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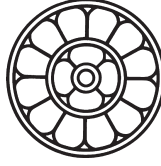
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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DESCENT

All my cells thrill swept by a surge of splendour,
Soul and body stir with a mighty rapture,
Light and still more light like an ocean billows
Over me, round me.

Rigid, stonelike, fixed like a hill or statue,
Vast my body feels and upbears the world's weight;
Dire the large descent of the Godhead enters
Limbs that are mortal.

Voiceless, thronged, Infinity crowds upon me;
Presses down a glory of power eternal;
Mind and heart grow one with the cosmic wideness;
Stilled are earth's murmurs.

Swiftly, swiftly crossing the golden spaces
Knowledge leaps, a torrent of rapid lightnings;
Thoughts that left the Ineffable's flaming mansions,
Blaze in my spirit.

Slow the heart-beats' rhythm like a giant hammer's;
Missioned voices drive to me from God's doorway
Words that live not save upon Nature's summits,
Ecstasy's chariots.

All the world is changed to a single oneness;
Souls undying, infinite forces, meeting,
Join in God-dance weaving a seamless Nature,
Rhythm of the Deathless.

Mind and heart and body, one harp of being,
Cry that anthem, finding the notes eternal, —
Light and might and bliss and immortal wisdom
Clasping for ever.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 578)

EXPERIENCES AND REALISATIONS IN THE INTEGRAL YOGA

PART TWO THE OPENING OF THE INNER SENSES

SECTION TWO: LIGHTS AND COLOURS

Chapter One: Light

Seeing Light

Light is always seen in Yoga with the inner eye and even with the outer eye, but there are many lights; all are not and all do not come from the *param jyotiḥ*.

*

Lights of various colours are one of the first things people see when they meditate.

*

There is no imagination in the seeing of these lights — it is when the inner vision is open or active that one sees them — for they themselves are subtle and not physical lights.

*

A concentrated mind is not always necessary for seeing the light — if there is an opening anywhere in the consciousness, that is sufficient.

*

It is not necessary to have the mind quiet in order to see the lights — that depends only on the opening of the subtle vision in the centre which is in the forehead between the eyebrows. Many people get that as soon as they start sadhana. It can even be developed by effort and concentration without sadhana by some who have it to a small extent as an inborn faculty. The quietude of the mind is needed for other things, such as the feeling of the presence of the Mother etc.

*

Light between the eyebrows indicates some opening of the Ajnachakra, which is there — it is the centre of the inner mind, inner will and occult vision.

*

The light outside means a touch or influence of the Force indicated by the light (golden is truth-light, blue is some spiritual force from the upper planes), while within means that it has penetrated and is established or is frequently active in the nature itself. Light above means a Force descending upon the mind, light around a general enveloping influence.

*

The golden and blue lights are both of them lights of Krishna. It was intimated to you by your seeing them once that they are there within you waiting to manifest. But it is by a psychic and spiritual, not a physical pressure that it must be done. If the mind can become silent and not interfere and if the nature can become more pure and both open to what is above the mind, these lights descend into the body and with them the divine influence.

Light and the Illumination of the Consciousness

Light or rays of light are always light of the higher consciousness working in the being to illumine or to purify or to awaken the consciousness or attune it to the Truth.

*

It [*Light*] is the power that enlightens whatever it falls upon — the result may be vision, memory, knowledge, right will, right impulse etc.

*

There are many lights of various planes — there is also the Divine Light that comes down from the higher planes and illumines the Adhar.

*

It is not necessary or possible to define [*the Divine Light*]. Light is light just like the light you see, only subtle — it clarifies the consciousness and works as a force and makes knowledge possible.

*

It [*the Divine Light*] has no function — it is just Light of Divine Consciousness. If you mean the result, it is supposed to illumine, to remove darkness and obscurity, to make the nature fit for true consciousness, Knowledge etc.

*

Light is a general term. Light is not knowledge but the illumination that comes from above and liberates the being from obscurity and darkness. But this Light also assumes different forms such as the white light of the Mother, the pale blue light of Sri Aurobindo, the golden light of Truth, the psychic light (pink and rose) etc.

*

The light, colours, flowers are always seen when there is a working of the forces within at a certain stage of the sadhana. The light of course indicates an illumination of the consciousness, the colour the play of forces mental (yellow), physical and vital, but forces making for enlightenment of these parts of the being. The flowers usually indicate a psychic activity.

Different Forms of Light

One sometimes sees the Light in masses, sometimes in forms — and the most common forms are sun, moon, star or fire.

*

The Light is often seen in front before the centre of inner vision, mind and will which is between the eyebrows in the forehead. The Sun means the formed Light of the Divine Truth, the starry light is the same Light acting as a diffused Power on the ordinary consciousness which is seen as the night of Ignorance. The call brought the Light etc. streaming down into the inner being.

*

It is not balls or flashes of light [*seen around the Mother*], but a flow or sea of Light entering into the body and surrounding it and illumining the whole field of consciousness. There can also be a vivid sense of Light and illumination without the vision. It can be seen or felt usually as an intense white or diamond or golden Light or something like sunlight or, for many, a blue or bluish white light.

*

What you saw was the procession of the chariots of the gods (Divine Powers) bringing light flashes into the air and the other was the corresponding movement of lightning flashes of the Truth in the heart lighting up the consciousness. These lightning flashes do not as yet bring knowledge — as the sunlight from above the mind does, — but they prepare the consciousness for realisation and knowledge.

*

Sparks or movements of light indicate the play of forces in the consciousness or around it.

*

Any well-formed illumined thought can be seen as a spark of light.

*

A glow means a subdued but rich light or else a sort of warm exhilaration of a luminous kind.

Two Visions Explained

(1) The lid of the skull opening means that the mental being has opened to the Divine Light and the flames indicate aspiration filled with the Light arising to join the mental part to what is above Mind.

(2) The Divine Light from above is of various colours. White is the Divine Power of purity, blue the light of the spiritual consciousness, gold the hue of the supramental knowledge or of knowledge from the intermediate planes.

(3) OM golden rising to the sky = the cosmic consciousness supramentalised and rising towards the Transcendent consciousness.

(1) and (2) indicate either something that is happening at present or a potentiality that is trying to materialise. (3) symbolises the process of the Yoga which will be followed if this potentiality is realised and pursued to its natural goal.

*

About your vision. It came as an answer to your call for the removal of ugly things in your own nature and you were shown how it would be effectively done.

First a vivid realisation was given of what the lower nature is, its terrible darkness and ugliness in which men contentedly live. But having realised its true nature a cry

came from your lower nature itself for the change.

You were then shown the light of the higher nature by whose descent the change could come — the white light of the Mother's consciousness and a flame of it descended into you by the usual path and filled you with the light. From there it descended into the subconscious and brought the light there. As a result the consciousness (it was the inner consciousness) became like a crystal pillar connecting the heights with the depths, the superconscious with the subconscious. In it the image of the Mother filled with the light in her.

You were then shown a symbol of the *rūpāntar*, the change in the universal Nature. This change was only in seed and in symbol. Afterwards this part of the vision disappeared and you saw again the darkness of the lower Nature. But in you the light was there still and the assurance that it brings. For it is in the individual that the change must first come and it is with the light and the faith in the individual as a support that the wider change can be made.

* * *

Chapter Two: Colours

The Symbolism of Colours

Colour and light are always close to each other — colour being more indicative, light more dynamic. Colour incandescent becomes light.

*

As for the exact symbolism of colours, it is not always easy to define exactly, because it is not rigid and precise, but complex, the meaning varying with the field, the combinations, the character and shades of the colour, the play of forces. A certain kind of yellow, for instance, is supposed by many occultists to indicate the *buddhi*, the intellect, and it often has that sense, but occurring among a play of vital forces it could not always be so interpreted — that would be too rigid. Here all one can say is that the blue (the particular blue seen, not every blue) indicated the response to the Truth; the green — or *this* green — is very usually associated with Life and a generous emanation or action of forces — often of emotional life-force, and it is probably this that it would indicate here.

*

The rays which you saw the trees giving out are there always, only they are veiled to the ordinary material vision. I said the blue and gold together indicated the

combined presence of Krishna and Durga-Mahakali; but gold and yellow have different significances. Yellow in the indication of forces signifies the thinking mind, *buddhi*, and the pink (modified here into a light vermilion) is a psychic colour; the combination probably meant the psychic in the mental.

In interpreting these phenomena you must remember that all depends on the order of things which the colours indicate in any particular case. There is an order of significances in which they indicate various psychological dynamisms, e.g., faith, love, protection, etc. There is another order of significances in which they indicate the aura or the activity of divine beings, Krishna, Mahakali, Radha or else of other superhuman beings; there is another in which they indicate the aura around objects or living persons — and that does not exhaust the list of possibilities. A certain knowledge, experiences, growing intuition are necessary to perceive in each case the true significance. Observation and exact description are also very necessary; for sometimes people say, for instance, yellow when they mean gold or *vice versa*; there are besides different possible meanings for different shades of the same colour. Again, if you see colour near or round a person or by looking at him or her, it does not necessarily indicate that person's aura; it may be something else near him or around him. In some cases it may have nothing to do with the person or object you look at, which may serve merely the purpose of a background or a point of concentration — as when you see colours on a wall or by looking at a bright object.

*

There are no separate colours of the beings. There is a characteristic colour of mind, yellow, of the psychic, pink or pale rose, of the vital, purple; but these are colours corresponding to the forces of mind, psychic, vital — they are not the colours of the beings. Also other colours can play, e.g. in the vital, green and deep red as well as purple and there are other colours for the hostile vital forces.

*

The lights one sees in concentration are the lights of various powers or beings or forces and often lights that come down from the higher consciousness.

The violet light is that of the Divine Compassion (*karuṇā* — Grace) — the white light is the light of the Mother (the Divine Consciousness) in which all others are contained and from which they can be manifested.

Purple is the colour of vital power. “Red” depends on the character of the colour, for there are many reds — this may be the colour of the physical consciousness.

*

As for the tricoloured ball of energy, I am not quite sure, but it may mean the triple force, Love, Light, Life which are contained and constrained in the inconscient sleep of the Shakti in the Muladhara. Possibly an observation of the colours might determine the significance; but this is not sure, as the colours on these lower planes have various meanings.

*

The four lights were the lights of the Truth, — white the purity and power of the divine Truth, green its active energy for work, blue the spiritual consciousness of the divine Truth, the gold its knowledge.

*

The silver temple is that of the spiritualised mind — the golden is that of the divine Truth. Yellow is the colour of the light of the thinking mind — white is that of the divine consciousness.

White Light

White light indicates the divine consciousness.

*

White indicates a force of purity.

*

The forces that come with white light are usually those of purity and peace.

*

The important experience is that of the white ray in the heart — for that is a ray of the Mother's light, the white light, and the illumining of the heart by this light is a thing of great power for this sadhana.

*

The white light is, as you know, the Mother's light — it is the light of the Force of the Divine Consciousness; the sun of white light is symbolic of that Force in its

origin and fullness of manifestation. It is a very good sign and if one feels its power in the being or mind or body it can have a strong influence.

*

What you saw was the Light (the white Light is the Mother's) which is always there in a mass; but it is seen only when the inner (Yogic) eye is open and the consciousness in some part of it at least can enter into touch with the Light.

*

The diamond light is the Mother's own light (that of divine Consciousness) at its most intense.

White Light with Light of Other Colours

The white light is that of the Pure Conscious Force from which all the rest come. The golden light is that of the Divine Truth on the higher planes.

*

The pale blue light is mine — the white light is the Mother's. The world you saw above the head was the plane of the illumined Mind which is a level of consciousness much higher than the human intelligence. It is there that the Divine Light and Power come down to be transmitted to the human consciousness and from there they work and prepare the transformation of the human consciousness and even the physical nature.

*

The two first [*bright white and whitish blue*] are the Mother's light and mine — the golden red is the touch of the Truth in the physical.

Whitish Blue Light

The pale whitish blue light is "Sri Aurobindo's light" — it is the blue light modified by the white light of the Mother.

*

The snake form is a symbol of Energy and the white blue light may be that of the Mother's consciousness in the higher mind, or if it is not two separate colours but whitish blue then it is Sri Aurobindo's light. The light is a manifestation of Force, the nature of the force being indicated by the colour of the Light.

*

The lights indicate the action of certain forces, usually indicated by the colour of the light. Whitish blue is known as Sri Aurobindo's light or sometimes Sri Krishna's light.

*

Whitish blue is Krishna's light or mine; deeper blues often indicate light from the higher consciousness.

*

There are two pale blues, one which is whitish blue and is known as Sri Aurobindo's light, the other quite blue which is that of the higher consciousness just above mind.

