



# Kundalini Awareness



## **Literary Research: Mystics and Geniuses**

Eileen Holland

Over the past 25 years, various members of ICR have contributed to the research into the lives and writings of the great mystics and geniuses. Among the subjects are **Walt Whitman**, 19<sup>th</sup> century U.S. journalist turned inspired poet whose “Leaves of Grass” caused a literary explosion; **Hildegarde of Bingen**, 11<sup>th</sup> century German nun whose writings, music and art mirrored profound mystical experiences. She was well versed in medicine and championed social justice in an age when women had few avenues of expression; **Victor Hugo**, 19<sup>th</sup> century French literary genius whose enduring novels, poetry and plays reflect a passionate search for human justice and a more compassionate world, all told with an extraordinary lyric beauty; **Mahadevi Akka**, an inspiring woman born in India in the 12<sup>th</sup> century who was believed to have reached the highest state of spiritual liberation. Mahadevi was a Virashaiva, one of a revolutionary group who worshipped Shiva, believed in the equality of all and tried to abolish the caste system. Before her death in her early 20s, Mahadevi wrote hundreds of poems describing her mystical experiences and she is still revered in parts of India as a saint and a creative genius; **St. John of the Cross**, 16<sup>th</sup> century Carmelite mystic whose poetry captures the fire of the mystical union in the exquisite language of Spain and whose utter detachment from the world was tempered by his humble service to and deep love for his fellow human beings; **Ralph Waldo Emerson**, 19<sup>th</sup> century U.S. transcendental philosopher whose prolific and radical essays and lectures were influenced by Eastern teachings and who believed that man exists to an absolute defined end and are ruled by a universal law of morality; **St. Teresa of Avila**, 16<sup>th</sup> century Spanish Carmelite nun whose struggles as a woman and a reformer were overcome by her astute ability to articulate the mystical process while giving her attention to the practicalities of life; **Jiddu Krishnamurti**, 20<sup>th</sup> century philosopher and mystic whose transformative mystical experience at age 26 set him on a lifetime path of critical questioning of ideologies and traditions. His teaching concludes that nationalism, racism, competitiveness, cultural traditions and ideologies are the elements that divide man and prohibit peace and true liberation; **Thomas Jefferson**, third President of the United States, the 18<sup>th</sup> century revolutionary giant whose accomplishments fill volumes but whose lasting legacy may be his religious philosophy of right action and deep faith in humanity. Although many of these people came from different cultures, lived in different centuries and walked a different path, the research nevertheless shows the similarities in the characteristics they displayed that are consistent with an awakened Kundalini.

For the purposes of this chapter, we will divide the characteristics into 3 main frames:

- 1) The Mystical Experience  
(including the experiences of light, fire, sound, unity, bliss and cosmic expansion)
- 2) The Elements of Character Traits  
(including morality, humanitarianism, profound sense of God, detachment)
- 3) Transformation of Consciousness  
(including gifts of genius, inspired creativity, the paranormal, prophecy and revelation)

## The Mystical Experience

Mystical experience is generally described as being some type of direct experience of the Divine. In virtually every spiritual tradition, mystics talk about this experience as a “union” with the Divine or as a “oneness” with all things. Gopi Krishna says that “In the highest states of mystical ecstasy every object springs to life and the whole of nature becomes alive. One incredible living, feeling Ocean of Being connects the mystic with every object in the Universe.”

In examining these lives, we present several examples of people who had these profound mystical experiences. They may differ somewhat, but their similarities are far more notable than their differences. Regardless of when or where they occurred, they all contain the elements of the mystical experience the Yogic tradition tells us are characteristic of kundalini awakening. This awakening is usually accompanied by an experience of cosmic light, sometimes sound, a feeling of bliss, and expansion of consciousness and a lasting transformation in the life of the experimenter.

