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**MYSTICISM IN INDIAN  
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## PREFACE

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## MYSTICISM IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

Philosophy, Religion, Mysticism are different pathways to God. Philosophy literally means love of wisdom for intellectuals. It seeks to ascertain the nature of Reality through sense of perception. Religion has a social value more than that of a spiritual value. In its conventional forms it fosters plenty but fails to express the divinity in man. In this sense it is less than a direct encounter with reality. Mysticism denotes that attitude of mind which involves a direct immediate intuitive apprehension of God. It signifies the highest attitude of which man is capable, viz., a beatific contemplation of God and its dissemination in society and world. It is a fruition of man's highest aspiration as an integral personality satisfying the eternal values of life like truth, goodness, beauty and love.

A man who aspires after the mystical life must have an unfaltering and penetrating intellect; he must also have a powerful philosophic imagination. Accurate intellectual thought is a sure accompaniment of mystical experience. Not all mystics need be philosophers, not all mystics need be poets, not all mystics need be Activists, not all mystics lead a life of emotion; but wherever true mysticism is, one of these faculties must predominate.

A true life of mysticism teaches a full-fledged morality in the individual and a life of general good in the world. A mystic is of supreme service to humanity by calling their attention from moment to moment to the perfection and greatness of God. No mystical experience is possible unless we have a plenitude of finer emotions all turned to the experience of God.

Mysticism is a body of eternal truth—spiritual or religious truths which were verified by ancient Rishis. It transcends the artificial distinctions between the individual and society. It is a quest of atman for the immediate or ultimate knowledge of God.

The only proof for the existence of God is the experience of God; Reality is realizable and completely real and can be completely known. Upanishads call this reality as Brahman. He can be directly known as realized. He is the ultimate ground of all existence. He is the home of eternal values of Truth, Goodness, Beauty and Bliss. He is Sat, Chit, Ananda. He satisfies the highest quest of science and metaphysics. He satisfies the ideals of philosophy of art, or aesthetics. He is the supra-personal. He is Vasudeva.

Every child has a right to know his father. The child recognizes its mother first. It is mother who introduces its father to it. God is the father of the entire world. We are part of Him. We know He exists but we will not have come into contact with Him direct. We see His manifestations. We daily experience that He is protecting us. Yet we will not have seen that supreme being. One of the modern Kannada poets "Srinivasa" has said as under:

"I have noticed your footprints along with mine on the sand, but I was so engrossed while walking, I did not recognize you though you were . behind me. I was imagining that I am alone doing everything by myself. I felt exhausted but I realize that you are all the while walking with me and , protecting me."

We know Him, we have felt Him, but we have not come into contact with Him directly. We can see Him face to face. The divine spirit which shines within the man is made to manifest and the soul sees light realizable beyond sight. This seeing is by intuition. It is Darshana.

In order to get at Him and see Him face to face one should prepare himself. Our Hindu scriptures have prescribed the methods. Our ancient Rishis have shown the path. It is the

Guru like the mother who introduces the Lord. He shows the path. He leads the aspirant in the correct path until he meets the Lord face to face.

What is the preparation one has to make? One has to purify himself. He must have fervour to meet Him. He must crave. He has to ascend three ladders. They are the ladders of Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga and Bhakti Yoga. The ultimate is the Bhakti Yoga. No man can escape his past and he is the slave of destiny. In a higher or moral sense, Karma is the action of a karta and the karta is morally free; he has the will to shape his future, according to his conviction. But when once the action is done, he cannot escape its consequences. What a man sows he reaps and the moral law of retribution works with mathematical precision. Good deeds are never lost, so also bad deeds, and it is the deeds that determine the man's character. But if karma is done by him as Nishkama Karma, he is free as he does not care for the fruits. Virtue has its own reward. It has its own intrinsic value and character shines by itself.

In Karma Yoga all sensuality is removed. The process of self-purification takes place. The mind is purified by freeing it from all animal inclinations and the pairs of opposites like success and failure and pleasure and pain.

In Jnana Yoga, one realises the self, self-contemplation and self-renouncement are the chief factors. Here he undergoes the philosophic method of enquiry into the nature of atman and its relation to Brahman. It is not merely an intellectual but also spiritual enquiry, based on Viveka, Vairagya and Abhyasa. He can now distinguish which is which. Therefore Jnana is essential to get Bhakti. Of course we have come across great Bhaktas without the knowledge of scriptures. To cite an example, Kabirdas had not read Upanishads. But the study of Upanishads, Brahma Sutra, Geetha will give the aspirant a true knowledge of Brahman whom he aspires to realise.