*

The meaning of blue light depends on the exact character of the colour, its shade and nature. A whitish blue like moonlight is known as Krishna's light or Sri Aurobindo's light — light blue is often that of the Illumined Mind — there is another deeper blue that is of the Higher Mind; another, near to purple, which is the light of a power in the vital.

Blue Light

Blue light, according to the shades, means several different things.

*

If the blue lights [*seen in vision*] were of different shades it might mean the overhead planes, Overmind, Intuition, Illumined Mind, Higher Mind.

*

The light from the higher planes of consciousness just above the mind is blue.

*

The light indicates an action of force (bluish probably indicates the spiritual-mind-force), the rest was a working to open the higher spiritual centre (*sahasradala*).

*

Blue is the normal colour of the spiritual planes; moonlight indicates the spiritual mind and its light.

*

Moonlight indicates spirituality — the blue light may be that of the higher or illumined mind.

*

The plane with the blue light is the Higher Mind which is just above the ordinary human intelligence, the first of several planes of higher consciousness through which one has to pass in order to reach the Divine Truth. Something from your mind (thinking willing mind) is trying to rise up into the blue light of the Higher Mind so as to join and become one with it.

*

There is one blue that is the higher mind, a deeper blue that belongs to the mind — Krishna's light in the mind.

*

There are different Krishna lights — pale diamond blue, lavender blue, deep blue etc. It depends on the plane in which it manifests.

*

Diamond blue is Krishna's light in the overmind — lavender blue in intuitive mind.

*

There is the whitish moonlight blue of Krishna's light — lavender blue of devotion, deep blue of the physical mind, sapphire blue of the higher mind and many others.

*

All blue is not Krishna's light.

*

Blue is also the Radha colour.

Violet Light

The violet is the light of the Divine grace and compassion.

*

“Violet” is the colour of benevolence or compassion, but also more vividly of the Divine Grace — represented in the vision as flowing from the heights of the spiritual consciousness down on the earth. The golden cup is I suppose the Truth consciousness.

*

Violet is indeed the colour or light of Divine Compassion, so also of Krishna's grace.

Golden Light

Golden Light is the light of the divine Truth descending from above.

*

The golden light is the light of the Divine Truth which comes out from the supramental sunlight and, modified according to the level it crosses, creates the ranges from Overmind to higher Mind.

*

The golden light is usually a light from the supermind — a light of Truth-Knowledge (it may sometimes be the supramental Truth-Knowledge turned into overmind or intuitive Truth).

*

It [*golden light*] always means the light of Truth — but the nature of the Truth varies according to the plane to which it belongs. Light is the light of consciousness, truth, knowledge — the Sun is the concentration or source of the Light.

*

The sunlight is the light of the Truth itself — whatever power of Truth it may be — while the other lights derive from the Truth.

*

The Light of the Sun descending into the heart (the Sun of the Knowledge) turns upon the physical and purifies it.

*

The golden light is the promise of the higher knowledge. For the coming of that knowledge the silence of the frontal exterior mind is necessary.

*

Gold is always the symbol of the higher Truth.

*

The hand with the gold pen writing golden letters was perhaps an indication of the Mother writing the things of the Divine Truth in you, — for gold in these visions is the symbol of the Divine Truth.

*

The spiritual Power is naturally more free on its own level than in the body. The golden colour indicates here Mahakali force which is the strongest for the working in the body.

*

The different parts [*mind, life and body*] are naturally coloured by the lights of the powers that come down (golden of Overmind and Intuition, blue of higher, illumined and intuitive mind) while keeping their own characteristic shade as an element.

Gold-Green Light

Gold-green: gold indicates at its most intense something from the supramental, otherwise overmind truth or intuitive truth deriving ultimately from the supramental Truth consciousness. Green has much to do with the vital and indicates here, I think, the emotional forces in their outpouring. The play of the emotional forces in the divine Truth is, obviously, very pertinent to the working of the Krishna lights.

*

Sunlight is the direct light of the Truth; when it gets fused into the vital, it takes the mixed colour — here gold and green — just as in the physical it becomes golden red or in the mental golden yellow.

Golden Red or Red Gold Light

Golden red is the colour of the supramental physical light — so this yellow red may indicate some plane of the Overmind in which there is a nearer special connection with that. The golden red light has a strong transforming power.

*

The golden Light is that of the modified (overmentalised) Supramental, i.e., the Supramental Light passing through the Overmind, intuition etc. and becoming the Light of Truth in each of these planes. When it is golden red it means the same modified supramental-physical Light — the Light of divine Truth in the physical.

*

“Red gold” is rather the light of the Truth in the physical.

*

Orange or red gold is supposed by the way to be the light of the supramental in the physical.

Orange Light

Orange is the true light manifested in the physical consciousness and being.

*

Orange is the colour of occult knowledge or occult experience.

Yellow Light

Yellow is the thinking mind. The shades indicate different intensities of mental light.

*

Yellow is light of the mind — golden is light from above the mind.

*

It is again the ascent into one of the higher planes of mind illumined with the light of the Divine Truth. Yellow is the light of mind growing brighter as one goes higher till it meets the golden light of the Divine Truth.

Pink or Rose Light

The rosy light is that of love — so probably you entered the psychic worlds — or at least one of them.

*

The colour of the psychic light is according to what it manifests — e.g., psychic love is pink or rose, the psychic purity is white etc.

Green Light

Green is the higher light in the vital, especially the emotional vital.

*

The green light is a vital force, a dynamic force of the emotional vital which has the power to purify, harmonise or cure.

*

Green is a vital energy of work and action.

*

Green light can signify various things according to the context — in the emotional vital it is the colour of a certain form of emotional generosity, in the vital proper an activity with vital abundance or vital generosity behind it — in the vital physical it signifies a force of health.

Purple and Crimson Light

It [*purple light*] is a light of vital power.

*

Purple is the colour of the vital force — crimson is usually physical.

*

Both [*purple and crimson*] are vital lights, but when seen above they represent the original forces of which the vital are the derivations.

*

The crimson colour is the light of Love in the vital and physical.

Red Light

Red is the colour of the physical, — touched by the higher Light it becomes golden red.

*

It seems to be an opening of various powers and the peace, light and wideness of the spiritual consciousness. The red Purusha may be the power of the true physical — red being the colour of the physical.

*

It depends on the nature of the red. Red (when it does not mean the light of the physical consciousness) indicates always some kind of Force or Power, but what power it is depends on the shade.

*

Deep red is the Divine Love — rosy is the psychic love.

*

The deep red is the light of the Power that descended before the 24th [*November 1933*] for the transformation of the physical.

*

The deep red light is a Light that came down into the physical for its change just before the 24th [*November 1933*]. It is associated with the sunlight and the golden Light.

Red and Black

Red is the colour of rajas, black is the colour of tamas.

SRI AUROBINDO

(*Letters on Yoga — III*, CWSA, Vol. 30, pp. 115-34)

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF YOGA

Yoga is not a modern invention of the human mind, but our ancient and prehistoric possession. The Veda is our oldest extant human document and the Veda, from one point of view, is a great compilation of practical hints about Yoga. All religion is a flower of which Yoga is the root; all philosophy, poetry & the works of genius use it, consciously or unconsciously, as an instrument. We believe that God created the world by Yoga and by Yoga He will draw it into Himself again. Yogah prabhavapyayau, Yoga is the birth and passing away of things. When Srikrishna reveals to Arjuna the greatness of His creation and the manner in which He has built it out of His being by a reconciliation of logical opposites, he says “Pasya me yogam aishwaram”, Behold my divine Yoga. We usually attach a more limited sense to the word; when we use or hear it, we think of the details of Patanjali’s system, of rhythmic breathing, of peculiar ways of sitting, of concentration of mind, of the trance of the adept. But these are merely details of particular systems. The systems are not the thing itself, any more than the water of an irrigation canal is the river Ganges. Yoga may be done without the least thought for the breathing, in any posture or no posture, without any insistence on concentration, in the full waking condition, while walking, working, eating, drinking, talking with others, in any occupation, in sleep, in dream, in states of unconsciousness, semiconsciousness, double-consciousness. It is no nostrum or system or fixed practice, but an eternal fact of process based on the very nature of the Universe.

Nevertheless in practice the name may be limited to certain applications of this general process for specific and definite ends. Yoga stands essentially on the fact that in this world we are everywhere one, yet divided; one yet divided in our being, one with yet divided from our fellow creatures of all kinds, one with yet divided from the infinite existence which we call God, Nature or Brahman. Yoga, generally, is the power which the soul in one body has of entering into effective relation with other souls, with parts of itself which are behind the waking consciousness, with forces of Nature and objects in Nature, with the Supreme Intelligence, Power & Bliss which governs the world either for the sake of that union in itself or for the purpose of increasing or modifying our manifest being, knowledge, faculty, force or delight. Any system which organises our inner being & our outer frame for these ends may be called a system of Yoga.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Essays Divine and Human, CWSA, Vol. 12, pp. 18-19)

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF YOGA

INITIAL DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS

Yoga has four powers and objects, purity, liberty, beatitude and perfection. Whosoever has consummated these four mightinesses in the being of the transcendental, universal, lilamaya and individual God is the complete and absolute Yogin.

All manifestations of God are manifestations of the absolute Parabrahman.

The Absolute Parabrahman is unknowable to us, not because It is the nothingness of all that we are, for rather whatever we are in truth or in seeming is nothing but Parabrahman, but because It is pre-existent & supra-existent to even the highest & purest methods and the most potent & illimitable instruments of which soul in the body is capable.

In Parabrahman knowledge ceases to be knowledge and becomes an inexpressible identity. Become Parabrahman, if thou wilt and if That will suffer thee, but strive not to know It; for thou shalt not succeed with these instruments and in this body.

In reality thou art Parabrahman already and ever wast and ever will be. To become Parabrahman in any other sense, thou must depart utterly out of world manifestation and out even of world transcendence.

Why shouldst thou hunger after departure from manifestation as if the world were an evil? Has not That manifested itself in thee & in the world and art thou wiser & purer & better than the Absolute, O mind-deceived soul in the mortal? When That withdraws thee, then thy going hence is inevitable; until Its force is laid on thee, thy going is impossible, cry thy mind never so fiercely & wailingly for departure. Therefore neither desire nor shun the world, but seek the bliss & purity & freedom & greatness of God in whatsoever state or experience or environment.

So long as thou hast any desire, be it the desire of non-birth or the desire of liberation, thou canst not attain to Parabrahman. For That has no desires, neither of birth nor of non-birth, nor of world, nor of departure from world. The Absolute is unlimited by thy desire as It is inaccessible to thy knowledge.

If thou wouldst know Paratpara brahman, then know It as It chooses to manifest Itself in world and transcending it — for transcendence also is a relation to world & not the sheer Absolute, — since otherwise It is unknowable. This is the simultaneous knowing & not knowing spoken of in the Vedanta.

Of Parabrahman we should not say that “It” is world-transcendent or world-immanent or related or non-related to the world; for all these ideas of world and not-world, of transcendence and immanence and relation are expressions of thought by which mind puts its own values on the self-manifestation of Parabrahman to Its own

principle of knowledge and we cannot assert any, even the highest of them to be the real reality of that which is at once all and beyond all, nothing and beyond nothing. A profound and unthinking silence is the only attitude which the soul manifested in world should adopt towards the Absolute.

We know of Parabrahman that It Is, in a way in which no object is and no state in the world, because whenever & in whatever direction we go to the farthest limits of soul-experience or thought-experience or body-experience or any essential experience whatsoever, we come to the brink of That and perceive It to be, unknowably, without any capacity of experiencing about it any farther truth whatsoever.

When thy soul retiring within from depth to depth & widening without from vastness to vastness stands in the silence of its being before an unknown & unknowable from which & towards which world is seen to exist as a thing neither materially real nor mentally real and yet not to be described as a dream or a falsehood, then know that thou art standing in the Holy of Holies, before the Veil that shall not be rent. In this mortal body thou canst not rend it, nor in any other body; nor in the state of self in body nor in the state of pure self, nor in waking nor in sleep nor in trance, nor in any state or circumstances whatsoever for thou must be beyond state before thou canst enter into the Paratpara brahman.

