

Healing Imagery in Major Religious and
Mystical Traditions

by

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CHAPTER VI

IMAGERY TECHNIQUES FROM CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM

"God is known both in all objects and outside all objects. God is known both through knowing and through unknowing . . . He is nothing of what is, and therefore cannot be known through anything that is; and yet he is all in all. He is nothing in anything; and yet he is known by all in all, at the same time as he is not known by anything in anything.

It is no mistake then to speak of God and to honor him as known through all being . . . But the way of knowing God that is most worthy of him is to know him through unknowing, in a union that rises above all else." (Dionysius the Areopagite quoted in Clement, 1995, p. 231)

Being admonished to return to myself, I entered into my own depths, with you as guide; and I was able to do it because you were my helper. I entered, and with the eye of my soul, such as it was, I saw your unchangeable light shining over the same eye of my soul, over my mind.

Late have I loved you, O Beauty so ancient and so new; late have I loved you! For behold you were within me, and I outside; and I sought you outside . . . You were with me and I was not with you . . . I tasted you, and now I hunger and thirst for you; you touched me, and I have burned for your peace. (St. Augustine of Hippo, quoted in the Divine Office, pp. 224-225)

"But Thou, Lord, wast more within me than my inmost being, and higher than what is highest in me," says St. Augustine (in Clement, 1995, p. 231). These quotes of mystical language paint a picture of what

mysticism is about and how inward its journey is. As St. Paul, a mystic apostle, puts it: when the inward eye sees, "what eye has not seen," and inward ear hears, "what ear has not heard," one enters the realm of imagery (I Corinthians, 2:9). But the journey of Christian mystics is far deeper than imagery, because they claim to cross even beyond the mind's eye and see with the soul's eye for which neither sensibility nor imagination could be learning instruments. A Christian mystic believes that this highest possible level of human ascent is not acquired or achieved through human efforts, but is graciously given by God and God alone.

This chapter on Christian mysticism will illustrate the following topics: the definition of mysticism; predispositions of a mystic; stages of the mystical ascent; kinds of mystical contemplation; history of mysticism; Jesus as a powerful influence on mysticism; the mystical character of St. Paul; symbols and imagery in John, the evangelist; Fathers of the Church: contribution to tradition; creative love: imagery exercise; the role of imagery in the spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi; inner realities of St. Catherine of Siena; spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola; the interior castle of St. Teresa of Avila; and St. John of the Cross.

Definition of Mysticism

A mystic is someone who has been initiated into some esoteric knowledge of the Divine which is believed to be kept as a secret (Inge, 1948). The experience itself is generally thought to be beyond the level of human expression or communication. Mysticism has been variously defined by scholars and mystics. Inge (1948) succinctly defines religious mysticism as "the attempt to realize, in thought and feeling, the

immanence of the temporal in the eternal, and of the eternal in the temporal" (p. 5). The soul, using its faculties such as thoughts and feelings, enters into a union with God transcending itself.

That this journey is above and beyond intelligence and senses is articulated by Pseudo-Dionysius:

"Besides the knowledge of God obtained by processes of philosophical and theological speculation, 'there is that most divine knowledge of God which takes place through ignorance, in the union which is above intelligence, when the intellect, quitting all things that are, and then leaving itself also, is united to the superluculent rays, being illumined thence and therein by the unsearchable depth of wisdom'" (quoted in Butler, 1951, p. 6).

The means with which the soul journeys toward this union with God is purely love. Louis of Blosius, a 15th century abbot, imagines the soul's love journey beyond intellect and senses as follows:

When through love the soul goes beyond all working of the intellect and all images in the mind, and is rapt above itself, utterly leaving itself, it flows into God: then God is its peace and fullness. It loses itself in the infinite solitude and darkness of the Godhead; but to lose itself is rather to find itself. The soul is, as it were, all God-colored, because its essence is bathed in the Essence of God. (quoted in Butler, 1951, p. 10)

Thus the definitions quoted above portray the extent to which intelligence and senses are connected and not connected in the ascent of the soul to its very Origin. Although the journey is beyond the soul itself, initially, it seems to employ intellect and senses in the inward

travel whereby imagery appears to be a feeding ground to sustain the mystic's march upward.

Presuppositions of a Mystic

Like any branch of knowledge, Christian mysticism makes certain assumptions. Harkness (1973) acknowledges five presuppositions, which mystics claim, characterize distinctive features of Christian mysticism. The first of these is that our five senses are not the only means to knowledge.

The mystic is usually ready enough to admit that for most of our everyday world of experience, what we see, hear, taste, smell, and touch gives us the raw material which our minds interpret as knowledge of the world around us. Yet he does not believe that this is the only access to truth and reality . . . (p. 56).

The mystic's belief is not merely limited to this material world alone.

The very first contention necessitates its second corollary: there is a realm of the spirit within human beings which is far wider than physical and material existence. In fact, this spirit is identified as a first prerequisite by Inge (1948) as soul which "can see and perceive" (p. 6). This human spirit is more than capable of merely responding to sensory impulses. "It can think, feel, will, love, reflect upon itself, set goals beyond itself and pursue great objectives" (Harkness, 1973, p. 56). In addition, the spirit is capable of discerning some truths, which Butler would term as spiritual truths, through channels other than the usual ones of sensation and rational deduction. It may be called insight, intuition, or even vision. Whatever is seen, heard, touched, tasted, and smelled appears to the mystic precious and most dependable. Although the mystic may use the language of senses in order to describe the soul's

experience, the channels themselves do not generate the experience and often it is said to be ineffable. According to William James, this characteristic of ineffability is the first and foremost of the four marks of mysticism.

The third assumption a mystic makes is to believe in the existence of an Absolute, Ultimate Reality, or Universal Self above all the visible realities. This consists of belief or faith in a God who cannot be accessed or subjected to experimental research in order to be known. To try to know that Reality requires acknowledgment of it. The fourth presupposition identifies the human spirit's capacity to enter into a union with the Absolute. This union may consist of a short, ecstatic, and momentary loss of one's self during identity with the divine. Finally, the fifth quality which marks mystical experience is one of paradox. It is assumed that God is present within the human soul, the Infinite within the finite, which demands purity of heart and life. Inge (1948) confirms this assumption in his words: "Without holiness no man may see the Lord" (p. 6). This is also emphasized in the Sermon on the Mount by Jesus: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God" (Harkness, 1973, p. 58 & Inge 1948, p. 7). Sensuality and selfishness are therefore considered obstacles to knowing the Absolute.

William James clarifies the same characteristics and adds three other marks to mysticism besides the quality of ineffability mentioned above: 1) Noetic quality is a state of knowledge which transcends truths perceived by discursive intellect. Inarticulate illuminations, revelations, and visions become so significant that they almost bind the mystic with some sense of authority for life. 2) Transiency refers to the momentariness of the experience. At the most the mystical experience

lasts for half an hour, or an hour in rare cases. But the impact is so remarkably recorded in the memory that it is possible to identify its recurrence. And 3) passivity is one of the most impressive qualities of mysticism. Although the mystic may focus attention through some kind of concentration proposed by the mythical systems, ultimately "the mystic feels as if his own will were in abeyance and indeed sometimes as if he were grasped and held by a superior power. . . Mystical states. . . modify the inner life of the subject between the times of their recurrence" (James, 1982, p. 380).

Underhill (1962), a British scholar on mysticism, holds this passivity of contemplation as a necessary prelude to the spiritual energy generated by the mystic. This quality is absolutely needed for the mystic not only to withdraw from the senses but also to stop the wheel of the imagination process itself. This passive characteristic of the mystical contemplation moves one from temporality to eternity, from the mundane plane to timelessness.

Stages of Mystical Ascent

Generally, writers recognize three major stages in mysticism: the purgative, the illuminative, and the unitive or the contemplative life of the mystical ladders (Inge, 1948). The purgative stage consists of "contrition, confession, and hearty amendment" (p. 10). Realizing the direct contrast between the Infinite and the self, the soul is determined to remove the obstacles which occur in the spiritual journey and discipline itself through mortification (Underhill, 1962). That this step is voluntarily assumed by the mystic is implied by Inge, "Mysticism enjoins a dying life, not a living death" (p. 11). Self-discipline was promoted by asceticism, which means more an austere simplicity of life than severe

flagellation of the body. This Christian mystical process does not imply any escapism or isolation from society, because the mystic never withdraws from the business of life, rather, but is involved in and attuned to even the minute business of life (Inge, 1948).

In the second, or illuminative, all the human faculties, intellect, will, and feeling are concentrated upon God. Good works are performed willingly and spontaneously and not necessarily because they are virtues. The inner life becomes more and more accentuated now than it had been previously. Underhill (1962) believes that contemplation at this stage brings about a kind of apprehension of God but not a union with God.

In the last phase, the journey culminates in a union with God, beholding God face to face. At this stage the soul becomes one with the Absolute. What is experienced is at once consummation and annihilation of the soul. Phrases such as "God became man, so that we might become God," were commonplaces with the Fathers of the Church even after St. Augustine (Inge, 1948, p. 13) The ultimate transformation of God-man-oneness is further expressed by Paul, "Not I; it is Christ that lives in me" (Galatians 2:19b). The methods through which this union is represented in the consciousness are ecstatic revelations, trances, visions, or locutions.

Kinds of Mystical Contemplation

Among the many and different means with which one engages to accomplish the mystical ascent, two are considered noteworthy and related to imagery. The ways to the knowledge of God are: meditation or discursive thought, and "pure faith" or contemplation (Inge, 1948). Meditation is called "the exterior road," which is usually for the initiates; this itself is insufficient to obtain perfection. The "interior road" to

attain a union with God consists of a total surrender to God through an annihilation of all self-will, and "an unruffled tranquillity or passivity of soul, until the mystical grace is supernaturally 'infused'" (Inge, 1948, p. 232). For this inner peace to be achieved many kinds of acts are suggested: prayer, penance, frequent communions, inner mortification, and so on. Of these, the prayer of three silences is insisted: that of words, that of desires, and that of thought. The last is believed to be the highest level of prayer in which the mind becomes totally blank and imageless and God alone converses with the soul. Perhaps it is comparable to what is described by John of the Cross as the "dark night of the soul" which will be elaborated later in the chapter.

Butler (1951) suggests prayer of faith, acquired versus passive contemplation as instruments of the mystical journey. By prayer of faith, he means emptying oneself of all sensible and intellectual perceptions and acquiring an interior tranquillity. It is also known as the prayer of loving attention, during which the soul waits upon the Lord in a state of quiet. Because the soul simply becomes aware of the indwelling presence of God, this is also known as the prayer of simplicity. However, this is only the beginning stage or the first step of contemplation.

Mystical prayer in general is in no way achieved as a result of human efforts, but it is wholly given by God. Yet human industry and "exercisings," assisted by divine grace, can in some sense be helpful in the acquisition. In passive contemplation, prayer becomes "supernatural," which means no human activity could acquire this state in the soul because it is entirely the work of God in the soul. In the words of St. Teresa of Avila,

I call supernatural those which cannot be acquired by our own efforts . . . however great these efforts may be. But we can dispose ourselves to receive them and we ought to regard it as of the highest importance to do so (Saudreau, 1924, p. 34).

Since it is the direct intervention of God, this is also called "infused prayer." There are others who speak of a mixed contemplation, that of acquired as well as infused or fully passive contemplation in which the initiative observed by the soul is gently assisted by divine motion.

Christian Mystic Encounters a Personal God

The question of passivity as a necessary psychological condition is detailed in many mystical writings. Asceticism is usually treated as a subsidiary quality to passivity because God cannot be expected to bless someone who is not determined to eliminate anything that will be displeasing to God. Since the flesh in human beings becomes the battle ground, one is to combat bodily appetites, curbing the flesh and pride of the spirit (Leuba, 1926).

Mere passivity, arrested bodily and mental activity, leads to sleep through drowsiness and somnolence. But when practiced in order to attain union with God, it may culminate in an ecstatic trance with remarkable attendant phenomena. The Christian mystic looks forward not to mere sleep, not even simply to the blessed Nirvana of the Buddhist; he goes to meet a personal God who loves him and whom he loves; and he has in mind what this meeting will mean to him (Leuba, 1926, p. 157).

Thus we see the Christian mystics insist on encountering a personal God.

History of Christian Mysticism

The earliest powerful influence of mysticism within Christianity is believed to have come from Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus' words and deeds, as recorded by the the three synoptics and St. John, the author of the fourth gospel, and the letters written by St. Paul demonstrate the mystical influence of Jesus in their words. Leuba (1926) believes that mystical philosophy and a kind of system may have originated from the Sacred Books of India, which spread to the Greco-Roman world, which in turn influenced Christianity. But the Christian mystical practices themselves are believed to be original with Christianity. Underhill (1962) recognizes three great interwoven sources: the Greek, the Oriental, and the Christian. But the distinguishing feature of Christianity is its contribution to the idea of transcendence, while Greek and Oriental thought provided the crucial forms through which that idea was translated. Christian mysticism reached its highest peaks in the third, fourteenth, and seventeenth centuries, coinciding with the three great periods of history: the Classical age, the Medieval Period, and the Renaissance (Underhill, 1962).

After the Pauline and Johannine writings, Patristic Fathers (Fathers of the Church) continuously contributed to mystical thoughts. Clement of Alexandria (160-220) contributed to mystical writings that were held brilliant. He was followed by his pupil Origen (183-253), who adapted the pagan mysteries to a Christian theory of spiritual life. Plotinus (205-270), a great philosopher of Alexandria, although he never owed anything to Christianity, nevertheless contributed a great deal from Platonic Philosophy, which enormously influenced Christianity. Later, Neoplatonism, of which Plotinus was one of the exponents, was a

common medium for mysticism both Christian and pagan (Harkness, 1973). The influence of Neoplatonism and Plotinus was embedded in the writings of St. Augustine (354-430) and Dionysius the Areopagite (about 460). Dionysius published "Mystical Theology," which may have paved the way for the earliest Christian doctrine on mysticism. St. Augustine's mysticism is partly obscured because his life consisted of a wealth of intellectual and practical works. His highly commendable work is entitled *Confessions*, a literary masterpiece depicting his solitary adventures as an advanced contemplative.

Stroumsa (1996) identifies a distinguishing characteristic of the Fathers of the Church: the paradoxical nature of statements which contain hidden as well as revealed meanings. He supports this on the basis of the words of St. Ignatius of Antioch of the second century: "What is hidden is what is revealed . . . " Again John Chrysostom of the fourth century states, "the most characteristic trait of mystery is the fact that it is announced everywhere" (Stroumsa, 1996, p. 3). Other significant mystics who influenced Christian mysticism are: St. Gregory the Great (540-604), St. Romuald (950-1027), St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153), St. Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), St. Thomas Aquinas (1226-1274), Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), St. John of the Cross (1542-1591), St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582), St. Rose of Lima (1586-1617), and St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622). The following section will analyze mystical characteristics in the words of Jesus, St. Paul, and St. John the Evangelist, related to imagery.

Jesus as a Powerful Influence on Christian Mysticism

Sanford (1993) considers the New Testament "a treasure-house of psychological and spiritual insight" (p. 1). Commenting on the mystical meaning of the Synoptic (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) and John's Gospels, he believes that the narratives contain interior, psychological, and esoteric meanings. In ancient Alexandria, Origen, one of the Fathers of the early Church, and the followers of his school held that the Scripture contained both historical and spiritual sense. While the literal or historical meaning consisted of a mere recounting of actual events, the spiritual traditions "sought to arrive at an understanding of the deeper meaning of Scripture, which was often hidden in the text and could be grasped only by understanding the symbolic as well as literal meaning of Scriptural passages" (Sanford, 1993, p. 2). This deeper understanding of the Scripture, influenced by Greek thought and tradition, was prevalent during the fourth century in Alexandria and later in Antioch.

Sanford points out the difference between ancient and modern world views. Ancient Biblical interpreters were open to the psychological or mystical method of interpretation. But modern Western worldview is mostly rationalistic and materialistic. Whereas the modern view limits its perspective to what is perceived by the world of senses, the ancient interpreters gazed inward into the world of the soul in which God worked in much more profound yet irrational ways. Dreams and visions were spiritual realities into which the divine broke into human consciousness.

Three Levels of Biblical Interpretation

Sanford (1993) believes that early Christian Biblical interpreters held three dimensions of the Bible interpretation: its historical or literal meaning, its moral or ethical meaning, and its spiritual or esoteric

meaning. The early Biblical interpreters such as Gregory of Nyssa were, in fact, opposed to a mere fundamentalistic or literal meaning of the Scripture. For them the Bible was not completely understood if the symbolic or spiritual meaning was not fully comprehended. For the ancient commentators the numbers in the Bible, for example, were not mere numbers, but they had both numerical and symbolic meanings.

Esotericism employs a language of its own with paradox, allusions, images, and metaphors. "The language is meant to reveal without revealing, to hide while at the same time hinting at or insinuating. Esotericism itself is paradoxical: the best way to keep a secret is to avoid making any allusions to it, or at least not to multiply them" (Straumisa, 1996, p. 7). Jesus himself did not teach everything to everybody, but rather, he limited detailed explanations about some matters privately to his disciples. To the crowds he spoke in parables, but explained matters in detail to his disciples.

Then his disciples asked him what the meaning of this parable (*the parable of the sower*) might be. He answered, "Knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of God has been granted to you; but to the rest, they are made known through parables so that 'they may look but not see, and hear but not understand.'"

(Mark, 8: 9-10)

Since Jesus himself hints at a hidden meaning, the following section will briefly dwell on the esoteric meaning of the words of Jesus, plunging into hidden meaning where imagery plays a part.

The Kingdom Within

The divine secrets, according to Augustine, are no longer those of God, but those of the individual, hidden in the depths of the human

heart and soul (Straumisa, 1996). The esoteric process is nothing but a process of interiorization in which imagery plays a part. God is claimed to be the essence of soul, our inner most nature, and our true self.

Hence God can be found in our innermost being. Jesus said,

For the kingdom of God is within you. (Luke 17:21)

Other references which promise God's presence within the soul are:

For where two or three are gathered together in my name,

there am I in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:20)

And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.

(Matthew 28:20)

The inner presence guaranteed by Jesus in the midst of individual(s) is one that has to be imagined by the believers. Either seeing him or hearing him indicates the application of imagery in faith experience.

Both the presence of the person of Jesus and his presence in the human soul are matters of belief. The very object of any mystic is to attain a inner union with God in his or her heart. Whenever and wherever this is realized, then God's kingdom indwells in one's being because God is venerated as king within such a mystic.

But what is meant by 'within' and 'inner experience?' When we close our eyes, we are automatically within ourselves. Although a person will normally see nothing but darkness within when their eyes are shut, that darkness is actually the starting point of the spiritual journey back to God. It is all a question of the mind's attention. When the mind is scattered in thoughts concerning the outside world, it cannot really be said that a person is within themselves, even if their eyes are shut. But when the attention becomes concentrated upon and interested in what lies within that

darkness, then the inner journey can be started. (Davidson, 1995, p. 29)

As Davidson points out, the life of union with God is an inner journey. Until a mystic makes this inward journey, he or she cannot speak of a union with God by merely observing some external conformity to rituals or obligations. When one begins to see light in the inward darkness, it is then a question of using one's imagination to look into the inner recesses of the heart.

Inner Seeing

For one who does not understand this dimension of inner presence, it is easy to look for God in the externals and distance oneself far from what is so close within oneself. Jesus adds that God can be seen in one's heart. Obviously, this refers to an inner seeing:

Blessed are the pure in heart:

for they shall see God. (Matthew 5:8)

When Jesus talks about seeing God inwardly, he is speaking of his own personal experience in which Jesus saw his own Father indwelling in him, which is what he wanted others to experience. And so he said:

I and my Father are one. (John 10:30)

Jesus spoke about the way he related to his Father in himself. However, this inner seeing is not going to be easy for all. It entails a personal effort to practice certain techniques and adapt a new way of life.

Single Eye

Again, this inward procedure is advocated by Jesus when the esoteric meaning of his words is examined:

The lamp of the body is the eye;

If therefore thine eye be single,

thy whole body shall be full of light. (Matthew 6:22)

Other versions of the same will translate this passage differently.

Davidson uses King James version which translates "single eye," usually represented in the Hindu and Buddhistic literature as was discussed in the previous chapters. This single eye may be likened to the "third eye" located on the forehead between the eyebrows and hence such an eye has to be imagined. Davidson (1995) continues the imagery of the mental eye as follows:

This *single eye* lies in the forehead, behind and slightly above the two eyes, though it is a mental center, not a physical one. It is the thinking center of a human being, the focus or headquarters of the mind and soul, also called the eye center or third eye. It has often been compared to a door and the early stages of spiritual practice are like knocking at this door. It is the place where the attention is to be withdrawn from the senses and inwardly concentrated. Withdrawing the attention from the external world and from the extremities of the body to this point is the first step on what is called the inner journey—the mystic ascent of the soul. And when attention is concentrated, . . . a great light is experienced within oneself and the soul commences the inward journey back to God. (p. 30)

Inner Door

Davidson uses another passage of Jesus in which Jesus speaks of a door which is believed to be an inner door found deep within each human being:

For everyone who asks, receives;
and the one who seeks, finds;

and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. (Matthew 7: 8) Undoubtedly, the process engages one in a world of imagination. The mystical ascent, according to Davidson, consists of knocking on and seeing an inner door open; and perceiving an inner light and listening to inner sounds, which are the constant guides and companions of the soul. Davidson's words paint how visual and auditory imageries are combined to begin this long mystical journey. The above-mentioned quotes are only a few samples of how esoterical the words of Jesus are to one determined to reflect upon the hidden wisdom. Many other words of Jesus expressed in forms such as story telling, parables, allegories, and moral instructions could also be examined to illustrate the hidden meanings. The following section will analyze St. Paul's words which spelled out mystical wisdom in which imagery was a part.

The Mystical Character of St. Paul

Leuba (1926) claims that not many people sufficiently recognize the mystical character experienced and expressed in St. Paul's words. Paul's new career began when he was confounded by visions and auditions which changed his whole life completely. Prior to his conversion, he had been a doctrinaire Jew, persecuting Jewish people who belonged to the new Jesus movement. After he had been confronted by Christ in a vision and heard him in an audition, he made a hundred and eighty degree turn and began to preach about Jesus Christ to Jews and Gentiles alike. In his autobiographical account Paul describes his vision and audition as follows:

On that journey as I drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from the sky suddenly shone around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, "Saul, Saul, why are you

persecuting me?" I replied, "Who are you, sir?" And he said to me, "I am Jesus the Nazarean whom you are persecuting." My companions saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who spoke to me. (Acts 22: 6-8)

St. Paul speaks of encountering the risen Christ. He claims that Christ appeared to him and revealed the gospel to him directly. Again vision and audition signify the importance of imagery. St. Paul says, "Neither did I receive the Gospel from man, nor was I taught it, but came to me through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:12). Obviously, Paul talks not about an external revelation, but an internal revelation taking place inside of him.

The very conversion through revelation, which consisted of visions and auditions, had imagery content because what he saw and heard was taking place within himself. After such a tremendous transformation, his letters written to various disciples, continuously expressed mystical statements with esoteric sense. The visions and auditions which he described also contained mystical meaning.

Baptism as Symbol and Reality

Baptism is a symbol Paul uses in order to translate the union with the divine. Paul perceives this union with God as not a single or one-sided event. Unity with God is achieved by unity with the believers of Christ, whom Paul calls "body of Christ" because the unity with one another becomes so central to the unity with God. "Body of Christ is not just a metaphor, it is something very real, and its members must undergo a death and birth" (Graef, 1965, p. 34). As members of the body of Christ, the believers will be crucified and rise again. The early Church followed baptism as a primary rite in which an adult believer was washed

clean in the water and given a white garment. This external ritual was not a mere ritual for Paul, but had a profound mystical meaning. Paul saw the immersion of one into water as dying to a life of sin and rising to a new life. Paul saw someone being literally buried with Christ and rising with Christ to a new sinless life and this reality has to be lived everyday. It is not merely over with the celebration of the rite itself:

You were buried with him in baptism, in which
you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God,
who raised him from the dead. (Colossians, 2:12)

For all of you who were baptized into Christ
have clothed yourself with Christ (Galatians, 3:27)

In this Paul sees an individual undergoing a concurrent inward and yet truly mystical event during the external celebration of the rite. For Paul it is not a mere sign which symbolizes an act of forgiveness and newness, but it is also an ongoing mystical reality which the individual has to live everyday, dying to sin and rising to a new life like Christ. If this actualization does not take place in one's life, then someone can hold this only as a magical act in which God fixes everything with no responsible interaction of the individual. This sacramental act symbolized in the rite of baptism and the mystical meaning imagined were understood and lived by early Christians:

This profound interpretation of the baptismal rite shows quite clearly that the identification of the Christian with Christ, his incarnate God, is always on the sacramental and mystical level, and it should be noted in this context that in the first centuries of our era the term mystical meant sacramental—the early Christians

made no difference between the sacramental and the mystical life which to them were one. (Graef, 1965, p. 35)

As was previously mentioned, although the sacramental character of the baptismal rite was visible, the mystical aspect had to be imagined by the baptized and lived everyday, which is where imagery plays its role.

Eucharist as Symbol and Reality

Eucharist is another sign, symbol, and reality for Paul. "The Christian who has mystically died and risen again in baptism needs a spiritual food to sustain his new supernatural life, just as he needs a material food to sustain his natural life" (Graef, 1965, p. 35). Again the symbolism of the Eucharist contains real meaning in an externally seen meal shared at table; and yet the other spiritual meaning of the meal sustaining one for eternal life has to be purely imagined and believed by the followers. As Sheikh, Kunzendorf, and Sheikh (1989) point out,

The Christian Communion service is an eminent example. As participants in the ceremony partake of bread and wine, they visualize the Last Supper, which Christ shared with his disciples, and are purified by it. Furthermore, Roman Catholics believe that the bread and wine *become* the body and blood of Christ, that they are transmuted, transubstantiated in the ceremony. (p. 476)

Obviously, the quote points out that the ceremony is held to be a true sign which symbolizes a reality taking place in the midst of the people. The external food represents a mystical communion with God through communion with one another in the sharing of bread and wine. Paul explains this sacramental and mystical act in his letter to the Corinthians:

The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, "This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink, in remembrance of me."

(I Corinthians, 11: 23-25)

Paul's words certainly contain esoteric meaning which one has to infer before acting on them. Imagery plays its part, especially when the sacramental rite has to be performed with the mystical symbolism which transcends the senses.

Imagery in Paul's Paradoxical Statements

Paul's mystical relationship with Jesus made him speak of the paradoxical nature of things, which one needs imagery to understand. What appeared to be failures and powerlessness to the eyes of the senses, seemed totally the opposite to Paul because of faith. Humbling and frightening human experiences such as our weaknesses, incapacities, and even death, had entirely different meanings because of faith which could only be imagined to be true. Paul would even take pride in his human weaknesses, failures, and humiliations as opposed to normal feelings of self-pity, guilt, and shame:

I am most happy, then to be proud of my weaknesses, in order to feel the protection of Christ's power over me. I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

(2 Corinthians, 9b-10)

Because of his eyes of faith, even the ultimate reality of death is not something of which Paul would be afraid. What for most people is probably unwelcoming and most intimidating—death—will be a welcoming and even rejoicing event for Paul:

If we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him. (Romans 6:8)

We know that if our earthly dwelling, a tent, should be destroyed (meaning death), we have a building from God, a dwelling not made with hands, eternal in heaven.

So we are always courageous, although we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight.

Yet we are courageous, and we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord. (2 Corinthians, 5:2 & 6ff.)

Apparently, what Paul refers to as "eyes of faith" is what he firmly believes to be true (but they can only be imagined in the mind's eye because they elude the grasp of our sensual experiences). Faith, for Paul, seems to be his firm belief in what was promised by God through the Scriptures. He can only imaginatively see this with his mind's eyes. That is why what many people consider death, the terrible end of human life, Paul would consider as going home, the beginning of a new life, or rejoicing entry into endless life. This is merely a matter of faith for one who simply believes, by using imagination in order to see the unseen, or to imagine the unimaginable. He believes in them as if he had already seen what he has not actually seen. Thus the nature of Paul's mystical journey transcends the level of human imagination, addressing problems which, humanly speaking, have no answers. What Paul attempts to do

is to root the spiritual in the material and psychological through the imaginative eyes of faith. According to Paul, then, spiritual matters are not extraneous to human experiences, but rather are intrinsically embedded into the physical and the psychological. Consequently, this empowers one to face humbling and weakening human experiences courageously with the imagination of the spiritual realities one hopes to experience in the hereafter.

Symbols and Imagery in St. John the Evangelist

In the third century, Clement of Alexandria called the fourth gospel of John the "spiritual gospel" (Inge, 1948, Sanford, 1993, Graef 1965, & Harkness, 1973). The gospel of John has such an impact on Christian mysticism that Inge (1948) would almost call it Johannine Christianity. Of the four gospels, this is believed to be the last composed, near the end of the first century C. E. Augustine says that the gospel of John impressed even the Platonists. The three of the four gospels, written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are so similar that they are called "synoptic gospels," meaning that they see things through "one eye" (Sanford, 1993). Their stories, expressions, and narrations have much in common. The Jesus of the fourth gospel has altogether a different personality from the Jesus of the synoptics. John seems to have been influenced by Greek ideas, particularly, Plato's, and possibly by the Gnostics and the Essenes. Whereas the fourth gospel of John is considered more theological, the synoptic gospels are held more historical.

There is a great deal of symbolic language and many figures of speech in John's gospel. John's Jesus preaches images such as "the bread of life," "the living water," "the true vine," and "the good

shepherd." From John's gospel, we understand that Christ and the Father, though separate, are one. John alludes to the Holy Spirit, who will descend upon the apostles after the resurrection of Jesus. In short, it is John's gospel which addresses the mystery of the Holy Trinity—one God yet three in persons: Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Since this is beyond the realm of even imagination, one has to have not imagination but simply faith to believe this. Interestingly enough, the mystical character of John's gospel is manifested in dichotomies such as light and darkness, above and below, seeing and being blind, truth and falsehood, life and death, flesh and spirit (Sanford, 1993). To understand these paradoxes one needs to depend on imagery.

Tradition holds that the author of the fourth gospel is John, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, and son of Zebedee, the Galilean fisherman who was Peter's close friend. However, there are serious objections to that because it is difficult to see how a simple and unlettered fisherman could have composed such a sophisticated book. Perhaps someone schooled in Greek language and philosophical thought and more acquainted with Jerusalem and its inner priestly circles may have composed this gospel. The author of the fourth gospel appears to have been a religious genius who was uniquely in touch with Jesus and presented not the historical Jesus as did the synoptics, but the Risen or the Cosmic Christ to the readers. Sanford sees the author applying active imagination and revealing the mystical figure of Jesus. Using the ideas of B. H. Streeter, a biblical scholar, Sanford states:

John's stories and discourses may have been seen and heard by him in a mystic trance. Streeter cites examples from the literature of mysticism in which the mystics show "a bewildering

intermixtures of history with dreams . . . which can hardly be understood save by those who realize the creative power of the mystical imagination." . . . the authority John relies on when he supplements the synoptic Gospels with unique material of his own may not be traceable to any historical sources, not to consciously contrived allegories, but may come from his own intense inner experiences through some form similar to active imagination with the Risen Christ (p. 9)

Sanford appears to offer some basis for the mystical nature of John's gospel. The following section will deal with some passages of John's gospel which use symbols and imagery.

Word as Symbol and Imagery for God

In the prologue, John uses the Greek word *LOGOS*, which is translated "Word" in order to mean God. *Logos* means more than just "word" and has symbolic meanings such as "thought," "deed," and "power," in Greek. According to Sanford (1993), "when John selected the idea of the *logos* in order to explain something of what Christ meant he had in mind a vast psychological and spiritual heritage" (p. 19). The readers are invited to use imagination in order to grasp the idea of God. John's prologue begins:

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things came to be through him,
and without him nothing came to be
And the Word became flesh

and made his dwelling among us, (John, 1: 1 ff.)

For John *logos* means the creative power of God which is also within each human being. John used *logos* in order to explain his idea of Christ and his incarnation, the indwelling presence of God within the human soul:

For John the *logos* referred to that expression of God's innermost nature which poured forth to create and be immanent in the world, giving the world order and expression, and which was most closely to be experienced within the human soul. It was a way of explaining how God, who was transcendent to creation, could also be immanent within creation. (Sanford, 1993, p. 21)

Although incarnation is believed to be historical, it is also mystical in the sense that humans could only use imagination to believe in such a transcendent yet immanent event, God becoming a human being.

Divine Qualities

Furthermore, not only did John reveal that God became man, but he also described him with personal qualities which could be better understood more in the imagery mode. John reveals that God is love, God is light, and God is Spirit (Igne, 1948 & Harkness, 1973). These qualities cannot be seen, but only imagined and believed to be true.

He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.

(I John, 4:8)

God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not live according to the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, then we fellowship with one another. (I John, 1:5-7)

God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. (John, 4:25)

John describes who God is and what we should do if we claim that we love God. One believing in such qualities of God is bound up with responsibilities to others. These personal attributes of God are to be imagined and practiced by the believer. Thus for example, whenever one lives a life of love, one can claim to be like God in one's imagination.

Bread as a Symbol

There are two other signs and symbols used by Jesus which are claimed by the mystics as containing esoteric meanings: bread and water. In chapter 6, John presents Jesus multiplying five loaves of bread and two fishes to feed a multitude. What the mystics infer from this is that Jesus did not merely satisfy the material needs of the body, but there is a spiritual significance for the soul which is being nurtured by eating the flesh of Christ himself (Graef, 1965). Like the synoptics, John does not record the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper by the end of his gospel, because he had already highlighted the symbolic spiritual meaning in chapter 6. Jesus denied that people led by Moses ate *manna* which came from heaven. Instead, he claims that he was the bread from heaven which gives life to the world. Jesus proclaims:

It was not Moses who gave the bread from heaven, my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world Your ancestors ate the manna in the desert, but they died; this is the bread that came down from heaven so that one may eat it and not die; I am the living bread that came down from heaven;

whoever eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world.

Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. (John, 6, 32 ff.)

The last supper described by Paul takes on an even greater magnitude with John's symbolism. The believer is invited to eat the bread and drink the wine, and call to mind that they are the body and blood of Jesus Christ. Participation is believed to nurture not only the body, but also the soul, leading one to resurrection and eternal life.

Water as a Symbol

In his conversation with the woman at Samaria (John 4:1-42), Jesus tells her that he is the "living water," which will quench the thirst not temporarily like the ordinary water, but forever. Water as a biblical symbol is "Something that wells up from within the human soul which is the refreshment of the soul and from which pours forth life and wisdom" (Sanford, 1993, p. 109). Jesus says to the Samaritan woman:

Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again; but whoever drinks the water I shall give will never thirst; the water I shall give will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

(v. 13 ff.)