Then the aspirant has to climb the ladder of Bhakti Yoga. It is here that he trains himself to surrender to God completely. The love invoked may be bridal or devotional (Seva). It is a complete surrender to Him when the aspirant beholds Him face to face. Unless one has faith he cannot surrender. Doubts must be cleared. That process should be while climbing the ladder Jnana.

Bhakti breaks into spirit, melts it down and becomes an infinite longing for the infinite. The Divine spirit which shines within man is made manifest and the soul sees the light realizable beyond sight.

There is another path—the Raja Yoga. It is rather difficult for an ordinary man to pursue. It is mind control and royal path to realise God. The mind is ordinarily fleeting and frittered and it is the aim of the Yoga to collect it and centre it in God. It is therefore a psychological method as different from the moral method of Karma Yoga. This yoga consists of eight stages—Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi. Purity of mind and body are essential to the practice of this yoga. The first four stages refer to the cleansing of the body and breath control. The next four stages refer to mind control. At last the mind expands, attains Samadhi and Shanti or Peace. This is the ascent of spiritual energy in the centres of body from muladhara in the lower part of the spinal cord to sahasrara in the brain. From the mental point of view there is expansion of consciousness from the lowest stage to the highest state. There is the expansion from the unconscious of the sub-conscious and the conscious to the supers conscious state of Samadhi.

The chief value of this yoga that is it teaches us the way to self-knowledge and self-Sovereignty.

When a man rises into spiritual stage, intellect expands into intuition and the spiritual man becomes a mystic who no longer thinks of God but has a direct knowledge of Him.

Intuition is different from sensuous visions and voices which are after all subjective and self-induced. It is Jnana chakshu or Divya chakshu. Intuition illumines the intellect and transforms confused knowledge into clear thought and clear thought into Purnanubhava or integral intuition of the Infinite.

Intuition is immediate knowledge of reality by insight or inspiration for which no rules or procedure can be laid down.

The mystic is not a visionary or a dreamer indulging in psychiatrics and auto-suggestion, but is a specialist in godliness which is higher than scientific experimentation and philosophical specialization which will give fixity and finality to feeling and makes it purposive and practical.

The mystics of all ages and countries have spoken the same language as they are denizens of the same spiritual world. There are no racial, no communal, no national prejudices among them. Time and space have nothing to do with the eternal and infinite character of their mystical experience. Those together constitute a band of divine musicians, each contributing his own note altogether producing a harmony.

The true mystic is one who holds his tongue, shuts his ears, closes his eyes and enjoys God in his heart. The mystic has the ineffable spiritual experience of direct contact with Reality. If he speaks at all, it is to edify the few, who are fit to hear his message. A mystic may also be one who enters into the affairs of humanity and finds God. Mysticism is not opposed to reason, and the claims of mystical experience are not contradicted by the verdict of philosophy. Mystical experience is an affair of the heart to which the intellect might contribute its quota. Mystic feeling can be had by intuition and not by instinct. The function of philosophy is to put a ring fence around mysticism to prevent the inroads of stray cattle. When philosophy serves these functions, then religion and philosophy join hands. There are many torch-bearers but there are few mystics.

There were mystics in Ancient Greece. There were mystics among Christians, Mohammedans (Sufis) and among Hindus.

Hinduism is a rock of ages and is a source of spiritual truths. It is one of the most important of the living religions in the world. It is the oldest of all and is called Sanathana Dharma.

It is not a historical religion, but is a religion without any historical founders and it has eternal foundation. Historical religions base their doctrines and dogmas on the revelations of their prophets. Hinduism is based on the Vedas, the eternal scriptures revealed to the seers and sages and testified to by the Smriti and transmitted in an unbroken tradition. It deals with eternal spiritual truths adopted to changing conditions and is therefore fixed in essentials and flexible in non-essentials like rites and rituals.

Hinduism is not a personal religion as it insists on the unity of life as a whole and the duties of each person to the other members of the society. But it does not accept the western view that God needs man's cooperation in the furtherance of His purpose. Man does his work as worship of God in the spirit of humility. Every act of social service is really the adoration of God as the inner self in all beings. There is no spiritual barrier between one jeeva and the other.

Hinduism is thus coherent, synthetic and universal. It is coherent because it satisfies every pramana and sees no dividing line between reason and revelations. It is synthetic because it gives a place to every system of thought and every school of Vedanta. It is also tolerant because it recognizes sects though it rejects sectarianism. It is universal because it affirms the truth that every man is a son of God and he can intuit Him directly. Every one is atman or spiritual and there is one atman in and beyond all; and every one can realise Him. Hinduism is divided by historians into three periods, ancient, medieval and the modern.