That is the unknown God to whom no altar can be raised and no worship offered; universe is His only altar, existence is His only worship. That we are, feel, think, act or are but do not feel, do not think, do not act is for That enough. To That, the saint is equal with the sinner, activity with inactivity, man with the mollusc, since all are equally Its manifestations. These things at least are true of the Parabrahman & Para Purusha, which is the Highest that we know & the nearest to the Absolute. But what That is behind the veil or how behind the veil It regards Itself and its manifestations is a thing no mind can assume to tell or know; and he is equally ignorant and presumptuous who raises & inscribes to It an altar or who pretends to declare the Unknown to those who know that they can know It not. Confuse not thought, bewilder not the soul of man in its forward march, but turn to the Universe & know That in this, Tad va etat, for so only & in these terms It has set itself out to be known to those who are in the universe. Be not deceived by Ignorance, be not deceived by knowledge; there is none bound & none free & none seeking freedom but only God playing at these things in the extended might of His self-conscious being, para maya, mahimanam asya, which we call the universe.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Essays Divine and Human, CWSA, Vol. 12, pp. 93-95)

HINDUISM AND THE MISSION OF INDIA

[. . . .] [That] which is permanent in the Hindu religion, must form the basis on which the world will increasingly take its stand in dealing with spiritual experience and religious truth. Hinduism, in my sense of the word, is not modern Brahmanism. Modern Brahmanism developed into existence at a definite period in history. It is now developing out of existence; its mission is done, its capacities exhausted, the Truth which, like other religions, it defended, honoured, preserved, cherished, misused and disfigured, is about to take to itself new forms and dispense with all other screens or defender than its own immortal beauty, grandeur, truth and effectiveness. It is this unchanging undying Truth which has to be discovered and placed in its native light before humanity. Tad etat satyam.

There are many defenders and discoverers of truth now active among us. They are all busy defending, modifying, attacking, sapping or bolstering current Hinduism. I am not eager to disparage but neither do I find myself satisfied with any of them. If I were, there would be no need for any speculation of my own. There are the orthodox who are busy recovering and applying old texts or any interpretations, new or old, of these texts, which will support the existing order, — and ignoring all that go against it. Their learning is praiseworthy and useful; it brings to notice many great and helpful things which were in danger of being misprized, lost or flung away as worthless; but they do not seem to me to go to the heart of the matter. There are the heterodox who are busy giving new interpretations to old texts and institutions in order to get rid of all such features as the modern world finds it hard to assimilate. Their brainwork can hardly be too highly praised; it is bringing to light or to a half light many luminous realities and possibilities which, if they cannot all be accepted, yet invigorate and sharpen the habit of original thinking and help to remove that blind adherence to traditions which is truth's greatest obstacle. Still they too do not seem to me to have the right grasp and discernment. Then there are the ascetics mystical or rationalistic who call men to disgust with the world and point to the temple, the monastery or the mountaintop as the best, if not the only place for finding God, and most of whom, in order to honour the Maker slight and denounce His works. Their position and temperament is so lofty and noble and their solvent force on the gross impurities of a materialised humanity has been so invaluable that it is with some reluctance one finds oneself obliged to put them on one side and pass onward. But it seems to me that we must pass onward if we would know and possess God in His entirety and not merely in a side or aspect. There is a story in the Jewish Scriptures which relates that when God wished to show himself to Moses, he could only, owing to the spiritual imperfections of the Jewish prophet, reveal safely to him His hinder parts. Moses would have died if he had seen the front of God; he

had not the dharanam, the soul-power to support that tremendous vision. The story well illuminates the character of materialism generally and to its aggressive modern form, European thought & civilisation, it applies with a quite overwhelming appositeness. But it seems to me that the average Vedantist, too, has only seen, for his part, the crown of the Lord's head and the average bhakta only the Kaustubh-stone over His heart or the Srivatsa mark upon it. On the other hand, there are those rationalists who are by no means ascetical in their views or temperament and their name is legion; they insist on our putting religion and God aside or keeping Him only for ornamental uses in spare moments, leave that, they say, & devote yourselves to practical work for mankind. That rationalism is necessary too if only to balance the error of the ascetics who would make of God's world a mistake and of its Maker an Almighty blunderer or an inscrutable eccentric or an indefinable Something inhabiting a chaos or a mirage. Nevertheless, from materialism least of all, however philanthropic or patriotic, can our future salvation be expected. Finally, there are the mystics who are not ascetics, — the Theosophists. From one point of view I cannot find praise warm enough to do justice to the work of Theosophy; from another I cannot find condemnation strong enough to denounce it. It has forced on the notice of an unwilling world truths to which orthodoxy is blind and of which heterodoxy is afraid or incredulous. It has shown a colossal courage in facing ridicule, trampling on prejudice and slander, persisting in faith in spite of disillusionment, scandal and a continual shifting of knowledge. They have kept the flag of a past & future science flying against enormous difficulties. On the other hand by bringing to the investigation of that science — not its discovery, for to the Hindu Yogin it is known already — the traditional European methods, the methods of the marketplace and the forum, it has brought on the truths themselves much doubt and discredit, and by importing into them the forms, jugglery and jargon of European mystics, their romanticism, their unbridled imagination, their galloping impatience, their haste, bragging and loudness, their susceptibility to dupery, trickery, obstinate error and greedy self-deception, Theosophists have strengthened doubt and discredit and driven many an earnest seeker to bewilderment, to angry suspicion or to final renunciation of the search for truth. They have scattered the path of the conscientious investigators, the severe scientists of Yoga who must appear in the future, with the thorns and sharp flints of a well-justified incredulity and suspicion. I admit the truths that Theosophy seeks to unveil; but I do not think they can be reached if we fall into bondage even to the most inspiring table talk of Mahatmas or to the confused anathemas and vaticinations hurled from their platform tripods by modern Pythonesses of the type of Mrs. Annie Besant, that great, capacious but bewildered and darkened intellect, now stumbling with a loud and confident blindness through those worlds of twilight and glamour, of distorted inspirations, perverted communications and misunderstood or half-understood perceptions which are so painfully familiar to the student and seeker.

If these things do not satisfy me, what then do I seek? I seek a light that shall be new, yet old, the oldest indeed of all lights. I seek an authority that accepting, illuminating and reconciling all human truth, shall yet reject and get rid of by explaining it all mere human error. I seek a text and a Shastra that is not subject to interpolation, modification and replacement, that moth and white ant cannot destroy, that the earth cannot bury nor Time mutilate. I seek an asceticism that shall give me purity and deliverance from self and from ignorance without stultifying God and His universe. I seek a scepticism that shall question everything but shall have the patience to deny nothing that may possibly be true. I seek a rationalism not proceeding on the untenable supposition that all the centuries of man's history except the nineteenth were centuries of folly and superstition, but bent on discovering truth instead of limiting inquiry by a new dogmatism, obscurantism and furious intolerance which it chooses to call common sense and enlightenment; I seek a materialism that shall recognise matter and use it without being its slave. I seek an occultism that shall bring out all its processes and proofs into the light of day, without mystery, without jugglery, without the old stupid call to humanity, "Be blind, O man, and see!" In short, I seek not science, not religion, not Theosophy, but Veda — the truth about Brahman, not only about His essentiality, but about His manifestation, not a lamp on the way to the forest, but a light and a guide to joy and action in the world, the truth which is beyond opinion, the knowledge which all thought strives after — yasmin vijñate sarvam vijñatam. I believe that Veda to be the foundation of the Sanatan Dharma; I believe it to be the concealed divinity within Hinduism, — but a veil has to be drawn aside, a curtain has to be lifted. I believe it to be knowable and discoverable. I believe the future of India and the world to depend on its discovery and on its application, not to the renunciation of life, but to life in the world and among men.

In these articles I shall not try to announce truth, but merely to inquire what are those things in Hinduism by following which we may arrive at the truth. I shall try to indicate some of my reasons — as far as within these limits it can be done — for my faith in my guides and the manner in which I think they should be followed. I am impelled to this labour by the necessity of turning the mind of young India to our true riches, our real source of power, purification and hope for the future and of safeguarding it in the course of its search both from false lights and from the raucous challenges and confident discouragements cast at us by the frail modern spirit of denial. I write, not for the orthodox, nor for those who have discovered a new orthodoxy, Samaj or Panth, nor for the unbeliever; I write for those who acknowledge reason but do not identify reason with Western materialism; who are sceptics but not unbelievers; who, admitting the claims of modern thought, still believe in India, her mission and her gospel, her immortal life and her eternal rebirth.

SRI AUROBINDO

‘THE SUPREME SCIENCE’

March 17, 1914

When physical conditions are a little difficult and some discomfort follows, if one knows how to surrender completely before Thy will, caring little for life or death, health or illness, the integral being enters immediately into harmony with Thy law of love and life, and all physical indisposition ceases giving place to a calm well-being, deep and peaceful.

I have noticed that when one enters into an activity that necessitates great physical endurance, what tires one most is anticipating beforehand all the difficulties to which one will be exposed. It is much wiser to see at every moment only the difficulty of the present instant; in this way the effort becomes much easier for it is always proportionate to the amount of strength, the resistance at one’s disposal. The body is a marvellous tool, it is our mind that does not know how to use it and, instead of fostering its suppleness, its plasticity, it brings a certain fixity into it which comes from preconceived ideas and unfavourable suggestions.

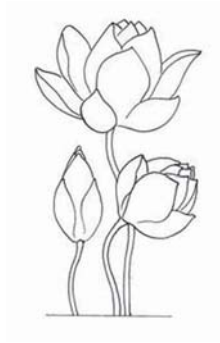
But the supreme science, O Lord, is to unite with Thee, to trust in Thee, to live in Thee, to be Thyself; and then nothing is any longer impossible to a man who manifests Thy omnipotence.

Lord, my aspiration rises to Thee like a silent canticle, a mute adoration, and Thy divine Love illumines my heart.

O divine Master, I bow to Thee!

THE MOTHER

(Prayers and Meditations, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 101)



A CONVERSATION OF 7 APRIL 1929

Will you say something to us about Yoga?

What do you want the Yoga for? To get power? To attain to peace and calm? To serve humanity?

None of these motives is sufficient to show that you are meant for the Path.

The question you are to answer is this: Do you want the Yoga for the sake of the Divine? Is the Divine the supreme fact of your life, so much so that it is simply impossible for you to do without it? Do you feel that your very *raison d'être* is the Divine and without it there is no meaning in your existence? If so, then only can it be said that you have a call for the Path.

This is the first thing necessary — aspiration for the Divine.

The next thing you have to do is to tend it, to keep it always alert and awake and living. And for that what is required is concentration — concentration upon the Divine with a view to an integral and absolute consecration to its Will and Purpose.

Concentrate in the heart. Enter into it; go within and deep and far, as far as you can. Gather all the strings of your consciousness that are spread abroad, roll them up and take a plunge and sink down.

A fire is burning there, in the deep quietude of the heart. It is the divinity in you — your true being. Hear its voice, follow its dictates.

There are other centres of concentration, for example, one above the crown and another between the eye-brows. Each has its own efficacy and will give you a particular result. But the central being lies in the heart and from the heart proceed all central movements — all dynamism and urge for transformation and power of realisation.

What is one to do to prepare oneself for the Yoga?

To be conscious, first of all. We are conscious of only an insignificant portion of our being; for the most part we are unconscious. It is this unconsciousness that keeps us down to our unregenerate nature and prevents change and transformation in it. It is through unconsciousness that the undivine forces enter into us and make us their slaves. You are to be conscious of yourself, you must awake to your nature and movements, you must know why and how you do things or feel or think them; you must understand your motives and impulses, the forces, hidden and apparent, that move you; in fact, you must, as it were, take to pieces the entire machinery of your being. Once you are conscious, it means that you can distinguish and sift things, you can see which are the forces that pull you down and which help you on.

And when you know the right from the wrong, the true from the false, the divine from the undivine, you are to act strictly up to your knowledge; that is to say, resolutely reject one and accept the other. The duality will present itself at every step and at every step you will have to make your choice. You will have to be patient and persistent and vigilant — “sleepless”, as the adepts say; you must always refuse to give any chance whatever to the undivine against the divine.

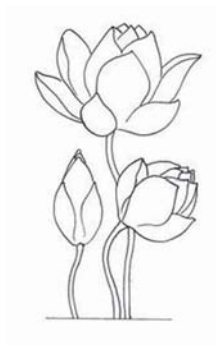
Is the Yoga for the sake of humanity?

No, it is for the sake of Divinity. It is not the welfare of humanity that we seek but the manifestation of the Divine. We are here to work out the Divine Will, more truly, to be worked upon by the Divine Will so that we may be its instruments for the progressive incorporation of the Supreme and the establishment of His reign upon earth. Only that portion of humanity which will respond to the Divine Call shall receive its Grace.