Sanford believes that Jesus refers to "a natural source of water that gushes forth from the ground, like a spring" (p. 109). The source is referred to as an inexhaustible one which never runs dry. Humans have a similar experience within themselves and we use expressions: deep inside of me; deep in my heart; and dreams well up. This is the kind of source, but it is only an unending source of life that Jesus refers to in his words. Clement of Alexandria believed that the very wellspring and

the water are Christ. Only imagination rooted in faith could make it possible for a mystic to experience the presence of Christ in the soul as an eternal wellspring of life.

Other Symbols which Evoke Imagery

Jesus calls himself the good shepherd, the door, the way, the truth, and states that he is the true vine and the believers are the branches. In all these symbols and signs, "we find epitomized the demands and fruits of an inward union with Christ and of outward service in his name" (Harkness, 1973, p. 53). In John there are other symbols such as eagle, calf, lamb, lion, and others are applied to Christ:

The list of symbolic representations of Christ seems endless: he was symbolized by the sun, by the circle, by the number eight, and by a variety of mandalas [concentric designs that represent wholeness and integrity]. He was also the uniter of the opposites who thus restored humankind to that wholeness which they lost in the Garden of Eden The above examples are only some of the most important of the multitudinous ways in which the early Christian imagination pictured this mystery of the divine Word made flesh whose presence was felt immediately in the soul. In this way the ancient mind struggled to represent in symbols the ineffable, mysterious, and wonderful reality of Christ and to reveal Christ as the mystical reality pervading all of life. (Sanford, 1993, pp. 25-26)

The quote above indicates how imagination played a significant role in John's symbols and how these symbols had to be stretched in the mind within and even beyond the limits of imagination in order to enter into a union with God in the mystical journey. Jesus called himself the light of

the world, good shepherd, the door, the way, the truth, the life and resurrection, which symbolically stir imagination in the mind of the believer to see Jesus in the symbols (Harkness, 1973). The following section will present different methods of concentration in Christian meditation.

Fathers of the Church: Contribution to Tradition

Concentration Techniques

Clement (1995) relates concentration techniques employed by the Patristic Fathers (Fathers of the Church) during their meditation. Imagery appears central to such methods. The fundamental part of meditation could be a sudden and immense recollection that God exists and that he loves us. Concentration in prayer only accelerated the personal love relationship with God. Traditionally, psalms were prayed. Sometimes a word or phrase in a personal prayer was simply repeated for communion with God in the soul.

To concentrate the mind and give it peace, to parry the inconsequent yet obsessive flux of "thoughts" or indeed to dry up the flow of them, the repetition of a short formula can be a help. It is not a mantra that is efficacious of itself as in India, but a word addressed to someone, the expression of a relationship, a cry for help, a link with him whom Augustine calls "interior Master." (Clement, 1995, p. 202)

As suggested above, short biblical verses were used to arrest the wandering mind in the sensory mode. It is not just a means to control the mind; the process of concentration itself contains a personal communication with God, because the Christians believe that the

inspired word is God's word itself. Clement (1995) quotes the words of John Cassian as follows:

"This is what happens in fact. Our thoughts wander from spiritual contemplation and run hither and thither Here is that formula for praying that you are looking for It is a secret that the few survivors of the Fathers of the early days taught us and which we in turn confide to the small number of souls who are really thirsting to know it. To keep yourself continually mindful of God's presence you should set this formula before yourselves:

'Haste thee, O God, to deliver me: make haste to help me O Lord.'

(Psalm 70:1). This short verse expresses all the feelings that human beings can have. It adapts itself to every situation . . . in adversity, for deliverance; in prosperity, for it to continue without inducing pride; . . . at work, in your various occupations; on a journey you can also repeat it; . . . let sleep close your eyes on these words and you will end by saying then even in your sleep; meditate on them according to Moses's precept 'when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise.' (Deuteronomy, 6:7)" (pp. 202-203)

Cassian points out both the imagery mode and the sensory mode of praying the vocal prayers, drawn from the Scripture. Although it is not explicitly stated, saying these words during sleep and meditating on them indirectly implies an imagery mode.

Ascetics use other phrases such as, "Lord have mercy;" "Have mercy on me, O God, according to thy steadfast love" (Psalm 51:3); "Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." In order to experience inner silence of the heart, the invocation of the name of Jesus was

combined with breathing. "Let your calling to mind of Jesus be continually combined with your breathing and you will know the meaning of silence" (John Climacus, quoted in Clement, 1995, p. 204). Other techniques speak of making the syllables of the prayer coincide with the continuous rhythm of the heart beating.

The Lord's Prayer was used for intense meditation by John Cassian, who encouraged that it be said in a pure imagery mode as follows:

"The prayer 'Our Father' raises those who make themselves familiar with it to that prayer of fire which very few know from experience. It is an ineffable state that is far above all human feeling, without the sound of any voice, without any movement of the tongue, without any articulate word. The soul is wholly filled with light and no longer makes use of human language, which is always limited. But it engrosses the whole person and becomes an abundant spring from which prayer flows and soars in an ineffable fashion to God." (Cassian quoted in Clement, 1995, pp. 207-208)

In this description the prayer probably transcends even the imagery mode. Without any exterior or interior articulation of words the prayer takes one to a level beyond imagination.

Imagery in the Sacraments

The Bible, as we have indicated, is very significant to the mystics, as many inspirations from it are integral to the mystic's ascent. The Bible is the revelation of God's word to the people. God's acts of creation and his intervention in human history have been recorded in the Bible. Slade (1975) indicates that the Bible has many signs, symbols, and images. It contains many *mythos* or myths which convey

deeper meanings than those presented by way of stories. The stories in the Bible are not sources for historical facts. Analogies in a form of narrative or parable are used by Jesus to convey a point. Genesis or the creation stories are a means to convey a spiritual truth that God created the world. *Eikon* is the general word in the Bible which means image. "It describes a creation, often the work of imagination, through which spiritual truth and life are revealed" (Slade, 1975, p. 126).

Christian tradition has drawn from the words of Jesus Christ some rituals which contain symbolic meanings. These are called the seven sacraments which are celebrated by a Christian to mark major stages during the course of life, from birth to death. These are: baptism, confession, Eucharist, confirmation, matrimony, holy orders, and anointing of the sick. "These are outward signs with inward meanings" (Slade, 1975, p. 126). Baptism and Eucharist have already been discussed. The other sacraments are also signs as well as realities. The external sign indicates an internal mystical transformation. Slade (1975) further demonstrates how internal and external images are linked through imagination within reason and Christian tradition:

External images are objects and events which have external existence outside of ourselves. Internal images are structures of the imagination made in the heart from these external materials. They are true or false in proportion as the material used by the imagination is objectively true and the imagination operates within the limitations of sound reasoning and a valid tradition. When this happens the image in the heart is true and can be

used . . . as an instrument for making the deepest relationship with the Lord. In other words such images are the instruments of contemplative insight. (p. 127)

Concentration techniques then become vital to achieve this internal-external transformation. Contemplatives and believers can use any number of external images and symbols which may be related to sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste. Christian tradition has acquired a great wealth of biblical symbols in its mystical journey. Slade suggests that both sensory and imagery modes are useful in transporting the external image to the internal:

The way of binding the heart to one image is both external and internal. The external binding is done by bringing all the senses to bear on the image; the eyes, the ears, the touch, the taste, the smell and holding them in an act of strong awareness for as long as possible The first step towards . . . internalization is to close the eyes and remove the other senses from the object to the center of the heart; at that center an internal image of the external image will begin to form. (pp. 128-129)

This is what happens when bread and wine are used at the Eucharistic table, appealing to the believers to see the body and blood of Christ being sacrificed on the altar as it was done on the Calvary. It is not repeated, but re-presented or re-enacted. Each of the seven sacraments has an internal mystical or spiritual meaning which has to be simultaneously internalized and lived by the participants. This demonstrates the place of imagery in the outward signs of sacraments. The symbolic inner meaning demands that a believer live that mystical reality as an ongoing process not limited to the time of the celebration of

the sacraments. Imagery needs to be employed before, during, and after the celebration of the sacraments, affecting one's everyday life. Otherwise, one is merely performing an external ritual without any internal application.

Lectio Divina

Thomas Keating, a Cistercian monk and a former abbot of St. Joseph's Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts, claims to be one of the founders of Centering Prayer movement which originated in the late 1960s (1994). He has traced the Centering Prayer method to the Christian tradition, principally initiated by an anonymous 14th century author of *The Cloud of the Unknowing*. "Lectio Divina" or "Divine Office" is a contemplative prayer widely practiced and preserved by monks, ordained ministers, and the religious. In fact, the Church considers the Divine Office so central to spirituality that it imposes it as an obligation on the dedicated men and women. Lectio Divina is a method of prayer in which prescribed psalms, parts of the Scriptures, and other selected readings are prayed or sung individually or collectively during different hours of day and night. It is a way of listening to the Scriptures. Monastery is a place where monks are immersed in constant contemplation of the Scriptures in solitude and silence. Monks exercise a special way of listening to the Scriptures in the liturgy and private reading which keep them moving from one to another level of faith. Imagery appears to be a part of this kind of prayer.

As discussed earlier, the Scriptures were understood at three different levels. Monks of the Middle Ages trained themselves to understand "four senses of the Scripture:" the literal, the moral, the allegorical, and the unitive or anagogical. They are four senses of

listening to the same passage and not ways of discussing them at a rational level. This practice was exercised not for the sake of enlightenment but for insight to encounter Christ and develop a personal friendship with him. Before printing was invented, only a few manuscripts of the Bible were available to the monks. However, they were supposed to learn the psalms by heart in order to recite or chant them together as a community. The practice is presented by Keating (1994) in the following words:

They would start reading the Scripture and when something struck them, they would stop, reflect on the text, and then pray over it, asking God for the good things they read about. They would move from discursive meditation to affective prayer or aspirations of the will, then to repeating the same aspiration over and over again, and finally they would experience resting in God. This was the goal of the process. Some monks might spend most of the time with just a word or two, resting in the presence of God When you are constantly in contact with the word of God, you don't have to read extensively in order to be restimulated or to be restored to a state of recollection. The monks were more or less held in the presence of God by their environment and the structure of their lives.

Lectio Divina was not just a mental or purely spiritual activity. The monks of the Middle Ages used to whisper the words so that their bodies were engaged in the conversation. They would also read very slowly, the whole process of Lectio taking at times a couple of hours. In our day, we are almost completely desensitized to sacred reading because we are so used to newspapers,

magazines, and speed reading. We tend to read the Scriptures as if they were just another book to be consumed And gradually, as friendship with Jesus deepens, the "four senses of Scripture" begin to unfold as a dynamic within one's own life. The word of God is within us. It is an action, not just a statue inside us. (pp. 47-48)

Keating (1994) demonstrates how the word of God is used in the imagery and/or sensory modes and how it becomes part of life when personal meanings are grasped. The word outside becomes the word within or inside. A particular phrase or sentence is repeated slowly, verbally or mentally. It is not a discursive meditation or a thought about the text that is emphasized, but simply a heart-to-heart exchange with Christ for new insights. Keating continues to illustrate the mystical benefits of this exercise. Suddenly, for example, the Egyptian slavery of the Israelites would be reexperienced in one's personal slavery to sins, historical transformed into personal. When the psalms are chanted or recited, it would appear as if the individual had composed them. The unitive level, Keating emphasizes, would lead one to an "unloading of the unconscious, or purification" (p. 49). Great psychological insights are claimed to be embedded in this kind of praying the Scriptures.

From the Visible to the Invisible

The mystics contemplated the created world and used creation as a means of seeing the secrets of the glory of God hidden in his creatures. The visible reality that the mystic experienced was also the symbol of the invisible reality. Often faith in God led the mystics to perceive realities with double eyes. Patristic fathers described many such contemplations on the creatures of God leading the mystic to see the unseen Creator

with the eyes of imagination. Isaac speaks of the importance of faith in recognizing the hidden God:

Faith is the doorway to the mysteries. What the eyes of the body are for physical objects, faith is for the hidden eyes of the soul. Just as we have two bodily eyes, so we have two spiritual eyes, and each has its own way of seeing; with one we see the glory of God hidden in creatures; with the other we contemplate the glory of God's holy nature when he deigns to give us access to the mysteries. (quoted in Clement, 1995, p. 213)

As Isaac points out, in order for the mystic to gradually ascend the ladder of the mystical journey, imagination becomes a crucial instrument, enabling the mystic to see the hidden God in creatures. The following section will illustrate some examples of mystical description in which the visible and the invisible merge.

Mystics recognize that the universe, or more accurately the world we experience, is a gift of God. Creation constantly shows the mystic the Creator. Augustine proclaims God's omnipresence:

I cannot show you my God, but I can show you his works.

"Everything was made by him " (John 1:3). He created the world in its newness, he who has no beginning. He who is eternal created time. He who is unmoved made the movement. Look at his works and praise the maker. (quoted in Clement, 1995, 216)

The invisible God is also believed to be visible in the words of Scripture. Mystics claim that invisible Word (God) both conceals and reveals in the visible words. Clement says, "The visible is invisible written down. . . The divine idea, the *logos*, . . . is both silent and self-revelatory in it"

(p. 217). Maximus the Confessor speaks of this hiding-revealing God in nature:

In the Scriptures we say the words are the clothes of Christ and their meaning is his body. The words veil, the meaning reveals. It is the same in the world where the forms of visible things are like the clothing, and the ideas according to which they were created are like the flesh. The former conceal, the latter reveal. For the universal creator and law-maker, the Word, both hides himself in his self-revelation and reveals himself in his hiding of himself.

(quoted in Clement, 1995, p. 217)

The mystic believes that God has revealed himself in the words of Scripture which, as previously discussed, have to be read symbolically for deeper meanings. According to the mystical perspective, the visible and invisible is almost intrinsically linked. Origen, commenting on the Song of the Songs in the Bible, says, "Without any possible doubt . . . everything that is seen is related to something hidden. That is to say that each visible reality is a symbol, and refers to an invisible reality to which it is related" (p. 221). Amazingly, every little piece of creation becomes a symbol for the mystics, instrumental to enter into a world of imagination and contemplate the invisible reality related to God.

From Creatures to the Creator

In the spiritual exercises, simple sensations such as breathing, gazing at the beauty of the blue sky, touching a stone or the bark of a tree, smelling the fragrance of a rose, or tasting the delicious fruits were all means for the mystics to experience the transcendence of God. Normal sensual arousals of the human body are mystically handled by the ascetic to transcend the physical. The beauty of the human body

may no longer induce lust and passion for a mystic, but rather, a sense of gratitude and praise to God. John Climacus illustrates the thought as follows:

"Someone, I was told, at the sight of a very beautiful body [a woman's] felt impelled to glorify the Creator. The sight of it increased his love for God to the point of tears. Anyone who entertains such feelings in such circumstances is already risen . . . before the general resurrection." (quoted in Clement, 1995, p.224)

The mystic seems to have freed himself or herself from the normal passions of the body by transcending its attractions and becomes liberated from bodily inducements. Astonishingly, such emotions were not only evoked because of the beauty of the human body, but also the mystic's heart was moved with compassion for every little object of creation, reminding him or her of the Creator. Benedict of Nursia is believed to have advised the monks in the monastery to consider all the instruments and property of the monastery as if they were sacred altar vessels. Isaac of Nineveh describes how the mystic's compassion for every little creature becomes so strong that he or she breaks down when any of the created beings are harmed:

"And what is a compassionate heart? 'It is a heart that burns for all creation, for the birds, for the beasts, for the devils, for every creature. When he thinks about them, when he looks at them, his eyes fill with tears. So strong, so violent is his compassion . . . that his heart breaks when he sees the pain and suffering of the humblest creature. That is why he prays with tears

every moment . . . they may protected . . . He prays even for serpents in the boundless compassion that wells up in his heart after God's likeness." (quoted in Clement, 1995, p. 227)

In the above quote what is obvious is the power of the mystic's imagination to see every creature representing God and that God is present even in the poisonous snakes. Instead of being afraid of such dangerous creatures as humans would normally react, the mystic recognizes God's likeness and realizes that all God's creatures are to be treated with respect and dignity because God found them worthy of creation. For a moment the mystic imagines as if he or she were God. When mystics contemplated the beauty of the creatures, they were given a spiritual or mystical awareness of the created objects.

Light as a Symbol and Imagery for God

Another popular object of imagination for many mystics is the sun and its glowing rays. Many have imagined the sun to be God with the rays of the sun as depicting God's mercy, compassion, and righteousness being generously bestowed upon humanity. They see the world in God and God in the world. St. Benedict visualizes an interesting contemplation on the ray of light, culminating in ecstasy and mystical experience with the Creator. Gregory the Great describes it as follows:

"While the disciples were still sleeping, Benedict the man of God was already keeping vigil, anticipating the hour of the night office. Standing in front of his window in the dead of night he was praying to the Lord Almighty when suddenly he saw a light shining, and it dispelled the darkness and sparkled with such brilliance that it would have outshone the light of day. While he was watching it something extraordinary happened. As he

described it later, the whole world was gathered up before his eyes as if in a ray of sunlight . . .

How is it possible for the whole world to be seen in this way by a human being? . . .

To one who sees the Creator, the whole of creation is limited. But one glimpse of God's light makes everything that has been created seemed too narrow. The light of interior contemplation in fact enlarges the dimensions of the soul, which by dint of expanding in God transcends the world. Should I say this? The soul of the contemplative transcends itself when in God's light, it is transformed beyond itself. Then, looking below itself, it understands how limited is that which on earth seemed to it to have no limits. Such a seeker . . . could not have had that vision except in God's light When it is said that the world was gathered up before his eyes that does not mean that heaven and earth were contracted. No. The soul of the seer was expanded. Enraptured with God he was able to see without difficulty everything under God." (quoted in Clement, 1995, pp. 225-226)

This powerful experience of Benedict and Gregory's interpretation are samples of how a simple creature could transport the mystic beyond the world of imagination and merge with God. Ecstasy starts with the sensory mode and moves to the imagery mode and beyond.

An Inward Journey

Augustine's mystical experiences have deep psychological and spiritual inspiration. He said, *Noverim me, noverim te* which means "If I knew myself, I should know Thee." After his conversion to Christianity

while talking to his mother Monica in Ostia, Africa, Augustine reports having experienced ecstasy together with his mother. As they stood by the window of the house and looked out onto the garden, and dismissing the past, they began to contemplate the immortal life and that which eye has not seen and nor ear has heard nor heart has glimpsed and crossed the boundaries of the physical universe:

"We opened our hearts wide to drink the waters of thy heavenly spring, that spring of life that is in thee, so that by filling ourselves as best we could we might have some inkling of that higher life . . .

We were exalted by an ever more burning desire and we ascended through the whole range of physical creation right up to the sky, whence the sun and the moon and the stars send their light upon the earth. Then we rose higher still, thinking inwardly of thee, speaking of thee and marveling at thy works. Thus we arrived at our souls, and went beyond them to reach that region of inexhaustible plenty . . . where life is that very Wisdom by which was made everything that is and everything that has been and everything that will be. (quoted in Clement, 1995, p. 232)

This ecstasy seems to begin with the sensual mode because it started out with merely looking at the garden, then gradually crossed the boundaries of the physical universe, and later it transformed to inward thinking. The highest level seems to be beyond all dreams and imagination which cannot be described by any human medium, nor could it be compared in any figures and symbols.

The Cloud of Unknowing

During the second half of the 14th century, the "Cloud of the Unknowing" was composed by an unknown author. It is a marvelous piece of English literature. This writing not only supported the previous mystical thoughts but also contained psychological insights. The English author illustrated the journey of the soul between two clouds. The main thrust of the soul's sojourn is to show as St. Thomas says, "the highest and truest knowledge we can have of God in this life is that He utterly transcends any knowledge or idea we can have concerning Him" (quoted in Buttler, 1951, p. xxiv). The imaginary journey of the soul between the clouds is depicted as follows:

The soul in contemplation is set between two clouds, one above it, the other below it. The cloud above it, between it and God, impenetrable, is the "Cloud of Unknowing," against which the soul in contemplation ever beats with "secret blind stirrings of love" in the will, inarticulate actuations, or else single words, "God" or "Love," poured out in swift repetition, like sparks from a burning brand. The cloud below the soul, between it and all creatures, is the "Cloud of Forgetting," into which it seeks to thrust down all images, thoughts, ideas of creatures, and all words, thus emptying the mind of everything that could disturb it in "the work" it is about. This "treading down of the thought of all creatures and holding them under the cloud of forgetting" is man's travail, with the help of grace. But "the devout stirring of love that is wrought in the will" "is the work of only God." "Therefore do thy work, and surely I promise thee He will not fail in His." (quoted in Buttler, 1951, p. xxiv).

This imagination is yet another reinforcement of the journey which consists of ridding the mind of all its images, thoughts, ideas, and words. In the final phase, it is just inarticulate sounds that a person utters not fully cognizant because the ecstasy is beyond comprehension.

The Divine Darkness

The mystic's inward 'descent' into the heart is compared to Moses's 'ascent' to Mount Sinai to encounter God. It is believed that Moses pierced the darkness where God was. Similarly, the mystic, by transcending the vision of mind and body, could penetrate inwardly into the divine darkness. Darkness then becomes a symbol for the divine presence which cannot be grasped, because the Inaccessible God presents himself yet eludes comprehension. Darkness does not mean the absence of light but it is more luminous than light. This darkness is both the brightest light yet dark because it outshines brightness; it is dark obscurity which is also transluminous. A contemplation of how to experience this divine darkness inwardly is illustrated by Gregory of Nyssa as follows:

The divine darkness is entered by "closing the eyes," that is by renouncing a gaze that is diffusive, objectifying, possessive, and by learning to look inward – or simply with the eyes shut, as in a state of loving abandon.

"At first the revelation of God to Moses is made in light. Then God speaks to him in the cloud. Finally, by climbing up higher, Moses contemplates God in the darkness. See what we could learn from this The more attentive awareness of hidden objects, guiding the soul by means of visible things to invisible reality, is like a cloud obscuring the whole perceptible

world, leading the soul and accustoming it to the contemplation of what is hidden.

Finally the soul, which has traveled by these ways towards the things that are above and has abandoned everything that is accessible to human nature, penetrates into the sanctuary of the knowledge of God that is wrapped on all sides in darkness. There, as everything perceptible and intelligible has been left outside, there remains for the soul's contemplation only what cannot be grasped by the intellect. It is there that God dwells according to the words of the Scripture: 'Moses drew near to the thick darkness'" (Exodus, 20:21). (quoted in Clement, 1995, p. 246)

The darkness meditation advocated by the mystics simply admits that no matter how extensive our imagination and how powerful our intellect, nothing could be used as a guaranteed method to experience God. Rather, the mystics recommend that we learn to let go of our intellect and imagination and allow the divine darkness to overtake us, for the divine presence may not necessarily be experienced through the human faculties.

From the Sensual to the Spiritual

There have been love and inebriation imaginations which have enabled the mystic to become spiritually drunk with the wine of love which is Spirit of God. As we had seen already the Johannine gospel has already proclaimed that God is love. The love union with God has inebriated humans fulfilling their hungers and thirsts. This love so intertwining that Meister Eckhart says, "The eye with which I see God and the eye with which God sees me are one and the same" (quoted in Clement, 1995, p. 242). Fathers of the Church have glorified this union

in which the "heart absorbs the Lord and the Lord the heart," (attributed to St. John Chrysostom, p. 242). This is an invisible love although it is comparable to human love. "For that which is loved, and that by which it is loved, is love, invisible love. Invisible, but the only thing that enables us to see" (Clement, 1995, p. 242). Augustine cites instances of erotic passion imaginatively experienced in this love union:

"We only love if we have first been loved 'We love him because he first loved us' (I John 4:10) 'God is love and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him' (I John 4:16) Let us seek below what we shall discover on high. Love that is attracted only to physical beauty does none the less move us to profound feelings. A sensual and lecherous man loves a woman of rare beauty. He is carried away by the loveliness of her body, yet he seeks in her, beyond her body, a response to his tender feelings for her. Suppose he learns that this woman hates him. All the fever, all the raptures that those lovely features aroused in him subside. In the presence of that being who fascinated him he experiences a revulsion of feeling. He goes away and the object of his affections now inspires him with hatred. Yet has her body changed in any way? Has her charm disappeared? No. But while burning with desire for the object that he could see, his heart was waiting for a feeling that he could not see. Suppose, on the contrary, he perceives that he is loved. How his ardor redoubles! She looks at him; he looks at her; no one sees their love. And yet it is that which is love, although it remains invisible . . .

You do not see God. Love and you possess him . . . Love me, he cries to us, and you shall possess me. You cannot love me without possessing me. (quoted in Clement, 1995, pp. 242-243)

Invisible love is pivotal even in human relationships. According to Augustine, even human love is based on the imagination of love. It is only what is imagined in the mind that seems to arouse love or hatred. Augustine uses the same analogy to experience the invisible love of God. It seems that when the spiritual overwhelms the sensual, the mystic crosses the boundaries of the sensual which then becomes less appealing and enters the realm of the transforming spiritual.

Creative Love: An Imagery Exercise

Anthony de Mello is an internationally renowned Indian writer and retreat master of 20th century whose works are recognized as contributing to mystical insights. He proposes the following exercise for creative love in which he has set an imaginary love dialogue between the self, the other, and Jesus. The meditation is a means to mystical awareness:

Talk to someone you like: In a meditative environment think of someone you love. Imagine that person is sitting in front of you. Talk lovingly, describing what that person means to you. As you do this, be in touch with what you are feeling.

Talk to someone you do not like: In the same manner as above think of someone you don't particularly like. Imagine that person is in front of you. As you look at the person, try to see something good in him or her.

See Jesus look at this person: Imagine Jesus is standing beside you and he is looking at that person that you do not like. Jesus

becomes your teacher in the art of love. What good and what beauty would Jesus detect in that person? Say what Jesus would say to that person.

See Jesus look at you: Imagine you have Jesus in front of you and he tells you all the goodness, the beauty, and all the lovely qualities he sees in you. Don't shirk this exercise. Jesus makes allowances for defects and will see through them to your goodness. What name or names do you think Jesus would make up for you? Look and Listen: Repeat the first looking exercise of these programs. That is, look at some scene or some object without thinking about it. Don't look for anything sensational. Just look and listen and touch with a quiet mind. (De Mello, 1984, introduction flier to the video program, "A Way to God for Today.")

Thus we see a gentle and creative love exercise in which the self is imagined in the presence of Jesus and a conversation takes place within oneself regarding the self, its relationship to others, and Jesus seeing the self handling the situation. De Mello uses both sensory and imagery modes to help the meditators achieve an interior transformation through healing. The imaginary examination and dialogue could also be pictured along the lines of the gospel stories depicting many kinds of people encountering Jesus and the transformations which followed. The following section will illustrate some deeply spiritual persons' inner journey which consisted of intensive relationships in which imagination played a significant role in enabling them to achieve a remarkable transformation. The following section will illustrate the role of imagery in the lives of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Catherine of Siena, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Teresa of Avila, and St. John of the Cross.

The Role of Imagery in the Spirituality of

St. Francis of Assisi (1182–1226)

Born in the Umbrian town of Assisi, Italy in 1182, Francis was Christened Giovanni Bernadone which was later changed by his wealthy cloth merchant father to Francesco. His wealthy background lent him opportunities to live a luxurious life. During a war between Assisi and the neighboring Perugia, Francis was imprisoned and became seriously ill and began to search for the purpose of life. As he was on his knees praying at the church of St. Damian, he felt that the crucified figure of Jesus above him began to speak to him, inviting him to a new way of life. "And whilst he was thus moved, straightway . . . the painted image of Christ Crucified spoke to him from out its pictured lips. And calling him by his name, "Francis," it said, "go, repair My house, that which as thou seest is falling into decay" (Harkness, 1973, pp. 95-96). Experiencing the real person of Jesus from the figure of the crucified Christ involves both sensory and imagery modes.

The actual direction for his later life came from the words of Jesus which a priest proclaimed during Mass in the Church of Saint Mary of the Angels. The words of Jesus, he imagined, were meant personally for him as he heard verses from the ninth chapter of Luke's gospel. Summoning his Twelve, Jesus gave them authority over demons and the power to heal the sick in order to proclaim the kingdom of God. Jesus said to them:

Take nothing for the journey, neither walking stick, nor sack, nor food, nor money, and let no one take a second tunic . . .

If anyone wishes to come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. What profit is there for one to gain the whole world yet lose or forfeit himself? (Luke 9:3, 23–25)

These words of Jesus anchored in him mystical insights for both internal and external journeys which Francis decided to make. The New Testament became his guiding force of life. From this time until his early death at the age of forty-four, he translated the personal invitation he heard from Jesus in life. He left his family much against the wishes of his father and stripped himself of any inheritance or allegiance to him. Instead, Francis chose God as his sole Father in heaven and associated himself with lepers and beggars. He vowed to live a life of self-denial, of simplicity of life through extreme poverty as advocated by Jesus, preaching the gospel, reaching out to those who lived in poverty, loving God, human beings, and all of God's creatures, and saw God's presence in all of creation. This section will highlight two areas of his life where imagery seemed to have played a significant part in his mystical experience. One is that he had tremendous love for living creatures such as birds and animals in whom he saw God's presence and with whom he indulged in imaginary conversations and speeches. The other is that he prayed for the gift of stigmata of Christ's crucifixion, using the crucified figure of Jesus for prayer and contemplation in his mountain hermitage of La Verna after he retired from his missionary work in Egypt in 1224.

Francis communed with God through nature and saw God's presence in creatures. His biographical writings relate that when once he was preaching to men and women, he silenced the twittering swallows:

The account has it that he had been preaching to men and women, and had bidden the twittering swallows to keep still while he talked. Then as he pressed on he saw a large number of birds in the trees and some on the ground, so he decided to preach to them. Those in the trees came down to listen, and this was the substance of the sermon as the *Little Flowers* reports: "My little sisters the birds, much are ye beholden to God your Creator, and always and in every place ye ought to praise Him for that He hath given you a double and a triple vesture; He has given you freedom to go into every place, and also did preserve the seed of you in the ark of Noe, in order that your kind may not perish from the earth . . . moreover, ye sow not, neither do ye reap, and God feedeth you and giveth you the rivers and the fountains for your drink." (Francis quoted in Harkness, 1973, pp. 98-99)

What we see here is the power of Francis' imagination to see vividly the presence of God in the beautiful feathers of the birds, the freedom with which God created them, and the bounty of His provision of food and drink. Not only did Francis love birds, but also animals of all kinds, even reptiles. He is believed to have even talked to the fishes of the sea.

Singing Praise of Creation through Imagination

Francis' imagination stretched over the whole creation of God, composing one of the most moving and acclaimed pieces of imagination. The *Canticle of Brother Sun* is a hymn of praise to Brother Sun, Sister Moon and the stars, Brother Wind, Sister Water, our Sister Mother Earth, and even our Sister Bodily Death. Some excerpts from his famous canticle are as follows:

Be praised, my Lord, for all your creatures.

In the first place for the blessed Brother Sun,
 who gives us the day and enlightens us through you.
 He is beautiful and radiant with great splendor,
 Giving witness of thee, Most Omnipotent One,
 Be praised, My Lord, for Sister Moon and the stars
 Formed by you so bright, precious, and beautiful.
 Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Wind
 And the airy skies, so cloudy and serene;
 For every weather, be praised, for it is life-giving.
 Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water,
 So necessary, yet so humble and precious, and chaste.
 Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Fire,
 Who lights up the night.
 He is beautiful and carefree, robust and fierce.
 Be praised, my Lord, for our sister, Mother Earth,
 Who nourishes and watches us
 While bringing forth abundance of fruits colored flowers
 and herbs. (quoted in Cunningham, 1976, pp. 58-59)

Francis seems to have lived in a world of imagination and was healed by seeing God's presence in every little creature. Obviously, his imaginary conversation was a way of communicating with God, giving thanks for the beauty of creation. Perhaps the tremendous love he had for all creatures of God has claimed him the title, Nature Mystic (E. A. Armstrong, 1973).

Preparations for the Gift of Stigmata

Two years prior to his death, Francis received the gift of stigmata. From his biographical reports, it is possible to scrutinize the role of

imagery in the process of acquiring Jesus' wounds in his body. It is alleged that Francis journeyed to take possession of his mountain hermitage in La Verna in 1224 and spent much time in prayer and contemplation. Francis' physical condition deteriorated, and one day, invoking the Holy Trinity, he ordered two of his fellow friars to open the gospel in three different places. Surprisingly, all three times he happened to notice readings related to the Passion of Christ. "Then Francis understood that there was nothing for him but to suffer to the end, and that his days of good fortune were gone forever. And he resigned himself to God's will" (Jorgensen, 1913, p. 294).

Seclusion and Contemplation on the Crucified Jesus

Francis secluded himself in a hermitage surrounded by nature and his fellow friars would visit him twice a day, morning and evening. Many times he was found in a state of rapture. "With arms spread out in the form of a cross and his face turned to heaven, he lay prostrate, and prayed aloud" (Jorgensen, 1913, p. 296). The cross and crucified Christ had been the subject of Francis's contemplation because his heart melted and wept for the sufferings of Christ. "It was the sufferings of the Crucified One that stood before his eyes, when as a young man he went and wept in the woods by Portiuncula" (p. 297). Fellow friars also had dreams in which they saw Francis, associated with the symbol of the Cross, because he often admonished them to pray to the Holy Cross.

Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross

It was during the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross that Francis was all the more penetrated by the wounds of the crucified Christ. Pierced by the readings of the feast he heard during Mass, and the readings and reflections of the divine office of the day, early one morning

before sunrise, kneeling outside his cell with hands upraised and arms extended, Francis prayed:

"O Lord Jesus Christ, two favors I beg of thee before I die. The first is, that I may, as far as possible, feel in my soul and in my body the suffering which thou, O gentle Jesus, sustained in thy bitter passion. And the second favor is, that I as far as possible, may receive into my heart that excessive charity by which thou, the Son of God, wast inflamed, and which actuated thee willingly to suffer so much for us sinners." (Francis quoted in Jorgensen, 1913, pp. 228-299)

From then on, Francis continued meditation on the suffering of Christ. Later that day, Francis had a vision of a seraph coming down from heaven with six luminous wings who showed him the image of a crucified man. Francis was frightened yet filled with joy and excitement at the crucified Christ. That vision conveyed a special message for Francis:

"It was not through bodily martyrdom, but through an inner flame, that he should be transformed entirely into the likeness of Christ the Crucified.

But now after the wonderful vision had finally disappeared, an excessive glow was left in Francis' heart, and a living love of God, and in his body the vision left a wonderful imagery and imprint of Christ's sufferings. For at once in his hands and feet marks like nails began to appear, so that they seemed perforated in the middle, and the heads of the nails were within the palms of the hands and on the top of the feet, and points of the nails were on the backs of the hands and under the feet, and they were bent over, so that there was space between the flesh and points of the

nails for a finger, as if in a ring, and the nails had a round, black head. And so in his left side the image of a lance-thrust appeared, without cicatrice, but red and bleeding, out of which blood often issued from Brother Francis' breast and saturated his habit and clothes." (Jorgensen, 1913, pp. 299-300)

Imagery had a tremendous impact on this nature mystic. He was so attuned to God that the sight of even the smallest creature would drive him into a trance. Many religious congregations hold Francis as their founder for spirituality. Italy's mysticism essentially descends from Francis. Underhill (1962) considers him a spiritual realist who was untouched and unschooled by any monastic education. Inspired and compelled by the force of the gospel, he imaginatively articulated a life of poverty and admiration for God's creatures. It was his own desire to receive the great gift of stigmata, which penetrated him so much that he constantly meditated on and contemplated the crucified figure of Jesus and made himself like the cross while he bent before the heavens, and ardently prayed for this particular gift of Christ's on his own body and soul. What he desired was what he imagined and what occupied his imagination was raised to God while he prayed. Viewing God's creatures in the sensory mode, and imaginatively translating Christ's wounds on his own body in the imagery mode, appear to be methods of prayer for this great mystic.

