

## Mystical journey of self: a case study of Lal Ded

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### ABSTRACT

Mystical experience is a fundamental category of human experience which psychologically speaking manifests itself whenever consciousness is not yet or no longer effectively centered around the ego. This involves disintegration and a remolding of a fragmented self, which is an inherently difficult yet eventually enriching process that molds the personality and life into a whole. In the present paper, the sayings and hagiographic accounts of Lal Ded, a fourteenth century mystic-poetess from Kashmir have been analyzed using the method of archetypal amplification to develop an understanding of her journey as a case study of how one can move through psychological turmoil and transform into an individual leading a more meaningful and spiritual life.

*Keywords: Mysticism, Consciousness, Self, Spirituality.*

The subject of the current paper is not mysticism or any of the myriads of forms in which it manifests itself but with the man or in this case the woman Lal Ded, a fourteenth century mystic from Kashmir in whom the mystical phenomena manifests. This paper is an attempt at understanding how psychological turmoil can be a precursor of a more holistic and spiritual life. For this purpose, two of Lal Ded's vakhs (sayings) and one hagiographic incident of her life has been taken up for analysis from a Jungian perspective.

Modern sciences including the fields of psychiatry and psychology have for the most part been prejudiced against any and all forms of spirituality. This is especially so in the case of direct mystical experiences of the transcendental nature. There are numerous books and articles available where attempts have been made to clinically diagnose spiritual stalwarts and visionaries belonging to different religious denominations and cultures. With the development of transpersonal psychology, the fourth force in psychology emergent in the late 1960's and the consequence of their collection of paradigm breaking data slowly but surely a space is being created to acknowledge these experiences as "they are ontologically real and contain information about important ordinarily hidden dimensions of existence which can be consensually validated" (Grof, 2000). Stanislav Grof coined the term, 'Holotropic' for this special category of non-ordinary experiences. Holotropic means "oriented towards wholeness" (Grof, 1992). He suggests that in these states we can transcend narrow boundaries of the body ego and encounter a rich spectrum of transpersonal experiences that help us reclaim our full identity (Grof, 2008). These experiences include

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experiences of shamans and their clients, spiritual practitioners and mystics of all ages and individuals in psycho-spiritual crisis (Grof & Grof, 1991).

Before the emergence of transpersonal psychology, Carl Gustav Jung was the voice in the field of psychology who acknowledged the worth of all kinds of religious and mystical experiences. Jung said, “I did not attribute religious function to the soul, I merely produced facts which prove that the soul is *naturaliter religiosa*, i.e. possesses a religious function. I did not invent or interpret this function; it produces itself of its own accord without being prompted thereto by opinions or suggestions of mine” (Jacobi, 1953). Jung was of the opinion that it was pointless to preach about the divine light if no one had the ability to see the same. According to him it was of much more importance to actually teach this very art of seeing as far too many people are incapable of seeing the connection between the sacred figures and their own psyche and they are unable to fathom how many equivalent images lie dormant in one’s unconscious. He suggested a clearing of the way for the faculty of seeing which will then facilitate the inner vision. And this cannot be done without making contact with psyche or psychology.

Erich Neumann in a paper presented at an Eranos Conference of 1948 entitled “The Mystical Man” (1968), introduces a new way to look at mystical experiences and mysticism from the perspective of analytical psychology. He proposed the development of ‘mystical Anthropology’ in which he defines as a doctrine of mystical man as a part of general theory of man. Mysticism for him then is not purely the religious, ecstatic inward kind but “mystical is rather a fundamental category of human experience which psychologically speaking manifests itself whenever consciousness is not yet or no longer effectively centered around ego” (Neumann, 1968).

Neumann suggests that development of humanity is essentially a journey towards consciousness and that the ego we have been able to develop is a relatively independent ego that functions as the center of a system of consciousness after an arduous and long process of differentiation. What makes this journey particularly difficult is the fact that it is in complete conflict with the unconscious. The formation of consciousness and ego is possible only after a battle with the engulfing powers of the unconscious. Thus “the heroic road of mankind – for heroic it is, in spite of imperfection- is the road to clarity, differentiation and responsible awareness of the ego” (Neumann, 1968).

