

MATERIALISTIC MYSTICISM AND MYSTIC MATERIALISM

Mysticism is a supersensory suprarational or transcendent form of experience of Reality or things comprising reality. Matter or Nature is one such element in our ordinary experience. Matter is said to be an obscure substratum which is subject to change at all times. It is seething with activity evening its smallest atomic particles. It is humming with activity. Mechanical activity forms as much a part of it as the purposive activity characteristic of living creatures, cells or corpuscles. Mental activity in addition to being purposive is correlational conscious activity. There are several philosophical theories about matter and motion and mind. One view holds that all motion and mind are material in substance. We see matter, and what senses it are organs which are in ultimate analysis matter or extended things. Mind itself is a product of the aggregation of material parts. A mind is seen only in an organism made up of parts which are most diverse in structure. And though it is argued that it is mind that confers and upholds the unity of the organism, there are indeed cases when mind itself is in a disintegrated condition in organisms. In such cases we are either to accept a soul which is incapable of being proved or known or we have to accept matter itself as the only

principle which has the powers of keeping unity, of exhibiting purpose and of breaking up unity. Thus mystical experience or knowledge of matter or Nature reveals matter in its real nature as the principle of change which can work and is working under the inner impulse of an intelligence or consciousness and for its enjoyment. The various forms of this Nature are our own several organs of sense perception which gather information about the outer world. They are the doors opening outside. And the mind which organizes and integrates the diverse impressions is also of Nature. It is also seen that the pseudo-soul or, ego which unconsciously gathers these sensa and preserves them in memory and own them, and the reflective mind which discriminates these and confers permanence to them in consciousness as images and things also are recognized to belong to Nature. This is so far as the manner of knowing the nature of Matter in regard to one's own inner psychological structure goes.

The second form of Nature is to intuit the nature of each fundamental quality of an object. Things or qualities are sensed. There are five types of objects known by the five senses. These are intuited as sound, touch, taste, form and smell. A finer purity of these sensations is available which is almost always a mixed experience. The experience of the atoms or the finest sub-divisions or

units of these elements is rendered possible. And in each case our intellect grants a cause-effect account of them. Indeed it is even claimed that a history of each atom is also delivered in the mystic perception. All the same the recognition of atoms and the perception of the process of their aggregation or disintegration are beyond the ordinary perceptive level. Even modern science can only assure their existence and their constitution by the effects on paths traversed or the lines of movement. The search for the structure of the atom has proceeded with a definite faith in its discoverability. So too, the search for the knowledge of the stellar cosmic structure is governed by a similar faith. That every part of the universe is reciprocally related to every other part and reacts to every change wherever occurring however obscurely, is also the faith behind the astrologer's reckonings and postulations. The entire question is, as it always has been, how far can human capacity go to the unravelling or calculation of the possibilities of Nature. Nature seems to be inscrutable in its minuteness as much as it is in its vastness. But what gives a ray of hope and light is the mystic faith and recognition that the structure of the atom is similar to, corresponds with and reacts or is repeated in the cosmic structure. An identity of structure pervades all nature. The atom, the embodied personality and the cosmic prakrti are of one pattern. This is the mystic materialism which is being gradually taken for

granted. The organismic pattern seems to be repeated both above and below: man is midway in size between the biggest and the smallest as Max Born stated. He is important in respect of the lower and smaller masses but insignificant in relation to the masses of stellar magnitude. But in structure too there is correspondence, as the atomic (Vaisesika mystics) said that the minutest atom should have six primary atoms⁷, the psychologists (yogis) (declared that the human organism has six systems or charkas in organic unity, and the theists affirmed that the Divine must have six attributes or centre of radiating energy of Being for all existence to be.

⁷ Nyaya Vaisesika conception of a visible or experienceable anu is that it is composed of six primary anus. This is a mystical correspondential theory. We shall have to remember that the six Qualities of the Divine in triple dyads is a further focusing of attention on this peculiar structural mysticism- Yatha pinde Tatha Brahmandah. The number of heads of gods or titans has something to do with symbology. The four-headed Brahma, the five-headed Rudra, the six-headed Kumara, the ten-headed Ravana are symbolic of qualities. Even so, the elephant headedness or horse headedness have symbolic reference to qualities. The Gk, *Satyr* having human head and horse's body is the exact reverse of Hayagriva-both of them being representatives of highest

wisdom, Satyr in form however is identical with the Indian *Kinnara*.