**Walt Whitman** in “Song of Myself” expresses the transformation:

“Loafe with me on the grass, loose  
the stop from your throat,  
Not words, not music or rhyme  
I want, not custom or lecture,  
not even the best,  
Only the lull I like, the hum  
of your valved voice...  
...Is this then a touch quivering  
me to a new identity?  
Flames and ether making a rush  
for my veins...  
...My ties and ballasts leave me...  
I travel...I sail...My elbows  
rest in sea gaps,  
I skirt Sierras...my palms cover  
continents,  
I am afoot with my vision.”

And in his poem “Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking”

“Never again leave me to the peaceful  
child I was  
before what there in the night  
By the sea under the yellow and  
sagging moon,  
The messenger there arous’d, the fire,  
the sweet hell within,  
The unknown want, the destiny of me.”

In "**Hildegard of Bingen: A Visionary Life**", Sabina Flanagan quotes Hildegard's description of the experience as it appears in the introduction to "Scivias":

"And it came to pass in the eleven hundred and forty-first year of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, Son of God, when I was forty-two years and seven months old, that the heavens were opened and a blinding light of exceptional brilliance flowed through my entire brain. And to it kindled my whole heart and breast like a flame, not burning but warming...and suddenly I understood the meaning of the expositions of the books, that is to say of the Psalter, the evangelists, and other catholic books of the Old and New Testaments."

In her 70s, Hildegard again describes her vision, this expansion of consciousness:

"From my early childhood...this vision, my soul as God would have it, rises up into the vault of heaven...and spreads itself out among different people...far away from me in distant lands and places...The light I see... is far, far brighter than a cloud that carries the sun...Sometimes I see within this light another light...all sorrow and anguish leave me, so that then I feel like a simple girl instead of an old woman."

With **Victor Hugo**, the mystical experience was often expressed in his fictional characters e.g., The Bishop of Digne in "Les Miserables", who meditates in his garden at night:

"...opening his soul to the unknown...offering up his heart at that hour when the flowers of night emit their perfume...expanding in ecstasy in the midst of creation's universal radiance...He felt something floating away from him; and something descending upon him, mysterious exchanges of the soul with the universe..."

In Hugo's poems, the sound that has been heard by mystics of all ages rings out:

"First 'twas a voice, immense, vast,  
undefined  
More vague than through the forest  
sounds the wind  
Music it was, ineffable and deep,  
Which vibrates, flows and round the  
world doth sweep..."

And in the poem "Dreams", the "voice" again appears:

"Let me in dreams ascend  
To heavens of love and shade  
And let them never end,  
But night the vision lend  
That in the day was made.

It is a voice profound  
Creation's total song:  
It is the Globe's vast sound  
The world as it turns round  
The Heavenly space along."

**Mahadevi Akka**, whose short but passionate life was spent in intense devotion of Shiva, recounts her experiences of bliss and light in her poetry much the same way as Hildegard:

“A light excelling a billion suns and moons  
Came down and lodged itself within my mind;  
At sight whereof I crossed this life’s pitfalls”

When Mahadevi reached marriageable age and her parents began to seek a husband for her, her worship of Shiva became clear, as she refused all eligible suitors saying she loved only Shiva whom she had given the name, Chenna Mallikarjuna (My Lovely Lord White as Jasmine). In her poetry, this love is portrayed as pure joy and a sense of expansion:

“I saw the Absolute,  
I saw the Mystery,  
I saw the joy that comes, the joy  
That is possessed, the joy that is lodged  
When knowledge had been won, I lost  
All trace of ignorance;  
While still hemmed in  
Within the fascination of the Sign  
I shed my bounds on knowing Thee,  
O Cenna Mallikarjuna.”

**St. John of the Cross**, whose experience of fire and light is the core of his writings, expressed his spiritual awakening in “Living Flame of Love”:

“Oh living flame of love  
How tenderly you wound  
the innermost center of my soul...  
Oh gentle cautery!  
Oh delicate wound!  
Oh soft hand! Oh gentle touch  
that tasted of eternal life  
and repays every debt!  
By killing, death into life you have transformed.”