Whether humanity as a whole will be benefited, if not directly, at least, in an indirect way, will depend upon the condition of humanity itself. If one is to judge from the present conditions, there is not much hope. What is the attitude today of the average man — the representative humanity? Does he not rise in anger and revolt directly he meets something that partakes of the genuinely divine? Does he not feel that the Divine means the destruction of his cherished possessions? Is he not continually yelling out the most categorical negative to everything that the Divine intends and wills? Humanity will have to change much before it can hope to gain anything by the advent of the Divine.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1929-31, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 3, pp. 1-3)



A CONVERSATION OF 14 APRIL 1929

What are the dangers of Yoga? Is it especially dangerous to the people of the West? Someone has said that Yoga may be suitable for the East, but it has the effect of unbalancing the Western mind.

Yoga is not more dangerous to the people of the West than to those of the East. Everything depends upon the spirit with which you approach it. Yoga does become dangerous if you want it for your own sake, to serve a personal end. It is not dangerous, on the contrary, it is safety and security itself, if you go to it with a sense of its sacredness, always remembering that the aim is to find the Divine.

Dangers and difficulties come in when people take up Yoga not for the sake of the Divine, but because they want to acquire power and under the guise of Yoga seek to satisfy some ambition. If you cannot get rid of ambition, do not touch the thing. It is fire that burns.

There are two paths of Yoga, one of *tapasyā* (discipline), and the other of surrender. The path of *tapasyā* is arduous. Here you rely solely upon yourself, you proceed by your own strength. You ascend and achieve according to the measure of your force. There is always the danger of falling down. And once you fall, you lie broken in the abyss and there is hardly a remedy. The other path, the path of surrender, is safe and sure. It is here, however, that the Western people find their difficulty. They have been taught to fear and avoid all that threatens their personal independence. They have imbibed with their mothers' milk the sense of individuality. And surrender means giving up all that. In other words, you may follow, as Ramakrishna says, either the path of the baby monkey or that of the baby cat. The baby monkey holds to its mother in order to be carried about and it must hold firm, otherwise if it loses its grip, it falls. On the other hand, the baby cat does not hold to its mother, but is held by the mother and has no fear nor responsibility; it has nothing to do but to let the mother hold it and cry *ma ma*.

If you take up this path of surrender fully and sincerely, there is no more danger or serious difficulty. The question is to be sincere. If you are not sincere, do not begin Yoga. If you were dealing in human affairs, then you could resort to deception; but in dealing with the Divine there is no possibility of deception anywhere. You can go on the Path safely when you are candid and open to the core and when your only end is to realise and attain the Divine and to be moved by the Divine.

There is another danger; it is in connection with the sex impulses. Yoga in its process of purification will lay bare and throw up all hidden impulses and desires in you. And you must learn not to hide things nor leave them aside, you have to face them and conquer and remould them. The first effect of Yoga, however, is to take

away the mental control, and the hungers that lie dormant are suddenly set free, they rush up and invade the being. So long as this mental control has not been replaced by the Divine control, there is a period of transition when your sincerity and surrender will be put to the test. The strength of such impulses as those of sex lies usually in the fact that people take too much notice of them; they protest too vehemently and endeavour to control them by coercion, hold them within and sit upon them. But the more you think of a thing and say, "I don't want it, I don't want it", the more you are bound to it. What you should do is to keep the thing away from you, to dissociate from it, take as little notice of it as possible and, even if you happen to think of it, remain indifferent and unconcerned.

The impulses and desires that come up by the pressure of Yoga should be faced in a spirit of detachment and serenity, as something foreign to yourself or belonging to the outside world. They should be offered to the Divine, so that the Divine may take them up and transmute them.

If you have once opened yourself to the Divine, if the power of the Divine has once come down into you and yet you try to keep to the old forces, you prepare troubles and difficulties and dangers for yourself. You must be vigilant and see that you do not use the Divine as a cloak for the satisfaction of your desires. There are many self-appointed Masters, who do nothing but that. And then when you are off the straight path and when you have a little knowledge and not much power, it happens that you are seized by beings or entities of a certain type, you become blind instruments in their hands and are devoured by them in the end. Wherever there is pretence, there is danger; you cannot deceive God. Do you come to God saying, "I want union with you" and in your heart meaning "I want powers and enjoyments"? Beware! You are heading straight towards the brink of the precipice. And yet it is so easy to avoid all catastrophe. Become like a child, give yourself up to the Mother, let her carry you, and there is no more danger for you.

This does not mean that you have not to face other kinds of difficulties or that you have not to fight and conquer any obstacles at all. Surrender does not ensure a smooth and unruffled and continuous progression. The reason is that your being is not yet one, nor your surrender absolute and complete. Only a part of you surrenders; and today it is one part and the next day it is another. The whole purpose of the Yoga is to gather all the divergent parts together and forge them into an undivided unity. Till then you cannot hope to be without difficulties — difficulties, for example, like doubt or depression or hesitation. The whole world is full of the poison. You take it in with every breath. If you exchange a few words with an undesirable man or even if such a man merely passes by you, you may catch the contagion from him. It is sufficient for you to come near a place where there is plague in order to be infected with its poison; you need not know at all that it is there. You can lose in a few minutes what it has taken you months to gain. So long as you belong to humanity and so long as you lead the ordinary life, it does not matter much if you mix with the

people of the world; but if you want the divine life, you will have to be exceedingly careful about your company and your environment.

What is the way to establish unity and homogeneity in our being?

Keep the will firm. Treat the recalcitrant parts as disobedient children. Act upon them constantly and patiently. Convince them of their error.

In the depths of your consciousness is the psychic being, the temple of the Divine within you. This is the centre round which should come about the unification of all these divergent parts, all these contradictory movements of your being. Once you have got the consciousness of the psychic being and its aspiration, these doubts and difficulties can be destroyed. It takes more or less time, but you will surely succeed in the end. Once you have turned to the Divine, saying, "I want to be yours", and the Divine has said, "Yes", the whole world cannot keep you from it. When the central being has made its surrender, the chief difficulty has disappeared. The outer being is like a crust. In ordinary people the crust is so hard and thick that they are not conscious of the Divine within them. If once, even for a moment only, the inner being has said, "I am here and I am yours", then it is as though a bridge has been built and little by little the crust becomes thinner and thinner until the two parts are wholly joined and the inner and the outer become one.

Ambition has been the undoing of many Yogis. That canker can hide long. Many people start on the Path without any sense of it. But when they get powers, their ambition rises up, all the more violently because it had not been thrown out in the beginning.

A story is told of a Yogi who had attained wonderful powers. He was invited by his disciples to a great dinner. It was served on a big low table. The disciples asked their Master to show his power in some way. He knew he should not, but the seed of ambition was there in him and he thought, "After all, it is a very innocent thing and it may prove to them that such things are possible and teach them the greatness of God." So he said, "Take away the table, but only the table, let the table-cloth remain as it is with all the dishes upon it." The disciples cried out, "Oh, that cannot be done, everything will fall down." But he insisted and they removed the table from under the cloth. Lo, the miracle! The cloth and all that was upon it remained there just as though the table was underneath. The disciples wondered. But all on a sudden the Master jumped up and rushed out screaming and crying, "Nevermore shall I have a disciple, nevermore! Woe is me! I have betrayed my God." His heart was on fire; he had used the divine powers for selfish ends.

It is always wrong to display powers. This does not mean that there is no use for them. But they have to be used in the same way as they came. They come by union with the Divine. They must be used by the will of the Divine and not for display. If you come across someone who is blind and you have the power to make

him see — if it is the Divine Will that the man shall see, you have only to say, “Let him see” and he will see. But if you wish to make him see simply because you want to cure him, then you use the power to satisfy your personal ambition. Most often, in such cases, you not only lose your power but you create a great disturbance in the man. Yet in appearance the two ways are the same; but in one case you act because of the Divine Will and in the other for some personal motive.

How are we to know, you will ask, when it is the Divine Will that makes us act? The Divine Will is not difficult to recognise. It is unmistakable. You can know it without being very far on the path. Only you must listen to its voice, the small voice that is here in the heart. Once you are accustomed to listen, if you do anything that is contrary to the Divine Will, you feel an uneasiness. If you persist on the wrong track, you get very much disturbed. If, however, you give some material excuse as the cause of your uneasiness and proceed on your way, you gradually lose the faculty of perception and finally you may go on doing all kinds of wrong and feel no uneasiness. But if, when once you feel the least disturbance, you stop and ask of your inner self, “What is the cause of this?” then you do get the real answer and the whole thing becomes quite clear. Do not try to give a material excuse when you feel a little depression or a slight uneasiness. When you stop and look about for the reason, be absolutely straight and sincere. At first your mind will construct a very plausible and beautiful explanation. Do not accept it, but look beyond and ask, “What is it that is behind this movement? Why am I doing this?” Finally you will discover, hidden in a corner, the little ripple — a slight wrong turn or twist in your attitude that is causing the trouble or disturbance.

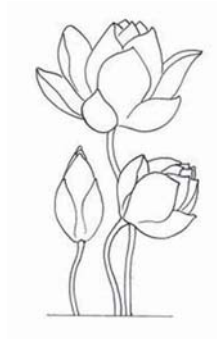
One of the commonest forms of ambition is the idea of service to humanity. All attachment to such service or work is a sign of personal ambition. The Guru who believes that he has a great truth to teach to humanity and who wants many disciples and who feels uncomfortable when the disciples go away or who seizes on anybody that comes and tries to make him a disciple, is evidently following nothing but his ambition. You must be able, if you are ready to follow the divine order, to take up whatever work you are given, even a stupendous work, and leave it the next day with the same quietness with which you took it up and not feel that the responsibility is yours. There should be no attachment — to any object or any mode of life. You must be absolutely free. If you want to have the true yogic attitude, you must be able to accept everything that comes from the Divine and let it go easily and without regret. The attitude of the ascetic who says, “I want nothing” and the attitude of the man of the world who says, “I want this thing” are the same. The one may be as much attached to his renunciation as the other to his possession.

You must accept all things — and only those things — that come from the Divine. Because things can come from concealed desires. The desires work in the subconscious and bring things to you which, although you may not recognise them as such, nevertheless do not come from the Divine but from disguised desires.

You can easily know when a thing comes from the Divine. You feel free, you are at ease, you are in peace. But when something presents itself to you and you jump at it and cry out, “Oh, at last I have it”, then you can know for certain that it does not come from the Divine. Equanimity is the essential condition of union and communion with the Divine.

THE MOTHER

(Questions and Answers 1929-31, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 3, pp. 4-10)



INDIA AND THE FATE OF NATIONS

A GLANCE AT THE CAREERS OF ANCIENT RACES THROUGH SRI AUROBINDO'S EYES

According to Sri Aurobindo, every nation, every large and distinguishable human collectivity, is a super-organism, with a common or communal body, mind and soul. This super-organism, like the individual, passes through a cycle of birth, growth, youth, ripeness and decline. If the decline lasts long, it generally ends in death.

But there resides, in the vast subtleties of the collective being of a people, a power of self-renewal with the help of its inner life-idea. The inner life-idea is the key to a nation's psychology and is more tenacious than the outer form. If it is great and intense and the body is strong enough and the surface-mind plastic and adaptive without being loose or unstable, then the collective being can keep unimpaired through vicissitudes, even rise phoenix-like out of an apparent perishing and one cycle will evolve into another and many cycles run their courses before the final collapse.

Certain of the ancient civilisations had this kind of continuity and resurrection. But even they could not last indefinitely. For, the inner life-idea itself of a super-organism is only a projection of the authentic soul behind, a principle of that soul's manifestation. This soul in turn is a manifestation and vehicle of the eternal Spirit whose expression in time is the whole universe. The Cosmic Self or "Virat", as the Rishis called it, acting through its particularised representative, the soul, is the true source and support of the inner life-idea of the collective being, as it is of the individual. And if the source and support is not sufficiently contacted in consciousness through the soul, the eternal is never brought with dominant effect into the temporal and ultimately a people suffers dissolution or a fusion into other races instead of achieving their assimilation into its own communal consciousness.

This has happened to several great collectivities of old: Egypt, Sumer, Crete, Greece, Persia, the Celtic culture, Rome, the Incas, the Aztecs and the civilisations of ancient America before them. The nations that exist today where these were at one time are no real continuations of them. Some influence does linger and is still fruitful in general amidst some ethnic remnant, but there is no perceptible identity of inner life-idea or even of outer nation-body.