About the process of formation of consciousness Neumann writes, ego is first defeated by the unconscious and then comes out victorious. This conflict takes place in two parts. One part of the battle is fought by the heroic action of the ego, which does not depart from its position in the center of consciousness. It takes possession of the unconscious content and draws them to the realm of the consciousness elaborates on them and uses them for construction of a conscious world picture. The second part of the battle Neumann states is the perilous one; where the ego descends into the depth of the unconscious where it encounters the non-ego. The development of the ego and the consciousness is dependent on the spontaneity of the non-ego, which manifests itself in creative process and is by nature numinous. This encounter with the numinous which leads to eventual development of the consciousness is by its very nature mystical.

Talking about this numinous encounter, Neumann notes that it is characteristic of the creative process that the ego must give up its position in the consciousness, take a plunge into the unconscious and encounter the non-ego. The encounter between ego and non-ego leads to a

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suspension of contradictions of world: ego and self. He further adds that in order to experience this paradoxical reality the personality will have to transform itself, assuming an attitude which leaves open the possibility of a union of ego and non-ego. Whenever this occurs, we can designate it as mystical.

Neumann goes on to discuss this numinous experience in more depth and reflects on how such encounters are also mystical experiences. He shares that the numinous content has power of fascination, a richness which is much beyond the capability of the consciousness to apprehend and a charge of energy which can overpower the consciousness. This is the reason why often an encounter with the numinous leads to an upheaval which goes beyond the consciousness and encompasses the total personality. He states that “in every confrontation of the ego with the numinous a situation arises in which the ego goes ‘outside itself’; it falls or is wrenched out of its shell of consciousness and can return ‘to itself’ only in changed form” (Neumann, 1968). This numinous encounter paves a way for the emergence of a creative void in man, which could be understood as a state beyond consciousness. The encounter with the numinous can take a character of an epiphany whose creative product then becomes a revelation. What is noteworthy is that besides religion, cult and rituals, revelation also gives us other gifts such as arts and morality.

Neumann notes that for every consciousness and ego, numinous is entirely different, it is indeterminable and free. Emerging as it does in a zone diametrically opposite to the consciousness; *numen* is evasive and indefinable. This accounts for the uncertainty of man’s ego position but also makes possible a creative revolution of the human personality. He also shares that side by side with the revelation and with the creative achievement which as a cultural phenomenon is characteristic of human species, stands a third and decisive form of mystical encounter between the ego and non-ego: metamorphosis. Encounter with the *numen* brings about a transformation; first it transforms the man in whom the *numen* appears and then the two poles of the encounter, the ego and the non-ego are also transformed as the division between the two ceases to exist from both the side. This transformation through the appearance of the *numen* detaches the ego from the old system of consciousness and its old relation to the world but there is a price to pay. And this price is the renunciation of the security provided by the conscious orientation and entrance into the fundamental paradox of the mystical.

Neumann shares that for the ego the mystical encounter with the non-ego is always an extreme experience as in it the ego always moves towards something outside of the consciousness and its rationally communicable world. This area from the perspective of the total personality, which it transformed, is the creative heart. However only from the viewpoint of the consciousness it is an area of nothingness. It is the sacred temple in man. It is as in Canaanite mythology, the focal point where El, the great God sits. Neumann notes that this creative void stands at the center of mystical anthropology as part of a depth psychology concerned with the nature of creative process, at the same time it stands at the center of all mystical experiences which circles around the hiddenness of the godhead, Analytical psychology calls this center the Self.

In its individuation, the personality no longer experiences itself as the ego, or solely as ego, but at the same time as non-ego or ego-self. Neumann notes that the mystic realizes this hidden point and he/she suffers trying to express this point, the psychological nucleus of the self, which remains unattainable even when ego plunges into it, which is paradoxically timeless even though it seems to constitute of time which although transpersonal is the

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center of personality and which constitutes the numinous essence of man. This situation appears as a paradox from the stand point of the ego consciousness but is not a paradox for the living personality manifests and causes problems of identity, 'who is who?' becomes the central problem often a question of life and death, sanity or madness.

Regarding the nature of the change in personality caused by the mystical experience Neumann is of the opinion that it is on a continuum ranging from a momentary trance to a lasting transformation. It can be an orderly process or a chaotic direction less irruption which destroys the personality in a flash. At the same time, it can manifest itself as religious expression, love, artistic creation, a great idea etc. Although the manifestation may vary what is certain that whenever a mystical element is manifested, the previously accepted rigidity of a world ordered around an ego is shattered and a dynamically changed or changing world behind the world is revealed.

