A Comparative Study of Jalal-Ud-Din Rumi and William Blake as Mystical Poets

Sardar Muhammad
11-FLL/Ph.D (English)/F07

Dr. Ayaz Afsar
Supervisor

A thesis submitted to
International Islamic University Islamabad, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English

Department of English
Faculty of Languages & Literature
International Islamic University Islamabad
Declaration

I, Sardar Muhammad, do hereby solemnly declare that this work has been composed by me at the Department of English, International Islamic University Islamabad, and that the subject-matter contained herein is my own except where explicitly stated in the text. I also declare that this work has not been submitted for a degree or professional qualification in a university anywhere in the world.

Sardar Muhammad

Researcher
Acknowledgement

I am highly grateful to Dr. Ayaz Afsar, my Research Supervisor, for his memorable efforts he did, to encourage me to complete this work. He facilitated me through providing required material, and extending full support in all academic endeavours. Through these words, I intend to express my sense of gratitude for his kindness and fruitful suggestions.
Dedication

This humble work is dedicated to my wife for her devotion and sacrifices. Without her constant support, motivation, and encouragement, it could hardly be possible for me to endeavour to complete this work.
Abstract

The present thesis examines the concept of Mystical Union, one of the major themes of Islamic and Christian mystical poetry through juxtaposing the views of Jalal-ud-din Rumi and William Blake on it (Mystical Union). The work is primarily focused on confirming the philosophical assertion that, “at the highest level of spiritual elevation (state of mystical union), dogmatic differences either cease to exist or become insignificant.”

As a central theme of Islamic and Christian mystical poetry, the study of Mystical Union may help to understand both types of mysticism. The analysis of this theme may also encompass the interpretation of most of the constituting elements of mysticism (the stages of mystical path in Islamic and Christian mysticism). The comparison of Rumi and Blake may help to determine the value of current thesis as an addition to existing body of knowledge.

To develop the current thesis, the study has been divided into two phases. In first phase the concept of mystical union has been discussed individually with reference to the poetry of Rumi and Blake through Dawson’s research technique of five Ws. In the second phase, Zepetnek’s model of comparative study of literature has been followed which provides an approach of thematic inclusion. In accordance with this model, the opinions of Rumi and Blake on Mystical Union have been juxtaposed for finding thematic affinities.

The affinities between the views of Rumi and Blake on mystical union show that there has been an overwhelming agreement between Islamic and Christian mysticism, and that “at the highest level of spiritual elevation (state of mystical union), the differences based on dogmatism cease to exist or become insignificant”. The validity of this assertion has been confirmed through comparative study of Rumi and Blake on Mystical Union.
# Table of Contents

I. **CHAPTER ONE:** INTRODUCTION 08  
   Status of Rumi and Blake as Mystical Poets 09  
   Significance of Rumi and Blake’s Juxtaposition 16  
   Review of Existing Literature 18  
   Research Question 42  
   Thesis Statement 42  
   Method of Comparative Study 42  

II. **CHAPTER TWO:** THE CONCEPT OF MYSTICAL UNION 48  
   Islamic Mystical Union 49  
   Quranic Parables of Mystical Union 53  
   Literary Parables of Islamic Mystical Union 56  
   Christian Mystical Union 62  
   Biblical Parables of Mystical Union 70  
   Literary Parables of Christian Mystical Union 75  

III. **CHAPTER THREE:** JALAL-UD-DIN RUMI ON MYSTICAL UNION 82  
   What is Mystical Union? 84  
   Significance of Mystical Union 90  
   Attainment of Mystical Union 95  
   Impact of Mystical Union on Mystic’s life 107  
   Illustration of Mystical Union 111  

IV. **CHAPTER FOUR:** WILLIAM BLAKE ON MYSTICAL UNION 122  
   What is Mystical Union? 124
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Significance of Mystical Union</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attainment of Mystical Union</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of Mystical Union on Mystic’s life</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration of Mystical Union</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. CHAPTER FIVE: COMPARISON OF RUMI AND BLAKE ON MYSTICAL UNION</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Mystical Union?</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of Mystical Union</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attainment of Mystical Union</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of Mystical Union on Mystic’s life</td>
<td>178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration of Mystical Union</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. CHAPTER SIX: THEMATIC AFFINITIES</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is Mystical Union?</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of Mystical Union</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attainment of Mystical Union</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of Mystical Union on Mystic’s life</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration of Mystical Union</td>
<td>202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for Further Research</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Cited</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1.0</td>
<td>046</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Comparative study of mystical themes with reference to the poetry of mystical poets with different poetic traditions and cultural backgrounds can be stated as a better literary technique to analyze and evaluate the universal nature of mysticism because of its presence in almost all religions of the world. Through juxtaposing the poets on mystical themes one can find out sufficient evidence of natural affinity inherent in different types of mysticism including Sufism (Islamic mysticism) and Christian mysticism in spite of linguistic and cultural dissimilarities.

As mysticism is “the science of union with the Absolute” (Underhill 1912, 86) the central theme of mystical poetry can be determined as mystical union. Comparative analysis of mystical union as a poetic theme through juxtaposing two mystical poets, one from Islamic and the other from Christian mystical tradition can help to understand the nature and function of mystical poetry in the eastern and the western societies, particularly with Islamic and Christian religious and social values.

To interpret the concept of mystical union through juxtaposing mystical poetry, one needs to select two poets on the basis of their status as poets and mystics. As representatives of Islamic and Christian mysticism Jalal-ud-din Rumi (a Muslim) and William Blake (a Christian) as mystical poets can be natural and logical choices for any researcher of mysticism, and their juxtaposition, a logical requirement for the interpretation of mystical union.

From the works of their critics it can be safely stated that Jalal-ud-din Rumi and William Blake have been regarded as popular figures and respected equally in literary circles of their times and their respective communities of practicing mystics. So there is a need to present the
opinions of their critics to evaluate their individual position to justify their selection for comparative analysis of mystical union.

**Status of Rumi and Blake as Mystical Poets**

To analyze the mystical themes with reference to the poetry of two mystical poets from different cultures and literary traditions it would be more important to evaluate their status as a poet in their respective societies from the sources of information available in the form of printed books. These sources mostly include the works of their critics or biographers. The works about Rumi and Blake provide necessary material for the reader or researcher to develop his opinion about their poetry and judge their popularity among their followers.

From the writings of their biographers and evaluators it can also be concluded that, their poetry is sufficiently appreciated by a sizable majority of poets, literary critics, students of literature, and also the lay-men. In this way they emerge as social, cultural, and literary representatives of their people, communities, and times. It seems to be more important to search for details about Rumi and Blake to evaluate their status as a poet and mystic.

1. **Jalal-ud-din Rumi**

Rumi’s biographers and critics mostly seem to be agreed on his standing or level of importance in literary circles. Their opinions reflect greater significance of Rumi and admiration of his poetry’s greatness. As the critics belong to East as well as western regions his poetry can be judged as popular equally in both regions of the world. How a poet can be regarded as great and popular among his readers whose poetry does not discuss something different from other poets of his time?

There may be several reasons behind his popularity as a poet. From the writings about his poetry it can be stated that he is appreciated in the east perhaps for the beauty of his verse and his
theme of love for mankind, and in the west for his doctrine of universal brotherhood. Whatever may be the reason the level of his popularity in the West seems to be based on the greatness and reconciliatory nature of his message, as Raficq Abdulla observes:

I believe the secret lies in the quality of lived experience,
the intense yearning or desire for something greater than ourselves, something which emanates power, awe, love, and beauty. It is the feeling of homecoming in a world in which we are displaced, un-rooted, that is the essence of Rumi’s verse and what draws us to it. (9)

Abdulla’s words seem to be sufficiently convincing for the readers of Rumi’s poetry to believe in it as a mainspring of motivation and energy to the hearts of those who intend to change their way from the way of displaced-men to the world of universal love, a common home for united-men. His words also represent stronger desire for attaining the higher form of knowledge which may provide necessary platform for reconciling differences between mankind.

Like other Sufis of Muslim world, Rumi, on the basis of his contribution to Islamic mysticism, can also be regarded as a well-known saint and Sufi master, the founder of a new order of mysticism (Maulavia order) and also a great Muslim scholar. Most of his biographers believe that the message of love for mankind is perhaps one of the factors which contribute to make his poetry more appealing, and appreciated by the readers from all parts of the world.

One can observe ‘comprehensiveness’ as one of the major characteristics of Rumi’s poetry. Through detailed study of his Mathnavi, the reader can realize that the work is comprehensively composed, and covers almost all aspects of Islamic Mysticism with necessary details. Although the style of Rumi’s poetry, like any other poet, can be questioned the poetic
themes or subject-matter can help the critics to judge the value of his work through evaluating his philosophy instead of his language and structural aspect of poetry as Raficq Abdulla opines:

The Mathnavi-e-Ma'navi or Poem of Inner Meanings runs for thousands of verses and is made up of countless interweaving stories, interspersed with more generalized observations. In this great didactic work, Rumi attempts to describe every aspect of mystical perception and aspiration. The Mathnavi is so highly regarded in the Muslim world that it has been audaciously called the Qur'an in Persian. (10)

Abdulla’s appreciation of Rumi’s poetry helps to evaluate his position in the community of mystical poets. The Mathnavi’s recognition and appreciation to the level of equality with the Holy Qur’an seems to be symbolic but it shows the extent to what the people love and pay tribute to Rumi’s poetry. Perhaps, a sizable majority of people who love Rumi’s poetry for its subject-matter and appreciate his message of love for mankind may not be able to understand Persian language, the language of Rumi’s poetry.

As Rumi’s poetry covers most of the aspects of Islamic Mysticism it may be a good source of information for the students of Islamic mysticism. The stories told by Rumi in the Mathnavi provide necessary information about well-known personalities mentioned in the Qur'an and the history of early Islamic period and overall condition of various social and political institutions. In this way it can be equally helpful to the students of Qur’anic studies, history and literature.

The universality of Rumi’s message of love shows that the audience of his poetry cannot belong only to a particular religious community but the people from all religions and cultures. He
represents love, and peace and thus represents human nature (love and peace are the parts of human nature). Citlak, and Bingul aptly say, “The world has never been without representatives of love and peace. Rumi was and is one of the perfect representatives of such a complete human being, and one of the greatest teachers of universal love and peace.” (2)

Rumi’s teachings can be useful to all men in the East and West. He is not only a poet to be appreciated for the sublimity of thought in his poetry but a teacher who teaches the men beyond geographical boundaries and cultural and linguistic limitations. His doctrine of universal love is such a humanitarian belief that has roots in almost all religions of the world including Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Rumi’s poetry can be called the poetry for all men. It is to be noted that:

Rumi is not merely a Mawlana (our master)-one of the titles assigned to him and widely used among Muslims-whose scope is limited to one part of the world. Rather, he is the master of people from both the East and the West. In fact, westerners have increasingly been amazed that his presence seems so alive eight centuries after his death. (Citlak and Bingul, 3)

From these lines it can be inferred that even after eight hundred years the presence of Rumi’s message in the minds of readers from the Eastern and the Western regions of world may be a token of his poetry’s recognition and popularity. His status has also been changed from that of a representative of a group of Muslims to the spiritual leader and guide for the lovers of mankind. It also shows that his words consist of superior wisdom which may be honoured by all men.

Rumi’s works (particularly Divan and Mathnavi) seem to represent man’s universally acknowledged tendency to attain higher level of wisdom which makes him distinguished from
other Muslim poets. This is perhaps one of the qualities for what Rumi seems to be more acceptable to the communities of mystics as well as literary circles all over the world. It can be safely stated that research made in Rumi’s works is more than research made in the works of his contemporaries. That is why his position can be regarded as greater than other Muslim mystical poets.

2. William Blake

William Blake can also be regarded as a well-known poet with a background of Christian mysticism. He can be considered as a poet with a message for all people from all times and cultures. Osmond calls him “one of the greatest of English mystics and, perhaps, the greatest poet among English mystics.”(278). His status as a poet is perhaps higher than most of his contemporaries. What makes him more different from other poets is the individuality of his poetic themes.

There are several categories of mystics among English poets who differ from each other on the basis of the subject matter of their poetry (love, beauty, nature, philosophy and religion etc.). Spurgeon (111) has placed William Blake with devotional and religious mystics. Devotional mysticism can be interpreted as a form of mysticism which represents the mystic’s passionate devotion for God. It also shows intimacy and direct relation between man and God in human form. The mystic enjoys the nearness to God and praises the kindness, and greatness of God as a Master.

Most of the critics of Blake’s poetry including Spurgeon seem to be agree on the point of his status as a great poet but there may be some difference of opinion while his category as a mystic is determined. Spurgeon’s conclusion in this regard seems to be more logical, “within what category could Blake be imprisoned? He outsoars them all and includes them all.”(111)
Blake in this way performs the role of a leader and representative of a particular school of thought in mysticism.

There may be some specific qualities in his poetry which help him to heighten his position in the minds of his readers. The readers can find according to their own social status, educational qualification, and literary taste, the elements of their interest in Blake’s poetry. He becomes important to them on the basis of some reasons as Shivshankar Mishra observes:

Blake attracts them all and sounds a meaning in a very personal way, by evoking the ‘Human Imagination’ embodied in each individual self. It is not for nothing that in an age like this, when most of the previous poets are losing fast their grounds, Blake has come up to the fore from a long way behind. (187)

Mishra’s words highlight some of the salient or distinctive features of Blake’s poetry. And that, its appeal lies in its quality of being evoker of man’s imagination to see the world beyond the limits of human mind, and be the part of that celestial world. It also shows that universality of his message maintains the appealing quality of his poetry. From the words of Mishra, he appears to be more readable than the poets of his tradition, his contemporaries, and even the poets of modern times.

It is however important to note that Blake composed his poetry not for a lay man but for poets, literary critics, research scholars and mystics. That is why he seems to be more popular for his greater poetry among other mystical poets than common people who can hardly understand the meaning of his unfamiliar biblical terms, symbols and allusions. His Biblical scholarship may
be appreciated by most of his learned Christian readers but for few people it can prove to be burdensome or cumbersome.

In spite of few difficulties the readers with strong affiliation to Christian mysticism and Biblical ideology can perhaps be attracted to Blake’s poetry more than any other poet with mystical tradition. At one hand the readers have to make efforts to overcome the difficulties based on his poetic technique but on the other hand they can realize that Blake’s message is known to them through Bible and the words of Jesus Christ. In such situations Blake’s themes get superiority over the structure of his poetry.

As a mystical poet, Blake can provide his readers an opportunity to understand their inner spiritual life. His description of his own mystical experience can facilitate the Christian readers to discover their own ability to realize the importance of mystical experience in attaining the higher form of knowledge or mystical wisdom. In this way he attains the status of a teacher, a spiritual guide, and a popular poet. Mishra rightly observes:

Everyone finds in Blake something which is at once very much his own and which he does not find anywhere else. It is, indeed, more than poetry normally can offer to its readers. They get attracted to him through feeling that he is for them a personal discovery and something of a private possession. (188)

Like any other mystic, Blake’s poetry may greatly appeal to the soul and heart of his readers. They can be fascinated by the power of mysticism to discover their own soul, the hidden treasure of knowledge. It is to be noted that the knowledge of mysticism can hardly be disseminated and communicated to other people. However, the superior knowledge through Blake’s poetry can
help to enlighten the minds of his followers and they can see their spiritual destination in his message.

As a mystical poet Blake could perhaps more successfully promote the freedom of human soul from the limitations of human body. His heart seems to be palpitating with the hearts of those who needed a guide, a leader, and a facilitator on the way to ultimate wisdom. Like all other mystics he can also be considered as a great lover and well-wisher of humanity. He was perhaps one of the people who exerted a lot to create an ideal situation for the people to get rid of their problems based on man’s material needs.

Blake can be perceived to be the leader of mystical poets who tried to promote universal love. It makes him the prophet of humanity and entitled to enjoy love and respect by all of his readers. It can also be considered one of the reasons behind effectiveness of his poetry. Because of his greater subject-matter the poetry could be created by the blessings of God without exerting much energy. John Beer believes that, “much of Blake’s best work came to him in this way-after the struggle was over.”(12) These words show that his mystical themes help to determine his status as a poet and mystic of his own category.

Significance of Rumi and Blake’s Juxtaposition

Rumi and Blake’s comparison is based on the principle of universal agreement between mystical poets irrespective of their religion, culture or language. If such a desirable principle is universally recognized, the mystics from all religions and all times would make a family of members who profess nothing but universal love and brotherhood. Derek Wall’s words can perhaps be helpful in showing universal link between the poets of all ages:

I grant this makes up an ungainly family tree, how many of these often cantankerous artists and thinkers could so much
as share a conversation with one another? Yet I am sure they belong together, not as an ideology, but as a sensibility for the sacred, the organic, the personal.(90)

There has been a family of mystics which will exist till the end of this universe. Universal love as a main theme in the poetry of mystics makes them universal representatives of humanity. Mysticism in this way can be widely accepted as a poetic tradition common to all poets from all languages and cultures. Rumi and Blake as mystical poets enjoy individual as well as cross-cultural significance. Rumi emphasized the value of human interaction and “stressed that all is love and all life is linked by a process of transformation and interaction.”(Wall, 90)

Rumi himself provides necessary information to the readers and critics to facilitate them to realize the need for juxtaposition of Rumi and other poets with similar interests and objectives. He seems to be interested in promoting and disseminating universal love as the message by all mystical poets for the people from all times, societies and geographical regions. And that the people from different backgrounds can never be united if love is excluded from their life.

On the other hand, Blake’s position and status also appeals to the mind of students and research scholars to put him in an appropriate place while selecting poets for juxtaposing their opinion on mystical themes. When there is a comparison of mystical poets from eastern and western cultures, Blake deserves greater attention as Derek Wall says, “It is perhaps both impossible and irrelevant to separate Western from Eastern streams of such thought. The influence of William Blake in synthesizing and transmitting such ancient knowledge cannot be understated.”(90)

The need for spiritual enlightenment can provide a common platform for mystics from all races and times to come closer to each other. Where there is a common objective to be achieved
by two persons belonging to contrasting ideological backgrounds, their ideological differences disappear at least for the time being. The candle of mysticism can be helpful in finding the ultimate truth or attaining the state of enlightenment. Rumi’s story of the elephant shows that, “If there had been a candle in each one’s hand, the difference would have gone out of their words. The eye of sense-perception is only like the palm of the hand: the palm hath not power to reach the whole of him (the elephant)” (Wall, 92)

Through the parable of the elephant Rumi tries to emphasize the need for reconciliation between the people believing in different ideologies through attaining knowledge of absolute truth. It is one of the important aspects of mysticism. Similarly, William Blake believes in providing an opportunity to man’s inner eye to clean itself to be able to see things accurately. He aptly says, “If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite. For man has closed himself up till he sees all things through narrow chinks of his cavern.”(Wall, 93)

Rumi and Blake provide necessary information for understanding both types of mysticism (Islamic and Christian mysticism). Juxtaposition of these poets on mystical themes can be helpful in finding ideological similarities between both types of mysticism at one hand, and affinities between Eastern and Western traditions of mystical poetry on the other hand. It can also facilitate the lovers of poetry and the followers of Rumi and Blake to come closer to each other through developing identical thinking on mysticism.

**Review of Existing Literature**

The current thesis is based on objective analysis of existing scholarship about the poetry and mysticism of Rumi and Blake. At one hand, the views of scholars with different backgrounds have been analyzed and found helpful in defining various aspects of mysticism represented by
Rumi and Blake. On the other hand, the views of Rumi and Blake about various themes of mysticism (specific type of mysticism) have been found helpful in selecting a theme for comparative study of both poets.

As far as the views of scholars and critics are concerned, they evaluate different aspects of their mysticism from their own specific point of view. Guiley’s The Encyclopedia of Angels introduces Rumi and Blake as poets belonging to a group of mystics well-known for their visionary experiences with supernatural being. According to this Encyclopedia “the works of Rumi, Kabir, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, William Blake, William Butler Yeats, and his friend A.E. (George William Russell) reveal familiarity with multiple worlds and beings”.(220)

Michelle Shete applies in a doctoral thesis (2008) the term “perceptive poets” to Rumi and Blake through highlighting their characteristics of having an intense focus on inner spiritual life, as opposed to religious life; detachment and balance; expanded consciousness; inspired by extended consciousness; recognition of the limits of language and intellect; and the use of symbolism. (Shete, 359) The thesis concludes that “perceptive poet” is one who displays these features. The work of literature can be great for the perceptive poets, if it is based on poet’s experience of consciousness in a more expanded form.

Beach perceives Rumi and Blake important members of that group of philosophers who promote tolerance, respect for all, and selflessness (basic principles of mysticism in all religions). He compares Rumi and Blake to Gandhi, American philosophers Vine Deloria Jr., Oren Lyons, Tom Happynook, and Leonard Crow Dog. He gives reference to the statement of an Indian mystic Ramakrishna that “God has made different religions to suit different aspirants, times and countries. All doctrines are only so many paths; but a path is by no means God(Reality).”(25)
Beach’s description of Rumi and Blake shows them representatives of humanity beyond the limitations of language, culture and religion.

Some scholars in modern times refuse to recognize mysticism of Rumi and Blake. They claim it madness and something that cannot be understood with human brain. G.K. Chesterton is one of them. He claims that William Blake is mad and his poetry is incomprehensible and worthless. But Conlon has rejected his assertion by saying that “he has no notion of a mysticism which requires some pretty close investigation to discover its meaning. And when he calls Blake mad, using the same ‘incomprehensible’ phrase in several places, he is making out Jallaludin-Rumi and every other eastern mystic mad as well.”

Kam Rad puts Rumi and Blake in the category of mystics who enlightened human world. In this group the other members included are Ghazali, Sannai, Jibran, John Wycliffe, St.Francis, William Tyndale, Nanak, Ignatius Loyola, Thomas Kempis, Jacob Boehme, William Law, William James, and W.B.Yeats. “They have all contributed to enrich the world of spirit, by a divine light shining through their hearts and minds. They all had revived the spirit of divine in many forms, originated from the Marv Valley of the ancient source.” He also claims the mystics have common goal to unite people within a world context, and respect all aspects of human differences for a wider unity. In this way, Kam Rad has declared Rumi and Blake the representatives of enlightenment and global unity.

Daniel Abdal-Hayy Moore perceives them (Rumi and Blake) to be inspired poets and mystics. Moore (146) claims that “Blake understood with visionary immediacy the depths of Gnostic understanding”. His visions are great source of inspiration. It was ‘inspiration’ which Sufi poets including Blake experienced. Moore further says, “Think of Shams of Tabriz’s transgressive attempts to expand Mevlana Jalaluddin Rumi’s heart to the true ma’rifa (immediate
knowledge) of divine recognition”(146). From the words of Moore it can be inferred that the inspirational role of some spiritual elements helped to develop the career of Rumi and Blake as poets and mystics.

Duncan professes that Rumi and Blake are lovers of God. In this way the type of mysticism they follow appears to be the mysticism of love. Duncan calls them spiritual heroes in the history of mankind and compares them with Kabir, Mira Bai, Hafiz, Julian of Norwich, Gandhi, Dalai Lama, and Thomas Merton. He declares that all lovers of God are belonging to one group or community. And that “the one we all worship is an infinitely more loving, infinitely less fathomable Being.”(Duncan, 54)

Now the question arises about exact nature of mysticism followed by both poets. The type of mysticism represented by Jalal-ud-din Rumi and William Blake through their poetry seems to be almost similar to William Johnston’s definition of mysticism who says, “Mysticism is wisdom or knowledge that is found through love; it is loving knowledge” (20). The definition primarily gives us two main themes as major parts of mysticism. The mysticism in this way can be analyzed as a journey of human soul from human heart (love) to human brain (wisdom). The love provides a platform for mystical practices and these practices end with the attainment of mystical wisdom.

To analyze mysticism the works of poetry composed by Jalal-ud-din Rumi and William Blake could be a great source of information. It was however the critical analysis of their works by some well-known writers and critics which proved to be helpful in determining the final direction of this humble work. The work is initially based on the concept of mystical union discussed in Rumi’s two major works (the Mathnavi and Divan-e-Shams-e-Tabriz), and three major works of William Blake (Jerusalem, Milton, and The Four Zoas).
Rumi’s Mathnavi discusses in detail the stages of mystical path which leads to union with God, and the mystic’s spiritual states developed through mystical exercises. On the other hand Blake’s Jerusalem discusses the mystical process that ends with unitive life in Christian Mysticism. The overall thematic similarity between Rumi’s Mathnavi, and Blake’s Jerusalem and the importance given by both poets to symbolic figures of Sham-e-Tabriz, and Milton paved the way for comparative analysis of mystical union as a central theme in the poetry of Rumi and Blake.

Three major mystical themes appear to encompass the whole discipline of mysticism and dominate the poetry of Rumi and Blake. These are also inter-dependent. If one of them is dissociated the remaining two themes would perhaps lose their significance. These mystical themes are love, mystical union, and perfect wisdom. Love can be regarded as a primary element in mystical experience.

As it comes from the human heart, the nursery of all passions and desires, it provides necessary enthusiasm and power to proceed on the path of mystical experience that leads to union with God, and through attaining mystical union the mystic can achieve superior form of wisdom. William Johnston rightly observes, “Mystical theology is experimental knowledge of God through the embrace of unitive love” (19). In this way the inter-dependence of love and wisdom is proved and mysticism appears to be the journey from the love to wisdom.

**Theme of Love**

The theme of love seems to be highly popular in the writings of almost all the mystics from Christian and Islamic mystical traditions. It provides necessary power to determine the mystics’ direction to spiritually travel to attain superior form of wisdom. Once the nature of relation between love and wisdom is comprehended the mystic’s work can be easier. As “Contemplation
is the mystical theology which theologians call secret wisdom which St. Thomas says is communicated and infused in to the soul through love” (Johnston, 20). The mystic’s level of determination to achieve that wisdom seems to be essential.

All mystics or mystical poets perhaps agree on the matter of recognizing the central role of love in mysticism. It seems to be the basic foundation of man’s relation with God. “He who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God” (Johnston, 20). Perhaps it was love which made Jalal-ud-din Rumi and William Blake the mystics and enlightened persons. Their poetry is replete with the examples of mystical love. Although the parables of both poets are different because of their own different cultures the theme of love seems to be at the centre as a power to move on the way to wisdom.

From Rumi (1207-1273) to Blake (1757-1827) the poetry of mystical traditions seems to be full of love theme. It was either in Persian or in English language but the concept of love as a dominant theme could perhaps retain its position. William Johnston believes that “in the mysticism which flourished in medieval the whole emphasis is on love. This is a time which abounds in lyrical treatises on the grades of love, ecstatic love, the ladder of love; it is a time of discussions and controversy about disinterested love and the chaste and perfect love of God” (21).

There is a need to discuss the theme of love with reference to the poetry of Rumi and Blake.

**Jalal-ud-din Rumi on the Theme of Love**

Theme of love in Rumi’s poetry stands on central position and provides necessary power to mystic to travel on the way to achieve superior wisdom and rich knowledge of God and the status of man. Whinfield, acknowledging the power of love says:

> Hail to thee, then, O LOVE, sweet madness! Thou who
> healest all our infirmities! Who art the physician of our
Pride and self-conceit! Who art our Plato and our Galen!

Love exalts our earthly bodies to heaven, and makes the very hills to dance with joy! O lover, 'twas love that gave life to Mount Sinai, when "it quaked, and Moses fell down in a swoon. (xliv)

Pride and self-conceit can be regarded as more harmful spiritual diseases than all other ailments. These are great hurdles on the way of a mystic to attain mystical union and spiritual wisdom. Plato and Galen represent human reason and intellectual power which remains under the influence of physical world. On the other hand, love can give life to mountains. It was perhaps the effect of love instead of reason and intellect that Mount Sinai trembled and Moses became unconscious.

Through regarding love as a cure to most of the spiritual ailments Whinfield tries to prove that Rumi’s theme of love is more important than anything else in his mystical philosophy. To Rumi, love seems to be multi-faceted. It is pain of heart, something man cannot describe appropriately. When it appears there is no room for reason. True love does not lose its power with the passage of time. It seems to be very difficult to interpret love. If one tries to define it he would hardly be able to do it. Its strength cannot be normally measured. It possesses such a power that may enable an ordinary man to do great things in life:

Explanation by the tongue makes most things clear,

But love unexplained is clearer.

When pen hasted to write,

On reaching the subject of love it split in twain.
When the discourse touched on the matter of love,

Pen was broken and paper torn. (Whinfield, 5)

Rumi believes in the power of pen more than anything else. But he holds more powerful opinion about love. It is pen which can hold everything under its control except love. To Rumi it is love which does not need to be discussed. Once it is disclosed its power is lost. It does not need a tongue to express it but the overall condition of the lover can make it more visible and easily expressible.

The well-known story of Laila and the Khalifa provides sufficient information about Rumi’s concept of love as expounded in his poetry. When Khalifa questioned the beauty of Laila through declaring her less beautiful than other women, her response to this criticism was surprising to khalifa. She turned down his claim by criticizing him for not holding the eye with love to see her real beauty. Rumi says:

In love to be wide awake is treason.

The more a man is awake, the more he sleeps (to love);

His (critical) wakefulness is worse than slumbering.

Our wakefulness fetters our spirits,

Then our souls are a prey to divers whims,

Thoughts of loss and gain and fears of misery.

They retain not purity, nor dignity, nor lustre,

Nor aspiration to soar heavenwards. (Whinfield, 12)

If mystical wisdom cannot be attained without love as a power behind it, one can understand the reason behind Rumi’s claim about wakefulness as treason. Why does Rumi believe that wakefulness fetters our spirits? The simplest possible answer from Rumi’s poetry is perhaps
nothing but the acceptance of heart’s (love) superiority to brain (intellect). And that the power of love is essential for traveling on mystical path which leads to attain mystical wisdom.

The concept of love is of central position in Rumi’s poetry. His admirers highlighted this theme as a main spring of Rumi’s philosophy. Citlak and Bingul opine that: “Divine Love is the cause of creation, the doctor of all diseases, the cure of disdain and selfishness and the lotion of agony” (86). They also quote the words of Rumi which describe love as the power of life necessary for mystical journey:

Love is that flame which, when it blazes up, burns everything except the Beloved. Love is among the attributes of God. O the medicine of our vanity and impunity, O our Plato, Our Galen, the body of dust has ascended to the heavens from love; Whoever has no inclination to love is like a wingless bird; woe on to him. (87)

Rumi’s theme of love has similarity with the flame of fire that may possess sufficient power to lead the mystic to the mystical path of wisdom. Once the love is able to control the excess of human pride nothing can prevent the mystic (the lover) from proceeding to reach his ultimate destination, the attainment of mystical wisdom. Consequently, the importance of love is increased to such a higher level that it becomes indispensable for the survival of a mystic.

The power of love has central place in the poetry of Jalal-ud-din Rumi. It is recognized as a motivating force for mystical journey. Annemarie Schimmel, a well-known writer on Sufism, and Rumi’s mystical poetry, holds higher opinion about Rumi’s theme of love and its impact on the poetry and personality of Rumi. It is perhaps nothing but love that makes Rumi’s poetry a
token of enlightenment and mystical wisdom. She quotes the concept of love from Rumi’s poetry to interpret its power:

The lady Spirit, sitting at home, began again to draw her veils,
and to run about from the castle of the body out of love.
Sleeping on the roof of love, the shepherd ‘Heart’ began,
Out of love for the moon, again to count the stars, one by one. (1993, 346)

It is love that helps Rumi’s soul to get freedom from the prison of human body. The soul once free from the grasp of human body becomes able to fly higher on mystical path and reaches its ultimate destination. It is love that made it possible for Rumi to count the stars in search of moon, the Beloved. In this way the student of Rumi’s poetry can aptly conclude that the theme of love provides necessary foundation for Rumi’s poetry and making him an important figure in the community of mystical poets, and the whole credit for attaining wisdom by him goes to his mystical love.

William Blake on the Theme of Love

Blake’s theme of love is primarily based on his mystical theology. He believes in love as a divine power gifted by God to some of the selected people in the world commonly known as mystics of love and devotion. It is a form of blessing that can hardly be attained by efforts. It is enjoyed by those who are divinely blessed and Blake claims to be one of them. In the first part of “Jerusalem” one of his prophetic books, he claims that:

Every morn
Awakes me at sun-rise, then I see the Saviour over me
Spreading his beams of love, & dictating the words of this mild song.
Awake! awake O sleeper of the land of shadows, wake! expand!
I am in you and you in me, mutual in love divine. (Maclagan and Russell 1904,1)

To Blake, love is the foundation for all mystical endeavours. It is nothing but love that helps the man to be one with the Christ. The love of the Saviour (Jesus Christ) helps the people to awake spiritually and proceed on the mystical path to attain the mystical wisdom which can be regarded as superior wisdom almost unattainable through physical or material sources. The form of mystical experience Blake believes in cannot be experienced without love as its basis.

Blake also holds an opinion that may support and highlight the significance of love as a mystical theme in his poetry. He claims that man cannot be sincere in dealing with another man in physical life. His so-called friendship to man is intentionally misleading without any sincerity for other human being. The only solution to this problem is that man should seek divine love. The love of God can lift the man above the level of material pleasures. Then he can be the traveler of mystical path. Blake says:

Seeking to keep my soul a victim to thy Love! which binds

Man the enemy of man into deceitful friendships. (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 1)

Blake’s doctrine of love seems to be based on his assumption that it is man’s carnal soul which makes a man enemy to another human being. It cannot allow the love to be developed and flourished among all men as members of one human family. To control this aspect of human soul the Saviour’s love is important and needs to be attained. As a mystic he believes in purifying the soul from the hatred and negative impact of sensuality with the power of divine love.

The concept of love as promoted by Blake can be regarded as a great power for human being, especially, the mystic searching for enlightenment and superior wisdom, but it is completely conditioned with the favours of Christ, the Saviour. To qualify for the favours of Christ one has to annihilate his carnal self. As the quest for divine love begins the carnal self as
a greater hindrance on the mystical path to union with the Absolute begins to be removed. Keeping in view the power and significance of love, Blake prays for it with great force and enthusiasm:

O Saviour pour upon me thy Spirit of meekness & love:

Annihilate the Selfhood in me, be thou all my life. (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 2)

Blake believes in self-annihilation as the only way to be the part of divine life. It is a specific type of life which can hardly be attained through human efforts. It needs divine love as its foundation and gradually the mystic makes progress on spiritual journey. In mystical life the man becomes one with God as soon as the process of self-annihilation comes to an end. Only the mystic can realize the influence of God’s love for man in his spiritual progress.

Once the mystic begins his journey on the mystical path, love and fear simultaneously begin to exist in his heart. At one side love makes him sufficiently powerful to face the challenge of mystical journey through his own Self, but on the other hand the fear of losing the acquired mystical status makes him helpless. However, the fear of God helps to purify the soul through controlling the activities of human body. The purification of human soul is perhaps based on purification of body through God’s fear.

Blake’s human love activates his quest for divine love which ultimately gives him another form of life different from the life in material world. With the passage of time the intensity of love increases and his prayer for blessing turns in to emotional appeal to Christ for love and favours. Blake expresses his feelings in these words:

Come to my arms & never more

Depart; but dwell for ever here:

Create my Spirit to thy Love:
Blake’s style of expressing love seems to be similar with the natural style of any man’s expression of powerful feelings for other fellow being (man to man). What has made him so self-reliant in his dealings with the Christ is perhaps nothing but his own love for the Saviour of mankind. Like a true lover, Blake surrenders his soul to the Christ for its development through the Christ’s love. He believes in the purification and development of soul through love, but he also believes that the body (physical aspect of human life) needs to be subdued through the fear of the Saviour.