When, however, there is a constant look into the Inmost, a persistent pressure upon the deepest and widest Self, a people acquires the secret of perpetual life-renewal and never ages, no matter how many millenniums pass, what foreign invasions interfere with the physical expression and what defects and decadences set in as a result of its own folly. Even death may threaten again and again, but every time a renaissance occurs and the wrinkles straighten out, the stiff limbs recover

healthy resilient tissue, the crust of dull habit and stifling conservative restraint breaks to reveal an enterprising and creative consciousness that was never moribund within. A people living not only with a keen and independent psychological stress rather than with a merely refined and superficially mentalised animal urge, a people living also in the experience of its profound soul and thereby in the presence of “Virat”, the infinite Self of the cosmos seeking its own highest manifestation through human history, such a people never dies and is everlastingly young in spite of many phases of apparent decline.

In ways that are different in several respects but have a basic similarity India and China strike the historian as nations that can be said to have lived from remote antiquity onward with a general touch on this infinite Cosmic Self. The sense of Atman, the sense of Tao meet us throughout. Not that there have been no counter-currents, but, by and large, the inmost universal Reality has been felt by them across the millenniums. And that is why they have persisted with a recognisable continuity, as no other nation contemporary with their early careers has done.

Modern China has gone through a revolution which appears to run against such a continuity at last. But can a nation that has kept a Tao-toned identity for so long lose its character under the sweep of Dialectical Materialism? It hardly seems probable. Certain economic changes may come to stay; permanent change of essential genius is unlikely.

Not the least doubt, however, can be entertained about the India of today. Behind a thousand defects, weaknesses and corruptions, there still runs, as an undying potential, the ancient spirituality. This potential also acts secretly against the trend of a superficial modernism. At one period — in the nineteenth century — India passed through the grave danger of getting its true genius obscured. Then arose Ramakrishna in a stark nudity of fundamental Indianness — illiterate, childlike, clear of all Europeanised trappings and modernised refinements. He began a new cycle of the Eternal in time for the old race. Vivekananda, his disciple, gave a strong vital and mental body to the sheer soulfulness of his master and brought the new cycle into some *rapport* with the temper of the age. But the sannyasi ideal was still a harking back to the past. Now, with the advent of Sri Aurobindo, the power of renewal, the realisation of perpetual youth, is a certainty, for there is the ideal of life-acceptance and life-transformation by means of spirituality, along with the taking up of all that is significantly modern.

But India labours under a host of difficulties, a load of shortcomings. Of course, we must not let them obsess our view or blind us to the greatness growing in the womb of time. Yet we cannot neglect them either. India must wake up more and more at once to these incongruities and to that greatness in order to fulfil with swift strides her deathless destiny.

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

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SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of May 2015)

Chapter: XLIII

The Historic Trial

The Alipore Bomb Trial was the first State Trial of any magnitude in India — because it was held at a time when discontent reached its highest point in Bengal and it concerned people who were gentlemen belonging to the best society, cultured, educated and highly intelligent.

Bejoy Krishna Bose¹

Arabindo Ghose had been a brilliant scholar in England. He had been Head of St. Paul's and won a scholarship at King's College, Cambridge. There he was a contemporary of Mr. Beachcroft, I.C.S., who tried him at Alipore and who had been Head of Rugby and had also won a scholarship at Cambridge. Both won honours at the University, and at the final examination for the Indian Civil Service Arabindo the prisoner beat Beachcroft the Judge in — Greek!

Eardley Norton²

From our point of view of presenting a picture of the perceptible events in the life of Sri Aurobindo, we see that they ran in three streams at this phase: (a) what the prosecution and the imperial power behind it were doing and the public and individual reaction to their actions, (b) what the revolutionaries, Sri Aurobindo's co-prisoners were doing and (c) what Sri Aurobindo himself was doing and experiencing — whatever can be discerned from his statements and reminiscences of others.

The terrible fear the top brass of the British Indian Administration felt for a single person reads incredible! The trial started on the 18th of May 1908 and the very next day a nervous Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, Sir Andrew Fraser, wrote to the Governor-General of India, Lord Minto:

There is one matter which I desire to press very strongly on Your Excellency's earnest attention: *viz.*, the necessity for deporting Arabindo Ghose. He is the ring-leader. He is able, cunning, fanatical: these qualities have the vigour in him which they not infrequently have in the man who is not quite sane. He is the leader. He is regarded and spoken of by all . . . but he has kept himself,

like a careful and valued General, out of sight of 'the enemy'. We cannot get evidence against him such as would secure his conviction in a court. But we have been fortunate enough to get papers which show his connection with the conspiracy, and information as to his action, quite sufficient to convince the reasonable mind and justify deportation.

I earnestly trust that no sentiments will be allowed to prevent this. The views of this Government have been clearly stated in Mr. Gait's official letter. I urge this on Your Excellency's personal attention. See what the man has done; see the length to which he is prepared to go; see the skill with which he has used his human tools and kept himself in the background. It would be deplorable to set him free to recommence operations. Tools are easily got. It is a grave responsibility to set free against society a man who can get them as easily and use them as effectively as Arabindo Ghose.³

To this most unusual letter, charged with fear, agony and emotion, was attached a long confidential note, signed by Sir Andrew Fraser. The note gives a brief account of Sri Aurobindo's career right from his childhood and regrets the "deplorable blunder" of the authorities for excluding him — a "clever, a distinguished student and very successful in his examinations" — from the I.C.S. on account of riding!

Further the note said, "Aided by Abinash Chunder Bhattacharji and Bhupendra Nath Dutt he started the *Yugantar* in 1906 to publish articles that might give an incentive to the Indians to try for the independence of the country." After giving an account of the circumstances which led Sri Aurobindo to resign his Baroda job and to come over to Calcutta, the note said:

He has ever since been the principal adviser of the revolutionary party and has been consulted about and in touch with their proceedings. . . . He has been very careful, as far as possible, to keep himself out of sight, and to prevent any trace of his presence or work being left behind. His confederates have all assisted in thus keeping him in the background. The result is that, though we have valuable proof of his important share in this conspiracy, the legal evidence is not so strong. But it is of the utmost importance to stop his power for mischief; for he is the prime mover, and can easily get tools, one to replace another.⁴

We can appreciate the Administration's anxiety because while Sri Aurobindo was its prime target and it had obtained the sanction from the officiating Chief Presidency Magistrate Thornhill's court for searching the houses of and arresting "Arabindo's gang of outlaws", not a single member of the "gang" even remotely implicated Sri Aurobindo in their confessions. This was exasperating and frustrating for the Prosecution. Their anguish was fated to increase in the days that followed as there was no sign of horror in any section of the Indian people for the actions of

Prafulla Chaki and Kshudiram. The feeling expressed in meetings and in the press was — yes, it was regrettable that two guiltless persons died; but that did not reduce the greatness of the end to meet which the pair of young men consciously risked their lives for. As a distinguished scholar of modern Indian history records:

The Indian press generally attempted to justify the anarchists on the ground that the Government had driven them to what they were doing. A greater reason for apprehension was that people in general did not disapprove of the violent methods since such methods were associated with religious feelings. . . . In Bengal and in the United Provinces the general feeling was sympathetic to the anarchists, and among the Bengalis it was a matter of pride “that the Bengali has been shown to have the pluck to do desperate deeds”. It was feared too that the other politicians of other parts of India felt a good deal of sympathy with the Bengal anarchists. The Government of the United Provinces produced an example: “Madan Mohan Malaviya, a member of the local legislative council and a vakil of Allahabad, is the recognised leader of the Moderates. Although he is disliked by the Extremists of Allahabad, he appears, when asked to attend the meeting held at the Mayo Hall on May 27, 1908, for the purpose of condemning the anarchist movement, to have refused to do so unless a resolution was passed to the effect that the Government should be asked to pay attention to the causes that led to the movement.” The educated community, if it did not approve the bomb outrages, maintained at all events that it served the Government right, and they were glad that the authorities were in danger.⁵

The Times of London wrote that the press in India had made belated comments on the Muzaffarpore bomb incident and had expressed sympathy with the victims. But several newspapers, *The Times* observed, had made “angry protests against the arrest of Aurobindo Ghose and the refusal to release the accused on bail. They declare that the anarchism is the outcome of the influence of foreign ideas and the refusal of the British Cabinet to grant self-government to India and revoke the partition of Bengal.”⁶

Sri Aurobindo’s admirers in Maharashtra proposed to raise funds for his defence. It was followed by an appeal by Sri Aurobindo’s younger sister Sarojini Devi published in some newspapers in Bengal:

My countrymen are aware that my brother Aravinda Ghose stands accused of a grave offence. But I believe, and I have reason to think that the vast majority of my countrymen believe that he is quite innocent. I think if he is defended by an able counsel he is sure to be acquitted. . . . I know all countrymen do not hold the same political opinions as he. But I feel some delicacy in saying that probably there are few Indians who do not appreciate his attainments, his self-

sacrifice, his single-minded devotion to the country's cause and the high spirituality of his character. This emboldens me, a woman, to stand before every son and daughter of India for help to defend a brother, — my brother and theirs too.⁷

Among several newspapers, the most important Bengali one of the time, the *Basumati* carried a long editorial on Sarojini Devi's appeal. What we reproduce below is only a lame translation of portions of the original, made by an officer of the Intelligence Department, but it should give us an idea about the love and esteem Sri Aurobindo had spontaneously come to command in the minds of the public. Indeed, there is no evidence of any other political leader having received such overwhelming tributes till then; no leader had been presented before the public as "the spiritual teacher" of the country:

The beloved son of the Mother, the unflinching devotee of the Mother's creed, Srijut Ghose is today in trouble — charged with serious accusation before the King's court. Countrymen, will you remain indifferent? Have you no duty to perform at this hour of Arabinda's trial?

Arabinda's sister, Miss Sarojini, is today a beggar at the doors of her countrymen. Not for her own self; it is for the sake of Arabinda, the brother of all Bengalis, the brother of all Indians and the sannyasi who is a devoted servant of the Motherland that Miss Sarojini has taken up the beggar's bowl. Countrymen, if you have allegiance to your duty, if you have love for the Mother's feet, then fill it up.

Arabinda has made the sacred land resound with the thunder of the new creed; Arabinda has renounced all desires for earthly pleasures and prosperity for the sake of your welfare; Arabinda has taken up *niskāma dharma* to preach the *mātrīmantra* and has turned a sannyasi renouncing everything. That Arabinda is in trouble today. Shall you prove heartless, remain indifferent, and show to the world that you possess only instinct of beasts?

Arabinda, the pioneer of the new idea, having renounced everything and made up his mind to sacrifice his life, has sounded the thunderous trumpet of *mātrīmantra*. The vivifying *mantra* which Arabinda has pronounced is novel in India in her present chaotic, distracted and self-forgetful condition.

The patriotism which appeared to be merely an idle dream, has been transformed into a stern reality by the magic influence of Arabinda. He has made the desert fields of India moist and pleasant by making the mighty stream of patriotism flow through them. Arabinda has caused to be engraved on every Indian heart the fiery *bijamantra* of the Mother. Arabinda is the giver of your *mantra*. O devoted worshipper of the *mātrīmantra*, shall you actually remain idle at this dangerous ordeal of your spiritual teacher?

Arabinda has taught that the power of the will can conquer the world. The power of the country has not disappeared; it was reposing, it is awaking now. The awaking of the latent power of the country is quite possible, it is natural. Arabinda has taught that we have lost the right path and have thrown aside the jewels of our own country and have taken up the glass beads of foreign lands; that having cast aside the power of our country, we have wandered into a wrong path, that we have gone up to the door of *paratantra* begging for deliverance. Arabinda proclaimed in India, which appears a cremation ground, that the soul of the country was ever-awake, that the deathless, everlasting soul was indestructible, *śaba-sāadhanā*, even on this cremation ground, was neither impossible nor impracticable. Slumbering India may, through the vivifying *mantra* of the Mother, again be converted into an awakened India. Arabinda said that in India which is without *karma*, without aim, without devotion and *dharma*, the golden throne of *karma*, aim, devotion and *dharma* might be established again.

Through the Mother's favour Arabinda felt in his heart of hearts and taught his countrymen that the path of deliverance could not be blocked for ever; that the path which today was narrow and full of thorns, might be turned into a broad and sacred path of deliverance tomorrow.

Arabinda felt that Western politics would not suit spiritual India. It is *dharma* which saved India in every yuga. That the Indians are nearing annihilation is due to their abandonment of that *dharma*. It is for this that he encouraged the Indians to devote themselves to *dharma*. Arabinda explained to his countrymen that the freedom of the soul from bondage was "the liberation of man while yet alive", that the sense of independence of the soul constituted the deliverance of man possessed of a physical body. Arabinda said that in India, the land of *dharma*, *dharma* was indestructible. Arabinda said: "Awake, O Indians, take to *dharma*, place the image of the Mother on the throne of your heart; take to the supreme path of deliverance . . ."