Inner Realities of St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380)

Catherine's life was a mixture of the ecclesiastical, political, and civil events of her day. Her lifetime spanned a critical era in Church history, dividing the Europe between one emperor and the pope. King Philip of France and Pope Boniface VIII were caught up in a power play to

control both the state and the Church in the year 1348, setting the pre-reformation stage. With constant feuds between Florence and Siena, a group of representatives obtained the privilege of ruling the region as a representative government (Fatula, 1990).

About the time the pope's residence moved to Avignon, France, Catherine was born in Tuscany, Italy, the twenty-fourth of twenty-five children to Giacomo Benincasa of Siena and Lapa Piacenti, daughter of a poet and quilt maker. Known for her liveliness and stubbornness even as a child, Catherine was attracted at a very young age to the Dominican church near her home. She later joined the group of Dominican women and wore their habit. Catherine spent her life taking care of especially the poor, the sick, and the dying in hospitals and hospices in Siena because she pictured the wounded Christ in them. She was filled with peace, joy, and passion. But she was also a woman of authority. Catherine was actively involved in the civic life of the people and also counseled popes. The following section will highlight two imagery concepts she applied in her spirituality to enhance her relationship with God.

Key to the Inner Journey

Although her life was full of involvement, she discovered that the relationship with the Lord was an inner journey leading one to truth and beauty in the midst of chaos. Two references from the Bible appeared to have indicated to her that the presence of God is inside her heart. One was from the Old Testament, stating that the path "is not too hard for you, neither is it far off . . . The word is very near you . . . ; it is in your heart" (Deuteronomy 30:11-14). And the other is the Latin text of Luke 17:21, "The kingdom of God is within you." This has previously been

pointed out as one of the powerful statements of Jesus with mystical insight.

Inner Dwellings

Catherine picture God within her heart through her imagination in which imagery played its role in her spiritual journey. She was attuned to the Holy Spirit leading her in her inner journey:

Having desired in her youth to live totally absorbed in God as a hermit, Catherine discovered that the Holy Spirit would lead her to the truth not within the walls of a material hermitage but within the inner dwelling of her heart. In the midst of the extraordinary activity and public ministry to which God called her, the Holy Spirit taught her to bear within her an inner dwelling which she would never have to leave. As she grew faithful to living within her own heart, she found the dimensions of this inner cell expanding until they assumed the proportions of the lavish garden and lightsome home of God himself. (Fatula, 1990, pp. 76-77)

The idea of building an inner cell was inspired by Catherine's childhood experience. She used to spend time in a small room in her large home which she called a "cell," after she had fulfilled her household responsibilities. When she began to build a nonmaterial cell, she discovered that she could stay there as long as she wanted and wherever she was. She called this cell God's kingdom and advised her friends to build cells within themselves and never step outside them. She also compared the cell to a hermitage where, in the crevices of the rock in empty and deserted places, the hermit seeks God in simplicity and silence of the heart. Her inner cell had more significance:

When she first began to live within her heart, this inner dwelling served as a haven and escape from the real world around her. But with time its small confines assumed increasingly spacious proportions and transparent dimensions. The inner cell became no longer a place of hiding but the lavish home of God whose generous love drew her both inward to his love and inseparably outward to her brothers and sisters. (Fatula, 1990, p. 78)

This description shows how Catherine enhanced her imagination of the spiritual journey which she had embarked upon with the Lord. It began in simple visual images and enlarged lavishly.

Two Inner Chambers or Cells

According to her imagination, the inner dwelling was composed of two chambers: one containing the knowledge of ourselves and the other, the knowledge of God's goodness.

Catherine began to understand that the inner dwelling comprises in fact two inseparable cells containing the knowledge of ourselves and of God's goodness: "You will know me in yourself, and from this knowledge you will draw all that you need." In prayer Catherine saw how knowing ourselves draws us to love God, for within our own lives we discover the height and depth, the length and breadth of God's goodness. As we become unafraid of our own need, we begin to discover within ourselves not a pit of emptiness but the very abyss of God.

Yet we can never know this wealth if we live superficially, outside the inner cell of self-knowledge: "I don't think it is possible to have virtue or the fullness of grace without dwelling within the

cell of our heart and soul, where we will find the treasure that is life for us. (Fatula, 1990, p. 80-81)

Catherine warns that of the two cells, one without the other is a dangerous thing. Knowing ourselves without God could lead only to arrogance and presumption, providing us with only partial knowledge, destroying the very self we seek to understand. Both cells have their own blessings which make us humble and compassionate. In knowing God we become Godlike to one another by becoming more loving, more charitable, and more generous. She has another comparison, drawn from the gospel for calmly waiting in her cell for the descent of the Holy Spirit:

Catherine liked to picture the apostles as they shut themselves in the upper room to await the Spirit's outpouring. In this image of peaceful waiting she found a symbol of our own need to dwell within both inner cells, for in this way we gain the humility and charity which only the Spirit of love can form within us. (Fatula, 1990, p. 82)

Inner Voices

Besides these inner visual pictures, Catherine also heard inner voices which consisted of conversations and messages from God. Although initially she confined herself visually to the cell building, later she shared this experience with her friend Raymond as follows:

Raymond describes how Catherine's spirituality stemmed from her initial experience of the inner cell, and how it unfolded around the one principal word which the Lord had spoken to her at the outset of her young adulthood. "Do you know, daughter, who you are and who I am? If you know these two things you have beatitude in

your grasp. You are she who is not, and I AM WHO IS."

Experience shows that we can do nothing apart from the Lord (Jn 15:5) and that, of ourselves, we "are not;" But with Paul we gradually learn to glory in the weakness which draws the power of Christ to us (2 Cor 12:9). (Fatula, 1990, p. 79)

What amazes one is the remarkable psychological insight which Catherine acquired in her inner cell experiences and the conversations she had with God. With a habitual exercise of mental imagery (cell-building), she perhaps was able to overcome her frustrations and failures and increase her trust and confidence in God. Renewed by her relationship with God, she cared for the poor and the sick cheerfully and functioned efficiently as an administrator. It transformed her totally—physically, psychologically, and spiritually. Without self-knowledge it would be difficult to know anyone else, much less God. Mystically speaking, knowing our weaknesses could become our strength because then we could overcome them with the power of God. Whatever we hold as powerful in our human experience could be detrimental, delusional, weakening our growth with the Lord because, as Catherine would say, nothing could be more powerful than the presence of God.

Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491–1556)

The spiritual exercises composed by St. Ignatius are as instrumental for a pilgrim to grow from spiritual childhood to spiritual adulthood as they were in the life of Ignatius. Ignatius was born in 1491 at his family castle of Loyola in the Basque country. His family belonged to the provincial nobility whose members had waged wars with the kings of Castile since 1200. Although his father harbored interests in his youngest son Ignatius seeking the career of a cleric, as was the tradition,

the adolescent Ignatius could not resist attractions to a worldly life and so he opted for a life of chivalry. He was happy and carefree when he began service at the court of a relative. He appears to have fallen in love with a lady of the nobility. Being delightfully worldly, he enjoyed gambling, dueling, and romances with women, rather than entertaining the thought of a clerical career. While he was courageously defending the city of Pampeluna against the French, he was badly wounded in his leg (Mottola, 1964).

Ignatius returned to the castle Loyola. While he was recuperating there from his wound, he seems to have begun the main phase of his conversion when he happened to read books about the life of Christ and the lives of saints, which inspired him with the major content for his later spiritual exercises. He decided to take a pilgrimage to Rome and set out to Monserrat as the first phase of his journey. At the shrine of Our Lady in Catalonia, he disposed himself of his worldly clothes and put on the garment of a pilgrim, made a general confession, and stood vigil at the altar of Mary. Then he took a ship to Barcelona and on his way took a break in a small place called Manresa, where he expected to be delayed only for a few days. However, his stay stretched-out to over ten months. It is in a cave at Manresa that he prayed with fasting and penance and it was there that he was favored with extraordinary spiritual and mystical experiences. There, he composed his *Spiritual Exercises*. These exercises had a twofold theme: the Kingdom of God and the Two Standards, that of Christ and that of Satan. Gradually, Ignatius formulated ways of incorporating those exercises into Christian life; they later served as basis for retreats for priests, religious, and lay people. Some claim that his meditations centered on the mysteries of the Lord. Others point out

that there were five major themes: Creation, Mankind, the Kingdom of God, Christ, and the Trinity (Mottola, 1964 &).

The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius span a period of four weeks of meditation. The first week corresponds to the purgative way in the spiritual life, during which time the soul needs to be put in order. The aim of this week is sorrow and contrition, for which Ignatius drew from Genesis with the story of Adam and Eve. The aim of the second week of reflection is to invite the participant to a knowledge of the person of Jesus. Examples from the public and private life of Jesus, meditations on the Kingdom of God and the Two Standards are illustrated. In the third week the exercitant is called upon to contemplate the Passions of Christ, inviting the person to follow Christ closely in his sufferings. The final week of the exercises is focused upon the Risen Christ to instill in the participants a message of joy and glory that awaits them by committing themselves unselfishly to Christ, holding him as the only anchor and counselor. The following section will illustrate some of the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises.

Imagery Exercise in the First Week

The first exercise in the first week consists of five exercises which are preceded by an examination of conscience. Each of the exercises consists of a preparatory prayer, two preludes, three principal points, and a colloquy. The following section will highlight areas where imagery is abundant. After the introductory prayer the first prelude starts as follows:

The first prelude is a mental image of the place. It should be noted at this point that when the meditation or contemplation is on a visible object, for example, contemplating Christ our Lord during

His life on earth, the image will consist of seeing with the mind's eye the physical place where the object that we wish to contemplate is present. By the physical place I mean, for instance, a temple, or mountain where Jesus or the Blessed Virgin is, depending on the subject of contemplation. In meditations on subject matter that is not visible, as here in meditation on sins, the mental image will consist of imagining, and considering my soul imprisoned in its corruptible body, and my entire being in this vale of tears as an exile among brute beasts. By entire being I mean both body and soul. (Mottola, 1964, p. 54)

In the second prelude the meditator is encouraged to ask God for what he or she desires and wants. Focus on the subject matter varies. If the resurrection of Christ is the point of the matter, then one could ask for the gift of rejoicing; if the passion, for tears and sorrow. In this context grace for shame and confusion is begged for because of the weight of the sin on the soul. In the following three points more personal examination is done. Disobedience to the Creator and the fall of Adam and Eve and other grave sins of one's own and others are imaginatively recalled. Then the exercise ends with a colloquy in which more imagery is suggested:

Imagine Christ our Lord before you, hanging upon the cross.
 Speak with Him of how, being the Creator He then became man,
 and how, possessing eternal life, He submitted to temporal death
 to die for our sins.

Then I shall meditate upon myself and as "What have I done for Christ? What am I now doing for Christ? What ought I do for

Christ?" As I see Him in this condition, hanging upon the cross, I shall meditate on the thoughts that come to my mind.

The colloquy is made properly by speaking as one friend speaks to another, or as a servant speaks to his master, now asking some favor, now accusing oneself for some wrong deed, or again, making known his affairs to Him and seeking His advice concerning them. Conclude with the "Our Father." (Mottola, 1964, p. 56)

What is seen here is the application of imagery in as many modes as possible. The contemplative may use all five imagery modes in the mental picture to see oneself in relationship to the self, others, and God. Ignatius does not seem to recommend any specific sensory mode, although the meditator could use visual pictures from the life of Jesus to set the imagination rolling for the mental construction.

Imagery Exercise in the Second Week

The second week of the contemplation consists of twelve day exercises on the kingdom of Christ, and each day includes a number of contemplations for different times of the day. The contemplations dwell on different themes of the gospel such as the incarnation, nativity, presentation of Jesus in the temple, the flight of Mary and Joseph to Egypt with baby Jesus, the two standards, Jesus's baptism and fasting in the desert, the sermon on the mount, Christ walking on the water, Jesus raising Lazarus to life and so on. The following section will give the general background and the contemplation on incarnation.

An earthly king's life and call are likened to that of the eternal king. As a general preparation, there is a short prayer. Then the two preludes follow:

First prelude: This is a mental picture of the place. Here we will see in our imagination the synagogues, villages, and towns where Jesus preached.

Second prelude: I will ask for the grace that I desire. Here it will be to ask of our Lord the grace that I may not be deaf to His call, but prompt and diligent to accomplish His most holy will.

Then begins part one:

First point: I will see in my mind a human king, chosen by God our Lord Himself, to whom all princes and all Christians pay reverence and obedience.

Second point: I will consider how this king speaks to all his subjects, saying, "It is my will to conquer all infidel lands.

Therefore, whoever wishes to come with me must be content to eat as I eat, drink as I drink, dress as I dress, etc. He must also be willing to work with me by day, and watch with me by night. He will then share with me in victory as he shared in the toils."

(Mottola, 1964, p. 67)

Third point invites reflections upon the consequences of person missing the call of a such a generous and noble king. If his call were to be missed by someone, how that person will miss the goodness of the king and how such a person would be despised by others! Then follows the second part in which the earthly king is compared to Christ the King in three points:

First point: If we heed such a call of an earthly king to his subjects, how much more worthy of consideration is it to see Christ our Lord, the Eternal King, and before Him, all of mankind, to whom, and to each man in particular, He calls and says: "It is My will to

conquer the whole world and all My enemies, and thus to enter into the glory of My Father. Whoever wishes to come with Me must labor with Me, so that following Me in suffering, he may also follow Me in glory." (Mottola, 1964, p. 68)

Two other points follow, inviting the listeners to respond to this call and distinguish themselves in service for the king. This contemplation is recommended to be made twice a day. Then begins the first day and first contemplation on the theme of the Incarnation. As usual, it consists of a preparatory prayer, three preludes, three points and a colloquy. After the prayer, the first prelude invites one to recall to mind the Holy Trinity, God in three persons, yet one God, and how the second person of the Trinity became part of human history, and how the angel Gabriel was sent to Mary in the fullness of time. Then starts the second prelude:

The second prelude is a mental representation of the place. I will see, in imagination, the great extent and space of the world, where dwell so many different nations and peoples. I will then see particularly the city of Nazareth in the province of Galilee, and the house and room where our Lady dwells. (Mottola, 1964, p. 69)

During the third prelude one is to ask for whatever one desires, especially, an intimate knowledge of the Lord, who became a man so that I may love and follow Him very closely. Then, begin the three points of elaboration on the same theme, imaginatively expanding the description:

The first point. First, I will see all the different people on the face of the earth, so varied in dress and in behavior. Some are white and others are black; some at peace and others at war; some weeping

and other laughing; some well and others sick; some being born and others dying, etc.

Second, I will see and consider the Three Divine Persons seated on the royal throne of the Divine Majesty. They behold the entire face and extent of the earth and They behold all nations in such great blindness, dying, and going down into hell.

Third, I will see our Lady and the angel who greets her. I will reflect, that I may draw profit from this scene.

The second point. I will hear what people throughout the world are saying, how they converse with one another, how they swear and blaspheme, etc. I will also listen to what the Three Divine Persons are saying, that is, "Let us work the redemption of mankind," etc. I shall then listen to what the angel and our Lady are saying. I will then reflect upon what I hear to draw and profit from their words.

The third point. I will consider what the people throughout the world are doing; how they are wounding, killing, and going to hell, etc. I will also consider what the Three Divine Persons are doing, namely accomplishing the most Holy Incarnation, etc., also what the angel and our Lady are doing, as the angel fulfills his office of ambassador, and our Lady humbles herself and gives thanks to the Divine Majesty. I will then reflect to derive some profit from each of these things.

The colloquy. I will now think of what I should say to the Three Divine Persons, or the eternal Word Incarnate, or to His Mother and our Lady. I will ask help according to the need that I feel within myself, so that I may more closely follow and imitate

our Lord who has just become Incarnate. Close with the "Our Father." (Mottola, 1964, p. 69-70)

It is needless to explain how Ignatius used all five modes of imagery to contemplate the theme of the incarnation. He adds to what already exists in the gospel by way of an imaginative elaboration to facilitate and focus on the particular subject. Ignatius almost makes it sound like story telling so that the meditator may dwell and concentrate on the details. The same technique continues in the other third and fourth week meditations, using the gospel scenes for imaginary narration. These exercises lead Ignatius to a life of unselfishness, self-conquest, and detachment from material possessions or desires of the ego such as honor, glory, and power. Imagination followed in the exercises presumably engaged the participants and speeded a conversion of heart, making a person selfless.

The Interior Castle of St. Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

St. Teresa of Avila is respected as one of the greatest mystics of the Church. Welch (1982) believes that she is considered a great "psychological mystic" because her journey to God consisted of a deep journey to the self. Welch studied, compared, and contrasted the deeper journeys of Avila and Carl Jung. Teresa illustrated her deeper union with God in rich imagery. Jung saw images as expressions and extensions of deep human experiences.

Teresa was born in the year 1515, in Avila, Spain, to Don Alonso Sanche de Cepeda and his second wife Dona Beatriz de Ahumada. When Teresa was twelve years old her mother died, leaving behind ten children. Teresa was placed in a school of the Augustinian nuns where her father believed she would grow up in a Christian environment. There, after

reading the *Letters* of St. Jerome, she became attracted to the religious life and requested her father for permission to enter a religious life. When her father refused her request, she fled her home and entered the Carmelite Monastery of the Incarnation in Avila itself. After her profession two years later, in 1538, she became seriously ill and was in a coma for three days, almost on the verge of death. Miraculously she revived, but she was paralyzed for three years. She eventually managed to walk, but carried on with acute pain for the rest of her life.

Situations concerning her deadly disease and the long days of recovery led her to read classics such as *Morals* by St. Gregory the Great, and the *Spiritual Alphabet* of Franciscan friar De Osuna. These became the great inspirations for her mental prayer, which favored her with initial mystical experiences. After reading the *Confessions* of St. Augustine, just as he heard a voice calling him in the garden, Teresa began to hear the voice of the Lord deep within her (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979). The inner calling set in her a new life of passive quiet, often in union with God, which she called supernatural prayer. She dwelt on them and articulated a labyrinth of inexplicable experiences which are difficult to understand and impossible to describe to those who needed guidance. In her fortieth year, she had established a habitual union with God and she undertook the colossal adventure of reforming the Carmelite order with a new manner of contemplative life, founding convents of "reformed" or "discalced" Carmelites all over Spain. She wrote quite extensively about her union with God and ways of acquiring such a union. The following section will analyze Teresa's *Interior Castle*, exemplifying the application of imagery in the seven inner

dwelling places of an imaginary castle she built within herself and describing the soul's travels through them.

The Interior Castle

The *Interior Castle* is a classic within the mystical tradition. In this work she describes the journey of her soul from the outer environs of a castle to its center where the King of King lives. It is essentially a series of spiritual transformations, culminating in a spiritual union with Christ. She invites the reader to enter into the castle within the soul and travel to God enthroned in the center.

The inner journey involves passing through seven inner "dwelling places" or "mansions" before advancing to the center which is the seventh mansion. The castle is global and encapsulated by seven spheres, each enfolding the other like the leaves of a palm. Each of the dwelling places contains many chambers, constructed above, below, and to the side of one another. What takes place inside these dwelling places is succinctly pictured by Welch (1982) as follows:

The journey to the center has two movements which Teresa likens to the efforts involved in filling two troughs of water. The prayer in the first three dwelling places is an active prayer of meditation. It is likened to arduously filling a trough of water from a distant source through a series of aqueducts. The prayer in the last three dwelling places is a receptive prayer of contemplation. It is likened to a trough easily filling with water because it is located at the source. The middle dwelling place, the fourth, is a transitional situation.

The work is highly imaginative. The castle is the dominant image but within it are numerous other images presenting a

theater within a theater. Among the major images are castle, water, journey, serpents, devils, butterfly, marriage, and Christ. (Welch, 1982, p. 2)

Welch believes that each of these symbols has a Jungian counterpart. The castle might correspond to a *mandala*, a symbol for the self and its destiny. Water is a symbol for the unconscious and the journey within alludes to human development. Images of serpents represent collective forces which obstruct the inner journey. Devils personify the neglected or inferior side which Jung would call "the shadow". While Teresa applies the butterfly image to imply the dying and rising during union with Christ, Jung would call it a series of transformations in which the psyche experiences healing power. For Teresa, marriage is a symbol of intimacy of the spiritual union with Christ, but for Jung it represents the masculine and feminine polarity in human existence, expressing the experience of "otherness." For Jung it is a dynamic move toward inner and outer unity within oneself and with others.

Teresa herself came up with this imagination of the castle to define the picture and progress of her inner journey:

"There came to my mind what I shall now speak about, that which will provide us with a basis to begin with. It is that we consider our soul to be like a castle made entirely out of a diamond or of very clear crystal, in which there are many rooms, just as in heaven there are many dwelling places." Previously, in *The Way to Perfection*, with similar thoughts, Teresa had advised: "Well, let us imagine that within us is an extremely rich palace, built entirely of gold and precious stones; in sum, built for a Lord as this

Imagine, also that in this palace dwells this mighty King." (quoted in Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, pp. 19-20)

The quote above presents Teresa's rich imagery to describe the beauty, the difficulty, and the rewards of an inner journey. The interior journey began to transform her personality.

Stirring our imagination, Teresa narrates the story of her soul's journey as she invites us to get a glimpse of her union with God. As previously mentioned, the castle is like a crystal globe. The outer environs are cold and dark, with snakes and creatures crawling around. As the soul pierces through the inner recesses, the picture changes. The darkness is dispelled by the light emanating from the center. Prayer is the key with which the soul finds entry into each sphere. To reach the center where the King lives, the soul must wander through many rooms which are composed of many chambers within. Each dwelling place is surrounded by "lovely gardens and fountains and labyrinths, such delightful things that you would want to be dissolved in praises of the great God who created the soul in His own image and likeness" (Teresa, quoted in Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 21). Unique experiences await the traveler in each place, with a magnetic attraction from the center.

The First Dwelling Place

On the outer environs of the castle there are many crippled and paralyzed souls which may need a special healing from the Lord to begin the journey. The first three dwelling places represent the efforts of those souls who just began an initial prayer relationship with the Lord. Amid many other distracting voices, they begin to listen to God's voice. Although a faint light from the center appears here, the darkness of the

outer environs and various crawling things have still sneaked into the place. This means that the attentiveness to God becomes off-centered in one's life because other things have moved to the center of one's life. Although there is light in this room, it is the soul's condition which creates the dark disorientation. In Teresa's words:

Even though it may not be in a bad state, it is so involved in worldly things and so absorbed with its possessions, honor, or business affairs, as I have said, that even though as a matter of fact it would want to see and enjoy its beauty these things do not allow it to; nor does it seem that it can slip free from so many impediments. If a person is to enter the second dwelling places, it is important that he strive to give up unnecessary things and business affairs. Each should do this in conformity with his state in life. (quoted in Welch, 1982, p. 17 & Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 45)

Efforts must be made by the individual to clear all that impedes the soul's journey toward the center. If the obstacles are not removed the path will become impassable.

The Second Dwelling Place

In the second dwelling place, the relationship becomes more and more personal. More conflicts and challenges are accepted and responded to by the soul. As opposed to the first stage where the soul is almost mute and deaf, the involvement of the soul here is increasingly greater. Frightening beasts and poisonous snakes could make the soul stumble and fall. These represent our pastimes, business affairs, pleasures, and attraction to material goods. Devils represent themselves in the form of snakes tempting one with worldly attractions as though

temporal pleasures were eternal. There are a variety of ways in which many hear God's call at this stage: the words from good people, sermons, good books, trials and illnesses, and moments of personal prayer. These opportunities call for reorientation of one's life by raising questions about oneself and one's life. Hearing God's call can destabilize and decenter a person and allow a stable center to emerge from within. The intention of prayer is to bring one's will into conformity with God's will.

The Third Dwelling Place

This is a place where one is settled down in life as a good Christian. Prayer has become central to such a person and its effects on the person become obvious. Teresa calls these people "model adult Christians." They avoid sin and offending His Majesty, take time for prayer and penance, do charity to those in need, and remain balanced between words and deeds. However, the picture Teresa presents here has another dimension, which shows that these people who have reached this place may try to find stability here. Nevertheless, they must recognize that they cannot settle down in these rooms, because the journey must continue and the life of prayer must deepen and transform. Overstaying here is dangerous and difficult. An inexplicable anxiety may creep in and people begin to experience a dryness in prayer life. Unexpected fears and oversensitivities can make one lose control in life. People tend to hold on to what offered them stability in the past but Teresa believes that people should let go of this stability and abandon themselves in order to move on. Model adult Christians cannot get stuck in the apparent stability created by their prayer life.

The Fourth Dwelling Place

Teresa envisions these dwelling places as a time of transition in the life of prayer of the traversing soul. The relevance of imagery is readily recognized in that Teresa converts all the external aspects of prayer into an internal silence as follows:

Prayer becomes less and less discursive or an activity totally controlled through human effort. Gradually, the experience becomes one of God drawing the soul into an interior state of recollection. The individual becomes passive in prayer. This infused prayer is the beginning of contemplation. And the fourth dwelling place is characterized by a degree of recollection which Teresa calls the prayer of quiet. (Welch, 1982, p. 18).

Since these places mark the beginning of what Teresa would call the supernatural or mystical, she needs to differentiate this infused prayer from the supernatural. She attempts to distinguish them by an analysis of the difference between consolations or *contentos* and spiritual delight or *gustos*. Teresa believes that while the former originate from human nature, the latter is generated by God and overflows to human nature. With the assistance of God, consolations result from human attempts. These spiritual delights are not merited through human efforts, but passively received. To ascend to such heights in the spiritual journey, Teresa warns the travelers not to indulge in thoughts but let the heart speak, because she believes this mystical journey is not of the head but of the heart. She says, "In order to profit by this path and ascend to the dwelling places we desire, the important thing is not to think much but to love much; and so do that which best stirs you to love." (Kavanaugh &

Rodriguez, 1979, p. 70). The traveler is called to become determined to please God in everything and not to offend Him.

Active Versus Passive Prayer of Contemplation.

To explicate further the difference between infused and mystical prayer, Teresa uses another piece of imagination which explains the distinctions between these two. She imagines pictures of two different founts with two water troughs. She chose the simple image of water being drawn because, "I believe that in each little thing created by God there is more than what is understood, even if it is a little ant" (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 74). Through the use of imagination, she drew much deeper meanings into creatures than people normally draw. Teresa let her imagination fly as follows:

These two troughs are filled with water in different ways; with one the water comes from far away through many aqueducts and the use of much ingenuity; with the other the source of water is right there, and the trough fills without any noise. If the spring is abundant, as is this one we are speaking about, the water overflows once the trough is filled, forming a large stream. There is no need of any skill, nor does the building of aqueducts have to continue; but water is always flowing from the spring.

The water coming from the aqueducts is comparable, in my opinion, to the consolations I mentioned that are drawn from meditation. For we obtain them through thoughts, assisting ourselves, using creatures to help our meditation, and tiring our intellect . . . in the end, the consolation comes through our own efforts . . .

With this other fount, the water comes from its own source, which is God. And since His Majesty desires to do so—when He is pleased to grant some supernatural favor—He produces this delight with the greatest peace and quiet and sweetness in the very interior of ourselves. (Teresa, quoted in (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 74)

Spiritual delight is something that can only be imagined but cannot be acquired, however diligent our efforts may be. The grace of this prayer is that God helps the seeker to find Him within oneself, rather than seeking him outside in creatures, just as Augustine was looking for God when he said that God was inside of him. While this position appears to convince one of the power of imagery in such an experience, Teresa warns us,

Don't think this recollection is acquired by the intellect striving to think about God within itself, or by the imagination imagining Him within itself. . . . But what I am speaking of comes in a different way. Sometimes even before one begins to think of God, these people are already inside the castle. I don't know in what way or how they heard their shepherd's whistle. It wasn't through the ears, because nothing is heard. But one noticeably senses a gentle drawing inward, . . . compared to a hedgehog curling up or a turtle drawing into its shell But these creatures draw inward whenever they want. In the case of this recollection, it doesn't come when we want it but when God wants to grant us the favor. . . . For he calls such persons especially so that they might be attentive to interior matters. (Teresa, quoted in Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 78-79)

It appears that imagery is used because the seeker is asked to focus within; but this is not the result of human effort, rather, it is due to the benevolent God who chooses the timing. It seems to be initiated by human efforts, but ultimately it flows down only as a free gift.

The Fifth Dwelling Place

Contemplative prayer becomes deep all the more and Teresa calls this a prayer of union. The faculties become more silent and even suspended. Teresa affirms that the "soul was in God and God was in the soul" (Teresa, quoted in Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 25). This union is beyond the description of imagination. In its union with God the soul "neither sees, nor hears, nor understands, because the union is always short and seems to the soul even much shorter than it probably is" (Teresa, quoted in Welch, 1982, p. 19).

Teresa likens the experience to yet another piece of imagination. The soul is like the silkworm, gradually being transformed into a small butterfly. This calls the traveler to imagine one's death and new life in Christ. "Once the soul is dead to itself and its attachments, it breaks forth from the cocoon transformed as does a small butterfly" (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 25). Having experienced death in Christ, the soul now takes on another form of imagination in order to continue its travel to the center of the castle: marriage and its preparatory stages. Teresa envisions the courtship of her time, when people before being engaged to each other, tried out if they would find an abiding relationship. Being desirous of union with God, the soul is expected to know His Majesty much better through virtues such as the love of neighbor, humility, and faithful performance of ordinary works. The key is to intensify love.

The Sixth Dwelling Place

This stage denotes a still deeper intensification of the love union which began enlarging in the fourth and fifth places. It is the longest section of the *castle* in which Teresa relates to the readers the extraordinary mystical phenomena which she experienced. The soul is imagined to be in a spiritual betrothal and a time of purification for the spiritual marriage which will occur in the last dwelling place. Both intensive desire for the Lord and the pains these desires cause become the means through which the Lord encourages the soul to be joined to Him, taking it as His Spouse. Without the courage given by the Lord, such a union would be impossible. Fortitude is needed to withstand both inner and exterior trials such as opposition from others, severe physical illnesses, inner sufferings, fears, anxieties, and even a sense of rejection by God.

The betrothal itself happens during the raptures, which draw the soul out of its senses because the soul is incapable of seeing its Majesty's closest presence through its senses. "Besides locutions from God with their beneficial effects, the soul may now also begin to receive, through intellectual and imaginative visions, understanding about the divine mysteries" (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 26). These favors are likened to the jewels the Spouse gives to the betrothed.

The Seventh Dwelling Place

Union with God is completed at this stage. Teresa says that there are no closed doors between the sixth and seventh dwelling places. The prayer union which commences at the fifth place is intensified through raptures in the sixth stage, making the soul blind and deaf as Paul was when he was blinded by lightning upon encountering Christ. The scales

of the eyes are removed so that the soul can see and understand the mysteries of God. The soul no longer falls into an ecstasy as it did before in direct vision of God, but experiences the mysteries as proper object, as connatural.

Entry into these most luminous places occurs through an amazing intellectual vision of the Trinity. Teresa emphasizes the profundity of this deep experience, recalling the extreme interior, very deep within the spirit. The powerful and habitual presence of the Trinity becomes a perduring awareness, without interfering with activities carried on as regular services. "An imaginative vision of Christ introduces the experience of union which she terms the spiritual marriage, the culmination of the journey through the castle" (Welch, 1982, p. 20). Through imaginative intellectual vision, the inseparability of the spiritual marriage is designated to Teresa and it is different from the spiritual betrothal and previous visions. What takes place is that the spirit is made one with God. Teresa takes pains to describe the closeness of this union:

"The union is like the joining of the two wax candles to such an extent that the flame coming from them is but one, or that the wick, the flame, and the wax are all one In the spiritual marriage the union is like what we have when rain falls from the sky into a river or fount; all is water, for the rain that fell from heaven cannot be divided or separated from the water of the river. Or it is like what we have when a little stream enters the sea; there is no means of separating the two." (Teresa quoted in Welch, 1982, p. 181)

The oneness is so great that the butterfly image is no longer sufficient to express the union. So the butterfly dies at this point with great joy because its new life is Christ, replacing it with the spiritual marriage. The ultimate goal of the soul's journey was the spiritual marriage which finally occurs in the last stage. This union of the soul with God leaves some indelible and distinctive effects on the person: a total forcefulness of self, desire to suffer, deep interior joy while persecuted, desire to serve God, a great detachment from everything, and no more dryness in prayer or inner disturbances, but the soul is almost always quiet (Welch, 1982). The imaginative castle journey of the soul appears to have transformed Teresa physically, intellectually, psychologically, and spiritually.

St. John of the Cross (1542–1591)

St. John of the Cross is a key figure in the history of Spanish literature and Christian mysticism. Juan de Yepes was born in 1542 in Fontiveros, a small town roughly about twenty-four miles northwest of Avila, Spain. His father, Gronzalo de Yepes, hailed from an upper-class family of silk merchants, but was ostracized by his family because he insisted on marrying a poor weaver, Catalina Alvarez. Juan was youngest of three boys born to the Yepes family. When Juan was about three years old, a prolonged illness claimed his father and Catalina suffered unemployment, abandonment, and hunger. When the family moved to Medina del Campo, Juan was placed in a school for the poor children, where he was offered free board, lodging, education, and training in a trade. Instead of taking a likeness to a trade, he was more attracted to caring for the sick and so he was given the job of a nurse and alms seeker for one of the hospitals in Medina (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1987).

While working at the hospital he attended Latin and rhetoric classes in a nearby Jesuit school where he distinguished himself as an intelligent scholar. He was fascinated by the classics and the imagery found in them and began composing his own poems, opening himself sensitively to the realities around him. When the hospital administrator offered him an opportunity to be ordained a priest and become the chaplain at the hospital, which would have secured him from poverty, he declined to accept it. Instead, compelled by his attraction for solitude, contemplative life, and a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, he chose to enter a Carmelite monastery at Medina, and received the name, Fray Juan de Santo Matia. After his education in the monastery, he studied courses in philosophy and theology at the University of Salamanca and the Carmelite College of San Andres, distinguishing himself intellectually in both places (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1987).