Blake also believes in love as a primary source of inspiration for a mystic to be able to endeavour for mystical knowledge and wisdom. It is perhaps nothing but love which introduced him to a new world almost unimaginable in ordinary circumstances of a mystic’s life. The love motivated him to enter mysticism, the spiritual world where he could experience the knowledge of God and celestial bodies. It was the love which gave him the eye to see that world:

I went to the Garden of Love,

And saw what I never had seen. (Berger, 185)

The spiritual eye is usually given by God as a part of His blessing to let the mystic see the destination before coming closer to it. The inner eye provided the poet an opportunity to see the invisible world of celestial bodies. The poet’s experience was perhaps a great source of knowledge and wisdom. He could realize that the life in material world is only a shadow of that superior status of life which shows him the part of Christ’s land of love and total blessings.

Love gives him a sense to act in the direction of spiritual enlightenment. He begins to realize that he is not supposed to waste his time sitting idly without improving his present spiritual condition. He expresses his sense of dissatisfaction over his own spiritually dormant
condition and his affiliation to physical world. His sense of realization is represented through these words:

Oh how sick and weary I
Underneath my myrtle lie!
Why should I be bound to thee,
O my lovely myrtle-tree? (William Blake, 39)

The words depict William Blake’s spiritual condition. He is physically under the influence of myrtle-tree’s beauty which can dominate the soul of every human being by the power of fragrance. With the passage of time, the poet strongly realizes that his actual destination is somewhere else and the beginning of his journey to that spiritual destination is almost indispensable and unavoidable, and that to delay the process of spiritual endeavour may be regarded by his spiritual Beloved as a token of dishonesty and unfaithfulness.

The concept of love as a form of true humanity has also greater importance for William Blake. The love as an attitude of heart is placed at higher position in his mystical philosophy of life. The message of Blake’s poetry based on the theme of love is of universal nature. To Blake it worked as an inspiration and motivating power to create the poetry with sublimity of thought and grandeur of imagination: “The true artist is always imaginative; the true man is a constant overflow of love” (William Blake, 45).

Blake shows indifference to Science and philosophy perhaps because of the absence of love in these fields of human knowledge. As a mystical poet his attitude toward the sources of knowledge primarily based on human intellect or the knowledge that appeals to the intellect rather than the emotions seems to be inappreciative. He believes that: “Study science till you are
blind; study intellectuals till you are cold; yet science cannot teach intellect, much less can intellect teach affection” (William Blake, 54).

As opposed to reason, Blake’s complete support for love and tender feelings as a part of his mystical philosophy provides necessary information about his attitude toward the concept of love as a necessary part of mystical life that leads the mystic to attain the superior form of wisdom, the ultimate objective of all mystical endeavours. Once the love provides stronger foundation for mystical journey the destination (the mystical wisdom) becomes visible and attainable to any mystic.

**Rumi on the Theme of Wisdom**

Keeping in view the description of Mysticism by William Johnston (20) as wisdom or knowledge through love, Rumi’s concept of wisdom can be discussed as the outcome of mystical experience and the ultimate objective of mystical practices. Rumi believes that the specific type of wisdom endowed by God to mystic after attaining union with the God cannot be compared with the wisdom attained by other people through academic activities and other social means.

Rumi’s concept of wisdom is based on his own mystical interpretation of human knowledge. He opines that God divided wisdom in to different forms and endowed one of these forms of wisdom to everyone according to his status and position. In this way, the knowledge or wisdom given to the mystics can be regarded as superior to the knowledge or wisdom of other people. Rumi highlights the significance of specific knowledge by saying that:

O friends, God has given me inspiration. Oftentimes strong counsel is suggested to the weak. The wit taught by God to the bee is withheld from the lion and the wild ass. It fills its cells with liquid sweets; For God opens the door of this
knowledge to it. The skill taught by God to the silkworm is a learning beyond the reach of the elephant. The earthly Adam was taught of God names, So that his glory reached the seventh heaven. (Whinfield, 20)

To Rumi, the wisdom of man is a form of God’s blessing. His knowledge comes directly from his creator as a reward for his efforts that he makes to come closer to his Creator. It is nothing but spiritual wisdom that makes him more important than the angels in heaven. The difference between the level of wisdom owned by the people of different categories shows that the knowledge and wisdom given by God is based on human needs. The mystic who does not get satisfied with the existing knowledge of God begins his journey in a special direction that may lead him to ultimate wisdom as God’s special endowment.

Rumi seems to believe in two types of wisdom, external and internal wisdom. He believes in external as a great hindrance on the way to attain internal or mystical wisdom. He gives much importance to mystical wisdom as he believes in it as an ultimate objective of all mystical practices. The mystic is therefore supposed to keep his external wisdom aside and proceed in the direction of mystical or internal wisdom. Once the hindrance is removed the blessings of God begin to reach him in the form of superior knowledge and wisdom. Rumi’s words truly represent it:

The knowledge of men of external sense is a muzzle
To stop them sucking milk of that sublime knowledge,
But God drops in to the heart a single pearl-drop
Which is not bestowed on oceans or skies. (Whinfield, 21)
The knowledge through mystical practices seems to be as great and powerful as its attainment is generally regarded as difficult. However, the wisdom endowed to man through mystical way is so vast that if it had been in material form the whole world could be insufficient to keep it. The significance of mystical wisdom can be evaluated from its function as the manifestation of divine being. It is important to note the mystic’s knowledge is beyond the level of common man and that it cannot be infused through teaching into the mind of an ordinary man.

Rumi makes a link between the mystical wisdom (the light of heart) and the wisdom of intellect (the light of brain). He believes that the mental wisdom is a light that comes out of the light of the heart which comes from the God directly. The wisdom of brain is its ability to argue, appreciate, and criticize in a logically acceptable manner. Once the wisdom of heart is attained the brain may also get wisdom, but the wisdom of intellect can hardly develop the heart’s level of enlightenment. Rumi claims that:

The light that lights the eye is also the heart’s Light;
The eye’s light proceeds from the Light of the heart.
But the light that lights the heart is the Light of God,
Which is distinct from the light of reason and sense. (Whinfield, 23)

Rumi’s description of the difference between the power of brain (wisdom) and that of heart (mystical wisdom) seems to be an effort to project the heart as superior to brain. In this way one can assume that perfect wisdom cannot be attained through education of mind but only through the blessing of God. Rumi opines that, “the perfection of human reason is reached when God reveals Himself to man, so that the recipient of this grace loses his rational faculties, being overwhelmed by this wonderful light” (Schimmel 1993, 297).
Rumi also claims that mystical wisdom attained through human heart (based on love) is superior to external wisdom through human brain (based on information and reason). The power and the level of wisdom through intellect may be limited but the mystical wisdom may have no limitations as Rumi says: “The intellect says: ‘the six directions are limits: There is no way out.’ Love says: “There is a way. I have traveled it thousands of times” (Hanut and Wetherbee, 11).

The power of mysticism lies in its level of wisdom attained by the man through specific mystical practices. Wherever the mind of a man educated through formal traditional education finds itself unable to resolve the problems of life in physical world, the mind of mystically educated man successfully traces the appropriate solution to those problems. The power of love enlightens the mind many times more than the power of formal education.

Rumi’s concept of mystical wisdom seems to be overwhelmingly attached to his mystical quest for attaining spiritual ability to see the world beyond the physical world and its limitations. To Rumi, the level of wisdom can be determined through observing the level of clarity maintained by human heart. Rumi believes that” Everyone sees the unseen in proportion to the clarity of his heart, and that depends upon how much he has polished it” (Kononenko, 134). The higher level of wisdom by heart in this way, can be attained only through purifying it to the possible extent.

Rumi compares the wisdom of a mystic to that of Jacob (Hazrat Yaqub, the prophet) who lost even his physical ability to see and recognize the people, but his spiritual ability or inner wisdom was improved with the passage of time as a part of God’s blessing. The mystic can see the things with the help of inner-eyes which cannot be seen with external or physical eyes. He says:

From each corner springs a restless Jacob

For his senses have received the scent of Joseph’s shirt,

Because the soul came to life with: “I breathed of My spirit into him”,
The divine spirit is its best food and drink,
Because the resurrection of the dead comes with blowing the trumpet,
The joy of hearing music brings the dead to life. (Keshavarz, 149)

Rumi’s description of spiritual wisdom as human ability to feel and things beyond the limitation of human eyes and its comparison to the prophetic wisdom of Hazrat Yaqub (Jacob) seems to be based on the intensity of his love for God. The prophet could feel the presence of his son Yousaf (Joseph) from a great distance with the help of that superior wisdom (based on his love for Yousaf) given to him by God. Similarly, the mystic with superior wisdom endowed by God can see the things invisible to man with external eyes.

It can be stated that, Rumi covers different aspects of wisdom as given by God to man in the form of blessing. The description of wisdom by Rumi includes God’s distribution of knowledge or wisdom in accordance with the need of his creatures. The knowledge given to man is more important than the wisdom of all other creatures, and the wisdom through heart is distinct from the wisdom of mind. The wisdom of a mystic can dominate the wisdom of an ordinary man, and is able to find solutions of problems. The wisdom of man is based on the degree of his heart’s clarity, and that all wisdom is one or the other form God’s spirit breathed into man.

Blake on the Theme of Wisdom

William Blake’s discussion of the theme of wisdom encompasses its various aspects including its nature, significance, attainment and its overall impact on the life of a mystic. His interpretation of the wisdom as a poetic theme is perhaps based on his mystical philosophy which discusses the qualities and conditions of human life as a product of God’s love and blessing for the man. In this way, the more the love of God is achieved, the higher the level of wisdom is maintained.
The level of wisdom attained by man is however based on the maximum level of God’s presence in human being. The wisdom which makes a man superior and different from other people is to full extent the divine quality and not the outcome of one’s efforts. Blake aptly claims that: “To his Genius, which is the Holy Ghost in Man; there is no other God, than that God who is the intellectual fountain of Humanity” (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 113). The God who guides the man through strengthening and improving his intellectual ability may be regarded as mainspring of mystical wisdom.

Blake gives much importance to mystical wisdom or ability to understand the extraordinary things in human life. He believes in searching for knowledge through Jesus Christ as the only way to get rid of physical restrictions on the way to attain the knowledge of heavenly world. The mystic can disserve the blessings of God only after preparing himself successfully for the mystical knowledge as Blake says: “teach me, O Holy Spirit, the Testimony of Jesus! let me Comprehend wondrous things out of the Divine Law”(Maclagan and Russell 1904, 90).

It is worthy to be noted that Blake does not believe in wisdom as an outcome of religious education through pedagogical process. He does not recognize the religiously holy person as mystically wise one. He approves a man to be wise only if he maintains specific level of mystical knowledge otherwise the training through religious education is nothing but foolishness. Blake seems to believe in intellect which may be based on mysticism:

I care not whether a Man is Good or Evil; all that I care
Is whether he is a Wise Man or a Fool. Go, put off Holiness
And put on Intellect. (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 114)

To Blake apparent holiness and intellect (mystical wisdom) are always in contrast with each other. The so called holiness cannot represent spiritual development of a Christian on mystical
path to a recognizable level. He emphasizes the need for the attainment of mystical wisdom through keeping himself away from the controversial discussion of good and evil based on dogmatic Christianity. In this way, he tries to minimize the significance of the religious concept of good and bad in human life.

The wisdom that William Blake expects from a Christian to achieve cannot be easily acquired. It needs specific attitude on the part of a Christian mystic. It requires unrestrained behaviour or the activity that goes beyond what is socially acceptable. The social restrictions mostly control the overall behaviour of a man and the case of mystical journey is not an exception. Blake aptly says:

The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.

Prudence is a rich ugly old maid courted by Incapacity. (Blake 1906, 13)

Blake derives wisdom from heart which makes it superior to that of human brain. Prudence, which represents human brain, is nothing but a tendency to evaluate situations carefully, so that risk may be avoided up to maximum level. Blake believes that superior wisdom cannot be achieved by a man who is unable to be courageous and willing to excel in mystical practices. The prudence is one of the major restrictions on the way of a lover to acquire the higher standard of wisdom.

Blake also believes that it is nothing but mystical knowledge that makes some difference between a wise man and the person lacking wisdom. Both of them see things in the universe differently. The mystic can evaluate and decide about human behaviour in a better way in specific conditions while the unwise man begins to analyze with his formally educated brain. He is unable to foresee the things to be happened in near future as the mystic can do as Blake concludes:
A fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees.

He whose face gives no light, shall never become a star. (Blake 1906, 13)

Blake claims the superiority of the mystic, a spiritually enlightened person to a man with no mystical knowledge. He calls him fool even if he is properly educated in theology or the popular sciences of his time. His claim is based on his own perception of formally educated people who can see things if they are understandable with the help of his own organs of sense. On the other hand the knowledge of a mystic has no limitations. As Blake observes: “The hours of folly are measured by the clock, but of wisdom: no clock can measure” (Blake 1906, 14).

The concept of mystical wisdom as promoted by William Blake seems to represent a conflict between heart and mind. Blake stands by heart, the nursery of love and rejects the status of mind as a representative of wisdom. He does not approve the knowledge through instruction and criticizes its limited scope. The knowledge that controls human emotions and does not allow the man to act independently cannot be recognized as wisdom. Blake supports the knowledge with power to free human being from all restraints of material world. He says:

The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction.

Expect poison from the standing water.

You never know what is enough unless you know what is more than enough.

Listen to the fools reproach! it is a kingly title. (Blake 1906, 17)

Blake compares the tiger’s uncontrollable anger with the horse’s controllable power to show that the tiger’s knowledge (given directly by God) is based on his love for God. It does not allow him to surrender to any material power or allow anyone to subjugate it. On the other hand, the horse educated and tamed by human hands cannot think to revolt against its educator, the man whom it
regards the main source of knowledge. The wisdom according to Blake lies in freedom and not in slavery of material world.

He also points out some of the weaknesses of man which restrict him from attaining wisdom. Man is by nature a lover of easiness. It makes him lazy and unable to proceed for higher wisdom through mystical practices. The limitation of man’s thinking is another great weakness and he cannot come to know about the knowledge or wisdom he requires. And the most important weakness of man is his restriction. He cannot afford to tolerate the criticism by his own society. Blake declares that social criticism of a mystic is the title of honour for him. So he must proceed to attain the required wisdom.

The critics of William Blake are also holding the similar opinion about his concepts of love and wisdom as discussed by Blake himself in the text of his poetry. If one critically analyses the poetry of William Blake he can trace the influence of Swedenborg on Blake’s philosophy and poetic themes. But on the concept of love and wisdom his opinion seems to be different from that of Swedenborg. Robert Rix is one of the critics who analyses this point and says:

Blake owned and annotated Divine Love and Divine Wisdom, in which Swedenborg banished all abstract notions of God’s compassion. Divine Love and Wisdom were known only through the ‘human form’. Love and wisdom, Mercy and Clemency were the Divine materialized through the practices of the individual believer. (108)

Blake’s support for the theme of wisdom based on the practices of an individual mystic through love makes him different from Swedenborg. His opinion about wisdom also makes him a true
representative of Christian mysticism. Divine wisdom through human form needs divine love, the only motivating power to lead the mystic on the way to achieve the goal of mystical life. Through divine love, divine values including mercy, Clemency etc. became the part of human life.

The body of mysticism seems to be built on the basis love and wisdom. The love and wisdom can be distinguished from each other but only on the basis of their thematic identity. As far as their function is concerned, the study of mysticism can perhaps provide sufficient evidence to prove that love and wisdom have identical function in their capacity of being two primary elements in the body of mysticism. Blake (1998) observes: “Thought without affection makes a distinction between Love and Wisdom as it does between body and Spirit” (Blake and Eaves, 78).

In the body of mysticism love and wisdom as two pillars of equal importance work side by side to maintain the order of activities inside the body of mysticism. Both pillars work interdependently. If one of them disappears the whole building will be collapsed immediately. The wisdom needs love to maintain it as the soul needs human body to live in it. The love is like a seed that is sowed in heart, the mystical land. Out of this seed the tree of mysticism is grown and the fruit of that tree is nothing but wisdom.

The body of mysticism is built on two pillars (love and Wisdom), which are located on two different sides. One pillar (love) is at the beginning and the other (wisdom) at the end of the body of mysticism. Whatever is located between beginning and the end is usually known as mysticism. Evelyn Underhill (2003) says that: “Mysticism, in its pure form, is the science of ultimates, the science of union with the Absolute, and nothing else, and that the mystic is the person who attains to this union, not the person who talks about it” (86). The concept of mystical
union appears to be the central point in mysticism. A comparative study of Rumi and Blake with reference to their views on mystical union may help to understand mysticism in a better way.

The Development of Thesis

The present thesis has been developed through highlighting the need for comparison to trace similarities in defining features of Islamic and Christian mysticism. There are several points on which Islam and Christianity show total agreement. The study of mysticism based on Islamic and Christian ideologies through literature may provide an opportunity to look for the ideas and literary themes on which there may be a total or at least partial affinity between the views of writers or the works of literature.

Research Question

To what extent the poetry can provide philosophical information necessary for tracing the common characteristics of Islamic and Christian Mysticism?

Thesis Statement

The concept of Mystical Union as a common ideal of Islamic and Christian mysticism may represent the highest level of spiritual elevation humanity may attain. At this stage, all dogmatic differences either cease to exist or pale in to insignificance. A comparative Study of Jalal-ud-din Rumi and William Blake with reference to their opinions on the concept of mystical union may confirm the validity of this assertion.

Method of Comparative Study

The present thesis has been developed in accordance with the basic assumptions of Zepetnek’s theory of comparative literature which provides necessary guidelines to set the principles for comparative study of mystical themes with reference to the poetry of different poets. As the
current thesis is juxtaposition of two mystical poets (Jalal-ud-din Rumi and William Blake) on the concept of mystical union, Zepetnek’s theory suggests necessary framework to meet its requirements.

Introducing Zepetnek’s theory of Comparative Literature, Nicolae Harsanyi claims that the work is a good model for the students and researchers of comparative study of literature and cultures. He states that “Zepetnek intends to enrich the field of comparative literature with a hitherto lesser known theoretical framework and methodology that represents to date one of the most advanced possibilities for the study of literature and culture”(215).

Because of its flexibility, Zepetnek’s model of comparative literature is perhaps a better choice for majority of researchers in comparative and interdisciplinary studies. In his "Comparative Literature and the Ideology of Metaphor, East and West," Karl S.Y.Kao offers a comparative reading of the ideological function of metaphor within Eastern and Western thinking. He has used the model for putting conflicting approaches side by side to discuss the meaning of words commonly used both in the East and the West. (Kao, Article 3)

Marian Galik has also followed Zepetnek’s theory of Comparative Literature in his “Interliterariness as a Concept in Comparative Literature”. The article discusses the concept of interliterariness as a guiding and unifying principle. It provides examples from the works of writers from different cultures who have identical views on many themes of literature. He proves that Interliterariness provides the universal concept of literature and the study of literature with an epistemological justification. (Galik, Article 6)

Another example of conceptual comparison on the pattern of Zepetnek’s theory of Comparative Literature is Gabriel V. Rupp’s article "Self Enlightenment in Woolf, Joyce, and Nietzsche". The writer has focused on Woolf's Mrs. Dalloway, Joyce's Dubliners and Portrait of
the Artist as a Young Man, and Nietzsche's 'strangely beautiful but mad’, ‘letters’, and ‘these writers’. Through putting side by side the works of Woolf, Joyce, and Nietzsche he has tried to trace disruption of self as common theme. (Rupp, Article 8)

It is important to note that, the concept of mystical union needs to be closely studied with reference to the poetry of Rumi and Blake individually before Zepetnek’s theory is practically applied as a Model for comparative analysis of this concept. In this way the current thesis can be stated to be developed in two phases. In first phase, the principles of Catherine Dawson’s research technique have been applied. Dawson advises the researchers that, “When you start to think about your research project, a useful way of remembering the important questions to ask is to think of the five ‘Ws’: What? Why? Who? Where? When?” (4)

Dawson’s guidelines have been followed in accordance with the necessity or compulsion of the subject-matter and structural requirements for the development of current thesis. Keeping in view the principles of Dawson’s technique the study of the concept of mystical union has been divided into five different parts which constitute main points of its interpretation (chapter three and four). These points include, what is mystical union? Significance of mystical union (Why), attainment of mystical union (how), impact of mystical union (what 2), and illustration of mystical union (how 2) (through poetic devices like, narration, symbolism, and allusions).

The current thesis is a research based on philosophical comparison (Mystical philosophy) which requires totally different methodology from action or physical research. It requires a specific conceptual framework. The study is related to mystical theme of poetry composed by Rumi and Blake. To understand the hidden meanings from symbolistic system of both poets, Julia Kristeva’s technique of metatext (Intertextuality) has been partially followed. For this purpose the texts composed by the critics and translators (Rumi’s translators) have been a great source of information and relevant material to analyze themes of mystical philosophy.
In the second phase, Zepetnek’s theory has been evaluated to judge its appropriateness to apply it as a model or method of comparative study in the development of current thesis. This model theoretically covers two major aspects of comparative literature. At first, it defines the nature of comparative literature, and secondly, it gives ten different principles to be followed in comparative study of literature. According to first aspect of this model, “Comparative Literature means the knowledge of more than one national language and literature, and/or it means the knowledge and application of other disciplines in and for the study of literature.” (Zepetnek, 13)

The second aspect of Zepetnek’s Model discusses different principles of comparative study of literature. These principles include, “method instead of a theory, dialogue between literatures, to acquire in-depth grounding in several literatures, Literature and other forms of artistic expression, comparative conceptual approach, and focus on literature within cultural context, ideological inclusion, interdisciplinary study, content against globalization versus localization, and the significance of comparison.” (Zepetnek, 15-18)

In accordance with the essence of subject-matter in current thesis only one of these principles can be applied in comparative analysis of Rumi and Blake on the concept of mystical union. For this purpose, the seventh principle of Zepetnek’s model has been selected. According to this principle, “Comparative Literature is theoretical, methodological as well as ideological and political approach of inclusion” (Zepetnek, 17). If the term ‘inclusion’ is lexically analyzed, it can be interpreted as the presence of somebody or something in a group or mixture.

In this way, the successful application of Zepetnek’s method of thematic inclusion needs to be based on its being (1) goal-oriented, organized to achieve particular goals (2) reciprocal, given or shown by each of two sides or individuals to the other, (3) based on equal status of both participants, (4) comparative not influential, no side can influence the other, and (5) both sides
maintain their individuality. These are some of the principles which have been kept in view while Rumi and Blake were being juxtaposed on the concept of mystical union to find certain affinities. The model of thematic inclusion can be graphically presented as in figure 1.0.

Zepetnek’s model has provided necessary framework to put the opinions of Rumi and Blake on various aspects of mystical union (theme) side by side to find out thematic affinities which may obviously exist between their opinions (chapter five). The poets although belonging to different cultures, speaking different languages, and practicing different religious beliefs, hold identical opinion on the nature of mystical union. There are however some points on which both poets have different opinions. These differences are primarily based on their respective religious beliefs.
Thematic inclusion has made the poets two members of one group or family. Although there are serious differences on specific points, however, on the points related to defining features of mystical union, its significance in mysticism, its impact on human life, and its poetic illustration, the poets (Rumi and Blake) show great similarity. On the way of attaining mystical union there are differences between both poets which are mostly based on their respective school of thought in mysticism (chapter six).

Zepetnek’s model has been helpful in comparative study of Rumi and Blake on one of the central themes of mystical philosophy. It provided necessary guidelines to analyze the work of these poets through interpreting mystical aspect of their philosophy. Thematic inclusion of their poetry has been helpful in establishing universal family of mystics. The development of current thesis on the basis of philosophical comparison of Rumi and Blake in this way can be regarded as recognition of Zepetnek’s theory of thematic inclusion.
CHAPTER TWO
THE CONCEPT OF MYSTICAL UNION

Mystical Union can be described as the Soul’s Union with its creator or God. It is highly important to explain the way of this union. How the soul travels to its destination and finally reaches it. There are several ways of mystical union as described by mystics with different background and mystical status. There is however a general consensus of opinions on the status of mystical union that it is a form of spiritual elevation. It is such a position which reflects that the traveler on mystical path is experiencing a direct contact with the Absolute authority.

The mystic can be regarded as a man with extraordinary power to work in his own field who can transcend the limits of the self, travel on spiritual path and still maintains his own identity as a man. The mystic’s human identity and his efforts for union remain unchanged. His overall condition can be compared to iron which is kept on fire. It takes fire and begins glowing but its identity as iron is not lost. The mystic burns with the fire of love but his existence as a human being remains unchanged.

It is perhaps the most difficult task to describe the nature of mystical experience in the form of mystical union with reference to the ideology of any religion based on monotheism. There is always abundance of difficulties and ambiguities in the struggle of giving a definite meaning to such an experience. Conceptual discussion of mystical experience has been made by many scholars through psychological interpretation of this practice but no connotation of Mystical Union could prove to be sufficiently acceptable to scholars and the students of mysticism or mystical poetry.

Mystical Union can be regarded as a true destination of mankind for what there is always a strong desire in human heart and quest for achieving it as soon as possible. It is such an
ambition that paves the way for an ordinary man to be the lover of God and the seeker of direct association between the creature and the Creator. The nature of Mystical Union cannot be understood as one can understand another discipline. The meanings given to this experience by Scholars have been based mostly on their own knowledge and the study of spiritualism.

Mysticism according to Bernard McGinn is “an attempt to express a direct consciousness of the presence of God” (xvi). Bernard Ginn’s statement shows that mysticism is the word that reflects a specific type of consciousness in which the mystic feels himself directly in contact with the absolute authority. If our study is focused on the certain state of consciousness which is placed beyond human understanding and reason we can derive an inference that mystical union is a psychological state in which there is no space for reason and rationality.

Keeping in view the opinion of Bernard McGinn one can assume that mysticism is, in theory or in practice, the process of preparation for the development of consciousness of indescribable experience which is generally described as a direct and immediate contact with the Absolute through transformation of spiritual conditions. Such an experience can be traced in almost all religions of the world including Islam and Christianity, the greatest religions of this time with respect to the highest number of followers in the world.

**Islamic Mystical Union**

The study of Mystical Union with reference to Islamic Mysticism or Sufism to interpret it like any other field of study is a goal difficult to achieve if not an impossible one. There is a reason why one cannot study and explain mystical union in plain words. Although there is a general consensus of opinion among scholars of Sufism that mystical experience is ineffable and no word can express it appropriately yet the mysteries of Sufism can be interpreted with the help of spiritual insight of higher degree as Nicholson (1914) observes:
Whatever terms may be used to describe it, the unitive state is the culmination of the simplifying process by which the soul is gradually isolated from all that is foreign to itself, from all that is not God. Unlike Nirvana, which is merely the cessation of individuality, *fana*, the passing-away of the Sufi from his phenomenal existence, involves *baqa*, the continuance of his real existence. He who dies to self lives in God, and *fana*, the consummation of this death, marks the attainment of *baqa*, or union with the divine life. (149)

The concept of Mystical Union is based on regular struggle on the way of love and the union can be attained through physical death but it is also possible to attain it even in this life with physical existence. There are two major sources of information to discuss the mystical experience one is the Holy Quran and the secondary source is existing Sufi literature. To understand the concept of mystical union we can trace examples from these sources.

The life of a Sufi is completely devoted to a great cause. It seems to be the duty of a Sufi to establish a close relation to his Creator. It is a gradual process of transformation from living for oneself to living for the sake of one’s Creator. Mir Vali-ud-din quotes Junayd’s definition of Sufi by saying that “Sufi is Dead to himself and alive in God. He passes away from what belongs to himself and persists through what belongs to God. When he is dead in relation to his own self, he becomes ‘alive’ in his relation to the self of God.”(6)

As soon as the Sufi succeeds in establishing direct relation to the Absolute Authority he begins feeling the presence of God in all matters of his life and everywhere in society. He
becomes indifferent to his fellow men and consequently his presence even in his own society is not generously welcomed. Husayn bin Mansur al-Hallaj claims that:

A Sufi is singular in his being, he neither accepts anybody nor does anybody accept him. He feels the immediate Presence of God alone within and senses the Presence of God without and his mental faculty gets rid of the thought of anything save God and is totally captivated by God.

(Mir Vali-ud-din, 6)

The loneliness of Sufis is generally regarded as the outcome of their indifference to their fellow men but in practice it can be noticed that their activities are not appreciated with an excuse that they are men or women from the other world. Their apparent condition is not appropriately perceived and their sentimental expression of ecstatic feelings is the most controversial element of their life. His mind is perhaps captivated by God to such an extent that whatever is uttered from his lips is generally rejected by the common men.

However the realization of God’s nearness is such an event in human life that can utterly change the life itself. There are however some indications of internal change which show that the mystic has become more humble, polite, patient and mentally satisfied. Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jilani says that the Sufi is “at rest in body, contented in mind, broad chested, his face beaming with the light of God, with an enlightened heart and oblivious of all things due to his nearness with God.” (Mir Vali-ud-din, 7)

The concept of union with the God is based on the idea that the real objective of human life is nothing but the love of God. One should love God as the love of God makes human soul purified. In such a situation the Sufi feels himself attached to his Creator and disconnected to
everything other than God. He feels his body and soul equally captivated by the love and blessings of God. There is a realization and significance of the love of God in human life:

Of my soul’s union with this fleshly frame

Of life and death,

Thou art the end and aim.

I pass away:

Thou only dost endure. (Mir Vali-ud-din, 8)

The words of mystics are the only source of knowledge about mystical union. Whatever can be understood from the available information is the description of the mystic’s destination which is usually the outcome of a spiritual journey towards realization of union with the Absolute. The teachings of Sufism can be called a guiding star to reach on the way to an ideal situation in life. Mir Vali-ud-din rightly observes:

Its teachings are limited not only to purification of the will and senses, but it also confers on us nearness to God as a consequence of which a Sufi having lost his sense of self-subsistence loses himself in the self-subsistence of God. He feels the immediate Presence of God within (yaft) and senses the Presence of God without (shuhud). His knowledge and actions are guided by God alone.

(Mir Vali-ud-din, 8)

Mir Vali-ud-din’s words can be supplemented by the concept of God promoted by Islam. According to this concept God is alone; He is neither a father nor a son to anyone in the universe. He is the only One who deserves to be worshipped and everyone is bound to prostrate before
Him. There is question that naturally arises in our minds, whether we can find the God anywhere? To find the answer to this question Sufism is perhaps the best platform and the Quran and the traditions of the prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) provide necessary guidelines with the name of *Ilm-i-qurb* (the knowledge of the nearness of God).

Such knowledge seems to be a special type of knowledge. It cannot be acquired through working hard and regular struggle on the Sufi path but only the blessings of God and His guidance can ensure it. The knowledge of the nearness of God can help the Sufi to understand the secret relation between God and the phenomenal things. “Not only does he know this secret but he feels the immediate Presence of God within his own self. Now he is dead to his self and consequently we can call him the one whom God has drawn near to Him (*muqarrab*).” (Mir Vali-ud-din, 9)

**Quranic Parables of Mystical Union**

Sufism or Islamic Mysticism is the mystical dimension of Islam based on the inner meaning of the Holy Quran. The central doctrine of Sufism (the concept of Mystical Union) is based on similar words of two verses (ayat) in different chapters (Surahs) of the Holy Quran. In these verses the creator categorically says, "When I have fashioned him (in due proportion) and breathed into him of My spirit, fall ye down in obeisance unto him.” (Quran15:29)

The words reveal a message that when God gave an injunction to the angels to show obedience and prostrate themselves before the Adam, the angels were indirectly ordered to prostrate before God, as the Spirit of God was breathed in to Adam and from Adam to all human beings. In this way the words of the Holy Quran provide necessary justification for the mystic to state that his/her practice in mysticism to achieve the state of mystical union is based on the guidance provided by the Holy Quran.
The description of God’s spirit in human beings is a reasonable source of inspiration and motivation for the mystic to develop required level of self-confidence to be able to carry on endeavours and continue his struggle on the way to achieve the greatest goal of human life. It strengthens the Sufi’s belief that God’s spirit and human body are one and that the efforts made by the Sufi will remain successful or beneficial. The hope for success provides necessary motivation to maintain consistency in spiritual practice.

If the human spirit is the part of a Universal spirit dissociated from it there must be some desire between both of them to unite. There is always a great possibility of their union. This is confirmed by another verse in the Holy Quran, which says, "from God we came, and to God shall we return" (Quran 2:156). This returning to the original destination is much important and central to the Sufi doctrine. Now, the Sufi embarks on a spiritual journey known as the Sufi Path; a path of devotion and love; which leads him to achieve his goal which is nothing but the union with God.

There is a general agreement of opinion among the majority of the Sufis that Mystical Union is the result of spiritual journey of a man. When a man delves down into his self to the deepest level through a continuous process of leaving all human limitations one by one, there is a possibility for him to reach the real destination of every traveler of mystical path. This destination is a condition in which he feels himself in contact and united with the Divine Ray which makes his soul enlightened forever. It is the power of this light that he feels himself to be totally immersed in it.

This is the highest degree of immersion and the man himself becomes unaware of this condition. It is the result of this immersion that he is no more distinguishable from that Divine Ray and seems to be the part of it. Although the Sufis hardly rely on the external sources for
guidance yet, it would also be logical to assume that such a spiritual process cannot be carried on without any inspiration and spiritual guidelines from the commandments of God or any other relevant religious books.

The way of the Sufis apparently seems to be independent mostly from the influence of external sources but if the need arises to consult any source of information or inspiration they can find it through penetration into the meaning of the Holy Quran to the deepest level. These examples of Quranic inspiration can be summarized as follows:

1. The first stage on the path of mystical experience is the isolation from the world of materialism. In the Holy Quran it is clearly stated that, "Remember the name of the Master, and isolate thyself to Him with a total isolation." (Quran 73:08)

2. The Sufi path leads to the realization of the fact that seeking nearness to God is the only objective of human life and an apt solution to all problems of mankind. On the way to real success the Sufi finds himself in such a position where he can realize the nearness to God within himself inspired by the words of the Quranic Verse: "All on it shall pass away, and there shall remain the Face of the Master, full of majesty and glory." (Quran 55:26, 27)

3. The Sufi believes that Mystical Union is the spiritual condition when he is united with the Divine light. The assumption that God is light is based on the words of a Quranic verse: "Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth."(Quran 24:35)

4. Another reason behind the Sufi quest for union with the Absolute is a general realization that God is always willing to come in direct contact with man who is an ideal creation of the Creator. And that God can be accessed from everywhere. This perception is perhaps based on the words of verses in the Holy Quran:
"Wherever you turn, there is the Face of Allah" (Quran 2:115) and also the following verse:

"He is with you wherever you be." (Quran 57:04)

5. The concept of Mystical Union and the Sufi’s struggle on the path to achieve it can be based only on the ideology of Sufi’s intimacy with God. He can establish Contact with Him on the basis of this verse:” He is nearer to him than his life Vein.” (Quran 50:16)

**Literary Parables of Islamic Mystical Union**

Whenever there is a description of mysticism the name of Husayn ibn Mansur, commonly known as al-Hallaj appears immediately to our memory. He was perhaps the first person to be executed against the charges of blasphemy and heresy in tenth century. He was punished for what he openly claimed before the public (*Ana 'l-Haqq*--I am God) who could hardly understand the mental and spiritual condition of al-Hallaj. Professor Nicholson (1914) is however of the opinion that “His execution seems to have been dictated by political motives” (149).

Now the question arises about the mystical ideology for what Hallaj was convinced to sacrifice everything including his life. Many scholars have tried to evaluate his ideology in their own perspective. It was perhaps the idea of divine man (God created man in his own image, thus he is divine in true sense of the word and possibly able to unite with God) which led him to express the state of union with God and immersion without any fear of execution from the court of law.

The concept of Mystical Union is the true essence of Sufism. Most of the Sufis used poetry as a tool to express the spirit of mystical experience described in public by Hallaj who says in one of his poems:

I am He whom I love, and He whom I love is I:
We are two spirits dwelling in one body.

If thou seest me, thou seest Him,

And if thou seest Him, thou seest us both. (Nicholson 1914, 151)

The lines of poetry depict the mental and spiritual condition of Hallaj who seems to be under the influence of ecstasy, a physical condition in which human mind does not work and decide appropriately. But I also disagree with Professor Nicholson’s justification of Hallaj’s execution (152) who claims that Hallaj betrayed the secret of his Lord, he claimed the union with divine essence instead of divine attributes, and that he rejected any difference between God and His creatures.