He explains the purifying flame further: “The fire...is able to consume to an extent which cannot be measured...since God is an infinite fire of love, when therefore He is pleased to touch the soul with some severity, the heat of the soul rises to such a degree that the soul believes that it is being burned with a heat greater than any other in the world”.

While imprisoned at the age of 35, St. John experienced a mystical ecstasy he described as a presence of light. One of his biographers describes it: “His cell became filled with light, even though it was night and there was no lamp or other source of light. St. John...later...told one of his brethren that the heavenly light, which God so mercifully sent him, lasted the night through, filled his soul with joy and made the night pass away as it were but a moment”.

**Ralph Waldo Emerson** spoke of “one central fire which flaming now out of the lips of Etna...and now out of the throat of Vesuvius...It is one light which beams out of a thousand stars. It is one soul that animates all men.”

Emerson’s mystical experiences were many and profound, finding expression in “Nature”, where he wrote...“Standing on the bare ground...my head bathed in the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space - all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball. I am nothing. I see all, the current of the Universal Being circulates through me.”

**St. Teresa's** descriptions of her mystical experiences are not only scrupulously detailed, they flow with a literary beauty that carries the reader along with her:

“If I should have spent many years trying to imagine how to depict something so beautiful, I couldn't have, nor would I have known how to, it surpasses everything imaginable here on earth even in just its whiteness and splendor.

The splendor is not one that dazzles, it has a soft whiteness, is infused, gives the most intense delight to the sight, and doesn't tire it; neither does the brilliance, in which it is seen, the vision of so divine a beauty, tire it. It is a light so different from earthly light that the sun's brightness that we see appears very tarnished in comparison with that brightness and light represented to the sight, and so different that afterward you wouldn't want to open your eyes”.

The expansion of consciousness attendant to the mystical experience, St.Teresa explains with a warning to the beginning spiritual seeker:

“There is another kind of rapture - I call it flight of the spirit - which though substantially the same as other raptures, is interiorly experienced very differently. For sometimes suddenly a movement of the soul is felt so swift that it seems the spirit is carried off and at a fearful speed, especially in the beginning. This is why I have told you that strong courage is necessary for the one to whom God grants these favors, and even faith and confidence and a full surrender to our Lord , so that He may do what He wants with the soul”.

**Jiddu Krishnamurti** wrote in his “Note-book” - “...there was an intense bright light at the very centre of the brain and beyond the brain at the very centre of consciousness, of one's being. It was light that had not shadow nor was it set in any dimension...with that light there was present that incalculable strength and beauty beyond thought and feeling.”

And in another description of the experience... “Suddenly one felt this immense flame of power...It is beyond all thought and words to describe what's going on, the strangeness of it and the love, the beauty of it. It's beyond and above all faculties of man.”

**Thomas Jefferson**, who chose not to dwell too deeply on the “mystical” but yet from his youth had a serene sense of an indwelling God, instead took the path of reason and religious freedom. He was interested in Eastern philosophy and there are intriguing hints that he may have turned away from the powerful experiences that often accompany esoteric disciplines. In a letter to Isaac Story, a Massachusetts minister, who was questioning Jefferson's beliefs, he answered...”When I was young I was fond of the speculations which seemed to promote some insight into the hidden country but observing at length that they left me in the same ignorance as they found me, I have for many years ceased to read or think concerning them and have reposed my head on the pillow of ignorance which a benevolent creator has made so soft for us...”

Jefferson had a deep conviction that men should answer to their own God and to “question with boldness even the existence of God.” In a letter to his nephew urging him to selfless action, he wrote, “if you find reason to believe there is a God, a consciousness that you are acting under His eye and that He approves of you, will be a vast incitement (to virtue).

These examples of mystical experience are but a small sampling of the highly evolved individuals who have reached these higher states of consciousness. These higher states should not be confused with “altered” mind states that are often drug-induced. The true mystical experience may be perennial, i.e., the person lives in a permanent state of luminous thought-energy, or the experience can be of short duration. In either case, the person is changed forever, the feeling of “oneness” with all living beings causing a transformation endowing the person with a deep sense of morality, compassion and humanitarian characteristics, detachment from the material and an unshakable belief in a Divine Intelligence or God.