A Reformed Order for Men

While considering to transfer to the more contemplative Carthusian order, he met the fifty-two year old Teresa of Avila in Medina, where he offered his first Mass as a priest. Teresa was looking for young friars to help establish a new contemplative form of life for the Carmelite nuns. Juan willingly offered himself to her new venture. The new form of Teresa's order began as a reformation and a return to the origins of a strict monastic life with practices of poverty, fasting, silence, enclosure, and most importantly, a life of prayer. These new communities were referred to as "reform," "observant," "discalced," or "hermit" communities. Taught by Teresa, Juan took the new name Juan de la Cruz or John of the Cross, and inaugurated a new contemplative order for men in a house bought by the Mother Foundress Teresa at Castile, a lonely spot

between Avila and Salamanca. Being considered a rebel friar, John was subjected to imprisonment, flogging, and fasting on bread and water, which were the standard procedures of the day. For over nine months he was locked up in a small cell six feet wide by ten feet long with a window which had only a tiny opening high up in the wall. Surrounded by darkness, emptiness, and loneliness, John received extraordinary spiritual experiences which he captured in the form of poems. The first were the verses of *The Spiritual Canticle*, describing that the way to union was through "nothing." He escaped from the prison and took refuge with Teresa's nuns in Toledo. When the number of discalced friars grew large in number, John was later made their superior, but he continued to be a poet, mystic, and theologian. Between the fourteen years of his life, from age thirty-six to forty-nine, John wrote three major treatises: *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*-*The Dark Night*; *The Spiritual Canticle*; and *The Living Flame of Love*, which are classics of intellectual and spiritual maturity (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979). The following section will analyze *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* and *The Dark Night*. The complete work of Ascent-Night consists of four integral parts: the sketch of the Mount; the poem consisting of eight stanzas; the first part of the commentary and treatise called *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*; and the second part of the commentary and treatise called *The Dark Night* (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979).

Ascent of Mount Carmel-Dark Night

This poem is an allegory in which the lover sings of her most fortunate dark night, during which she went out to be united to her beloved. *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* describes the path to high perfection which he chose to achieve union with God. It provides a systematic

theory and practical norms to be observed for holiness. In the poem, *The Dark Night*, John shares with his readers how he journeyed through active and passive purifications and finally obtained the state of perfection, the absolute union with the Bridegroom. It is basically the journey of the soul in the dark night, claiming the Mount of perfection. When one speaks of journey within, one speaks of imagery. Hence the following section will point out just how this imaginary journey is undertaken and analyze the role of imagery as a means.

"The poetic figure 'dark night' provided by St. John of the Cross with a mysterious-sounding metaphor to designate the entire way leading to union with God. The path, then, in the center of the mount of perfection, and which alone leads to the summit, is a dark night" (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 47). There are three reasons why the path of union with God is a dark night: the mortifications of the appetites; the journey in faith; and God's communication to the soul. Before we analyze the three parts to disclose the journey of the soul, an understanding of the soul according to John and the structure of his composition need to be illustrated.

Spiritual and Sensory Parts of the Soul

John divides the soul into two main parts: the sensory and the spiritual. The sensory part of the soul contains interior and exterior parts. The exterior parts of the sensory possess the sense faculties of sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch—which belong to the sensible or corporal objects. The inner parts of the sensory are phantasm and imagination. The spiritual part of the soul, concerned with the spiritual or incorporeal objects, consists of three faculties: intellect, memory, and will. Intellect and memory, which belong to both the sensory and the

spiritual, are cognitive, involving perception; while will belongs to the appetitive faculty: appetites and emotions such as joy, hope, fear, and sorrow (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979). John asserts:

In order to attain union with God the soul "must ordinarily pass through two principal kinds of night (which spiritual persons call purgations or purifications of the soul) in order to reach the state of perfection." These nights are the purifications of the two main parts of the soul and are wrought in a double manner: actively, through the soul's own efforts; and passively, through God's work in it. He informs us that he will deal with the active night or purification of the sensory part in the first section of his work, with the active night of the spiritual part in the second and third, and with the passive night in the fourth part. (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 48)

This gives one the general notion of what is to be found in his work. It explains how the two parts of the soul prepare in the dark night, both actively and passively, in order to climb that ladder. The following section will briefly illustrate the three major components of the union with God.

1) Mortification of the Appetites

According to John, the main theme of the *Ascent* is the mortification of the appetites. The reason for choosing the metaphorical phrase "dark night" as an image is to refer to the negative idea of privation. The love experience of the soul itself is seen negatively because

"To love . . . is to labor to divest and deprive oneself for God of all that is not God Just as night is nothing but privation of light

and, consequently, of all objects visible by means of light . . . the mortification of the appetites can be called a night for the soul. To deprive oneself of the gratification of the appetites in all things is like living in darkness and in a void." (John quoted in Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, pp. 46-48)

This description of the soul's journey during the first part of the night in the sensory area in Book I sets the tone for practitioners to learn how to envision the soul's position in imagination. John substitutes other terms for "appetite:" "attachment, affection, the love of creatures, the will for something, inclination, and desire" (p.48). By appetites, John refers to the voluntary appetites, rather than the involuntary appetites. Furthermore, by voluntary appetites he means either mortal sins (serious sins) or venial sins (less grave sins). To prepare for the journey, the soul must mortify the voluntary, inordinate, and habitual appetites by putting them to death, or to destroy their voluntariness by withholding consent and eliminating them because they produce harmful effects and obstruct the union with God. All the appetites of the sensory and the spiritual must be directed toward supernatural love, which is the love of God and of neighbor.

Denial of Sensual Pleasures.

The soul has to empty itself of all of its gratification and become a *tabula rasa* or clean slate so that it would become ignorant of all the knowledge received through senses. All the five sensual pleasures gained from hearing, sight, smell, taste, and touch have to be mortified and denied. John calls this "nakedness of the soul." The reason why the soul has to deny these pleasures is because these delights of the world contrast to that of God, meaning our sensual pleasure may be intense

suffering, torment, and bitterness for God. All the wealth and glory of creation, compared with the wealth of God, is utter poverty and misery in God's eyes. The soul which does not deny these pleasures is likened to a cloudy mirror that does not reflect a person's countenance. How shall an individual enter this part of the night? Ordinarily, a person enters this night in two ways: active and passive. In the active manner, John lays down a list of rules or counsels to be followed. He sketched them in the form of a diagram (see Figure Example 24) and asks that the verses be repeated for one to claim the summit of the Mount. Repetition of the verses may occur in sensory or imagery mode. The passive manner will consist of nothing except that the individual be a passive recipient of what God accomplishes. All human faculties should cease to function before this culmination. This stage is not yearned, nor is it a result of any human effort, but a gift freely offered by God. He elaborates upon this in the fourth book, which treats the communion with God.

2) The Journey of Faith

John likens the first cause or part of this night to twilight, during which time objects fade from sight. The second part of the night is compared to the faith factor which at midnight, makes it darker than the third. The third part of the night refers to the period before dawn which is close to the illumination of the day. The daylight is compared to God who illumines the soul after the night.

Faith is an important factor in the path that leads one to union with God. Intellect, according to John, is incapable of producing within us the knowledge of God, while faith offers us knowledge of the supernatural mysteries of God. It gives us the obscure encounter with God. To enter into a union with God, one "must lean on faith, take it

for his guide and light, and rest on nothing of what he understands, tastes, feels, or imagines." (John quoted in Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 51). That journey "is decidedly hindered . . . when he is attached to any understanding, feeling, imagining, opinion, will or way of his own, or to any other of his works or affairs" (p. 51). John believes that God transcends both reason and feeling. Just as the sensory faculties were to be emptied for the first stage of the night, the spiritual faculties need to be purified for the departure. John makes allowance for meditation which provides the initial images about the knowledge of God, but as the person is freed from sense knowledge, he or she enters the realm of faith with its sister virtues of charity and hope. At this point in Book II, John recommends that one stop all kinds of imagination:

We are speaking of two interior bodily senses: the imagination and the phantasy. They are of service to each other in due order, the one is discursive and the other forms images. For our discussion there will be no need of differentiating between them . . .

All that these senses, then, can receive and construct are termed imaginations and phantasms. These are forms represented to the interior senses through material images and figures.

There are two kinds: supernatural and natural. The supernatural are represented passively without the work of the senses. These we call supernatural imaginative visions; . . . The natural are those the soul can construct actively through forms, figures, and images.

Meditation is the work of these two faculties, since it is a discursive act built upon forms, figures, and images, imagined and

fashioned by these senses. For example: the imagining of Christ crucified, or at the column, or in some other scene; or of God seated upon a throne with resplendent majesty; or the imagining and considering of glory as a beautiful light, etc.; or the picturing of any other human or divine object imaginable.

The soul must empty itself of these images and leave this sense in darkness if it is to reach divine union. For these images, just like the corporal objects of the exterior senses, cannot be an adequate, proximate means to God. (John quoted in Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 137)

Since nothing of what is imagined by human faculty is a match for God, John advises that all imagination be abandoned. The individual must learn to abide in a quietude with loving attentiveness to God, letting go of all imagination. The soul does not engage in any work actively, but remains passive, by receiving whatever is given by God. The journey then is one in which loving awareness of God is established in tranquillity, discontinuing the way of reasoning and imagining.

3) The Dark Night and the Communication of God

The *Ascent* is an explanation of how, in order to reach perfection, the soul has to travel through the mortification of the appetites and journey through faith, purifying the sensory and the spiritual faculties of everything. The *Night*, on the other hand, demonstrates "how God purifies the soul passively and brings its faith and love to the perfection delineated in the *Ascent*" (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 55). It is a night of passive purifications.

By the end of Book II of the *Ascent*, John begins to demonstrate how union with God reaches more of a receptive mode, gradually going beyond the confines of imagery as follows:

Book Two of the *Ascent* explains how God leads the soul forward step by step, first communicating His life to it through the senses and through images and gradually preparing it thereby to receive His more spiritual communications without the aid of the senses. The Saint often designates this communication of God to the soul by other terms, such as: "inflow," "infusion," "manifestation," "illumination," "illustration," and so on. (Kavanaugh & Rodriguez, 1979, p. 56)

What is received through senses and imagination is likened to morsels, but the inflow through the spiritual part is beyond description. God, in the passive nights, communicates a general and obscure knowledge which is infused through faith. This contemplation of the passive purifications is believed to be painful, rather than delightful to the soul.

John illustrates the main components involved in this passive purification: God illuminates the soul by showing the miserable situation of the soul; during contemplation the soul experiences abandonment by God and creatures; the soul experiences inactivity as if it were imprisoned in a dark dungeon, hands and feet bound up, unable to move or see or feel any grace from heaven or earth; it is tormented by abandonment; finally, there arise intense increase and hunger for God by making the soul withdraw from any appetite for any object. The touch of divine love then dries all desires of the soul, leading to total inactivity, and it becomes capable of receiving light, warmth, and plenitude of God's bliss. Thus, union with God results from privation, purification,

elimination, and annihilation of everything contrary to the perfect union.

John of the Cross invites the soul to embark on an imaginary journey of purification of the sensory and spiritual faculties by transcending the senses and imagination and becoming passively receptive to God's communication which is offered freely and effortlessly. It seems more a negative experience of annihilating oneself and reducing oneself to "nothing," before becoming passive and receptive to infusion from God, which is said to be beyond description.

Conclusion

Christian mysticism has developed a paradoxical language of its own. It perceives sense realities differently from their normal appearance. The Sacred Scripture, is believed to be the revealed word of God, and particularly the words of Jesus, appear to be the cornerstone of mystical thinking. Even the disciples and followers of Christ conveyed the same esoteric meanings in the New Testament, which is believed to be divinely inspired. Mystics attempted to draw esoteric meanings from what appears to be normal statements and in return they contributed to the mystical wisdom through their writings. Imagery is more linked to mystical statements and demands a different way of understanding, rather than being identified as a technique for union with God. Christian rituals which are followed during the celebration of the seven sacraments contain external symbols which call for an internal activity which can only be imagined and lived.

Concentration techniques have played a significant role in the mystic's journey. Simple creatures have been used by mystics as objects for imagination to worship and commune with God because of the

symbolism they contain. From visible realities of life, invisible realities were almost visibly seen, transporting a mystic from the ordinary to the extraordinary, from the sensual to the spiritual. Some saints have engaged in imagining the life scenes of Jesus and indulged in a very personal imaginary conversation with God, while others engaged in building inner realities and experienced a God within. Still other saints have used particular kinds of imagery to build an interior map for their faith journey. Many of them seem to indicate that human efforts and imagination are possible only to a certain extent because the climax of the mystical journey is a totally free gift from God, and it does not depend on any human labor. Any object of creation or part of Scripture, according to the Christian mystics, may be used in the sensory and/or imagery mode in order to make a connection to the Creator. What appears to be specific to the Christian mystics is that they strongly believed in what they imaginatively saw with their mind's eye, although one may or may not necessarily believe in what is imagined. This may be termed "faith in God" which seems stronger than any other means to mystical experience.

CHAPTER VII

SUFI IMAGERY TECHNIQUES FROM ISLAM

What is to be done, O Muslim?

I do not recognize myself.

I am neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Gabr, nor
Muslim.

I am not of the east, nor of the west, nor of the land
nor of the sea . . .

My place is the placeless, my trace is traceless:

'Tis neither body, nor soul, for I belong to the Soul of
the Beloved.

I have put duality away, I have seen the two worlds
are one;

One I seek, One I know, One I see, One I call.

He is the First, He is the Last, He is the Outward, He
is the Inward . . .

I am intoxicated with love's cup; the two worlds have
passed out of my ken . . . (Cragg, 1976, p. 74)

* * * * *

One came to the Beloved's door and knocked. And a voice
from within whispered: "Who is there?" And the love answered
saying: "It is I."

Then the voice said, "There is no room in this house for thee
and me." And the door was not opened to him. So the lover went
back into the desert and fasted and prayed. At the end of a year,
he returned once more to the Beloved's door and knocked.

And the voice from within said again: "Who is there?" This time, the lover, having learned self-renunciation, answered: 'It is thyself.' And the door was opened. (Jalaluddin Rumi, quoted in Cragg, 1976, p. 56)

* * * * *

Our master used to say: The true way to hurt the enemy is to be occupied with the love of the Friend. On the other hand, if you engage in war with the enemy, he will have obtained what he wanted from you and at the same time you will have lost the opportunity of loving the Friend.

Whenever someone shows hostility towards you, whether he be one of you nor not, do not be concerned with yourselves, but with what your Lord has commanded. Provided you do not defend yourselves, God will defend you and take care of your cause. But if you do defend yourselves and are concerned with your cause, He will leave it to you to manage it, and you will be powerless. For it is 'God who has power over all things.' (Cragg, 1976, p. 48)

* * * * *

Nasrudin, ferrying a pedant across a piece of rough water, said something ungrammatical to him. "Have you never studied grammar?" asked the scholar.

"No."

"Then half of your life has been wasted."

A few minutes later Nasrudin turned to the passenger.
"Have you ever learned how to swim?"

"No. Why?"

"Then *all* your life is wasted—we are sinking."

(Shah, 1964, p. 58)

* * * * *

Sufism contains plenty of such passionate poems, wise and humorous stories, pithy statements, and prayers. These examples illustrate the core belief of Islam and present such matters of wisdom to learned and unlearned alike. Sufi's love for God is so intense that he or she consciously chooses God above anything or anyone else. Oneness or Unity of God is professed, proclaimed, and preferred above the dividedness or duality of human nature.

The following section will examine the inward and outward movements of Islam and the origins and five pillars of Islam and Sufism. The next portion of the chapter will discuss one of the significant mystical methods of Sufism, namely, *dhikr* or remembrance of God, analyzing how sensory and imagery modes are used. It will illustrate how supplementaries are engaged as additional support to enhance efficacy of *dhikr* or invocation. Different kinds of *dhikr*, meditations visualizing one's master, and the activation of subtleties will then be addressed. Another Sufi mystical approach called *sama* or spiritual concert of the Whirling Dervishes will be examined. The next section will elaborate on three Sufi methods to approach God, namely, the path of love, of ecstasy, and of intuition, detailing lives and messages of some renowned Sufi mystics. The chapter will conclude with a short discussion on imagery in the Sufi symbolism and calligraphy.

Exoterism and Esoterism

Sufism is the inner component or mysticism of the religion of Islam (Stoddart, 1985). Mysticism in every religion is composed of an

inner dimension. As a derivative from the Greek word *myein* or "to close the eyes," it is something mysterious which may not be obtained by ordinary human or intellectual efforts. It is a spiritual experience which depends neither on rational nor sensual methods; but it is an inner light which arises from the wisdom of the heart (Schimmel, 1975). Sufism is distinctively mystical, yet it is the inward movement of the formal religion of Islam.

The two dimensions of Islam, the inward and the outward—while each has unique features—are inherently related to each other. Stoddart (1985) and Arasteh and Sheikh (1986) liken the outward or "exoterism" of Islam to an outward circumference of a circle; and the center of the circle is the inner Truth or "esoterism," which is Sufism. The radius which proceeds from the outer circumference to the center is called *tariqa* or the mystical path. Smith (1991) adds that the Sufis compared the distinction between the outer and inner aspects of religion to a pitcher and the water it contained. They cried, "Love the pitcher less and the water more" (p. 258). Allah presents Himself in the Quran as both "the Outward [*al-zahir*] and the Inward [*al-batin*] (57:3)" (p.258). The Arabic word *Sufi* means "wool," meaning the coarse woolen garment worn by the first generation of Muslim ascetics. Hence it refers to someone, who, detaching from the worldly desires, has reached the goal, just as the *Yogi* of Hinduism. It could also refer to the "initiates" who are still journeying toward the goal (Arasteh & Sheikh, 1989).

Origins of Islam and Sufism

Islam is the third of the Semitic monotheisms, the other two being Judaism and Christianity. The birth of Islam begins in Mecca during the seventh century with the revelation which the Prophet Muhammad is

believed to have received from God through the intermediary of the Archangel Gabriel. The revelation occurred to Muhammad in middle life and was gradually made known to his companions over a number of years. These intermittent utterances of the Prophet were later composed into a sacred collection in Arabic, known as the "Quran," the holy book of Islam. According to Lings (1975), "if the theme of the Quran is above all Allah Himself, its secondary theme is that it comes directly from Him by way of Revelation and that it leads back to Him through guidance along *the straight path*" (p. 26). "For Islam, the Quran is the direct and immediate Word of God" (Stoddart, 1986, p. 25)

Being the Uncreated Word of God (Lings, 1975), it is the Quran, and not Muhammad, which is the center of Islam. While in Christianity, Christ is true Man and true God, in Islam the Quran is truly the Word of God and Muhammad is only a true Man. Just as the annunciation came to Mary through the angel Gabriel, revelation came to Muhammad through the Archangel Gabriel. While virgin Mary gave birth to a Son, the uneducated Muhammad produced a Book. As Mary's "virginity" was significant for Christians, the "illiteracy" of the unlettered Prophet has spiritual importance for Muslims. Both Jews and Arabs claim posterity to Abraham. Whereas the Jews trace their descendancy from Isaac, the son of Abraham and Sarah, the Arabs, including Muhammad, attribute their origin to Ishmael, the son of Abraham and the slave woman Hagar. The stone altar called "Kaba" (literally means "cube" because of its shape) at Mecca, said to have been erected by Abraham and Ishmael, illustrates the significant roles played by Ishmael and Hagar toward their progeny, the Muslims (see Figure Example 25).

Some historians consider the birth of Sufism as a result of the worldliness of Islam during Umayyad (one of the four caliphs of Muhammad) period between 661 and 750 A. D. (Nielsen, Hein, Reynolds, Miller, Karff, Cochran, & McLean 1983 & Smith, 1991); while Islamic scholars claim that it originated with the Prophet Muhammad with his inner circle of companions. The Prophet himself made a spiritual ascension into the intimate presence of God and became the prototype of mystical wisdom. Legend holds that Mohammed himself transmitted the esoteric wisdom to his cousin and son-in-law Ali ibn Abi Talib. Other members of his family were also granted mystical insights or engaged in mystical practices. Mystical tradition maintains also that "the people of the bench," some poor and pious members of the community who lived in the mosque at Median, were his companions who became the spiritual ancestors of Sufism (Schimmel, 1975).

Five Pillars of Islam and Sufism

Both Islam and Sufism are anchored in five obligations of divine worship. The most central message or *risala* is the declaration of faith or *shahada* which is twofold: "There is no god but God; Muhammad is the Messenger of God" (*La ilaha illa Llah; Muhammadur Rasulu Llah*) (Stoddart, 1985, p. 31). This *shahada* is cardinal to all the Sufi and Islam doctrines and everything else derives from this core belief. The Islamic law or *sharia* comprises "Five Pillars or *arkam* of Islam:" profession of faith or *shahada*, ritual prayer or *salat*, fast or *sawm* during Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, almsgiving or *zakat*, and the pilgrimage or *hajj* to Mecca.

Faith or *iman* is the assent one gives to declaration of faith or *shahada*. The Arabic word "Islam" means "submission" (i. e. to God), and

"Muslim" refers to "one who submits." A Muslim is called upon to assert this faith in the formula mentioned above. There are external and internal aspects of this faith. Both public and private testimony or confessions of faith are required. Repetition of the formula many times a day affirms one in the religious relationship which is "vertical and horizontal, personal and social" (Nielsen et al., 1983, p. 608).

Ritual prayer or *salat* is the canonical prayer observed five times a day at dawn, noon, afternoon, sunset, and night. It encompasses specific words and coordinated physical movements, the most dramatic one being a full prostration in which the worshippers touch the earth with their foreheads, symbolizing a total submission to the One who formed them out of the dust. It could be performed in the gathering of an assembly in a *mosque* or place of prostration, coordinated by an *imam* or "one who stands before God," or it could be performed alone, with family members, or with traveling companions. It is traditionally performed facing Mecca, which geographically symbolizes the unity of the worshippers as well as the object of worship. Muslims are encouraged to go to a mosque for the noon prayer on Friday which is called the Day of Gathering. Ritual prayer symbolizes leaving behind all concerns and directing all energies to the One who created everything.

The third of the five pillars is the fast or *sawm*, observed during the month of Ramadan because it was during this month that Muhammad received the initial Quran revelations. Every Muslim, if health permits, must abstain from food, drink, tobacco, and sexual activity from the first ray of dawn to the onset of darkness. The symbol of Ramadan is to recognize the inner hunger for God more than yielding to carnal desires.

Almsgiving or *zakat* is the fourth pillar of Islam, which imposes the social responsibility of sharing one's goods with those in need. Parting with the abundance of material wealth symbolically imitates God's generosity to humanity and it is considered only making loans to God which will be repaid multiple times in the next world.

The fifth pillar of Islam requires that every Muslim, if possible, make a pilgrimage or *hajj* to the holy city of Mecca once in lifetime. Many observances of the pilgrimage supposedly imitate certain aspects of Abraham and his religious practices. While most of the pilgrims are men, women and children can also participate in the pilgrimage. The white garment donned by the pilgrims before they enter the holy city symbolizes unity and purity and signifies that neither their worldly success nor their lack of it precludes them from experiencing unity with God. After performing ablutions, the Muslims enter the mosque in Mecca and circumambulate the cube-shaped building (see Figure Example 25) at the center of the sanctuary seven times, each time observing different rites. The first rite is touching or kissing the black stone set in one corner. As mentioned earlier, legend holds that a white stone was originally delivered to Abraham by the archangel Gabriel and later this stone was blackened by the sins of humanity.

Another the pilgrims perform is the ritual running between two hills near the Kabah. The Bible says that Abraham's wife Sarah, unable to bear him any offspring, gave him the slave girl, Hagar, as a concubine to bear offspring. Later on, out of jealousy, Sarah coaxed Abraham to expel Hagar and her son Ishmael from the household. As she neared the site of the Mecca sanctuary, after wandering in the wilderness and dying of thirst, Hagar ran between two hills, crying out for divine assistance.

The well of Zamzam was the gift of divine intervention to Hagar's prayers. Hence the reenactment of history illustrates humanity's desperate need for God and God's response. Pilgrims perform another rite of standing at Arafat, where they experience a powerful sense of standing before God. Then, at Mina on their way back to Mecca, the pilgrims stone three pillars which symbolize human resistance to the devil, who allegedly appeared to Abraham and Isaac and tempted them to resist the divine command to offer Isaac as sacrifice. There is also the animal sacrifice rite which recalls to mind God's permission to Abraham to sacrifice an animal instead of Isaac. Thus *hajj* or pilgrimage today stands as the great unifying moment of Islam. All the five pillars have been pointed out by the Prophet as essential duties of humanity, constituting a total submission to God (Nielsen et al., 1983).

Additional Sufi Meanings

Sufism takes these five pillars literally, adds symbolic meanings to them, and practices them with an inward meaning. Sufis concentrate on the inner illumination which arises through submission to the revealed law and faith in the proclamation of One God and His Messenger, the Prophet in all sincerity. The central method of the Sufis is *dhikr* or invocation (spelled also as *zehr* or *ziker*). Prior to following this method, a Sufi is to practice all five pillars in an inward manner. Faith or *iman* refers to inner illumination. Ritual prayer or *salat* is understood not only as a sign of "slavehood" toward one's Lord, but also as merger of the Sufi with the song of universal praise continuously offered by creation to the Creator. Fasting or *sawm* symbolizes the total dependence of the poor on Him who is rich beyond imagination. Almsgiving or *zakat* indicates that everything in life, including life itself, belongs to him.

Everything is only God's gift which has to be shared with all who are in need. Finally, the pilgrimage or *hajj* to the Kaba in Mecca is only an external symbol of an inward journey within the heart where the communion between the human and the Divine occurs.

Sufi Mystical Path

Any religion has two basic components: theory and practice or doctrine and method. Whereas one concerns the intellect, the other relates to the heart, appealing to the two faculties, 'mind' and 'will.' Practice is the outward expression of inward belief, and it consists of public and private worship. The Sufi's spiritual path encompasses a rite of initiation which is essential, marking the beginning of an inward life for the initiate. The aspirant is initiated into the mystical path by a Sufi master or *sheikh*, who in turn has received the rite of initiation from another master. The succession dates back to the Prophet himself, who supposedly initiated his own companions, Caliphs Abu Bakr and Ali, who were the first Sufi descendants. The chain of initiation is known as *silsila*. There are many Sufi Brotherhoods or Orders which bear the names of masters, constituting a family tree of Sufi masters, who are known for their outstanding holiness. These orders crystallized in the twelfth and thirteenth century and continue to exist to this day.

The Quran

Many of the Prophet's revelations were recorded at or just after the time of their utterance during his Medinan period. Perhaps some of his earliest revelations remained only in the memories of his companions. After Muhammad's death, his followers began to write down the utterances and proclaimed them as "the Speech of God." Some of them became well-known and are held to be authoritative. Revelation is

primarily in the speech form and it cannot be merely read silently or passively. The word "Quran" itself means "lecture" or "recitation," which implies that it should be read aloud or recited or chanted in worship. Even when the Quran is used for silent meditation, the internalization is believed to be a form of speech. The poetry, rhythms, and other forms of composition which are repetitious in nature, are meant to be read, heard, proclaimed, or recited. "For the Muslim, the marvel of the Quran is not only what is said but how it is said" (Nielsen et al., 1983, p. 606). This explains how, as will be described below, many of the Sufi techniques, even those that include imagery, center around recitation.

Dhikr or Remembrance of God

Mystic and nonmystic Muslims practice ritual prayer. Ritual prayer is performed five times a day during the prescribed hours starting from sunrise and to complete darkness after sunset. Ritual purity in the form of ablutions, which are symbols of internal purification of the soul, precedes ritual prayer. Bodily postures such as *rakas* or units of prostration, genuflection, or upright position, accompany ritual prayer or *salat*. The Sufis meticulously added to the ritual ablutions and performed numerous *rakas* or units of prostration, genuflection, or upright positions which had symbolic meanings. Different prayer formulae and the Quranic verses were recited and repeated. Numbers such as three, seven, fifteen, fifty, seventy, and one thousand were some of the common numbers for repetitions. The first Sura of the Quran, for example, is called *fatiha*, which is praising God in words similar to the "Our Father" prayer of Christianity. Other prayer formulae were also used for free prayer, using the Quranic texts.

Sensory and Imagery Modes of Dhikr

The Sufis follow the above-mentioned methods of prayer, but *dhikr* is the most distinctive Sufi method of prayer. Stoddart (1985) who considers the method *par excellence*, identifies the two-fold meaning of *dhikr* when translated as "invocation:" "remembrance" and "mention." The Quran insists on 'remembering' God by 'invoking' His Name: "Invoke the Name of the Lord and devote thyself to Him with utter devotion" (Sura 8) and "Remember God with much remembrance" (Sura 41) (Stoddart, 1985, p. 63). Referring to *dhikr*, Stoddart says, "this may be done silently or in the form of a chant, motionlessly or accompanied by a rhythmic swaying which may take the form of a dance" (p. 66). Using one essential formula "Allah," Smith (1991) adds,

The Sufis supplement . . . the practice of remembering Allah through repeating his Name Remembrance of God is at the same time a forgetting of self, so Sufis consider the repetition of Allah's Name the best way of directing their attention Godward. Whether they utter God's Name alone or with others, silently or aloud, accenting its first syllable sharply or prolonging its second syllable as long as breath allows, they try to fill every free moment of the day with its music. Eventually this practice kneads the syllables into the subconscious mind, from which it bubbles up with the spontaneity of a birdsong. (p. 263)

Bakhtiar (1975) describes the mode of the Sufi *dhikr* as follows: "The repetition continues, either alone or in assembly, aloud or silently, until the Sufi identifies the heartbeat with the Divine presence" (p. 24). The foregoing descriptions of *dhikr* indicate that the recollection of the Names can be combined with breathing in either imagery mode and/or

sensory mode, either with/without others. The results derived from the practice of *dhikr* illustrate its transformative power on the human psyche.

Purpose of Dhikr

Furthermore, Bakhtiar substantiates the reasons why an active invocation of God's Name must be engaged. This method is employed in order to transcend the ceaselessly thinking mind, whereby the restless psyche's resistance is gradually subdued. He even insists that there is no meditation possible without the invocation of a Divine Name. It reconnects us to our original state in which we were created by the Divine Word. When we remember God's Name by invocation and mention, God is present in His Names. Divine Substance is in the air and when we invoke His Name through words, we give our existence back to God. By becoming conscious of the spiritual substance of our breath, we gain spiritual energy which is prevalent in the air.

Dhikr is not limited to any particular place or time; nor is it like the ritual prayer which is restricted to particular hours, preceded by ritual purification. The formula for the *dhikr* is usually transmitted through a chain of spiritual masters, tracing its origin to the Prophet himself. Legend holds that Muhammad taught Abu Bakr the silent *dhikr* during his emigration to Medina, while Ali was bestowed the loud *dhikr*. The formula is to be repeated several times a day. Schimmel (1975) reports the story of a child who learned the formula "O Allah! O Allah! O Allah!" from his uncle who instructed the boy to say it continuously for day after day, and night after night until he learned to utter it even in his sleep. The little disciple got so absorbed in remembering God that one day a piece of wood fell on his head and broke the head. The drops

of blood dripping from his head formed the phrase, "O Allah! O Allah! O Allah!"

Dhikr or Invocation of Divine Names

Besides the most important formula, "Allah,," other attributes of God were also used in this spiritual exercise which transported the adepts into levels beyond comparison. Arasteh and Sheikh (1989) illustrate how the famous Sufi mystic Al-Ghazzali's method consisted of repeating the 99 names or attributes of God (see Figure Examples 26, 27, & 28), which were employed for concentration, eventually leading one to deeper insights and enlightenment. These Names are generally divided into three categories: Essence, Actions, and Qualities (Bakhtiar, 1976). Arasteh and Sheikh (1989) describe the method as follows:

Then one chooses one of the attributes of God, or just the word "Allah," representing all of creation; now one begins to chant. One must concentrate on the heart and practice chanting without interruption. After a while, the lips become dry and one cannot utter the word again, but the registered motion continues in *heart*. It is at this moment that the gate of inspiration and enlightenment opens. One is ready now for receiving the Creator's blessings. The light of truth, the flash of creativity, the gem of wisdom, the new experiences then take place. (p. 170)

This description of the method points out how one begins to chant the names aloud in the mouth continuously in the sensory mode. Once this loud articulation tires, the aspirant's motion is transferred to the heart, where it becomes an imagery mode because sound is merely reverberated in the heart, letting the divine take over. The Sufis teach a number of formulae such as Al-Ghazzali's, and specify exactly how they have to be

repeated in order to bear fruit in paradise. Merely repeating the confession of faith several thousand times would produce a blissful transformation of the subconscious. Many Muslims may not usually get up from the ritual prayer without adding many *dhikr* formulae. "Many a Muslim has found consolation in the frequent repetition of a sacred sentence or a divine name from which he experiences comfort and strength" (Schimmel, 1975, p. 177). The remarkable power of this spiritual exercise is believed to lead to a healing experience in the body, mind, and spirit of the practitioners.

Supplementaries to Dhikr:

Rosaries.

Complementary techniques were added on to the practice of *dhikr* in order to enhance the outcome. Particularly rosaries, breath control, and body postures served as facilitating instruments. Since the ninth century, rosaries with thirty-three or ninety-nine beads have been used to count the repetitions of the Divine Names as a method of concentration. Rosaries were a medium to promote the "heedlessness" needed to absorb the mental stress of constant, intense *dhikr*. One may, for example, start the litany with the first invocations by saying one by one, *Ya Rahman ya Raheem*, "O Merciful!, O All-Compassionate!" and ending with the last Name, simultaneously counting the beads one by one. The constant invocation of the Divine Names seemingly produced a variety of qualities in the human psyche, mysteriously connecting the human beings with the Creator. There are meticulous rules as to which Name must be invoked at what time. For example, *Al-Wadud* or "The Loving Beloved," is believed to make the mystic loved by all God's

creatures, and "when it is constantly recited in seclusion, intimacy and divine love will increase" (Schimmel, 1975, p. 178).

Body Postures.

Although a general recollection of names could be performed anywhere at any time, the official *dhikr* called for the observation of certain preliminaries. An analysis of methods indicates their similarity to Indian yogic postures. Schimmel (1975) describes Simnani's instructions in the following words,

the mystic should sit cross-legged, the right hand on the left, and the left hand keeping the right leg in position on the top of the left leg . . . Even if the sitting position style might vary according to the orders, the correct position was considered of great importance for the success of the *dhikr*, and the manuals carefully explain the relevant rules. (p. 170)

Once the body postures were assumed, then slowly the practice of *dhikr* or recollection gradually began in the sensory and/or imagery modes. Body postures were not only preludes, but they continued simultaneously with the practice of this spiritual exercise.

Breath Control.

Besides the body postures, breath control was also introduced when *dhikr* was well developed. Breaths were controlled, held, or counted in order to enhance the outcome of the exercise. "Every breath that goes out without remembering Him is dead, but every breath that goes out in recollecting the Lord is alive and is connected with Him" (Sahl, quoted in Schimmel, 1975, p. 173). Although there are no specific guidelines in Sufism, this method has parallels in Hinduism, Christianity, and Buddhism. That breath control is substantial for

facilitating concentration is pointed out by Schimmel, "concentration without control of breathing is scarcely possible" (p. 174). In the Middle Ages, holding the breath for a long time was also practiced as a part of the influence of Indian asceticism; and according to Schimmel, it remained as a disputed technique in Sufism. Trimingham (1971) adds that *dhikr* served as a means to avoid distractions, draw closer to God, and glorify Him, "by the constant repetition of His name, by rhythmic breathing either mentally (*dhikr khafi*) or aloud (*dhikr jahri* or *jali*)," underscoring the importance of breathing and sensory and/or imagery modes of the practice (p. 194). The intense practice of *dhikr* is believed to have drowned the Sufis in sweat while uttering the confession of faith; they would also melt snow around them because of the internal heat they produced. Hence, after the performance of recollection, the Sufis drank water to cool down the heat generated in the body.