As far as the first statement is concerned it can be stated that the purpose of human creation was to make him God’s vicegerent. How the vicegerent can be punished for describing his relation with his Lord. Secondly, the union with God’s attributes is union with divine essence. How the God can be separated from His attributes and how it can justify punishment. Thirdly, there is no appropriate reason to punish a person whose doctrine is not understandable to a person who is supposed to decide punishment for him. However the execution was based on apparent conditions and human observation.

Islam generally rejects the mystics’ desire to unite with God. God is the creator and must be revered, praised and obeyed, not embraced. Islam's apparent indifference to any of the notion of divine incarnation highlights the major difference between human being and God who is immortal and deserves to be worshipped. It is also based on fact to say that many mystical traditions were promoted under the umbrella of Islam. These mystical traditions included most of the varieties of Sufism. The doctrine of mystical union was also promoted through mystical poetry.
Some of the Sufis especially whirling dervishes concentrate on dancing designed to develop a state of rapture or exaltation which is an important stage on the way to mystical union. In spite of the fact that many Muslims were not willing to give music any importance in their lives, the Sufis regarded poetry and music as a part of their mystical practice. They composed lyrical poetry (ghazzals) in order to express their love for God. This is perhaps one of the reasons behind the popularity of Sufi poets throughout the Islamic world. The concept of mystical union seems to have been discussed mostly in the poetry composed by the mystical poets in Persian.

The concept of mystical union has been the subject of the poetry written in most of the languages spoken in Muslim world including Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Sindhi and Punjabi. It is important to note the point of view of Michael Sells, who states that Sufi mystics found in love and wine poetry “a vehicle to express an episode of mystical union experienced independently” he goes on to assert that “Poetic and Sufi sensibility are closely intertwined at the moment of union. To consider one the vehicle of the other is to lose the resonance and power brought about by the interfusion of the two language world” (Schimmel 1982, 90).

Mystical Poetry represents the states, stages or stations of Sufi-path to its destination i.e. Mystical Union with God. These stages are major themes of Sufi or Islamic Mystical Poetry. When it comes to an actual description of the Spiritual States (ahwal and maqamat) there are many ways in which the Sufis have described these steps leading from man to God. Especially in the case of the ahwal it is hardly possible to limit them to a set number. In one of the earliest authoritative texts of Sufism, the Kitab al-luma, Abu Nasr al-Sarraj enumerates ten states of the soul (ahwal): “constant attention (muraqabah), proximity (qurb), love (mahabbah), fear (khawf), hope(raja), spiritual yearning (shawq), familiarity (uns), tranquility (itimman), contemplation (mushahadah), and certainty(yaqin)”(Al-Sarraj, XIX – XXXVII).
Nicholson in his well-known work *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* describes mystical states or stages which lead the mystic to union with the Beloved. He states that the earliest and the best description of the mystical stages (*maqamat*) in Sufism is the *Forty Stations (Maqamat-e-arba īn)* stated by the eleventh-century Sufi master Abu Said ibn Abī l-Khayr known to the West for his quatrains (Nicholson 1921, 21). Thus the poetry of mystical themes has become a vaster field to discuss. However, we can discuss some of states including Repentance, Abstinence, Asceticism, Poverty, Patience, Confidence, Contentment, Fear, Hope, Familiarity, Tranquility, Love and Mystical Union.

Another important example of mystical union in Sufi literature is that of Attar’s well-known *Mantiq ut-tair*, the Birds’ Conversation (Attar, trans. Avery). The followers of Attar’s philosophy of Sufism were guided and highly inspired by this work that leads the reader to understand the true destination of the Sufi on the path, i.e. Union with the Absolute. The Conversation explains seven valleys (veils) which the "Bird of the Sky" goes through and passes to meet Simurgh (God). This is a process of mystical journey which eventually comes to an end through realization of Mystical Union.

In the poetry of Khwaja Shams-ud-Din Muhammad Hafiz of Shiraz (1320-1389), mystical union has been discussed through a method different from the existing practice of the Sufis of his time. He used human being to reflect the concept of Divine beauty. In almost all the poems composed by Hafiz one can observe the sensual imagery. The imagery describes various features of the Beloved, the beautiful lips, long hair, bright eyes, and attractive neck etc. Through these human symbols Hafiz has tried to discuss the beauty of Beloved (God) and that “union is hidden behind separation as light is hidden in the darkness” (Schimmel 1982, 69).
The Sufis used metaphors comparing the Holy Quran to the Beloved’s perfect beauty. Separation of the Beloved for a short time is shown as longer and more troublesome than the day of resurrection. They have also transformed historical personalities into symbols of lovers. Hallaj is hero of all those who believe in courage, and independence of love. Another ideal of lovers is Mahmud Ghaznavi (King of Ghazna in Afghanistan). His love for Ayaz, a Turkish officer, is a symbol of true love. Laila and Majnun, Shirin and Farhad represented various aspects of love which leads to mystical union. (Schimmel 1982, 73-74)

Some examples of Mystical Union can also be traced in the Sufi Literature of Indo-Pak Subcontinent which is initially in the form of translated poems from the poetry of Arabic and Persian Classical Poets including Attar and Rumi. As Arabic and Persian Mystical Poetry represented the true spirit of Islam, it could inspire the people of Subcontinent. Their Sufi doctrines including the concept of Union were also recognized and popularized in India. Annemarie Schimmel (1976) observes:

Allusions to their works are found in almost every mystical work composed in India. The works of Ibn Arabi (d.1240), the Spanish-born mystic who had built a close system of mystical theology in his Futuhat al-makkiyya and the Fusus al-hikam, the ‘Bezels of Wisdom’, became known in early 15th century, and taught the Muslims the idea of Wahdat al-Wujud, the essential unity of being, according to which God and the creation can be understood as two aspects of one Reality. (5)
One can summarise the concept of Mystical Union and human quest for it with reference to the literature composed by poets under the influence of Sufism or Islamic Mysticism. In Arabic mystical poetry the relation between man and God was described as a man’s love for a beautiful maiden. On the other hand in the Persian mystical poetry, this relation has been usually discussed as the love between a man and a beautiful young man commonly known as *shahid*. Those who used this term are of the opinion that a young man is physically more beautiful than a woman. And there is naturally stronger inclination necessary for successful union.

The ideal of every mystical poet has been to find God in all His creation and thus attain union with Him. The union or annihilation in God could be fully achieved after death, but in some cases it was gained while living. The Union gained while living is of two types, partial and complete. A partial union is possible when the Sufi is in a state of supreme ecstasy. The complete union can be attained (in very rare cases) when all consciousness of self is lost and the mystic lives ever after with the Universal Self.

The poets used the heroine of the romance as the symbol for the soul longing for union with God through suffering and death. The heroine in these poems always searches for her lost beloved until she either finds him, or dies of thirst and heat in the mountains, or drowns in the river Indus. She becomes the parable of the seeking soul on the mystical path who, separated from the Divine Beloved, must undergo great trouble and a painful purification process in her quest.

Through the survey of Sufi poetic tradition we could realize that love and mystical union have been the central themes in the poetry of all Sufi poets. The style of poetry could be different because of the difference in the period and social and cultural conditions of the poets but the Sufi poetry of all times has been popular among the people for its themes, its language that is suitable
for the expression love and passion for union with God. The use of human characters to represent human love for God is a common feature of the poetry composed in all times.

**Christian Mystical Union**

Christian Mystical Union can be described as the mystical experience or condition in which the Christian mystic feels himself free from the bondage of the world and the devil disappears. At that moment God (which Christians call Jesus Christ) can take over the Soul. And so the mystics empty themselves, and the Grace fills them completely. The attainment of Mystical Union is based on the pain and patience that a mystic has to bear. Proficiency in it needs a long struggle even for the greatest Saints, whose life is usually full of such practices that make a man the perfect human being.

The concept of Christian mystical union has been derived from the teachings of Bible and the writings of Christian scholars who spared and spent their whole lives to provide interpretation for all concepts which needed clarification. As far as the idea of mystical union in Christianity is concerned there is a deep consensus among the opinion of various writers working on mysticism that Mystical union is a part of Christianity. It improves the authenticity of a Christian to be the believer in Christ or God. Harvey D Egan observes:

> The Christian Mystic awakens to, is purified and illuminated by, and is eventually united with the God of Love. As an icon of agapic love, the mystic both amplifies every person’s more hidden life of faith, hope, and love and points the way to full human authenticity. (xvi)
The way of the Christian mystic in life is in the direction of achieving the love of his creator whose love is the real objective of his life to attain. God has created in human being the sense of love and quest for coming closer to his Creator. A Christian mystic is naturally traveling on the way of that realization of intimacy with God. It is perhaps on the basis of assumption that God created him for this purpose and he is doing nothing but struggling to fulfill the very desire of his Creator. It is out of the sense of responsibility that is too eager to follow the wishes and orders of his Creator.

It is the sense of self-importance in Christian mystics which leads them to struggle for the greatest goal of their life. The realization of God’s favour is such a sense that stimulates them to express the desire to be fallen in love with God. They are blessed with loving heart which is a token of God’s love for them. Harvey D. Egan opines:

> Through God’s special activity, they realize that God is in love with them, and therefore we are all, at least secretly, in love with God and each other. The explicit awareness of God’s burning love at the very roots of their being causes mystics an immense longing that allows them no peace until they are irrevocably united to God and transformed in to God’s very own life. (xvi)

Egan’s interpretation seems to be logical as love for God in Human heart cannot be achieved through practice but it is the blessing of God who gives the loving heart to those who are loved by God. It is God’s love for mankind which paves the way for human being to love their Creator. It is the love for God which is gradually enhanced and ultimately leads the mystic to experience the unitive state with God.
At the primary stage the mystic feels himself in a condition of love with God but this love does not develop itself because of human sense of sinfulness. Then the mystic believes himself to be in the weakest position to present himself before his Creator. He can see the gap which gives feelings and a sense separation from God. At this stage he can do nothing but to pray for God’s blessing which can ensure the attainment of union with God, the goal of a mystic’s life.

With the passage of time the mystic begins realizing the fact that all forms of his previous struggle to go upward to achieve the union with God are no more beneficial. The sense of sins has been a great impediment on the way of their successful career as a mystic and traveler on the way of union with God. Then he begins realizing the blessings of God which transformed his indifferent heart to enthusiastic heart showing excitement and eagerness to achieve the most desirable status of mankind. Otherwise there was hardly a chance for him to attain the ideal position.

The final stage is more important when the mystic successfully arrives at a place or position usually called enlightened state. The mystic is completely united to his Creator. The state of mystical union seems to be similar to a marriage taken place between two human beings. But the mystic is united with God and his individual status is not lost, the union becomes completely different from human marriage. There is however a great change in the life of a mystic. He forgets himself and every work done by him is only for the sake of God. The problems attached to human life do not change his direction because of his realization of God’s presence in his life. Egan believes that:

The mystic is experientially united to a love that communicates itself to all persons and to all things. Therefore, the more deeply the mystic experiences union
with God, the more deeply union with God’s creation is experienced. Transformed by and in to love itself, the mystic becomes creative, totally self-giving, radically concerned about others- in short, spiritually fecund. (xix)

Egan’s words depict the true picture of a mystic’s life after attainment of union with God, the final stage of a mystic’s journey. Human weakness is transformed in to power and no one can disturb his peace of mind achieved through the blessing and love of God. Such a life can be called a perfect form of human existence in this world. We can conclude that as much as one is spiritually stronger and productive, his capability to face the challenges of life is also improved. The mystic also possesses a special type of knowledge which cannot be learnt and achieved through mental labour.

According to Evelyn Underhill (1912, 416), the mystics describe the experience of mystical union in two different ways. However, these two forms of expression apparently seem to contradict one another. Some mystics call it deification, a form of spiritual change of human being. In other words it is the complete realization of one’s complete transmutation of the self in God. The mystic becomes spiritually the part of God and loses his own identity. In this way a new identity is achieved which is not only better than his previous identity but also a common destination of all mystics who successfully achieve the very goal of their untiring struggle in this life.

Another approach to describe Christian Mystical Union is the form of Spiritual Marriage of his soul to God. This is a permanent form of union which does not disintegrate with the passage of time. To be the permanent part of the Absolute Power is in itself a great blessing for the mystic who even physically living with a body deteriorating day by day and eventually
suffering death, is successful in making permanent spiritual relationship with his Creator, the permanent Being.

Keeping in view these two interpretations of the concept of Christian Mystical Union one can conceptually analyze the spiritual experience and realize the fact that both types of description are interconnected with one another. The concept of Deification or becoming spiritually the part of God and the Spiritual Marriage or establishing permanent relationship with God are almost of similar meaning for the common man. The difference can however be realized only by the mystic who could achieve the highest position in mystical journey.

Another fact can also be described that the way of describing the concept of “deification” and that of “spiritual marriage,” seems to be highly subjective and based on personal experience of the mystic. In this way we are led to such a position where we have no option other than considering the state of mystical union on the basis of information provided by mystics who describe it as Deification or Spiritual Marriage. These forms of unitive state are hardly understandable to other people with no experience of mystical life.

Every mystic must have his own language and individuality of style to express the mystical experience. He may use different types of words and symbols to interpret the idea inexpressible in plain language. It is however important to note that the subject matter or ideology of every mystic is similar to that of other mystics. Evelyn Underhill (1912) observes:

> He would say that his long-sought correspondence with Transcendental Reality, his union with God, has now been finally established: that his self, though intact, is wholly penetrated—as a sponge by the sea—by the Ocean of Life and Love to which he has attained. “I live, yet not I but
God in me.” He is conscious that he is now at length cleansed of the last stains of separation, and has become, in a mysterious manner, “that which he beholds.” (418)

Underhill’s interpretation of the Unitive Life is based on the description of Christian Mystics who gave an account of their spiritual condition which represented the union with the Creator. Such an experience explained by mystics can hardly be understood by the laymen. Such a claim however leads the common readers to believe that deification is to a great extent a conscious practice instead of ecstatic condition.

One can reach a logical conclusion on the basis of information from the history of mysticism that the Christian mystical practice has been in the direction of deification. The concept of deification seems to be based on the ideology of incarnation or God’s appearance in human form. The description of the process of its attainment will perhaps pave the way for developing an opinion that may be justifiable and based on the biblical facts. These biblical interpretations will help to understand the nature of deification, one of the two major forms of mystical union.

The mystic is a traveler on the way to his destination, a status or position to be achieved through continuous struggle. The struggle is meant for achieving the highest place in mysticism or the lofty peak. Such a position is attained only through unintermittent spiritual practice commonly known as the mystical path. What are the feelings of the mystic who successfully achieves his goal? Perhaps there is a realization of human significance. His position seems to be similar to that of the winner of a prize who was destined to have it from the beginning of his life. Underhill (1912) explaining the position of a mystic writes:
The mystic in the unitive state is living in and of his native land; no exploring alien, but a returned exile, now wholly identified with it, part of it, yet retaining his personality intact. As none know the spirit of England but the English; and they know it by intuitive participation, by mergence, not by thought; so none but the “deified” know the secret life of God. (424)

From the experience achieved through our study of mysticism, we can claim that three primary conditions are necessary to be fulfilled to meet the criterion for a qualified traveler on the way to achieve the mystical union. These necessary conditions include Patience, a key to all success, to abandon the Self, which creates hurdles on the way to sacrifice human love for material possessions, and the willingness to sacrifice personal human identity to achieve the Universal identity. If the mystic meets these requirements his journey can be regarded as successful in the direction of achieving the destination.

To express the experience of union with God is a difficult task to be done by the mystic who personally experienced it. It has been a common practice among the mystics to use the language of love to describe it. The mystical union is not interpreted as an act of joining together between the Creature and Creator but explained as the union of Lover and Beloved. The language of amorism explaining the romantic love and higher degree of sentimentality is used through selecting various symbols. The use of symbolism to discuss the Spiritual Marriage between human soul and its Creator has been a good technique to avoid severe criticism from the ideological opponents.
When we carefully observe the incidents in the lives of great mystics we can see a specific type of vigour in their activities. They seem to be an energetic soul working steadily to achieve the very goal of their life. The loss of their physical health does not create any hindrance on the way of their achievements. It is perhaps the impact of mystical union on the life of a mystic that he cares for nothing but only for his duty supposed to him God. This is the spirit which makes their lives the symbols of perfection. St.Paul, St.Teresa and St. Catherine can be the best examples of spiritual perfection.

When we look at the achievements of St.Paul we are surprised to see the higher degree of motivation behind his work. It was perhaps the unfailing force of love and quest for spiritual union with the Absolute that facilitated him to continue his efforts to achieve a status or position which usually becomes an identity of great souls. They are known to be the achievers of union with their Lord. He could be appreciated as a representative of Jesus Christ. Evelyn Underhill (1912, 431) quotes his words answering the question about his motivation to work for Catholic Church, “Not I, but Christ in me.”

As far as the position of St. Teresa and St. Catherine is concerned, one can generalize an opinion that their career began right after they could achieve union with the Absolute. Underhill (431) is of the opinion that St. Teresa left her convent in order to reform a great religious order in Spain while on the other hand St. Catherine of Siena dominated the politics of Italy with an objective of reforming it. Their success in their career is based on the power and inspiration they derived from their mystical union or Spiritual Marriage. Their spiritual power made them more self-confident and the words they used in public meetings became more inspiring and convincing to help them to achieve their goals.
The concept of mystical union can be summarized as the destination of a mystic’s journey not only to God but also in God. It is a higher position and status of human being which cannot be achieved through working under the shelter of human mind. It needs the fire of love which provides necessary power to travel on the way of eternal blessing. It is the realization of perfection and the mystic finds himself in such a place which has ever been the dream of human being to achieve it. Whatever is the word used to express it, deification or spiritual marriage it is however the best form of human life.

**Biblical Parables of Mystical Union**

Bible can also be regarded as a source of information about Christian mysticism and its various aspects and stages on the way to mystical union. Christian mystics need to believe in the biblical commandments as their main sources of knowledge and inspiration. They regard these sources as more reliable for their guidance on the way to mystical union, the destination of every true mystic. The text of the Holy Bible provides necessary guidelines for mystics to understand and practice mysticism for the attainment of an ideal position in the spiritual world.

The Bible provides necessary information about the concept of Christian mystical union. On the way of salvation the mystic is arrived at such a place where he finds himself completely under the direct guidance of God. The mystic’s experience can be interpreted as God’s own blessing which ultimately leads the mystic to realize God’s companionship or friendly association as stated in the Bible:

> That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

(1 John 1:3)
According to Christian spiritual ideology a true Christian mystic is supposed to believe in seeking personal fellowship with God and Christ through passing various stages on the way to enlightenment. At higher level of mystical journey the traveler begins feeling God to be living in him and he in the God. The attainment of such a position is not possible through human efforts but the outcome of God’s wish to achieve the union with human being in spiritual world.

The mystic’s status becomes unique in itself if he begins spiritually living in God and there is a realization of God’s presence in his life. He becomes more sanctified and holy for his fellow men. He enjoys such an unusual prestige till the end of his physical life. The very reason supposed behind the higher position of a Christian is not only the faith but also the presence of Christ in him. Bible (Rom. 8:1) points to this direction, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

The life of a true Christian is based on the principle of spiritual union with God or Christ and a Christian’s approach to life even without declaring it seems to be mystical and mystical union exists in one or the other form. Sufficient number of descriptions in the Bible is available for general readers and the student of Christian mysticism to be helpful as a reliable source of knowledge in analyzing the concept of spiritual union. Bible gives a categorical statement to help the reader in his effort to trace biblical representation of union with God or Christ:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I,
but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in
the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved
me, and gave himself for me. (Gal. 2:20)

The Christian mystic has to rely mostly on the verses of the Bible. He has to consult the biblical texts for guidance to proceed on the way to his destination. To maintain the quest for higher
position in the mystical field, the verses of Bible are a great source of inspiration and divine guidance and influence. The Holy Spirit in the hearts of mystics works to let them continue their struggle to achieve the very goal of their life. They are stimulated through the idea of being closer to God as the children are closer to their father. Bible (Rom. 8:16) says that “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.”

The love is the only guiding star for a mystic on the mystical path to reach the final stage usually called Union with God and in Christian mysticism it may also be union with Christ. If the mystic’s love for Jesus Christ helps him to reach the union with Christ he will also experience the ultimate union with God. The Christian mystic believes that God and Christ are not two different destinations on the way of mysticism as stated in the Bible (John 14:23), “Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” Wayne Grudem opines:

Union with Christ is a phrase used to summarize several different relationships between believers and Christ, through which Christians receive every benefit of salvation. These relationships include the fact that we are in Christ, He is in us, we are like Christ, and we are with Christ. (840)

The presence of Jesus Christ in human being makes them self-sufficient in all aspects of their life. The mystic is a man with glorified attitude while talking to the direction of mystical union. It is the glory of Christ which is observed by the mystics and other men of spiritual world. The Bible is also helpful for understanding the nature of hope for successful life. The true success in life is perhaps based on man’s relation to his God. The Christian mystic ultimately becomes the
part of Jesus Christ’s life. The Bible (Eph. 5:30), points to this direction that, “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.”

The path of mystical union is love. A mystic without love becomes powerless, spiritually dormant, and mentally inactive to perform his duties as traveler to higher state of consciousness. Therefore, to establish a permanent contact with God, the significance of love cannot be ignored. The higher degree in Christian mysticism can be achieved only through burning fire of love and presence of Christ in human heart. Bible (Eph. 3:17) says, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love.”

The Christian mystic is supposed to increase the degree and status of sanctification to an acceptable level before taking up the most challenging job of human life. It gives him strength enough to meet the challenges on the way to union with God. There is a natural enhancement of inclination to face all troubles to achieve the lofty goal. Due to unfailing struggle in improving the degree of faith, the mystic eventually feel himself living in Christ and Christ in him. Bible (John 15:5), describes that, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”

For every Christian mystic the goal of life is nothing but living in God. Christ is the only source to achieve this goal. According to Christian point of view the mystic is not united but reunited. This doctrine is based on the assumption that man was naturally united with God but because of sin he was dissociated and separated. This union is similar to that of a tree and its broken branch grafted again to be its part. Jesus Christ helps to reunite the separated soul to its original body. Bible (Gal. 2:20) says, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”
The real objective behind the Christian mystical union seems to be expression of God’s blessing which helps a man to be united with God in a mystical way. Such a position which cannot be easily described is unique in itself because of its relation to Christian faith. Love stands at the higher status and unites the soul with Christ. The union with Christ or God is stronger than most of our blood relations in our family. Bible (Eph. 5:31) gives a description of human relation Christ and God as, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.”

To understand mystical union is a difficult task for the student of Christian studies. The love leads to sacred union with God. It cannot be regarded as the mystic’s ability to receive special gift of wisdom. It is not a mixture of earthly and divine quality of human being simultaneously. It should also be noted that the union is the outcome of continuous struggle on the path of love. Bible (Acts 17:28), describes that “For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.”

The doctrine of mystical union can be interpreted through the verses of the Bible. It can be stated that the Bible is the main spring and the treasure of knowledge that can help to understand the most popular idea among Christian mystics. In mysticism the destination of a traveler is not the attainment of God’s gifts but union with God through Jesus Christ. Biblical interpretation of mystical union is based on the knowledge derived from the commandments of God. Pope John Paul II concludes the nature of mystical union by saying that:

Union with God is realized in the vision of the Divine Being "face to face" (1 Cor 13:12), a vision called "beatific" because it carries with it the ultimate attainment of man's aspiration to truth. (John Paul II, 71)
The words of Pope John Paul II sufficiently elaborate the concept of union. He calls it ‘beatific’ which means the perfect happiness and inner peace supposed to be enjoyed in by the soul in heaven. His technique of expressing something which is usually perceived to be inexpressible is helpful in understanding the true nature of mystical union. His technique seems to be more appropriate for discussing the higher degree of spiritual enlightenment of mankind through establishing a vigorous and purposeful relation between truth and heavenly happiness.

**Literary Parables of Christian Mystical Union**

Christian Mystics are perhaps the men and women of such a world of their own completely different from that of other human beings. They tell themselves to be conscious of God and express their views about life through interpreting it as a condition of living and feeling themselves in the presence of God. They feel themselves directly in contact with God and they use literature as a tool to discuss and disclose their position and relationship with Jesus or God. The use of literature makes their expression more beautiful and effective for the readers who get inspiration and appreciate their struggle and longing for the union with Absolute authority.

As far as the origin of mystical union in English literature is concerned it would be hardly possible for us to give an exact description of it, but our study of the history of English literature can help us to trace the concept of mystical union in English poetry. Spurgeon gives necessary description of mystical union in English poetry:

> One of the earliest examples of this thought in English literature is the tender and charming lyric by Thomas de Hales, written probably before 1240. Here is perhaps the first expression in our poetry of passionate yearning of the
soul towards Christ as her true lover, and of the joy of mystic union with Him. (104)

The statement uttered by Spurgeon provides necessary guidelines for the reader of modern times to understand the nature of mystical poetry composed by the poets in thirteenth century. If the conceptual aspect of this poetry is carefully examined one can realize that there is a great thematic similarity of this poetry with the Persian mystical poetry composed in the same period of history.

It is also a fact that one can hardly realize the intensity of religious feeling in the mystical poetry of thirteenth and fourteenth century. The works of this period have not been published or lost in any form. That is perhaps one of the reasons behind the absence of true religious mystical poetry. The mystics perhaps confined themselves to ‘prayer’ or monasteries and convents. Their life as a hermit did not allow them to create poetry in order to use it as tool to express their mystical experience and the feeling of love for their Creator or Jesus Christ.

When we try to interpret the Christian mysticism our interpretation remains incomplete till the discussion of Julian of Norwich. She is generally regarded as the leader of mystics searching for union with their creator. Lack of strength, power, or determination proves to be the great hurdle which the mystic usually has to encounter on the way to his true destination. She refutes all types of threats on the way to mystical union. She rejects the doubts, feeling or state of uncertainty in the direction of human success and quest for unitive state by saying that:

> It is the enemy of our souls who maketh us to feel false dread, so that we are afraid to appear before our courteous Lord. For Jesus is our blessed Friend, and it is His will and counsel that we hold us with Him, and fasten us to Him
homely evermore, in what state so ever we be; for whether
we are foul or clean, we are all one in His loving. (Inge, 62)

The concept of mystical union has been a popular field of literary discourse among the poets with mysticism as a major part of their poetry. Some poets call it union with the divine, others define it as a higher ecstatic condition and some of them also interpret it as self-deification. As soon as such a position is achieved the mystic becomes a universal man. It makes the mystic free from all distinctions of right and wrong. Emerson was perhaps intoxicated by the draught of self-deification when he abruptly said:

I am the owner of the sphere,
Of the seven stars and the solar year,
Of Caesar's hand, and Plato's brain,

Of Lord Christ's heart, and Shakespeare's strain. (Inge, 31)

Emerson defines the spiritual position of a mystic when he successfully achieves the union with God or the state of deification (the condition of having been made a god or goddess). He becomes the owner of everything that existed or is existing in the universe. He develops the sense of ownership by claiming that everything is belonging to God and after uniting to God I am the owner of everything in spiritual or secular world. Such a condition is generally regarded as intoxication with the Divine Wine.

William Law is another mystic who claims mystical union to be the God’s blessing. His point of view seems to similar to that of a vast majority of mystics. He claims that God is a part of his life and the knowledge about external world that he could acquire is because of God’s existence in me. He says that: "It is not I who know these things, but God knows them in me." (Inge, 144)
William Wordsworth who is well-known as a lover of nature in the history of English Literature also possesses some of the characteristics of mysticism in his poetry. Although his style is unique and absolutely different from most of his contemporaries but a careful view of his poetry can lead the reader to understand his tendency and the quest for mystical themes. He also shows similar tendency towards realization of union with the creator of this universe. He gets inspiration not from the Christian scholars but from the love of nature which was endowed to him from the very beginning of his life. He claims that:

I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. (Inge, 201)

Wordsworth’s spiritual marriage with the Creator of this world is in the form of realization of the Divine Presence in his life. He is inspired and guided by the God through providing him godly power of imagination. He feels that some higher power is interfused in him and whatever is composed by him is not his own but it belongs to God who is living in him. Whatever is regarded as pantheism in Wordsworth’s poetry partially seems to be the mystical realization of truth through spiritual marriage with the Creator of the world.
Walter Hilton is another example of spiritual perfection. His well-known work *The Scale of Perfection* is a true representation of his mystical love and quest for union with the Creator of mankind. His work is included by Gordon L Miller in his book *The way of the English mystics: an anthology and guide for pilgrims*, and quotes his words about mystical union as under:

> Spirit in the inward man that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith to the end that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be strong to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fullness of God. (50)

Most of the writers in English literature have been trying to describe their love for God as they can express their love for other human being. Crashaw tries to show that God is the lover and not the Beloved. His love for human soul is much stronger than human love God. Crashaw describes the God’s desire of winning the soul of human being:

> Let not my Lord, the mighty lover
> Of soules, disdain that I discover
> The hidden art
> Of his high stratagem to win your heart,
> It was his heavnly art
> Kindly to crosse you
> In your mistaken love,
> That, at the next remove
> Thence he might tosse you
Crashaw’s interpretation of union seems to be based on his concept of Divine love for human souls. He is holding an opinion that whatever is discovered by him through continuous struggle is not because of his efforts but because of God’s love that facilitated him to proceed on the way of enlightenment. The heart which is troubled by human inabilities is more acceptable to God than anything else. In this way the union becomes not only the destination of human soul but also the very desire of its Creator.

Among the poets of the seventeenth century, John Donne is the most sensual and passionate in his expression of his feelings. His poem *The Ecstasy* is representative of his mystical love and union:

This ecstasy doth unperplex
We said and tell us what we love.
We see by this it was not sex,
We see we saw not what did move:
But, as all several things contain
Mixture of things, they know not what,
Love these mixt souls doth mix again,
And makes both one, each this and that. (Bullett, 94)

John Donne’s interpretation of union is given in seventh and eighth stanza of the poem *The Ecstasy*. Stanza seven relates that the two souls now speak as one. They may make a mixture and leave the place in a better form than the place when they arrived there. But the eighth stanza states that their state of ecstasy simplifies things, and they can see that it was not sex that
motivated them to unite but it was a union of two souls which has made something new from two different natures.

In every discussion on Christian Mysticism in English literature William Blake can be one of the poets who are usually regarded as poet, mystic, and philosopher and respected by most of his readers. The concept of Mystical Union discussed in Blake’s poetry can be helpful for the student of English literature as well as the student of Christian mysticism. In the *Everlasting Gospel*, Blake gives a description of the mankind to be the Divine. Jesus Christ who is the true representative of humanity is addressed by God in these words:

If thou humblest thyself, thou humblest me.

Thou also dwellst in Eternity.

Thou art a man: God is no more:

Thy own humanity learn to adore,

For that is my Spirit of Life. (1905, 253)

The words of William Blake truly represent the concept of union between human being and the God. It is however possible by the love of God for human soul. It seems to be the God’s desire instead of human quest that facilitates union between the Creator and His creature. And it is perhaps the God's existence in human life that motivates the man to struggle for the highest position ever possible for man to achieve. It can be safely stated that English poetry is an effective tool to express the concept of mystical union.
CHAPTER THREE
JALAL-UD-DIN RUMI ON MYSTICAL UNION

Jalal-ud-Din Rumi can be regarded as one of the greatest mystical poets. His mystical journey like other Persian Sufi poets can also be stated as destined to Union with the Absolute Reality. The mystical path through various stages comes to an end with human perfection, the higher status and condition of mankind achieved through attainment of union with God, the real creator of mankind. As Rumi is a Sufi, his concept of union with God is also derived from the Sufism or Islamic Mysticism.

The concept of Mystical Union is of great significance in the poetry of Jalal-ud-din Rumi. It can be regarded as the quintessence of his mystical philosophy. A study of his life and works reveals that a major part of his work is truly representing the quest for union with God in the form of Beloved. It can be logically assumed that no study of Rumi’s poetry would be sufficiently result-oriented if the concept of mystical union is not discussed to the required extent. As Rumi is regarded as a true exponent of Sufism or Islamic mysticism his work provides clear insight of Sufism.

The study of mystical union, its description, interpretation, and its impact on human life as suggested by Rumi, comprises within itself a greater level of universality. Rumi’s Divan-e-Shams-e-Tabriz and Mathnavi-e-Ma’navi can be treated as two great sources of inspiration and mystical interpretations of Islamic ideology. The study of these works can help to understand universality of Sufism and provides necessary information for the reader to trace its existence in almost all the great religions of the world through making comparison of various elements of mysticism and mystical union is one of them.
Rumi seems to be the follower and influenced by Mansur Hallaj and his teachings. The concept of *Ana 'l-Haqq (I am the God)* is interpreted by the followers of Hallaj with an assumption that the words *Ana 'l-Haqq* was not uttered by Mansur Hallaj but God used Hallaj’s mouth to express Himself as in the case of Hazrat Musa (Moses) where the God identified Himself through the bush with flames (Quran 20:08-14). Rumi is perhaps one of the Sufis who support this claim by the Hallajian mystics.

Rumi as a follower of Hallajian teaching interprets the concept of mystical union as a state of higher consciousness and unification. However he expresses the higher sense of commitment and complete adherence to Islamic Ideology and Quranic injunctions. He promotes mystical love for union with God but through a system designed under the principles of Islamic Law (*Shariah*). He can see the presence of God in everything in different shapes:

> What is it that is transferred? What is transmigration in reality? The lovely winner of hearts Became a sword and appeared in the hand of 'Ali and became the Slayer of the time. No! no! for 'twas even He that was crying in human shape, *'Ana 'l-Haqq.'* One who mounted the scaffold was not Mansur, though the foolish imagined it. Rumi hath not spoken and will not speak words of infidelity: do not disbelieve him!

Whosoever shows disbelief is an infidel, one of those who have been doomed to Hell. (Nicholson 1914, 154)

The concept of mystical union with God seems to be based on God’s desire to be known to His creatures. The appearance of God to some people in different forms shows that man’s quest for union has been naturally developed by God. The mystic who can show the highest degree of
motivation and willingness to bear the pain and be committed to show patience on mystical path may be guided by God, otherwise human weakness makes the man disappointed and willing to surrender to trying conditions of mystical journey.

1. What is Mystical Union?

The study of mystical union is something more difficult than any other discipline of human knowledge. When we discuss mystical union with reference to the poetry of Jalal-ud-din Rumi, there are two questions we have to respond. These questions cover the knowledge of two aspects of life under the influence of Islamic ideology. At one hand, the knowledge through revelation is involved and man comes to know about oneness of God, on the other hand, the knowledge through experience shows ‘how to be one with Do’?

At first we are supposed to clarify the difference between Tawhid, and Ittihad, and secondly, what is the nature of union? As far as first question is concerned, Sefik Can and M. Fethullah Gulen (136) give description of both terms to illustrate their meanings. Tawhid,(Unity) is the belief in God as one. It shows that one believes in the unity of God and knows that He is unique and peerless. On the other hand Ittihad (union) means to be one with God. To know God as one and to be with one with God are two different things.

As far as the nature of union is concerned, some people believe that it is hulul (God’s incarnation) which means to adopt something. However Rumi believes that it is effacement and clarifies the concept himself by saying that:

If the person who enters the path of God, cleanses his lower self (nafs) by properly and thoroughly performing asceticism, self-mortification, good deeds, and worshipful duties, that person has found a way to ittihad. That person’s
being one with God means that he is obeying God’s commandments completely, and that he is dissolving his personal choice and will in to God’s choice and will.

(Can and Gulen, 136)

The description or necessary explanation of mystical union in the words of Jalal-ud-din Rumi seems to be purely Islamic interpretation of mystical ideology. The element of surrendering and submitting before God seems to be given significant position and status by the Sufis (Islamic Mystics). The second important point raised by Rumi is the purification and cleanliness of lower self (nafs-e-ammara).