Arabinda said: "Let *dharma* be your very soul; let the Ganga of compassion issue forth from the sacred Gomukhi of devotion to *dharma*; that sacred stream will deliver the 33 crores of men and women. Let the service of the country be enthroned in the inmost hearts of this spiritually-inclined people, let the fountain of the nectar of self-help be approached and then, O Indians! You will attain *siddhi*." Arabinda taught that in this world enthusiasm after languor, awakening after sleep and rise after fall were quite natural in the life of a nation. The devotee Arabinda sounded the conch shell of awakening in India, and the pulsation of an awakened India, the restlessness of a new awakening and the uprising of new hopes were felt which rose so high as to overtop the normal limit of things. From the snow-capped white peaks of the Himalayas to the Cape Comorin the whole of India was powerfully moved by the mighty flow

of feelings and the pulsations of life. This awakening was mistaken by the rulers for rebellion, and this is why Arabinda is in sore trouble today and is a prisoner. O Indians! O Bengalis! Is this trouble not yours as well? Shall you sacrifice Arabinda, the man in whose heart rises the sacred tide of patriotism, in the flame of official wrath, thereby deepening the black stain that already disfigures the Bengalis' forehead?

The man at whose call you have returned to the temple of the Mother after ages, have known swadeshi, have loved your countrymen, have embraced your own *dharma*, have been fired with the aspiration for *swaraj*, that Arabinda is in trouble today for your sake. O Bengalis, O Indians, will you not do your duty?

Arabinda loves the Mother, loves his own country. *Janani Janmabhumi* . . . is his goddess, greater than heaven itself. *Bande Mataram* is the essence of his life, the bridge of nectar, the mantra for deliverance. Arabinda's culture is unparalleled. His sacrifice is unequalled. There is no other devoted son of the Mother, no other disinterested Karmayogin like him in India. O Bengalis, will you not save that Arabinda from the clutches of the law? Will you permit Arabinda and with him the weal of the country to be crushed under the wheels?

The British Court will decide whether Arabinda is innocent or not. In the trial Arabinda may prove himself innocent and so may be acquitted. But he has no money. If in new India Arabinda be unable to defend himself for want of money, then all the waters of the Indian ocean will not be able to wash away this blackest stain on the country.

On the day when the renowned poet Rabindranath said with his heart full of admiration, "Accept Arabinda, the obeisance of Rabindra", the whole of Bengal resounded, "Accept, Arabinda, the obeisance of Bengal." Countrymen, can the stream of that admiration be dried up at the touch of alarm? Is it impossible in India, inhabited by 33 crores of men and women, to make an attempt to save Arabinda, to free him from the disgrace of accusation?

We are destitute of bread, the goddess Lakshmi has deserted us; we are therefore miserly, but are we miserly in our soul, poor in our sympathy? No. It can never be so. In this new India, where patriotism holds sway and where the vow of *niskāma karma* has been taken, there will be no lack of money for Arabinda. A *cowri* from each one of crores of starving population will, when collected together, make a heap of gold. Are we not to entertain that hope for Arabinda?⁸

(To be continued)

MANOJ DAS

References and Notes

1. Bejoy Krishna Bose: *The Alipore Bomb Trial*; Butterworth & Co.; Calcutta, London, Sydney. 1922. *Bejoy Krishna Bose was one of the defence lawyers — he fought for the accused from the beginning till the end.*
2. Eardley Norton, Bar-at-Law: “Foreword” to the work mentioned above. *Eardley Norton was the State-appointed lawyer who fought against the accused for the greater length of the trial.*
3. Minto Papers. Old India Office Library; culled by the present author. See *Sri Aurobindo in the First Decade of the 20th Century*; Sri Aurobindo Ashram.
4. *Ibid.*
5. M. N. Das: *India Under Morley and Minto*; George Allen & Unwin, London, 1964. The words on Malaviya are from the Minto Papers: ‘From Hewett to Minto, 16 June 1908’.
6. *The Times*, London; 6 May 1908.
7. Manoj Das: *Sri Aurobindo in the First Decade of the 20th Century*.
8. *The Basumati*, Calcutta; 29 June 1908. English translation from the CID Reports, Old India Office Library, London.

About the contact with the world and the hostile forces, that is of course always one of the sadhak's chief difficulties, but to transform the world and the hostile forces is too big a task and the personal transformation cannot wait for it. What has to be done is to come to live in the Power that these things, these disturbing elements cannot penetrate, or, if they penetrate, cannot disturb, and to be so purified and strengthened by it that there is in oneself no response to anything hostile. If there is a protecting envelopment, an inner purifying descent and, as a result, a settling of the higher consciousness in the inner being and finally, its substitution even in the most external outwardly active parts in place of the old ignorant consciousness, then the world and the hostile forces will no longer matter — for one's own soul at least; for there is a larger work not personal in which of course they will have to be dealt with; but that need not be a main preoccupation at the present stage.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 22, pp. 397-98)

ABRAHAM LINCOLN — NOBLE AND RESOLUTE

(Continued from the issue of May 2015)

17. Lincoln's Second Inauguration and his indifference to the assassination plots against him

On inauguration day, 4 March 1865, there were rumours that Lincoln could be assassinated. In spite of Lincoln's irritated protests extra guards were assigned.¹ The President's second inaugural address is remembered not only as a call of forgiveness for the adversaries but compassion for all those who suffered deeply. Here is an excerpt of this fine reconciliatory speech — famous words that reverberate till this day:

. . . but let us judge not, that we be not judged. . . . Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray, that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away.

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.²

The *Spectator* of London, formerly critical of Lincoln, said the speech was “by far the noblest which any American President has yet uttered to an American Congress.”³

Eminent black leader Frederick Douglass describes the events of that day:

For the first time in my life, and I suppose the first time in any coloured man's life, I attended the reception of President Lincoln on the evening of the inauguration. As I approached the door, I was seized by two policemen and forbidden to enter. I said to them that they were mistaken entirely in what they were doing, that if Mr. Lincoln knew that I was at the door he would order my admission, and I bolted in by them. On the inside, I was taken charge of by two other policemen, to be conducted as I supposed to the President, but instead of that they were conducting me out the window on a plank.

1. See Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, p. 410.

2. Website: www.bartleby.com

3. Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 701.

“Oh,” said I, “this will not do, gentlemen,” and as a gentleman was passing in I said to him, “Just say to Mr. Lincoln that Fred Douglass is at the door.” He rushed in to President Lincoln, and almost in less than half a minute I was invited into the East Room of the White House. . . . I could not have been more than ten feet from him when Mr. Lincoln saw me; his countenance lighted up, and he said in a voice which was heard all around: “Here comes my friend Douglass.” As I approached him he reached out his hand, gave me a cordial shake, and said: “Douglass, I saw you in the crowd today listening to my inaugural address. There is no man’s opinion that I value more than yours; what do you think of it?” I said: “Mr. Lincoln, I cannot stop here to talk with you, as there are thousands waiting to shake you by the hand”; but he said again: “What did you think of it?” I said: “Mr. Lincoln, it was a sacred effort,” and then I walked off. “I am glad you liked it,” he said. That was the last time I saw him to speak with him.⁴

On March 5, 1865 the public was surprised when the Vice President, Andrew Johnson, fortified himself with liquor for his swearing-in as Vice President. Lincoln came to his rescue stating: “I have known Andy for many years . . . he made a bad slip the other day, but you need not be scared. Andy ain’t a drunkard.” Lincoln then observed, “It has been a severe lesson for Andy, but I do not think he will do it again.”⁵

Speaking of Vice Presidents, Georgian Alexander Stephens, Confederate Vice President, who once served in the Congress with Lincoln, reported that when he met with the President in February 1865, the President spoke to him as a friend. Mr. Lincoln arranged for Stephens’ nephew to be released from a Union prison in Ohio.⁶

Lincoln’s life was under threat ever since winning the Presidential elections in November 1860 but when he entered his second term, rumours of assassination plots escalated. The hate mail poured in with an eerie continuity. A Southern newspaper publicly offered \$ 100,000 for his “miserable traitorous head”.⁷ Lincoln never paid heed to repeated warnings. He told a friend: “Soon after I was nominated, I began receiving letters threatening my life. The first one or two made me feel a little uncomfortable . . . but they have ceased to give me any apprehension.” When the friend expressed surprise at his attitude, Lincoln responded: “Oh, there is nothing like getting used to things.” Nevertheless, he confessed to Seward, “I know I am in danger but I am not going to worry about it.” Somebody may have tried to kill him

4. Website: www.mrlincolnwhitehouse.org (Allen Thorndike Rice, editor, *Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time*, pp. 191-193)

5. Website: www.mrlincolnwhitehouse.org (H. Draper Hunt, *Hannibal Hamlin: Lincoln’s First Vice President*, pp. 197-198 and John Forney, *Anecdotes of Public Men*, p. 177)

6. Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, Vol. IV, p. 51.

7. See Stephen B. Oates, *Abraham Lincoln, The Man Behind the Myths*, p. 89.

some time back for whilst he was riding there was a gun shot and the horse stampeded but Lincoln managed to control the horse and made light of the incident. Though he admitted the bullet whistled close by he denied anybody had really tried to shoot him. His friends and his bodyguard Ward Hill Lamon constantly worried about him and Lamon wrote to the President, “You are in danger. And you know, or ought to know, that your life is sought after, and will be taken unless you and your friends are cautious, for you have many enemies within our lines.” Lincoln called Lamon a monomaniac on the issue of assassination. When it was decided that there would be extra security for the President, he expressed his annoyance: “It is important that people know that I come among them without fear.” He detested the idea that the guards made him feel like a king. At times, he would evade the escort during his nightly walks or ask him to stay behind. Secretary of War, Stanton would get exasperated and begged him to look after himself. Lincoln protected his security men and once out of concern said, “If Stanton should learn that you had let me return alone, he would have you court-martialled and shot.”⁸

Lincoln was haunted by his train journey to Washington for his first inaugural address in 1861. Journalists and cartoonists had then taunted him as a shivering coward when he was persuaded to discard his familiar stovepipe hat to escape recognition by would-be assassins whilst passing through dangerous Baltimore. He ranked it the worst mistake of his life. When in 1864 Confederate troops threatened the capital, he never let the public glimpse his anguish and publicly stood firm. To prove a point he went to watch a Confederate attack from a parapet, thus becoming the first and only President to come under enemy fire in war. A captain shouted, “Get down, you fool” but Lincoln didn’t mind and was persuaded to crouch down because of the tall target he presented. By war’s end, his Baltimore image was forgotten. Even Confederate President Jefferson Davis vetoed the idea of kidnapping him by conceding: “Lincoln is a man of courage . . . he would undoubtedly resist being captured.”⁹

18. Civil War ends — Generals Grant and Lee

Around March 1865 General Lee contacted General Grant and suggested that the two Generals resolve the war. When Lincoln learned about this he sent Grant a clear firm command: “I will deal with political questions and negotiate for peace. Your job is to fight.”¹⁰

With victory in sight Grant invited Lincoln to visit his headquarters. Grant had just won a battle and the President went to inspect the battle sites. There were dead

8. See Waldo Emerson Reek, *A. Lincoln, his last 24 hours*, pp. 12-15, See Stephen B Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, pp. 415-17, See website: www.mrlincolnwhitehouse.org

9. See website: www.haroldholzer.com

10. Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, p. 415.

and wounded soldiers strewn all over the battlefield. When a long line of captured Confederate soldiers passed by, Naval commander John Barnes, who was accompanying Lincoln, recalled: "Lincoln remarked upon their sad and unhappy condition . . . his whole face showing sympathetic feeling for the suffering about him." On the return trip Lincoln bewailed "that he had seen enough of the horrors of war, that he hoped this was the beginning of the end, and that there would be no more bloodshed or ruin of homes."¹¹

Lincoln's proximity to the battle action unnerved Stanton so much that he sent a warning message to Lincoln. But for the soldiers in the field who greeted him with heartfelt cheers, Lincoln's presence at the scene revealed that "he was not afraid to show himself among them, and willing to share their dangers here".¹²

With the war drawing to a close Grant and Sherman felt that "one more bloody battle was likely to occur before the close of the war." Lincoln queried: "Must more blood be shed? Cannot this last battle be avoided?" The generals explained that all would depend upon the actions of Lee. The next day Sherman inquired of Lincoln: "What is to be done with the rebel armies when defeated?" Lincoln replied that "all he wanted of us was to defeat the opposing armies, and to get the men composing the Confederate armies back to their homes, at work on their farms and in their shops." He wanted no retaliation or retribution. He continued, "I want no one punished; treat them liberally all around. We want those people to return to their allegiance to the Union and submit to the laws." Later that afternoon saying goodbye to the President, Sherman "was more than ever impressed by his kindly nature, his deep and earnest sympathy with the afflictions of the whole people," and his "absolute faith in the courage, manliness, and integrity of the armies in the field." A decade later, Sherman remained convinced of Lincoln's unparalleled leadership. "Of all the men I ever met, he seemed to possess more of the elements of greatness, combined with goodness, than any other."¹³