## The Elements of Character Traits

And so, we come to the examples of this transformation in the elements of character traits consistent with the mystical experience of kundalini awakening.

**Walt Whitman's** experiences of inner light or unity with God made him aware of the dangers if this energy was not properly understood and as a result, he adopted a lifestyle of simplicity and detachment. He ministered to the wounded and dying soldiers during the American Civil War. What he saw moved him to compassionate service and without pay or recognition, for months he dressed wounds. His intuitive ability to recognize each person's need enabled him to instill a will to live in many of the soldiers and endowed him with above average nursing skills.

And in "Song of Myself", he speaks of "that in me - I do not know what it is - it is without name" -

"Do you see, O my brothers and sisters?  
It is not chaos and death - it is  
form, union, plan -  
It is eternal life -  
It is happiness"

**Hildegarde of Bingen's** entire life was spent in the service of God and through her knowledge of medicine and healing skills, she eased the suffering of the many pilgrims and supplicants who came to her convent. Her moral and ethical standards were the basis of a life-long dedication to social justice. There are records of her letters to kings, princes, bishops and even the Pope deploring the dissolution and corruption she saw around her. Not even the dictates of the highest church authorities could make her go against what she believed was right.

In "Antiphon for the Holy Spirit", her belief in God is exquisitely sung:

"The Spirit of God  
is a life that bestows life,  
root of world-tree  
and wind in its boughs

Scrubbing out sin  
she rubs oil into wounds

She is glistening life  
alluring all praise  
all-awakening  
all-resurrecting"

During his life, **Victor Hugo** spent much of his energy fighting for causes that evinced his deep morality, idealism, compassion and concern for humanity. He gave political speeches on equality, poverty and the environment. During the Revolution of 1848, he became a champion of the people. While Louis-Napoleon pursued his plan to become Emperor, Hugo gave this speech..."The man of the masses suffers today from the two-fold and contradictory feeling of his actual poverty and the greatness to which he knows himself entitled...we who sit in this Chamber (he was a Peer of France) bear a special responsibility...It is we who must take steps to rid the land of poverty and set the poor on the road to greatness and enlightenment."

In his writings, too, he expressed this desire to ease the suffering of humanity. Myriel, Bishop of Digne in "Les Miserables" says, "Teach the ignorant as much as you can, society is guilty in not providing universal free education and it must answer for the night it produces. If the soul is left in darkness, sins will be committed. The guilty is not he who commits the sin, but the one who causes the darkness".

Hugo's attitude to both God and man is best summed up by the words contained in his will: "God. The Soul. Responsibility. This three-fold idea is sufficient for mankind. It has been sufficient for me. It is the true religion. I have lived in it. I die in it. Truth, light, justice, conscience. It is God... I shall close my earthly eyes but my spiritual ones will remain open wider than ever. I refuse the prayers of all churches. I ask for a prayer from every soul. I believe in God."

**Mahadevi**, after a disastrous marriage, alone and penniless but spurred on by her yearning for her Lord and her innate sense of justice and equality, journeyed to a spiritual centre founded by the great teacher, Basavanna. There, she became an outspoken supporter of his teachings, i.e. the inherent equality of all humans, the need to abolish the caste system and the need to wipe out the social customs that kept women from having the same rights and freedoms as men. Here in this community, her teachers helped her attain ever higher states of mystical union in an atmosphere of acceptance, freedom of thought and revolutionary ideas.