Rumi interprets mystical union as a human condition and position higher than everything. It is such a higher status that appeals every man to achieve it. The Sufi strives to achieve it perhaps with an objective to enjoy extraordinary powers. It can make him virtual ruler of everything. To be one with God is perhaps a condition of being indifferent to everything other than God, including everything in material world. Rumi says:

“I was invisible awhile; I was united with Him,
I was in the kingdom of “or nearer”, I saw what I have seen.” (Nicholson 1994, 331)

Rumi gives the description of union through giving examples to make it more understandable to his reader. He compares the spiritual condition of a Sufi with that of a child who is as innocent as he had been in the womb of his mother. He is provided everything necessary for life including food but one who provides everything is not his mother but God, his
real creator. His life is similar to that of a child living in paradise. Such a form of life may be
naturally a great dream of every human being.

It is a matter of great pleasure for every child to come in to this world and the beauty of
life can be enjoyed by the child when he enters this world. His pleasure can hardly be felt by
other people. The innocence and freedom from all anxieties enjoyed by the child can be treated
as a great blessing of God. Rumi believes that the degree of happiness achieved through mystical
union with God is many times greater than the happiness of early childhood and it would be
equal to pleasure achieved through coming to this world many times. He aptly says:

مازنده طفل أندر شكم من پرورش دارم زحق
یکبار زا ید آدمی من یارا یاپه ام

“I have my nourishment from God, like a child in the womb;

Man is born once, I have been born many times.” (Nicholson 1994, 331)

Rumi claims that the indifference of man to everything in material world on the basis of
being in union is itself a great blessing of God. He does not need to bother about the problems of
life. The Sufi is always happy to realize that he could achieve more than he expected through his
efforts. The hurdles on his way from society, from human needs and dissatisfaction regarding the
achievement of desired goal of life are always great troubles in the life of a Sufi. The experience
of union makes him indifferent to all these troubles. He claims that:

پردا مانم گرد فعا نشنست برگزای گدا
در باغ و بستان یفا گلبا فرا وان چیه ام

“Never did the dust of annihilation settle on my skirt, o dervish;

I have gathered a wealth of roses in the meadow and garden of eternity.” (Nicholson 1994, 332)
The state of being in the union can be understood from the Sufi’s statements and expression of opinion about such things which hardly be understandable and believable to other people. He claims to be different from other human people who are interested in pursuing the wealth of world and material gains. The Sufi in this way is regarded as the only person who can understand the meaning of whatever is uttered from his own lips. Representing the Sufis as a group of people, Rumi claims that the union has made him such a man who can show no affiliation to anything but God and non-aligned to everything other than Beloved (God). He says:

اَزْ آَبَ وَ آتشَ نَیْسَتُمَ وَ زِباً دَ سَرِکْشَ نَیْسَتُمُ
خَاق مَنْقَشَ نَیْسَتُمُ مِنْ بِعْمَ بَغْدَادِیْهَ اَم

“I am not of water nor fire, I am not of the forward wind;
I am not moulded clay: I have mocked (transcended) them all.” (Nicholson 1994, 332)

Mystical Union to Rumi seems to be a state of oneness with God that can be experienced only by the Sufi (Islamic Mystic) while the other people try to interpret it according to their own knowledge and religious ideology as one could see in the case of Hallaj. It seems to be based on a Sufi’s own level in Islamic Mysticism. Keeping in view various stages of mystical journey, one can conclude that Rumi’s union is achieved eventually through passing all the stages necessary for it.

Rumi’s union with God seems to be based on the degree of pleasure that a mystic achieves through uniting with his or her creator. The nature and form of such a union is an ideal situation for every human being and it is something for what human desire is a natural tendency as Nicholson (1914) states:

How lovely” (he says), "how magnificent a state is the soul of man in, when the life of God inactuating her shoots her
along with Himself through heaven and earth; makes her unite with, and after a sort feel herself animate, the whole world. He that is here looks upon all things as one, and on himself, if he can then mind himself, as a part of the Whole. (163)

Rumi’s concept of mystical union seems to be similar to that of the Sufis or the mystics of Islamic path, who believe “Fana,” the total loss of one’s individuality, as the end of their journey. In this way they prove their independence from the world and its affairs. As soon as they lose their individuality, their indifference to their fellow being is usually noticed. Their isolation from society ultimately leads them to be careless in abiding by the laws of the Land and makes them indifferent to religious matters and practices.

It can also be stated that Rumi promotes the idea of the loss of personality. The loss of personality is based on the experience of union with God. His claim is perhaps identical to that of the Sufis from almost all the orders of Islamic mysticism. According to this perception the Sufi after union cannot maintain his individuality and eventually achieves a new form of identity, the identity through God or Universal-Soul. To translate the experience of Union the Sufis have to depend upon figurative language and the terms of love and marriage become popular tools to interpret it. The union is however a great blessing of God for the Sufi as suggested by Rumi:

Happy the moment when we are seated in the Palace, thou and I,
With two forms and with two figures but with one soul, thou and I.
The colours of the grove and the voice of the birds will bestow immortality
At the time when we come into the garden, thou and I.
The stars of heaven will come to gaze upon us;
We shall show them the Moon itself, thou and I.

Thou and I, individuals no more, shall be mingled in ecstasy,

Joyful and secure from foolish babble, thou and I. (Nicholson 1914, 168)

Although as a Sufi or Muslim mystic, Rumi believes in mystical journey to achieve union with God, but he finds himself at such a place where he can see the destination before his eyes and does not need to search it through following the mystical path to reach the ultimate stage or union with the Beloved. He describes the status and position of his own which shows his condition as a traveler of mystical journey:

Oh you who’ve gone on pilgrimage
where are you, where, oh where?
Here, here is the Beloved!
Oh come now, come, oh come!
Your friend, he is your neighbor,
he is next to your wall
You erring in the desert
what air of love is this?
If you’d see the Beloved’s
form without any form. (Schimmel 2001, 148)

Although there are many forms of mystical union but the most favourable to Rumi is ‘fana’, complete annihilation in the Beloved. It represents a special human condition usually showing no difference between an ordinary lover in human form and the God as Beloved. The soul of mankind loses its own identity and achieves another form of identity through God. If one tries to
look in to the heart of Rumi he does not fail in realizing the similar condition of Rumi as that of Hallaj and he is found completely annihilated in his Beloved:

He said: Since I am he, what need to seek?
I am the same as he, his essence speaks!
Indeed I sought my own self, that is sure,
Fermenting in the vat, just like the must. (Schimmel 2001, 19)

Rumi also seems to believe in death as a form of mystical union. Although death is an end to physical life but at the same time it facilitates spiritual life. The man’s soul is able to unite with its Creator after being successful during the interrogation by the angels of God in the grave. Rumi like other Sufis seems to believe in death as a wedding night behind the scenes. This is perhaps the reason behind his advice to his disciples to avoid crying over his death:

Don’t cry: “Woe parted!” at my burial-
For me, this is the time of joyful meeting!
Don’t say “Farewell” when I’m put in the grave-
It is a curtain for eternal grace. (Schimmel 2001, 30)

Rumi’s claim to enjoy a meeting with God at the time of physical death seems to be based on his staunch belief in Islamic ideology and the teachings of the Holy Quran. His opinion of death as a curtain between two different forms of human life also reflects his belief in eternal blessing to be attainable only after physical death. Rumi’s knowledge and understanding of Islamic way of life and deep-rooted commitment to Sufism makes him disseminator of mystical union.

2. Significance of Mystical Union

The Union is the realization of human quest for God’s blessings and love. It is perhaps out of human love for God and desire to trace and establish a direct contact with one’s own lord and
creator. The quest for establishing direct association with God is a great motivation for human being to search Him everywhere. The search begins with religion which is perceived to be the major source of human relation with God. The man becomes a Christian or an Idol-Worshiper and tries to trace Him in church or an idol-temple. Rumi says:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{چلپیبا و تصرانیا ن سر بسر} \\
\text{ببهومد اندر چلپیبا نبود} \\
\text{ب- بتخان رفنم بدير کم} \\
\text{در و بیچ رنگی بودا نبود}
\end{align*}
\]

“Cross and Christians, from end to end,
I surveyed; He was not on the Cross
I went to the idol-temple, to the ancient pagoda;
No trace was visible there.”(Nicholson 1994, 70)

Rumi’s statements highlight human nature with reference to mankind’s way of searching for the Beloved at various places in accordance with one’s knowledge and belief. He claims that a Muslim always holds higher degree of belief and trust in the sanctity, sacredness, truthfulness and spiritual status of Ka’ba and he rushes towards it in order to experience the presence of God and making direct association with one’s creator. But the heart of a Muslim is not satisfied with only blessings of God. It wants something more than blessing which is a direct experience of contact and union. Rumi says:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{بکعب کشیدم عنان طلب} \\
\text{درآ ن مقدس پر و برنا نبود}
\end{align*}
\]

“I bent the reins of search to the Ka’ba;
He was not in that resort of old and young.”(Nicholson 1994, 72)
Rumi’s search for God could not provide him any way of tracing God neither in the place of worship nor in the world of nature. He however continued his efforts to the possible extent to trace his Beloved. Rumi claims that when he was disappointed through failures one after the other he changed his direction to himself and now his efforts did not remain fruitless. He could eventually trace and see his Beloved (God) as soon as he looked in to his own heart. He observes:


"I gazed in to my own heart;

There I saw Him; He was nowhere else."

(Nicholson 1994, 72)

It is too important to note that the quest for mystical union indirectly leads to establish stronger belief in God and its impact on human life is also of greater degree. The man, who perceives himself to be the vicegerent of God, wants to achieve all blessings of his Creator and through recognition and direct contact with God. This is perhaps one of the reasons behind a simple Muslim’s adaptation of Sufism, a mystical path to achieve realization of God’s special love and blessings in the form of union.

There are many causes and stimulating elements which increase a Sufi’s desire for union with God. It can be logically claimed that the attainment of union is mostly based on the intensity of craving and the degree of desire for union i.e., the higher the level of desire the easier the attainment of union. It can be claimed to be such a specific feeling that does not need any human tongue to express explicitly. Rumi shows strong belief in the power of desire for union and maintains that it can enable every element of human life in this universe to speak and express its craving to see the Creator and the owner of this world:
I am silent, speak thou, o soul of soul of soul,
From desire of whose face every atom grew articulate.”(Nicholson 1994, 06)

It is perhaps nothing but human desire and necessity for union with God which provides necessary basis for the Sufis to love and worship their God. The prayer in this way becomes the first step to the direction of achieving a spiritual destination; the highest place for human being usually called by the Sufis “the city of union”. Although the city of union is an imaginary world and its experience in physical world is not the business of a lay man however its desire seems to exist everywhere as a part of human nature.

One can claim that the poets with the background of Sufism treat the concept of mystical union as their objective and express their desire to achieve it. Rumi as a leader of one of the Sufi orders believes in the attainment of union as a practice similar to that of recovering one’s home that was lost for some time. And that it would not be possible for him to live away from his real home, for what his heart is longing all the time without any intermittence. In his Divan Rumi says:

“The heart’s home, first to last, is thy city of union,
How long wilt thou keep in exile this heart forlorn?”(Nicholson 1994, 06)

Rumi’s necessity for union is increased gradually and there is a time when one can see his heart transformed in to a loving-body. Rumi’s heart is fed with the fire of love and its flames
can be seen in his eyes. The special form of love has given him insight and the power to see the world beyond human compass. He says:

\[
\text{دل یافت دیده ک مقيم بواي تست}
\]

\[
\text{آوخ ک ان بوا چه دل و دیده پرورست}
\]

“The heart hath gotten an eye constant in desire of thee,
Oh, how that desire feeds heart and eye!”(Nicholson 1994, 42)

The overall condition of Rumi’s necessity of union and stronger desire for it seems to be purely based on his human weakness. He realizes that he does not deserve to claim and express his love for God because of his inferiority and lowliness. He also realizes that it is possible only through the blessing of God that a man may be able to claim his love for God and desire for spiritual union while living in a physical world with material needs and desires for material gains.

Rumi tries to explain the reason behind human efforts to achieve the union with God through giving examples from real life. He compares himself to reed (a thin piece of cane, metal, or plastic fitted inside some musical instrument that vibrates to produce sound, usually when the player blows in to the instrument) which cannot work unless it is played by its master, a flutist. To elaborate this concept Coleman Barks quotes the opening lines of Rumi’s Mathnavi book-I:

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 apart from someone he loves
understands what I say.
Anyone pulled from a source longs to go back. (Barks, 17)

The words making comparison of Rumi’s condition with that of reed reflect the intensity of feelings behind Rumi’s craving for direct association with God, the master of human soul. Rumi’s home is God and his efforts to achieve his home have similarity with reed’s desire for reedbed. He provides a good example for the lovers to understand the real condition of a lover who is departed from his Beloved. It is however a natural tendency of human being to search and go back to their lost home.

Although there are many reasons behind a Sufi’s quest for union with God but Rumi gives central position to ‘realization of God’s blessing’ as the only major reason that provides necessary motivation for making efforts to achieve mystical union. The Sufi and a common Muslim are both searching for blessings of God but the degree of blessing they seek is different from each other and their way of seeking God’s blessing becomes different. Rumi claims that:

مبارکست بوای تو برهم، مرغان
چه نا مبارک مرغی ک در بوای تو نیست

“Blessed to all birds is desire of thee;
How unblessed the bird that desires thee not.” (Nicholson 1994, 38)

3. Attainment of Mystical Union

Rumi’s Mathnavi provides necessary information about the whole process of attaining union with God through different mystical practices generally known as the Sufi Path. Although Rumi is criticized by the students of Sufism on the basis of an assumption that Rumi’s Mathnavi is not structurally well-organized. The critics claim that there are no recognizable guidelines on the Sufi path which can be regarded as the central practice of Sufism.
In response to criticism from one of his literary opponents Rumi reacts gracefully and positively in a logical manner. His response is perhaps based on an assumption that the critics are unable to recognize the quality of the subject matter and their critical remarks have no value more than the statement of an ignorant person who can care for nothing but his own ignorance. Rumi’s response to the questions raised by the critics reflects his mental condition. He strictly rejects the claim of the critics who criticize his poetry and say:

It lacks any explanation of the stages and stations, those wings by which the mystic soars on high.’ O critical dog, you are doing a lot of noisome barking, but I will follow the advice of the Sage of Ghazna: I will not allow myself to be affected by these taunts. Does a caravan ever turn back from a journey because of the barking dogs? (Baldock,81)

The critics of Rumi’s Mathnawi seem to be more interested and partially concerned with the structure of the book than the subject matter discussed in it. The purpose of Mathnawi is perhaps the interpretation of the internal quintessence of Sufism and not the external qualities of its text. Rumi’s message seems to be more appealing to heart than human intellect. He openly declares that he is following the Sage of Ghazna (Abul Hassan Ali Ibn Usman al-Jullabi al-Hajvery al-Ghaznawi) who is commonly known as Daata Ganj Bakhsh.

The Sufi Path

The Sufi is supposed to travel on the path of Sufism to attain the ultimate union with God. The path is divided into various stages by different poets and writers whose works on Sufism are recognized and treated as the major sources of information on the subject. The stages of the Sufi Path reflect the changes and spiritual development of the travelers who struggle continuously to
achieve their ultimate destination. However, the number of stages has been discussed by Abu Nasr Al-Sarraj in *Kitab al-Luma*, Al-Hujwiri in *The Kashf al-Mahjub*, and Attar in his well-known work *The Conference of Birds*.

Abu Nasr Al-Sarraj discussed the Sufi path and provided necessary details about its seven stages to reach the union with God. These stages which are usually called stations as discussed by Abu Nasr Al-Sarraj are ‘the stations of repentance (tauba), abstinence (taqwa), renunciation (zuhd), poverty (faqr), patience (sabr), trust in God (tawakkul), and the station of satisfaction (ridd) (Al-Sarraj, XXI – XXVII). These stages are mostly the same stations which have been discussed by Syed Ali Al-Hujwiri.

Al-Hujwiri gives description of the stations of mystical path in a unique method designed by him. He calls these stations the veils to be uncovered to achieve the union. He describes eleven veils which represent ‘the gnosis of God (Marifat Allah), unification (tawhid), faith, purification from foulness, prayer (al-Salat), alms (al-Zakat), fasting (al-Sawm), pilgrimage, companionship, explaining the phraseology, defining the terms and varieties of important ideas, and audition (Sama) (Al-Hujwiri, 362 - 498). It is however important to note that there is a great conceptual similarity of Al-Hujwiri’s stations and those suggested by Abu Nasr Al-Sarraj.

Attar is generally regarded as the spiritual guide or forerunner of Jalal-ud-din Rumi. From the study of Mathnawi, one can assume that Rumi was perhaps inspired by Attar’s Sufi path discussed in *The Conference of the Birds*, which shows the stations of mystical path as seven valleys. These valleys include ‘the quest, love, understanding, detachment, unity, astonishment, and poverty and annihilation (Attar, 11-134). The path followed by Rumi seems to be partially similar to that of Al-Sarraj, Al-Hujwiri, and Attar.
The path to achieve union with the Beloved has been defined, described or analyzed differently by the writers and scholars of Sufism. It is however important to note that the ideas do not lose their spirit even if the words and the style of composition are different from person to person and one age to another. John Baldock generalizes the path and claims that there are only two stages: ‘dying to the self and union with the Divine.’ He believes that the stages of path are nothing but the stages of purifying and developing nafs. He says:

The Arabic word nafs is variously translated as ‘soul’, ‘self’ or ‘ego’. The nafs has seven level or stages of development that correspond more or less to the seven stages of the Sufi Path. The Path, which leads to a transformation of consciousness, can therefore be described as the refinement and purification of the soul. (87)

John Baldock’s interpretation of Sufi path seems to be more relevant to discuss the path followed by Rumi. The seven forms of nafs represent the stations or stages which must be reached and passed to attain the most desired status of the Sufi’s life. He describes the seven forms of nafs as nafs al-ammara, nafs al-lawwama, nafs al-mulhama, nafs al-mutmainna, nafs al-radiyya, nafs al-mardiyya, and nafs al-kamila. (Baldock, 87)

1. First Stage: Nafs al-Ammara (The Commanding Self)

John Baldock’s description of seven forms of nafs seems to be helpful in understanding the stages of Rumi’s path to the attainment of union with God. Nafs al-Ammara is perhaps the first step or stage which the Sufi has to control. It is highly powerful form of nafs (self) which promotes animal desires and is perceived to be responsible for human failure in obeying the
commands of God. The Sufi has to encounter this strong hindrance on the beginning of his spiritual journey. Rumi says:

Your nafs is the mother of all idols, a material idol is only a snake, but the idol of the nafs is a dragon. Breaking a material idol is easy, very easy; to regard the nafs as easy to subdue is folly, folly. O son, if you want to know the form of the nafs, read the description of the seven gates of hell.

(Baldock, 88)

Rumi believes in nafs al-ammara as a constant danger for the career of a Sufi. It can create hurdles for him anytime and there is a possibility of a total reversal of achieved progress. As the nafs is of central importance in Sufi practices it becomes more difficult to control at least for those who are the beginners. Even the excess of prayers cannot minimize the danger of nafs al-ammara. Rumi says that “the nafs has the name of God on its lips and the Quran in its hand, but up its sleeve it has a danger.” (Baldock, 88)

The most dangerous function of nafs al-ammara is perhaps the spiritual blindness caused by its carnal desires. The power of physical passions can easily overcome the Sufi’s desire to travel on the path of love achieve the ultimate goal of Sufism. Rumi advises the traveler saying “wield the mace against yourself and smash your ego to pieces, for the carnal eye is like an ear stuffed with cotton wool.” (Baldock, 88)

In the history of Sufism nafs al-ammara, or the self that incites human being to evil, has been debated more than any other element of human life. It was perhaps more criticized and the Sufi masters suggested their disciples to struggle against it more than any other thing. Annemarie Schimmel (1993), a well-known scholar of Sufism aptly says:
Rumi is not less energetic in his struggle against the *nafs* than his predecessors on the Sufi path who saw here the root of every evil. The whole Quran consists, according to Rumi, of an explanation of the evils of the carnal soul in its various manifestations. Mowlana applies the prophetic tradition ‘die before ye die’ to this struggle against the carnal soul, which should be slain so that the higher faculties may live. (269)

The words of Annemarie Schimmel seem to reflect the true spirit of Sufism and particularly the significance of waging war against the carnal soul or self. It is perhaps the root cause of all spiritual problems and the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon Him) seems to be the only way to get rid of it. It is the first step to achieve the ultimate union and the remaining stages depend mostly on this stage. The disciple or traveler tries to develop indifference to *nafs al-ammara* and its temptations and purifies his heart for further advancement. To Cross this stage one has to overcome greed, pride, jealousy, and lust which are usually regarded as the characteristics of *nafs al-ammara*.

**2. Second Stage: Nafs al-Lawwama (The Regretful Self)**

Once a Sufi successfully subjugates carnal self he enters into comparatively more difficult stage of spiritual purification and his ability to make correct decisions becomes more trustworthy. He feels himself in a better position to respond to the self who reproaches him for his evil deeds and calls him to pray and beg forgiveness. It is called *nafs al-Lawwama*.

It is the form of *nafs* or self that helps to realize the evil influence of carnal self on the actions of a man and enables him to review his own deeds. Defining *nafs al-lawwama*, John
Baldock claims that it is “the accusing or blaming self that corresponds to the awakening of conscience and a realization of the extent to which one’s actions are controlled by the *nafs al-ammara*.” (87)

It seems to be one of the forms of repentance which reflects the conflict between *nafs al-lawwama* and *nafs al-ammara*. The evil power of carnal self is balanced when the awakening or blaming self works. Rumi analyses the status and the central position of blaming self through saying that:

Sensual desires and sinful actions are wiped out by repentance, but these are only symptoms and will recur unless their inward source is removed. Nothing avails except self-mortification. (Rumi 1989, vv. 773-74)

Rumi’s opinion about self-mortification seems to be similar to the opinion expressed by most of the followers of different orders of Sufism especially the whirling dervishes of maulavia order. The influence of *nafs al-ammara* can be decreased gradually through activating and strengthening *nafs al-Lawwama* which improves our ability to realize our own misdeeds. The realization of sins is perhaps the first stage followed by regular practice of begging for pardon. It eventually enables the Sufi to achieve sufficient spiritual power to travel on the way to union.

3. **Third Stage: Nafs al-Mulhama (The Inspired Self)**

It is perhaps the most important stage on the way to surrender one’s ego or self. The Sufi at this stage is in a better position to listen the voice of his own conscience. It paves the way for genuine progress on the way to get rid of desires from the physical world. Defining *nafs al-Mulhama* Baldock says that it is “the inspired or balanced self marks the beginning of genuine spiritual
integration and a release of the self from the tyranny of physical instincts and the desires of the ego." (87)

It is generally believed that the Sufis try to do good as soon as they get an opportunity. Perhaps they believe that the opportunity to do well is a blessing of God and they quickly try to be blessed. Abbas Bin Abdul Muttalib lays down three rules:

1. Ta'Jeel or Swiftness. A good deed must be done immediately and there should be no laziness.
2. Tehqeer or Contempt. You must look at your good acts with contempt otherwise you will become self-righteous.
3. Ikhfa or Secrecy. You must keep your good acts secret otherwise people will praise you and it will make you self-righteous. (Singh,253)

Rumi gives description of inspired self to highlight its significance in the Sufi path of achieving union with God through the story of Ibrahim bin Adham who is willing to abstain from the desires of physical world. As soon as he is asked “Why, then, art thou seeking God on the throne of empire?” (Rumi 1989, v.829), he immediately leaves the physical pleasures and listens to the voice of his nafs al-mulhama. To cross this stage one has to acquire great qualities of an inspired soul. Such a soul becomes detached from the physical pleasures and develops higher degree of patience.

4. Fourth Stage: Nafs al-Mutmainna (The Contented Self)

It is one of the most important stages on the way to realization of union with God. John Baldock claims that “the tranquil self or self at peace, as its name implies, has attained a degree of detachment from worldly concerns and an increasing awareness of the Presence of God in all things”(87). As much as one realizes the nearness to God his social, economic and personal
problems lose their importance and the Sufi becomes more satisfied and free from all the problems of physical world.

The significance of \textit{nafs al-mutmainna} is noteworthy in the life of a Sufi. It shows his utter satisfaction over the progress and achievements of his own. Although in material world he may be a loser yet his continuous efforts to achieve the spiritual goal reflect the gratification achieved through spiritual practices. The will of God is perhaps the only objective to be achieved at this stage. N.K Singh claims that:

\begin{quote}
This is the ideal stage of ego for Sufis. On this level one is firm in one’s faith and leaves bad manners behind. The soul becomes tranquil, at peace. At this stage Sufis will have relieved themselves of all materialism and worldly problems and be satisfied with the will of God. (254)
\end{quote}

Rumi recognizes \textit{nafs al-mutmainna} as an advanced stage on the Sufi path and regards it to be the major station from which the soul of mankind can proceed to its ultimate destination. To highlight the significance of \textit{nafs al-mutmainna} (The contented self or soul) Rumi refers to the verses of The Holy Quran which state that to the righteous Soul will be said: “O Soul, in (complete) rest and satisfaction, come back to your Lord well-pleased (yourself), and well-pleasing un to Him. Enter you, then, among My devotees. Indeed, enter My Heaven.” (Rumi 1989, v. 1169). To cross this stage one has to develop all qualities of the soul in peace.

\textbf{5. Fifth Stage: Nafs al-Radiyya (The Pleased Self)}

The stage comes after the fourth principal stage when the Sufi feels himself in a state of complete satisfaction, and peace of mind. The Sufi at this stage is free from all social hindrances and the very objective he has to achieve seems to be nothing but the nearness and the blessing of
God. In this way he can be able to proceed in the direction of achieving the ultimate goal of his life. N.K Singh observes:

> On this level one is pleased with whatever comes from Allah and does not live in the past or future, but in moment. One thinks always: ‘Ilahi Anta Maqsudi wa ridhaka matlubi’ (O God, thou and thy pleasure are my objectives). One always sees oneself as weak and in need of Allah.

(254)

It is perhaps the most developed condition of the Sufi’s soul which seems to be able to seek direct guidance from the creator and thus craves for union with God. John Baldock is of the opinion that “the fulfilled or satisfied self is the initial merging or union of the individual with God” (87). The words of John Baldock represent the idea of the soul’s gradual development on the Sufi path which helps the traveler to come closer to his destination.

Rumi describes the *nafs-i-radiyya* (The Pleased Soul) as a great power for the Sufi to encourage him to be indifferent to profit or loss, happiness or sadness, and pain or delight. The story of ‘The Sufi who sold the traveler’s ass’ reflects the impact of ‘the pleased soul’ on the life of a Sufi. After the loss of the Sufi’s ass, the servant in the story says: “I was always going away, saying to myself, he is aware of it, he is satisfied with what God has decreed, he is a gnostic” (Rumi 1989, v.514). It can be concluded that to cross this stage successfully one has to prove his willingness to accept everything from God positively.

6. Sixth Stage: *Nafs al-Mardiyya* (The Pleasing Self)

On the sixth stage of development the Sufi’s self is called *nafs al-mardiyya* (The Pleasing Self). This is regarded as the most important stage on the way to ultimate destination. John
Baldock expressing his opinion about the Pleasing Self claims that it is “the fulfilling or satisfying self, also described as the self of total submission, is the merging of God with the individual.” (87)

The description of The Pleasing Self by N.K Singh is however based on its impact on the overall behaviour of human being. He states that: “on this level the two Ruhs (Souls) in man have made peace. One is soft and tolerant with people and has good akhlaq (courtesy), good manners (254). It may represent the man’s spiritual maturity which needs to be maintained to travel to the highest level of spiritual elevation.

When the God is pleased with the Soul, the love and blessings of God change the man completely. He becomes sufficiently able to realize the nearness of God and get direct inspiration from the power and love of God. Rumi claims that: “the King is one soul, and the army is filled with him; the spirit is like the water, and these bodies are the river-bed. If the water of the King’s spirit be sweeter, all the river-beds are filled with the sweet water (Rumi 1989, v.71-72). It may develop in the Sufi the love for mankind and ability to leave everything for the sake of God.

7. Seventh Stage: Nafs al-Kamila (The Perfected Self)

In the seventh or the highest stage of development the Self is developed to such a position that it can be called the perfect soul or self (nafs al-kamila). The Self is completely surrendered to the will of God. N.K Singh defining the Self at this stage says: “On this level one is dressed in the attributes of the Insan Kamil, the perfected man, who is completely surrendered and inspired by Allah. One is in full agreement with the Will of Allah.”(254)

On the other hand some writers have given description of the perfected soul with reference to its position on the way to achieve the goal of a Sufi’s spiritual journey. John Baldock is one of the writers who interpreted nafs al-kamila (The Perfect Self) by saying that:
“the perfected and complete self is the state of total union with God and the attainment of universal consciousness” (87). Such a stage can be regarded as the greatest achievement and the ascension of the Sufi to the place or destination for which he craved and struggled for a long time.

Rumi has highlighted the status of the Perfect Self through putting emphasis on its significance in the life of a true traveler on the Sufi Path. He describes the Perfect Self through the story of The Greek and Chinese Artists. The story ends with the statement: “The spiritual Moses holds in his bosom the infinite form of the Unseen reflected from the mirror of his heart” (Rumi 1989, v.3467). Similarly the attainment of union through Self’s gradual development has been mentioned in almost all the books of the Mathnawi.

Like all other great Sufis of the world, dying to the Self and union with the Divine seems to be the primary objective of Rumi’s mystical path. The journey which begins with “Listen to this reed how it complains: it is telling a tale of separations”(Rumi 1989, v.1), and ends with the realization of a great reality as Annemarie Schimmel (2001) quotes:

He said: Since I am he, what need to seek?

I am the same as he, his essence speaks!

Indeed I sought my own self, that is sure,

Fermenting in the vat, just like the must. (16)

The words attributed to Rumi give a sense of realization that God is a part of human life and to seek God out of one’s own life is of no use and fruitless activity. Rumi’s spiritual journey as discussed in the text of the Mathnawi reflects the importance of human desire to seek and come directly in contact with his Creator. It is perhaps an inspiration which helps to lead active and
progressive life. Rumi seems to promote the ideology of realizing God through craving for realizing one’s *nafs* (Self).

4. Impact of Mystical Union on Mystic’s Life

Mystical union is achieved after untiring efforts for a long time. It is perceived to be such a unique achievement that changes the ultimate direction of human activities in this life. The overall impact of mystical union can be observed from the physical condition or life style of the Sufi, his indifferent attitude towards materialism, extraordinary sources and the depth of his knowledge, and the higher degree of satisfaction expressed by him.

1. Condition in Physical World

Attainment of mystical union is an ideal form of success for what the Sufis are always supposed to make efforts. Although perfection has never been regarded as a characteristic of human life yet the Sufis’ claim of spiritual perfection is not only recognized by lay men but also regarded as an honourable position. The Sufis are generally supposed to be indifferent to material world that is perhaps the reason behind their success and happiness as a human being. They possess the peace of mind and satisfaction even in the worst physical conditions. Rumi says:

مرد خدا مسئ خودن بی شرایب
مرد خدا سیر بود بی کباب
مرد خدا شاه بود زیر دلق
مرد خدا گنج بود در خراب

“The man of God is drunken without wine,
The man of God is full without meat
The man of God is a king beneath dervish-cloak,
The man of God is a treasure in a ruin.” (Nicholson 1994, 28)
Rumi seems to believe in a Sufi to be the man who can enjoy the pleasure of wine without having a drop of it. He seems to be a poor man but his knowledge and spiritual power makes him the king of the world. Although his physical condition shows that he may be a poor and helpless person yet the blessing of God and the knowledge of spiritual world can make him wealthier than anyone in this world. His knowledge is a power which can be more valuable than a treasure of a king in the physical world.

2. Educational Condition

Attainment of mystical union can also be regarded as a form of human education. The Sufis are educated through saints and highly learned teachers. Their education is based on theoretical description, practical experience. Their knowledge becomes a part of their spiritual life at one side and their physical life on the other side. When they express their opinion it becomes a combination of physical information and spiritual enlightenment. It makes them popular among the masses and their words more acceptable. Rumi claims that:

مرد خدا بحر بود بی کران
مرد خدا با رد در بی سحاب

“The man of God is a boundless sea,
The man of God rains pearls without a cloud.” (Nicholson 1994, 28)

The education of a true mystic through attaining mystical union makes him a totally different person from other people educated through ordinary methods. His mind becomes enlightened to such a level that whatever he says it represents his vast knowledge of human life. The words of a Sufi can be compared to the pearls which represent higher value and rich ideas. The Sufi disseminates knowledge without any planning and preparation. It can regarded as the precious knowledge.
The Sufis are educated for a specific purpose. The sources of their knowledge mostly seem to be informal. The teacher (sheikh) is one of the major sources of knowledge. The primary objective of mystical education seems to be the training of the traveler (Salik) to proceed on the mystical path to achieve the union with God. Such a special form of education is hardly possible through books. Although there is a great possibility of using textual information as a partial source of knowledge but the central position lies with the instructions of the mystical teacher who gives him nothing but truth. Rumi aptly concludes:

مرد خدا عالم از حق بود
مرد خدا نیست فقهی از كتاب

“The man of God is made wise by the truth,
The man of God is not learned from book.” (Nicholson 1994, 28)

Rumi’s words represent his concept of real knowledge. The knowledge which does not come from the ordinary source can be considered as superior to that of knowledge learnt through ordinary sources. The knowledge of religion and other sciences comes from the books of revelations or the books based on the scientific experiments of leaned scholars and wise men of their time but the education of a true mystic is based on the practical experience through following a specific path of mysticism. In this way his learning and knowledge can be more reliable than other forms of education.

3. Spiritual Condition

The Sufis who remain successful in achieving the ultimate goal of all mystical practices through showing higher degree of perseverance may be rewarded with great blessing of God and spiritual enlightenment. The Sufi who left the physical world for spiritual world perhaps begins to realize that he is free from all problems of human life. Rumi believes that the man after achieving union
with his creator becomes a symbol of honour and dignity. He is equally welcomed by God and the men who are His creature:

مرد خدا گشت سوار از عدم
مرد خدا آمد عالی رکاب

“The man of God has ridden away from not-being,
The man of God is gloriously attended.” (Nicholson 1994, 30)

Rumi claims that the Sufi after attaining the union with God achieves such a status which shows that he could get rid of what is known to be not-being. The mystic whose world is shifted from not being to the world of being is perhaps the man in ideal situation. He can claim to be attended in the world of eternity with great love and respect by God and the angels who serve the selected men of God.

The attainment of union changes the very direction of human thinking. The Sufi realizes the weakness of human efforts to achieve the blessings of God through religious practices. The sacred places for religious worship become less significant for the Sufi to achieve the goal of spiritual purification and salvation. Rumi says:

Oh you who’ve gone on pilgrimage
where are you, where, oh where?
Here, here is the Beloved!
Oh come now, come, oh come!
Your friend, he is your neighbor,
he is next to your wall. (Schimmel 2001, 148)

Rumi’s words depict the true picture of the mind that is spiritually enlightened. The Sufi’s knowledge and spiritual condition sometimes creates problems. The lay man is unable to
understand the extraordinary meaning of words uttered by him. His informal way of expressing opinion about God gives an impression of abnormal attitude and imbalanced mental condition. However he becomes a symbol of honour, love, and knowledge for those who possess the required wisdom and ability to understand the meaning of Sufism.

5. Illustration of Mystical Union

Rumi illustrated the concept of mystical union through using several poetic devices but the narration, symbolism, and allusions are such devices which performed the major role of explanatory and decorative devices simultaneously. Rumi designed his stories, created unique types of symbolism, and searched for relevant allusions from the Holy book (Quran) and the popular legends of his times.

1. Narrative Illustration

Keeping in view the needs of his subject-matter and existing trends of mystical poetry of his times, Rumi applied narrative technique. It can be assumed that narrative technique facilitated him to interpret the concept of mystical union which was generally regarded as an inexpressible theme of poetry. The stories in the *Mathnawi* are related to different sections of society. The characters have been derived from almost all walks of life but the central idea of every story seems to be related to the concept of mystical union.