Finally, Neumann writes that every experience of the numinous leads a more or less restricted form of the experience of Self which means that although the ego here experiences the non-ego in a restricted form, it nevertheless affected by the numinous experience involving the totality of the psyche. This also forms the basis of primitive religion. Man can experience the numinous, or in a higher plane a god or the god in everything and anything. Experienced in this way the whole is numinous: "every place, everything, every situation and every living creature, for they are all potential bearers of the 'sparks' as the Hasidim said capable of kindling and illuminating the human personality" (Neumann, 1968).

### *Lal Ded: An Introduction*

Lalleshwari, better known as Lal Ded, which translates as grandmother Lalla, is considered to be the mother and forerunner of medieval mystical tradition in the region and along with it the modern Kashmiri language. The life of Lal Ded is shrouded in myth and legend and there is disagreement within the scholars about her date of birth and the place of her birth. We have three dates— 1300-01, 1334-335 and 1346-47; while we have two possible places of birth— *Sempore* (near *Pampore*) and *Pandrenthan*. All legends agree that she was born in a Brahman family, where she imbibed an atmosphere of piety and came under the influence of Siddha Mol, her guru from whom she learnt certain spiritual disciplines. She was married to Nica Bhatt, a Brahman of Pampore. Her husband and mother in-law cruelly treated her. There is a persistent legend that when Lal Ded left her husband's home, she wandered naked dancing and singing in ecstatic frenzy. Another meaning of '*Lal*' in Kashmiri is an unnatural growth. It is noted that after she left her marital abode behind and started wandering naked Lal's belly grew like a hanging lump of fleshy cloak down to her knees to cover her private parts. There is also a great deal of controversy as regards to Lal's philosophy. Some scholars call her a follower of the Kashmir branch of the *Shaiva* religion. Others have tried to establish that she was influenced by *Hathayoga*, *Buddhism* or *Shankaracharya*. There are also longstanding legends recorded in Persian chronicles that she accepted Islam and was a follower of Shah Hamadan who took refuge in Kashmir from Timur's persecution. Many remember her as a Sufi and a Wali. In 1885, Pir Ghulam Hasan summed up the argument in his *Tarikh-i-Hasan*: "The Hindus say that she is one of them. The Musalmans claim that she belongs to them. The truth is that she is among the chosen of god, May god's peace be upon her" (Kaul, 1973).

Lal Ded lived as a wandering ascetic, seeking and seeing god everywhere. She is said to have died around the age of 71 behind the wall of *Juma Masjid* at *Vejibror* on the highway to *Jammu*, 28 miles from *Srinagar*. She passed away leaving not a trail behind. There is no

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*Samadhi* or *Maqbara* to mark the place where she was cremated or laid to rest. Lal Ded helped Kashmiris to discover their mother tongue and their soul as people. She opened new channels of communication between the elite and the common people and more importantly among the common people themselves.

Lal Ded's vakhs are a significant landmark in the linguistic transition from old to modern Kashmiri. Grierson (2013) even claims that they are the oldest known specimen of the Kashmiri language. The vakh is usually a four-line stanza, complete and independent in itself, a sententious gnomic verse. The sense of vakh seldom runs on into another stanza. There are however several vakhs that have a common theme and a few are in the form of questions and answers. They are intended to make the listener think and reflect. She is talking in the common man's language but she is describing something personal and almost indescribable hence these vakhs are aphoristic, even cryptic at times, embodying rare spiritual experiences.

Her vakh and their spirit pervade the countryside. Poets and Mystics, both Hindus and Muslims alike have paid tribute to her in their writings over the last four centuries. Lal Ded's vakhs have the modern quality of interrogation and expostulation. They are modern also as they come alive for us even today; they are still recited and read in the times of trouble and confusion by the members of the community. It is still a living tradition where in the older generation passes on the vakhs and stories associated with Lal Ded to younger generation orally like it happened in my own personal home.

### **METHODOLOGY**

Carl Jung prescribed a constructive approach towards interpretation and analysis of psychic activity. By constructive he meant based on its goal or purpose rather than its cause and source. He said, "I use constructive and synthetic to designate a method that is antithesis of reductive. The constructive method is concerned with elaboration of the products of the unconscious (dreams, fantasies etc). It takes the unconscious product as a symbolic expression which anticipates a coming phase of psychological development" (Jung, 1971). He also believed that the contents need to be analyzed in a symbolic manner only then we can go to the sub soil of human psyche from which the human life emerges. With these points in mind Jung developed certain specialized techniques for data analysis. For the present study the technique used is called Archetypal Amplification.