**St. John of the Cross**, before the age of 21, worked with the sick and dying in a hospital in Spain and upon being offered its chaplaincy, chose instead the vows of a Carmelite friar. Eventually, he joined the reform order of St. Teresa of Avila, whose goals were to move away from a life of affluence and return to prayer, contemplation and a way of life more likely to lead to mystical union. St. John's sense of detachment not only included the things of the world but also the desire for spiritual attachment. "True spirituality," he said, "seeks for God's sake that which is distasteful rather than that which is delectable; and inclines itself rather to suffering than to consolation; and desires to go without all blessings for God's sake rather than to possess them...For to seek oneself in God is to seek favors and refreshments of God." So committed was St. John to maintaining the necessary degree of detachment for union with God, he burned his letters from St. Teresa because he knew himself to be attached to them. Although St. John was often portrayed as austere to the extreme, he was also known for the love and tolerance he demonstrated for the sick, those who repeatedly faltered, all of whom he humbly served.

**Ralph Waldo Emerson**, who identified himself with every good movement, however unpopular (the Underground Railroad, the open letter to President Van Buren denouncing the expulsion of the Cherokee nation) believed that morality was Karmic law. "The constitution of the Universe," he said, "is on the side of the man who wills to do right. It is of no use to vote down gravitation or morals." He felt the same way about the existence of God - "God builds his temple in the heart on the ruins of churches and religions...we are born believing. A man bears beliefs as a tree bears apples." Emerson's sense of detachment is summed up in these words..."I have a house, a closet which holds my books, a stable, a garden, a field; are these, any and all, a reason for refusing the angel who beckons me away, as if there were no room or skylight elsewhere that could reproduce for me as my wants require?" Emerson's belief in God, his sense of oneness found expression in the poem, "The Sphinx",

"Sea, earth, air, sound, silence  
Plant, quadruped, bird  
By one music enchanted  
One deity stirred"

**St. Teresa of Avila**, in establishing her convent reformed the traditions which accorded the wealthy nuns privileges such as servants, better clothes, private quarters and the like, while the poorer nuns slept in dormitories. She encouraged a life of equality and humility among her sisters, discouraging attachment to honor, money, clothes, work and even thought. She offered to her people a guide to her inner life and her profound sense of the presence of God. "Finally," she wrote, "joy will reach such an excess that the soul will want to be a herald to the entire world that all might help it praise the Lord."

**Krishnamurti's** spiritual transformation led him to teach that all that is required of us is to be in a constant state of awareness, to be with "what is, as it is", to face who we are and not who we should be. He describes his experience as having "touched compassion which heals all sorrow and suffering; it is not for myself, but for the world...I have drunk at the fountain of Joy and Eternal Beauty...I am God-intoxicated."

He examines the states of attachment and detachment and explains the conflict of both in "Commentaries on Living, Series 1 & 2": "We are dependent or attached because it gives us pleasure, security, power, a sense of well-being, though in it there is sorrow and fear. We seek detachment also for pleasure, in order not to be hurt, not to be inwardly wounded. Our search is for pleasure, gratification. Without condemning or justifying, we must try to understand this process, for unless we understand it there is no way out of our confusion and contradiction. Can craving ever be satisfied, or is it a bottomless pit? Whether we crave for the low or the high, craving is always craving, a burning fire and what can be consumed by it soon becomes ashes; but craving for gratification still remains ever burning, ever consuming and there is no end to it. Attachment and detachment are equally binding and both must be transcended."

**Thomas Jefferson**, sometimes called the "Champion of the Free Mind" dedicated his life to the cause of religious freedom. His love for humanity was only slightly overshadowed by his devotion to his family. When he was only 20 years old he expressed his life-long faith in God to his friend, John Page - "Perfect happiness, I believe, was never intended by the Deity to be the lot of his creatures in this world; but that He has very much put in our power the nearness of our approach to it, is what I have steadfastly believed. The most fortunate of us, on our journey through life, frequently meet with calamities and misfortunes which may greatly affect us; and to fortify our minds against attacks of these calamities and misfortunes should be one of the principal studies and endeavors of our lives. The only method of doing this is to assume a perfect resignation to the Divine will, that to consider that, whatever does happen, must happen."