Some stories however describe the union with God, but there are some other stories which represent the states or stages on the way to mystical union. For example in “The Three Fishes” (Rumi 1989, v.2202), the intelligent fish represents the soul of the Sufi whose objective in life is union with God. Through this story Rumi tries to highlight the importance of mystical death of self (*fana*) and the need of a teacher who can lead him on the path of Sufism to the ultimate destination or Union with God.
The longing for union with God has also been represented through stories in Rumi’s Mathnawi. The story of “The Sincere Penitent” (Rumi 1989, v.2771) reflects the longing of a Sufi for eternal life through union. The intensity of his feelings shows the internal condition of his heart full of human desire for attainment of love and blessing of God. The power of his longing for God is recognized and rewarded by God. In Rumi’s pursuit of love, longing is perhaps of central importance. The significance of yearning is evident from the fact that the Mathnawi itself opens with the description of longing.

Selfhood seems to be one of the major forms of hindrances on the way to union with God. In the story of “The Paladin of Qazwin” (Rumi 1989, v.2981), Rumi highlights the importance of getting rid of selfhood in the process of achieving union through saying that, the person who becomes free from the pride of selfhood is grown to such a level before the eyes of his creator that he deserves to be worshiped by the sky, sun, and the moon. Similarly the story of “The Sufi and The Empty Wallet”(Rumi 1989, v.3014) also represents the egoistic desires of a Sufi which create hurdles on his way to union and it is important for the Sufi to make himself free from it.

The love for worldly pleasures is also a great hindrance on the way to ultimate spiritual union of the Sufi with God. Rumi through the story of “The King And The Handmaiden” (Rumi 1989, v.36) tries to represent the significance of human indifference to the pleasures of this world in the journey to union. The contribution of the Sufi teacher (Shaykh) becomes more important in this direction when he has to prepare a wayfarer for a long and difficult journey. The Physician, in this story is perhaps the saint who cures the spiritual ailments of his disciples.

Rumi can be unquestionably acknowledged as one of the best poets of his times who applied narrative technique in their poetry and promoted it. After Attar’s narrative poetry, it was
perhaps Rumi’s poetry which promoted narrative technique in poetry to a popularly accepted level in the community of poets. In this way narrative technique became perhaps the criteria to judge the popularity and greatness of poetry. There are six books of Rumi’s *Mathnawi* and if one goes through the *Mathnawi* it can be observed that there are a number of stories in every book.

There are two types of stories in Rumi’s *Mathnawi*. The longer stories discuss some of the major doctrines of Sufism including the stages of mystical path to union with God. The shorter stories however discuss either the states of Sufism or provide further discussion and interpretation of the themes discussed in longer stories. Sometimes a major story is divided into several short stories. Jawid Ahmad Mojaddedi rightly observes:

If one were to consider the dozen or so major stories of this kind in each book to be Rumi’s main building-blocks, then, by analyzing their functions one may be able to decipher the rationale behind Rumi’s division of the poem into books, and the order of the major stories in each one.

(Rumi 2007, xi)

To make categories of different books of the *Mathnawi* on the basis of their content is highly difficult for the student of literature. The subject matter discussed through stories is too diverse and does not help to make the categories of different books of the *Mathnawi*. Although the books of the *Mathnawi* do not provide necessary guidelines to make an order of different stories in accordance with the subject matter yet it is possible to give an order to different stories according to the stages of Sufi path.

The stories which represent various stages of mystical path can be considered as Rumi’s spiritual representatives. For example, the story about unexpected meeting of the caliph Omar
(R.A) and the Byzantine emissary can be regarded as the beginning of a Sufi’s journey through meeting with the Sufi master (Rumi 1989, vv.1399-1556). It can be related to the story about caliph Ali (R.A) which shows the climax on a Sufi’s journey (Rumi 1989, vv. 3735-4004). It reflects the fact that the stories in the *Mathnawi* can be partially categorized.

The stories in book one and two are mostly related to the progress of the Sufi on the path and the achievement of ultimate destination, however there are some stories in other books of the *Mathnawi* which also reflect the conditions of the Sufis on the way to union with God. The story that shows the achievement of Hazrat Ali, the son-in-law and the follower of Muhammadan path of Sufism who could go across all hindrances of Sufi path. When the enemy who is about to be killed by Hazrat Ali, he spits in his face and Hazrat Ali throws his sword away and leaves him. (Rumi 1989, vv.3735-4004). It shows that his actions are not determined by himself but God.

Rumi perhaps composed his poetry in narrative form only to discuss various themes of Sufism. To discuss a variety of themes seems to be a great hurdle for Rumi to compose stories more acceptable to his critics than the story he has composed apparently lacking appropriate form and style. To Rumi the content seems to be more important than style. It was perhaps the main reason that he could focus only on the subject matter and not on the style and structure of his stories. Jawid Ahmad Mojaddedi observes:

Rumi has been able to produce a work that is far richer in content than any other example of the mystical *masnavi* genre. That this has been achieved often at the expense of preserving continuity in the narratives seems to corroborate Rumi’s opinion on the relative importance of the content of
his poetry over its form, as reported in his discourses.

(Rumi 2004, xxiii)

The words of Mojaddedi show that there is a need to study Rumi’s narrative poetry to understand the concept instead of structure of the stories. If we study carefully the text of the Mathnawi Book I, the concept of union with God and the mystical path to achieve it is discussed through various stories. For example, the story of the parrot fleeing its cage (Rumi 1989, vv.1557-1922) represents one step on the Sufi path to union. Similarly, the story of The Lion and The Beasts of Chase (Rumi 1989, vv.904-1398) truly depicts the evil self which creates hindrances for the Sufi on the way to union.

The stations of Sufi path are also represented through different stories, for example, the story about the lion, the wolf, and the fox (Rumi 1989, vv. 3026-3136) represents the highest stage of Sufi path, self-annihilation in God. As the basic objective of Rumi’s narrative poetry seems to be nothing but to provide necessary guidelines for his disciples and followers. The other books of Rumi’s Mathnawi also present some examples of mystical union through stories. For example, The Ecstasy of Bayazid (Rumi 1989, v.2102) gives description of the impact of mystical union. He repeated the words of Hallaj, “Lo, I am God”. He presented the same justification as Hallaj did that God is speaking through his tongue.

The structure of Rumi’s stories is usually challenged on the basis of an assumption that Rumi has not followed the strict principle of order while composing his stories. However Rumi seems to be primarily concerned to convey the teachings of his Sufi order to his disciples and he could do it perhaps more successfully than other Sufi poets of his time. In this way the irregularity in the flow of stories needs to be avoided and the content of poetry deserve to be given preference over the structure.
2. Symbolistic Illustration

The weaker human being, who successfully discovers the real truth through achieving the ultimate union with God, is almost unable to describe the condition of a lover at the time of complete annihilation. It convinces the mystics to make use of symbolism to describe the theme of union which is hardly describable through ordinary form of language and Rumi is also not an exception. He also used the similar technique popular in his times. He used variety of symbols to describe and interpret the concept of mystical union.

Rumi derives his symbols from the mineral, plant, animal and human realms. The Muslims believe that Adam was created from clay or earth and God breathed His soul in to him. Rumi claims that if the earth is mined it offers precious stones and similarly the inner world offers rubies if properly mined. He says: “Adam (humankind) was made from clay, But how he resemble clay?”(Rumi 1989, v.393) and that “a stone transformed in to a flawless ruby, becomes filled with the qualities of the sun” (Rumi 1989, v.2025).

From the plant realm Rumi selects ‘Rose’, the symbol of love that provides necessary motivation to travel on the path to attain union with God. Rumi says:

That which God said to the rose,
And caused it to laugh in full-blown beauty,
He said to my heart,
And made it a hundred times more beautiful. (Baldock, 143)

From the animal world Rumi selects ass or donkey which represents nafs al-ammara (our lower self) which creates hindrances through promoting sensual desires for the Sufi who tries to proceed on the way to realization of union. Rumi reflects the call of our higher self which taunts us for obeying the commands of lower self:
O self-centred creature, don’t you know that the dominant quality determines the nature of a thing? God intended you to behave like a horse and not an ass, for a horse responds to the command “come”. Mustafa was put in charge of the stable yard for your animal nature. Out of compassion, God said to him, “come ye” so that I may train you, for I am the trainer. (Baldock, 145)

The lower self represented by ass is in contrast with the camel, the superior self and vehicle for the journey on the spiritual path. Rumi has also used She-camel to represent the body instead of soul. In the story about Majnun and his she-camel (Rumi 1989, vv.1534-59), Majnun is the loving soul which want to join Lyla (the Beloved), but the body (she-camel) goes in the opposite direction. After a long journey in opposite direction Majnun realizes that the destination of Majnun is different from She-camel and they have to leave each other to reach their beloveds.

Rumi also uses birds as symbols including the crow (Rumi 1989, vv.1309-12) (represents death), the owl (Rumi 1989, vv.3746-7) represents darkness and spiritual death, the duck (Rumi 1989, vv.3766-72) represents greed a great hindrance on the Sufi path, the parrot (Rumi 1989, vv.1547-1845) stands for the soul that wants freedom from desires, and the nightingale (Rumi 1989, v.2037) represents re-union with the beloved.

Rumi has also selected symbols from human society. For example, ‘Man’ (Rumi 1989, vv.3342-5) is a term that represents men or women who could attain the higher place on the Sufi path to union. Similarly the term ‘woman’ has been used by Rumi to represent the Self of God as Rumi says: “Woman is a ray of God, she is not a mere mistress, she is the Creator’s self. One might even say, she is not created.”(Baldock, 162)
3. Allusive Illustration

Rumi tries to interpret the theme of mystical union through relating it to the achievements of well-known historical personalities; people discussed in the Holy Quran and the major characters of popular legends of his time. One can notice a variety of references in the *Mathnawi* of Jalal-ud-din Rumi which help the reader to understand the Sufi path leading to union with God, the absolute power leading and guiding the man. Some of the references in the Mathnawi are Abraham (Hazrat Ibrahim), Moses (Hazrat Musa), Jesus (Hazrat Isa), and Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him), Layla and Majnun, and Mansur al-Hallaj etc.

It is however important to note that Rumi selects his characters from well-known figures and gives them meaning according to the principles of Sufism or the stages on the Sufi path to union. He does not discuss them according to their biographical or historical position. The real story behind the characters and their original identity is not known to the reader. The figures of Quranic narratives or historical personalities are presented in such a form that they represent one or the other form of self (*nafs*) which make a stage on the path to union, the ultimate goal of Sufism. Rumi describes such characters and says:

> If you wish to pass beyond mere names and letters, purge yourself of self at one stroke, purify yourself of all attributes of self, so that you may see your own pure un tarnished essence, and perceive in your heart the knowledge of the prophets, without book, without teacher, without master. (Baldock, 107)

Rumi’s reference to great figures or prophets seems to be an allusion to the process of purifying one’s self. The development of self from the commanding self to regretful, inspired, contented,
pleased, pleasing and the perfected self. The well-known figures discussed by Rumi are the persons who achieved the highest level in the development of self (nafs). In this way; their names can be used to represent the process of purification and achievement of highest goal of a Sufi’s life.

The description of the ‘fire’in the Mathnawi is perhaps an allusion to the fire prepared by the people of Nimrod for Abraham (Hazrat Ibrahim). Abraham was thrown in to it as a punishment for destroying the idols being worshipped by Nimrod’s people. However, the meaning of the fire as discussed in the Mathnawi seems to be different from the general meaning of the term in the Holy Quran. Rumi says:

The ‘fire’ is the fire of carnality, within which lie the root of sin and error. External fire may be quenched with water; the fire of carnality draws you towards hell. What is the remedy for carnality’s fire? The light of religion: it will extinguish the fire of the unbelievers. What kills this fire? The light of God. Make the light of Abraham your master so that your body, which can be likened to wood, may be delivered from the fire of your Nimrod-like self.

(Baldock, 111)

The ‘fire’ discussed by Rumi is attached to Nimrod, who according to Rumi, represents the carnal self which is generally regarded as a great hindrance for the Sufi on the way to ultimate destination or union with God. The description of fire perhaps shows the war between Abraham (the higher or light-bearing self) and Nimrod (the lower or ego-centred self). Such a war between
higher and lower self seems to be referred to by Rumi in the *Mathnawi* through suggesting the names of Moses and Pharaoh, Jesus and his donkey, and Muhammad and Abu Jahl.

The emphasis on the names of Khidr (*Khiẓr*) and Moses in Rumi’s poetry also seems to be an allusion to ‘the relationship between the Sufi master and his disciple’ as discussed in the Holy Quran (Quran 18:79-83). Khidr is representing the Sufi Master and Moses, the traveler on the Sufi path. Rumi gives description of the shaykh who mortifies the fleshly soul of his disciple and says:

> When you have been accepted by the pir,
> Obey, and surrender yourself to him;
> Be like Moses, submit to the guidance of khidr,
> Whatever your khidr may do, be patient.
> Don’t make him say, ‘Go, this is our parting.’ (Baldock, 132)

The reference to the story of Moses (*Hazrat Musa*) and Khidr shows the commitment and obedience to the master (guide) on the Sufi path as a primary requirement to be able to travel and achieve union with God. It gives a lesson to be patient over the instructions of the Sufi master even if they are apparently unfavourable to the mind of a disciple. In this way, it emphasizes the importance of discipline on the Sufi path.

Sometimes Rumi chooses the names of legendary figures with reference to their cause of popularity in society. Rumi’s selection of Majnun and Layla, as a lover and the beloved is perhaps the allusion to the Night Journey (*miraj*) of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as discussed in the Holy Quran (Quran, 17 :). The name Layla seems to be derived from the night (*lail*). It represents the state of union of a Sufi with God as a Beloved. Rumi says:
I am a lover; I am always in close touch with blows. But my being is full of Layla: this shell is filled with the qualities of that Pearl. The (man of) reason whose heart is enlightened knows that between Layla and me there is no difference. (Rumi 1989, vv.2016-17)

Rumi illustrated his own view of the concept of mystical union through applying different poetic devices, but the use of narration, symbolism, and allusions could be some of the most effective and helpful devices to interpret and elaborate the whole body of mysticism, and the process of attaining highest level of spiritual elevation through crossing different developmental stages of self (nafs), from lower self to higher self and attain the union with God, the ultimate objective of Islamic mysticism.
CHAPTER FOUR
WILLIAM BLAKE ON MYSTICAL UNION

William Blake can also be regarded as a great mystical poet of English language whose name is included in the community of poets who used poetry as a tool to promote and disseminate their mystical philosophy. Like Jalal-ud-din Rumi, a Persian mystical poet of thirteenth century, Blake also seems to be interested in developing the concept of Mystical Union, the ultimate objective for any mystic to achieve in life. The quest for Mystical union is perhaps an ideal condition which may inspire a poet to produce poetry through direct inspiration from God without any mental efforts.

Like other poets of Christian tradition including St.Teresa and Boehme, Blake introduced mystical union as a power to inspire and facilitate the mystic to compose a unique type of poetry. It was perhaps the inspiration of mystical union that convinced William Blake to express his condition and degree of motivation at the time of writing one of his prophetic books ‘Milton’. He says:

I have written this poem from immediate dictation, twelve or sometimes twenty or thirty lines at a time, without pre-meditation and even against my will. The time it has taken in writing was thus rendered non-existent, and an immense poem exists which seems to be the labour of a long life, all produced without labour or study. (Spurgeon, 120)

Blake’s description of motivating power behind the composition of one of his prophetic books sufficiently provides information about the state of enlightenment usually called the unitive life. At this stage the poets like Blake create the work of its own kind which needs enlightened minds.
to read and interpret it. The poetry composed in such a condition is neither designed for ordinary people nor can they understand and interpret it.

William Blake’s concept of union seems to be based on an assumption that man was separated from God at the time of birth so that he may be able to live in this world with his own individual identity. Instinct is perhaps one of the essential features of human life which help to maintain individuality. According to Max Plowman, if one denies instinct, individuality or individual consciousness will also be denied, which was separated from the consciousness of God at the time of birth and the purpose of this separation is described by William Blake as:

\[
\text{to bring Albion again}
\]

\[
\text{With Luvah in to light eternal in his eternal day. (Plowman, 146)}
\]

Blake’s words represent the primary objective of human separation from God. It was perhaps to let the man struggle to achieve the place from which he was dissociated. In this way one can assume that this struggle in a specific direction was determined by God. Although individuality seems to be a great power to restrict human efforts to achieve the universal consciousness yet the spiritual cravings make their way and eventually lead to such a status when the man becomes God-like figure.

The concept of mystical union as discussed by William Blake seems to be the truth perceived by him and the seeker of union is the seeker of ultimate truth. The union in this way becomes the need of a mystic. Max Plowman observes: “Everything in the world is relative, and truth most relative of all, since it can never be known except by the union of subject and object. It is a matter of spiritual sensation or imagination, and never of fact.” (110)

Blake primarily believes in great similarity between the man and God. As an ideal creation of God man can represent God in a God-like manner. In order to represent God in true
sense of the term there is a need to go beyond the limits of physical world which create hinderances on his way to achieve the most favourable position for him:

God is Infinite Man; Man confined to the senses is Finite

God. Man becomes as God when he apprehends as God apprehends. He confines himself to the limitations of mortality when he lives by reason and not by imagination, thus neglecting to use his God-given means to apprehension of the Infinite. (Plowman, 62)

Blake gives much importance to imagination which seems to be the central element of his poetry. However to Blake the meaning of the term “imagination” seems to be different from the meaning given to this term by other poets and critics of romantic era. C. M. Bowra believes that, for Blake, “imagination is nothing less than God as he operates in the human soul. It follows that any act of creation performed by the imagination is divine and that in the imagination man’s spiritual nature is fully and finally realized” (89)

1. What Is Mystical Union

To define Mystical union has always been a challenging job for the scholars and interpreters of mysticism. Researchers in mysticism tried to analyze mystical union in different ways through using different words to define the essence of this experience. Some people call it unitive life; self-annihilation and some others call it deification. Evelyn Underhill (1912) explains mystical union through saying that:

It is the peculiarity of the Unitive Life that it is often lived, in its highest and most perfect forms, in the world; and exhibits its works before the eyes of men. As the law of our
bodies is "earth to earth" so, strangely enough, is the law of our souls. Man, having at last come to full consciousness of reality, completes the circle of being; and returns to fertilize those levels of existence from which he sprang. (495)

Evelyn Underhill’s description opens two ways for the students of mysticism to interpret it. First, from the words of mystics who tell about union according to their position and status in the field of mysticism. Second, from the overall condition of mystics and the impact of union on their psychological condition and behaviour. The symbolic language used by mystics and the contrastive analysis by themselves sometimes makes it more difficult to interpret it.

The interpretation of mystical union as suggested by Evelyn Underhill (496-7) reflects the subjective nature of this experience. For the mystic it is either deification, (the utter transmutation of the self in God) or the Spiritual Marriage of his soul with God. On the psychological level it shows complete affiliation and interest in God, great sense of freedom, and realization of spiritual power.

Mystical union according to William Blake seems to be a spiritual condition of mankind which represents the concept of being in Jesus Christ or the realization of the Christ in one’s own life. Christ becomes a permanent part of life, a leader or shepherd who works as a guiding star to one’s own inner world. He provides food for spiritual hunger and pacifies the mystic over the pain he suffers from on the way to union. He says:

We call Jesus the Christ; and he in us, and we in him,

Live in perfect harmony in Eden the land of life,

Giving, receiving, and forgiving each other’s trespasses,

He is the Good shepherd; he is the Lord and master,
He is the Shepherd of Albion, he is all in all. (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 42)

The realization of Jesus Christ in one’s own life seems to be a great blessing for the mystic. It is such an achievement which becomes possible after making effort in this direction for a long time. To achieve the union with Jesus Christ may lead to achieve the power of Christ and the mystic at this level begins to claim himself as God’s incarnation. It represents a man’s universal nature free from all racial and regional discrimination, a soul that knows no bounds.

Blake as a true Christian believes in Christ as a part of God and the spiritual union with Jesus Christ as the ultimate realization of union with God. Even after attainment of mystical union physical condition does not change as the Jesus was living in this physical world without belonging to it. Blake says:

The Divine Vision still was seen,

Still was the Human Form Divine,

Weeping in weak & mortal clay,

Jesus, still the Form was thine. (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 30)

Although physically the mystic does not show any difference from other human beings but his internal world is totally changed. The mystic does not exist spiritually after losing his individuality through becoming the part of universal self. The union cannot be attained unless the mystic’s total submission of his own identity is ensured. In this way it can be aptly concluded that “the Mystical Union is an absorption in to the divine substance, in which the individual is lost.” (Damon, 58)

Blake also seems to believe in the essence of mystical union with God as similar to that of an act of uniting two friends. The friend is supposed to behave in a friendly manner through ignoring the evil activities of the friend in past. Once a mystic attains the union, his position is
utterly changed from the worshiper to the friend. He begins to develop his status to the level of being worthy of God’s love. Blake says:

I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and friend;
Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me:
Lo! we are One; forgiving all Evil; Not seeking recompense;
Ye are my members O ye sleepers of Beulah, land of shades.

(Maclagan and Russell 1904, 1)

Another form or parable of mystical union is the realization of Jesus Christ (God) in imagination as a leader or shepherd who talks to his sheep (human being) like a friend and tries to do everything possible to help the man. Jesus appears in human form so that the man can recognize the saviour and builder of Jerusalem, the place of human enlightenment and union. Blake says:

Then Jesus appeared standing by Albion, as the Good Shepherd.
By the lost Sheep that he hath found, & Albion knew that it was the Lord, the Universal Humanity, & Albion saw his form, a Man, & they conversed as Man with Man, in Ages of Eternity. And the Divine Appearance was the likeness & similitude of Los.

(Maclagan and Russell 1904, 117)

Blake as a representative of Christian Mysticism uses Biblical images to interpret his own poetic themes. Los represents ‘imagination’ and is connected to the image of Jesus Christ. Through the character of Los, Blake tries to discuss his own experience of the vision of Jesus Christ, for whom Blake uses the word ‘Lamb of God.’ Blake’s union and conversation with Christ reflects the intimacy of Blake with his Creator in particular and that of a Christian mystic in general.
Blake claims that Mystical Union is similar in spirit to the process of reuniting a person to his origin or the body from which he was dissociated due to disintegration of the body. And after getting tired he is offered an opportunity to reunite. And that the person who is reunited can realize alone the pleasing condition of union. When the tired part of a body regains the lost position, there may be peace and pleasure. Blake says:

\[
\text{ALL Human Forms identified, even Tree, Metal, Earth \& Stone, all Human Forms identified, living, going forth, \& returning wearied. Into the Planetary lives of Years, Months, Days \& Hours, reposing and then awaking into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality. And I heard the Name of their Emanations: they are named Jerusalem.}
\]

(Maclagan and Russell 1904, 120)

Jerusalem is called by Blake as the emanation which means “to flow from" or "to pour forth or out of”. It is the way of deriving things from their origin. For the mystics the origin or first reality is perfect God. Man is the product of degradation. In this way, the man as an emanating being becomes less perfect, less pure, and less divine. The process of Emanation seems to be different and to some extent opposite in spirit to creation. In the process of creation, the creator maintains His separate individuality and does not show Himself as a part of His own creation.

In Christian Mysticism, the most prominent form of mystical union is perhaps the form usually called the ‘self-annihilation’ or detachment from self. It is a human condition which reflects the loss of awareness of being an individual. It can be achieved through meditation or other mystical means or practices. Blake claims that he experienced self-annihilation through strengthening faith in Jesus Christ and following His path:
All that can be annihilated must be annihilated
That the Children of Jerusalem may be saved from slavery.
There is a Negation, & there is a Contrary:
The Negation must be destroyed to redeem the Contraries.
The Negation is the Spectre: the Reasoning Power in Man:
This is a false Body: an Incrustation over my Immortal Spirit; a Selfhood which must be put off & annihilated always.

(Maclagan and Russell 1907, 44)

Self-annihilation is perhaps necessary to experience mystical union. Through detaching from ‘self’ one can achieve freedom from the slavery of individuality and experience the ultimate union with God. Although God and human being are contrary to each other yet through removing reasoning power of mankind it can be possible for both contraries to be in agreement with each other and united.

2. Significance of Mystical Union

As mystical union seems to be the primary need for mystical life, the mystic is always found engaged in attaining it. The need for the attainment of union reflects the level of its significance in mysticism. It is perhaps the quest for union which gets the mystic realized that he has been a part of divine body which he left through following his own blind self. If he attains union with the divine body he would be able to regain his lost position and status:

And O thou Lamb of God, whom I
Slew in my dark self-righteous pride,
Art thou return'd to Albion's Land?
And is Jerusalem thy Bride?

And O thou Lamb of God, whom I
Slew in my dark self-righteous pride,
Come to my arms & never more

Depart; but dwell for ever here:

Create my Spirit to thy Love:

Subdue my Spectre to thy Fear. (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 30)

The mystic can be able to live a life as in paradise. The words of William Blake represent the need for attaining the love of Jesus Christ at one side and fear at the same time to control his uncontrollable self. The quest for reuniting with Christ also represents the natural tendency of mankind to search and find the God, the creator and lover of His own creature. The attainment of union is also important for the mystic to know his Saviour to such an extent that he may be able to call Him like friend instead of a beggar.

The value of mystical union in mysticism can be measured from the need for its attainment. Its attainment perhaps leads the mystic to recover his status before the Lord and saviour of the world and gives a glimpse of hope to those who lost their identity through the process of dissociation from their real centre of power, the Christ. Blake believes in the restoration of divine power in human being through mystically reuniting to the Absolute. He believes in total death of man if remained separated permanently and professes that:

If thou dost lay thine hand upon me, behold I am silent;

If thou withhold thine hand, I perish like a fallen leaf,

O I am nothing: and to nothing must return again;

If thou withdraw thy breath, behold I am oblivion.

(Maclagan and Russell 1904, 33)

From the words of William Blake one can opine that the mystic’s life cannot be judged in isolation from the centre of his love and interest. His pleasure seems to lie in the achievement of
the real goal of his life, the experience of union with God. The love and search for anything cannot be carried on if there is no real objective to be achieved behind it. The mystic’s real objective may be different according to his current status in the field of mysticism however; the realization to regain the lost status can be treated as one of the points on which all mystics can agree.

Another important aspect of mystical union is the projection of man’s importance as a representative of God. One who is not similar to God can not represent God. Mystical union can promote the sense of realization that man is a divine body and thus truly represents the Absolute authority in the universe. It is perhaps the experience of union which can make the man distinctive from other living creatures. This is perhaps the characteristic of human being which helps him to be the vicegerent of God. Blake aptly represents the words of God: “I elected Albion for my glory; I gave to him the Nation of the whole Earth. He was the Angel of my Presence; and all the sons of God were Albion’s Sons; and Jerusalem was my joy” (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 31).

It can be stated that every true Christian perhaps believes in searching for Jesus Christ who according to Christian theology sacrificed his life for the sake of human redemption and is regarded as the saviour of mankind. It is therefore a natural human tendency to have a strong desire to see the saviour, the most loved one. Mysticism provides an opportunity to see the saviour of mankind through direct experience of contact to Jesus Christ through attainment of mystical union. Blake expresses strong desire for such a view of Christ:

And Los prayed and said, O Divine Saviour arise
Upon the Mountains of Albion as in ancient time. Behold!
The Cities of Albion seek thy face. (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 34)
Los, representing ‘imagination’ and connecting himself to the image of the Christ seems to be Blake’s own alter-ego. Through the character of Los Blake perhaps tries to represent objectively the opinion of a Christian mystic looking forward to have a view of Jesus Christ, who is commonly regarded by the Christians as the saviour of mankind. Blake’s words highlight the significance of attaining mystical union as the only way to have a glimpse of the saviour.

As the attainment of union is regarded as the last stage on mystical path, there is also a great possibility for the mystic, striving in the pursuit of union to acquire knowledge and have awareness about all other stages of mystical path without making any efforts to study those stages. The journey to the particular destination can be helpful in understanding various steps and hindrances on the way to reach the predetermined end. Blake believes in mystical path as a way to touch upon everything on the way:

I give you the end of a golden string,

Only wind it into a ball:

It will lead you in at Heaven's gate,

Built in Jerusalem's wall. (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 92)

Blake has described four categories of vision. At first there is one-fold vision. It only represents the man being closed within himself without using energy from the infinite or God. In two-fold vision Albion is unable to see God’s plan, and in three-fold vision the God’s intervention is seen, and in four-fold vision man’s awakening and being united with God is reflected. The golden string in this way seems to represent the process of man’s fall and reawakening spiritually to be able to attain union.

It is perhaps the Mystic’s desire or in some cases the realization of necessity to attain the union with God that provides him an opportunity to be aware of the need to become a true
Christian through self-sacrifice, a major doctrine of Christianity. In other words the intensity of one’s desire for union makes him a more careful and true Christian. Blake perhaps believes in human desire for union as a great motivation to sacrifice one’s self as his Milton says:

I will go down to self-annihilation and eternal death

Lest the Last Judgment come and find me unannihilate,

And I be seiz'd and giv'n into the hands of my own Selfhood. (Spurgeon, 126)

Blake seems to believe in having strong desire for mystical union as a necessary part of Christianity. And that its attainment can possibly have an impact on the religion based on the life, teachings, and example of Jesus Christ. Blake’s concept of self-annihilation as represented through his poetry is perhaps more similar to that of Sufism but he feels the fright of failure. He expresses his sense of dissatisfaction and uncertainty over the possibility of attaining self-annihilation in this life till the Day of Judgment (In Jewish, Christian, and Islamic belief, God will deliver His final judgment on humankind at the end of the world).

Mysticism in general and the attainment of mystical union in particular, provides necessary opportunity for a Christian to justify and promote the doctrine of man’s sinfulness by birth, a commonly accepted doctrine of Christianity. He needs to transform his sinful self by passing it through the process of purgation. Blake claims that the process of attaining union can help to change the self most appropriately, “man is born a Spectre or Satan, & is altogether an Evil, & requires a New Selfhood continually, & must continually be changed into his direct Contrary.” (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 58)

Life in the physical world for a true Christian seems to be similar to a prison, and no prison can ever be a permanent place to live in. Mystical union provides necessary opportunity to get rid of such a Self-made prison in the physical world. The man seems to be interested in
exerting all of his energies in physical world and does not see any way out of this quagmire. The way of attaining mystical union is perhaps the only way to get rid of non-Christian and unspiritual way of life. Blake says:

Into two stationary orbs, concentrating all things.

The ever-varying spiral ascents to the heavens of heavens

Were bended downward, and the nostrils' golden gates shut,

Turn'd outward, barr'd, and petrify'd against the infinite. (Spurgeon, 123)

Blake criticizes the self-made life by comparing it to a prison at one side but provides on the other hand a way out of it. The people who have deadened their ability to see and recognize their God are suggested to reestablish their connection to the Absolute. To achieve this objective there can be hardly a way better than mysticism, its practices and especially the last stage of mystical path, the union with the Absolute.

Blake seems to believe in mystical union as a part of his search in life. His imagination is perhaps nothing but the realization of unitive life with the infinite. He craves for attaining no other objective but the union, the most important among all objectives of his life. Berger rightly observes: “the spirit's aspiration towards something infinitely remote and unrealizable is at the bottom of Blake's soul, as it is with all mystics. He regards this aspiration as an indisputable fact” (77).

Mystical union is perhaps an ideal situation for every Christian mystic with respect to the provision of liberty. It can provide spiritual as well as physical liberty to every seeker of unitive life. William Blake also believes in maintaining liberty of mind and body to develop the mystic’s imaginative power which can be helpful in the process of developing connection with eternal
world, a world in which our transitory bodies will be changed into eternal bodies enjoying all types of liberty. Blake says:

I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination: Imagination, the real & eternal World of which this Vegetable Universe is but a faint shadow, & in which we shall live in our Eternal or Imaginative Bodies, when these Vegetable Mortal Bodies are no more.

(Maclagan and Russell 1904, 92)

Blake’s emphasis on mysticism as a mainspring to attain liberty and giving more importance to liberty than any other thing represents the notion that he believes in giving priority to eternal world of imagination over vegetable or inactive physical world. The words uttered by Blake also give an impression that transitory life with mortal bodies are perhaps of little importance in his ideology of life. On the other hand after attaining spiritual union with God, Blake can live with imaginative or celestial body in the superior world called by Blake, the world of imagination.

Mystical union can be regarded as the last stage on the mystical path of Christianity. William Blake like a true Christian mystic highlights the need for union to complete the whole process of mystical experience. To Blake, Jerusalem is perhaps not only the lost soul of mankind but also the spiritual state of mankind developed through the process of union. It can be regarded as a place where the mystic can realize that Jesus Christ was present in him and that he did nothing but traced Him within himself through imagination. Blake says:

And Enitharmon named the Female Jerusalem the holy,

Wondering she saw the Lamb of God within Jerusalem Veil
The divine Vision seen within the inmost deep recess

Of fair Jerusalem’s bosom in a gently beaming fire. (Quinney, 120)

The lines occur in Blake’s well-known poem “The Four Zoas”. In Night the Eighth, one can observe the contest between Urizen (reason) on one hand, and Los (imagination), and Enitharmon (inspiration) on the other. Urizen introduces crucifixion while Los and Enitharmon jointly promote transcendental awakening and successfully recognize their ‘Jerusalem’ (a figure for human spirituality) and its significance in their life. It promotes the notion that the need for attaining mystical union cannot be overlooked in the life of a Christian mystic like William Blake.

The mystic’s firm belief in his success to attain the union seems to be more important than any other spiritual practice. To travel on the way to union needs higher degree of commitment and seriousness on the part of a mystic. Blake also believes in having strong belief in the Absolute reality. If one lacks the required level of belief he can hardly travel to attain the union, as Blake says:

He who Doubts from what he sees
Will never believe, do what you please;
If the Sun and Moon should Doubt,
They’d immediately Go Out. (Berger, 87)

Blake’s ideology of mysticism and attaining union through its practices seem to be based on staunch belief in God (as suggested by Christianity) and the trustworthiness of mystical path. Blake perhaps believes in the power of faith more than anything else. To Blake faith and mystical union seem to be inter-dependent. If the faith is stronger, mystical union would be
easier to attain, and the attainment of union can also ultimately make the faith stronger. There is no room for losing faith at any stage.

If one loses his belief in God at the highest stage even slightly, he will be the loser. This fact can help to realize the importance of mystical union in developing one’s belief in God. As the mystical knowledge is based on experience through rigorous practice on mystical journey it may strengthen gradually the mystic’s belief in God. The mystic in this way can be considered as a man with stronger belief in God, which may represent the strength of his moral character.

3. Attainment of Mystical Union

Like different orders of Sufism, there are so many types of Christian mystics who related themselves to ‘one or the other type of mysticism. There could also be observed at least slight difference in the mystical paths followed by them. As far as English mystical poets are concerned they are categorized according to the subject-matter of their poetry, for example, mystical love (Shelley, Browning, and Keats), nature mysticism (Henry Vaughan, Wordsworth), philosophical mysticism (Donne), and devotional and religious mysticism (William Blake).

Blake as a poet of devotional and religious mysticism follows perhaps the path commonly popular among other religious mystics of English church. However, one can hardly trace any difference of opinion among the mystics on the question about the end to mystical path, i.e. attainment of union with God. There is a question, ‘to what extent William Blake believed and followed the traditional way of Christian mysticism to attain the union with God, or absolute reality? To answer this question we have to go through the Christian mystical way with reference to the poetry of William Blake.

Christian mystical way as suggested by well-known mystical scholar Evelyn Underhill is perhaps the most comprehensive account of mysticism. It provides a clear picture of Christian
mystical path. It includes the awakening of the self, the purification of the self, the illumination of the self (including voices and visions), the dark night of the soul, and the unitive life. (Underhill 1912, chap: II-X). The study of these stages of mystical journey with reference to the views of William Blake or the opinions of Blake’s critics may help to develop better understanding of a Christian mystic’s progress on the way to highest level of elevation.

