in the Christian life, but our primary discipline is to study the word of truth so that we do not create false and unbiblical disciplines, no matter how it makes us feel. It is time to celebrate the discipline of the Word of Truth.



It must be remembered that mysticism is at the heart of all religious systems, including Buddhism. Mystical insights, it is claimed can only be attained by direct, divine intervention, or else by inward contemplation; logic and reason are not part of the process. If one attains mystical insight by divine intervention (which the Buddhists call Jhana), it is likely to result in a closed system of thought, meaning a system that claims to possess all the necessary knowledge for proper conduct of life.

Mysticism, whether employed by Buddhists, Christians or anyone else is by its nature anti-reason. Reason, if not overtly attacked, as in Christianity, is demoted to a lower level, as in Buddhism and Hinduism. To the mystic, emotions are valid cognitive tools, which represent a realm of 'higher' reality than that attained by 'mere' reason. At the root of all mystical thought is the concept that consciousness is an axiomatic, irreducible primary; consciousness is superior to physical existence, and many religionists argue that consciousness in fact 'created' existence itself. Therefore, argues the mystic, the highest level of consciousness is that which is perceived through mysticism.

Gautama the founder of Buddhism was able within the context of this time to obviate a strictly mystical outlook and recognize the essential role of sensory validation in acquiring knowledge. Buddhist knowledge (Jhana) must be conjoined with seeing (Pasya), for without some kind of sensory validation; one cannot hope to understand the world around us. Thus Buddhism, unlike Western religions, has no need to attack sensory validation or blindly attack reason.

Buddhism teaches that there are two different types of knowledge (Vidyas): "lower" knowledge, or knowledge acquired through the intellect and "higher" knowledge, or that acquired through intuition. This is a special, insightful kind of seeing that the Mahayana Buddhists call prajna; it claims to penetrate into the very nature of existence. Through prajna, the Buddhist hopes to attain insight into reality that would not be obtainable by reason. With mystical components such as this built into the system, Buddhism is no longer strictly philosophical system of thought. Prajna alone proves that Buddhism, like all religions, places mysticism above reason.

At the heart of all religious systems is an anti-life outlook. This is manifested in various ways. For Buddhists, the focus is on suffering (dukha). The Buddhist seeks to avoid suffering by focusing on mystical methods of alleviation. Thus Buddhism starts off with a problem created by itself and then offers a solution to the alleged problem. This is true of the other religions as well, as when Christianity assumes everyone to be a 'sinner' and then offers a way to have those sins forgiven. The methodology is the same: Both religions create a psychological dependence that tends to keep the believer mired down the system.

By placing consciousness rather than existence as the primary fact from which we drive all our knowledge, Buddhism, like all the other religions, is fundamentally irrational.

The present research is the first attempt to study Lalleshwari and her Mystical Strain. She was a poetic genius and Mystic of highest order. Her poetic composition, an explicit expression of her personal spiritual experience and knowledge combined with high poetic brilliance is almost unprecedented in the world of literature. Once one tries reading them between the lines the poems leave the reader spell bound. Most of Lalla's poems are compact with a deep content that mystifies the reader as if one has gone through a full volume in single gulp. As a mystic she had undoubtedly attained the peaks of spiritual excellence such that all divine secrets had opened clearly to her. A fully realized soul, an ardent proponent of Kashmir Shaivism and achievements in her various poetic compositions obviously to show a clear path in divine Journey to the seeker of awakening. Her poems are shaped within the horizons of Kashmir Shaivism, Yoga and Tantra. It was truly exclusive of Lalleshwari that she not only achieved the highest emancipation of her self but also succeeded in guiding masses of her time and the future generations alike towards a better life and awakening to the divine secrets of the Universe and ultimately being one with the Supreme Lord.

In reality, all mystics declare, our True Nature or ultimate reality, is God, Brahman, Buddha – Nature, the Tao or Consciousness itself. Mystics of all traditions agree that their teachings about ultimate nature of reality should not be taken on faith alone. Just as scientific theories can be verified by anyone willing to perform appropriate experiments, mystical teachings can be verified by anyone willing to engage in appropriate spiritual practices and

disciplines. Mysticism belongs to human race as a whole. A myth shows his universal brotherhood in his adaptability. Among the Christian, he is a Christian, among Jews, he is a Jew. Among Muslims, he is a Muslim and among Hindus he is a Hindu, for he is one with all and thus all are with him.

It became clear that mystics whether they were Hindus, Christians or Muslims, aspired to experience some sort of spiritual union or Samadhi with the Divine. This ultimate Samadhi; the higher union with Godhead, is no doubt beyond our power to communicate or grasp. But mysticism is not only this supernal peak, it has many levels. It is not only the final gnosis; it is thousands of intermediate experiences – moments, insights, decisions, epiphanies that come to us along the way. It is a whole way of life, with attitudes, motivations, incentives, assumptions that undergird such an existence.

### CONCLUSION:

Mysticism is not something against or opposed to religion. Its stand at the very root of religious experience. Every religion teaches us some sort of spiritual union with God. It is the religion of the heart. Its primary importance is to seek God in the hearts of mankind.

- <sup>1</sup> Saiyid, A.A. Rizvi: History of Sufism in India, Vol. 1 (New Delhi, Munshiram Manorlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd, 1978) P. 18.
- <sup>2</sup> Ozak 1981 : 102, Ozak Sahaflar Carsis in Istanbul
- <sup>3</sup> 'Mystical Ecstasy' Sufi Practices, F.M. Hassnain Gulshan Books, 2007, P. 12.
- <sup>4</sup> 'Mystical Ecstasy', Sufi Practices. F.M. Hassnain Gulshan Books, 2007, P.14-15.
- <sup>5</sup> The Holy Quran, Surah: Al-Baqarah, 256 (2:256)
- <sup>6</sup> Chidvilasananda, Swami (1989) Kindle My Heart. Prentice Press
- <sup>7</sup> Mac Arthur, John Jr., 'Our sufficiency in Christ' P. 18
- <sup>8</sup> Mac Arthur, John Jr., 'Our sufficiency in Christ' P. 181
- <sup>9</sup> Underhill Evelyn 'Mysticism: A Study of the Nature and Development of Spiritual Consciousness' 1911
- <sup>10</sup> "Christian Mystics; Their Lives and Legacies Throughout the Ages (2001) by Ursula King
- <sup>11</sup> Foster Richard: 'Celebration of Religion', P. XV)
- <sup>12</sup> Georgia Harkness, "Myssticism", P. 25.
- <sup>13</sup> Cited in James Sandquist, Who's Driving the Purpose Driven Chrch? Bethany, OK. Rock Salt Publishing, 2004, P. 93.
- <sup>14</sup> Foster, "Celebration of Discipline," 1980, P. 13
- <sup>15</sup> Foster, "Celebration of Discipline," 1980, Pg. 15
- <sup>16</sup> Foster, "Celebration of Discipline," 1980, Pg. 113