The Ancient period commences from the Vedic period and extends upto the 8th century. The Upanishads, Brahma Sutra and Gita form together a single integral unity on Vedanta (Prasthanatraya) whether it is monism (Advaita), Theism (Dvaita) or Theistic monism (Vishishtadvaita) which form the basis of all future mystic developments. The Itihasas and Puranas are, according to tradition popular expositions of the way in which the transcendental and immanent Brahman, of the Upanishads manifests Himself in the historic incarnations as the God of love who is easily accessible to all mystics.

Upanishads :— Mystic wisdom in its perfect form is enthroned in the Upanishads. The upanishadic doctrines, totally unknown in the Rig Veda, can be divided under the following headings:

1. The Atman
2. The Karma
3. The transmigration of souls
4. The revelation of God to man
5. The practice of asceticism

The Upanishads were translated for the first time into Persian language by Dara Shukoh the enlightened son of Shah Jahan in 1659. The object of Dara's translation was the harmonization of Hinduism and Islam as Sufism, Upanishads were later translated into other European languages. The fundamental principles and precepts of the Upanishads and their mystic trends may be stated briefly under the heads metaphysics, morality and mysticism.

Metaphysically, Brahman is knowable and by knowing Him everything is known. He existed when nothing existed. He is the creator of the world. He is immortal. He is absolute. He is self-subsistent. He is the supreme God. He is the home of all beings and all beings are the modes animated and sustained by Him He is the inner ruler. Immortal of all beings.

As regards the moral aspect, He is the giver of the Sreyas and Preyas—Self-love and God-love.

Mystical aspect:—In Mundaka Upanishad it is stated that “Whom the self chooses unto him He reveals himself”—Seek Him earnestly; He reveals Himself.

The Upanishads insist on the existence, eternity and plurality of Purushas, the social solidarity of all jivas, the absolute as the supra-personal god and unity of the universe. When a mukta is freed from worldliness and egoism, and attains Brahman, the Being of the being, he is divinized or brahmanised and becomes purna or perfect. He goes from mortality to eternity, from darkness to light and from misery to everlasting bliss.

Brahma Sutra:—Badarayana is the author of the Sutra. In the Sutra he discusses apparent contradictions and inconsistencies found in the texts of the Upanishads as the philosophy of religion and shows how they form a connected and coherent system of philosophic and religious thought free from contradictions and discrepancies.

The Gita expounds the mystic path more clearly and consistently on Mysticism which speaks of purgation, contemplation and unio mystico.

The way of union is fully expounded in Bhakti Yoga. Bhakti leads to an irrepressible longing for God and is answered by the soul hunger of God. To the Bhakta or devotional mystic, God alone is his life, his very food and drink and to God such Bhakta is dear as his very self or Atma. The mystic yearning for union with God is answered by His longing for the union with the mystic and finally the two are united for ever—Nara-Narayana.

The Bhagavatha Purana: The Bhagavatha may just be called a motherland of mysticism. Bhagavatha mysticism is free from the errors and evils of emotionalism and asceticism. The mystic way to God is here universalised. Every jiva, sub-human, human or celestial has in him a spark of divinity and when kindled, it shines as divine light itself and fulfilled in the bliss of union. The lives of Bhaktas and puranic mystics are described at length in Bhagavatha. It is a store-house of mysticism. The Puranic mystics are Dhruva, Prahlada, Akruva, Markandeya, Narada and Suka. Bhagavatha religion is Bhakti. Bhakti is single-minded devotion to God, and is as old as Vedic hymns. Bhakti is open to all irrespective of their birth, status or station in life and is therefore universal and democratic. Bhakti is well defined and explained in the sutras of Narada and Sandilya.

The Medieval Period: The Medieval period extends from the 9th century to the 18th century. In this period the spread of Bhakti is witnessed in India in different aspects, the hymns of Alvars and Nayanars in the South, the teachings of the Great Acharyas, Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhwa, the Gita Govinda of Jayadeva and the Haridas's movement and Shivasharanas in Karnataka.

Alvars: As the name itself implies the Alvars were expert divers in divinity and were deeply immersed in love. Their poetic utterances were spontaneous. The three Alvars Poigai, Bhutan and Pei once stood at a narrow space at Tirukoilur and felt a stranger squeezing Himself in between them. When the inner light was lit they had a beautiful vision of the Lord. Each sang in praise of him.

Poigai sang thus:—"With the earth as bowl, the sea as ghee, and the shining Sun as the Lamp, I make a garland of Hymns and place at thy feet." Bhutan sang "I kindle the light of Jnana with Bhakti as ghee, love as bowl and mind as wick." Pei was God-intoxicated. By their yogic insight they sighted God as light.