Breath Control and Shahada.

As body postures were assumed and breath control exercised, concentration in the sensory mode was gradually introduced; then one would move on to the imagery mode. The content for *dhikr* was the *shahada* or the central declaration of faith. How this spiritual exercise has been used in the Naqshbandi tradition along with body postures and breath control is described in two different sources. According to Schimmel, the description of Khwaja Attar is as follows:

"The purpose of *dhikr* is not to speak much; one says in one breath three times *la ila illa Allah*, beginning from the right side, and brings it down to the heart, and brings forth *Muhammad rasul Allah* for the left side. A ninefold or eighteenfold repetition in one breath is also possible" (p. 174)

Three Kinds of Dhikr

Trimingham (1971) elaborately discusses three kinds of *dhikr*: *dhikr al-awqat* or daily office, *dhikr al-khafī* or one's personal or occult recollection, and *dhikr al-hadra* or communal exercise or recitals in congregation. He quotes a Naqshbandi *dhikr khafī* which describes the exercise combining body postures, breath control, and the declaration of the faith in the following words:

'He must keep the tongue pressed against the roof of his mouth, his lips and teeth firmly shut, and hold his breath. Then starting with the word *la*, he makes it ascend from the navel to the brain. When it has arrived at the brain he says *ilaha* to the right shoulder and *illa llah* to the left side, driving it forcefully into the pineal heart through which it circulates to all the rest of the body. The phrase *Muhammad rasul Allah* is made to incline from the left to the right side, and then one says, 'My God, Thou art my goal and satisfying Thee is my aim.'" (P. 202)

Trimingham (1971) describes another Qadiri *dhikr*, which is supposedly an Indian group, quoting As-Sanusi in which an awareness of body parts and body postures is created initially and the recollection begins in a sensory mode and gradually moves to the heart (which is an imagery mode):

"Sitting cross-legged he seizes with the big toe of the right foot and (the toe that) adjoins it the vein called *kaimas*, which is the great vein situated in the hollow of the knee joint, and puts his hands on this knees, opening his fingers in the form of the word 'Allah.' He begins with the *lam*, sustaining it until his heart is opened and the divine lights disclosed . . . For this he sits in the just-

mentioned position, turning his face inwards towards his right shoulder, saying *ha*; turning his face left saying *hu*; lowering his head, uttering within himself the word *hayy*; and carrying on repeating without respite." (p. 202)

There is also a "rasping saw" *dhikr*, originating from central Asia. In this method "the *ha* is expired very deeply and the *hi* is as low as possible" which sounds like sawing (Trimingham, 1971, p. 197). More enunciation on breath control techniques emerged from the principles of Yoga and many orders adopted the Yogic practices (Burckhardt, 1976). This is a clear example of how a variety of preliminaries build up toward the expected goal (concentration of mind and body), and in the final stage, the recollection is uttered only in the heart. The adept, upon entering *dhikr*, should keep the image of his *sheikh* or master before his/her mind's eyes while requesting spiritual help (Schimmel, 1975); and there are special recollections attributed to famous *sheikhs* or masters.

Visualization of the Spirit of a Saint or One's Sheikh or Master

The masters themselves would visit the tombs of the deceased Sufis and concentrate on the spirits of the departed souls in order to augment spiritual energy (Schimmel, 1975). Referring to the Naqshbandi masters, Schimmel says, "By directing one's thought to the spirit of this or that mystic—instead of concentrating upon one's sheikh exclusively—a mystic might achieve a greater sublimation of the spirit, according to the power of the saint in question" (p. 175). Trimingham (1971) alludes to two main eastern practices: the devotee concentrated upon the spirit of a saint or of the current master in order to have a communion or union with the spirit of the saint, and attempted the possession of the spirit of the saint or the *sheikh* or master. In a method known as

Muraqba or spiritual communion, concentration was employed merely as a method to gaze upon the picture of the Prophet, saint, master, or Quranic verse, but it was not used as a process. In other words, fixing the gaze on the object was engaged for an unveiling of the mystery of life by almost losing one's attention completely on the focused object.

Ar-Rabita or Bond or Link with Master

Trimingham describes another method, called *rabita*, which is a general custom of the eastern orders and in which one was completely absorbed with the *sheikh* or master to gain a bond or link with the *sheikh* (also spelled as *shaikh*). He quotes As-Sanusi as follows:

"In order to attain this he must visualize interiorly the image of his shaikh. He imagines his image as though on his right shoulder. Then picturing from the right shoulder to his heart a line which can act as a passage whereby the spirit of the shaikh can take possession of that organ. This process maintained continuously will ensure his attaining absorption in the shaikh."

Elsewhere as-Sanusi shows that *rabita* is a general custom in eastern orders, and refers to this form of meditation as a guard against random thoughts: "He has an additional support who props himself on 'the bond with the shaikh,' that is, conjuring up the image of the shaikh in vision, seeking protection in him from the attacks of the wild beasts of the valleys of destruction." (pp. 212-213)

Ar-Rabita or visualization of the masters is said to be even superior to *dhikr* or recollection. "It involves keeping to the forefront of one's mind a mental image of the shaikh" (Qadiri book, quoted in Trimingham, 1971, p. 213). The foregoing quotes are examples of how imagery played a role

as a concentration technique in order to control random thoughts and acquire protection from such a spiritual exercise.

Sufi Meditation Transcends Dhikr

Dhikr or recollection is used as a meditative technique. This kind of a practice is believed to be conducive to what Shafii (1985) calls a "passive concentration," in which the recollection is applied simultaneously with breathing. In this meditation participants transcend the awareness of breathing and even recollection and become tranquil or "empty," experiencing almost a total release from thoughts, fantasies, sensations, ideas, and feelings. A variety of supports such as the Names, a verse from the Quran, a Sufi poem, or the name of a *sheikh* or master may be used. Meditators journey from active stage to passive mindfulness, known as *fana* or annihilation or emptiness. Shafii describes one such meditation as follows:

Silent meditation (*zikr*) begins with the passive concentrative meditation of quietly and silently inhaling and exhaling one of the names of God. Thoughts, feelings, fantasies, ideas, and sensations are not actively suppressed. the meditation allows him or herself to experience feelings and then gently brings attention to the object of meditation.

As the Sufi becomes more experienced in meditation, each meditative session begins with passive concentrative meditation, but gradually moves to a state of mindfulness. The Sufi transcends the experience of breathing, *zikr*, and goes through the phase of active mindfulness by focusing on thoughts, sensations, and feelings, eventually reaching the state of passive mindfulness. In this state, the Sufi is totally free from concentration on *zikr* or

specific sensory perceptions, feelings, or thoughts. The Sufi experiences "moments of *fana*," similar to the experience of "emptiness" in Zen Buddhism and *nirvana* in Yoga. (Shafii, 1985, p. 93)

(The word *pir* mentioned in the quote means teacher or master). Shafii (1989) alludes to another kind of Sufi meditation called, *zikr-i-jali* or glorious outward meditation. In this kind of meditation, "a short verse from the Koran, a melodic Sufi poem, the name of one of the attributes of God, or the name of a Sufi *pir* is rhythmically chanted and actively concentrated upon" (p. 93).

Gradually, the meditator transcends all the supplementaries with which the meditation commenced. The meditation culminates in emptying the body and mind of all their sensations and thoughts and experiencing *fana* or annihilation of all awareness. This kind of meditation, according to Shafii (1985), resembles the concentrative technique of Tantric Yoga and *samadhi* of Tibetan Buddhism, and contemplative Christian traditions. In this technique we see how meditation uses sensory and imagery modes only in order to transcend all the techniques and supplementaries and reach a totally liberating stage.

Silent and Loud Kinds of Dhikr

Two important distinctions are made about the nature of remembrance (although some hold that there is a traditional tripartition): silent and loud. These two categories are significant to analyze because they indicate the relevance of imagery and/or sensory modes. According to Schimmel,

The distinctive worship of the Sufi is the *dhikr* a recollection that can be performed either silently or aloud Defenders of both practices found Koranic sanction: "Be not loud-voiced in thy worship, nor yet silent therein, but follow a way between" (Sura 17:10). The Sufi practices of *dhikr* were founded upon a Koranic order, "and recollect God often" (Sura 33:40), for, as another word attests, "the recollection of God makes the heart calm" (Sura 13:28). (quoted in Schimmel, 1975, p. 167)

Accordingly, Schimmel points out that there are generally two branches of recollection—the recollection of the tongue and the recollection in the heart—and the latter is usually considered superior to the former. Although one may recollect with the tongue, the heart may not be attuned. To this, a third tradition is added: the recollection with love. The interdependence of all the three is beautifully expressed in the words of Kharraz:

"A recollection with the tongue not felt by the heart—that is the usual recollection; a recollection with the tongue in which the heart is present—that is a recollection seeking reward, and a recollection when the heart is wandering in recollection and lets the tongue be silent, and the worth of such a recollection is known only to God." (quoted in Schimmel, 1975, p. 171)

In this quote we see the sensory mode is exercised first with the exclusion of the imagery mode in the first level; it is combined with the imagery mode at the second level; and both seem to be nonfunctional or absent at the third level. This kind of *dhikr* is expected to permeate the whole being of Sufi, eventually forgetting the recollection of everything

else, experiencing a total blanking of mind—a sign of absolute surrender to God.

Loud Dhikr as Aid for Group Ecstasy.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, whether or not *dhikr* should be performed silently or spoken aloud, created major divisions in Naqshbandi orders in Central Asia. Those who insisted on the loud quoted support from Quran and argued that it was meant to wake up inattentive ears and it was "a cry against infidelity and heedlessness" (Schimmel, 1975, p. 175). Others quoted the words of the Prophet, "You do not call upon a Deaf one and not an Absent one, but you call unto a Hearing one who is with you wherever you are!" (quoted in Schimmel, p. 175). Yet tradition remained divided. Often, loud *dhikr* was employed in small groups as a means to ecstatic or quasi-ecstatic state:

The repetition of the word *Allah*, or of the rhythmical formula *la ilah illa Allah*, accompanied by certain movements, could easily induce a state of trance. The word *Allah* would be shortened until only its last letter, *h*, remained; pronounced *ha*, it was spoken toward the left shoulder, then *hu* was spoken toward the right shoulder, and *hi* was pronounced with a lowering of the head. Often the Sufis would join in a *halqa*, a circle formed around a *qutb*, "pivot;" they would put right hands on the left hands of their neighbors and with closed eyes repeat the *shahada* until it consisted merely of the last *h*. Anyone who has had the opportunity to attend such a rhythmical *dhikr*, with its increasing tempo and its reduction of words until a kind of permanent sighing is reached, knows that even a non committed listener is easily carried away by the strength of the experience. (Schimmel, 1975,

p. 176)

Although loud recollection is used to help devotees to get into a rhythm, later when the experience is heightened, only sighing is heard, indicating that the experience becomes more inward than outward. Trimingham (1971) illustrates a Shadhili *dhikr* that is performed with a group sitting in a circle, with its leader in the center, surrounded by a grouped choir. They begin by reciting the office together for thirty minutes and then they begin chanting the first formula or *tahlil* confession of faith loudly:

Participants sit either in a circle, or in two lines facing each other, the singers and the shaikh in the center or at one end. The *dhikr* commences with the recitation of the *tahlil* in a loud voice [the stages are called *maratib adh-dhikr*] for about two hours [no count being made], but with variations. Then, at a sign from the shaikh, they subside to the ground cross-legged and continue silently [though the rhythmic breathing in unison is very audible], swaying from side to side or backwards-forwards. Next, on their feet again, the word Allah is repeated for half an hour aloud . . . (Trimingham, 1971, pp. 205-206)

Then seven other words are recited for another half hour, and the *dhikr* is finally concluded with other long prayers after which the group comes to consciousness. Other physical movements such as jumping, moving from slower to faster levels, swaying of left-right sides, and closing eyes were also added in variations. This kind is a typical *dhikr* which combines loud recitals or chanting, body postures, followed by silent recollection, rhythmic breathing, and swaying—all of which contribute to a transformation of consciousness. Generally speaking, it promotes a wellness experience, releasing participants from all mental, physical, and

emotional blocks. What is experienced by the devotees is the rejuvenation of energy beyond description. Sensory-imagery modes of experience are enhanced when they are coupled with body postures and rhythmical breathing.

Activation of Subtleties

Locations of Organs of Perception.

Schimmel (1975) mentions another eighteenth century Naqshbandi tradition in which there was a practice of the *dhikr* of the *lataif*, which are the five focal points of the body upon which the Sufi concentrates his or her recollection in order to activate them until his or her consciousness is transformed. Shah (1964) describes their locations in the parts of the body and the colors associated with them. Seven subtle body points are mentioned out of which the activation of five is sufficient for illumination. He compares them with the *chakras* or the seven centers of the subtle body in Hinduism and the Christian alchemist sign of the cross. For Hindus the invisible subtle body is physically located on the body, connected by innumerable nerves or channels or *nadis*. The Christian alchemists believe that a succession of colors can be seen by focusing concentration on certain parts of the body. For Sufis, the *lataif* or organs of perception are located on different parts of the body: mind or *qalb*, with its color yellow is located on the left side of the body; spirit or *ruh*, with its color red on the right side of the body; consciousness or *sirr* and its color white situated on the solar plexus; intuition or *khafi* and its color black located on the forehead; and finally, deep perception of consciousness or *ikhfa* and its color green, located in the center of the chest. Self and Deeply Hidden are the other two, located in the navel and brain.

Sign of the Cross.

The order in which these colors are perceived is very important to the Christian alchemist and the usual succession of color is black-white-yellow-red. When this succession is translated into the physical equivalents, they take the form of crossing oneself with the sign of the cross. Shah (1964) claims that this activation of the organs of perception is a Sufi adaptation which has its succession in this order: yellow-red-white-black-green. Various color successions signify the corresponding progression of the individual consciousness. All of this merely presumes imagination of the subtle organs in different parts of the body. The imagery mode only enhances the sensory performance of ritual and the observer could consciously activate the subtle organs, meaningfully exploiting them.

Activation.

The activation of one or more centers may take place partially or accidentally, enabling the individual to deepen intuitive knowledge, corresponding to those particular *lataif* or organs of perception. These could be activated through techniques such as breathing exercises, dance movements (the famous whirling dervishes of Turkish Mevlevi Order is worth mention here, see Figure Example 29) and others. Each of these recollections has to be performed with quality. For example, the *dhikr qalbi*, located in the heart on the left side of the chest has to be performed with love and longing and so on. Finally, the *dhikr* is extended to the brain, eventually overwhelming the entire being of a person—body, mind, and spirit—leading to perfect recollectedness and peace, usually known as the royal recollection (Schimmel, 1975). There is yet another sevenfold *dhikr* of Sharani of the sixteenth century.

Dhikr Originates from God

Stoddart (1986) claims a parallel of *dhikr* between Hinduism and Christianity, underscoring its significance comparatively. The "God and His Name are one" is central to Sufism. The root of *dhikr* in Arabic is *dha-ka-ra*, from which three words are derived: *Madhkur* or the Invoked; *Dhakhir* or the Invoker; and *Dhikr* or the Invocation. According to Stoddart's analysis of Sufism, in the final analysis, it is God Himself who is invoked and God Himself is the invocation. This Divine Act only passes through the human mystery of salvation. He likens *Madhkur-Dhakhir-Dhikr* to the core Hindu belief: God is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, which is translated "Being-Consciousness-Bliss," meaning God is the Divine Subject and the Divine Object and the Divine Union. Stoddart compares this to the Holy Trinity of Christianity: Father-Son-Spirit. In order for Sufi to make such a deeper connection with God, he or she must plunge into boundaries beyond senses and imagination, beyond body and mind, and beyond will and intellect, embarking into the world of the spirit, whereby "it feels like a gift rather than an acquisition," and this Sufi level beyond concentration can be compared to the "infused gift" of Christian mystical theology (Smith, 1991, p. 261).

The "Recollector" and the Recollected

This spiritual exercise is claimed to have produced remarkable qualities in the spirits of the adepts, leading the subject to a stage "in which the subject is lost in the object, in which recollection, recollecting subject, and recollected object become again one" (Schimmel, 1975, p. 172). The Sufis taught that the end of *dhikr* without words is supposed to lead to contemplation in which the subject and the object

are indistinguishable. Even word or imagination of God necessarily involves an awareness of subject and object:

"True *dhikr* is that you forget your *dhikr*" . . . says Shibli. Since even the word or thought 'O God!' implies the consciousness of subject and object, the last mystery of recollection is complete silence. "Worshipping has ten parts, of which nine are silences." (Schimmel, 1975, p. 172).

That the highest stage of this experience is indescribable and that it transcends both sensory and imagery modes is emphasized by Schimmel (1975):

Sincere recollection is beyond letter and thought; rosary and beads are, for the advanced Sufis, "like the lion painted in the bathroom" . . . i. e., dead, without meaning and value. He who has reached the last stage no longer speaks, for "when the tongue speaks, the heart is silent" . . . the poets may compare him to the lily, breathless with adoration and silent with ten tongues. Even the syllable *hu*, "he," or the letter *ha*, the last sound of the word "Allah," the last sigh in *dhikr*, becomes meaningless. (p. 172)

Although the *dhikr* begins with sensory and/or imagery modes, it transcends both and culminates in the heart whereby through "the *dhikr* of the heart the seeker becomes, eventually, completely heart; every limb of his is a heart recollecting God" (p. 173).

Sama or "Hearing" or Spiritual Concert

The goal of Sufi meditation is to experience a total annihilation of the self, called *fana*, and to persevere in a constant union with God. The culminating experience has been regarded as a free divine gift, carrying one out of himself/herself, often considered ecstasy. Sufi's word for

"ecstasy" is *wajd*, which means "finding," i. e. to find God and become attuned and peaceful in finding Him. Some Sufis called this experience "instasy" instead of "ecstasy," since the mystic is not transported out of himself, but rather, carried into the depths of himself/herself. Many a means was engaged in order to experience the ecstatic state. Singing, dancing, and even drugs, which were condemned by both orthodox and moderate Sufis, entered Sufi practices. Trimingham (1971) mentions other means such as rhythmical exercises involving body postures, breath control, synchronized movements, oral repetitions, numbers and symbols, colors and smells, perfumes and incense, ritual actions and purifications, words of power, and invocation to celestial beings, which were employed by the dervishes in order to open up consciousness to the vistas of the supra-sensible realm.

Listening to Music and Dancing Movements

Sama is usually translated as "hearing," which implies paying attention to sound. The hearing is so powerful that it moves the body according to its rhythm. Some will call it a "spiritual concert" in which dance movements are synchronized to the sacred music. Sufi schools have been split by the unresolved controversy over whether or not "listening to music" and "dancing movement" are legitimate means. Are they not illegitimate attempts to gain through human efforts what can only be granted by divine grace? Besides, mere sensual rather than spiritual pleasure is commonly attributed to listening to music and dance movements. The Western world came to know about the mystical dance in the convents of the Mevlevis, the Whirling Dervishes. Although the whirling movement has been institutionalized in this order, it has long been practiced in Islam. Even in Greece and primitive cultures

dance has been used as a magical means to placate the gods for rain and produce. Circumambulating a sacred object or person was believed to produce magical power or at least to gain power. Although music and rhythmical movement did not have orthodox approval, they provided an emotional kind of worship to those who could not benefit from the ritual prayer (Schimmel, 1975).

Arabs respond to the sound and rhythmical wording of the Quran in a spiritually uplifting manner. An expert's recitation of Quran could move the audience to tears. It is said that in the Middle Ages, Islam used to treat nervous diseases and mental illness by applying music as a therapy. Schimmel quotes an interesting anecdote of a Sufi blacksmith, named al-Haddad:

"One day he was sitting in his shop listening to a blind man who was reciting the Koran in the bazaar. He became so absorbed in listening that he put his hand into the fire, and without using the pincers, drew out a piece of molten iron from the furnace." Stories of this kind are frequently found in Islamic hagiography, and many miracles are, in fact, explained by a state of absolute unconsciousness caused by listening to the Koran or by performing any kind of mental prayer. (quoted in Schimmel 1975, p. 180)

Sufi mystics reached such a deep unconscious state that even surgical operations could be performed on their bodies and they would remain immune to pain. Stories and legends of this kind demonstrate how people could become fully absorbed while listening to the recitation of the Quran or observing mental prayer.

The Whirling Dervishes or Mevlevis

The Persian word "darwish" literally means, "the still of the door." The same word, accepted in Arabic and Turkish, describes the Sufi as one "who is at the door of enlightenment" (Friedlander, 1975, p. 15). One of the great Sufi mystics and poets, Jalaluddin Rumi, usually called "Maulana" or "Maulawi" by his disciples, is credited with the founding of this Order of the Whirling Dervishes ("Maulana" means "our master;" Turkish pronunciation is Mevlana). The basic aim of the dervish is to see everything from the eyes of the heart and to see the invisible from the visible. This is a desperate attempt to release the self from the glue that binds it to material reality and to merge it with God, becoming transformed into his channel of light. That the dervish saw everything from an inward perspective is illustrated by Rumi:

In a fair orchard, full of trees and fruit
 And vines and greenery, a Sufi sat with
 Eyes closed, his head upon his knee,
 Sunk deep in meditation, mystical.
 "Why," asked another, "dost thou not behold
 These signs of God the Merciful displayed
 Around Thee, which He bids us contemplate?"
 "The signs," he answered, "I behold within;
 Without is naught but symbols of the Signs."
 (Rumi, quoted in Friedlander, 1975, p. 19)

The experience of uncovering the buried treasure from looking with the eyes of the heart, and not of the head, is a typical way of the dervish life. Rumi is said to have gone through a metamorphosis when once he

saw another Sufi, Shamsi Tabriz, in his rags, demonstrating how to interiorize oneself by moving from mind to heart.

A Five-Step Dance.

The Whirling Dervishes recite the *dhikr* or invocation, emptying all their thought save that of God as they turn around. The dervishes wear a white sleeveless frock, a jacket with long sleeves, a belt, and a black overcoat which is cast aside before the ritual dance. They wear a long white cap which is a typical sign of the Mevlevis (see Figure Example 29). The dervishes inherited much of their music from Rumi. Many a classical musician have been inspired by Rumi. The dance is regulated with strict discipline. The dervishes use the triple technique: whirl, dance, and jump, and their actions are symbolic of spiritual reality (Trimingham, 1971). The dance consists of a five-step program in which each of their actions has a symbolic meaning before the dance climaxes in unveilings and revelations. Arasteh and Sheikh (1989) describe the meaning of the five step dance as follows:

The dancer takes steps and moves closed palms toward the chests (first act); then he or she takes another step, opens the palms, and moves the hands toward the ground, symbolizing release from the self (second act). Next, he or she raises the hands toward heaven to symbolize the nature of God and the fact that everything comes from Him (the third act). Then the dancer moves the hand over the head in such a way that the palms face the sky to symbolize that human beings do not know the nature of God (fourth act). Finally the dancer points the fingers of the right hand toward his or her object of desire, to illustrate that all that exists is thou.

The Sufis perform this dance with intense concentration on their object of desire. (pp. 152-153)

Symbolism of Whirling.

Bakhtiar (1976) interprets the symbolism of whirling as a reference to the "spirit's standing with God in its Secret" (p. 70). The leaping implies moving toward a union with God, from the confines of the human level. The stirring of heart which the Dervishes experience is the invitation from the Almighty God to appear before Him for service. The result of the dance is said to lead to the apprehension of unseen states or revelations. Not only do they invoke God's Name as they whirl, they also continue loud or silent invocation even after. The dance itself is the foretaste of the lost Center. "In fact the invocation of the Name, aloud or in silence, usually accompanies the dance which in any case is intended above all to plunge the dancer into a state of concentration upon Allah" (Lings, 1975, pp 84-85). The poetry of Rumi consisted of verses which resound a strong rhythm of dancing movements; and he believed music to be arising from the doors of Paradise. Freed from the fetters of the body, the soul joins in unison with the entire universe which moves in a constant mystical rhythm.

The dance itself reveals the interplay of sensory and imagery modes of performance. It starts out with listening to music and coordinating one's movements with the invocation and culminates in loud or silent recollection in order to contemplate the mysteries revealed during the experience. *Dhikr* or invocation appears to have preceded, accompanied, and followed the dance. When the dance progressed according to the music, the Dervishes continued using recollections such as the confession of faith, other formulae, or just the word Allah mentally,

while the sensory modes of recitation either preceded or followed the dance.

Sufism in the West

Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan is the eldest son and successor to Pir-O-Murshid Inayat Khan who established the Sufi Order in the West in 1919. Pir Vilayat has profound experiences in Sufi retreats; he has also learned meditation methods of many major world religions. In his books, "That which Transpires Behind that which Appears," he describes a method of whirling, meaningfully creating a rebirthing technique. Pir Vilayat blends concentration on the *chakras* of Hinduism to mobilize body's energy centers.

The meditation begins with whirling movements of the head and focuses on the third eye.

Begin the practice by whirling your head, moving your left shoulder, down to your left knee, up to your right shoulder, and back to the zenith. Imagine that you are tracing with your third eye a circle of light. Even your heart is forming a circle of light. But if you become aware of your crown center at the top of your head, then you will seem to be tracing a spiral that gets increasingly large as you whirl, and reaches right into the stars. (Khan, 1994, p. 60)

As the meditator immerses with the feeling of the spiral, he/she could experience the centrifugal forces. The meditation continues by enlarging one's being—the psyche and the body—and simultaneously expelling the negative and unhealthy impressions of the environment. The focus could shift to a mental whirling around the solar plexus. Instead of imagining

a whirling body, one could envision the magnetic field of the environment churning the magnetic field of the body.

Concentration then could shift to a sparkling aura of light of the self. Imagination moves to circumambulating the center, generating simultaneously centrifugal and centripetal forces. Once the whirling anchors in the zenith, inhalation and exhalation processes are combined. As one exhales, centrifugal forces are experienced and as the head whirls toward the center one starts inhaling. When inhalation begins the head is kept downwards toward the solar plexus and gradually the head is moved toward the heart center. The alchemical process is believed to lead to a recurrent rebirthing experience.

An Ideal Master Meditation

Khan (1982) invites the participants to an imaginary celestial Himalayan pilgrimage. The imagination glances at the beautiful scenic beauty of the Himalayas, the temples, the sannyasis (holy men or women), and thousands of the pilgrims around the temples. Then the imagination moves through the snow toward nature, particularly, to a spot where a fictitious sanniyasi is surrounded by a magnetic field. That person may represent any master, saint, prophet, or one's ideal *guru* or teacher, either known or heard about. Khan (1982) then describes the appearance of the person as follows:

You should now have a very clear picture of how you think your guru looks, even physically, in detail; his clothing, his bearing, and the glance of his eyes should be very clear. The first thing you notice is that the whole environment seems to be charged with his magnetism, which is tremendous; you yourself, sitting in his presence, feel magnetic and radiant with magnetic power—a power

you could use for healing. Then you notice the atmosphere of his being as distinct from his magnetism, and although it is impossible to describe, you can feel yourself bathing in the atmosphere of his being . . . Now you notice that he seems to manifest a divine power: his whole being seems to be inhabited by a power that is a sort of majesty; his being kingly It is the same power that moves the planets, the atom, the sea, the storm, and the sap in the trees—the power that can transform things.
(p. 91)

Then the meditator focuses on the aura which surrounds the master. The illumination from the master pierces the soul of the self: the radiant light brightens the light of the self and merges with that of the master's. This exercise is believed to lead to a clear awareness state, enlightenment. Finally, the meditation concludes by identifying the self with all the contents of imagination—the vastness of the mountains, the radiant master, and the surrounding aura. The mediation is believed to free one from restricting conditions, apparently making one immaculate. Khan has introduced a number of imagery techniques which could be employed in order to experience healing and self-growth.

States and Stages

The Sufis were engaged in a variety of professions such as blacksmith, weaver, mason, bookseller, glass maker, and so on for their livelihoods, as evidenced in their last names. Hence the performance of recollection occupied their lives only partially. After enlightenment, some would abandon their original professions to share the mystical insights with others, thereby attracting disciples. They were supposed to follow a number of strict disciplines. A person has to pass through a

number of states and stages. Schimmel points out differences between a "state" and a "stage:" a state is defined as something that descends from God into one's heart which can neither be acquired nor repelled by human efforts, whereas a stage is also called a "station," which to a certain extent, is a human striving. While the former belongs to the category of grace, the latter belongs to that of human acts.

Sufi manuals propose a variety of states and stages of the ascetic and moral discipline. Yet Sufi theoreticians do not seem to lay down a clear classification or distinction between the two. Schimmel (1975) elucidates three main stations: repentance, trust in God, and poverty. The adept who is called *murid*, has to have a guide to lead him or her in the spiritual path. A *sheikh* or master (*per* in Persian) usually teaches the adept the method and the spiritual exercises after testing out the intents. First, *tauba* or repentance is just the very beginning of the path because no one could proceed in the deep spiritual journey without turning away from sin. This may be awakened in the soul when suddenly one word, be it mundane or sacred, or a recitation of a sentence from the Quran, may intuitively be grasped. True repentance, according to the Sufis, is a sincere attempt to turn away from everything that distracts one from entering into the spiritual path; it does not originate out of hope for a heavenly reward nor the fear of hell. The adept has to constantly fight against *nafs* or the lower self. Second, *tawakkul* is total surrender to God and the third is *faqr* or poverty. *Faqr* is sometimes identified with *fana* or annihilation in God. The heart which is annihilated in dire poverty becomes rich in God. These main categories have other supplementary qualities which are elaborately discussed in Sufi literature. The following section will discuss three

routes as presented by Smith (1991) and highlight the areas where imagery is involved.

Three Approaches to God

Sufi is constantly consumed by the "fire of love" for God, which is experienced in one of three ways and degrees: first, the hearing of fire; second, by seeing it with one's own eyes; and third, being burned in its heat. The Sufis desired to be "burned by God," (Smith 1991, p. 259), or as Attar, a Sufi mystic, illustrates it, "to become fire without the presence of the sun" (quoted in Schimmel, 1975, p. 179). According to Smith, Sufis laid down three different and distinct paths: love, ecstasy, and intuition. The following section will highlight each area and its association with imagery and healing.

The Path of Love

Sufi love poetry is world renowned. The Sufi mystic's great discovery is that God's love is the core of creation. They started composing heart-moving poems for the love of God. The unseen love of God has been visualized in words which described God as if the Sufis had seen God with the eyes of their faith. They saw and experienced God in even the smallest creatures of the universe. Here again we see a combination of sensory and imagery modes of expression, imaginatively describing God, just as the Christian mystics did. Their words also contain paradoxical language which baffles and intrigues anyone not used to mystical literature.

Love in the Lives of Sufi Mystics:

Fudayl ibn Iyad.

Fudyl was a highway robber who was instantaneously converted when he happened to hear the recitation of a verse from the Quran. He

turned his life around and devoted himself to God. His life consisted of a deep sadness, a usual ascetic quality of realizing the separation of the soul from its Maker. According to Underhill, an existential separation of the beloved from the lover is one of the three images with which the mystic imagines himself or herself in relationship to God (the other two imagers are that of a pilgrim moving toward destination, and gold being polished in a furnace). Although Fudayl was married, he somehow considered his family life more of an obstacle to him on his way to God. "He was seen smiling only once in thirty years—when his son died. This event was, for him, a sign of divine grace: 'When God loves His servant, He afflicts him, and when He loves him very much He takes hold of him and leaves for him neither family nor wealth'" (quoted in Schimmel, 1970, P. 36). Rumi, in his book *Mathanawi*, included a verse about Fudayl, "The death of his children were for him like sweetness" (quoted in Schimmel, 1970, p. 36). Among earlier Sufi mystics, there was a voluntary option for celibacy in spite of the Prophet's example of married life. Sufis considered the restlessness caused by marriage as a punishment for the execution of lawfully permitted lusts.

Rabia al-Adawiyya.

Rabia is an eighteenth century woman saint who allegedly ushered in a new era of "selfless" or "disinterested" love in early Sufi asceticism. She was a slave girl set free by her master. Her love for God was so absolute that she did not think she could possibly have any other thought or love. She chose to live in solitude, often indulging in lasting vigils. The world meant nothing to her. That she had used her ability to see everything related to God through imagination is described by Schimmel (1975):

She would shut the windows in spring without looking at the flowers and became lost in the contemplation of Him who created flowers and springtime. This story has often been retold by the mystical poets of Iran. Every true mystic should know that "the gardens and the fruits are inside, in the heart," as Rumi says in his version of Rabia's story. (p. 39).

Even after visiting the Kaba at Mecca, she did not seem to become enamored of its marvel because the Kaba she had built inside her appeared more attractive to her. Her single-mindedness in her love for God is expressed in her behavior and words. One day, in Basra, she was seen carrying a torch in one hand and a ewer in the other hand. When confronted with the question why she carried them, she answered: "I want to throw fire into Paradise and pour water into Hell so that these two veils disappear, and it becomes clear who worships God out of love, not out of fear of Hell or hope for Paradise" (Schimmel, 1975, pp. 38-39). Love for love's sake is the central theme for Sufism.

Just as the Christian mystics were attuned to God's presence by merely looking at the creatures, Rabia too was conscious of God's presence by merely looking around the world of nature. How God's love is unfailing is expressed in her most moving imagination:

"My God and my Lord: eyes are at rest, the stars are setting,
hushed are the movements of birds in their nests, of monsters in
the deep. And you are the Just who knows no change, the Equity
that does not swerve, the Everlasting that never passes away. The
doors of kings are locked and guarded by their henchmen, but your
door is open to those who call upon you. My Lord, each lover is

now alone with his beloved. And I am alone with you." (quoted in Smith, 1991, p. 260)

From imagining a human love Rabia experiences divine love in her heart. Because her heart was filled with the love of God, she could not bring herself down to hate even the devil. Nor could she give an exclusive place for the Prophet in her heart. There was no room in her heart for anything but God. It is as if she constantly encountered God in the simple silence of creation, employing both sensory and imagery modes to experience a personal encounter with God.

Mansur al-Hallaj.