Like all truly enlightened individuals, Jefferson had faith that when informed with discretion through education, all people would live up to their responsibilities in society. "Man," he said, "was destined for society. His morality, therefore, was to be formed merely relative to this. This sense is as much a part of his nature as the sense of hearing, seeing, feeling...This moral sense, or conscience, is as much a part of men as a leg or an arm." His religious philosophy can also be compared to the ancient precept of yoga. He believed that happiness was the aim of life and that virtue, that is, the overcoming of desire and fear, was the foundation of that happiness. Far from employing a passive philosophy, Jefferson constantly strove to achieve this happiness through selfless action and encouraging all around him to do the same.

Page after page, biography after biography, it is a humbling experience to bear witness to the overwhelming similarities of character traits that these great teachers, writers, mystics possessed. Even more inspiring is to see the interwoven patterns of their thoughts and ideas; one learning from the other. Hugo, Jefferson and Emerson all examined ancient eastern philosophy deeply; Krishnamurti brought his heart and mind to the west. Gopi Krishna tells us - "Mystical vision, enlightenment and prophethood are the natural endowments of a more evolved human brain brought in tune with the spiritual realities of the universe."

## **Transformation of Consciousness**

The transformation of consciousness resulting from a mystical experience brings with it, along with an enhanced sense of morality, compassion and detachment, a continuum of experience, with the gifts of genius, inspired creativity and paranormal gifts on one end to revelation on the other. Often, this transformation manifests in new knowledge, revolutionary ideas, new forms of writing or art, and what the yogic tradition call "siddhis" or boons, i.e., paranormal gifts.

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**Walt Whitman's** poetry in itself was a departure from a standard literary style and its structure was a new and revolutionary expression. He brought the gift of physical and emotional healing in his extraordinary ministering to the wounded and dying soldiers of the American Civil War.

He prophesied the coming turbulence of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in his poem, "Starting from Paumanok"

"O expanding and swift! O henceforth,  
Elements, breeds, adjustments,  
turbulent, quick and audacious;  
A world primal again, vistas of glory,  
incessant and branching  
A new race, dominating previous ones,  
and grander far - with new contests,  
New politics, new literatures and  
religions, new inventions and arts  
These! My voice announcing - I will  
sleep no more, but arise;  
You oceans that have been calm  
within me! How I feel you,  
fathomless, stirring, preparing  
unprecedented waves and storms."

Whitman believed that sublime knowledge and enlightenment was accessible to all. "A prophet," he said, "is one whose mind bubbles and pours forth like a fountain from inner divine spontaneities revealing God...The great matter is to reveal and outpour the God-like suggestion pressing for birth in the soul."

After **Hildegarde of Bingen's** profound mystical experience in 1141, the voice in the vision commanded her to "say and write" what she "saw and heard" in her visions. At first she refused and as a result, she soon fell ill. The moment that she began to do as the voice within the light had commanded, her illness lifted and one of the most phenomenal creative outpourings in history began. Between her forty-third year and her death at the age of eighty-one, Hildegarde produced a monumental amount of literary, poetical, musical, medical and scientific material. In total she wrote three lengthy books on her visions, two books on medicine, a book depicting the cosmology of the world, two biographies of saints, liturgical poetry and the words and music to a cycle of over seventy songs. She wrote a mysterious and apparently unfinished dictionary containing the definitions of some 900 words that appear to be from a completely unknown language. Beyond all this, Hildegarde expressed herself artistically by illustrations (some done with the help of others) that depict elements from her visions.

In addition to her visionary, musical and medical writing, Hildegarde produced the very first morality play - a drama form that would become the standard for theatre in the Middle Ages. In his classic work, "From Magic to Science", written in 1958, Dr. Charles Singer gives Hildegarde a pivotal place in the history of science. He states that her writings on Cosmology "are heralds of the dawn of a new movement" and says that "with her we have left the Dark Ages and the Dawn of Science has begun."

Along with this new knowledge, Hildegarde was instrumental in the development of sapiential theology - a tradition in Christianity that focuses on the divine feminine that is expressed as Wisdom or Sophia in such texts as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Wisdom of Solomon.

