



HINDU MYSTICISM

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Philosophy.⁹ Through oral instruction, tradition, and the example of great men who renounced the world in pursuance of the high ideals of philosophy, the essence of these different systems, with their spiritual longings and their yearnings after salvation and the cessation of rebirth, have gradually been filtering down into the minds of the masses of the population. The tiller of the soil and the grocer in the shop may be uneducated and often wholly illiterate, but even they, while tilling the ground, driving a bullock cart or resting after the work of the day, will be singing songs full of mystical meaning, and for the moment transporting themselves to regions beyond the touch of material gains and comforts:

"The sky and the earth are born of mine own eyes.
The hardness and softness, the cold and the heat are the products of my own body;
The sweet smell and the bad are of my own nose."

Or,

"Nobody can tell whence the bird unknown
Comes into the cage and goes out.
I would feign put round its feet the fetter of my mind
Could I but capture it."¹⁰

A traveller in the village of Bengal or on board the steamers plying the rivers of the interior of rural Bengal, may often hear a middle-aged or old Mohammedan or a Hindu singing mystical, philosophical or mythical songs of the love of Krishna and Radha, or of the renouncement of the world by Chaitanya, while a large crowd of men is assembled around the singer listening to him with great reverence and feeling. The singer is probably describing the world as a mirage or a mere phantom show of *maya*, or is expressing the futility of his worldly life on account of his having lost his friendship with his own self.

"My hope of the world is all false,
What shall be my fate, O kind, good lord?"

⁹ In my *History of Indian Philosophy*, the first volume of which has already been published by the Cambridge University Press, England.

¹⁰ Dr. Rabindranath Tagore's opening address at the First Philosophical Congress at Calcutta, in 1925.