Jung says that "[The Archetypes] exist preconsciously, and presumably they form the structural dominants of the psyche in general. They maybe compared to the invisible presence of the crystal lattice in a saturated solution" (Jung, 1970). They act as a magnetic field directing the unconscious behavior of the personality through the pattern of behavior set up by the instincts; it also operates as a pattern of vision in the consciousness, ordering the psychic material into symbolic images. A research in the world of the archetypes can be known only through the method of amplification; "for only through "amplification"- method of comparative morphological psychology, which interprets analogous material from the most varied spheres of religious history, archeology, pre-historic studies, ethnology and so on- can we reach an understanding of the archetypes and the individual symbols. However, the true objective of our inquiry is the symbolic self-representation of the archetype that has passed through the medium of man, and that speaks to us from images fashioned sometimes unconsciously and sometimes consciously" (Neumann, 1991).

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### *Analysis*

The following incidence is one of the most famous ones associated with Lal Ded. It is talking about a critical moment in her spiritual journey wherein she finally chooses between domestic life and a life of a contemplative.

“Lal Ded used to go out early in the morning, crossing the river without her feet dipping into the water and sat at the ghat of Zinpura village at the place where there is the shrine of *Natta Keshva Bhairava*, at present marked by a mulberry tree. There, after her ablution, she remained in communion with God. Her husband being suspicious of her once went quietly after her to see where she had gone. He saw her going to and sitting alone at the above place. He never knew, nor could he read, her purpose. Leaving the house before the dawn and sitting alone on the river bank was, he thought, nothing short of madness. He got angry at this. When after meditation for some time, she returned with an earthen pot full of water on her head, he, in his rage, struck it with a stick. The pot broke into pieces, but the water was not spilt and remained perfectly still on her head. She then came into the house, filled all the empty pots with this water and yet it was not exhausted. Then she threw down the remainder of the water outside the house and a pond was formed of it. This pond exists even now and is called Lal Trag” (Koul, 1921).

Rivers since time immemorial have been the cradle of civilizations, which have sprung on their banks offering various gifts like freshening water, fish, fertile soil and waterways. They have been abodes of immortals that provided the gifts of purity, cleansing grace and a mythic passage to the other shore. In this incident the river symbolizes the boundary between the mundane world and the sacred world. On one side is the mundane world where Lal Ded participated in her household life, while to be in communion with divine she has to go across to the other shore. She is making multiple forays back and forth across the two aspects of life that is, mundane and sacred. Yet her feet don't get wet pointing to the fact that despite her forays back and forth between the two shores she is not stained by the mundane world and its activities. Taking this imagery to the realm of the psyche, crossing a river is a metaphor for the act of an individual travelling between the mind's two shores, the conscious and the familiar and the unconscious the farther shore. Also supporting this hypothesis is the next part of the instance where she is crossing the river and sits to meditate under a tree. This journey that Lal Ded undertakes hence is at two levels: one on the outside and one in the inside. On the outside she ritualistically moving away from civilization for a period of time so that she can practice making the inner journey by turning her attention from the outside world to the inner sanctum of her soul.

This image of an individual sitting under a tree to meditate is an intrinsic part of Indian culture and civilization. Buddha gained enlightenment meditating under a Bodhi tree, while the image of Lord Shiva as *Dakshinamurthi* under a *Peepal* tree meditating is the earliest known example of the same. These images represent the archaic beginning of a journey one undertakes within that is the mystical journey— as the masters have done before so shall the novice do now highlight the continuity of mystical tradition. The spot where Lal Ded went to meditate is now marked by a mulberry tree holds added significance as this particular tree is not only widely found in the region but is also an integral part of culture and rituals of Kashmiri Pandits.

The pitcher or the pot has long been considered a feminine symbol. Round and hollow made with the earth, which was identified closely with the great mother goddess and had her attributes: it contains, protects, gestates, nourishes and gives gifts. The hollowness allows it

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to contain the cosmic waters as the feminine receptive principle, the life source. The pot also symbolizes an individual's outward persona, the vessel for the spirit inside like the water. As the famous mystic poet Kabir said in his doha "*Kabira kuan ek hai, aur paani bhare anek bhande main hi bhed hai paani sab main ek*". Lal Ded carried the pot back home from the river not only filled with fresh water but she also brought back with her a rejuvenated spirit and essence she received from her communion with the divine.