The Confederates had to flee from their capital, Richmond. When news reached Lincoln about the capture of Richmond, he remarked, "Thank God that I have lived to see this! It seems to me that I have been dreaming a horrid dream for four years, and now the nightmare is gone."¹⁴ On 4 April, Lincoln entered the city. Admiral David Dixon Porter, one of the major naval figures in the war, recalls that the liberated slaves fell to their knees before him, and Lincoln responded, "Don't kneel to me. That is not right. You must kneel to God only and thank him for the liberty you will hereafter enjoy. I am but God's humble instrument but you may rest assured that as long as I live, no one shall put a shackle on your limbs, and you shall have all the

11. See Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 710.

12. *Ibid.*

13. See *Ibid.*, pp. 712-13.

14. See *Ibid.*, p. 716.

rights which God has given to every other free citizen of this republic.”¹⁵ Porter further recalls that Lincoln spoke to an audience of blacks, “My poor friends, you are free — free as air. You can cast off the name of slave and trample upon it; it will come to you no more. Liberty is your birthright. God gave it to you as he gave it to others, and it is a sin that you have been deprived of it for so many years. But you must try to deserve this priceless boon. . . .”¹⁶

Both Admiral Porter and Lincoln’s bodyguard William Crook were worried for Lincoln’s safety as he was in rebel territory. Lincoln seemed unmindful of any threat to his life. Crook later wrote that it was “nothing short of miraculous that some attempt on [Lincoln’s] life was not made.”¹⁷ James Speed relayed Seward’s message to Lincoln about the increased threat to his life. “He stopped me at once,” Speed recalled, “saying, he had rather be dead than to live in continual dread.” Moreover, he considered it essential “that the people know I come among them without fear.”¹⁸

Prior to his departure for Washington Lincoln visited the hospital camps and shook hands with some seven thousand wounded soldiers. He said he would probably never see them again and he wanted them to know how much he appreciated what they had done for the Union.¹⁹ Marquis de Chambrun who was accompanying Lincoln, recalled Lincoln moved “from one bed to another, saying a friendly word to each wounded man, or at least giving him a handshake.” At one bed, he held the hand of a twenty-four-year-old captain who had been cited for bravery. “The dying man half-opened his eyes; a faint smile passed over his lips. It was then that his pulse ceased beating.” Lincoln remained among the wounded for five hours. When the marquis inquired about the troubles of US and France over Mexico, Lincoln replied, “There has been war enough, during my second term there will be no more fighting.”²⁰

Lincoln’s visit to Richmond is related by G. F. Shepley:

I took him and Admiral Porter in my carriage. An immense concourse of coloured people thronged the streets, accompanied and followed the carriage, calling upon the President with the wildest exclamations of gratitude and delight.

He was the Moses, the Messiah, to the slaves of the South. Hundreds of coloured women tossed their hands high in the air and bent down to the ground, weeping for joy. Some shouted songs of deliverance, and sang the old plantation refrains, which prophesied the coming of a deliverer from bondage. “God

15. Don Edward Fehrenbacher, Virginia Fehrenbacher, *Recollected Words of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 366.

16. *Ibid.*

17. See Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 720.

18. See *Ibid.*, p. 723.

19. See Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, p. 421.

20. See Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 722.

bless you, Father Abraham!" went up from thousand throats.

Tears and smiles, and shouts of the emancipated people evinced the frenzy of their gratitude to their deliverer. He looked at all attentively, with a face expressive only of a sort of pathetic wonder.

Occasionally its sadness would alternate with one of his peculiar smiles, and then his face would relapse again into that sad expression . . .

. . . Not long after, the bullet of the assassin arrested the beatings of one of the kindest hearts that ever throbbed in human bosom.²¹

On 9 April 1865 Lee surrendered to Grant thus effectively ending the war. In his hour of defeat let us spare a thought for this magnificent, ubiquitous Confederate Army Commander, General Robert E. Lee. Always the underdog, fighting against an army numerically far superior, Lee was courageous, dashing, determined and a brilliant military strategist. Ironically, Lee was sensitive to the horrors of the war; at the very outset said, "There is a terrible war coming, and these young men who have never seen war cannot wait for it to happen, but I tell you, I wish that I owned every slave in the South, for I would free them all to avoid this war."²² General Scott, Commander of the US Army regarded Lee as "the very best soldier I ever saw in the field." At the outbreak of the Civil War Lincoln had offered him the highest ranking military position. Lee, replied: "I look upon secession as anarchy. If I owned the four million slaves in the South I would sacrifice them all to the Union; but how can I draw my sword upon Virginia, my native state?" He then tendered in his resignation from the US Army to General Scott: "It would have been presented at once but for the struggle it has cost me to separate myself from a service to which I have devoted all the best years of my life . . . I have experienced nothing but kindness from my superiors, & the most cordial friendship from my companions. . . I shall carry with me to the grave the most grateful recollections of your kind consideration, & your name & fame will always be dear to me."²³

Now for a brief insight into Lincoln's favourite Army commander, General Ulysses S. Grant, who like Lincoln was an unassuming man. Grant seldom visited the White House. The first time he met Lincoln was when he was appointed General-in-Chief of the Army in March 1864. There was an eager crowd awaiting his arrival at the White House — he was already a war hero by then. Lincoln attempted to convince him to stay for dinner. When Grant asked to be excused, Lincoln replied: "But we can't excuse you. Mrs. Lincoln's dinner without you, would be Hamlet with Hamlet left out." Responded Grant: "I appreciate the honour Mrs. Lincoln would do me, but time is very important now — and really — Mr. Lincoln, I have

21. *Lincoln's Stories and Speeches*, edited by Edward Frank Ellen, pp. 39-40.

22. Website: homepage.eircom.net

23. See Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 350.

had enough of this show business.” Assistant Secretary, William O. Stoddard, asked Lincoln, what kind of man Grant was: “Well . . . I hardly know what to think of him, altogether. He’s the quietest little fellow you ever saw,” said the President. “Why, he makes the least fuss of any man you ever knew. I believe two or three times he has been in this room a minute or so before I knew he was here. It’s about so all around. The only evidence you have that he’s in any place is that he makes things git! Where he is, things move!” Unlike other generals, the President told Stoddard, Grant did not look for excuses to avoid an advance.²⁴

Lincoln was forced to deal with bickering and demanding generals on almost every front and it is little wonder that he developed such a deep respect, admiration and love for the uncomplaining Grant. When Grant led the battle operation in Vicksburg, Lincoln exulted: “Whether Gen. Grant shall or shall not consummate the capture of Vicksburg, his campaign from the beginning of this month up to the twenty-second day of it, is one of the most brilliant in the world.”²⁵ Grant later explained what Lincoln expected from his Generals, “All he wanted or ever had wanted was someone who would take the responsibility and act, and call on him for all the assistance needed, pledging himself to use all the power of the government in rendering such assistance.”²⁶ Grant also spoke of Stanton’s briefing to him: “He and General Halleck both cautioned me against giving the President my plans of campaign, saying that he was so kind-hearted, so averse to refusing anything asked of him, that some friend would be sure to get from him all he knew.”²⁷

Congressman Elihu Washburne recounted spending six days on the road with Grant, who “took with him neither a horse nor an orderly nor a servant nor a camp-chest nor an overcoat nor a blanket nor even a clean shirt.” Carrying only a toothbrush, “he fared like the commonest soldier in his command, partaking of his rations and sleeping upon the ground with no covering except the canopy of heaven.”²⁸

Despite Lincoln’s deep regard for Grant there was an instance where he needed to intervene. In order to prevent peddlers from illegally profiteering in cotton, Grant had issued an order expelling “the Jews, as a class,” leaving all their assets behind. A delegation of Jewish leaders approached Lincoln on the matter. He responded to their troubles with a biblical reference: “And so the children of Israel were driven from the happy land of Canaan?” The delegation leader answered: “Yes, and that is why we have come onto Father Abraham’s bosom, asking protection.” Lincoln instantly replied: “And this protection they shall have at once.” He wrote a note to

24. See Shelby Foote, *Civil War*, Vol. III, p. 6; Isaac Arnold, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 371; W. O. Stoddard, *Lincoln’s Third Secretary*, pp. 197-199; Bruce Catton, *Grant Takes Command*, p. 143.

25. Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 528.

26. Website: www.civilwar.org

27. *Ibid.*

28. Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 616.

Gen. Halleck, ordering immediate cancellation of the order. Halleck explained to Grant that “the President has no objection to your expelling traitors and Jew peddlers, which, I suppose, was the object of your order; but, as it in terms proscribed an entire religious class, some of whom are fighting in our ranks, the President deemed it necessary to revoke it.”²⁹

The surrender completed, the two noble Generals saluted somberly and parted. “I felt . . . sad and depressed,” Grant wrote, “at the downfall of a foe who had fought so long and valiantly, and had suffered so much for a cause, though that cause was, I believe, one of the worst for which a people ever fought.” As news of the surrender spread through Union camps, batteries began firing joyful salutes until Grant ordered them stopped. “The war is over,” he said; “the rebels are our countrymen again, and the best sight of rejoicing after the victory will be to abstain from all demonstrations.” To help bring those former rebels back in the Union, Grant sent three days’ rations for 25,000 men across the lines to perhaps ease the psychological as well as physical pain of Lee’s soldiers.³⁰

The news of surrender had spread through Confederate lines. Lee tried to speak to his men but tears came into his eyes and he could only manage to say “Men we have fought the war together, and I have done the best I could for you.” In an overwhelming display of respect and devotion his soldiers greeted him from all sides. When their cheers brought tears to Lee’s eyes, they, too, began to weep. A soldier, reflecting the sentiments of all, said: “I love you just as well as ever, General Lee!”³¹

Lincoln and Stanton embraced each other in joy at the news of Lee’s surrender. Lincoln told his Cabinet that he was glad and relieved that the war was over, but had little time to rejoice, for his post-war burdens were great. He had to rebuild the South whilst maintaining the loyalty of white Unionists there and protect Black freedom.³² One recalls, when Lincoln won the Presidential elections in 1860 there was no exultation on his victory but a sober comprehension of the grave task at hand. One is reminded of the Mother’s words: “The greatest victories are the least noisy” and “One must be *very* great, *very* pure, have a *very* high and *very* disinterested spiritual consciousness in order to be successful without being affected by it. *Nothing is more difficult than being successful. This, indeed, is the true test of life!*”³³ Lincoln himself said: “Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character, give him power.”³⁴

29. *Ibid.*, p. 529.

30. Website: www.neh.gov (*Battle Cry for Freedom: The Civil War Era*, article by James M. McPherson)

31. See Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 726.

32. See Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, p. 423.

33. *Collected Works of the Mother*, 2nd Ed., Vol. 15, p. 171 and Vol. 6, p. 239.

34. Website: www.goodreads.com

Lincoln refused the Radicals' desire to punish the South but looked instead for reconciliation and integration. He wanted the Confederate legislature to assemble in Richmond with the hope they would take back the order of secession but his cabinet strongly disagreed and insisted that law and order in the rebel states should be maintained under Federal authority. He confessed to Welles that the opposition of his colleagues on this issue troubled him tremendously. Wholly outnumbered he was finally prevailed over.³⁵

Lincoln remarked that "there were men in Congress who . . . possessed feelings of hate and vindictiveness in which he did not sympathise and could not participate. He hoped there would be no persecution, no bloody work, after the war was over." As for the rebel leaders, he reiterated his resolve to perpetrate no further violence: "None need expect he would take any part in hanging or killing those men, even the worst of them." Stanton later wrote that Lincoln seemed "more cheerful and happy" than at any previous cabinet meeting, thrilled by "the near prospect of firm and durable peace at home and abroad." Stanton continued, Lincoln "spoke very kindly of General Lee and others of the Confederacy," exhibiting "in marked degree the kindness and humanity of his disposition, and the tender and forgiving spirit that so eminently distinguished him."³⁶

With the war over, War Secretary Stanton now felt that he was no longer needed and tendered in his resignation. Lincoln put his hands on Stanton's shoulders and said, "Stanton, you have been a good friend and a faithful public officer and it is not for you to say when you will be no longer needed here." Reluctantly, Stanton consented to stay.

More than 600,000 Americans, out of a population then of a mere 31.5 million, died in the American Civil War. More American soldiers were killed in this war than in all other wars combined in American history. Four million black slaves were freed.