Hallaj is a Persian mystic, poet, and martyred saint. His love for God was so great that he identified himself with God in shocking ways. Smith (1991) reports al-Hallaj's claim, "I saw my Lord with the eye of the Heart. I said, 'Who are you?' He answered: You.'" He was accused of uttering blasphemy when he made his most mythical and famous statement, "I am the Absolute truth," which is similar to the Hindu truth *Tat tvam asi*, or "thou art Thou" and St. Paul's words, "Not I, but Christ in me" (Stoddart, 1976, p. 70). He was deemed to be a neuropath, monist, and pantheist. Out of his deep personal love for God, he is said to have made such a statement, meaning total identification with and yet annihilation in God. Having been tried and found guilty, he was flogged and sentenced to be decapitated. According to legend, he went to the gallows singing and dancing, filled with mystical intoxication. On his way, he requested his friend Shibi to lend him his prayer mat. While performing a prayer on it he experienced a mystical union with God. As the public surrounding him began to throw stones at him, Shibi threw a rose and Hallaj sighed. When he was asked why he sighed, he made a

remark about his friend Shibi, "They do not know what they do, but he should have known it." A Turkish saying sprang from his remark, "the rose, thrown by the friend, hurts more than any stone" (Schimmel, 1975, pp. 68-69). Perhaps Hallaj wondered how his friend Shibi could even question his desire to die for God. His hands and legs were cut off and he was eventually decapitated. His body was burned and the ashes thrown into the Tigris.

Hallaj longed for the time of his death, for which his whole life had been only a preparation. He would often urge the people of Baghdad to kill him so that he could be united with God. Here is one most inspirational and touching mystical statement which the mystics for centuries used as a basis for contemplation:

"Kill me, O my trustworthy friends, for in my being killed
is my life" (quoted in Schimmel, p. 69).

One of the themes of his poetry is that of dying and thereby gaining a new life, resembling the Prophet's famous and oft-quoted words: "Die before you die." The Prophet is believed to have made this statement after he had ascended into heavens and experienced the foretaste of resurrection (quoted in Lings, 1975, p. 35). The death experience is a frightening event; but the mystic perceives this reality differently, almost rehearsing and anticipating it in imagination. Just as St. Paul interpreted death not as an end but a beginning of a new life, this saint danced to the gallows because of his strong, what one may call, "faith" in God. This experience seems to transcend sensory and imagery modes because it defies any comparison.

Jalal ad-Din Rumi.

Appear as you are.

Be as you appear.

—Rumi

Rumi composed mystical poems which reveal his rich imagination and deep insights. He sang lyrics to God and saw the presence of God in everything. His famous composition *Mathnawi*, considered to be the Sufi Bible, disseminated the message of love through symbols and images. He elucidates the pangs of human separation from God in a very simple yet rich analogy of the sound of a reed flute disconnected from the reedbed. His most famous poem, entitled "Song of the Reed," succinctly describes the human longing:

Listen to the story told by the reed, of being separated.

"Since I was cut from the reedbed, I have made this crying
sound.

Anyone separated from someone he loves understands what I
say, anyone pulled from a source longs to go back."

(quoted in Smith, 1991, p. 259)

Rumi compares the situation of the human soul to that of a reed torn apart from its reedbank, standing as a symbol for the soul's separation from Allah. All the pain and agony of the soul could not be comforted by any human attempts. What a powerful way of imagining the root cause of the soul's suffering, as an estrangement from its Origin! Yet the unfathomable divine love is not totally unreachable, just as Jesus says, "Seek and you will find; knock it will be opened to you," Rumi assures us of God's transcendent and immanent love:

Never does the lover seek without being sought by his beloved.

When the lightning of love has shot into *this* heart, know that
there is love in *that* heart

Mark well the text: "He loves them and they love Him."

(Koran, 5:59), (quoted in Smith, 1991, p. 260)

Once the beloved feels a real longing for the lover, the lover recognizes that and allows Himself to be sought and found. How real this mutual longing is in a human relationship, and yet this is unlike humans because the beloved seeks the lover only with the eyes of imagination! Since reality for Sufis was primarily internal, they learned to find their true happiness in being free of worldly things. It is said that they used only straw mats, with bricks as pillows, and they neither cared for their outward appearance nor for their garments because they experienced a total acceptance of God from the inside. Sometimes these habits were stretched to the extremes when they began to disfigure themselves. What is explicit here is that the life and death of great mystics demonstrate an inexplicable conviction generated from deep within. It affected them so deeply that they began to see and live for invisible realities more strongly than for physical and temporal realities. Perhaps the invisible was more visible than the visible!

The Path of Ecstasy

The second path outlined by Smith (1991) is that of ecstasy because it became key to their exterior transformation. Sufis draw inspiration from the Prophet's nocturnal ascension through the seven heavens. Legend holds that Muhammad, on the night of his miraculous flight from Medina to Jerusalem, ascended to the throne of God through the seven heavens. From the Kabah, on one night, the prophet was celestially transported to a site in Jerusalem, which is now known as the

Dome of the Rock, a monument of great Islamic architecture. It is believed to be a place where Abraham prepared to offer his beloved son Isaac as a sacrifice to God, and the temple of Solomon was later constructed. It is alleged that from a rock in the monument the Prophet began his heavenly ascent. Seated upon Buraq, a winged horse which appeared with the face of a woman and a peacock's tail, the prophet is believed to have ascended the heavenly realms and was "at two-bow's-length distance" from the throne of Allah (Trimingham, 1971, p. 208 & Nielsen et al., 1983). No one could tell what exactly the prophet saw, but it was certainly something extraordinary and ecstatic in nature (Smith, 1991).

The Prophet's mystical journey was considered so important that his heavenly flight became a symbolism to Sufi experience of ecstasy known as the "ascent of the soul." It is not that the Prophet demonstrated an example for mystical journey. What happened was that the Prophet's "consciousness was radically altered through long vigils, meditations, and revelations" (Nielsen et al., 1983, p. 637). What the Sufis attempt is not to glimpse what Muhammad encountered in ecstasy, but to move in his direction. To experience ecstasy or trancelike state became one of the Sufi goals, imitating the example of Muhammad. It is an endeavor toward an altered state of consciousness, similar to "dissociated state." In order to obtain this state of ecstasy the Sufis developed methods of concentration. How pilgrims were amazed at some ecstasies is described by Smith (1991),

a pilgrim who sought out a revered ecstatic named Nuri reported finding him in such an intense state of concentration that not a hair of his body moved. "When I later asked him, 'From whom did

you learn this deep concentration?' he replied, 'From a cat watching by a mouse hole. But its concentration is much more intense than mine.'" (p. 261)

Two of the concentration approaches, *dhikr* or invocation and *sama* or spiritual concert, have been previously elaborated in this chapter. There are other extensive kinds of *dhikr* or recollection, imitating the symbolism of the soul's ascent. Although the Sufis make constant concentration attempts, they admit that the height of the state is only a divine gift as the Christian mystics claim. Ecstasy is not something which, the Sufis say, results out of their self efforts; nor do they feel entitled to it because of their concentration practices (Smith, 1991). Whatever revelation the Sufi acquires is beyond description. What is hoped for is that this ecstatic experience radically transforms the consciousness of individuals just as it did in the case of the Prophet. Ascetic principles and mind/body concentration techniques are only preparatory steps to the final divine gift.

The Path of Intuition

The foregoing two methods are believed to imbue new knowledge about supra-sensible realities. Love-mysticism endows one with the "knowledge of the heart," while ecstasy provides one with the "visual knowledge." The intuitive mysticism is said to endow "mental knowledge," described by Sufis as *marifah*, which is obtained not through the sensual organs called the eyes of the body, but with "the eye of the heart." For the eye of the heart, the entire body and creation are only symbols revealing the presence of God. This is beautifully described by Smith:

Because the realities attained through *marifah* are immaterial, the eye of the heart is immaterial as well. It does not compete with the physical eye whose objects, the world's normal objects, remain fully in view. What it does is clothe those objects in celestial light. Or to reverse the metaphor: It recognizes the world's objects as garments that God dons to create a world. These garments become progressively more transparent as the eye of the heart gains strength. It would be false to say that the world is *God*—that would be pantheism. But to the eye of the heart, the world *is* God-in-disguise, God veiled. (Smith, 1991, p. 261)

What this stage indicates is that the experience of the mystic crosses the boundaries of the physical and mental realms (sensory and imagery) and embarks upon a spiritual world. The eye of the heart (which could be termed the spirit or soul, as other religious mystics would describe it), does not conflict with the physical eye. It permeates the physical perception, gently enabling it to be in touch with realities, beyond its level of apprehension, demonstrating the presence of the unseen God.

Imagery in the Sufi Symbolism

Islam and Sufism abound in symbolism. As was pointed out, the Sufi is in constant communication with the invisible even when surrounded by the visible, as is also the mechanics for other religions. The very holy Scripture, the Quran itself, is a reality as well as a symbol because the Sufis believe that the Word (*logos*) is God. "The Koran was accepted relatively early by the faithful 'as uncreated and coeternal with God" (Schimmel, 1975, p. 24). And the Word has immeasurable depth that may not be comprehended in a lifetime. "Every verse of the Koran, the Sufis say, conceals a minimum of seven hidden significations, and

the number can sometimes reach to seventy" (Smith, 1991, p. 262). Everything worldly and spiritual, the Sufis claim, has been symbolically accommodated in the Quran. Without denying its literal interpretation, the symbolic meaning of the Quran is all the more multiplied in Schimmel's words: "For the devout—some of whom could find up to seven thousand meanings in a single Koranic verse" (1975, p. 25).

Arabic Alphabet

The Arabic alphabets are a fascination for every Muslim because those letters are a medium through which God's eternal revelation appeared to humanity. The Quran itself confesses that if all the seas were ink and the trees pens, they would be insufficient to contain the words of the Lord (Sura 18:109, quoted in Schimmel, 1975). The divine beauty, perfection, and grandeur were revealed through these letters and served as almost idols in some sense. Sufi mystics indulged in extensively contemplating the secret meaning hidden within different letters. Mystics attempted to interpret different layers and layers of meaning which God's Word has. That the layers of secret meanings were intended by God is expressed by Schimmel, "When God created the letters, he kept their secret meaning for Himself, and when He created Adam, He conveyed this secret to him, but did not convey it to any of the angels" (p. 412). The richness of the sacred symbolism is revealed in the Quran Chapter 2: 37: "Thereafter Adam received certain words from his Lord, and He turned towards him." This sentence is inscribed artistically in calligraphy so that it could be read in a number of ways (Bakhtiar, 1976, p. 115, see Figure Example 30). A sensory mode translates the transcendent God inviting humans to use more than imagery to cross the boundaries of imagination.

Every ritual gesture has symbolism which has to be clearly understood by the believer. The Muslims remove their shoes before entering the mosque out of reverence for the place where communion with God takes place; this symbolizes one's readiness to leave behind everything that is ungodly before offering glory to God using God's Word. The ritual ablution of hands, feet, and face symbolizes both internal and external purity. Water itself is a symbol for the Spirit which flows into the human heart, purging sin. The gateway of the mosque reminds one of the beginning of the spiritual journey, picturing in one's mind human beings as mediators between heaven and earth and thus being both human and divine (Bakhtiar, 1976).

Imagery in Calligraphy

Exclusive and meticulous emphasis was laid on calligraphy in many shapes and appearances and it became a medium to express mythic states (Bakhtiar, 1976). The Divine Word graciously descends into the human heart, setting up a rhythm for the soul. When, for example, the Name *Rahman* or Compassion is recollected in the heart, it descends into the heart indiscriminately; it is also the Word that ascends through the recitation of another Name *Rahim* or Mercy, rewarding the performer. The transcendent and immanent God is manifest in his Names. The Name, exquisitely engraved upon the walls, became a tangible reminder of God's presence in humanity. For example, the Seven Names invoked by the Khalwati initiate are calligraphically pictured (see Figure Example 31). These seven names, recited by other names, indicate the soul's journey from one stage to another. The initiate is asked to repeat the profession of faith *La ilaha illa Llah* or "there is no God but God," 100,000 times. Then the *sheikh* or master

introduces the next "Allah" to the aspirant. Other words follow after the progress is carefully monitored by the master: *Hu* or He, the stage of the inspired soul; *Havvy* this Name stands for the contented soul; *Qayyum* or the Eternal, symbolizing the journey of the satisfied soul; and finally, the seventh Name is *Qahhar*, or the Subduer, representing the stage of the perfected soul.

There are other architectural and carpet symbols, depicting Unity within multiplicity and multiplicity in Unity. Originating from Unity, the whole cosmos and the cosmic processes in all creation returns to Unity. Mystical music is another example of how various musical notes are orchestrated into symphony, representing the undeniable Oneness of God, which seems to be the oft-repeated note that the Sufi lived and breathed every minute of existence.

Conclusion

Sufi literature delineates a clearly defined and distinctive interior road map for a deeper mystical spirituality. Not all human potential seems to be sufficiently exploited by formal or externally organized religions. Sufi mystics desired to do more than merely fulfill the five pillars of Islam. The path discovered by them is the amazing love of the Creator which many take for granted. Religion for a Sufi was more a boundless spontaneous performance than limiting oneself to some external structures. Different kinds and modes of recollection were employed for concentrating on the object of desire. Breath control, body postures, music, dancing movements, visualization, and the like were engaged in so the recitation of God's Name might be performed in such a way that it permeated the whole being of the Sufi mystic. Be it ablution or ritual prayer, fasting or pilgrimage, the Sufi performed them more

inside than outside. No stone was left unturned until the Sufi became one with his or her revered God. Enlightening poems, sayings, and stories contributed by the Sufis reveal that they had obtained a wisdom which far excels any human intelligence. The lives of the mystics and the way they handled highly threatening situations such as torture and death speak volumes of the height of their journey. Although the Sufis used sensory and/or imagery modes, they simply transcended all human faculties. Perhaps it was "eye of the heart" with which the Sufi simply stood still or danced at "the door of enlightenment."

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As evidenced by chapters of this study, imagery techniques have been espoused and used in many different ways by the mystical and religious traditions chosen for investigation. This research proposed to investigate how imagery techniques were involved in producing holistic healing—physical, psychological, and spiritual. The method of inquiry, literary analysis, was used to determine whether or not there were imagery techniques in these traditions; and whether or not they were instrumental in creating the highest level of healing attainable by human beings. Before evaluating the results of this inquiry, one needs to preview some inevitable presuppositions which are basic to these traditions. Hence the following section will analyze four presuppositions.

Transpersonal Dimension

Generally speaking, these traditions, with the exception of Buddhism, apparently recognize and believe in an unseen human composite, variantly termed, "spirit," "soul," "self," or "heart." This transpersonal component cannot be proved, but only believed to be true and necessary in order to experience the highest form of healing. Most ancient healers, the shamans, for example, seem to have believed strongly in a world of spirits. In fact, a malady was believed to originate in the weakness or the loss of the spirit, rather than in physical sickness. Hinduism acknowledged a self capable of experiencing supra sensible realities. Although the Buddha did not postulate a self or an Absolute, he believed that everyone was capable of liberation from the bondage of life in order to enter into an unconditioned state. The

monotheistic religions termed the reality "soul" or "heart;" and regarded it as the highest mode of human existence. It is believed to be intrinsically related to consciousness. The deeper levels of consciousness are the unconscious and "the spiritual unconscious;" and the spiritual unconscious is postulated to be the deepest or highest level of human consciousness (see Figure Example 32).

Existence of a Higher Power

Secondly, these traditions believe that the spirit or soul is capable of moving on to higher modes of being. That a higher mode of existence is possible is demonstrated in the shaman's journey to the land of the gods or goddesses. Religions in general believe in one ultimate Being which could be termed the Absolute, the Self, the One, God, or Three in One. Whereas this reality is recognized by most religious and mystical traditions as God, Buddhism refers to it as an "Unconditioned State" or *nirvana*. Since this Being is not created, but only believed to be the Creator, it cannot be subjected to scientific experimentation and proved to be existent, just as the spirit's or soul's existence cannot be verified, but only presumed and believed.

Faculties of the Spirit

Because human beings have this higher component of existence, the spirit or soul or self is capable of thinking, feeling, willing, and loving. The senses and the physical world of existence alone are not the only source of knowledge. "Will" is presumed to be most distinctive of the spirit. Will of the spirit is explained in terms of wishing the highest level of goodness which is nothing but a complete union with the Absolute (see Figure Example 32). It is true that the self uses channels of perception. Its experiences are translated through the senses, yet it

does not generate its information from the senses. Its perceptions are inarticulate illuminations which cannot be adequately translated by sensory modes (James, 1963). That is because the soul or spirit is capable of experiencing a relationship with the Supreme Being which defies adequate description in human words.

Relationship between Self and Higher Power

Although the Infinite Being cannot be comprehended by finite beings, the Infinite is believed to be present in finite beings. It is capable of revealing Itself to those who build a relationship imaginatively by simply believing in its existence. Although that Being is transcendent, it is also immanent in creation. The individual self is capable of merging with the Absolute Self and becoming eternal because it reflects the nature of the Eternal Self. When the created human self merges with the Eternal Self, the process of healing culminates. The spirit is confined to body and mind which constantly limit its capacity to recognize its true nature. Without an acknowledgment of these four basic transpersonal premises, investigation of the relationship between the two, which bestows the highest level of healing, is hardly possible.

Imagery's Significant Role in Relationship

Attempts to build a relationship with the Absolute are recognized by religious traditions. The monotheistic religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam adhere to efforts for a personal relationship with God. In these religions, the human efforts or techniques in and of themselves are not sufficient means to be united with God. Without revelation from the Absolute human efforts will be futile. According to Judaism and Islam, the hidden God is revealed through Word. In Judaism, prophets reveal the hidden God through their own words and

deeds. In Islam, the Prophet becomes the prototype revealing God's Word and the human potential to respond to it to the fullest extent possible. In Christianity, the relationship is built by believing God's Word and recognizing fullest revelation, the incarnation of God, in the person of Jesus Christ. Revealed Word and God as a Person become central to this healing relationship. Hinduism espouses human attempts to control the body and mind and then let the Absolute take over. It insists much on self-efforts as a means to free oneself from bondage. For example, the royal yoga, one of the six Hindu systems, perceives the relationship with the Absolute developing on eight stages, each leading to the other (see Figure Example 33). Although imagery plays a significant role in the contemplative stage, other factors such as physical and moral restraints and breath control should not be overlooked. Redemption or salvation has to be earned to escape reincarnation. Buddhism illustrates ceaseless self efforts to free oneself from binding conditions in order to cross to the threshold of the Unconditioned state. One of the ways to become unconditioned is to live the moment as opposed to being pulled by the past or concerned about the future. Since self, the Absolute, and attempts to build a relationship between the two are beyond the grasp of the senses and human intelligence, imagery plays a vital role in the healing process. To believe Word as God requires more than imagery. Some religions call this "faith" or "belief."

Imagery is not an End in Itself: Only Part of a Process

This study applied literary analysis for investigation. In the process of investigating the matter, the research indicates how imagery techniques were primarily utilized as a means to an end and not an end in themselves. Imagery and/or sensory techniques were developed in

combination with supplementaries with a view to arresting the wandering mind and focusing attention on a single point. Imagery appears to have contributed to an atmosphere for concentration of mind and body (see Figure Example 34). Imagery techniques were supplemented with sensory techniques, sometimes in combination, or at times one to the exclusion of the other. Since concentration of mind was the goal, both sensory and imagery methods seem to have been employed to achieve this purpose. Once concentration had been accomplished, all the means applied seemed to have become irrelevant because the highest level of concentration appears to be a complete freedom from thoughts, fantasies, sensations, and feelings. Mystics were filled with and moved by such an extraordinary personal love for God that the height of that positive love tended to root out the entire negativism of life. Traditions may label this experience as a total annihilation, unconditioned state, union with the object of desire, oneness experience, merger with the Eternal Self, union of the soul with its Creator for whom it was created, or the union of the "recollector" and the recollected. Hence healing appeared to have occurred on a continuum in which both sensory and/or imagery techniques played their parts (see Figure Example 34).

Relevancy of Supplementaries

The analysis also indicated the importance of supplementaries since concentration, and not imagery for the sake of imagery, was the goal. Supplementaries appear to have enhanced the sensory and imagery techniques. Be they body posture, breath control, body movements, music, rosary, mandala, idols, or any other physical or moral restraints, they were apparently utilized to enhance concentration. Since

supplementaries appear to contribute substantially to the success of sensory and imagery techniques, the emerging consensus is that these techniques may not have as easily accomplished the intended goal if it were not for the efficacy of the supplementaries. These appear to be not only enhancing, but also inevitable, for the practice of sensory and/or imagery techniques. Supplementaries themselves (such as breathing concentrated on the affected part of the body imaginatively in order to cure the ailment) have been used in the imagery mode.

The Visible is Only Symbolic of the Invisible

Mystical techniques seemed to have transported the mystics more to the inside realm than to the outside of themselves. It was because mystics sought to perceive everything from the inside. Most life experiences became symbolic of something beyond themselves. By merely looking at the visible reality, they used their senses and imagination of the senses to penetrate the presence of invisible beings such as spirit or soul and God. Christianity, for example, holds that seven sacraments are symbols, signs, and realities. The sacramental rituals are real and yet symbolic of something unseen which one has to imagine and believe what is being imagined. For the mystics, every creature merely pointed out the Creator; every breath inhaled and exhaled prompted awareness of the unseen God; and every heartbeat ticked the name of the unimaginable God very clearly into the mystic's being. All human hungers and cravings merely symbolized a profound longing for God, who alone could satisfy the needs of the soul. This approach to life's problems may serve as an efficient tool for the psychotherapist.

Human alienation or loneliness is only a manifestation of the soul's separation from God. Once mystics began recognizing this

ultimate hunger, they chose to be less dependent on their senses, and even on others, because they clearly saw themselves as uniquely created for God and for God alone. In order to satisfy this deepest hunger of the spirit, mystics learned the need to deny their sensual desires. Because their spiritual hunger apparently transcended the physical and psychological needs, they sublimated them in such a way that the very denial of the senses bestowed immeasurable joy which they derived from a source above the senses. Life itself was only a symbol for what was yet to be acquired beyond the senses. So they chose to consider themselves only pilgrims marching toward another destiny, gold being polished in the furnace, and separated-beloved suffering and longing to be united with the Lover.

Nonrational Method Used as a Means

Neither rational nor sensual methods seemed to have helped the mystics undergo such deep transformation of consciousness. Mystics claimed that neither intelligence nor senses could serve as a means to union with the Absolute. By tuning themselves simply to the wisdom of the heart, mystics were transported to higher levels of healing. The methods they used to dispose themselves to secure this wisdom were neither based on rationalization nor on emotional excitements or arousals. Mystics constantly dwelt in nonrational sensory and/or imagery methods such as repeating some words or phrases, either meaningful or meaningless. Although they employed the five senses and imagination of the five senses to transcend human conditions, verbal and visual modes of the senses and imagery seem to dominate their practices. Since concentration was their ultimate end, they used

numerous supplementaries to increase the influence or efficacy of sensory and imagery techniques.

From Conscious to Unconscious Mind

Mystics seemed to have begun their ascent by focusing on the senses or imagination of senses with a conscious mind. In order to arrest the distractions of body and the thinking mind gradually, they began by drumming themselves repetitiously with sensory/imagery methods. Once the conscious mind was focused, they began accessing the unconscious mind which, as was pointed out by Bresler, responds to nonverbal methods such as imagery and symbols. This incessant nonverbal communication, by whatever techniques the mystics employed to drum their thinking minds, appeared to have had a profound impact on the involuntary nervous system, slowing down activities such as heartbeat, blood flow, production or reduction of body chemicals, and the like. Breath control and bodily exercises pumped in large amounts of oxygen to the brain and stretched body muscles, expanding the feeling of relaxation and contributing to the one-pointedness of mind. Addictive "negative codings" in the unconscious, which maintain unhealthy behavior patterns, were perhaps decoded because of the positive imagination of God as a source or object of love. Sense and imagination of senses seemed to have accompanied the mystical ascent only up to the area of the unconscious mind, where part of the physical and emotional healing may have taken place. But that was not the end of the story of healing.

From the Unconscious to the Spiritual Unconscious

What seems amazing is that the deeper the journey from the conscious mind to the unconscious mind, the higher were the levels of

healing. But the relationship with the higher power seemed to have taken place in an area much deeper than the unconscious mind. This appeared to have occurred in an area which perhaps Viktor Frankl called "the spiritual unconscious," or "superconscious" as Assagioli termed it, which is a mode of operation beyond comprehension. It was the spirit, soul, or self merging with the Absolute, the Eternal Self, or God. This inexplicable illumination was barely reported or communicated through senses or imagination of senses. This was perhaps the area where the spirit entered into a communion with the Absolute and went through a profound spiritual healing, affecting or transforming the body and psyche as well. After such a deep spiritual transformation, neither the body nor the mind seemed to have any more noticeable influence on the freed or liberated human beings or *jivan muktas*. It was as if the spirit was no longer subdued by thoughts, perceptions, imagination, fantasies, mind, or body. Hence no worldly desires or bodily needs could affect such transformed personalities. It was as if they had tasted what one would experience after death, or as the Prophet Muhammad would say, a "die before death" experience. It did not sound like mind over matter, but it was spirit over mind and body. Various factors such as senses, psychophysical exercises, faith and belief reinforced imagery techniques and contributed to the concentration of conscious and unconscious mind on the healing continuum (see Figure Example 34). But the journey from the unconscious to the spiritual unconscious was only passive, only waiting to be "possessed" or "infused" into infinity, a total blank state, or "no-thingness" experience. Whereas the normal state of an individual's consciousness is limited to sensory and conscious areas, the mystic's awareness in sensory, conscious, the unconscious, and the

spiritual unconscious areas seem expansive and the travel from one state to the other is more "fluid" (see Figure Example 35).

Death and After-Death Imagery Influence

The reality of death and speculations about what happens at the moment of or after death apparently played a powerful role in some of these traditions. What the spirit might encounter during and after death was imagined during mystical meditation so that one might rehearse for the upcoming experience. For example, Hinduism proposes conformity to the subtle body of which the gross body is only a miniature configuration. Energy centers of the body have to be focused so that energy may be raised through the psychic nerve centers and one may be liberated from bondage. Buddhism abounds in death and after-death imagery. Those techniques are a rude awakening to the inevitable reality of death. St. Paul's descriptions of death as destroyed or overcome by Christ, or death as only the beginning of a different life, have to be not only imagined, but really to be believed to be true for the spiritual healing to occur. In general, heaven is believed to be a state of oneness with God, angels, and saints. Hence the content of imagery may be taken merely as a technique of imagination for the sake of concentration or believed to be true. When the substance of speculation is believed to be true, it may be called "faith" or "belief." (The power of belief is such a strong component that it could be used for healing experiences. Perhaps it is something that humans have to use necessarily because, as Benson points out, "we have been wired for God," p. 196). Meditation on life after death seemed to have preoccupied the hearts and minds of these sages, and they used those sensory and/or imagery techniques as leverage to bring about changes in life on earth, almost disregarding

senses and worldly needs. That was the reason why some mystics were able to handle devastating experiences such as death in an unusual or casual way and interpreted it not as an end, but only the beginning of a different kind of existence. Some mystics even anticipated death and prepared themselves to let go of life; perhaps they were even able to choose the day and time of their deaths.

Difference between Imagery and Faith

As has been previously stated, a number of factors such as senses, imagination of senses, breath control, and physical exercises contribute to the mystical ascent. An important distinction between imagery and faith seems to be emerging from the mystical practices. Imagery, as defined by Richardson, is an imagination of the senses before the mind's eye. One may or may not choose to believe in what is being imagined. If one were to choose to "believe" in or put "faith" in what is being imagined based on the revelations of the higher power through the sacred Scriptures and their interpretation by traditions, then what is being imagined is more than mere imagery. Perhaps one will call it "belief" or "faith." Mystics will say that it is not even just belief, but "extraordinary faith" which is required for someone to ascend to the heights of healing and mystical union with the higher power. For example, if one were to rationalize the content or core of belief in the Absolute, there would be questions and answers, beliefs and disbeliefs, doubts and despairs. That person, according to mystics, is at the very beginning stage of transcendence because only the rational mind is involved. To move on to deeper levels of the conscious and the unconscious, one should have taken belief or faith of the rational mind to these deeper levels continuously and habitually in such a way that the very repetition of the

content of belief becomes transformative. So much so that this on-going process becomes a part of the mystic's very being and way of life. Hence the healing envisioned by mystics presupposes deeper levels of belief or faith in the imagery; and it transpires through nonrational methods, exercised perhaps over and over in one's lifetime.

Healing as a Way of Life

According to mystics, union with a higher power was the highest form of healing. Imagery and sensory techniques merely created a center of attention or focus of concentration, which they used to transcend attention and concentration, waiting to be infused or possessed by God. So for mystics, healing was not a technique of acquiring some skills in order to cope with existing crises. But their very lives centered around a healing relationship with the higher power so much that healing became a life-long process in which they themselves became "healing and healed instruments." Healing was not something they learned, but something they "became." That was how their very presence or touch itself healed and transformed whoever came into contact with them. The healers were highly healed ones. It was as if they were completely surrounded by a healing energy radiation! It was as though the presence of the Absolute was more present in them than their actual presence was!

Cause for Human Problems

Mystics seem to insist on concentration and focus. They resorted to many ways of contemplation in which senses and/or imagery played a significant role. Thoughts and emotions were synchronized in such a way that they were able to dwell on one particular thought, only to transcend even that. Conversely speaking, one could argue that when concentration of thoughts is not maintained, humans may become

vulnerable to problems, resulting in what Borysenko (1987) calls a "polyphasic" existence and splitting humans inside and outside. When the psyche is flooded or obsessed with excessive thoughts, the mind in turn could affect the body, causing psychosomatic diseases, psychoses and neuroses. Mystics avoided such a snag by frequently dwelling on physical and mental supports which unified their consciousness. With the unification of consciousness their travel to the unconscious and the spiritual unconscious became "fluid." In a way, the concentration they attempted to attain through sensory and imagery techniques permeated their conscious and unconscious minds; from there they moved back and forth to the spiritual unconscious where they were healed by an encounter with the Absolute.

Limitations of the Mystical Way

The demands and the disciplines which accompany the mystical path could be overwhelming for any lay person. Although these disciplines lay down precise regulations, they may not necessarily be followed exactly the way they are prescribed. Mystical ways are intended for those who are determined to adhere to the disciplines. Perhaps patients with severe pathologies or simple psychological problems may not even be able to try some these methods. These methods are probably for healthier people who aspire for higher levels of healing and peace. However, a number of studies conducted on some parts of these methods have proven their efficacy even when they are partially practiced. Modern physicians have been experimenting with many of the mystical methods in parts. Borysenko has published a modern and practical version of Yoga which could be exercised by anyone (see Figure Example 36). Benson has delineated simple steps that are involved in *mantra*

meditation (see Figure Example 37). These may be useful for patients who may not be able to follow tough mystical methods. Mystical methods are suggestions to psychotherapists who may consider taking some time to learn and practice some of these approaches and perhaps introduce simplified versions in clinical settings.

* * * * *

This analysis attempted to throw light on the use and the healing results produced by imagery techniques from mystical and religious traditions. This study contributed to the body of knowledge by underscoring the mechanism of mystical traditions-healing-continuum in which a number factors contribute to the process, proceeding from consciousness to the spiritual unconscious. Whether or not these approaches, if separated from their belief systems, will have similar results to those which these traditions claim is outside the scope of this study. The medical field seems to have tested and recognized the success of some of these methods taken in isolation. Further investigation of these methods under clinical settings may better establish their credibility and reliability. Science may not be able to prove the existence of the soul or the Absolute, but the influence (such as the relaxation response of meditation on physiology studied by Benson), claimed to result out of a relationship between the two, may be subjected to clinical investigation. Perhaps these studies may enlighten one about the deeper healing resources which these traditions claim to possess. Many of these traditional techniques are yet to be scientifically validated by further research. In the final analysis, the studies may enrich both science and these traditions.