The reaction of her husband to this act is suggestive of his inability to understand her. People misunderstand religious behavior especially when an individual, steps out of a given religious boundaries and prescribed behavior into a life of the contemplative. The husband in the incident can be understood at two levels. On one level, the earthy husband becomes the animus image. Carl Jung suggests one of the functions of dreams is to rectify a situation, similarly this incident seems to be rectifying Lal Ded's situation. Her family life was full of discontent and grief. So here, the husband acting as a facilitator is breaking the pot and freeing her from the emotional earthly bond. The second level is husband as active action animus. As she returns from meditation this action animus breaks the earthly pot leaving only pure spirit behind. This indicates an important change, in a way waking up a dreamer from a sleep or in this case, providing impetus to move to the next level of spirituality for the contemplative, Lal Ded. This signals to an important change in the life of Lal Ded as she can no longer go on living with the same identity and values. Her life will no longer be driven by the rules and regulations of the society but rather her actions will be driven by the calling of her soul.

At the end of the incident having attained the spirit and enlightenment she comes back crossing again into the mundane world, to fill the life of others of her time with the spirit. She fills the pots of others yet still the spirit is not exhausted, which means she created a reservoir of the spirit and left for us that legacy. A parallel of Lal Ded and her inexhaustible pot is found in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, which talks about "a Treasure Vase" or "Bhumpa" which symbolizes Buddha's infinite quality of teaching dharma: no matter how many teachings he shared, the spiritual abundance and treasure never lessened. This last part points to the fact that although the journey of a mystic is a journey of an individual, yet the spiritual abundance usually transcends the individual. The mystic in transforming and healing herself lays down the way and leaves behind legacy so that long after she is gone, seekers who follow her path too can experience the transformation and healing like she did.

### *Vakhs*

"One has to bear lightening flashes and thunderbolt,  
One has to put up with pitch darkness at mid-day:  
Forbearance is tantamount to getting ground to powder between the mill stone,  
(If one can stand all this), contentment and peace attend on you" (Parimoo, 1978).

In the first line of the verse Lal Ded is talking about withstanding lightening and thunderbolts. Lightening is dazzling, fast, often unexpected and has the ability to kill. In Kashmiri culture the word '*Trath*' means to be struck by lightning is used as a metaphor of befalling of tragedy. While usually seen as a destructive force of nature, nonetheless it has a positive side as well. The Chinese symbol for lightening is Shen, which refers to the positive expansive forces of the universe, which coming along with rain support life on earth (Eliade, 1987). The especially destructive aspect of lightening is imagined as a thunderbolt. It can split trees, start fires, shatter buildings and strike people dead. It has the capacity to 'level' and often it strikes the highest object in its path. Lightening is also seen as a revelation of the

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divine or an omen of disaster, sometimes signaling advance of storms, followed by deafening sound of thunder, evoking overpowering shifts in the physical or psychic landscapes (Jung, 1969). The shamanic traditions talk about the mystical experience of *Qaumaneq* (Lightening) which contacts the unconscious opening the psychic realms of clairvoyance, (Eliade, 1987). In Hindu and Buddhist mythology, lightning bolt is the “Vajra” a weapon of spiritual transformation, which destroys ego’s inflated illusions (Beer, 1999). Essentially lightening is illumination, it in-breaking of nature, electrifying, as our intuition “comes in a flash” as does insights, and inspirations, they represent our own cloud to ground enlightenment, (Ronnberg and Martin, 2010).

Further she shares her experience of pitch darkness at mid-day. She is juxtaposing the opposite of mid-day and darkness and to be able to simultaneously and successfully experience them at the same time. Human beings are biologically tuned to the changes of day and night these changes in have a biological effect on mankind and this effect is known as circadian rhythms. This adaptation was necessary for the very survival and the eventual advancement of human species. Carl Jung in his book, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (1933) compares the life of an individual with the stages of a day. The sun symbolizes the consciousness of man. In the morning, the sun:

"Rises from the nocturnal sea of consciousness and looks upon the wide, bright world which lies before it in an expanse that steadily widens the higher it climbs in the firmament. In this extension of its field of action caused by its own rising, the sun will discover its significance; it will see the attainment of the greatest possible height - the widest possible dissemination of its blessings - as its goal. In this conviction the sun pursues its unforeseen course to the zenith; unforeseen, because its career is unique and individual, and its culminating point could not be calculated in advance. At the stroke of noon, the descent begins. And the descent means the reversal of all the ideals and values that were cherished in the morning, the sun falls into contradiction with itself. It is as though it should draw in its rays instead of emitting them. Light and warmth decline and are at last extinguished" (Jung, 1933).