A peculiar mystic meaning is given to numbers – two, three, four, five six, seven, eight, nine and ten. We are of course not concerned with these symbols. But the materialism of the mystic is a real recognition of the correspondence of the planes-the reality of the planes being accepted, and the identification of the supreme principle in and through Nature. Natural Mysticism in either of its forms leads to the recognition of a supreme transcendent principle which is actively associated with it, which in a sense exists for its control and enjoyment and which can be recognized as helping its own transition from one kind to other kinds of activity or changes. Nature thus is revealed as the field and body of God. One supreme Nature diversified into many bodies of the soul in every one of its parts, continuously exists as the body of God by the principle of being determined, supported, controlled and enjoyed and helping its own fulfillment exclusively by God in a transcendent manner. Nature is in an essential revelation fused through and through in God and is indeed the first discovery of the cosmic consciousness. The pantheisms of Giorduno Bruno, of Spinoza and Shelley, are close parallels to the experience of *Svabhava-vadins*.

Mysticism is realistic and recognizes that all aspects of reality or existence must be granted real status not the inverted status that philosophy grants to them.

Nature has no absolute independent status as such. But every part of it in so far as it is experienced is a real experience. Its existential status it gains in and through the cosmic spirit but the experience of this cosmic spirit underlying it does not sublate it. It is fused with it. Pantheism is true in this sense, but pantheism emphasizes Nature and denies the transcending factor of mystic experience and triumph over process which grants sublimity.

In the experience of Nature there is also another factor that presents itself in the process. All process is rigidly determined by the law of uniformity. Given the same conditions the same effects follow. This law is the characteristic of natural process. Science aims at discovering the laws of nature having faith in this axiom. Mystic vision finds law to be the prime form of correspondential structure which must be felt and cognized in a universal form. In one sense a running thread of identity pervades all branches of knowledge, and both science and mysticism aim at the same goal, only mysticism has a more integral purpose and vision of the substance of Unity through law than science. The mastery over matter by science is a hope; mysticism discovers mastery in the freedom of the soul to see not

only what Nature can show in it but something more, and thus gives a new direction to Nature itself.

At this point I would like to make a distinction between materialistic mysticism which is acceptable and mystic materialism which is an aberration. All the criticisms leveled against mysticism by science are due to this kind of materialism. Indeed when materialism in its naturalistic or animistic or vitalistic forms becomes a 'vague cognition without clear understanding' (a type of monistic materialism of the Heackelian variety) or becomes a type of omni-organic feeling, primitive and atavistic sense of herd-cognition, then it is mere heat without light. It is then best described as mystic materialism. Indistinguishability and non-discrimination parade as direct apprehension or direct and unmediated sensibility. A vegetative stupor however produced is not real experience of being, which is eluded by this process. Men seek to practice all types of sensibility through decoctions and drugs, secret and hidden practices of postures and rites and fancies. Though these may be surely beginnings of science, yet rarely have they led to the real mystic experience of freedom, sense of existence and truth. They are more often escapes from existence-consciousness.

There are mystics who have seen in matter the absolute negation of being-which is the polar opposite of spirit (*atyanta-bhava*). A deeper abyss than matter is God. If

darkness is matter, greater darkness is as it were God who makes possible this darkness. The pantheistic identification is surpassed or transcended when God is said to be the creative ground of non-existence. This means that in an ultimate consideration, non-existence is an opposite outside existence but inseparable from God in every way. But there are degrees or grades of non-existence or existence. The passage of any ray of existence from non-existence to existence is a passage in every way different in kind and free from any relation to it. One thing is certain that this is different from matter which is but existence inversed, an existence which is wrapt up or inconscient as Sri Aurobindo puts it.

There is great truth in materialistic mysticism but none whatsoever in mystic materialism which is vague, indefinite and escapist and not different from a superficial idealism.