Tirumazhisai Alwar worked ceaselessly for the spread of Vishnu Bhakti.

Nammalwar—the greatest of Alvars is a typical mystic. His composition is Tiruvoimozhi.

Kulashekhara Alwar's life is a life of Bhakti and Prapatti.

Periyalwar's love of Sri Krishna is something grand. He sang Tirumazhi. His daughter is Andal. She is a mystic, lyrical in devotion. Her spiritual songs are Tirup-pavai.

Tondaradippadi Alwar sang Tirumalai.

Tiruppani Alwar is an outcaste like Nanda, but a great Bhakta of Sri Ranganatha. His songs are highly devotional.

Tirumangai Alwar, a thief by profession, realized and became a saint when he stole the jewels of the bride and bridegroom who are no other than Lord Vishnu and his consort. His songs are also highly devotional.

Acharyas: 1. Shankara (788-820) is the founder of Monism (Advaita). His Bhashyas on the Upanishads, Brahma Sutra and Gita are profound. His songs Bhaja Govindam and Karavalambam are highly devotional. His religion is summed up in the following verse.

Though difference be none I am of Thee  
Not thou, O Lord, of Me ;  
For of the Sea is Verily the Wave  
Not of the Wave the Sea.

2. Bhaskara and Yadava Prakasha: Their philosophy is Bhedaabheda.

3. Ramanuja (1017-1137): Ramanuja built up the Vaishnava thought already in existence. He composed Sri Bhashya. His commentary on Vishnu Sahasranama is unique. His Vedantic definition of Brahman is Satya, Jnana and Ananda. The chief value of Vishishtadvaita lies in its removal of error, evil, ugliness and other imperfections of Jiva and of all perfections like truth, goodness, beauty and bliss of Brahman.

4. Srikantacharya: He propounded the Shivadvaita. To him Jiva is self-conscious, morally free and monadic. Siva transforms Jiva into Shivatva. The individual soul is deified.

5. Madhwacharya: He is the founder of Dvaita Vedanta. His philosophy is monotheistic and pluralistic. Taratmya Jnana is the key note of his philosophy. Dvaita is Sad-Vaishnavism as distinguished from Sri Vaishnavism of Ramanuja.

6. Chaitanya (1485-1533): He is the founder of Achintya Bhedaabheda school of Vedanta. He was influenced by Eshwara a follower of Madhwacharya. He became god-intoxicated. His field of activity lay in Bengal.

7. Vallabhacharya (1479-1531): He is the founder of Suddha-advaita Vedanta. His ancestors came from Andhra Desa. His is Bridal Love, Pushti Bhakti. His followers are chiefly found in Gujarat and Kutch.

Ramananda who was born in Prayag was deeply influenced by Ramanujacharya and became a religious reformer in North India. His vehicle was Hindi. He preached the Bhakti cult. Ravidas, Kabir. And Ramaullah came under his influence.

Kabirdas is one of the great mystics. He had never read scriptures. He was a weaver by caste. His songs are melodious; they are highly mystical. To Him Rama is Reality, his panth is called the Nath panth.

Mira Bai who was born as a princess in Rajputana and married a chieftain became a disciple of Ravidas. She went in search of Giridhar. Her songs are mystical in quality.

Tulasidas: Tulasidas is the author of Ramayana in Hindi. He is also a great mystic.

Guru Nanak who founded the Sikh religion is a mystic. He hails from Punjab. To him contentment (Tripti) is the father, Forgiveness (Kshama) is the mother and God Love (Divyaprema) is the husband. Divine Love is Dharmakhand, realm of beauty is Jnana khand, realm of ecstasy is Sharankhand, realm of power is Kharankhand and in Sachkhand becomes one with God.

Mysticism is as understood of Hindu seers and saints a religion not merely rationalized but realized. The sadhanas are 1. Self-purification, 2. Contemplation and 3. Yearning for the union with the Lord, Sri Krishna.

Side by side with the Hindi saints, Maharashtrian saints have contributed much to mysticism. Gnaneshwar, a great commentator on Bhagavad-Gita is a great mystic.

Namadev (1270-1350) son of a tailor is a mystic by nature.

Ekanath (1533-1599) is a great Bhagavatha.

Tukaram was the son of a grain merchant. His abhangs are reputed.

Ramadas were not only a mystic but he is responsible for the birth of Maharashtra power. He was the Guru of Chatrapati Shivaji.