1. The Awakening of the Self

The beginning of any journey is important for predicting the overall performance of the mystic on the way to ultimate union a common destination of all mystics. The journey begins with the awakening of the consciousness which seems to be a change which can hardly be understood by ordinary mind. It is perhaps a sense that transcends the boundaries of human wisdom. Evelyn Underhill (1912) believes that:

> It is a disturbance of the equilibrium of the self, which results in the shifting of the field of consciousness from lower to higher levels, with a consequent removal of the centre of interest from the subject to an object now brought into view: the necessary beginning of any process of transcendence. (213)

The words of Evelyn Underhill reflect the development of a special sense of realizing things from beyond the limits of human common sense. It shows a shift of interest from one’s own life to the object of his search in life. As it is a shift or conversion from lower self to higher self, it needs conceptual clarity. It needs to be kept in mind that it is different from religious change which refers to change of belief. On the other hand, in the awakening of the self, the soul at personal level deadens but on the impersonal level it awakens.
As far as Blake’s opinion about the awakening of the Self is concerned, one can realize the importance of the very first stage on mystical journey to experience the union. Blake’s poem, “The Four Zoas” provides necessary representation of his attitude towards spiritual awakening to see things beyond the limits of human observation. Los (imagination) encourages Enitharmon (Inspiration) to discover the vision of Jesus Christ within her own self:

Tremble not so my Enitharmon at the awful gates
Of thy poor broken Heart I see thee like a shadow withering,
As on the outside of Existence but look! Behold! Take comfort!

Turn inwardly thine Eyes and there behold the Lamb of God. (Quinney, 120)

Blake believes in imagination and inspiration as two companions on the way to union with the Absolute. In realizing the first stage of the journey one provides motivation and encouragement while the other works practically to change the centre of interest from personal to impersonal and subjective to objective. On the mystical journey the mystic (Blake) realizes the awakening of Self to see the world that transcends the barriers of human knowledge and wisdom. A new type of wisdom seems to be attained and the poet gradually proceeds on the way to ultimate destination.

At the level of human being, one can hardly claim sufficient power at hand to travel on mystical path. At the stage of initiation, the mystic has to encounter fright, dissatisfaction or disappointment. The mystic has to prepare whole-heartedly to resist the hindrances on the way. He has to open his heart to receive the knowledge and eyes to see the vision of God. Laura Quinney (121) observes:

To apprehend the vision, Enitharmon must first have her heart broken, or to use Blake’s full metaphor, the gates of
her heart must be broken open. Los has seen her at these
gates, despairing as an abject creature on the outside of
Existence, deprived of life and power. If she looks through
the opened gates, she will see the life and power within.

Laura Quinney’s analysis of human situation with reference to Blake’s poem “The Four Zoas” aptly provides guidelines for the reader of William Blake to understand and interpret the primary or first stage of mystical path. Through the character of Enitharmon, which represents human inspiration to struggle on the way to change one’s life through awakening one’s Self to see the truth that lies beyond the limits of human observation, Blake highlights his own experience of the awakening of the Self.

2. The Purification of the Self

The second stage on the way to union with God or the Absolute is the purification of the Self. It generally means the process of getting rid of all elements which are not in harmony with the purity and perfection of God. The process of purification may be hard and slow as it seems to be similar to hunting one’s self for the sake of God or the Absolute through removing all kinds of evil and imperfection from human life. The purification or purgation of the soul is perhaps the primary requirement for the mystic to proceed on the way to union.

The mystics of almost all religions and mystical backgrounds seem to be agreeing on treating the ‘purification of the Self’ as a prerequisite for attaining the union. Evelyn Underhill (1912) is one of them. She highlights two major aspects of purification as negative purification or self-stripping and positive purification or character-adjustment:

The Negative aspect, the stripping or purging away of those superfluous, unreal, and harmful things which dissipate the
precious energies of the self. This is the business of Poverty, or Detachment. The Positive aspect: a raising to their highest term, their purest state, of all that remains the permanent elements of character. This is brought about by Mortification: the gymnastic of the soul: a deliberate recourse to painful experiences and difficult tasks. (247)

As suggested by Evelyn Underhill, the process of purification of self is divided into two major parts. At first the state of detachment is shown as a primary stage on the way to get rid of harmful and unreal things. The second stage of the soul’s purification is suggested to be of higher level and greater importance. It is mortification, the use of self-imposed discipline, abstinence from pleasure, and self-inflicted pain in an attempt to control or put an end to human desires and passions.

As far as Blake’s opinion about the process of purification of the Self is concerned, he believes in it as an essential part of mystical path to attain the union with the Absolute and achieving the status of Divine man. Blake aptly says, “If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is: infinite” (Quinney, 22). The doors of perception need to be free from sins before an effort is made on the way to mystical journey. Aldous Huxley’s book *The Doors of Perception* also seems to be a partial interpretation of Blake’s words “the doors of perception were cleansed”. Huxley tries to highlight his experiences which range from the "purely aesthetic" to "sacramental vision" (15).

The process of purification can be stated as series of actions directed toward a particular but difficult aim. As it cleans the emotions and suppresses human desires usually believed to be the animal desires or in more appropriate words the sub-human emotions and craving for
physical pleasures. The process of developing the soul seems to be similar to that of breaking a body into pieces and then rejoining the pieces in to a new body different from original body. Blake also holds a similar opinion:

Though the purification process is a severe one, it is reconciling, and the soul that welcomes the rending which causes it to bleed, becomes again as a clear spring cleansed from the subhuman emotions—feet of the beasts—which had invaded it. Nevertheless the suffering entailed by the experience affects the emotional nature, altering it in its elements. (Hamblen, 210)

As suggested by William Blake, the mystic is supposed to experience or endure the pain to purify his soul through rending his own self in to pieces or constituent elements and the elements of one’s Self can go through purification process individually. The experience of pain can also decrease the intensity of emotions and desires which may pave the way for successful purification of the soul and ultimately helpful in achieving union with the Absolute.

3. The Illumination of the Self

The illumination of the self is perhaps a state of human consciousness which makes a mystic different from an ordinary man and represents his ability and awareness of or sensitivity to realize the Absolute. It seems to be the higher level of soul’s purification to the level of perfection and possessing certain features of mystical life including consciousness of the Absolute. Evelyn Underhill (1912) claims that the illumination of the self is a mystic’s ability:

To "see God in nature," to attain a radiant consciousness of the "otherness" of natural things, is the simplest and commonest form
of illumination. Most people, under the spell of emotion or of beauty, have known flashes of rudimentary vision of this kind where such a consciousness is permanent, as it is in many poets; there results that partial yet often overpowering apprehension of the Infinite Life immanent in all living things. (282)

Underhill’s analysis of illumination shows two major points. At first it connotes the consciousness of God in nature. The mystic can see God in natural things like other natural phenomena. Secondly, it is overpowering apprehension or the power or ability to grasp the importance and meaning of infinite life. And that the ability to realize the Absolute naturally exists in all living things including human beings. It reflects the importance of an unbreakable relation between the man and God.

William Blake’s opinion about the process of illumination seems to be mostly based on his own mystical tradition. He believes that his work is naturally destined. There is a sense of being chosen by God for bringing mystical illumination which may enable a mystic to experience the vision of the Absolute Reality. He believes in sparing no efforts to cross one of the major stages on the way to attain mystical union:

I rest not from my great task
To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes
Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought: into Eternity
Ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination.
O Saviour, pour upon me thy Spirit of meekness and love,
Annihilate the Selfhood in me: be thou all my life.

(Maclagan and Russell 1904, 2)
Blake’s primary objective in achieving the state of illumination seems to be the attainment of destination in the Bosom of God. For this purpose the mystic is supposed to open his spiritual eyes which may lead him on the path to surrender his own self gradually and reaching eventually to the stage where the difference of Creator and created disappears and the life of man becomes the part of Divine existence. But it needs commitment, seriousness to purpose and consistency to be maintained.

Another step forward in illumination is perhaps the overall spiritual condition of a mystic which enables him receive visions, listen voices, compose automatic script, and sometimes directly talking to the voice of God. Such a condition can only be possible if the mystic can show the higher degree of imaginative power. There is however a great possibility of giving importance to visions and voices and wrongly accepting them as revealed instruction, divine guidance or the messages directly sent by God. Evelyn Underhill (1912) interprets the visions and voices:

Those visions and voices which are the media, by which the seeing self truly approaches the Absolute; which are the formulæ under which ontological perceptions are expressed are found by that self to be sources of helpful energy, charity and courage. They infuse something new in the way of strength, knowledge, direction; and leave it physically, mentally, or spiritually better than they found it. (323)

Evelyn Underhill’s interpretation of the visions and voices as a medium or way to achieve mystical union seems to be a part of mystical life of English mystics of almost all the categories including William Blake a representative of religious and devotional mysticism. The vision can
represent the power achieved by the mystic, and the condition of his overall mystical development on the way to achieve the ultimate destination.

As far as William Blake’s visions are concerned, he seems to be a man of such a world absolutely different from physical world with material temptations. Like most of the mystics with the background of Christian mysticism, Blake remained perhaps happier than his contemporaries because of his experience of living among the company of the angels and God. His visions could be perhaps the only source of power which paved the way for his realization or experience of mystical union:

With a blue sky spread over with wings,
And a mild Sun that mounts & sings;
With trees & fields full of Fairy elves,
And little devils who fight for themselves,
With Angels planted in Hawthorn bowers
And God Himself in the passing hours. (Spurgeon, 119)

Blake’s experience of the vision of sky looking like a bird covering something with its wings and the voice of the Sun experienced by Blake in the form of a melodious song represents the image of a bird which flies at such a height where it can cover under its wings everything that exists in the world. Secondly, the Sun is perhaps an image of a singing bird which expresses its sense of pleasure over the success in achieving its goal.

The visions and voices also seem to be a great motivation for Blake as a poet to create or compose the work of art or poetry through which he can express his own spiritual condition or the degree of illumination. The visions are a source of power and representative of the current
status of a mystic on his mystical journey to union. In a letter to Hayley in 1804, William Blake expresses his opinion about the visions:

Dear Sir, excuse my enthusiasm or rather madness, for I am really drunk with intellectual vision whenever I take a pencil or graver into my hand." This is the "divine madness" of which Plato speaks, the "inebriation of Reality," the ecstasy which makes the poet "drunk with life.

(Spurgeon, 120)

The visions and voices reflect the poet’s level of illumination and his ability to experience the Absolute Reality directly. His eyes and ears seem to be familiar with visions of supernatural elements and voices of angels who represent the voice of God. It is perhaps a stage of higher consciousness where William Blake as a traveler on the mystical path realizes the possibility of attaining mystical union, a common destination of mystics from all religions.

4. The Dark Night of the Soul

The fourth and perhaps the most important stage of mystical path. It is a stage between illumination of the self and union of the self with the Absolute. This is perhaps the only stage which represents almost the similar experience for all the mystics. It can be called a painful state between the illumination and the union. It leads the mystic to realize that there is always a negative or dark aspect of every positive thing. Evelyn Underhill (1912) gives defining features of the dark night of the soul:

The Dark Night, then, is really a deeply human process, in which the self which thought itself so spiritual, so firmly established upon the super sensual plane, is forced to turn
back, to leave the Light, and pick up those qualities which
it had left behind. (463)

As far as Blake’s experience of the dark night of the soul is concerned, one can realize after
going through his poetry that he experienced it on the way to union with the Absolute. But some
critics believe that Blake could not maintain the effect of this experience for long time in his
life: “a true mystic Blake had come through the dark night of the soul but had failed to totally
forsake its mood. Caught up in the passion of his vision, he failed to make any impact in his
lifetime” (Blake 2004, 7).

In Blake’s Jerusalem (plate 76), one can study and realize the pain that an ordinary
Christian may go through after viewing the scene of Jesus Christ’s crucifixion. It can be assumed
that the crucifixion of the Christ has a symbolic importance of its own. The world was deprived
of its saviour and there could be seen nothing but a total darkness everywhere on the earth. It was
perhaps the representation of the dark night of the soul which Blake realized as a consequence of
the dullness of human senses:

More accurately, Blake sought to represent the Dark Night of the Soul. The man with outstretched arms below is
Albion (Britain), who sees in the crucified One the torture of his highest faculties. For Albion, Christ is the Eternal
Imagination, nailed by human circumstances to the Cross of the Natural World, in which every spiritual faculty tends
to be killed by the dullness of the senses. (Smith, 112)

The event of crucifixion symbolically represents the dullness of human senses and the loss of self-confidence. The loss of spiritual power seems to be giving birth to self-pity, a psycho-
religion is always perceived to be harmful for the development of human personality. Once the mystic loses his saviour, he begins to realize that the negative or the dark side of human character is stronger than the positive or bright aspect of human life. It usually results in developing a perception that ‘to be with the Christ is to be on a weaker side.

At the stage of disappointment, the mystic perhaps comes to know about his inability to travel any more on the path to union with the Absolute. The mystic’s human weakness or the lack of strength and determination gives however a positive message to other side of mystical journey. The mystic perhaps through inner-eye sees the saviour appearing before him and encouraging him to build reliance in the Divine power to support him on the way to achieve the ultimate goal of his life.

Blake’s Jerusalem provides necessary answers to most of the questions in the mind of a traveler on the mystical journey. As a Christian, Blake seems to believe in the permanence of Divine Existence and the permanence of Divine love for mankind. In this way one can hardly believe that Divine Power will not come forward to save the mystic from any disappointment. The mystic who may claim to be the traveler on Divine Path deserves to be saved and supported by Divine Power. Even in the dark night of the soul, Divine power facilitates the mystic to continue his mystical journey as Blake claims:

Thus spake Jerusalem, & thus the Divine Voice replied.

Mild Shade of Man, pitiest thou these Visions of terror & woe?
Give forth thy pity & love, fear not! Lo I am with thee always.
Only believe in me that I have power to raise from death
Thy Brother who sleepeth in Albion: fear not, trembling Shade.

(Maclagan and Russell 1904, 71)
The only power that encourages a mystic is perhaps the inspiration from the Divine. It encourages him to continue even with the increased number of hurdles. It can be claimed as a higher stage of mystical path where the effect of troubles and hurdles can hardly restrict the mystic from proceeding to union, the highest stage of the mystical life. At this stage nothing but God’s blessing can be only source of inspiration and motivating power to overcome the pain, disappointment, and lack of courage. Then the mystic can be expected to recollect all energies to proceed on mystical path to union.

5. The Unitive Life

There is always an end to every journey. It renders great pleasure and satisfaction to a traveler who suffered from pain and faced hurdles on the path. How one can evaluate the condition of a traveler who successfully traveled to God, the ultimate source of power and inspiration in this life. Mystical union or the unitive life is perhaps such a destination to be achieved by a mystic even if the whole life of the mystic is spent in struggling on this path.

The mystic after passing through the dark night of the soul enters into Union with the Absolute. The last stage on the mystical path seems to be the dream of almost every mystic but the attainment of this stage is perhaps the most difficult process of human life. To be one with the Absolute is perhaps such a condition which looks almost ineffable. As it refers to direct experience of God, mystical union cannot be called an ordinary achievement. Blake claims that mystical union is the outcome of higher degree of commitment and regular efforts:

I rest not from my great task!
To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes
Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought: into Eternity
Ever expanding in the Bosom of God, the Human Imagination.
O Saviour pour upon me thy Spirit of meekness & love:
Annihilate the Selfhood in me, be thou all my life.

(Maclagan and Russell 1904, 2)

The mystical path leading to mystical union seems to be a way full of difficulties and hindrances. However, once the mystic is committed to achieve the goal all hindrances disappear gradually. Blake’s point of view about opening immortal eyes resembles the opinion of almost all the mystics of his own category (religious and devotional mystics). Blake calls ‘the Bosom of God’ as the last stage of human search for Divine power and interprets it as human imagination.

4. Impact of Mystical Union on Mystic’s Life
Mystical union seems to have greater impact on the life of a mystic than any other religious or social activities. It changes perhaps every aspect of his life including his role in physical world, his mental and educational development, and his status and position in spiritual world. The attainment of mystical union can also be reflected through the mystic’s overall behaviour to people and society. It is however important to note that the attitude of society towards the mystics is not usually normal. The people begin to expect him to lead a life different from other people. In this way he becomes a man of one world who lives in another one.

1. Condition in Physical World
The mystics are usually regarded as the men with indifferent attitude towards their own society. They can hardly care for their physical appearance as they are mostly found engaged in spiritual world. William Blake believes in achieving divine attributes through mystical union. He expects the mystic to behave like Jesus Christ in physical world who destroyed His physical life for the sin of mankind. According to Christian belief His physical death was necessary to give spiritual life to mankind. Blake says:
He wither'd up the Human Form,
By laws of sacrifice for sin,
Till it became a Mortal Worm;
But O! Translucent all within. (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 29)

If the mystic leads the life as expected and suggested by William Blake, he will have nothing to do in physical world with a society based on material needs. In this way one can assume that the overall impact of mystical union on human society may not be so pleasant but it may give the mystic great pleasure and satisfaction. Such a pleasure can be regarded as true and permanent.

It is perhaps the impact of mystical union that the mystic shows indifference to other people in society. Such indifference seems to be based on his condition in which he realizes the importance of the friendship of God. The friendship achieved through union is to be maintained otherwise a permanent threat to man’s spiritual life would continue to exist. Blake says:

Till the existence of friendship & benevolence is denied:
The wine of the Spirit & the vineyards of the Holy-One
Here turn into poisonous stupor & deadly intoxication,
That they may be condemn'd by Law & the Lamb of God be slain.

(Maclagan and Russell 1904, 49)

Blake uses the terms which have symbolic importance. The wine and the vineyards represent the sweetness of love between God and human being. Once the love and friendship is diminished the sweetness caused by love can be transformed into bitterness. The process of gradual decrease of friendship can be resulted in the total loss of spiritual life as the poet symbolically calls it the killing of the Lamb of God (Lamb of God or Jesus Christ stands for spiritual life). The mystic becomes indifferent the physical world perhaps to save his spiritual life.
2. Educational Condition

The mystic’s spiritual training on the journey to attain the union can also educate his mind to deal with the problems of this world more successfully. The training on mystical path promotes his ability to change himself quite in accordance with the changing conditions of human life. It is perhaps the impact of mystical union one can observe the mystic’s ability to accept the difficult challenges becomes more reliable. William Blake also seems to believe in the mystic’s improvement through mystical path. He claims that, “Man is born a Spectre or Satan, & is altogether an Evil, & requires a New Selfhood continually, & must continually be changed into his direct Contrary” (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 58).

Blake’s perception of training through mystical exercises seems to be strange but the poet supports the idea through professing the importance of spiritual education. He gives priority to mystical education over the non-mystical education with an assumption that it can able the learner to learn through divine sources of knowledge about human life in different periods of human existence:

I see the Past, Present & Future, existing all at once
Before me; O Divine Spirit sustain me on thy wings!
That I may awake Albion from his long & cold repose.

(Maclagan and Russell 1904, 14)

The education provided through the process of attaining mystical union is perhaps the education of mind, body and soul simultaneously. The quality of knowledge always depends upon the status and position of the educator. If Blake’s opinion about the impact of mystical union on human knowledge is accepted as an appropriate assumption, the knowledge through mysticism would become a dream of every Christian. And every Christian would feel proud to be a mystic.
The education through mysticism can be regarded as a special type of knowledge and unique form of training. Although the formal education through physical means also contributes to liberate the man from ignorance, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, but there is limitation of human knowledge. Education through mystical union enables the man to go beyond human limitations. His learning encompasses everything including divine knowledge. Blake says,“ I know of no other Christianity and of no other Gospel than the liberty both of body & mind to exercise the Divine Arts of Imagination” (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 92).

Mystical experience may educate a mystic totally in a different manner. The mystic who is supposed to have learnt directly the knowledge of man and his life from the source regarded as completely divine. He usually seems to believe that his knowledge is not the outcome of his own efforts but a total blessing of God usually showered over the people selected by Him. Blake aptly concludes:

O how can I with my gross tongue that cleaveth to the dust.  
Tell of the Four-fold Man in starry numbers fitly order'd,  
Or how can I with my cold hand of clay! But thou, O Lord,  
Do with me as thou wilt! for I am nothing, and vanity  
If thou choose to elect a worm, it shall remove the mountains.  

(Maclagan and Russell 1907, 15)

Blake’s doctrine of education through mystical practices seems to have great similarity with the spiritual education of Sufis through Sufism or Islamic Mysticism. As the Sufis can claim that their education is based on their divine selection and that their personal abilities are of no use them. Similarly Blake’s claim to be nothing and looking for divine knowledge which can make him a great and powerful person. Although the example of a worm to remove the mountains
through divine education seems to be symbolic yet it reflects the importance given by Blake to educational aspect of mystical union.

3. Spiritual Condition

The mystic’s life through the process of attaining mystical union can be regarded as a life absolutely changed in all respects. But its impact on his spiritual condition seems to be comparatively more powerful than its influence on other aspects of his life. It appears to be a new form of spiritual life represented through the word ‘imagination’ by William Blake. The mystic’s life appears to be covered by the love and blessing of God and he does not feel any need to care for the problems of physical world:

And Los thus spoke: O noble Sons, be patient yet a little:

I have embrac'd the falling Death, he is become one with me:

O Sons, we live not by wrath, by mercy alone we live.

(Maclagan and Russell 1907, 20)

Los who represents imagination in Blake’s poetry calls his followers (the followers or believers of imagination) to show patience for some time. The physical death as represented through Jesus Christ’s crucifixion has provided them an opportunity to live a life totally different from their previous life, the life in which one can directly experience the love and mercy of God. It is perhaps due to the impact of mystical union that the mystic seems to live in paradise keeping himself indifferent to the problems and troubles of material world.

The mystic after attaining union with God perhaps begins thinking and evaluating things from a different point of view. He appears to be focused on internal or spiritual aspects of things ignoring their external or physical condition. The mystic seems to differ in most cases from other people. His opinion about various matters becomes angelic. There appears the difference of
education between the mystical education of a mystic and non-mystical education of a layman (a person with no knowledge of mysticism). Blake does not hesitate in giving his own opinion:

We are led to Believe a Lie
When we see, not Through the Eye,
Which was Born in a Night to perish in a Night,
When the Soul Slept in Beams of Light. (Berger, 79)

Blake’s opinion represents a common point of view of every mystic who can hardly recognize the ability of a layman to see things in their true perspective. He seems to believe in attaining perfect wisdom (Eye) only through putting one’s soul to divine light. In other words, to Blake, the attainment of perfect wisdom and mystical union appear to be indispensable to each other. In case of one’s inability to have the mystical wisdom (Eye), there is perhaps a great possibility for a layman to believe in what is nothing but only a false belief.

It is perhaps nothing but the impact of unitive life that the mystic can be regarded as an enlightened person. His indifferent attitude towards physical world enables him to lead a life more successful and comfortable. The absence of desires for material prosperity can also help to get rid of anxieties based on one’s failure in physical world. It can also contribute to enhance the mystic’s ability to educate himself for spiritual life up to the level of perfection. The overall impact of mystical experience can be seen through the mystic’s attitude to material world, his level of wisdom through mystical education, and miraculous ability to experience divine elements.

5. Illustration of Mystical Union

Like any other mystical poet William Blake made use of some poetic techniques or devices to make the concept or poetic theme more conceivable, and easily believable. The function of these
devices in Blake’s poetry seems to be similar to that of pictures and diagrams to illustrate the meaning of a text. Blake has applied several techniques but the use of narrative, symbolism, and allusions helps to make his poetry different from other poets of his time. The application of these devices makes his poetry difficult at one hand but on the other hand their application seems to be highly desirable to interpret mystical themes of his poetry.

1. Narrative Illustration

William Blake used different poetic forms to elaborate the concept of mystical union, but the use of narrative technique to interpret the mystical theme seems to be interesting but his selection of characters from the Bible and human history creates ambiguity and the reader, while trying to understand the central idea or the main theme of story, feels himself in difficulty. There may be so many reasons behind Blake’s composition of stories without following any proper format. Andrew Lincoln rightly observes:

Although his narrative is in many respects highly idiosyncratic, it can be seen as an attempt to engage with the mainstream of contemporary thought, an unprecedented effort to grapple with the divergent traditions he had inherited, and to force them to illuminate each other. (14)

Although the structure of Blake’s narrative seems to be inappropriate yet the message he wanted to convey to his reader could perhaps be conveyed to possible extent. Blake’s reader who believes in his poetry to be prophetic and mystical would not expect him to compose the narrative in ordinary sense of the word. The narrative form of poetry has been a popular form of expression among the Persian poets with a background of Sufism or Islamic mysticism. Blake’s reader can be expected to study the poet’s theme without bothering for his poetic structure.
The concept of attaining mystical union can be based only on human realization and the intensity of desire for it. Blake through the story that seems to be based on the Book of Lamentations (a poetic book of the Hebrew Bible), tries to interpret the state of being separated from one’s origin. Andrew Lincoln believes that Blake through this story reflects the destruction of Jerusalem and highlights its symbolic importance in the mystic’s life that is dissociated from his real home. He concludes that:

Such laments illustrate the importance of emotions of defeat in the Old Testament, in which the present is repeatedly seen as a condition of spiritual exile from which a dependent (and often self-pitying and reproachable) humanity must look back, as Ahania does, to a lost communion with a divine master. (21)

Blake relates his mystical quest for union to stories from the old and New Testament perhaps with an assumption that there is a great similarity between the concept of those biblical stories and William Blake’s own mystical interpretation of human life. Blake’s selection of stories from the text of the Bible shows his strong affiliation with Bible and Christian mysticism. Even the stories which he derived from the history of English church or British history, he selected only those stories or characters which have some direct or indirect connection with the Bible.

The story related to Milton, a well-known poet and religious figure in British history also represents Blake’s awakening of the Self, the first stage on the way to attain the union with God. Through this story Blake highlights the mystical interpretation of Christianity’s doctrine of redemption. The mystic’s awakening of the Self can be regarded as the turning point that can lead to ultimate destination. Milton, who is described as a man living in Eternity for long time suddenly realizes the fact as Laura Quinney says:
He is awakened to self-knowledge by a cautionary tale that he hears in Eternity. A character called the Bard, who is in fact an aspect of his own critical intelligence, sings an allegorical epic in which prophetic power feebly betrays itself to worldly interests. The ego, or Selfhood, pursuing those interests is now called “Satan”. (128)

Blake in his vision can see the changing spiritual condition of Milton in the world of eternity. After his self is awakened to proceed further on the way to experience the highest stage of mystical development he seems to realize the sense of the absence of redemption, a primary objective of every Christian. The story seems to reflect Blake’s own spiritual awakening after having a vision of a poet who gives him a lesson of enlightenment and encourages him to proceed on mystical path.

The story of Jesus Christ’s crucifixion has also been presented by Blake perhaps to represent the concept of Mystical union. Blake’s doctrine of unitive life seems to be based on the notion of divine human form. The physical body of human being can be seen through ordinary human eyes but to see the divine aspect or experience the union, there is need of visionary eyes. Anne Kostelanetz Mellor rightly observes: “Blake describes the tremendous difficulty one encounters, even after one has achieved the vision of innocence and seen the potential infinite in man, in actually becoming the human form divine and living the life of Christ on earth” (218).

It is perhaps the ego or human self which is usually regarded as a great hindrance for the mystic to achieve his goal even at the higher stage of journey. Although the story of Christ’s crucifixion provides an opportunity for every Christian to change the status of his life through seeking physical death and spiritual life yet the process of following the way of Christ does not
seem to be free from difficulties. The mystic’s quest for redemption through union paves the way for his realization of ultimate experience.

2. Symbolistic Illustration

Blake’s poetry and symbolism seem to be indispensable to each other. Although his poetry is mostly based on mystical themes yet his quest for truth is perhaps one of the reasons behind his excessive use of symbolism. He selected such themes for his poetry which are mostly related to Christian mysticism and based on the text of the Bible. Mystical ideas can be regarded as ineffable and needs symbols to represent them. Blake’s use of symbolism has been helpful in interpreting even the ineffable themes. Samuel Foster Damon (xxvii) observes:

Blake wanted the truth—the whole truth including all errors,
life including death, the soul including the body, the world
of mind including the world of matter, the profound
discoveries of the mystics reconciled with the scoffings of
the skeptics, heaven and hell married and working together,
and in the ultimate heart, Man eternally in the arms of God.

Although Blake’s symbolism covers different themes of his poetry which he derived perhaps from various sections of society in which he lived, and developed his own philosophical foundations. His selection of symbols seems to be rich to such a level that even the ideas usually regarded as controversial in English society could be discussed in an appropriate manner. It is however more important to note that he needed the use of symbolism for mystical themes particularly mystical union, more than any other theme.

Blake’s use of symbolism seems to be the only desirable technique to explain the concepts related to either mystical union or the stages on the way to attain it. For example Blake
declares that it is his duty to open the man’s immortal eyes: “to open the immortal eyes of Man inwards, in to the Worlds of Thought” (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 2). It leads the reader to interpret the statement according to his own knowledge of Blake’s poetry and mysticism. A reader with sufficient awareness about the Christian mysticism and Blake’s position in it will perhaps interpret it as ‘his desire to help the reader to attain the highest stage in mysticism or mystical union.

Another example of symbolism also seems to be related to the purification of soul, the second stage on the Christian mystical way. At the end of Night IV, of Blake’s poem “The Four Zoas” there is a statement: “Christ’s crucifix shall be made an Excuse for Executing Criminals” (Damon, xxvi). The reader, who has not studied Blake’s poetry and philosophy thoroughly, may interpret the statement according its lexical meaning which can convey a message to the mind of a reader perhaps contrary to the actual message Blake wants to convey.

On the other hand a reader with sufficient knowledge of Blake’s philosophy will perhaps interpret the statement through its spiritual aspect. The slaves of Self are perceived to be criminals and their self needs to be executed following the way of Jesus Christ’s crucifixion. It can help them to purify their Self, and proceed to further stages of mystical path including illumination, dark night of the soul and finally the union, perhaps the most desired stage among the circles of mystics.

Sometimes Blake creates hindrances for his reader through using such words or statements which do not convey apparently any appropriate meaning. It results sometimes in confusion because of the reader’s inability to interpret the statements composed by Blake. For example there are some lines in Jerusalem: “I give you the end of a golden string, only wind it
into a ball: It will lead you in at Heaven's gate, Built in Jerusalem's wall” (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 92). For the lay man the statement seems to have no significant meaning.

It can give the meaning suitable only to the mind of reader well trained in the field of mysticism. It appropriately states that the poet as a leader provides necessary guidelines for the mystics. These are the principles to be firmly followed by the travelers of spiritual journey. If they do not leave the path even after suffering from pain and troubles, they would be able to attain the union, the real objective of their life as a Christian mystic.

The word ‘Jerusalem’ as a symbol has also been used by Blake in many different contexts. It makes the reader perhaps to some extent helpless in defining the term in true sense of the word. Even the informal definition or description of the word becomes absolutely difficult. For example Blake says:

England! awake! awake! awake!
Jerusalem thy Sister calls!
Why wilt thou sleep the sleep of death,
And close her from thy ancient walls? (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 94)

While reading the lines, the reader with ordinary awareness of poetry and only superficial knowledge of Blake’s philosophy and mysticism, can hardly understand the true meaning of these line. The lay man can perhaps translate the lines with a claim that there is a call for the people of England to help the people of Israel. There is a great religious similarity between both nations and that if England continues to ignore Israel (is in death Sleep), Israel will lose its power.

But the student of Blake’s poetry can possibly interpret it according to his knowledge of Blake’s mysticism. He can give it the meaning that seems to be more relevant to Blake’s
mystical interpretation of life. He can claim that the lines that England is representing humanity and that Jerusalem is the lost soul of humanity which needs to be restored to its highest position in union with God, perhaps the only true place of human soul in accordance with Christian mysticism.

3. Allusive Illustration

Blake’s poetry can also be regarded as the poetry replete with indirect references to the Bible and other historical figures. Blake tries to interpret his mystical themes including unitive life, and these references can be traced through finding out the link between Blake’s concepts, and the characters in poetry, and eminent historical personalities and biblical stories. There are some characters in Blake’s prophetic books which seem to be taken from the works of other well-known writers or the biblical texts.

Albion, the central figure of Blake’s last prophetic works including Jerusalem, where ‘Jerusalem’ is described as the emanation or Albion, whose union with the Christ is stated by Blake as the very objective of mystical life. The word seems to be derived from the work of Holinshed, a well-known writer of British history. He was also one of the renowned figures of European mythology. Damon observes:

Eventually Blake learned that “Albion” was the name of the aboriginal giant who conquered the island and renamed it for himself. Neither Geoffrey of Monmouth nor Milton mentions him, but Holinshed does (Chronicles, 1577), confusing the classical Albion (a son of Neptune who was killed by Hercules) with the local giant, who was killed by Brut. (9)
Damon’s observation of Albion seems to provide sufficient information for the reader to claim that the word is an allusion. Although the historical reference seems to be contrary to mystical interpretation of Blake’s Albion, yet the objective that Blake wanted to achieve through using this word could perhaps be achieved. Through using this allusion Blake was perhaps interested in projecting ‘Albion’ as a representative of mankind, whose redemption through mystical union with God would be generally perceived as human redemption. It was perhaps one of the reasons behind giving the name ‘Albion’ to his ‘Fallen Man’ in The Four Zoas.

Beulah, is another term in Blake’s poetry which seems to be an allusion to John Bunyan’s “The Pilgrim’s Progress”. The plot and the stages of journey in Bunyan’s work seem to be a model for mystical adventures. In this work Bunyan declares the land of Beulah as the last stage before the pilgrims can reach their destination, the spiritual heaven in the form of union with Christ:

In Beulah the pilgrims may stay,
Till summon’d, at length, to the heavenly shore,
They pass through Death’s river, and happily soar
To mansions where sorrow and sin are no more,
But darkness is turned in to day. (174)

Bunyan’s land of Beulah has conceptual similarity with that of William Blake. Although Blake’s land of Beulah seems to be the inspiration for poetic creation in Milton, and The Four Zoas (two prophetic poems by William Blake), yet the power of poet’s imagination is perhaps the only way to experience the stages of mystical path including the ultimate stage usually described as unitive life, the paradise on earth for a true mystic.
The word ‘Canaan’ in Blake’s poem “Milton” also seems to be an allusion to the description of ‘Canaan’ in the text of the Bible: “And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came” (Genesis 12: 5). Such a land where the Friend of God is destined to go can hardly be an ordinary place; it must be spiritually the place of perfection.

The place may have some symbolic importance of its own. Damon opines that “Canaan was the land which the Lord promised his chosen. It symbolizes the ideal home or (more often) that state which the individual thinks is ideal” (67). Now we try to analyze the description of ‘Canaan’ by Blake. In his poem “Milton”, he gives it the status of perfect world of infinity. It is described as an ideal world, attractive to such an extent that man can lose everything for it including his infinite status. The poem describes:

An aged Woman raving along the streets (the Space is named Canaan);

Then she returned to Los weary, frightened as from dreams.

The nature of a Female Space is this: it shrinks the organs

Of Life till they become Finite & Itself seems Infinite (Johnson and Grant, 251)

Blake’s Canaan is a space or ideal place which seems to appeal excessively to different organs of human life and makes them insufficiently active for spiritual endeavours. Although it pacifies the intensity of human quest for any spiritual adventures but it still maintains its status of being infinite. In this way it can be treated as the world of Eternity, to be attained as the outcome of human struggle on mystical path. The word “Canaan” gives the meaning of a spiritually ideal place which seems to be similar to ideal situation for a Christian mystic (the unitive life).
The similarity between the concept of Canaan in the Bible and that of Blake provides necessary information about the word in Blake’s poem to be regarded as a biblical allusion. Blake’s technique of narrative, symbolistic, and allusive illustration could perhaps be more helpful in elaborating the concept of mystical union as suggested, promoted, and disseminated by William Blake as a true Christian mystical poet. And the picture developed in the mind of a reader through these devices can be more helpful in understanding the concept, usually claimed by the mystics to be ineffable.
CHAPTER FIVE
COMPARISON OF RUMI AND BLAKE ON MYSTICAL UNION

Zepetnek’s Model provides necessary guidelines to set the principles for comparative analysis of Jalal-ud-din Rumi and William Blake with reference to their point of view on the concept of mystical union which facilitates them to stand in the line of mystical poets. Keeping in view the principles of this model (Zepetnek, 13-18) for comparative study of literature, the opinions of both poets on various aspects of mystical union have been juxtaposed to find out all similarities. These aspects include nature of mystical union, its significance, the way to attain it, its impact on the life of a mystic, its narrative, symbolistic, and allusive illustration.

