



3. INITIATION AND MYSTICISM

The meaning of the word “initiation” correctly expresses the *saṃskṛta* term *dīkṣā*. It derives from the Latin term *initiatio*, which described the ritual acceptance of a disciple in an initiatory organization, known as *mysterium*¹. The *sampradāyas* giving initiation were several, located in different sanctuaries similar to the *maṭhas* and *pīṭhas* of Hinduism. In every sanctuary the initiation of a different deity was conferred by some sacerdotal masters, and in this way the local god or goddess became the *iṣṭadevatā* of the initiate². The name of the Deity was recited as *jāpa* along with other sounds, as for instance “*evōé*” (εὐοῖ) or “*ið*” (ἰώ), without any literal meaning³, like the *bīja mantras* of Hinduism. The most famous sanctuaries were dedicated to the goddesses Demeter (Bhūdevī) and Persephone (the Moon Goddess) near the town of Eleusis not far from Athens. Those dedicated to Zeus (the king of the Gods) and his wife Dione at Dodona in Epirum, today’s Macedonia; other important *mysteria* were dedicated to the God Dionisos (similar to the *saiva tāntrika sādhana*), to the divine twins Kabyrans (gods of the subterranean fire) in Greece, the Pythagoras-Orpheus *mysterium* dedicated to the Sun God Apollo (corresponding to Sūrya) in southern Italy, those of the *Magna Mater* (Great Mother) and *Bona Dea* (Good Goddess) in Rome⁴.

The Latin verb *inire* means “to go into, to get in”, expressing the sense of entering in a new condition of existence, in a different inner experience. Therefore *initiatio* was used also for defining the ritual which produced this deep change in the life of the individual and introduced him to the mysteric ambit. The *guru* was called *initiator*, in Latin, μητήρ (read *myetés*) ο μυσταγωγός (read *mystagogòs*) in Greek. He conferred the *dīkṣā* [*initiatio*; μύησις (read *myesis*)], transforming in this way a profane [*prophanus*; ἀμύητος (read *amýetos*)] in a *dīkṣita* [*initiatius*, μύστης (read *mystes*)]. All Greek terms derive from the verb μύεω – μύω (read *myeo - myo*)⁵, whose meaning is “to close himself” in a sacred space, and also “close” his own lips, in the sense of remaining in the sacred enclosure and, at the same time, of maintaining the incommunicable *rahasya*⁶ in oneself. The domain reserved to the *dīkṣitas* was called esoterism (interior doctrine and *sādhana*), whereas the domain open to ordinary mass of profane ones was called exoterism (exterior cult, religion).

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¹ In origin the *mysteria* were called in Latin *initialia*. Only after the 2nd century B.C., Romans used the term *mysterium*, under the influence of the Greek culture. In ancient Greek the word sounds μυστήριον (read *mysterion*). *Mysterium* means exactly “*rahasya*”.

² The recent initiated, the novice, was called neophyte (gr. νεόφυτος, read *neòphytos*), new seedling, newly green, just spiritually reborn.

³ But these *mantras* had a ritual vibratory efficacy.

⁴ With the expansion of the Roman Empire other *mysteria* were included into the Roman Religion: those of Attis, of Cybeles, of Isis, of Mithra, proceedings from the traditions of different conquered parts of the Empire.

⁵ In sanskr̥t *mauna*, silence, and *muni*, the silent one, have the same etymological origin.

⁶ We point out that he who encloses himself in a sacred space, or remains in silence, is really acting as opposed to a profane. The last one is “out of any sacred space”, according to a first etymology (*pro-fanum*, out of a sacred space), and, according to another possible one, “who is speaking to an audience” (*pro-fans*). *Vulgus profanum*, profane people, was a term comprehending not only the mass of ordinary men, but also the not initiated priests.





During the 4th century A. D., when the Roman Emperors converted to Christian religion along with their subjects, all these terms passed to Christian initiation. Actually, concealed in the exoteric Christian Church, many streams of initiation lines⁷ have continued, mostly in the monasteries, in the warrior brotherhoods and in craft guilds (*śreṇi*). In the latter Middle Age, with the decline of the Monastic Orders, and with the bloody destruction of the Temple Order Knights by the King of France with the approval of the Pope (1313-14 A. D.), the Christian initiations disappeared. Since that moment the terms “Mystic” and “Mystique” didn’t mean anymore *dīkṣita* and *sādhana*, but only have designated a new religious phenomenon, therefore exoteric. Mystique or Mysticism became a new exterior religious approach, an individual spontaneous experience emotionally intense⁸, without any connection with a regular *guruśiṣyaparamparā*, without any *sādhana* based on *yantra*, *mantra*, *tantra*. The mystics are more similar to the village *mediums*, sometimes spontaneously possessed by Gods, Goblins etc. that they regard as God, Jesus, Virgin Mary, other Saints and Devils. The Mystic has a natural predisposition towards psychic openings, remaining passive to influences coming from outside.

Let us quote now how a contemporary Catholic theologian defines the “Mysticism”:

What is then the Mysticism? It is “never” anything which can be acquired through ascetic exercises, techniques or initiation paths. It does not presuppose any moral perfection neither a spiritual evolution similar to the biological [Catholic darwinism!]. Says St. Theresa of Avila: “Nobody rises: it is God who raises us”; so the mystical “experience” is the violent, sudden irruption of God in the soul, their union. The mystics speak about a “fire of love”, “enlightenment”, “deification” as a gift of grace, undeserved and unprecedented, undeniable and incomprehensible at the same time sublime and brilliant, full of quivering transforming enjoyment. You must not write a treatise to explain what it means “grace.” Just to refer to an immediate term understanding: “gratis”. The Mysticism as “theological discipline” consists of studying the witnesses of those who in the history of religions⁹ have experienced what we have just said, and much more. Over the centuries, one has proposed many definitions of it. The most complete is certainly that coined by P. Albert Deblaere, S. J. ∴ The mystique is “The direct and passive experience of God's presence”.¹⁰

If we neglect the silly concessions to the profane science, we must admit that the theologian has correctly described the Mysticism. It will be clear now that one can never translate initiate, *dīkṣita*, with mystic, neither initiation path, *sādhana mārga*, with Mysticism. Indeed the Mysticism appears only where the initiation has been withdrawn. In fact out of Catholicism, Judaism and Shi’ite Islam, Mysticism does not exist at all. If by chance the *bhaktas* can appear to somebody similar to the Catholic

⁷ As we will see later, the Greek language of the ancient Mysteries has remained almost unchanged until now in the esotericism of Greek and Russian Orthodox Church. The esoteric terminology in Latin remained in use in the area of the Roman Catholic Church until the 14th century A. D., when the Latin initiation has been almost completely eradicated from Western Europe.

⁸ That is to say, produced by the *manas*. Sometimes, very rarely indeed, there have been some cases of intellectual Mysticism (improperly defined by the catholic theologians as “Contemplative Mysticism”), when instead of blissful visions, pleasant perfumes and sweet sounds, the mystic conceive some higher thoughts. In this case the producer of that kind of phenomena is evidently the *buddhi*.

⁹ Notice how the Catholic theologian take support from the authority of an academic pseudo science!

¹⁰ Don Roberto Tarquini, www.mistica.it, 2 febbraio 2006.





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mystics because of their outpouring of love, one does not forget that the *bhaktas* have a *guru*, the *paramparā*, the *sādhana* based on *yantra*, *mantra* and other techniques, unlike the mystics.

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