At noon, the sun (consciousness) is at its highest point above the earth, its zenith. In the afternoon, the sun declines until night falls and darkness, which represents death to Jung arrives. Daytime is related to the masculine, active principle and to the conscious state within mankind. In contrast, darkness and nighttime is related to the feminine and unconscious principle.

Darkness is most simply understood as an absence of light. Light is clarifying and delineating and the world comes into being at daybreak while darkness absorbs many different wave length of light and merges them into one. It evokes the formlessness of the beginning. “Darkness there was” the Rig Veda says “At first concealed in darkness this all was in discriminated chaos”, (Rig Veda, 10:129). Hesiod called night "the mother of the gods" because the Greeks believed that night and darkness preceded the creation of all things. In alchemy, the stage of nigredo is a stage in which the ego is confronted not only with the weight of its earthiness and un-lived possibilities but more importantly with its own capacity for evil, (Ronnberg and Martin 2010). Fourth Century Christian Thinker, Gregory of Nyssa, has seen sun as source of reason and logic. He shares that “only after one has quenched the light of reasoning mind that one may enter most immediately into the presence and knowledge of divine. He notes that Moses’ vision of god began with light and

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afterwards god spoke to him in a cloud but when he rose higher and became more perfect, he saw god in the Darkness” (Danielou & Musurillo, 1979).

Darkness is the precinct of initiation, where one comes face to face with the agony and muted rapture of death and (re)birth; it is darkness of paradox and ambiguity. The voluntary experience of this initiatory darkness, to endure all of its enshrouding is about learning to walk the path without the ability to see where one is headed. It's about a new set of skills, seeing and hearing accurately in darkness, which would require development of special sense organs for the same. If one is successful in the endeavor the individual is rewarded with all the treasures hidden there. Consequently, transforming darkness into a familiar source of transformation, inspiration, growth, healing to which we gratefully return repeatedly.

Further, she expresses her anguish as like that of the grain being ground to a powder between millstones. B.N.Parimoo in his book, *The Ascent of Self* (1978), explains this line as “Patience is like getting grounded between two mill stones: the lower one the immovable strength of faith and the upper one of the antagonistic forces bent upon pulverizing you. Her patience seems to have been the compound of faith and hope. Patience would pave the way to contentment and peace, she says”, (Parimoo, 1978). As the wheat grains get grounded in mill stones, they undergo a physical transformation, which causes the grains to transform into flour which is more pliable, consumable and digestible. However, this process is long drawn and painful to say the least and hence holding on to one's faith and optimism is the only way one can come out of the other side transformed and experience contentment. Hence she ends this vakh on a positive note, asking individuals walking the path to hold on, have faith when nothing seems right and you face “darkness” at noon and you feel that you might be overwhelmed have patience because know that things are about to change, just as the night is darkest before dawn, similarly this night will lead you to a new day.

“I, Lalla came through the gate of my soul's jasmine garden  
And found Shiva and Shakti there, locked in love!  
Drunk with Joy, I threw myself into the lake of nectar.  
Who cares if I'm dead woman walking!” (Hokoste, 2011)

Lal Ded in this vakh by saying she came through the gate of my soul's jasmine garden. Being hallmarks of spring and signs of renewal and awakening flowers bring forth a hermaphroditic quality of joining of opposites in self-becoming. They bridge the gap between the dualities of manifest and latent world, the world below and world above and also between potentialities and active generation. Thus, flower here is symbolic of soul and at the same time ends up sanctifying the inner duality that must be transcended into union and wholeness for experience of true spiritual bliss. The jasmine flower is used as a bridal flower in Hindu weddings, and it is frequently used in religious ceremonies. In essence it promises an everlasting love, hope and divinity itself sanctifying her experience of oncoming divine love and embrace. Jasmine as a flower is also connected to the worship of Lord Shiva. *Mallikarjun* Jyotirlinga in Srisailam, Andhra Pradesh is referred to as one of the twelve *Jyothirlingas* of Lord Shiva and as one of the eighteen *shaktipeethas* of goddess Parvati. It is the only temple in India, which is revered as both jyotirlinga and *shaktipeeth*. Shiva is worshiped as *Mallikarjun* and is represented by the lingam. His consort Parvati is depicted as *Brahmaramba*. The word '*Mallikarjuna*' can be translated as Arjuna, lord of Jasmine or Lord as white as Jasmine. As per legend, the presiding deity, Lord Shiva in the form of Lingam was worshipped with jasmine (locally called Mallika), leading to the name

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of presiding deity as *Mallikarjun*. Also, it is worth noting that in the catholic canonization the fragrant smell indicates towards a blessed and venerable nature of the person.