Karnataka mystics occupy a very high place among the Great God realizes over the world. These mystics divide themselves into two schools Vaishnavite and Saivite. The Vaishnavite School commences from Madhwacharya. His disciple Narasimhathirtha commenced composing songs in Kannada. Sripadaraya is the Adya of Haridasas. Sri Vyasaraaja his disciple started Vyasakuta and Dasakuta. Those who belonged to Dasakuta brought the Vedic religion and philosophy into Kannada poetry. Among them the name of Purandaradas stands high. He is the disciple of Vyasaraaja. His contemporaries are Vadiraja and Kanakadasa, who is a kuruba by birth, but a great mystic. There are a number of Haridasas who have contributed much to mysticism. Among them are Vijayadasa, Mohanadasa, Gopaladasa, Jagannathadasa, Mahipathiraya and Others.

Haridasa sahitya is a mine of mystic gold. The Haridasas being the great masters of mystic experience have analysed every shade of human experience from different aspects and angles of vision and recorded their results in the form of songs or suladis. Outwardly the song may refer to any immediate incident or episode, but the reflections arising out of the analysis of the occurrences are of permanent character and add support to the edifice of the Dvaita philosophy of Sri Anandatirtha on which the movement stands.

The Haridasas boldly cut asunder the unmeaning accretions to sound philosophical thought of the Vedic seers and laid bare the brilliant philosophy of love (bhakti) which is the sure means of salvation.

The everyday life of a commoner is spiritualized and ennobled by the opening of the mental eye in him which the Haridasas preached for seeing the nectar-yielding Hand of All-powerful God — Vishnu in every action expressed or latent. The sonorous, melodious musical tunes of the Dasas are an unparalleled gloss on the harmony of the universe which the God ordained to maintain against all inequalities and discordant elements that are to gross eye. Love, harmony, goodwill and limitations of individual souls, human effortism and the greatness of God Vishnu are sung with special emphasis to ensure correct understanding and right action.

The mystics of Saiva cult in Karnataka have contributed to Kannada world, the vachanas which are unparalleled in any Indian literature. Basaveshwara started the Shakti Vishistadwaita in 12th century. He was the organizer of the Anubhava Mantap at Kalyan. The Veera-shaiva saints like Channabasava, Allama Prabhu, Akka Mahadevi, joined in discourse and wrote Vachanas containing mystic utterances. They have contributed a good deal to the world's mystic thought.

The Shaivite mystics of the South are the source of inspiration to the Veerashaiva saints of Karnataka. They are the 63 Nayanars including Tirumalur and Meikandar who are the great Saivite saints of South India. Among them are Appar, Sundarar, Tirugnana Sambandar, Manikka Vacagar, Kannappa, Tiruneelakanta Nayanar, Tayamanavar, Pattinadu Pillaiyar, Ramalinga Swamigal.

Among the Telugu mystics Vemana stands like a beacon light. We must not forget to

mention the name of Kshetrajna and Annamacharya who have composed melodious songs in praise of Sri Venkateshwara.

Modern period: Coming to the modern age, we come across great men like Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Vivekananda, Thyagaraja, Ram and Maharshi, Aravinda Ghosh, Sawan Singh, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. Each one of them is a great mystic besides being religious, social, literary or political reformer.

The institutions like Theosophical Society, Arya Samaj, Brahma Samaj, Ramakrishna Ashrama, Ramana Ashrama, Aravindashrama, Radhaswami Satsang have played a wonderful part in nourishing Hindu culture and spreading mysticism all over India.

No two persons are alike in temperament or station in life. Hinduism provides for every kind of adhikarin or aspirant and he is allowed to choose the path that is suited to his spiritual growth. A man may worship God in whatever form; He reveals Himself to him in that form. But he should seek Him with pure heart. Though Hinduism thus aims at unity in variety it still follows an ancient tradition bequeathed from father to son and from Guru to Sishya and insists on Satsanga.

The most modern mystic who passed away just ten years ago is a Kannadiga. He has contributed much on mystic literature. He is Dr. R. D. Ranade. He was the Vice-Chancellor of Allahabad University. He founded the Adhyatma Vidyapeeth at Nimal. His authorship of very profound books on philosophy and mysticism were the outcome of his constant endeavour to know and live in truth.

There are mystics all over the world even today.

Saint Thyagaraja has sung as under:

“Enduro Mahanubhavulu, Andariki Vandanamulu.” I join him and offer my salutations to all the mystics, both past and present.

Let me conclude my talk with a poem composed by me which connotes the mystic experience :

“ Hari Ninna Olagiralu Horagelli Arasuthihe  
Karakaraya Padutaliruve  
Sthirachittadali ninthu Guruvitha namavanu  
Nirutha nemadi japisalagariyuve.”