1. What is Mystical Union?

Rumi believes in mystical union as the oneness with God in the form of a humble servant. It is total submission to the will of God. The mystic has to surrender all pleasures and choices of his life to the choice and pleasure of God. The nearness to God does not mean that the mystic has become free from all bonds and religious commitments. Although he enjoys highest human status but his position as a human being can not be changed. There is perhaps a reason that God perceives his human form as an ideal to the Lord and Creator. He enjoys food from heaven (Nicholson 1994, 331).

On the other hand Blake believes in mystical union as the state of being one through realizing one’s soul to be in Jesus Christ or the state of spiritual enlightenment to realize Jesus Christ in one’s own life permanently. He lives in heaven under the supervision of God, where he is treated with great care and love of God like a shepherd who loves his flock. He also feeds him with more love than one’s own mother. Christ’s food for spiritual hunger is more pleasing to him than anything else in the whole world (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 42).
The true nature of mystical union according to Rumi is similar to meeting of two friends in a friendly manner. There is no discrimination on the basis of their status as a Creator and the Created. The mystic can experience the friendship of God as two friends can experience the friendship between two different bodies but one soul. The situation is reflected as two friends sitting side by side with each other. The friendship can be a point of appreciation to everyone and everything including the birds, the stars of heaven, and the moon etc (Nicholson 1914, 168).

William Blake professes mystical union to be the state of being a friend with the Absolute, or the ultimate reality. He is worthy of God’s friendship and unchanging love. The type of friendship between the mystic and the Lord of this universe is unique. Here the friendship is based on God’s desire for it, and the mystic is treated as a brother and friend instead of submissive human being. It is a situation of total happiness. There is neither a question from God about the man’s peccability nor an apologizing response from the man. There is nothing but expression of love and sense of friendship from both sides (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 1).

Rumi identifies another aspect of mystical union. It is according to Rumi, the state of human consciousness, which reflects the mystic’s enlightened spiritual condition, and total rejection and indifference to material world. Although he has a body from material world, yet he does not recognize the elements of his own physical existence. He professes to have transcended the limitations of the elements of physical life (water, fire, wind, and clay). In other words, it is the mystic’s state of mind, represented through his claim that, in spite of living in this world he is a man of other world (Nicholson 1994, 332).

Blake professes that mystical union also refers to realization of man’s divine status. Though he lives in physical world, and suffers from its problems and troubles, he cannot be regarded as a man of this world. As Jesus lived in human form in the physical world without
being a part of it, the mystic’s body from the mortal clay cannot deprive him of his divine status. According to Blake’s ideology, the trials and tribulations including crucifixion of Jesus Christ in the human form confirm the divine status of human body. The realization of this fact in the line of Jesus Christ is an ideal form of union (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 30).

Among the forms of mystical union Rumi considers “complete annihilation in God” as the most favourable and ideal situation in a mystic’s life. The mystic in such a situation loses his existing identity and accepts another identity with God. Rumi believes that the situation of annihilation in God is similar to that of grape-juice developed into wine after long process of fermentation. The new form of grape-juice can be claimed to be its new identity. The mystic’s new identity is completely different from his former identity (Schimmel 2001, 19).

Blake also believes in mystical union as a self-annihilation, or total detachment from his Self. It is a situation in which the mystic loses his individuality and becomes the part of another identity. Blake believes in self-annihilation as an ideal situation for the mystic. He feels himself free from the controlling power of his own Self. It is however important to note that the situation needs to be in accordance with the path of Jesus Christ. It is a situation in which the mystic is believed to have destroyed his own reasoning power, a great hindrance on the way to experience the union. Blake calls this situation the true form of redemption at the hands of Jesus Christ (Maclagan and Russell 1907, 44).

Another true form of mystical union is the identification of God. Rumi claims that union is only a spiritual condition in which the mystic can see and identify the God within himself. He begins to think that his search for God through different paths was of no use. It was an unnecessary endeavour to look anywhere for the One, who is nearest to the bosom of a mystic. The only thing required is the spiritual eye which can see the things beyond the limits of physical
world. The attainment of such an eye is one of the best examples of mystical union (Schimmel 2001, 148).

Blake’s doctrine of mystical union can also be evaluated from his claim about union as the Christ’s identification by the mystic. Such an experience of Jesus Christ can be possible only through developing and strengthening one’s imagination. Imagination according to Blake is the power of a mystic to see things in the heaven. The mystic can see the Christ in the form of a Shepherd, who leads His flock (the people) to the world of spiritual enlightenment and ultimate redemption. The attainment of such an eye to see the extraordinary things is Blake’s one of the best forms of mystical union (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 42).

Rumi also believes that physical death leads the mystic to such a condition that seems to be most similar to mystical union and must be regarded as a form of union. This is perhaps one of the reasons behind Rumi’s advice to his companions not to cry over his death. Physical death according to Rumi is a joyful meeting and he does not see any reason to weep over the situation in which the seeker of God enjoys direct contact and the nearness to God. Such a description of union is perhaps identical to Islamic concept of meeting with God in life after death (Schimmel 2001, 30).

Blake’s concept of union as an outcome of a Christian mystic’s physical death seems to be based on the Christian doctrine of Jesus Christ’s physical death through crucifixion and new life in spiritual world. In the spiritual world Christ lives in man and man in Christ. Blake believes that, it is only through Christ’s sacrifice, that man can become infinite. Physical death provides an opportunity to liberate the soul to unite with Jesus Christ, the human embodiment of divine. The state of being united through physical death is perhaps the central doctrine on which the whole system of Christian mysticism is based (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 120).
2. Significance of Mystical Union

It is perhaps the man’s natural tendency which convinces him to find and love his creator. It provides the mystic an opportunity to seek the knowledge of God through mystical practices. The mystic’s prayer shows the sign of hidden desire for direct contact with the Absolute. The love as a platform determines the way of mystic to union and thus the overall body of mysticism can be constituted. The importance of mystical union as a central theme may represent the significance of mysticism as an academic discipline.

Rumi and Blake show higher degree of enthusiasm in discussing and promoting the concept of mystical union. Although the time, language, culture, religion and mystical background are different but the poets give almost equal importance to the concept of union. There is hardly any considerable difference in the opinion of both poets when they are found interpreting the significance or need for union in mysticism. In spite of philosophical difference there are certain points which reflect the necessity of mystical union realized by both of the poets.

Rumi claims that the union is the objective of mystical practices. It helps to regain or recover the house of a mystic lost for some time because of one or the other reason. A man by nature cannot live away from his real abode. There is always a natural desire to attain it. The attainment of mystical union is of similar importance as one gives to the event of his lost home’s recovery. If the union is excluded from mysticism, it would become similar to a journey without any destination.

Rumi through comparing the mystic to reed (flute) which is expressing its dissatisfaction and pain over the condition of being separated from the reed-bed(home) emphasizes the need for getting back the lost home of man. It is the quest for one’s lost abode that motivates and helps
him to struggle through various mystical practices and tries to reach the ultimate stage. It is the intensity of desire that encourages the mystic to develop mysticism as a discipline (Barks, 17).

Blake also holds an opinion that shows his interest in giving importance to mystical union as a primary objective of mystical life. The quest for mystical union is such a power, which can let the mystic realize the loss of his divine home or greater position. His own self was responsible for that loss of spiritual abode. And that the attainment of mystical union can help to regain his lost status. Through mystical union he can expect that his soul can attain the love of Jesus Christ and his material body can be subdued by the fear of Christ (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 30).

Blake believes that desire for mystical union is necessary for various practices of mysticism. It is mystical union, which provides necessary realization that Jesus Christ can only be searched and found within one’s own self. Blake emphasizes the significance of unitive life in finding out the love of the Christ, the lost home of every Christian mystic. In this way the quest for mystical union becomes helpful in developing mysticism as a science of spiritual enlightenment.

Rumi claims mystical union to be the part of God’s blessing. The love and desire for union is naturally gifted to man. If one does not feel any desire for coming closer to God he is unblessed and ultimately a loser. The blessing of God as an element of mysticism adds to the body of mystical science. In this way, Rumi’s emphasis on mystical union can be justified through recognizing its importance in the life of a true mystic. And that it is the token of God’s recognition to man’s higher position in the realm of God (Nicholson 1994, 38).

Blake also gives much importance to God’s blessings as a part of mystical life. If the hand of Christ is laid upon the mystic his life is full of joy because of the power acquired from
the love of Jesus Christ. However, the mystic would not be able to sustain if he is deprived of Christ’s love. And he cannot enjoy the attention or affection of anyone else. The sense of being blessed by God is one the primary elements of Christian mysticism, and that the way to union is necessary for mysticism to exist as an academic subject or discipline (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 33).

Rumi claims that mystical union is the end to man’s search for his Creator, and after attaining the status of union he realizes that God was actually present in his heart. He also realizes that God’s presence in him gives him the right to be His representative. To believe in representing God is regarded as the highest status of a mystic and all mystical endeavours are focused to achieve it. It also represents the state of being free from all restrictions of one’s own Self (Nicholson 1994, 72).

Blake also believes in mystical life as a form of God’s representation. He gives a description of God’s will behind the man’s (spiritually enlightened man) position as God’s representative. According to Blake, God calls the man to be the angel of His presence. Man can attain this status only through union and thus through achieving divine he can have direct experience of God, an end in itself. As the mystic achieves one of the objectives of Christian mysticism, the science of mysticism is developed (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 31).

Rumi believes that the man’s desire for mystical union is a powerful instrument to teach him the science of traveling on mystical journey. Every element of his body becomes articulate and efficient in learning the way of crossing various stages of journey through purification. In this way, the mystic is sufficiently, and continuously educated for achieving spiritual objectives. The overall impact of union on the mystic’s life is so great that Rumi’s emphasis on it is logically justified (Nicholson 1994, 6).
Blake also holds an opinion which shows that he gives greater importance to the process of attaining union. The search for union may help to develop better understanding of various stages of mystical path. It educates the mystic to be able to develop his self to the most desired level. The impact of mystical education can be observed from the mystic’s ability to proceed on the way that leads to Heaven’s gate. It is one of the best conditions of mystical life which adds to the body of mysticism as a science (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 92).

Rumi claims that the wisdom earned through mystical process based on human desire for union with God needs to be continued. It can feed the heart with the power necessary for liberating it from restrictions and hindrances of human self. The inner eye developed through mystical practices can help the man to be indifferent to material world or at least paves the way for his flight beyond the limits of material world. The development of such an inner eye is one of the objectives of mysticism. And it can be developed through the path that leads to mystical union (Nicholson 1994, 6).

Blake believes in mystical union as an ideal situation for any Christian. The attainment of union empowers the soul with spiritual energy required for liberating the soul from the state of imprisonment. It can liberate the body and soul of a mystic to let him exercise the divine arts. The mystic can have a vision of the world of which the universe is but a faint shadow. To see the divine world, one needs to be free from the chains of self. It can be possible if one travels on mystical path to attain union with the Absolute. Such a state of mind is one of the most desirable objectives of Christian mysticism (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 92). Some mystical poets have been declared mystics of one type or the other but on the significance of unitive life all of them seem to have identical views.
3. Attainment of Mystical Union

The process of attaining mystical union seems to be a very difficult path inside the soul of mankind. Rumi follows the path of Islamic mysticism with seven stages. Rumi believes that to proceed on the way to ultimate destination the struggle against the carnal self (nafs al-ammara) is of great importance. The second form of self (Nafs al-Lawwama) or the regretful self also needs to be developed up to the required level to realize the evil influence of the carnal self. It provides necessary basis for The Inspired Self (Nafs al-Mulhama).

The Inspired Self is the awakening stage of human self. The mystic can listen to the voice of his own conscience. He feels himself in better position to get rid of physical desires. To overcome the difficulties created by self there is a need of strong inspiration and motivation to enable the mystic to change his priorities and to detach himself from the pleasures of physical world. It is such an objective which does not seem to be easily achievable. Rumi perhaps believes it to be a turning point in the life of a mystic (Baldock, 87).

As far as Blake’s opinion about the process of attaining union is concerned, one can claim that his journey begins with stage of awakening the soul. At this level the mystic’s self gradually shifts from lower to higher level. There is a need to change the direction of the mystic’s eye. He has to turn his eye inward and pursue the saviour of humanity. Here two major companions of the mystic (imagination and inspiration) perform their role. Through these elements the mystic gets necessary power to travel further on the way to union with the Absolute (Quinney, 120).

One of the major stages on Rumi’s mystical path to union is the Contented Self (Nafs al-Mutmainna) which refers to the mystic’s state of being detached from most of the worldly concerns and successfully develops the self that enjoys total peace. It becomes possible only
through regular efforts. The mystic at this stage can feel the presence of God more clearly than anybody else. The problems based on material needs of human life lose their importance and the mystic can live a happy life quite in accordance with the desires and blessings of God. In this way the will of God can control the power of one’s own will. Rumi believes in contented self to be the stronger position which ultimately paves the way for union (Singh, 254).

Blake’s purification of the self seems to be the process of getting rid of all those things which cannot be in harmony with God’s status of perfection. The evils of human character can create hindrances for the mystic who tries to proceed on the way to God. He can realize the need for purifying the self through rigorous process of self-mortification. Once the mystic’s doors of perception are cleansed, the vision of God would be clearer and the infinite character of mankind would be more visible to him. Blake believes in sub-human emotions as a great danger to one’s spiritual life and the pain to be endured to purify the self becomes an essential part of mystical path to attain the union with the Absolute (Quinney, 22).

Rumi’s stage of the pleased self (*Nafs al-Radiyya*) seems to be a step further on the mystical path. The mystic according to Rumi at this stage is devoted to no one but God. He may not be concerned about anything other than God. He expresses his willingness to accept everything from God without considering it to be favourable or unfavourable. He perceives every trouble or hardship to be the part of God’s will for him. The very objective of his life becomes nothing but the pleasure and blessing of God. His attitude is perhaps transformed in that of a faithful servant who needs his Master’s help in every matter of his life. On the level of mysticism, it can be called the most important stage before the mystic attains the ultimate goal.

The mystic’s spiritual condition as being satisfied with God’s will can be regarded as the initial stage of uniting with one’s Absolute Master. Rumi believes that the pleased self is a power
to control the mystic’s reaction against the problems and pleasures of the physical world. It makes him indifferent to the impact of profit or loss, happiness or sadness, and pain or delight. At this level the degree of accepting everything from God becomes highly positive. Whatever is endowed by God is accepted as sufficient and potentially best in all respects for the mystic. It can be called an ideal situation to proceed to unite with God (Nicholson 2000, 92).

Rumi’s next stage on mystical journey is called the pleasing self (Nafs al-Mardiyya). It is perhaps the most important stage which refers to the state of the mystic’s total submission to the will of God, and the state of God being merged with the mystic. The mystic can realize the nearness of God, and God’s love directly inspires and gives him power. Rumi believes that the sweetness of the spirit of God nourishes the soul of man in such a way as one can imagine the river with sweet water can fill the river-beds with the sweetness of its water. Such a higher degree of God’s love for man can spiritually illuminate him to such an extent that, he can leave everything for the sake of God (Rumi 1989, v.71-72).

William Blake on the other hand follows the typical path of Christian mysticism. The stage of the illumination of the self represents two main points. At one side it shows the mystic’s ability to see God in natural elements, and on the other hand, it can be regarded as his power to realize the permanent relation between man and God. Blake aptly claims that it is the spiritual condition which shows that the immortal eyes of man are opened in to internal world of eternity. The imagination becomes stronger enough to lead him in to the bosom of God. There may also be a realization of stronger need to be annihilated with God, and leave everything for the sake of Absolute Reality.

Blake’s stage of illumination seems to be based on typical Christian doctrine of man as an object of God’s love. It is perhaps the love of God which paves the way for a mystic to be the
seeker of God. As God wants to be seen by his selected persons the eyes of those persons are opened only by the blessing of God. In this way God enables the mystic to surrender his Self to his Creator and reach gradually to that stage where the difference between the Creator and Created becomes almost insignificant. The status of a man to be a lover and beloved can only be possible if there is involvement of divine and Absolute Power. God’s blessing can be the only source of illumination (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 2).

Blake also believes that the mystic’s level of illumination can be judged through evaluating his imaginative power. How does he receive visions and voices and how does he talk to the voice of God. He believes that the person with an ability to experience the visions and voices can be a person happier than other people. Blake at the higher stage of illumination can see the sky with wings, sun with music, fairies and angels, and God in material shape. It is perhaps the state of being illuminated which inspires the poet (William Blake) to compose mystical poetry with unique themes. The description of visions which inspire the poet can perhaps be understood only by the illuminated souls (Spurgeon, 119).

Rumi’s mystical journey comes to an end at the highest stage regarded by the Sufis as the perfected self (Nafs al-Kamila). It is the highest degree of surrendering one’s self to the will of God. In this way the soul of man can be regarded as a soul in total agreement and in the state of union with God. At this stage the mystic begins to believe that he is one with God. He and God are one and similar to each other, and that he has been seeking for nothing but his own Self. The state of being united with God can be compared to the juice of grapes which becomes wine, and loses its own identity. Rumi believes in mystical journey as a struggle to find one’s own self which seems to be similar to find one’s God (Schimmel 2001, 16).
Blake’s journey on the other hand comes to an end with the attainment of union with God. However, the mystic has to go through a stage called by Blake “the dark night of the soul.” It has some symbolic importance because of its relevance to Jesus Christ’s crucifixion. The death of the saviour (dark aspect of every positive thing) is perceived to be the painful situation and the mystic is supposed to turn back and unlearn the knowledge he learnt on the mystical path to union. However, the new life of man through Jesus Christ enables him to continue his journey to attain the ultimate union (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 2).

The attainment of union as the ultimate goal can be achieved after regular struggle on the prescribed path. Blake’s journey to union seems to be a journey inside the soul of his own. At the end of the journey Blake realizes that he has reached in to the bosom of God but actually he could reach in to his own self. To be united with God through annihilation of God’s soul in to his soul, every Christian mystic strives with full force of soul and commitment. In the unitive life, mystic enjoys the blessings and favours of God. The mystic’s immortal eyes are opened and the view of infinite bodies revives his energies which he lost on the mystical path.

**4. Impact of Mystical Union on Mystic’s Life**

Mystical union seems to bring about tremendous change in the life of a mystic. One can analyze the enormousness of its impact on the mystic’s life irrespective of his religious and cultural background. There is also a great possibility of similar impact of union on the mystics with different religious ideologies and mystical paths. In the study of mystical union with reference to the poetry of Jalal-ud-din Rumi and William Blake one can observe almost identical impact on the Muslim and Christian mystics. One can also be in a better position to find out conceptual affinities if the opinions of both poets are placed beside each other.
The opinion covers the impact of union on mystic’s condition in physical world, his educational development through the process of attaining union, after attainment of the union, and the improvement in the spiritual capacity to an advanced level of enlightenment. The mystic’s behaviour based on the developed spiritual condition can also be focused for understanding the overall progress made by the mystic in the specific direction, and expressed through his own words.

1. **Condition in the Physical World**

Rumi believes in the experience of mystical union to have stronger impact on the Sufi’s life in the material world. He becomes free from the anxieties of life based on material needs. He seems to be drowned in the love of God and the love of material prosperity becomes valueless. His physical appearance can hardly represent the internal situation of his soul. His weaker health gives an impression of poverty but the wealth at his disposal cannot be seen by the ordinary people because the mystic, after attaining such a higher position, does not remain an ordinary person (Nicholson 1994, 28).

The experience of nearness to God is perhaps an extraordinary experience and seems to be based on God’s love. The love of God is perhaps a form of treasure, richer than the wealth of the whole world. The Sufi who possesses such a spiritual wealth cannot be expected to look at the wealth and luxuries of material world. His kingdom is more beautiful than any other kingdom. The power of kings seems to be worthless before his dignity and self-respect. As the Sufi world can be regarded many times superior to this world his appearance would be suitable to his own world and it hardly makes any difference whether it suits well to other world or not.

William Blake on the other hand believes that a mystic is expected to behave like Jesus Christ who sacrificed His physical life to give spiritual life to mankind. After attaining the union
the life of the Christian Mystic needs to be physically destroyed but enlightened from within. After being one with the Christ his indifferent attitude to the activities of material world can be considered as essential part of his spiritual life. Although his position in material society becomes questionable but his experience of Christ’s love can hardly let him bother about material society. It can be perceived to be the life in heaven which can hardly allow the mystic to come out of it. In eternity he is the king of the whole world along with Christ (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 29).

Blake also believes in the friendship of Jesus Christ attained through mystical journey to union. He holds an opinion that this friendship needs to be maintained permanently. In this way the mystical life of a Christian mystic is supposed to be dependent upon the level of consistency maintained by the mystic. The sweetness of love and friendship with the Christ is perhaps more important than anything else to save the spiritual life from its disintegration (from the Lamb of God be slain). To achieve this objective it becomes almost essential to be indifferent to the pleasures of material world, and the mystic tries to do the same whole-heartedly.

2. Educational Condition

Mystical Union according to Rumi is a form of education different from formal type of learning in educational institutions. The education of Sufis can be perceived to be superior to that of a common man whose sources of knowledge are perhaps the books of revelations and the books composed and taught by human beings. The knowledge of the Sufi can be compared to the width of the sea. When the Sufi has to talk, he utters the words more valuable than the pearls. For doing that he needs no time to plan and make any preparation (Nicholson 1994, 28).

The knowledge of a mystic seems to be nothing but the awareness of the truth. The whole process of attaining the union provides necessary opportunity to train the mind of the mystic and
the union can be attained along with the higher degree of wisdom. Such wisdom can hardly be attained through ordinary sources of knowledge. As the wisdom is based on spiritual training there is not book or material source is involved. The education through such an extra-ordinary system can enable the mystic to see the events simultaneously in present and future.

Blake also believes in mystical union to be the mode of education. The education of a mystic seems to be different from the formal education on the basis of its spiritual nature. Formal education can improve only the person’s ability to live successfully in material world but the education of a mystic is supposed to change the evil self in to its contrary or purified and illuminated self. The education through the process of mystical union can thus be regarded as a source of changing a devil in to angel. Such knowledge cannot be equal to that of an ordinary man whose education is supposed to be helpful in dealing with matters of physical world.

The training of a mystic through mystical journey to union can make him more powerful to maintain higher level of wisdom. Blake believes in the wisdom of mystics to be their ability to see through vision the occurrences of the past, present, and the future. He can develop through mystical education an ability to awaken the man spiritually dead and dormant. It keeps him active and in physical as well as spiritual life. As he maintains his link to the Absolute Authority, the guidance from the spiritual world can be supposed to be the permanent part of his life (Maclagan and Russell 1904, 14).

The knowledge of a mystic can be perceived to be imparted by God without any involvement of physical sources of communication. The quality of knowledge can evaluated through examining the source it comes from. As the mystic learns from the source which is divine, his education can be based on God’s blessing, love and special favours. Blake claims that it is the love of God which makes a man able to learn and not the intellectual qualities of Man.
Even if the worms are selected for divine knowledge they can be of great importance and the rulers of this universe. One can conclude that the knowledge based on mystical experience is nothing but God’s blessing.

3. Spiritual Condition

Rumi professes the importance of mystical life excessively. It is perhaps nothing but the love of God which utterly changes the life of a mystic. The way of mystical experience can be regarded as a journey from not-being to being. The mystic after attaining the union realizes that the problems based on material needs are going to disappear gradually. The life under material compulsions can be considered as death and the mystic on the mystical journey gradually gets rid of these compulsions and eventually becomes free from all of them and attains a new life through uniting with God.

For the mystic it seems to be a new form of life achieved through constant progress on his way to the enlightenment. In unitive life he is treated with great love and care. The concept of human inferiority to divine bodies disappears and the mystic experiences the higher status with God. While engaged in spiritual world his anxieties of material life become almost insignificant and meaningless. To experience the presence of God in one’s life makes one happy and thankful to God all the time. Rumi’s man of God is perhaps the most enlightened and loved one (Nicholson 1994, 30).

The man’s need for religion is perhaps based on his desire for establishing an everlasting relation with his Creator, and the specific places of worship can be perceived to be the training centres of their respective religion. However, the mystic at the stage of union begins to believe that there is no need for sacred religious places to search and experience the nearness of God. The nearness of God can be experienced in the heart of a man in a better way than any place of
worship. The concept of sacredness becomes valueless to the person who attained the union. There is perhaps a stronger realization of God nearer to man than anything else.

The picture of spiritual enlightenment presented by Rumi seems to be excessively difficult and tremendously surprising to those who have no prior knowledge or experience of mysticism. The reflection of the mystic’s higher degree of enlightenment through his extraordinary utterances and overall behaviour lets other people believe that he is perhaps a man with powers of miraculous nature. However, it may also build and gradually increase the social distance between the mystic and the people living in his society in the material world.

On the other hand, such an impact on spiritual condition may also be a great source of knowledge for other mystics and to some extent helpful to them in their own respective spiritual endeavours. It can empower the mystic with self-reliance and strengthen his character sufficiently to let him be able to work to greater extent in the field of mysticism, and to serve the mankind as supposed to him by God. His service to man (the family of God) can be supposed to be based on his assumption that every service to human being is an obligation.

Blake claims that the experience of mystical union can utterly change the mystic’s spiritual condition. Once spiritual enlightenment is attained the mystic becomes perhaps indifferent to problems of life in material world. Blake’s experience of uniting with the Christ enables him to realize the love and mercy being showered to mankind by the Christ. The significance of shifting from death (not being) to life in Christ (being) can be realized from the mystic’s state of being free from all anxieties of material world as well as divine retribution. The love of Christ in this way becomes more significant to the mystic than anything else (Maclagan and Russell 1907, 20).
The attainment of union may also change the mystic’s perception of things. As the mystic attains a new form of life it seems to be necessary for him to observe everything from a different point of view. With the development of a new eye or insight to see things differently his soul seems to be covered by divine light. The wisdom achieved through such a form of blessing can be more reliable than ordinary human wisdom. The words uttered by the mystic can represent it but the meaning of such words can be hardly be conceivable to all other than mystics of his own level.

Blake also believes in giving preference to mystical experience over traditional religious experience and that, through the process of attaining mystical union, the mystic may realize seriously the importance of mystical life. He also realizes that the traditional religious practices gradually appear to be insignificant while the mystic makes progress on the way to achieve the highest goal of human life. The mystic’s ability to experience the elements of divine is perhaps the only thing which makes him different from priests serving in church and striving for the blessing of God though ordinary practices.

5. Illustration of Mystical Union

Rumi and Blake used different poetic devices to illustrate the concept of mystical union to provide the students of mysticism an opportunity to understand the meaning of a poetic theme based on spiritual experience, and usually regarded as ineffable and hard to be penetrated. It is however, more important to note that Rumi and Blake seem to be equally interested in applying similar techniques for the literary interpretation of their mystical experience. These commonly used literary techniques can be stated as narrative, symbolistic, and allusive.

The poets differ in culture, poetic tradition, and mystical background to each other. The use of identical techniques of composing philosophical ideas through poetry by both of them
shows natural tendency of mystical poets to use these devices. Through these devices mystical poets can safely discuss, and disseminate the concepts which cannot be interpreted through using simple language, and natural style. The use of narrative, symbolistic, and allusive techniques to illustrate the concept of mystical union can be juxtaposed as under:

1. Narrative Illustration

The use of narrative technique was perhaps an appropriate tool to illustrate the mystical themes of Rumi’s poetry. Through selecting different characters from the history and popular legends of his time, he professes that human nature cannot be changed with the passage of time, and that the status of man projected by mysticism is of universal nature. Through using the position of his characters to represent the concept of mystical union he acknowledged the significance of narration in promoting and disseminating the mystical themes.

Rumi hardly follows any acceptable stylistic pattern in his stories. The stories can thematically be divided into two categories. At one hand, there are some stories which directly reflect the concept of union with God, but at the other hand there are also some stories through which the poet has tried to discuss various stages of mystical path or the overall spiritual condition of the mystic on the way to union. The stories can however be regarded as a set of different examples to promote a theme more important than any other idea in mystical poetry (Nicholson 2000, 32-35).

William Blake also applied narration as a poetic technique to illustrate the meaning of mystical themes including the unitive life. The selection of characters from the Bible and human history shows that the poet realized the importance of following the biblical pattern of narration to discuss and promote mystical themes. Through this technique he could perhaps be able to
interpret the essence of mystical experience which can be perceived to be ineffable in ordinary sense of the word (Lincoln, 14).

The stories composed by Blake are without any proper format or stylistic pattern. It was perhaps based on the fact that Blake was focused on thematic aspect of poetry and that he never tried to be careful about the style or format of his stories. It is however more important to note that his narrative technique could perhaps be a better tool of poetic illustration to clarify the meaning of his extraordinarily uncommon theme. Blake’s narrative seems to be of specific type perhaps because of the specific need of his poetic theme or subject matter.

Rumi’s Mathnawi can be regarded as one of the best compositions of narrative art. The stories in the Mathnawi could perhaps be the best tool of Rumi’s expression of desire for attaining union with God. The stories could represent in a better way the need for union, its attainment, and its impact on the mystic’s life. Rumi’s art of narrative illustration may help the reader to understand the whole process of developing a thought. The Mathnawi opens with longing for union and then the poet begins to discuss the stages of the whole path through narrating stories.

Blake’s discussion of mystical union also begins with the description of human desire to regain the lost relation with God, and then through the character of Ahania he develops the whole story of human separation from the origin. The need for looking back to lost communion with the divine master provides necessary material for developing narration to illustrate it. Blake’s art of establishing relation between biblical narration and his own quest for attaining unitive life makes his narrative technique more convincing and goal-oriented.

Rumi’s narration helps to understand the path of attaining union through maintaining control over the Selfhood. The stories of “The Paladin of Qazwin,” and “The Sufi and The
Empty Wallet” represent the poet’s efforts to get rid of Selfhood. Once the egoistic desires disappear, the way to union becomes easier and the Sufi feels himself in a better position to achieve his goal. The stories seem to work as appropriate poetic tools to interpret the poet’s opinion about the significance of control over one’s self to achieve greater objectives.

It also seems to be nothing but the self of man that restricts the man’s spiritual progress. Rumi’s story of “The King and the Handmaiden” discusses the extent to what the man’s self needs to be controlled or kept in fetters. It is perhaps the power of self which develops one’s love for the pleasures of the material world. In this way the more one chains the self, the easier one feels the way to his destination. And the development of the self to the level of the Inspired Self (Nafs al-Mulhama) remains the only option with the Sufi or Islamic mystic.

Blake’s story about Milton also seems to represent the awakening of the Self, the primary stage on mystical journey. Blake describes the spiritual condition of Milton after awakening his soul or self in eternity through another story. The self which promotes one’s interest in material pleasures has been discussed as the evils or the attributes of Satan. Here nobody can see the new self of Milton other than Blake. The awakened self is perhaps the most powerful aspect of human life. Blake seems to believe that there is no possibility of developing one’s vision to see the world of eternity till the time the process of awakening one’s self is complete.

Similarly the story of Jesus Christ’s crucifixion also seems to represent the essential condition of physical death to facilitate the spiritual life in God. The man’s divine humanity needs to be promoted through sacrificing the material aspect of one’s life. The process of becoming the human form divine and represent the life of Christ in this world one’s self as a hindrance on mystical progress needs to be removed. The mystic’s desire to have redemption
through following the way of Jesus Christ seems to be a difficult objective to be achieved by the mystic.

The stories in Rumi’s poetry seem to have been designed for specific purpose. The concept of mystical union and various stages to attain it have been easily understandable to the student of Rumi’s poetry perhaps due to the use of narrative technique. Although the structure of Rumi’s stories does not meet the criteria to judge the modern short story, yet the poet seems to have achieved the objective behind the composition of these stories. The stories could illustrate the mystical theme usually regarded as ineffable and hard to penetrate for the student of poetry.

As far as Blake’s stories are concerned, one can hardly believe them to be the stories in ordinary sense of the word. Blake has followed no proper form of narration as one expects from a modern story writer. The poet’s objective in using the narrative technique is perhaps nothing but to interpret the mystical experience in such a way that may appeal to the mind of every reader or particularly the student of mystical poetry. It can be safely stated that Blake remained successful in promoting and disseminating his mystical themes including unitive life through using narration.

2. Symbolistic Illustration

The use of symbolism can be stated as a natural tendency with a mystical poet to interpret the concept that usually seems to be inexpressible through ordinary means of poetic expression. To discuss the concept of mystical union with sufficient elaboration Rumi applied the symbolistic technique of poetic illustration and Rumi could perhaps achieve the very objective of his poetry. One can observe that there is a great variety of symbols to represent Rumi’s greatest poetic theme.
Rumi’s symbols belong to earth, plants, animal world and that of mankind. According to Rumi, Adam who stands for human being was created from the clay (earth). There are so many precious stones hidden in the earth, and if they are properly searched one can find them. Similarly, the man can search and find the precious stones (highly valuable spiritual qualities in human body) from his own life. The earth and the rubies are two different things as human body and mystical knowledge including the union different from each other (Baldock, 143-45).

Rose as a symbol from plants world is perhaps more important than other types of symbols. It stands for love in Rumi’s poetry which provides human heart a stronger motivation and power to proceed on mystical path. The ass or donkey is a symbol from the animal world. It represents the man’s lower self, which may create hindrances for the mystic on the way to union. The she-camel (animal symbol) represents human body a great hurdle for Majnun (a human symbol for loving soul) on the way to man’s spiritual destination.

Rumi’s symbols from the world of birds are perhaps the best tools to represent almost all aspects of mystical experience. The crow (death), the owl (darkness and spiritual death), the duck (greed a great hindrance on the Sufi path), the parrot (the soul that wants freedom from desires), and the nightingale (represents re-union with the beloved). The symbols from human society also provide necessary facility to Rumi to convey his message to his readers.

William Blake’s poetry is also replete with various types of symbols. Blake’s symbols represent various aspects of mystical experience including spiritual death, the discoveries of mystics, the reconciliation of opposites and the man in the arms of God (mystical union). His symbols have helped him to discuss even the most controversial points of his philosophy but the concept of unitive life is almost inexpressible without proper system of symbols. It is to be noted
that Blake’s symbols are philosophical symbols based on experience and taken only from man’s world (Damon, xxvii).

Blake’s use of “Man’s immortal eyes” as a symbol represents the man’s ability to travel on the path to experience the state of mystical union. The symbol needs greater attention on Blake’s poetic philosophy. It is however helpful to discuss the process of attaining mystical knowledge and wisdom. Immortal eye provides the base for the development of spiritual building. Another symbol from man’s world is “Criminals”. It represents the people who are slaves of their lower self. Such people are perceived to be criminals and Blake’s wants them to be executed on the way of Christ’s crucifixion.

Crucifixion is another symbol from human life that stands for spiritual purification. Blake opines that it is an important and necessary part of the Christian mystic’s life. It can make him powerful enough to be able to cross the remaining stages on the path. Once the mystic is spiritually purified his travel to illumination, the higher stage becomes possible. Blake gives importance to base more than the whole building of mysticism. The building can be more durable if the base is stronger.