The union of Shiva and Shakti is symbol rooted in Tantric traditions, which symbolizes the union of opposites leading to creation. Carl Jung says, “An archetypal drama of death and rebirth lies hidden in the conjunction, as the union of two produces a third” (Jung, 1970). Throughout the world similar images can be found, like the famous symbol of Yin and Yang in Chinese mythology or Yab Yum in Tibetan mythology which represents the primordial union of wisdom and compassion, depicted as a male deity in sexual union with his female consort. The male figure represents compassion and skillful means, while the female partner represents insight. Another parallel can be found in the iconography of Christian church where Mother Mary is shown in union with the Holy Spirit.

Paul E. Murphy in his book, *Triadic Mysticism* (1986), explains this image from the perspective of Kashmir Shaivism as “the union of Shiva and Shakti is the highest form of the Supreme Self, and Lalla discovers them in the tranquil repose of loving union within her own self- the ‘Joy’ of her soul... this is then is Siva the archetype, mater of yoga and the supernatural powers who reduces to ashes the god of carnal love. But beyond him is the ineffable Tremendous God. Yielding to this Absolute, the relinquinsher heroically follows the path of emptiness and undifferentiation- the dark and painful night of Shiva opening upon the night of inexpressible joy and silent bewilderment” (Murphy,1986).

A garden is similar to a park but it is more associated with an individual rather than public as they are attached to houses rather than cities. Referring to her soul as the garden Lal Ded sanctifies her soul as her personal cultivation of divine. It is not untended wild growth but her own careful cultivation of her psyche and nourished sense of self. In her work Dr Clarissa Pinkola Estes suggests that for women gardens are personal sacred sanctuaries that lead them to a more personal experience with their life/death/life nature. She suggests that in nature and psychological life, life death and life are not absolute and transform into one another. Death does not end prior to life but rather gives birth to newer life in a different, highly possible more evolved form. She suggests this letting live and letting die is very important. It is this natural and basic rhythm which women are meant to understand and live (Estes, 1992). She says, “a garden is a concrete connection to life and death. It teaches profound psychological and spiritual lessons. Whatever can happen to the garden can happen to the soul and psyche- too much water, too little water, bugs, heat... healing. The garden is a meditation practice that of saying when it is time for something to die. In the garden one can see time coming for both fruition and for dying back... through this meditation we acknowledge that the life /death/ life cycle is natural one...” (Estes, 1992).

Thus, understanding our soul as the garden also enriches our understanding of the deeper truth that the soul must undergo symbolic deaths from time to time in order to attain a renewal. Hence towards the end of the verse we see Lal Ded referring to herself as a dead woman walking. Her death is first of all not a sad shallow experience of a dismal end but an ecstatic one of inner transformation that she experiences once she is able to visit the inner sacred sanctuary of her soul and experience a mystical inner union.

The love of the lord that a mystic seeks is not an external love of a stone deity but an inner experience of divine bliss and unity. Lal Ded’s experience of cosmic unity leads her to a state of divine bliss symbolized by her expression of being drunk with joy and throwing herself into the lake of nectar. Nectar the drink of gods is also a transformed essence of-life

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experience- the spirit existing within the physical. It is a living and transforming living energy that can heal and uplift. The inner union of gods ensures that Lal Ded will open herself and experience her own eternal nature to which she plunges herself joyfully. Once she throws herself into the lake of cosmic bliss, she became a “dead woman walking” that is to say that her entire sense of being went through a radical sense of transformation and she moved towards a more awakened sense of being.