**Victor Hugo's** exceptional gifts included a creative energy that often resulted in a staggering output. His daily schedule of exercise, writing, spending time with family and reading left little time for sleep. Even with only 3 or 4 hours sleep he would not stop work until he had finished 100 lines of poetry or 20 pages of prose. Yet he lived in good health and active creativity until his death at age 83.

His mystical and visionary attributes aside, Hugo stands as a great literary genius. In "Victor Hugo, A Tumultuous Life", Samuel Edwards summarized, "It is said even by his detractors, that no one ever expressed the French language in such a unique fashion...He was acclaimed as the greatest lyric poet of the century and one of the greatest who had ever lived. 'A Ville Quier' is a lyric elegy of unsurpassed beauty and is recognized as one of the greatest poems ever written in the French language."

Certainly, Hugo was a visionary. He once wrote that the complete poet is composed of these three visions: Humanity, Nature and the Supernatural. "Man always dreamed," he wrote, "always went beyond reality."

The divine inspiration that **Mahadevi** embodied was not only evident in her courage but in her creative expression. Her deepest yearnings resulted in the powerful imagery of her poems:

"For hunger,  
there is the town's rice in the begging bowl.  
For thirst,  
there are tanks, streams, wells.  
For sleep,  
there are the ruins of temples.  
For soul's company,  
I have you, O Lord  
White as Jasmine."

There can be no doubt that Mahadevi knew that she was receiving this inspiration from God:

"Knowledge is like the sun;  
Devotion, like his rays:  
Without the sun, there are no rays;  
Without the rays, no sun.  
So, how can ever be  
Devotion without knowledge, knowledge without  
Devotion, O Cenna Mallikajuna?"

Like many before and since, **St. John of the Cross** was transformed by his experience of illumination, becoming "a poet unsurpassed in the Spanish language". In the decade that followed his transformation, he completed his three major poems, "Dark Night of the Soul", "Spiritual Canticle", and "Living Flame of Love" and wrote lengthy treatises to explain them in detail. St. John has given the world a wealth of spiritual guidance, his writings give us but a glimpse into the depth and scope of his insights into the union of the soul with its creator. At his beatification process, a nun, M. Francesca de la Madre de Dios, testified that on two separate occasions when he was preaching, St. John was "rapt and lifted up from the ground". In addition to writing poems and treatises in record time, St. John knew the Bible by heart and completed a two-to-three year course in theology in one year. His literary style was quite unique and highly individualistic. E. Allison Peers, his biographer, concludes that, "nothing but natural genius could import the vigour and the clarity which enhance all of St. John of the Cross's arguments and nothing but his own deep and varied experience could have made him what he may well be termed - the greatest psychologist in the history of mysticism".

**Ralph Waldo Emerson**, it is said, was not a great writer, but he was a writer with a greatness of mind. He has been compared to Walt Whitman in that they both overcame the suppressive nature of their cultures and each produced a body of writing that was uniquely American. Emerson's belief that science and religion could be unified was a revolutionary concept. In his outstanding work, "The Esoteric Emerson", Richard Geldard explains: "In our secular world Emerson's world view is lumped into so-called paranormal phenomena and is often discredited as sentimentalism. In science the subtle is merely what is yet to be fixed by experimentation and demonstrable proof. For Emerson, subtle meant unseen, what had to be intuitively known. It also meant "real" and he defined it as a "source of energy by which life was generated and sustained."

Emerson's gift of genius might not be original in thought but there was originality and beauty in its expression. A precocious child, an unusually thoughtful young man, Emerson's genius matured in his mid-30s with the publication of "Nature". His essays and poems were a marvel of intellectual clarity, depth and range; their vision, revelations and practical wisdom causing one biographer, George Woodbury, to say, "No man rises from reading him without feeling more unshackled."