GLOSSARY

A

Adonay — the Name of God in Hebrew

Agni — fire

Ain Sof — the Infinite light

Ajna chakra — third eye energy center

Al-Batin — the Inward

Al-Wadud — the Loving Beloved

Al-Zahir — the Outward

Anahata chakra— heart energy center

Ar-rabita — bond or link with the master

Arkam — Five Pillars of Islam

Asanas — body postures

Asuras — titans

Atman — self

Ayin — nothingness

B

Bahir — brilliant

Bardo — transition; gap

Bardo-Thodol — liberation by hearing while on the after-death
plane

Bhagavad Gita — the ancient Hindu Scriptures

Bhakta — follower of the path of love, devotion

Bhakti yoga — path of love, devotion

Binah — the intelligence of God

Bindu — point of zero

Bodhisattva — person who has attained the final stage of liberation

Brahman — the Absolute; the Eternal Self

Brahmarandhra — the meeting place of psychic energy and Pure
Consciousness above the crown of the head

Buddha — the Enlightened One

Buddhi — intelligence

C

Chaim — life

Chakra — psychic energy center; wheels

Chikchai barda — state which exists at the moment of death and
immediately after death

Chonyi bardo — state in which the individual slowly recovers
from the swoon and vaguely becomes conscious
of objects

D

Devas — gods

Devekut — attachment

Dhakhir — the Invoker

Dhaki-Madhkur-Dhikr — the Invoker-the Invoked-the Invocation

Dharana — concentration

Dharma — sacred doctrine

Dhikr — remembrance; recollection

Dhikr al-hadra — recollection of communal exercise

Dhikr al-awuat — recollection of daily office; prescribed prayer

Dhikr jahri or jali — loud invocation

Dhikr khafi — mental invocation

Dhyana — contemplation

Din — the power of God in regard to stern judgment or
punishment

Dukka — suffering

E

Egartha — to fix the psychomental flux on a single point

EHYEH — the Name of God in Hebrew

Elohim — the Name of God in Hebrew

En Sof — Without End

F

Fana — annihilation; emptying

Fatiha — the first chapter of the Quran

Faqr — poverty

G

Genurah — the power of God in regard to stern judgment and
punishment

Gunas — worlds

Guru — teacher

H

Hatha yoga — a discipline which integrates breathing techniques

Hajj — pilgrimage

Halqa — a circle formed around a pivot

Havvy — the Name of God as the Centered One

Hesed — the love or the mercy of God

Hinayana — small raft

Hitbodedut — mental self-seclusion

Hod — the majesty of God

Hokhmah — the wisdom or primordial idea of God

Hu — He; the stage of the inspired soul

Hum — realm of hell

I

Ida — the left nerve of the subtle body that winds the central channel

Ikhfa — deep perception of consciousness

Imam — faith

J

Japam — repeating God's name(s)

Jetzira — the Book of Creation

Jivan mukta — liberated soul

Jnani — follower of the path of knowledge

Jnana yoga — way of knowledge

K

Kabbalah — something handed down by tradition; a doctrine received by oral tradition

Kaimas — vein

Karma — law of causality

Karma yoga — way to God through work

Karma yogi — person who serves God through work

Kananah — concentration; attention; devotion; intention

Kavad — the glory of God

Kether Elyon — the supreme crown of God

Khafi — intuition

Koan — a special kind of problem-solving meditation

Kumbhaka — retention of air

Kundalini — psychic energy

L

La Ilaha illa Llah — There is no god but God

Lataif — organs of perception

Lama — priest

Linga — male sexual organ

Logos — the Word, meaning God; thought; deed; word; power

Lokas — worlds of conditioned existence

M

Madhkur — the Invoked

Mahabindu — great point

Mahayana — big raft

Malkhuth — the kingdom of God

Manipura chakra — solar plexus energy center

Maulana — our Master

Maya — illusion

Muladhara chakra — root energy center

Mandala — concentric circles; concentration devices

Mantra — repeated words, phrases, sounds

Matra — twenty-four measures

Moksha — liberation

Mosque — place of prostration

Midrash — Exposition

Mudras — prayer postures

Muhammadur Rasulu Llah — Muhammad is the Messenger of God

Mukti — eternity

Murid — adept

Myein — to close the eyes

N

Nadis — channels

Nafs — lower self

Nagah — a light before the throne of God known as Glow

Naras — humans

Nava — nine

Netsah — the lasting endurance of God

Nimitta — vivid visual imagery

Nirvana — to blow out or to extinguish; unconditioned;
irreducible; indefinable; transcendent; inconceivable
state

Noverim me, noverim Te — If I knew myself, I should know Thee

O

Om — sound believed to bestow magical wisdom and power

P

Padma — lotus

Padmasana — lotus posture

Pir — master; teacher

Pingala — the right nerve of the subtle body that winds the
median channel

Prakrti — substance; matter

Pranayama — breath control

Pratyahara — sense withdrawal

Pretas — unhappy gods

Puraka — inhalation

Purusha — self; soul

9

Qalb — mind

Qahhar — the Subduer

Qayyum — the Eternal

Qutb — pivot

R

Rahamim — the compassion of God

Rahim — the Name of God, Mercy

Rakas — units of prostration

Raj — royal

Rechaka — exhalation

Ruh — spirit

S

Shahada — profession of faith

Sahasrara chakra — crown energy center

Salat — ritual prayer

Sama — hearing; spiritual concert

Samdhi — enstasis; ecstasy

Sarvam dukkam, sarvam anithyam — all is painful. all is transient

Samsara — moving state

Sefer Yezirah — the Book of Creation

Sefiroth — ten Emanations of God

Sch-Chid-Ananda — Being-Consciousness-Joy

Sharia — Islamic law

Sheikh — master; teacher

Sh'ma — declaration of faith

Sidpa bardo — state which is filled with intense craving for rebirth

Sirr — consciousness

Shakti — female energy

Sawm — fast observed during the month of Ramadan

Shekinah — God's Kingdom

Shiva — male energy

Siddhi — miraculous powers

Silsila — rite of initiation

Sodo — secret

Sohar — the Book of Splendor

Sura — any of the chapters in the Quran

Sushumma — subtle body's median nerve

Sutras — aphorisms

Svadhithana chakra — genital energy center

T

Tahlil — loud confession of faith

Tanha — desire, drive for fulfillment

Tantra — that which extends knowledge

Tantra yoga — a discipline which extends knowledge

Tapas — asceticism

Tat tvam asi — thou art Thou

Tauba — repentance

Tawakkul — surrender to God

Theravada — way of the elders

Tov — a light before the throne of God known as Good

Trisans — brutes; animals

Tummo — psychic heat

U

V

Vishuddha chakra — throat energy center

W

X

Y

Yantra — a geometric composition

Ya Rahman — O Merciful

Ya Raheem — O All-Compassionate

Yesod — the foundation of all active forces of God

YHWH — the name of God in Hebrew

Yoga — to bind together; to hold fast; to yoke; a discipline

Yogin — pupil; disciple

Yoni — female sexual organ

Yichudim — unifications

Z

Zakat — almsgiving

Zebul — Habitation; the fourth heavenly Hall

Zehir (Zikr) — recollection; invocation

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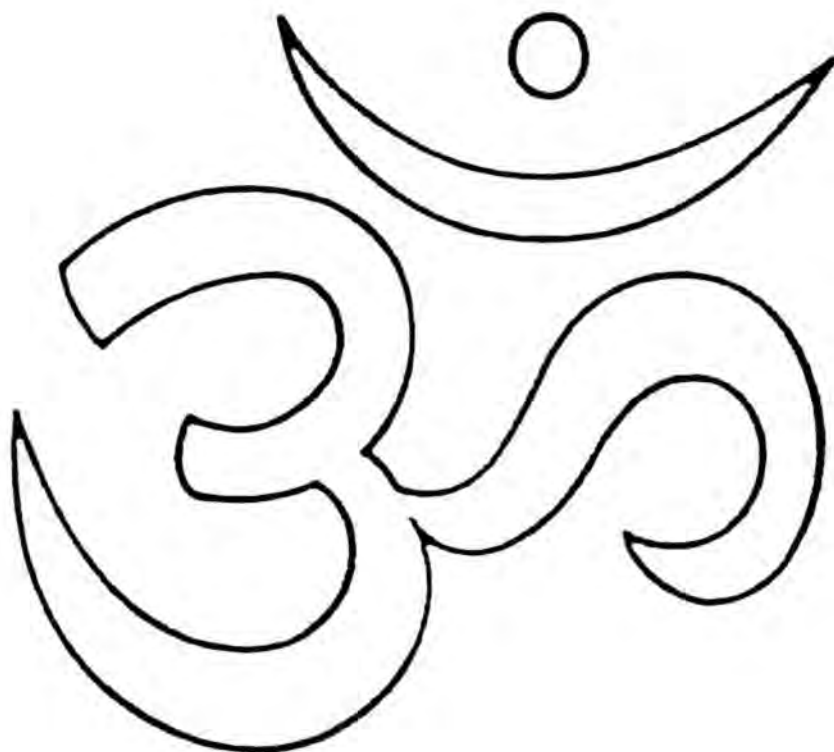
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Figure Example 1. The Padma Asana or Lotus posture



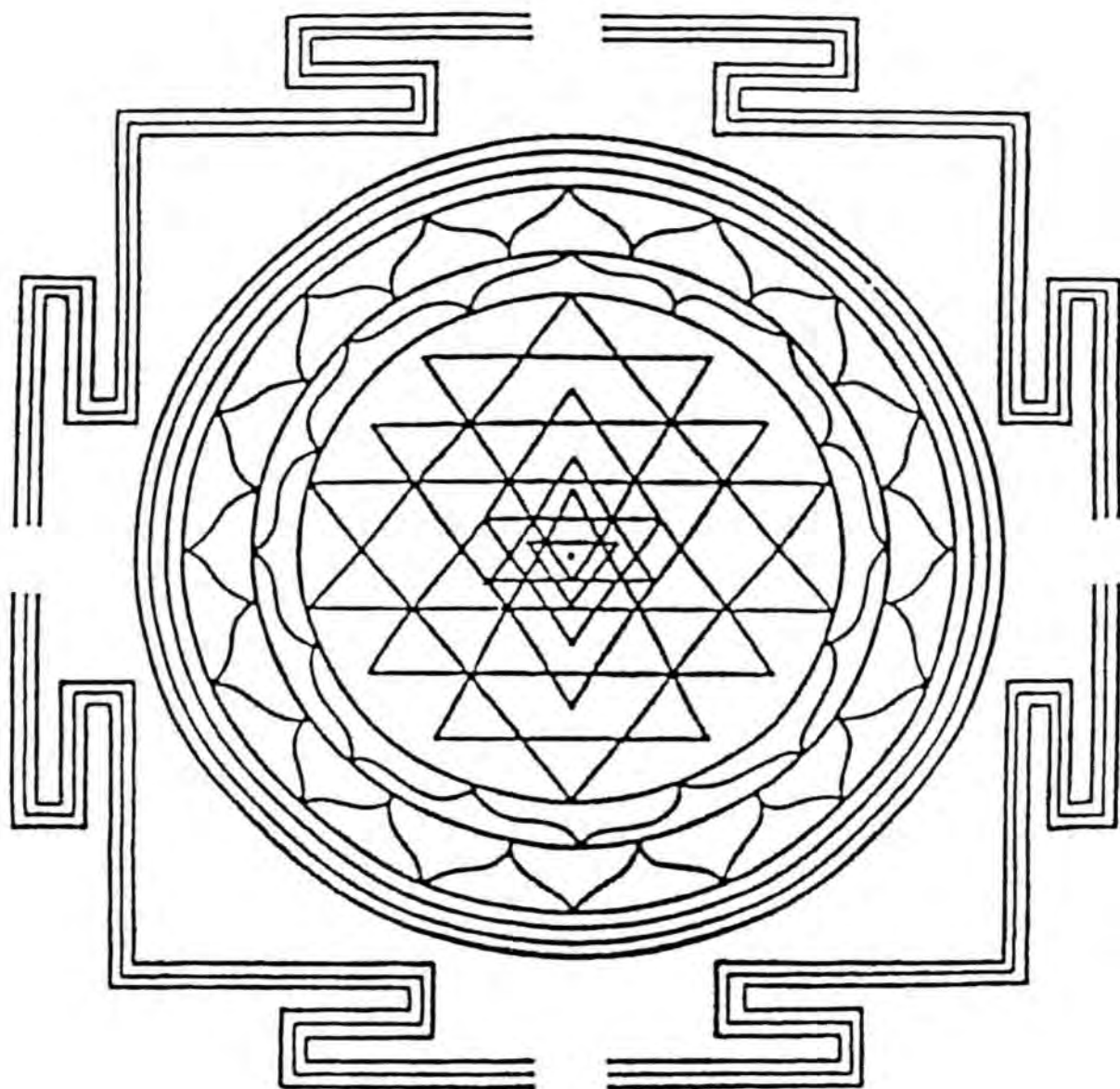
From "Yoga and the Hindu Traditions," by J. Varenne, 1976, p. 107. Copyright 1997 by American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 2. The Syllable "OM"



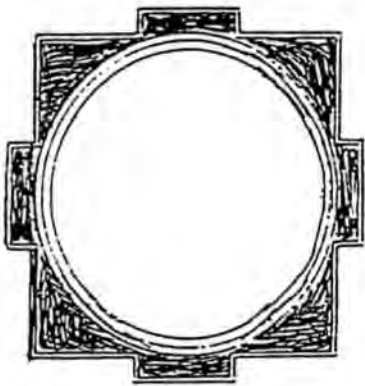
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Figure Example 3. The Sri Yantra or Concentric Circle

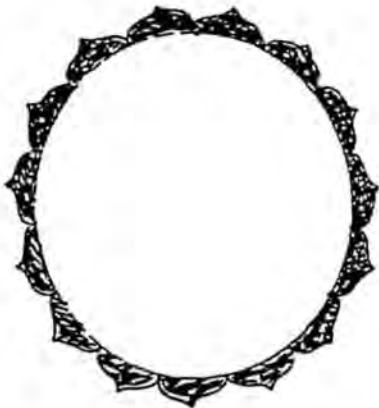


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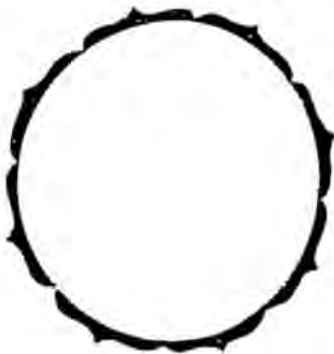
Figure 4. The Nava Chakra or Nine Circuits of Sri Yantra.



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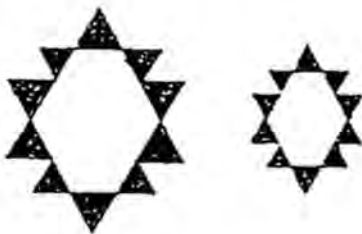
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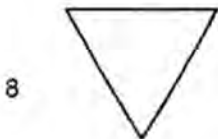
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Figure Example 5. The Nadis or Channels of the Subtle Body

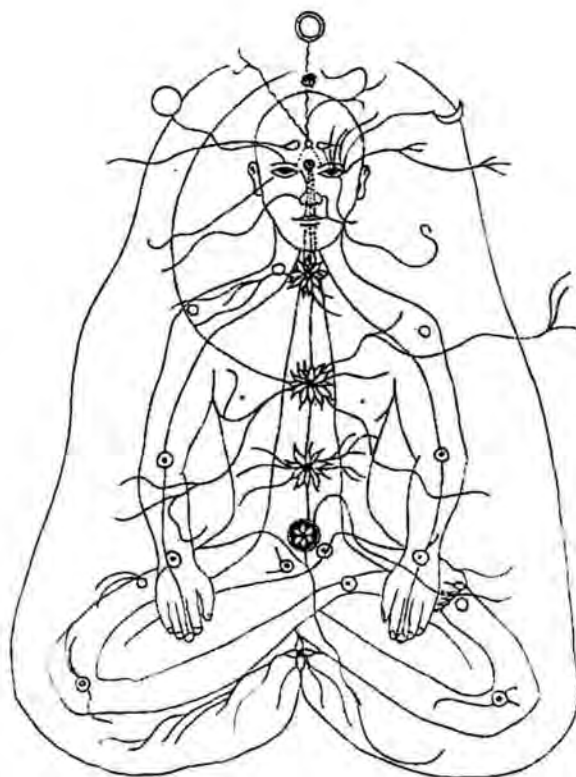
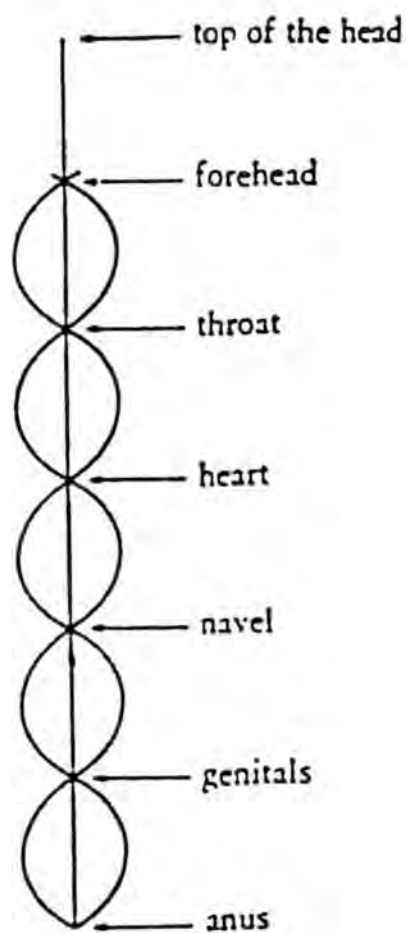


figure 2d

From "Yoga and Psychotherapy: The Evolution of Consciousness,"
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Figure Example 6.. The Three Nodis: Sushumna, Ida, & Pingala of the Subtle body and their Intesections.



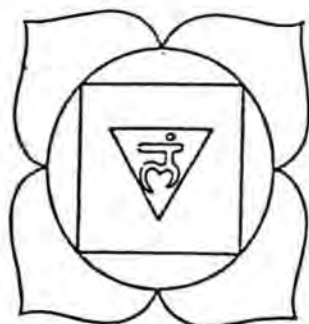
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Figure Example 7. Shiva Ardhanarishvara: Statue showing right-left polarity and its relationship to male-female principles.



From "Yoga and Psychotherapy: The Evolution of Consciousness,"
by Swami Rama, R. Bellentine, & Swami Ajaya, 1976, p. 40.
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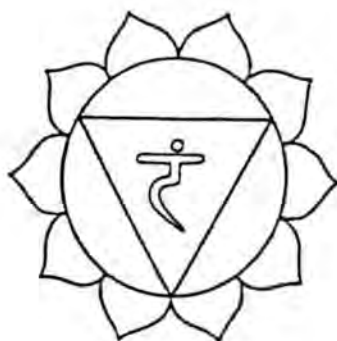
Figure Example 8. The Seven Chakras or Energy Centers.



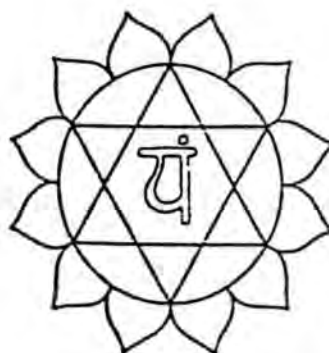
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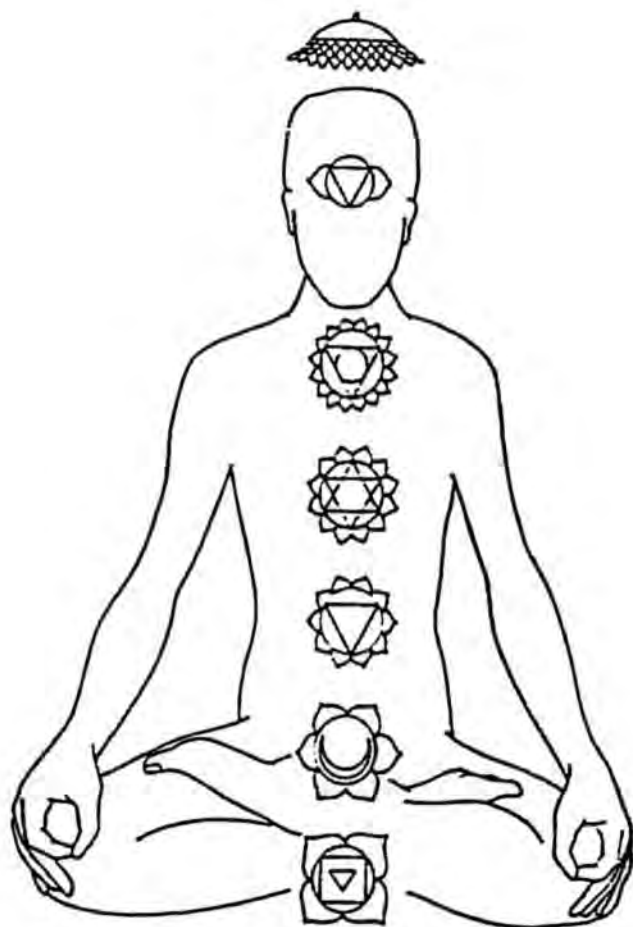


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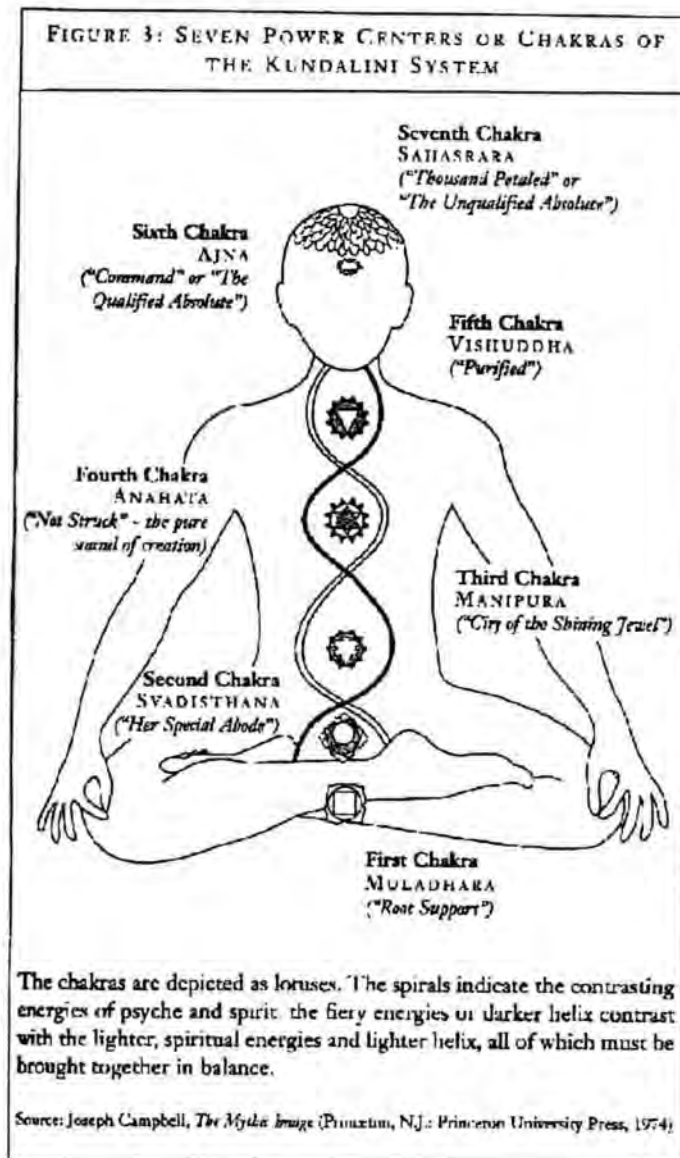
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Figure Example 9. The Seventh Chakra or Energy Center.



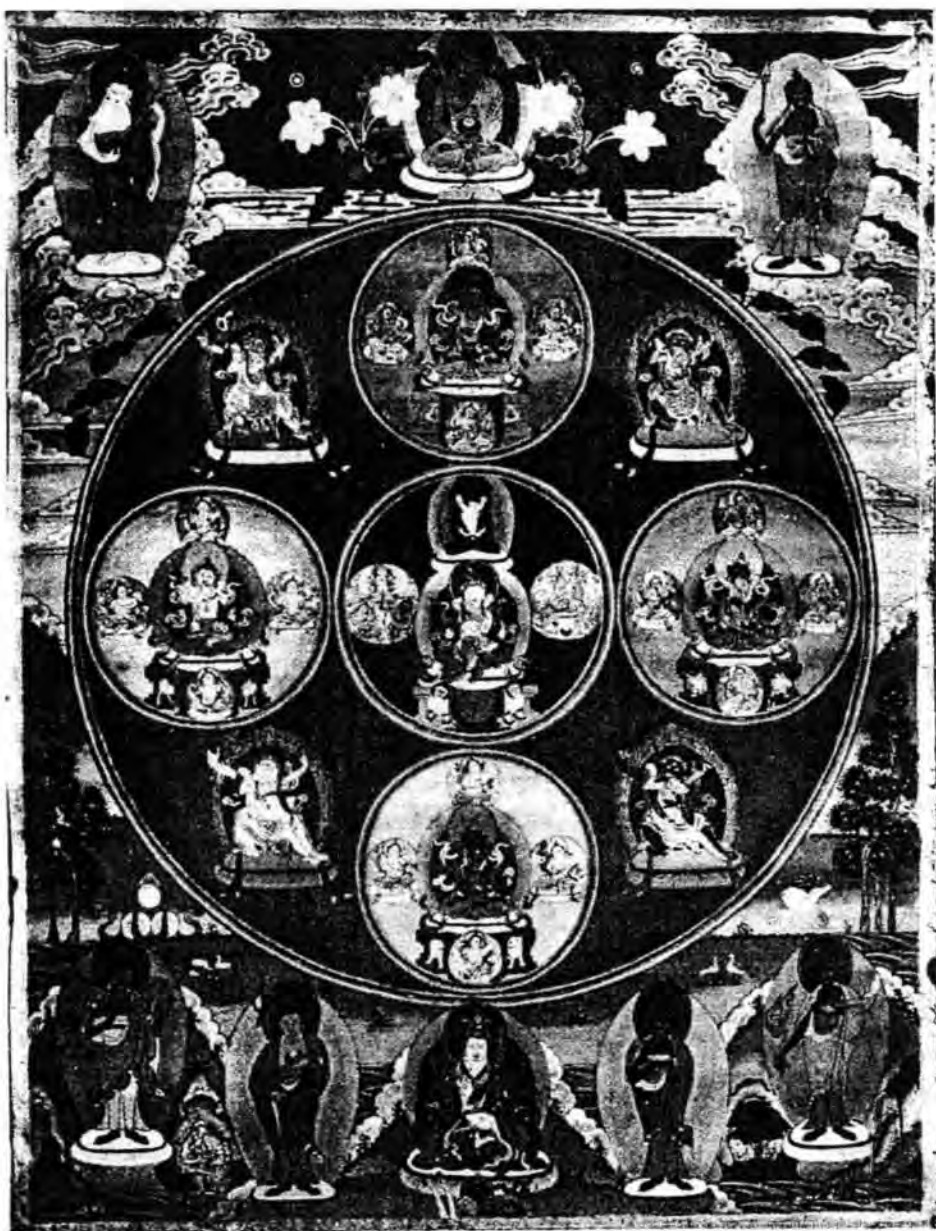
From "Yoga and the Hindu Traditions," by J. Varenne, 1976, p. 171. Copyright 1997 by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 10. The Seven Chakras or Energy Centers and the Three Nadis or Channels.



From "Anatomy of the Spirit: the Seven Stages of Power and Healing," by C. Myss, 1996, p. 69. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 11. The Mandala of the Peaceful Deities.



THE GREAT MANDALA OF THE PEACEFUL DEITIES

Described on pages xxviii-xxix, 118-22, 217-20

From "The Tibetan Book of the Dead," by W. Y. Evans-Wentz, 1960, p. 119. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 12. The Mandala of the Wrathful Deities.



THE GREAT MANDALA OF THE KNOWLEDGE-HOLDING
AND WRATHFUL DEITIES

Described on pages xxix-xxx, 127-8, 217-20

From "The Tibetan Book of the Dead," by W. Y. Evans-Wentz, 1960, p. 137. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 13. The Visual Form of the Mantra: Om Mani Padme Hum Hrih.



Fig. 1. The *mantra* *Om Mani Padme Hūm Hrih*. The first six syllables are read clockwise from the top petal; the final *Hrih* (often omitted from the *mantra*) is in the centre. From ceiling decoration of 'Potala' Temple, Chengde, China. Original size approx. 50 × 60 cm. Drawing by Amanda Yorke.

From "The Twilight Language: Explorations in Buddhist Meditation and Symbolism," by R. S. Bucknell & M. Stuart-Fox, 1986, p. 15. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

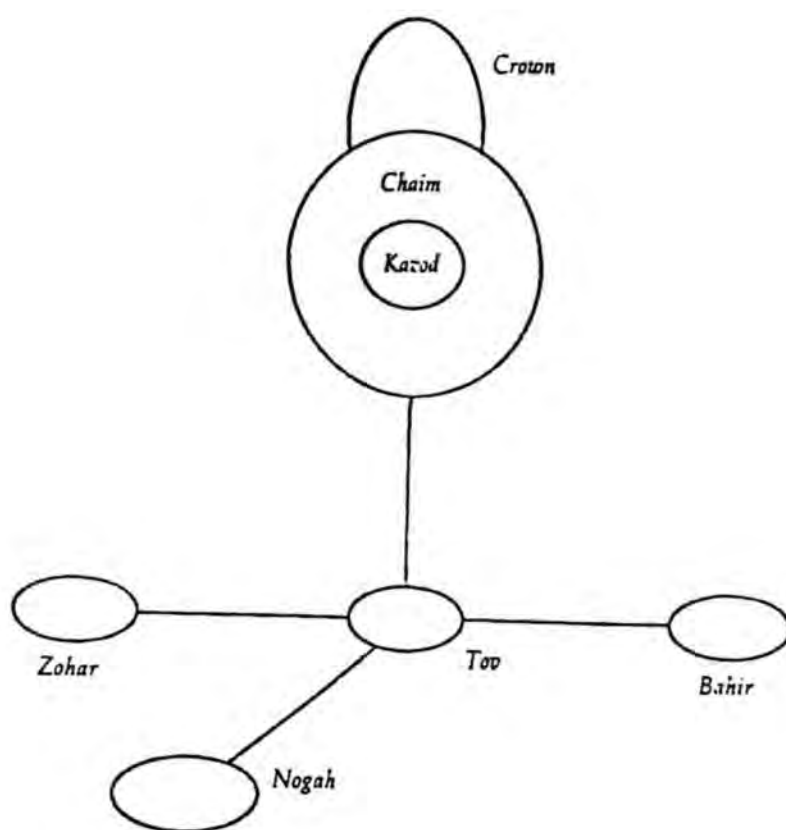
Figure Example 16. The Hebrew Alphabet and the Numerical Equivalents.

SFARDI NAME	SOUND	NUMERICAL FORM	HEBREW NAME	LETTER	SFARDI NAME	SOUND	NUMERICAL FORM	HEBREW NAME	LETTER
Lamed	L	30	לָמֶד	ל	Alef	'	1	אָלֶף	א
Mem	M	40	מֶם	מ	Bet	B	2	בֵּית	ב
Nun	N	50	נּוּן	נ	Gimel	G	3	גִּמֶל	ג
Sameh	S	60	סָמֶךְ	ס	Dalet	D	4	דָּלֶת	ד
Ayin	"	70	עֵין	ע	Hay	H	5	הָא	ה
Pay	Pֶ	80	פֶּא	פ	Vav	וּ	6	וּ	ו
Tzadee	Ṣ	90	צָדִי	צ	Zayin	Z	7	זָן	ז
Kof	Q	100	קוֹף	ק	Het	ח	8	חֵית	ח
Resh	R	200	רֵישׁ	ר	Tet	ט	9	טֵית	ט
Shin	Ṣ	300	שֵׁן	ש	Yod	Y	10	יּוֹד	י
Tav	T	400	תָּו	ת	Kaf	X	20	כָּף	כ

THE HEBREW ALPHABET AND GEMATRIC EQUIVALENTS

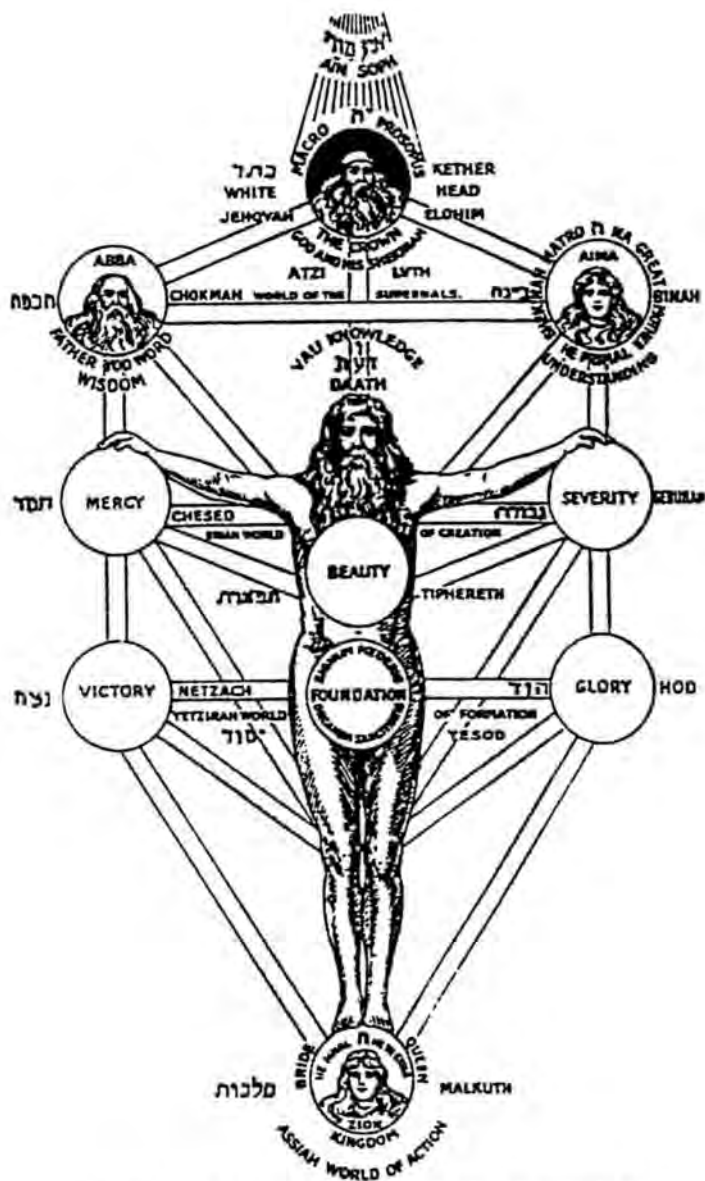
From "Understanding Jewish Mysticism," Volume II, by D. R. Blumenthal, 1982, p. 45. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 17. The Meditation on the Imagery of Light.



From "Meditation and Kabbalah," by A. Kaplan, 1982, p. 121.
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Figure Example 18. The Tree of Sefiroth and Its Symbols and Images.



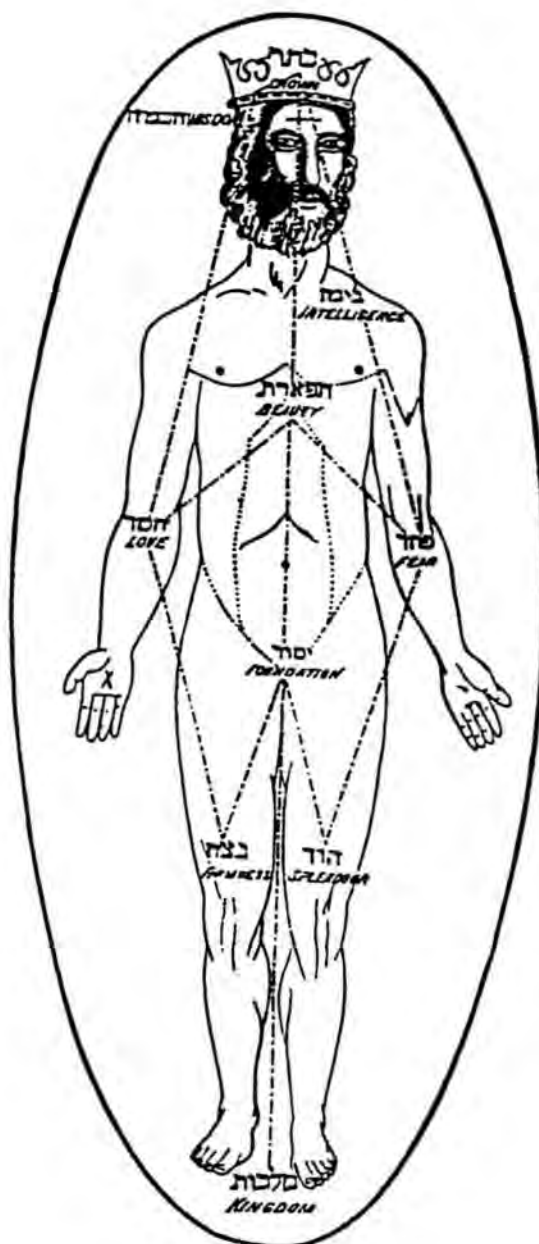
THE SACRED TREE OF THE SEPHIROTH

From "The Holy kabbalah," by A. E. White, 1975, Inside the Front Wrapper. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 19. Kabbalists' Imagination of Primordial Man.

