

16. Sri Tyagaraja the Mystic

All Paths to the attainment of the Supreme ultimately fall into two heads, which may be described as the Kramamukti marga and the Sadyomukti marga; in other words, the Normal Path and the Special Path. These two may be compared to the well-made, smooth, slowly climbing cartable road going up a hill to the top and to a short-cut, the bridal path, to reach the same top. On the former, people live a life of ordinary goodness following the normal rules of conduct and gradually work themselves towards the stage when they get illumination, while on the other path one hopes to achieve in a very short time what nor-

mally would take perhaps many aeons to accomplish on the other path. This is really the path of Yoga.

Even on this path there are two methods depending upon the temperament of the seeker for Reality; persons evolving on these two divisions may in a way be described as 'Occultists' and 'Mystics' or roughly *Jnanis* and *Bhaktas*. The occultist, so to say, has his face turned outwards. He studies the universe and equips himself to understand the basic truths beyond the phenomenon. The world to him is an expression of a Thought in the Mind of the Great Lord and he seeks to get at that Cosmic Mind by a study of its objective expression. The mystic on the other hand seeks the Reality within himself, more by feeling than by any analytical process. Herein lies the fundamental difference between the occultists and the mystics. Intellect and detachment play a greater part in the outlook of the occultists, while Love and emotional reactions form the basis of the mystic's efforts. Almost all the bhaktas in the real sense of the word are mystics.

There are essential differences between the mystic and the occultist in their outlook, their method and their reactions. As I have already mentioned the outlook of the occultist is more objective in the broader sense of the word, while to the mystic his inner reactions and feelings count everything; reasoning by the mental faculty has only a secondary place in the life of the mystic. What the occultist achieves by his reason, the mystic will do by intuition which, in some cases, lifts him to a stage far beyond what the occultist can hope for. The occultist is more impersonal in all his activities than the mystic who is intensely personal. While the former is dealing with abstract concepts the mystic finds his joy in dealing with concrete manifestations of those concepts. Naturally this tends to make the occultist apparently steady and balanced while the mystic allows

himself to be swayed by impulses and feelings. To the mystic God is not an abstract idea or a metaphysical concept; He is a Great person full of Love and Mercy. The mystic perceives Him as a friend, as a lover, as a beloved, as a guide, as a father, as a mother; in short he approaches God in all these relations; and when his feelings sway him he goes into ecstasies and forgets himself; in such moments he and his Beloved God alone exist in this universe. God is realised as the Great Lover of all that lives. This naturally leads to various reactions, and so in the writings or other expressions of mystics we find various moods portrayed. Sometimes he takes liberties with his God and finds fault with Him and even rebukes Him. At other times he is so full of joy that nothing else matters to him except to bathe all the time in that ocean of Ananda. At other times he considers himself as being unworthy of the Lord's attention. Because the mystic's emotional nature is always active, there is a tendency in him to be emotionally unstable: he may be irritable, he may appear a fanatic, he may even evince unbalanced sex life. These are only passing phases in the life of mystics.

In the case of Sri Thyagaraja a study of his compositions will clearly indicate that he was a mystic to the core. He lived but to please Sri Rama who was living Reality to him, a constant companion and a loving Guru. The glamour of earthly riches had no influence upon him. His one great sorrow was that people about him were not able to enjoy the bliss of Ramabhakthi, and were making themselves and others miserable. He often felt sorry for his uncongenial surroundings. The piece "Toline Jesina pooja phalamu" in *Suddha bhagala* is an example of this phase of the Saint's feeling. A true mystic that he was, he has had visions of Rama in various aspects and also several experiences with the Lord, and some of these are often referred to in his compositions.

" Alakalalladaga "	in	<i>Madhyamavati</i>
" Koluvamaregada "	in	<i>Todi</i>
" Yentabhagyamu "	in	<i>Saranga</i>
" Natimatamarachitivo "	in	<i>Devapriya</i>
" Chinnanade-na "	in	<i>Kalanidhi</i>
" Parithapamu "	in	<i>Manohari</i>
" Dasarathi "	in	<i>Todi</i>

As examples of his vision of Sri Rama as the supreme embodiment of all that is Good and Beautiful, as one to whom the heart flows out in love and rhapsody we may consider the following compositions :—

" Merusamana "	in	<i>Mayamalavagowla</i>
" Yentukoukalintura "	in	<i>Suddhadesi</i>
" Lavanya Rama "	in	<i>Poornashadjam</i>
" Ramabhirama "	in	<i>Durbar</i>
" Ninuvina namade-ndu "	in	<i>Navarasakannada</i>
" Sanitodi teve "	in	<i>Harikambhoji</i>

That he had also moments of great exhilaration is evident from the compositions like "Yetla terigitiva" in *Vasanta*.

When for a moment he lost touch with his Rama due perhaps to some emotional reaction he blames himself for it, in a mood of self-condemnation. The pieces

" Yetulabrotuvo "	in	<i>Chakravakam</i>
" Pahi Kalyana "	in	<i>Punnagavarali</i>
" Kaligiyunte "	in	<i>Kceravani</i>

are examples thereof.

As a bhakta he often takes liberty to rebuke Sri Rama for His neglect. The following pieces are illustrative of this reaction :

" Pariyasakama "	in	<i>Vanaspati</i>
" Entavedukondu "	in	<i>Saraswatimanohari</i>
" Sarivarilona "	in	<i>Bhinnashadjam</i>
" Neeke teliyaka "	in	<i>Anandabhairavi</i>
" Anyayamu Seyakura "	in	<i>Kapi</i>
" Chalamelara "	in	<i>Margahindolam</i>

In short, Thyagaraja was a typical mystic and with this background his life and his compositions reveal a great meaning and a high purpose. Apparent contradictions get reconciled and inexplicable incidents get explained, and we see the saint as an embodiment of emotional synthesis which leads to an Emotional Vision of the Great Reality.