Blake’s term, ‘golden string,’ also seems to be a symbol. For the students and scholars of Blake’s philosophy, it represents the poet’s golden principles or guidelines for the mystics to follow to proceed successfully on the path of Christian mysticism. It helps the poet to present his message without inviting any bitter criticism from his critics, and facilitate his readers. The term ‘Jerusalem’ is also a spiritual symbol in Blake’s poetry. Blake uses it to discuss the Christian mystical concept of man’s departed soul. He needs to search and find it through mystical practices. To illustrate mystical experience for the readers of his prophetic works William Blake has derived symbols from the text of Bible and the works of contemporary writers.
3. Allusive Illustration

Rumi’s use of indirect references to well-known personalities, characters, and historical events in the Holy Qur’an, and some of the legendary works of his time has helped him to interpret the concept of mystical union in a better way. The popular references included in the Mathnavi are Abraham (Hazrat Ibrahim), Moses (Hazrat Musa), Jesus (Hazrat Isa), and Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be upon Him), Layla and Majnun, and Mansur al-Hallaj etc. Through allusive technique the poet could easily make conceptual connection between the concept he wants to discuss and the concept behind the event or character being referred to (Baldock, 107-11).

Blake’s poetry is also replete with indirect references to Biblical and historical personalities and characters. Most of the references in Blake’s poetry need detailed study of the Bible. Blake has taken the name from the text of Bible and represented through it the concept that suited well to the personality of original character. In this way the mystical themes including the unitive life could more clearly be interpreted. The allusive technique makes the poetry of William Blake more difficult to understand (Damon, 9, 67).

The figures or characters in Quranic stories, and historically well-known personalities are presented in such a way that they represent one or the other stage of mystical path or a form of self (nafs). Through the references the poet provides an opportunity to his readers to follow the people he calls the prophets without book. Through making their character a model, the readers of Rumi’s poetry can attain their desired position on mystical path of love and self-sacrifice.

Albion, the central character of Blake’s prophetic works including Jerusalem. The title of the poem ‘Jerusalem’ reflects that it is the emanation (something sent out) of Albion. The mystical life according to Blake is nothing but the union of Albion with Christ. The character refers to Chronicles (Bible). The reference shows that Blake was perhaps interested in
representing the mankind through the name Albion and his mystical union with God can be regarded as redemption of mankind in general.

Rumi’s reference to well-known events is also an effective technique to elaborate the concept of union in part or as a whole. The fire of Nimrod for Abraham (Hazrat Ibrahim) is referred to in the Mathnavi represents the fire of carnality. To kill the fire of carnality one needs to follow the light of Abraham to get rid of Self, harmful like Nimrod. Nimrod represents carnal self, a great hindrance for the mystic struggling to fight it to be able to travel on the way to union. The higher and lower self is also represented by Moses and Pharaoh, Jesus and his donkey, and Muhammad (PBUH) and Abu Jahl.

Through the reference of Majnun and Layla Rumi shows the path of Layl (night journey) of the Prophet (lover) to God (Beloved). The end of this night journey is shown as mystical union. The attainment of destination (Layla) by Majnun (lover). The concept of mystical union can hardly be understood by any other way more than allusion of Majnun quest for Layla. At the end of journey the traveler comes to know that there is no difference between the mystic and the God, he has been searching for.

Beulah, another term which also seems to be an allusion to John Bunyan’s “The Pilgrim’s Progress” Blake makes an indirect contact between his own process of attaining mystical union and Bunyan’s Beulah, the last stage of journey before his pilgrims reach their journey. It is a place of blessing where no sorrow can exist and darkness turns in to light. Through this reference, Blake could perhaps define the nature of union as something similar to paradise in a more convincing manner.

Blake’s use of the term ‘Canaan’ in his poem “Milton” also seems to be an allusion to the description of ‘Canaan’ in the text of the Bible. To Blake Canaan is a place which seems to be an
ideal abode for human soul. It may pacify the quest for spiritual endeavours. It is the world of eternity, which the mystic attains after continuous struggle for a long time. It is similar to unitive life and makes a man satisfied with whatever he could achieve. For a Christian mystic it is the place to see the Christ without any restriction.
CHAPTER SIX
THEMATIC AFFINITIES BETWEEN RUMI AND BLAKE ON MYSTICAL UNION

Rumi and Blake’s juxtaposition on mystical union has provided an opportunity to find out similarities between their opinions on the central theme of mysticism. The poets have shown almost similar attitude on various aspects of mystical union. It shows that the message at the centre of mysticism is identical in both of its types (Islamic and Christian mysticism). It is however, important to note that, there is a great difference between the mystical paths of Islamic and Christian mysticism. The following points represent affinities between Rumi and Blake on mystical union.

1. What is mystical union?

On the definition of mystical union there is a great similarity between Rumi and Blake. Rumi defines mystical union as man’s state of being one with God like humble servant, and surrendering all pleasures of material life. Similarly, Blake defines mystical union as the state of being one with God (Jesus Christ) through realizing one’s soul to be in Jesus Christ. Both agree that mystical union refers to the man’s status of being one with God according to one’s religious belief.

About the nature of mystical union Rumi opines that it is on the pattern of meeting between two intimate friends. And there is no room for any discrimination on the basis of status. Similarly, Blake professes that it the man’s state of being friend with the Absolute. The friendship is based on God’s love and desire. Both express identical opinion about mystical union as a relation that exists between two friends. It does not make much difference whether the friendship is based on man’s desire or God’s love.
Rumi claims that mystical union also refers to man’s spiritual condition in which he rejects material world. While living in material world he continues to remain a man of other world. And Blake professes that it is a form of divine status. As Jesus lived in material world in human form without being a part of it, the mystic enjoys the same status. Both poets are of the same opinion on the divine status of the mystic, who lives in material world but does not belong to it.

Another form of mystical union is generally called the self-annihilation. Rumi believes that it leads the mystic to lose his existing identity through accepting the identity of God. Rumi compares it to the grape-juice developed into wine after the process of fermentation that leads the grape-juice to lose its own identity. Blake claims that it is the ideal form of mystical life. The mystic feels himself free from the control of his self. His reasoning power is destroyed and he is placed at the mercy of Jesus Christ. Both agree that self-annihilation is important for the life of a mystic. He becomes totally dependent upon the mercy of his Creator.

Another form of mystical union, according to Rumi, is the man’s spiritual condition in which he can see and identify God within himself. The mystic develops the inner-eye to recognize his creator. And Blake believes that the mystic can see the Christ in the form of a Shepherd, leading His flock (the people). Such an experience of Jesus Christ is possible through strengthening one’s imagination (inner-eye). Rumi and Blake are holding identical opinion on the status of a mystic who experiences direct contact with his Creator.

Rumi claims another form of mystical union based on physical death of a mystic. Physical death is a joyful meeting between the man and God. Once physically dead, the mystic gets an opportunity to have nearness and direct contact to God. On the other hand, Blake holds a similar opinion based on Christian belief of Christ’s physical death through crucifixion and new
life in spiritual world. The physical death facilitates the soul to unite with Jesus Christ. Both poets hold similar opinion on the concept of union through physical death.

To draw an inference from the opinions of Rumi and Blake on the concept of mystical union, it can be aptly stated that there is a great affinity between the poets on the definition and conceptual interpretation of the central theme of mysticism. Although there is a natural difference between their religious beliefs but still at the level beyond ordinary dogmatism, their attitude towards the essence of truth represents something universal in their philosophy.

2. Significance of Mystical Union

As mystical poets Rumi and Blake equally give importance to the concept of mystical union to its appropriate level, acceptable among the circles of mystical poets. As far as their mutual agreement on the concept’s importance is concerned, there may be some differences but in most of the cases one can observe greater affinity between the opinions of both poets. The following points can sufficiently prove to be the examples of similarities between them:

Rumi believes that mystical union is the lost abode of a mystic and his search for it is a natural desire. Without union the journey may become similar to a journey without any destination. Rumi’s comparison of a mystic to reed (flute) expressing its discontent over the condition of being separated from its real home (reed-bed). Blake expresses similar opinion by saying that man’s quest for union is actually the search for realizing and getting back his lost home (greater position or love of the Christ), which he lost because of his own self.

Both of them are holding identical opinion that the quest for mystical union is an important part of mysticism. If it is excluded from the mystical experience, there can be no possibility of developing mysticism as a discipline for academic study and research. As the attainment of union is the primary objective of mystical science, there is no reason to overlook
its importance in developing it, and both of the poets are quite in agreement with each other on this point.

Another point, on which, the poets seem to hold similar opinion is the status of union as a blessing of God in the field or body of mysticism. Rumi professes that if one does not have stronger desire to come closer to God, he is unblessed and subject to lose tremendously. It can be attained only through God’s love for man and special blessing for the mystic. Blake also opines that the mystic can enjoy unitive life only through Christ’s love for him. If he is deprived of it, no one can help the mystic to attain the union. Both poets agree to each other on the importance of God’s blessing for mystical union and through that process the field of mysticism.

One of the most important parts of mystical life is its representative position or status. Rumi believes that mystical union enables the mystic to realize God’s presence in his life, which gives him the right to be His vicegerent or representative. It reflects the man’s freedom from all restrictions and chains of one’s self. Blake also professes that God calls the man to be the angel of His presence. Rumi and Blake’s opinion is almost similar on the representative nature of mystical life. They equally recognize the importance of man’s representation of divine, as an element of mysticism.

There is also a great agreement between the poets on the educative aspect of mystical union within the framework of mysticism. Rumi declares that the process of attaining union includes various stages and the mystic learns through the process, the way of overcoming difficulties on spiritual path. Blake professes that the process of attaining union helps to understand the nature of various stages of mystical journey. Rumi and Blake’s opinion about the significance of mystical path in educating the soul of a man is almost similar.
Mystical union is a great source of wisdom, the ultimate objective of mysticism in all religions and cultures. According to Rumi mystical union gives superior type of knowledge and wisdom through liberating the man’s soul from the dominance of his own self. The inner-eye developed through mystical practices is able to see things beyond the limits of material world. Similarly, Blake also believes that the man after attaining union with the Absolute can be able to exercise the divine arts, which shows his total liberation from self. Both are equally advocating the importance of union as an agent of wisdom, the ultimate goal of mysticism.

3. Attainment of Mystical Union

The process of attaining mystical union is a complicated way to interpret, but the poets have successfully discussed it according to their poetic skill and conceptual ability and understanding of Islamic and Christian mysticism. There are seven stages in Rumi’s mystical path and five stages in Blake’s path. But the conceptual similarity between most of the stages exists. Although the affinities can be found partially yet they cover major part of mystical paths of both types of mysticism.

In Rumi’s path of mysticism, the Inspired Self (Nafs al-Mulhama) is an awakening stage of human self. At this stage the mystic can listen to the voice of his own conscience, and determine his priorities of life, and to detach himself from the pleasures of physical world. Blake’s journey begins with awakening the soul. The mystic’s self shifts from lower (material) to higher (spiritual) level. Both agree on the stage of soul’s development to the level of realizing their spiritual duty to proceed from material to spiritual world or inside one’s own soul.

Rumi’s next stage on mystical path is called the Contented Self (Nafs al-Mutmainna) that represents the mystic’s development to such a level where the worldly concerns become valueless. The mystic enjoys total peace and presence of God. In Blake’s path, the next stage is
the stage of the purification of soul. At this stage the mystic realizes the need for self-mortification, a process of purifying the self. It makes the doors of perception clean to have the vision of God in a clearer form. Both have similarity of opinion on this stage. They advocate for freedom from the matters of the world and experience the God’s presence.

Another important stage on Rumi’s mystical path is called the pleasing self (Nafs al-Mardiyya). It refers to the mystic’s state of total submission to God’s will, and God being merged with the mystic. The mystic begins realizing God’s nearness and love directly. The sweetness of God’s spirit nourishes the soul like sweetness of water that fills the river-beds. God’s love for man can illuminate him to such an extent that, he can be willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of God.

Similarly, Blake’s mystical stage of illumination of the self shows that, the immortal eyes of man are opened in to internal world of eternity. The imagination becomes stronger enough to lead him in to the bosom of God. Blake’s stage of illumination is based on typical Christian doctrine of man as an object of God’s love. It is God’s love which encourages the mystic to love the God. The man can neither be a lover nor a beloved if not so desired by God.

Rumi’ pleasing self and Blake’s illumination of the self, are parts of two different types of mysticism but there are some common points between both of them. The God’s love is at the centre in both of them. God’s blessing is the motivating force to encourage the mystic to seek the nearness of God in both cases. The mystic can see and realize the nearness of God and surrender his self to the will of God. And that all power comes to the mystic directly from divine source.

The end of Rumi’s mystical journey is called the perfected self (Nafs al-Kamila). At this level the soul of man is in total submission and agreement with God. The stage is popularly known as mystical union, the mystic’s realization of being one with God. And that through
mystical journey he has been seeking nothing but his own self. Blake’s journey also ends with union with the Absolute. The journey is inside the soul of his own, and at the end Blake realizes that he reached in God’s bosom but actually he reached in to his own self. Both poets end their journey on mystical union. They realize that through mystical journey they could find themselves.

4. Impact of Mystical Union on Mystic’s Life

Although Rumi and Blake belong to different mystical traditions, different languages, and different social background yet the concept of mystical union has provided them an opportunity to come closer to each other. The impact of mystical union on their life seems to be identical. The differences based on religious beliefs, and cultural values seem to disappear on higher level of mystical experience. The poets hold almost similar opinion about the impact of mystical union on the mystic’s physical, educational, and spiritual conditions.

1. Condition in the Physical World

Rumi believes that the mystic, after attaining the union, leads a life free from all anxieties based on man’s material needs. He enjoys the love of God which makes him indifferent to the matters of material world including material prosperity or adversity. Similarly, Blake opines that the mystic, who attains union with the Christ, is expected to be indifferent to his position in material life. The experience of Christ’s love is similar to life in heaven. The poets agree on the impact of union as a power to make the mystic disinterested in material life.

2. Educational Condition

Rumi and Blake also seem to be in agreement with each other on the educational function of mystical union. The mystic according to Rumi, is educated in a better way because he is educated by God directly. When he has to talk, he utters the words more valuable than pearls.
Similarly, Blake claims that union is a form of education better than formal education. It educates and changes the man’s soul as the Christ is the teacher. Both of the poets hold identical opinion on educative function of mystical union.

On the type of education given to a mystic through mystical practices, the poets have complete similarity of opinion. Rumi professes that the knowledge given to the mystic is that of the awareness of truth and higher level of wisdom and ability to see things to be happened even in future. Blake believes that mystical practices help to develop superior type of wisdom. And that the mystic can see through vision the occurrences of the past, present, and the future.

3. Spiritual Condition

The spiritual state of a man is totally changed by mystical experience. Rumi claims that the mystic is a man of God. He enjoys God’s love which keeps him away from the problems of material life. On the other hand Blake professes that mystical union strengthens man’s character, and enables him to serve the people as God’s family. He serves the people out of his belief that it is source of God’s love. Rumi and Blake’s opinion is similar on the point of God’s love as the outcome of mystical union which makes him the lover of all human being.

Rumi expresses his opinion about the impact of mystical union the spiritual condition of mystic through saying that it provides nearness of which may change his perception of things. He realizes that the heart of a man is better than a place of worship, and the concept of sacredness of things becomes insignificant. Blake, on the other hand believes that it utterly changes the mystic’s perception of things. He begins to observe everything from a different point of view. He realizes that his soul is covered by divine light, the best source of wisdom. They also agree that, the change of mystic’s perception of things is the impact of mystical union.
5. Illustration of Mystical Union

Rumi and Blake used various poetic devices or techniques to promote mystical themes and disseminating them to all students and scholars of mystical poetry. Both have individually applied many poetic devices but there are some basic techniques which Rumi and Blake have equally used to make their poetry more understandable and interpretable to their readers and critics. Their poetic traditions are different but the use of narration, symbolism, and allusions shows that there is a great similarity between their interpretations of mystical union through illustration.

1. Narrative Illustration

Rumi’s use of narration has been helpful in discussing and interpreting the concept of union with God. Through using the status of major characters in stories he discussed either the concept of union, some of the stages of mystical path or the mystic’s condition on the way to union. Similarly, Blake made use of narrative to discuss mystical union through following the biblical pattern. The narrative technique helped him to interpret the theme, difficult or mostly ineffable. Like Rumi Blake also focused on them and not the style. Both of the great mystical poets have applied similar technique to illustrate the concept of union.

The stories in Rumi’s Mathnavi have been greater tools to represent the mystic’s desire for mystical union, attainment of union, and its impact on mystic’s life. Even the opening lines of the Mathnavi reflect the mystic’s longing for union. Blake also begins his discussion of union with the description of mystic’s desire for it. The character of Ahania represents the same concept. Rumi’s reed (flute) and Blake’s Ahania are representing the longing for union. Both have created specific characters for discussing various stages of mystical path.
Rumi through the stories of “The Paladin of Qazwin,” and “The Sufi and The Empty Wallet” tries to discuss the man’s selfhood as a hindrance on the mystic’s way through developing one’s love for the pleasures of the material world, and in the story of “The King And The Handmaiden” discusses the intensity of need to get rid of it to be able to proceed to the next stage. Similarly, Blake through the story of Milton tries to discuss the awakening of the Self, the primary stage on mystical journey. Rumi and Blake are mutually agreed on using major characters of their stories to interpret the Self.

Rumi has applied narrative technique to discuss the central theme of mysticism with caring for the stylistic pattern of his stories. Rumi is not interested in creating stories on the pattern of modern stories. His primary objective is the dissemination of his mystical theme through these stories and he could do it successfully. Similarly, Blake’s stories have also been composed to discuss the mystical experience, and one can hardly accept them as stories in ordinary sense of the word. Both of them have created stories for specific purpose without following any format of stories acceptable to modern readers of literature.

2. Symbolistic Illustration

Like many other mystical poets, Rumi has also made use of symbolism to give meaning to his mystical themes. Rumi’s symbols have been derived from different worlds including the world of plants, birds, animal, and that of mankind. Blake has also used the symbols but his symbols are belonging only to man’s world. The central theme to be interpreted through the symbolism of both poets is either the union with the Absolute or the other stages of mystical path.

Rumi and Blake have used symbols to represent various aspects of mystical experience. As far as Rumi’s symbolism is concerned, he has discussed the man’s lower self through ass or donkey as its symbol, the love (Rose), and human body (she-camel). Blake also uses symbols to
represent one or the other aspect of mysticism. Blake’s use of “Man’s immortal eyes” stands for man’s ability to travel on the path. To discuss the lower self, he uses the term “Criminals”. Both use symbols of their own but represent the similar theme.

Rumi’s loving soul (Majnun) is in search of his departed soul (Layla) is in conformity with Blake’s Jerusalem, which represents the Christian mystical concept of man’s departed soul. In this way one can see great similarity between both of them on the concept man’s search to regain his lost home. There may be difference of words and examples on the basis of religious and cultural differences but the conceptual similarity exists between them.

Rumi’s nightingale (represents re-union with the beloved) through purification and development of one’s self on the mystical path followed by Rumi. In a similar way, Blake’s Crucifixion of Jesus Christ is a symbol of the purification of self to be able to proceed on the way to union with the Absolute. Rumi and Blake use different words but present identical theme. In spite of linguistic and religious contrasts the poets have shown similarity of opinion on various concepts relating to mystical union.

3. Allusive Illustration

Rumi and Blake have used the allusive technique through which the poet can establish connection between the concept he wants to interpret and the concept behind the event or character being referred to. Both of them have used this technique successfully to discuss the concept of mystical union. Rumi’s reference to Mansur al-Hallaj shows that there is a link between Rumi’s mystical union with this historical figure. Hallaj is a representative of mystical union who was executed after he expressed his mystical status by saying “I am God”. In the same way, Blake’s Albion, is a character which refers to Chronicles (Bible). Blake calls him the representative of mankind. And through his mystical union he wants redemption of mankind.
Rumi’s reference to the fire of Nimrod for Abraham (Hazrat Ibrahim) represents the fire of carnality, to get rid of Self, harmful like Nimrod is a great hindrance for the mystic to attain union. Abraham represents the mystic who successfully attains union with God. Similarly, Blake’s Beulah, is a reference to John Bunyan’s “The Pilgrim’s Progress. Bunyan’s Beulah is the last stage of journey before his pilgrims reach their journey. It is a place of blessing. Both have shown the process of attaining mystical union but with two different examples.

Rumi’s reference to the legendary characters of Majnun and Layla shows the lover’s journey to his Beloved, the destination of his journey (mystical Union). Similarly, Blake’s reference to ‘Canaan’ in his poem “Milton” is an ideal place for the human soul to live. For the Christian mystic it is the place to see the Christ, the state of union. Rumi and Blake are in agreement with each other on the union as a spiritual abode of every mystic with his Creator.
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

The current thesis examines the validity of assertion that at the highest level of spiritual elevation (mystical union) attained by human being dogmatic differences cease to exist or become insignificant. For this purpose the views of two mystical poets Jalal-ud-din Rumi and William Blake (two poets from different ideological backgrounds) through their poetry have been juxtaposed to find out similarities between their expressions of mystical union. Affinities in their views may confirm disappearance of dogmatic differences at the level of mystical union.

Although the present work is not substantial addition to existing body of knowledge yet it provides a new direction for discovering the essence of humanity through going beyond the range of ordinary dogmatism and advocates mystical love as a force to ensure peace in the world and present it as an alternative to clash of religions and cultures. It also provides philosophical evidence (common platform) to establish global friendship through heightening the doctrine of universal brotherhood of mankind.

The poetry of Rumi and Blake has been studied through focusing on its thematic aspect. The poetry of both poets has been interpreted through paying attention in particular to the concept of mystical union in it. During the study for current thesis all other themes in their poetry have been totally over-looked. In this way, it has been a serious effort to sift the central point of this work from the whole web of poetry in two different languages, and present it as a major theme for comparative analysis of Rumi and Blake’s views on it.

The overall development of current thesis has been made in two phases. At first, the concept of mystical union has been discussed in detail through the poetry of Rumi (chapter three)
and Blake (chapter four) keeping in view Catherine Dawson’s research technique. In the next stage the views of both poets (Rumi and Blake) have been juxtaposed (chapter five) in accordance with Zepetnek’s model of thematic inclusion which provided necessary framework to discover affinities in their expression of mystical union (chapter six).

In the development of chapter three, and chapter four Rumi and Blake’s own words (through their poetic works) have been used as primary sources of information, however in some cases their original textual evidence could not be available and their critics’ views have been used as major sources of information. The same evidence has also been helpful in juxtaposing the views of both poets on mystical union and developing chapter five of this work. The views of both poets have been sifted from the words of poets or their critics (as quoted in chapter three and four) and juxtaposed for finding affinities in their expression.

Through comparative study of Rumi and Blake, it has been revealed that the poets hold identical views on most of the aspects of mystical union, a central theme of their poetry (chapter six). On all the major points regarding the nature of mystical experience, significance of union in mysticism, mystical path with various stages, and the impact of union on human life, there is a great agreement between the opinions of Rumi and Blake. There is also similarity in illustrative techniques of their poetry. Both poets made use of narration, symbolism, and allusions.

There are some dissimilarities or contrasts between their opinions on some aspects of mystical union e.g. the path of mystical journey. In Rumi’s path, there are seven stages (chapter three) while on the other hand Blake’s path consists of five stages (chapter four). The Commanding Self (*Nafs al-Ammara*) is a central stage in Rumi’s mystical path but does not exist in Blake’s mystical journey. Similarly, the dark night of the soul, fourth stage on Blake’s mystical way is not included in Rumi’s journey to union. However, the difference is totally based
on the nature of religious beliefs on which the foundations of Sufism (Islamic Mysticism) and Christian mysticism have been laid.

Rumi and Blake equally emphasize the use of illustrative devices especially narration, symbolism, and allusions and the purposes behind the use of these devices are simplification and facilitation instead of decoration. The poets however show great contrast in their selection of material for these poetic devices. This contrast can be observed in the central characters of their stories, the types of symbols, and the sources of allusions. However, the differences are not of such a magnitude which may bring about any drastic or significant change in the views of readers developed on the basis of thematic affinities between Rumi and Blake.

On the basis of thematic affinities, it can be stated that comparative study of Rumi and Blake with reference to their opinions on various aspects of mystical union has been helpful in understanding their agreement on the point of view that, humanity at the highest level of spiritual elevation (state of being united with God) may be free from all social, cultural, religious, and linguistic differences. At this level, the commonness of spiritual objective exists and the differences based on dogmatism cannot make any change in commonness of spiritual destination for human being.

Keeping in view the facts mentioned above it can be safely concluded that the very objective of this work (to confirm that at the highest level of spiritual elevation of humanity the dogmatic differences cease to exist) has been achieved. The points on which there are differences of opinions between Rumi and Blake are not significant enough to make any change in the opinion based on similarities in their views about the concept of mystical union. Affinities in Rumi and Blake’s views can also be generalized as common points on which all Muslims and Christians (major part of global population) can be united.
Suggestions for Further Research

The present thesis discusses mystical union, the central theme of mysticism, but there are some other themes which need to be discussed through comparative study of Rumi and Blake. The poets have discussed variety of themes in their poetry. If these concepts are discussed through comparison, it may add to the treasure of knowledge about Sufism and Christian mysticism. These themes can perhaps hold the central position in both types of mysticism.

The concept of love is one of the major themes of Sufism, and Rumi’s poetry is replete with it. The study of love through juxtaposing Rumi and Blake can help to understand the basic or primary element of mysticism. It may also help to understand and critically evaluate the difference between Islamic and Christian concept of love, and the way of mystical poets to discuss it as a common theme to present themselves as lovers of mankind without any discrimination.

The proposed work may examine similarities between Rumi and Blake’s views on the concept of love to confirm the assumption that “mysticism in any form represents love and no mystical poetry can be composed without dealing with this theme.” The work may determine defining features of mystical poetry (what is mystical poetry) and how a poet can be accepted as a mystical poet. Similarities between Rumi and Blake’s views on love may help to conclude that ‘love’ as a central theme is primary concern of mystical poets either they believe in Islamic or Christian mysticism. Any appropriate method of comparative literature can be applied for the development of proposed work.

Another theme of mysticism is the concept of mystical wisdom, the outcome of mystical science. Both, Rumi and Blake, are equally interested in it. The comparative analysis of wisdom with reference to the poetry of these poets may help to understand the significance of mysticism
for an ordinary man. The poetry of both poets can be analyzed in a better way by keeping in view their mystical philosophy and wisdom as a part of it. The major part of Rumi’s poetry discusses mystical wisdom and same is the case with Blake’s poetry.

The work may confirm the validity of assumption that “mystical wisdom is superior to wisdom through formal education”. At first, the work may discuss Rumi and Blake’s views on wisdom (through their poetry) and in the second phase of study, similarities between their views may be discovered through comparison. Their identical opinions on ‘wisdom’ may be juxtaposed with two other poets with no mystical traditions. The differences between the views of mystical and non-mystical poets would help to confirm the superiority of mystical wisdom to wisdom through formal education. The researcher can opt for appropriate methodology to complete the proposed work.

In chapter two of this work the concept of mystical union has been introduced with reference to some verses from the Holy Qur’an and the Bible. Selected verses from the both sacred texts can be used to develop a thesis titled “Affinities in Islamic and Christian doctrine of mystical union with reference to the verses from the Holy Qur’an and the Bible”. The proposed work may discover thematic similarities between both texts (with different languages and compositional backgrounds) on one of the major mystical themes.

It can be asserted that “to promote the science of mysticism divine books provide (discuss) identical subject matter.” Through discovering affinities between the Holy Qur’an and the Bible on mystical union the assertion may be confirmed. Authentic translations of both texts can be helpful in conceptual reading for the development of proposed work. For juxtaposing both texts to find out similarities between them any appropriate model or method of comparative literature can be applied.
Another aspect of mysticism is the application of its principles to promote the concept of universal brotherhood. Rumi and Blake are also great lovers and supporters of this concept. As mysticism helps to remove the barriers of hatred between the people from all regions and religions, the study may help to find ways of promoting friendly ties between the people belonging to all geographical regions. The study can become more result-oriented if the opinions of Rumi and Blake on this concept are juxtaposed with reference to the text of their poetry.

The proposed work may discuss the claim that “the doctrine of universal brotherhood promoted by Rumi and Blake may help to ensure peace in the world.” Through finding out similarities between Rumi and Blake’s views on universal brotherhood and presenting their identical views on it may confirm the validity of this claim. To study their poetry from thematic angle of universal brotherhood and juxtapose their opinions on it an appropriate method including zepetnek’s model of thematic inclusion can be applied.

A comparative study of Rumi’s Contented Self (Nafs al-Mutmainna) and Blake’s Illuminated Self may help to develop comparative mysticism in a better way. The poetry of both poets provides necessary information about both themes, and important parts of mystical paths of Sufism and Christian mysticism. The study may develop consensus among mystical poets that philosophical differences are of no significance when the man gets rid of worldly problems through attaining satisfaction with God’s will and realization of God’s presence in his life.

The proposed work may discuss the claim that “contented and illuminated soul always coincide.” Through discovering affinities between Rumi’s Contented Self and Blake’s Illuminated Self the truth of this claim can be verified. The work may cover only one stage of each mystical path followed by two poets. The reading of Rumi’s poetry is to be made focusing on contented self (excluding other stages) and Blake’s poetry from thematic angle of illuminated
soul (ignoring other stages of mystical path). Any appropriate comparative method can be applied for the development of proposed work.

Narrative technique can be discussed and researched as a part of poetic style and fashion of particular poetic tradition. In Persian mystical poetry, the use of stories is a common technique. Among Persian mystical poets, it has been the criteria to judge the standard of poetry through the standard of stories composed by the poets. Similarly, the mystical poets of romantic period have also been using narration as a part of their style. The comparative study of narration may also be helpful in stylistic study of poetry.

Both, Rumi and Blake, have used narrative technique in their poetry to make their mystical themes understandable to their readers. The current thesis discusses it as an illustrative device only. If their narrative technique is discussed to analyze their poetic style in detail, the students and scholars of poetry in general and mystical poetry in particular may be able to interpret narrative poetry thematically as well as stylistically. Through juxtaposing Rumi and Blake’s narrative technique the function of poetic tradition in framing the style of a poet, and the significance of specific poetic technique to particular type of subject-matter may be highlighted.

In practice the proposed work may examine the view that “mystical themes cannot be interpreted without narrative technique”. Through finding out functional (simplifying mystical themes) similarities between Rumi and Blake’s narratives the significance of this device may be evaluated and verified. The narratives from Rumi and Blake’s poetry can be used as major sources of information however the study requires selection of an appropriate model for comparative analysis.

The use of symbolism is another poetic technique used by Rumi and Blake. The present thesis partially discusses it only as an illustrative technique. If the use of symbolism in mystical
poetry is discussed as a structural or stylistic pattern in accordance with the principles of Symbolist Movement as discussed in Arthur Symons’ *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, published at first in 1899. Through focusing on Rumi and Blake it would help to develop better understanding of both thematic and stylistic aspects of mystical poetry.

From the poetry of Rumi, it can be safely guessed that Persian mystical poetry in general and that of Rumi’s time has been replete with symbolism. The mystical poets had perhaps no alternative to symbolism and used this technique under the compulsion of poetic need. Blake’s poetry also represents poetic style of his period. It shows that the use of symbolism has been a popular technique among the poets of his time including the poets who discussed no mystical themes in poetry. It has been perhaps a poetic need for the mystics.

The proposed work may discuss the assertion that “Symbolism is essential for interpreting mystical themes”. Through discovering similarities between Rumi and Blake on symbolism the significance of this stylistic device can be highlighted. The works of both poets can be used as primary sources of information. However the study of Rumi and Blake’s symbols must be based on the model of Symbolist Movement. Any appropriate comparative method can be selected for comparative study of both poets.

Another important field of study that needs to be discussed is the use of allusions by Rumi and Blake in detail. The present thesis has discussed partially the use of allusions for interpreting mystical union. But there is a great need to discuss the use of allusions to interpret the mystical love, and mystical wisdom. The poetry of Rumi and Blake may provide necessary material for this purpose. It may not only help to discuss the mystical poetry but also the Quranic, Biblical, and historical characters, and events.
The study of allusions may facilitate the readers to develop better understanding of allusive style of poetry. The poetry with allusive style may thematically be more effective, but it needs to be composed for readers with scholarly knowledge of poetry. It may also help to evaluate the stylistic significance of allusions. For the poets to develop allusive style, it is important to note that the poet has studied other poets and the texts of those works which may have similar theme or subject-matter. The stylistic comparison of Rumi and Blake with reference to their use of allusions may develop better understanding of the allusive style of mystical poetry.

The proposed study may be focused on the claim that “recognizing literary or historical reference is a prerequisite for interpreting mystical love and wisdom in poetry”. Through discovering similarities between Rumi and Blake’s use of allusions to discuss mystical love and wisdom in their poetry, the validity of this claim can be confirmed. The comparison of allusive styles of both poets needs an appropriate model to be followed in promoting the mystical themes of love and wisdom to meet the requirements of proposed work.

Like other poets, Rumi and Blake’s poetry is also the outcome of poetic inspiration from one or the other source. The study of their poetic background shows that Rumi’s poetry is inspired by Shams-e-Tabriz and Blake’s poetry by Milton. The current thesis is primarily focused on Rumi and Blake’s juxtaposition on mystical union and the poetic inspiration behind their poetry has been totally ignored. If the inspirational role of Shams and Milton is analyzed through their comparison the poetry of both poets can be interpreted in a better way.

The inspirational role of Shams and Milton can be observed in almost all aspects of poetry composed by Rumi and Blake. The role of these two persons in overall development of Rumi and Blake’s poetry cannot be ignored. Poets have been spiritually changed (spiritual inspiration), they became poets (creative inspiration), the titles of their works e.g. ‘Divan-e-
Shams-e-Tabriz’ and ‘Milton’ have been easily suggested (Compositional inspiration), and mystical themes have been derived from their philosophy (thematic inspiration).

The proposed work may be focused on the claim that “Rumi and Blake’s poetry is inspired by Man instead of Muse”. Through discovering similarities between inspirational roles of Shams and Milton the validity of this claim can be confirmed. The proposed work may be based on textual information from the poetic works of Rumi (Divan-e-Shams-e-Tabriz) and Blake (Milton) about these well-known figures. The works of both poets need to be studied for finding out relevant information about Shams and Milton to evaluate only the poetic inspiration behind their works. Any comparative method of analyzing poetry may be applicable to develop the work as suggested.

The contrastive analysis of Rumi and Blake’s views on various mystical themes may be a great addition to the existing treasure of knowledge. The current thesis discusses thematic similarities between Rumi and Blake on mystical union. There may be several themes on which both poets may show great contrast. Themes of love, wisdom, and union with God may be some of the concepts on which contrastive analysis of Rumi and Blake may help to interpret the science of mysticism, especially the Islamic and Christian mysticism.

The proposed work may discuss the assertion that “religious differences exist even at the higher level of spiritual elevation”. Through finding out thematic contrasts between Rumi and Blake (representatives of Islamic and Christian mysticism) the assertion can be verified and confirmed. Their contrastive views may represent the primary differences between both types of mysticism. The poetry of both poets can be used as primary source of information and their critics’ views as secondary sources. Any appropriate method of comparative literature may be applicable to meet the requirements of proposed work.
The language of poetry is another point of contrast between Rumi and Blake. The present thesis is focused on one of their poetic themes. It does not discuss the language of poetry used by them. Rumi’s poetry has been composed in Persian language with a structure different from the language of Blake’s poetry (English Language). The poets discuss mystical themes through different languages. The contrastive analysis of two vehicles (two languages) for one idea (one mystical theme) may be a sizable addition to existing treasure of knowledge.

The proposed work may be based on the assertion that “the use of different languages may not restrain the poets from interpreting identical themes”. Through finding out contrasts between Rumi and Blake’s poetry on the basis of language (on identical themes) the acceptability of this assertion may be confirmed. It may prove that the poets can discuss similar ideas through languages which may be totally different in structure from each other, and that different vehicles for one idea can be used. For contrastive analysis of two languages (Persian and English), any suitable comparative method can be used.
Works Cited


Spurgeon, Caroline F. E. *Mysticism in English Literature*. Cambridge: CUP, 1913.