### **CONCLUDING REMARKS**

“A man is ill, but the illness is nature’s attempt to heal him” (Jung, 1970). Sometimes one needs an illness to realize the importance of taking care of one’s body and same is true in case of our psychological health. Lal Ded lived in a tumultuous time; women were kept within confines of her domestic life. From being a woman married to man who doesn’t understand her or her spiritual leanings to probably being the only well regarded mystic and contemplative in that era; sitting across men of spiritual status across religious traditions and debating on spiritual matters could not have happened had she not experienced the discomfort and distress of not answering her calling. As was the case it was this psychological disequilibrium, which led to her to take an action; finally walking out of her domestic life and progressing on to the next phase of life as a contemplative. Jung reflects on the issue of answering the call and says, “What, in the last analysis induces a man to choose his own way and so to climb out of the unconscious identity with the mass as out of a fog bank? It cannot be necessity, for necessity comes to many and they all save themselves in convection. It cannot be moral choice, for as a rule a man decides for convection. What then it is, that inexorably tilts the beam in favor of the extraordinary? - It is what is called the vocation: an irrational factor that fatefully forces a man to emancipate himself from the herd and its trodden path. True personality always has vocation and believes in it, has fidelity to it as to God, in spite of the fact that, as ordinary man would say, it is only a feeling of individual vocation. But this vocation acts like a law of God from which there is no escape. That many go to ruin upon their own ways means nothing to him who has vocation. He must obey his own law, as if it were a demon that whisperingly indicated to him new and strange ways. Who has vocation hears the voice of the inner man; he is called” (Jacobi, 1953).

The term vocation comes from Latin *vocātiō*, meaning 'a call, summons'. It is an occupation to which a person is specially drawn or for which they are suited, trained, or qualified. Though now often used in non-religious contexts, the meanings of the term originated in Christianity. The idea of vocation is central to the Christian belief that God has created each person with gifts and talents oriented toward specific purposes and a way of life. Jung describes vocation like a ‘law of God from which there is no escape’ he is alluding to its power of fascination, and to a charge of energy it possesses which can overpower the consciousness. Man, who is called and finds his vocation then has a numinous and mystical experience. Jung calls it the ‘voice of the inner man’; this inner man is what we call the self in analytical psychology. It is the divine spark in us our transpersonal center.

As shown by the hagiographic incident, Lal Ded took her time deciphering her calling in life. There was a lot of back and forth movement both psychologically and in the outer world. She also attempted to somehow manage the two worlds mundane and the sacred together. However, when the call finally came when the time was ripe, the transformation happened. The change in life situation was abrupt; the severing of the marital and worldly ties was swift and clean. This was her first experience of the self, and the beginning of her mystical journey.

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The two verses that have been analyzed in the present paper are visually rich and verb driven. Both these verses create sense of dramatic action-packed imagery for the reader. This happens to be quality of the Lal Ded's vakhs in general; she has the knack of sharing the subtle metaphysical truths in action words. She uses in her verses, impactful symbols to articulate something, which very few have experienced and even fewer have been able to share it coherently with others. The two verses can be considered as two instances of the numinous experience in the life of Lal Ded. Her four lined vakhs then can be understood as the condensation of one aspect of her mystical journey. In the first verse, she is emphasizing the suffering that is inherent in the transformation process, while in the second verse she is detailing the blissful aspect of the endeavor.

An important point here is that mystical journey and in fact psychological development is never linear it always follows a spiral pattern. The inner development repeatedly comes around to the same point again but at a different level. This gives ample opportunities to the individual to resolve conflict, allowing for balanced movement and natural unfolding leading to a harmonious transformation. All-natural spirals have a center of balance around which all motion and turbulence revolves. This spiral center evokes the center of our psyche, the divine spark also known as the self. This spiral movement in the psyche is also called as *circumambulation* in the school of analytical psychology. This movement is what leads to the transformation of personality and it also prevents the ego being completely overpowered by the self or the non-ego in its descent into the unconscious. Keeping in mind that the mystical journey is spiral in nature, the two verses then can be understood as two perspectives on the same experience. The first verse talks about the clearing of the land of past vegetation and growth, turning up of the land before planting the new crop. The second verse has the imagery of spring when post all the hard work the crop is ready.

In the first verse, we can see the signs of resistance to change and transformation and hence Lal Ded calls upon the initiate to hold on to faith and patience. While in the second verse, armed with the powerful and deep knowledge of life /death/ life cycle taking the plunge, and dying that is the process of transformation becomes joyful. "Everything good is costly, and the development of the personality is one of the most costly of all things. It is a question of yea saying, taking the self as the most serious of tasks, keeping conscious of everything done and keeping it constantly before eyes in all its dubious aspects- truly a task that touches us to the core" (Jacobi, 1953).

From the present study on the mystical journey of Lal Ded we can conclude that suffering and transformation are in fact the precursors to health and wholeness while the inability to initiate or respond to transformation becomes the actual pathology in the realm of the individual psyche. Jung said, "Suffering is not an illness; it is the normal counter pole to happiness" (Jung, 1977). So far, the mainstream psychology looks at suffering as being something from which an individual needs immediate alleviation. But from the present case study we can come to a conclusion that suffering can lead to real solutions and wholeness of the being.

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