Stephen Whicher calls Emerson's idea of man's entire independence one of the most startling new notes in American literature - "The aim of this strain in his thought is not virtue, but freedom and mastery. It is radically anarchic, overthrowing all the authority of the past, all compromise or co-operation with others in the name of the Power present and agent in the Soul."

The expansion of consciousness attendant to the mystical experience, **St. Teresa of Avila** explains with a warning to the beginning spiritual seeker: "There is another kind of rapture - I call it flight of the spirit - which though substantially the same as other raptures, is interiorly experienced very differently. For sometimes suddenly a movement of the soul is felt so swift that it seems the spirit is carried off, and at a fearful speed especially in the beginning. This is why I have told you that strong courage is necessary for the one to whom God grants these favors and even faith and confidence and a full surrender to our Lord so that He may do what He wants with the Soul."

St. Teresa of Avila wrote about her mystical experiences in the language of her people and displayed her genius by expressing the ineffable in a way that could capture the essence of her spiritual life. She wrote spontaneously with very little erasing nor revising her words and her work belongs in the top echelon of Spanish literature. "The Interior Castle" stands as an example of divine inspiration and a practical road map to a spiritual transformation.

After **Krishnamurti's** mystical experience in 1921, people who had known him from an early age reported that the change in him was marked. Mary Lutyens, his biographer, called him "almost vacant" in his early years. But in the years 1926 to 1931, Krishnamurti wrote sixty poems. From 1926 until his passing in 1986, he gave innumerable talks world-wide, published dozens of books and founded eight schools.

From a very early age, Krishnamurti had a tendency to be clairvoyant, seeing deceased and absent loved ones, occurrences that could be brushed off as fanciful if they hadn't been witnessed in some cases. When asked about his ability, he said it was a faculty he could still have but did not choose to. He felt the ability was a distraction from real spiritual development.

According to Mary Lutyens, he also had the power of healing. Krishnamurti had written to friends years earlier that he had success in this area but later down-played the assertion because he did not wish to be known as a healer. He emphasized throughout his teaching that internal personal growth is far more important than development of psychic abilities. He never rehearsed his teaching - "It is like what the Bible terms revelation", he said "It happens all the time I am talking. This simple person Krishnamurti has not come to the teaching through thought. The core of his teaching is that each individual must hold a mirror to his own consciousness and strive to develop freedom. There is a direct line to Truth within each individual."

**Thomas Jefferson**, author of the Declaration of Independence, mastermind behind the historic expeditions of Lewis and Clark, architect and founder of a great University, was also an accomplished naturalist, musician, inventor and lawyer. He could converse expertly on art, science, religion, physics, astronomy and literature. He spoke several languages fluently and could read the classics in the original Greek and Latin. These astonishing gifts of genius have been documented in numerous volumes over the years. Was Jefferson a prophet, also? In his writings, he often predicted the evils, upheavals and disasters that later came upon the

American people in consequence of violation of economic balance, political justice and social fair dealing. His mind was always open and young. Phillips Russell writes, "One of Jefferson's distinctions was that increasing age found him neither cynical nor conservative. During a long life, he remained an inquirer and student."

This has been but a brief examination of the lives of enlightened mystics and extraordinary geniuses. Some diversity in the accounts of their experiences are due to variations in mental levels, ideas, and cultural development but the common features of the characteristics displayed certainly give credence to the Kundalini hypothesis. Research into the kundalini phenomenon remains embryonic at this stage but its importance for our planet cannot be overestimated. **Gopi Krishna** makes this prediction - "The possibilities inherent in Kundalini are unlimited. Its implications in respect of every sphere of human life are enormous. What the seekers often believe to be a power they can activate for their own spiritual or material benefit, is the Power that rules the Universe, the Infinite Intelligence of which we are a tiny speck. Once the existence of an organic evolutionary mechanism in human beings is confirmed, Kundalini will assume an importance that is unimaginable at present. It will decisively influence every field of human activity and thought. The whole atmosphere of the earth will be saturated with the idea that man is a pilgrim on the way to the Shrine of God-Consciousness."