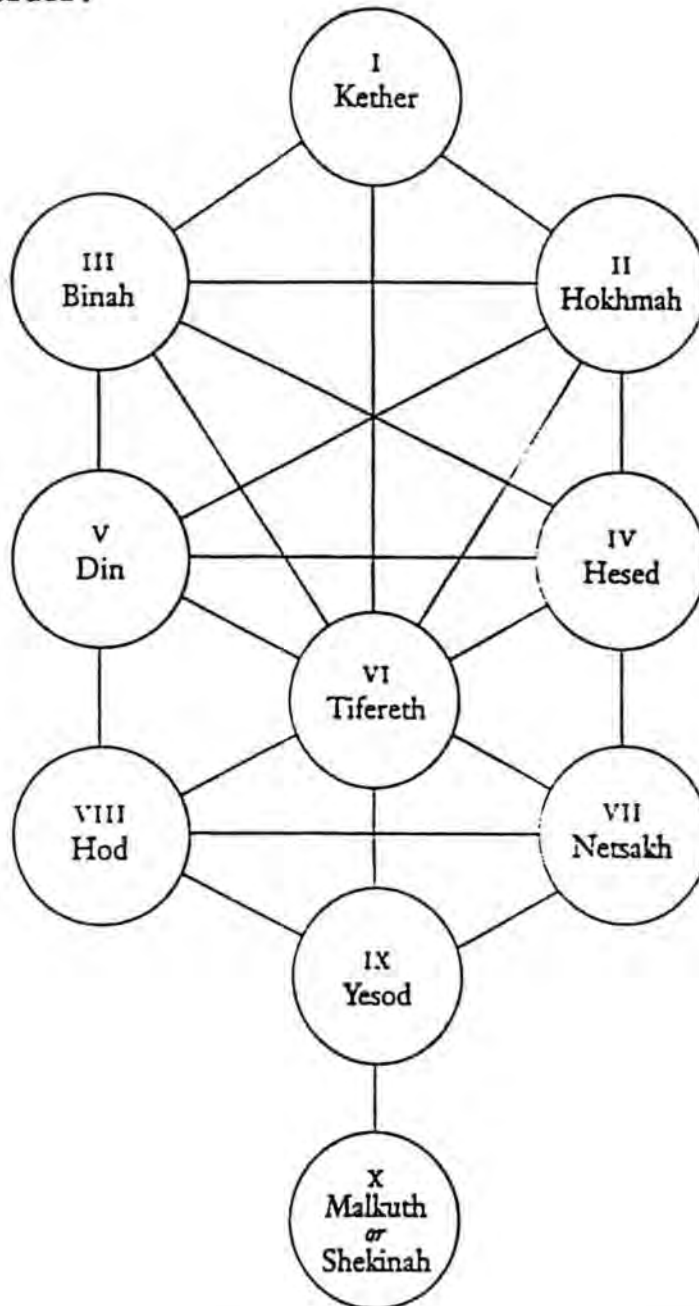
PRIMAL MAN

אין סוף
THE ENDLESS



From "Understanding Jewish Mysticism: A Source Reader," by D. R. Blumenthal, 1978, p. 117. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

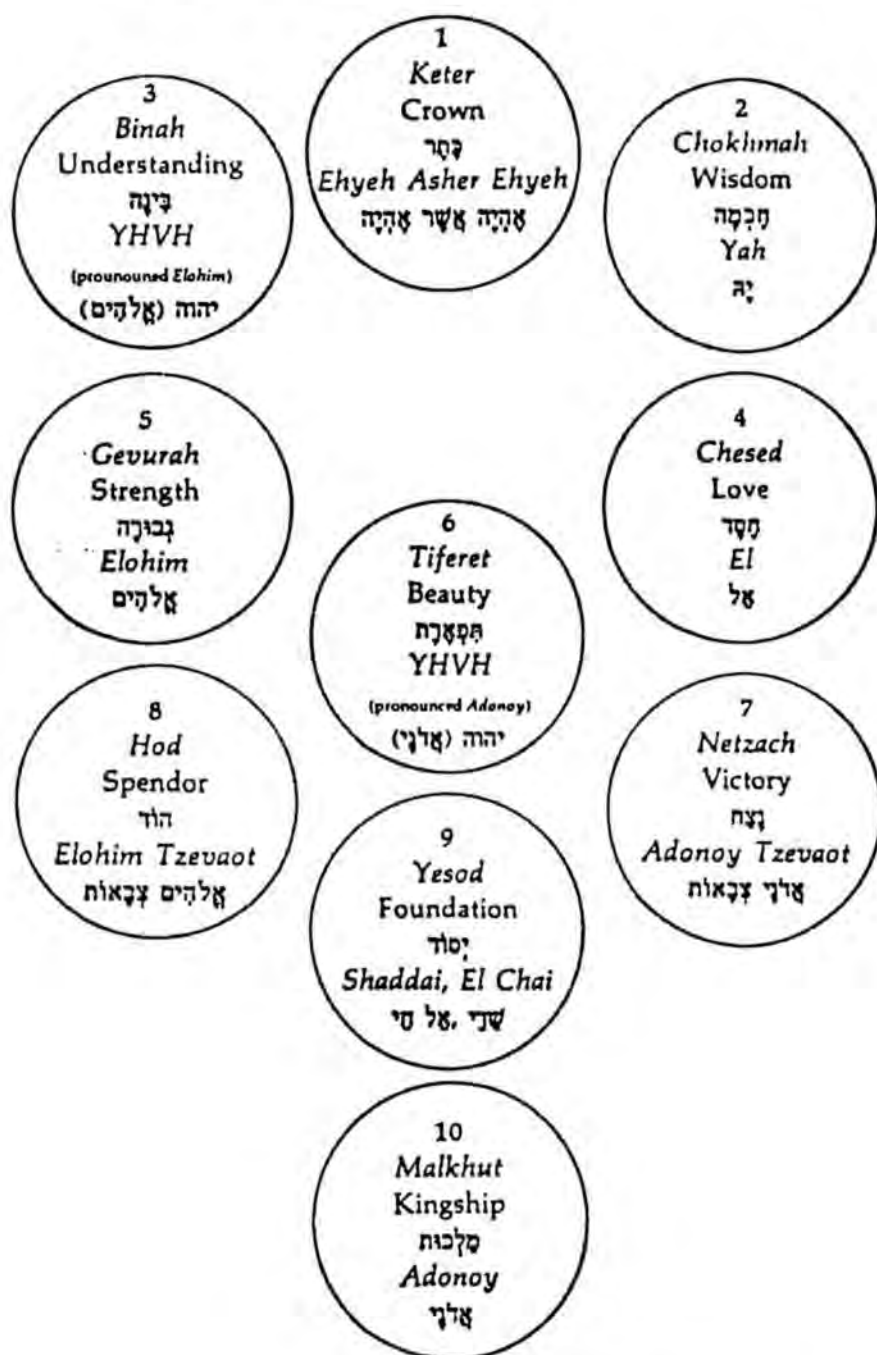
Figure Example 20. The Sacred Tree of Sefiroth with its Hebrew Names and Order.



The Tree of the Sefiroth

From "A History of God: The 4,000-Year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam," by K. Armstrong, 1993, p. 246. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 21. An English Translation of the Sefiroth and Its Associated Names of God.



From, "Meditation and Kabbalah," by A. Kaplan, 1982, p. 126.
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Figure Example 22. Ascension through the Seven Heavenly Halls or Palaces.

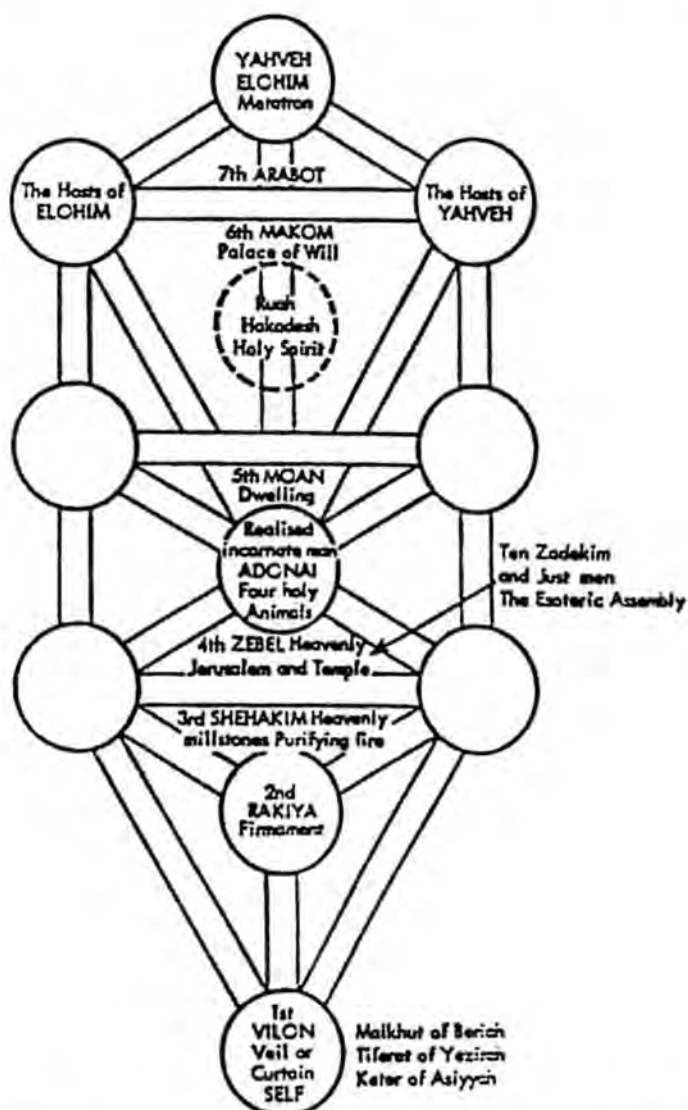


Figure 30. Seven Heavens. In this scheme the Seven Heavens are placed on the central column, as against the seven lower sefirot in some Kabbalistic formulations. This is because here the Heavens are seen as states of consciousness up the middle Way of Holy Knowledge. As spiritual stages, the traditional accounts set out in symbolism the conditions of each level from the first moment of Self-awareness at Malkhut to the final ecstasy in the Seventh Heaven of Arabot.

From "The Way of Kabbalah," by Z'ev ben S. Halevi, 1976, p. 211. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 23. Rabbi Akiba's Ascension and the Angles Guarding the Heavenly Palaces.

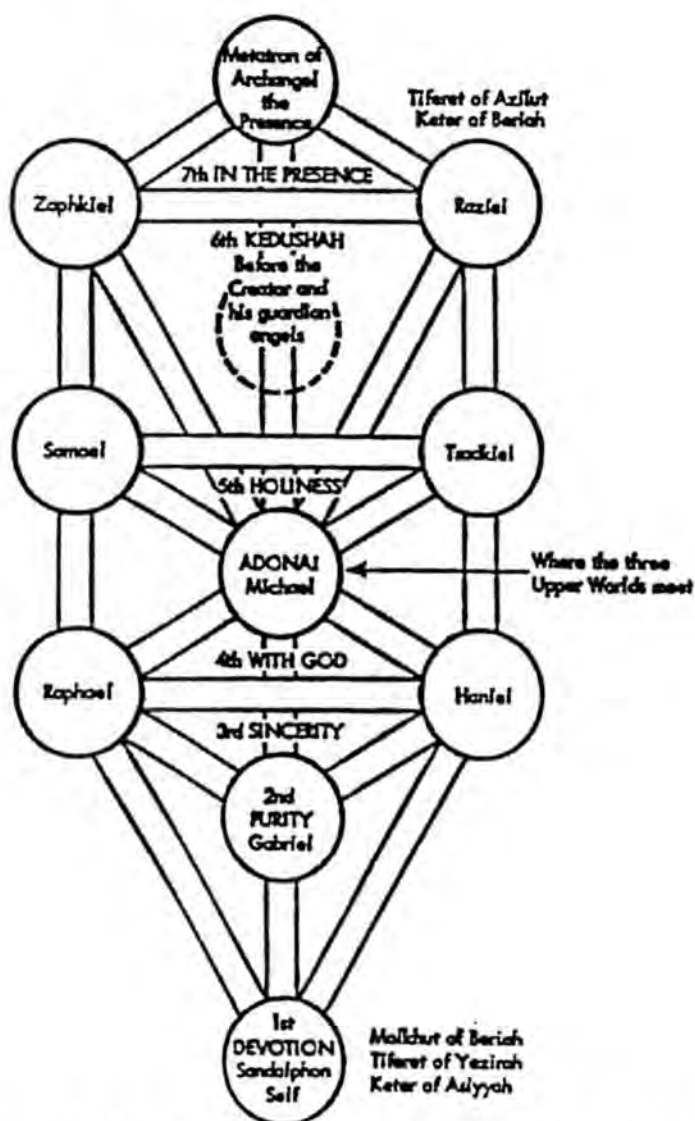


Figure 29. Rabbi Akiba's Ascension. Here Rabbi Akiba's description of his ascent through the Heavenly Palaces is set out on the Beriaic Tree. Moving through seven distinct states of reality, he passes between the guardian archangels up out of the lower face of Creation into the upper face of Beriah which is simultaneously the lower face of Azilut. Here in Emanation he stood, so he tells us, erect and trembling before the Divine Presence of the Glory.

From "The Way of Kabbalah," by Z'ev ben S. Halevi, 1976, p. 208. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 25. Pilgrims Circumambulating the Kaba during a hajj at Mecca. The Shrine is Sheathed with black silk and the pilgrims kiss or touch the black stone set at one corner.



From "Religions of the World," by N. C. Nielsen, N. Hein, F. E. Reynolds, A. L. Miller, S. E. Karf, A. C. Cochran, & P. McLean, 1983, p. 613. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 26. The 99 Names and Attributes of Allah.

Number	Name	Attribute
1	AR-RHMAAN	The Beneficent
2	AR-RAHEEM	The Merciful
3	AL-MALIK	The Sovereign Lord
4	AL-QUDDOOS	The Holy
5	AS-SALAAM	The Source of Peace
6	AL-MOMIN	The Guardian of Faith
7	AL-MUHAIMIN	The Protector
8	AL-AZEEZ	The Mighty
9	AL-JABBAAR	The Compeller
10	AL-MUTA KABBIR	The Majestic
11	AL-KHAALIQ	The Creator
12	AL-BAARI	The Evolver
13	AL-MUSAWWIR	The Fashioner
14	AL-GHAFFAAR	The Forgiver
15	AL-QAHHAAR	The Subduer
16	AL-WAHHAAB	The Bestower
17	AR-RAZZAAQ	The Provider
18	AL-FATTAAH	The Opener
19	AL-ALEEM	The All-knowing
20	AL-QAABID	The Constrictor
21	AL-BAASIT	The Expander
22	AL-KHAAFID	The Abaser
23	AR-RAAFE	The Exalter
24	AL-MUIZZ	The Honorer
25	AL-MUZILL	The Dishonorer
26	AS-SAMI'L	The All-hearing
27	AL-BASEER	The All-seeing
28	AL-HAKAM	The Judge
29	AL-ADL	The Just
30	AL-LATEEF	The Subtle
31	AL-KHABEER	The Aware
32	AL-HALEEM	The Clement
33	AL-AZEEM	The Magnificent
34	AS-SABOOR	The Patient
35	AR-RASHEED	The Guide to the Right Path
36	AL-WAARITH	The Supreme Inheritor
37	AL-BAAQL	The Everlasting
38	AL-BADEE'I	The Incomparable
39	AL-HAADI	The Guide
40	AN-NOOR	The Light
41	AN-NAAFI	The Propitious
42	AD-DAAR	The Distresser

From "Eastern and Western Approaches to Healing: Ancient & Modern Knowledge," by A. A. Sheikh & K.S. Sheikh, 1989, p. 171. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 27. The 99 Names and Attributes of Allah.

Number	Name	Attribute
43	AL-MANI	The Preventer
44	AL-MUGHANI	The Enricher
45	AL-GHANE	The Self-sufficient
46	AL-JAAME	The Gatherer
47	AL-MUQSIT	The Equitable
48	ZUL-JALAALI-WAL-IKRAAM	The Lord of Majesty and Bounty
49	MAALIK-UL-MULK	The Owner of Sovereignty
50	AR-RAOOF	The Compassionate
51	AL-AFUWW	The Pardoner
52	AL-MUNTAQIM	The Avenger
53	AL-TAWWAB	The Acceptor of Repentance
54	AL-BARR	The Source of All Goodness
55	AL-MUTA'AAL	The Most Exalted
56	AL-WAALI	The Governor
57	AL-BAATIN	The Hidden
58	AZ-ZAAHIR	The Manifest
59	AL-AAKHIR	The Last
60	AL-AWWAL	The First
61	AL-MUAKHIR	The Delayer
62	AL-MUQADDIM	The Expediter
63	AL-MUQTADIR	The Powerful
64	AL-QAADIR	The Able
65	AS-SAMAD	The Eternal
66	AL-AHAD	The One
67	AL-WAAHID	The Unique
68	AL-MAAJID	The Noble
69	AL-WAAJID	The Finder
70	AL-GHAFOOR	The Forgiving
71	ASH-SHAKOOR	The Appreciative
72	AL-ALEE	The Most High
73	AL-KABEER	The Great
74	AL-HAFEEZ	The Preserver
75	AL-MUQEET	The Sustainer
76	AL-HASEEB	The Reckoner
77	AL-JALEEL	The Sublime
78	AL-KAREEM	The Generous
79	AR-RAQEEB	The Watchful
80	AL-MUJEEB	The Responsive
81	AL-WAASI	The All-embracing
82	AL-HAKEEM	The Wise
83	AL-WADOOD	The Loving
84	AL-MAJEED	The Glorious

From "Eastern and Western Approaches to Healing: Ancient & Modern Knowledge," by A. A. Sheikh & K.S. Sheikh, 1986, p. 172. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 28. The 99 Names and Attributes of Allah.

Number	Name	Attribute
85	AL-BAA'ITH	The Resurrector
86	ASH-SHAHEED	The Witness
87	AL-HADQ	The Truth
88	AL-WAKEEL	The Trustee
89	AL-QAWEE	The Strong
90	AL-MATEEN	The Firm
91	AL-WALEE	The Protecting Friend
92	AL-HAMEED	The Praiseworthy
93	AL-MUHSEE	The Reckoner
94	AL-MUBDI	The Originator
95	AL-MU'EED	The Restorer
96	AL-MUHYEE	The Giver of Life
97	AL-MUMEET	The Creator of Death
98	AL-HAYY	The Alive
99	AL-QAYYOOM	The Self-subsisting

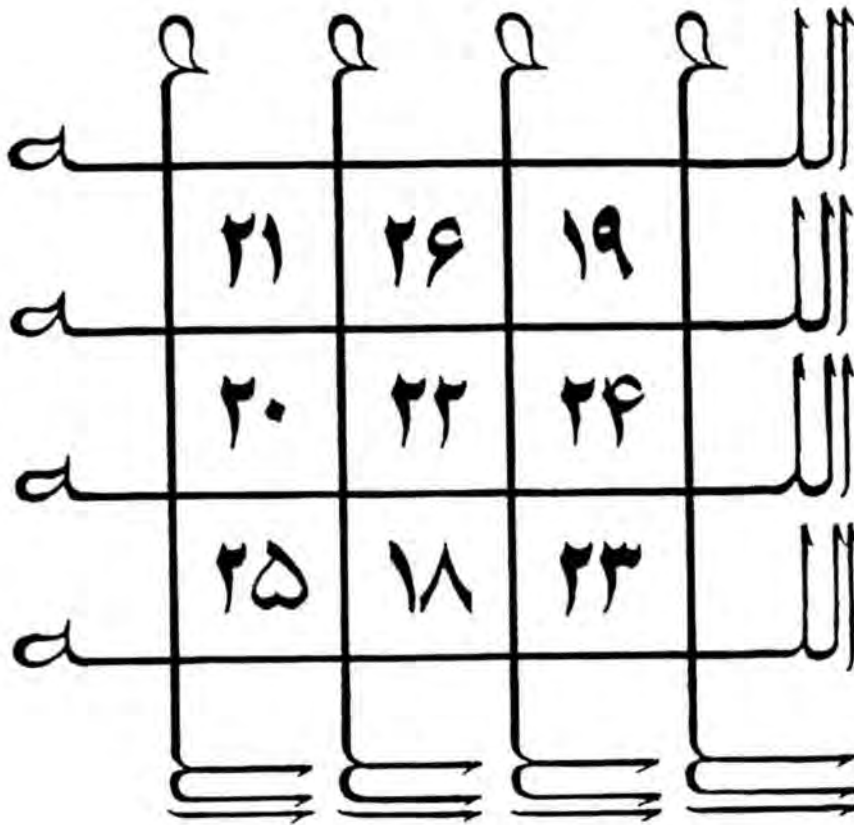
From "Easter and Western Approaches to Healing: Ancient & Modern Knowledge," by A. A. Sheikh & K. S. Sheikh, 1989, p. 172. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 29. The Whirling Dervishes Dance in Konya, Turkey.



From "Sufi Expressions of the Mystic Quest," by L. Bakhtiar, 1976, p. 71. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 30. The Quran's Quote: 2:37 is so written Calligraphically that it can be read in a number of ways.



From "Sufi Expressions of the Mystic Quest," by L. Bakhtiar, 1976, p. 115. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

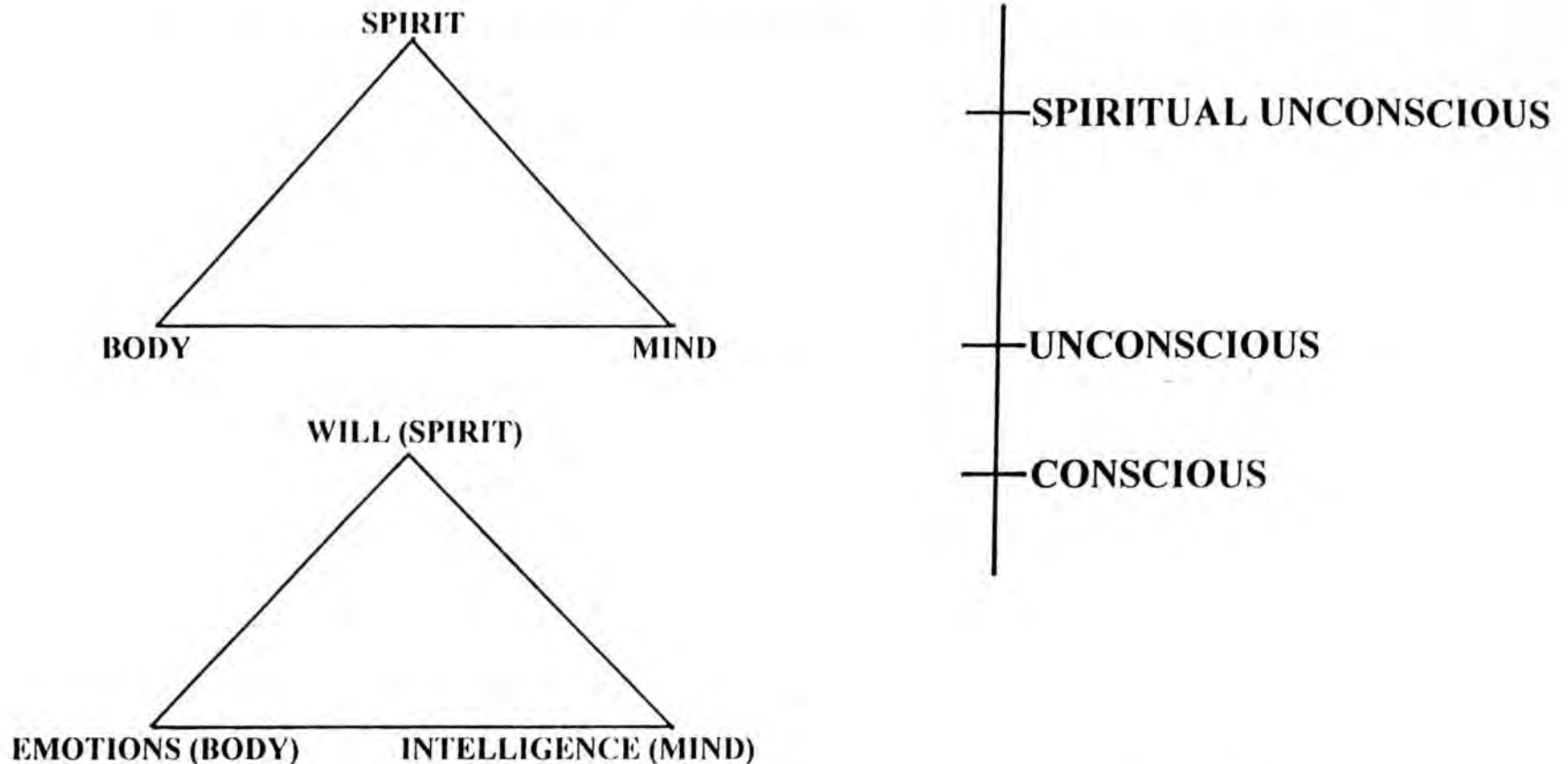
Figure Example 31. A Calligraphic Expression of the Seven Names invoked by the Khalwati Initiate under the Direction of his Sheikh.



From "Sufi Expressions of the Mystic Quest," by L. Bakhtiar, 1976, p. 39. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 32.

HUMAN COMPOSITE ACCORDING TO MYSTICS



MIND AND BODY - EXPLORED BY SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
SPIRIT - NEEDS TO BE EXPLORED

Figure Example 33. The Seven Stages of Royal Yoga

Atman (Essence)	8. <i>Samadhi</i> (Enstasy) 7. <i>Dhyana</i> (Contemplation)	spirit
<i>Buddhi</i> (Intelligence)	6. <i>Dharana</i> (Concentration) 5. <i>Pratyahara</i> (Sense-withdrawal)	body
<i>Manas</i> (Thought)	4. <i>Pranayama</i> (Breath-control) 3. <i>Asana</i> Postures	body
<i>Indriya</i> (Organs of Perception & Thought)	2. <i>Niyama</i> (Disciplines) 1. <i>Yama</i> (Restraints)	body

Figure Example 34.

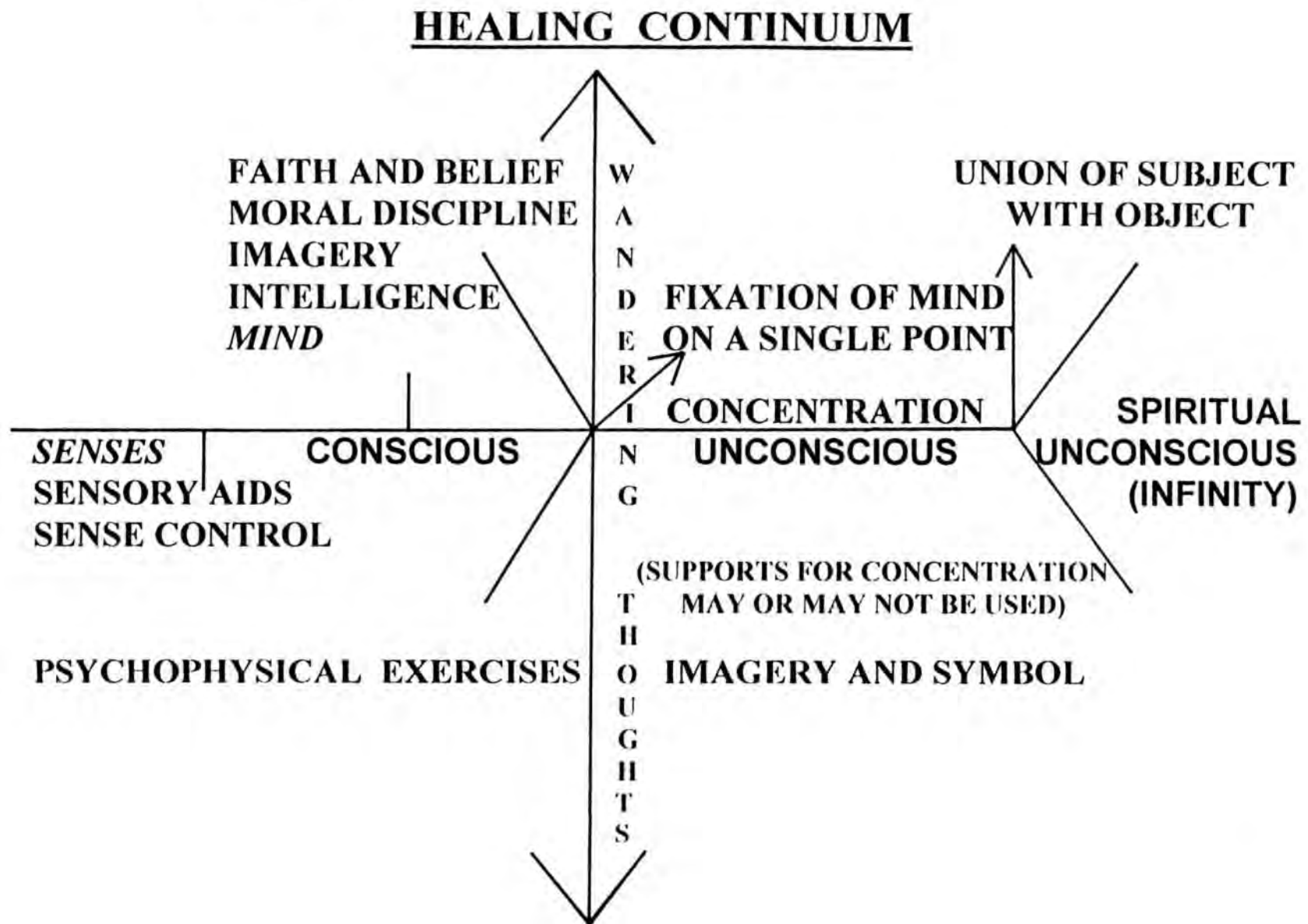
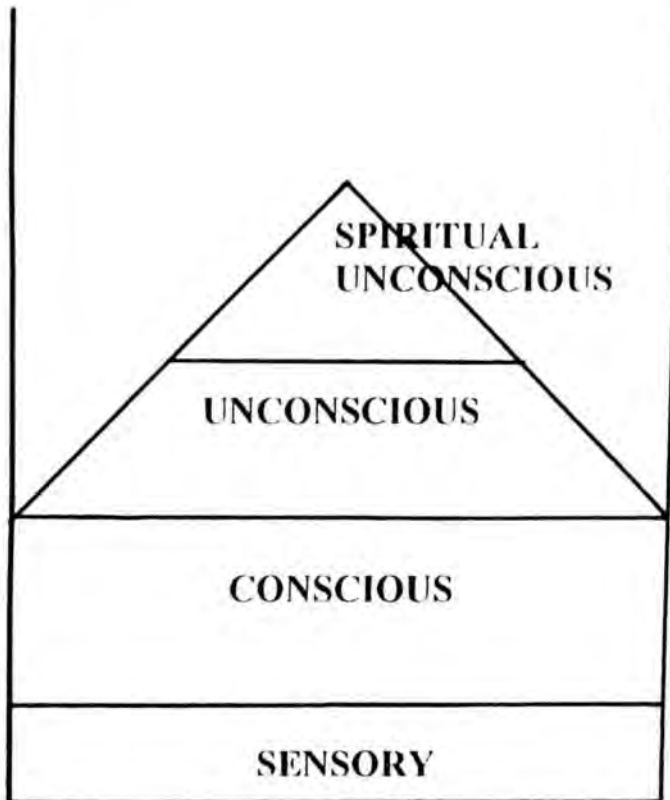


Figure Example 35.

AWARENESS LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS

NORMAL STATE



MYSTICAL STATE

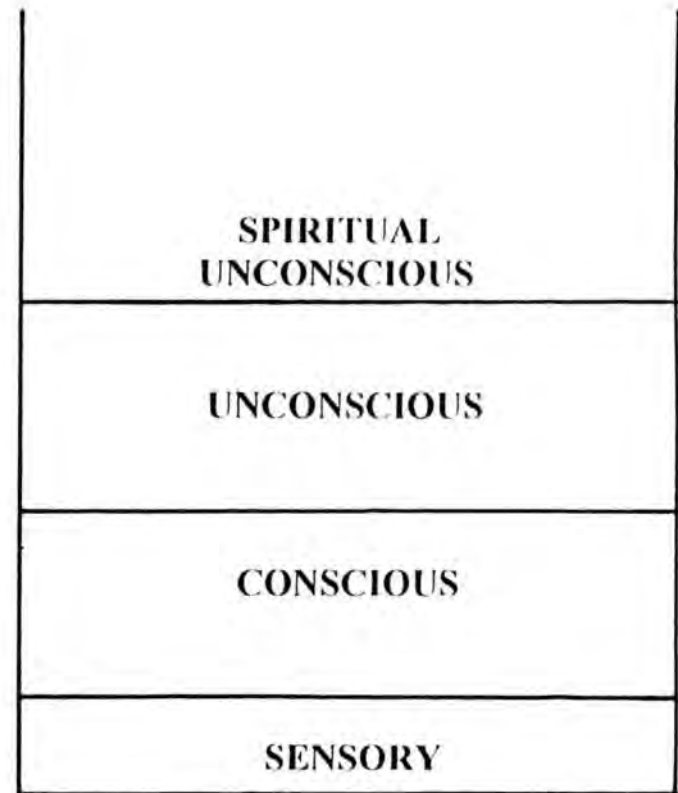


Figure Example 36. A Modern Version of Yoga Techniques.

EXERCISE 2: SHOULDER SHRUGS



A. INHALE
Shoulders up



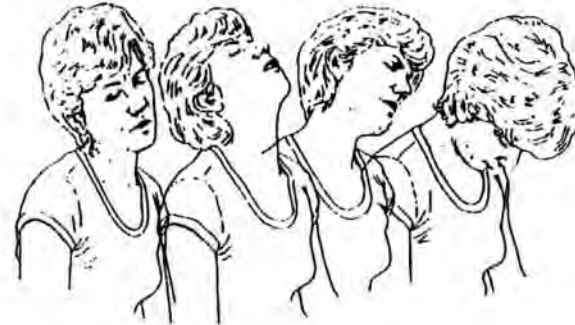
B. CONTINUE TO INHALE
Roll shoulder blades together



C. EXHALE
Shoulders down

Inhale and pull your shoulders up to your ears, (A). Now rotate your shoulders backward, pulling the shoulder blades together (B). Exhale with a sigh and let go (C). Repeat three times (long pause). Notice that when you pull your shoulder blades together, you are giving the chest muscles a nice stretch.

EXERCISE 3: HEAD ROLLS



INHALE

EXHALE

Exhale as you drop your chin to your chest. Now inhale and rotate your head to the right, just letting it go, letting gravity take it rather than trying to push it around. When you have rotated your head around to the back, begin to exhale. Continue the exhalation as you roll to the left and back down to the chest. Now you're ready to inhale and start over. Complete three rolls to the right and then reverse, three to the left. Notice how the stretch moves around your neck as you do this? For instance, when you have dropped your head to the right, you can feel the stretch on the left side of your neck; when your head drops back, the stretch moves to your throat, and so on all the way around. Try to be aware of where you feel the stretch rather than where you are moving your head (long pause).

From, "Minding the Body, Mending the Mind," J. Borysenko, 1988, p. 72. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.

Figure Example 37. A Simplified Version of Mantra Meditation.

- Step 1.** Pick a focus word or short phrase that's firmly rooted in your belief system.
- Step 2.** Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
- Step 3.** Close your eyes.
- Step 4.** Relax your muscles.
- Step 5.** Breathe slowly and naturally, and as you do, repeat your focus word, phrase, or prayer silently to yourself as you exhale.
- Step 6.** Assume a passive attitude. Don't worry about how well you're doing. When other thoughts come to mind, simply say to yourself, "Oh, well," and gently return to the repetition.
- Step 7.** Continue for ten to twenty minutes.
- Step 8.** Do not stand immediately. Continue sitting quietly for a minute or so, allowing other thoughts to return. Then open your eyes and sit for another minute before rising.
- Step 9.** Practice this technique once or twice daily.

From "Timeless Healing: The Power and Biology of Belief," H. Benson, 1997, p. 136. Copyright by the American Psychological Association and author's permission will be requested.