The Union victory in the Civil War was a precursor to democracy in Britain and rest of the world. A debate in the British Parliament, in which the American example figured prominently, led to enactment of the Reform Bill of 1867, enfranchising a large part of the British working class for the first time. With this act the world's then most powerful nation took a stride toward democracy. The Reform Bill was clearly influenced by Lincoln's victory in the Civil War. The Union victory also ended slavery in Brazil and Cuba, the only other places in the Western Hemisphere where it still existed.³⁷

35. See Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 729-30.

36. See *Ibid.*, p. 732.

37. Website: www.neh.gov (lecture by James M. McPherson)

19. Lincoln's assassination and the mourning

After the war Lincoln had a dream where he heard many people weeping and saw a body at its funeral in the White House with soldiers around it. When Lincoln asked who was dead, he was told it was the President, killed by an assassin.³⁸

On Good Friday, April 14, Lincoln awoke in a good mood having for a change slept well. At the Cabinet meeting he wanted no vengeance against the rebels; no war trials, hangings and firing squads — not even for the rebel leaders. In the afternoon he worked over the pardons and reprieves to be handed out. One of President Lincoln's last White House meetings on April 14, 1865 was with Treasury Secretary McCulloch, who later wrote: "I never saw Mr. Lincoln so cheerful and happy as he was on the day of his death. The burden which had been weighing upon him for four long years, and which he had borne with heroic fortitude, had been lifted . . . As he took me by the hand when I was about to leave the White House, he said: 'We must look to you, Mr. Secretary, for the money to pay off the soldiers who are about to be relieved from military service.'"³⁹

In the evening Mary said he looked so gay and cheerful, to which he replied, "And well may I feel so, Mary, I consider this day, the war has come to a close. We must both be more cheerful in the future — between the war and the loss of our darling Willie — we have both been very miserable." He talked about his desire to travel to Europe and Jerusalem with his family. They had planned to go to the theatre that night. A detective pleaded with him not to attend but Lincoln assured him all would be well. When the evening guard did not show up, his guard William Henry Crook asked if he could extend his duty hours and go along with him to the theatre, Lincoln said, "No, you've had a long hard day's work, and must go home."

Whilst watching the play Lincoln was shot by a radical Southerner, an actor, John Wilkes Booth little realising that with Lincoln's death the opportunity of peace with magnanimity and dignity died.⁴⁰ Lincoln had a premonition of his death, for that very evening the President had said, "Crook, do you know I believe there are men who want to take my life? And I have no doubt they will do it."⁴¹

The bullet had gone through the brain and lodged behind his right eye. Though softly breathing, he was paralysed and almost dead. At his deathbed numerous officials came pouring in. Senator Charles Sumner, a Lincoln supporter despite having friction with him on policy matters, clasped Lincoln's hand and wept. Stanton, with tears burning his eyes, was close to breaking down but had to check himself for the nation was at a standstill and as Secretary of War he had to take over the

38. See Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, pp. 425-26.

39. www.mrlincolnwhitehouse.org (McCulloch, *Men and Measures of Half of a Century*, p. 222)

40. See Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, pp. 426-31. Website: www.historydc.org

41. M. S. Gerry, editor, *Through Five Administrations: Reminiscences of Colonel William H. Crook*, p. 66.

leadership. Friends and colleagues now gathered around the dying President, many unable to withhold their tears. Almost no one was able to contain his grief that night, for as one witness observed, “there was not a soul present that did not love the president.”⁴²

When Grant got the news of Lincoln’s assassination he disconsolately told his wife that the tidings filled him “with the gloomiest apprehension. The President was inclined to be kind and magnanimous and his death at this time is an irreparable loss to the South, which now needs so much his tenderness and magnanimity.” The Southern newspaper *Richmond Whig* observed that with Lincoln’s death, “the heaviest blow which has ever fallen upon the people of the South has descended.”⁴³

Finally, at 7.22 a.m., April 16, Lincoln died; one of the final casualties of the war. At his deathbed, Stanton offered an epitaph: “Now he belongs to the ages.”⁴⁴ The news spread to a shocked nation. Never had the nation mourned so over a departed leader. Not only Lincoln’s well-wishers but also the numerous critics — those who had denounced and ridiculed him — now grieved for this mystifying personage. At the funeral the brave and dashing General Grant wept, saying it was the saddest day of his life. Twelve veteran reserve corps carried the coffin to the funeral car and the funeral procession started with a detachment of black soldiers followed by rows of mourners accompanied by booming guns, bells tolling and bands playing. The lines swelled when wounded soldiers left their hospital beds, some bandaged and some hobbling on crutches, to follow their fallen Chief. The next day while he lay in state, thousands of people filed past to pay their respects. On 21 April a train took Lincoln’s body on a 1600 mile journey to Springfield where he was to be buried. All along the route people gathered and watched in silence. In Cleveland, the coffin rested in a pagoda where more than 150,000 pilgrims from three states paid homage. On the night run to Indianapolis, bonfires lit up the route and stunned crowds stood in the rain as the train passed by. In Chicago, thousands of people wearing black armbands marched with the coffin in a final tribute.⁴⁵

Until the moment of Lincoln’s death, Stanton’s “coolness and self-possession” had seemed “remarkable” to those around him. Now he could not stop the tears that streamed down his cheeks. In the days that followed, even as he worked tirelessly to catch the conspirators, “Stanton’s grief was uncontrollable,” recalled Horace Porter, “and at the mention of Mr. Lincoln’s name he would break down and weep bitterly.” While Stanton’s raw grief surprised those who had seen only his gruff exterior, John Hay understood. “Not everyone knows, as I do,” he wrote to Stanton, “how

42. Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 742.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 742-44.

44. Website: www.civilwar.org

45. See Stephen B. Oates, *With Malice Toward None*, pp. 432-36.

close you stood to our lost leader, how he loved you and trusted you, and how vain were all the efforts to shake the trust and confidence, not lightly given and never withdrawn. All this will be known some time of course, to his honour and yours.”⁴⁶

Seward was grievously injured in an assassination attempt by another Southerner on the same evening that Lincoln was assassinated — the conspirators had planned to kill them both. News of Lincoln’s death was withheld from Seward as the doctors feared that he would not be able to bear the shock. A few days later as he gazed out of his window he noticed the War Department flag at half-mast. Then turning to his attendant, he announced, “The President is dead.” The attendant tried to deny it, but Seward knew with grim certainty. “If he had been alive he would have been the first to call on me,” he said, “but he has not been here, nor has he sent to know how I am, and there’s the flag at half-mast.” He lay back on the bed, “the great tears coursing down his gashed cheeks, and the dreadful truth sinking into his mind.” His good friend, his captain and chief, was dead.⁴⁷

The clergy across the North portrayed Lincoln as an American Christ who died to expiate the sins of his countrymen. That he was shot on Good Friday was no coincidence to them. The blacks deeply revered Lincoln and as someone put it, “Lincoln was an earthly incarnation of the Saviour of mankind.” For many, including his biographer Josiah Holland, Lincoln was a martyr-saint, as pure and perfect a spirit as the Almighty ever created.⁴⁸ His ex-Attorney General and former rival Edward Bates — who once said “He [Lincoln] was very near being a perfect man” — wrote in his diary that “besides a deep sense of the calamity which the nation has sustained, my private feelings are deeply moved by the sudden murder of my chief with and under whom I have served the country, through many difficult and trying scenes, and always with mutual sentiments of respect and friendship. I mourn his fall, both for the country and for myself.”⁴⁹

“Every one likes a compliment,” admitted Lincoln a month before his death, aware that he had already enjoyed his fair share and had become a living hero to many Americans.⁵⁰ Almost all of Lincoln’s peers and subordinates, a good standard of measure as any, have spoken about his outstanding and astounding character. Treasury Secretary, 1865-69, McCulloch recalled: “The more I saw of Mr. Lincoln the higher became my admiration of his ability and his character. . . . he was a man of will and energy, of well-balanced mind, and wonderful sagacity.”⁵¹ Secretary of the Interior, John Palmer Usher reminisced, “Lincoln was one of the greatest men who ever lived. It has now been many years since I was in his cabinet but his

46. See Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 743.

47. See *Ibid.*, pp. 744-45.

48. See Stephen B. Oates, *Abraham Lincoln — The Man Behind the Myths*, pp. 4-5.

49. Website: www.mrlincolnswhitehouse.org (Howard K. Beale, *Diary of Edward Bates*, p. 473)

50. See Website: www.neh.gov (lecture by Harold Holzer)

51. Osborn H. Oldroyd, editor, *The Lincoln Memorial: Album-Immortelles*, p.118.

extraordinary personality is one of the most distinct things in my memory.”⁵² General Grant, who met rulers and leaders of many countries after he became President of America for two terms following Lincoln’s death, summed up, “He was incontestably the greatest man I ever knew.”⁵³ Grant also said, “Lincoln impresses me as the greatest intellectual force with which I have ever come into contact.”⁵⁴

Presidential bodyguard William Henry Crook narrates a story he believed exemplified the personal character of Lincoln:

I remember one afternoon, not long before the President was shot, we were on our way to the War Department, when we passed a ragged, dirty man in army clothes lounging just outside the White House enclosure. He had evidently been waiting to see the President, for he jumped up and went toward him with his story. He had been wounded, was just out of the hospital — he looked forlorn enough. There was something he wanted the President to do; he had papers with him. Mr. Lincoln was in a hurry, but he put out his hands for the papers. Then he sat down on the curbstone, the man beside him, and examined them. When he had satisfied himself about the matter, he smiled at the anxious fellow reassuringly and told him to come back the next day; then he would arrange the matter for him. A thing like that says more than any man could express. If I could only make people see him as I did — see how simple he was with every one; how he could talk with a child so that the child could understand and smile up at him; how you would never know, from his manner to the plainest or poorest or meanest, that there was the least difference between that man and himself; how, from that man to the greatest, and all degrees between, the President could meet every man square on the plane where he stood and speak to him, man to man, from that plane — if I could do that, I would feel that I had told something of what he was.⁵⁵

The influential American poet, Walt Whitman, wrote an elegy — he also dedicated three other poems to Lincoln — shortly after his assassination:

This dust was once the man,
Gentle, plain, just and resolute, under whose cautious hand,
Against the foulest crime in history known in any land or age,
Was saved the Union of these States.⁵⁶

52. Website: www.archive.org (Rhodes and McClure publishing co., *Abraham Lincoln Speeches Complete*, preface p. 4)

53. Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 747.

54. Website: www.archive.org (Rhodes and McClure publishing co., *Abraham Lincoln Speeches Complete*, preface p. 5)

55. Website: www.mrlincolnwhitehouse.org

56. Website: en.wikipedia.org

In 1879, Whitman said: “Why, if the old Greeks had had this man, what trilogies of plays — what epics — would have been made out of him! How the rhapsodes would have recited him! How quickly that quaint tall form would have enter’d into the region where men vitalise gods, and gods divinify men!”⁵⁷

Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of the anti-slavery novel *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* said:

Lincoln is a strong man, but his strength is of a peculiar kind; it is not aggressive so much as passive, and among passive things, it is like the strength not so much of a stone buttress as of a wire cable. It is strength swaying to every influence, yielding on this side and on that to popular needs, yet tenaciously and inflexibly bound to carry its great end; and probably by no other kind of strength could our national ship have been drawn safely thus far during the tossings and tempests which beset her way. Surrounded by all sorts of conflicting claims, by traitors, by half-hearted, timid men, by Border States men, and Free States men, by radical Abolitionists, and Conservatives, he has listened to all, weighed the words of all, waited, observed, yielded now here and now there, but in the main kept one inflexible, honest purpose, and drawn the national ship through.⁵⁸

When Lincoln first met Stowe he rose awkwardly from his chair, saying, “Why, Mrs. Stowe, right glad to see you!” Then with a humorous twinkle in his eye, he said, “So you’re the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!”⁵⁹

Once Lincoln set out on a task, he enforced his steely determination and unwavering will in accomplishing it — whether the issue was self-education, self-improvement, law, politics, governance, military strategy or leadership. Cited below are a few reported Lincoln quotes, a testimony to his resoluteness.

Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any other thing.

*

Great men are ordinary men with extraordinary determination.

*

57. Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, Introduction page.

58. Website: abrahamlincolnsclassroom.org (*Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, Summer 1994, p. 38.)

59. Website: www.mrlincolnwhitehouse.org

The largest army can be defeated but a determined man can never be defeated.

*

I will study and prepare myself, someday my time will come.

*

Success is moving from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm.⁶⁰

*

All through his childhood and early adult life, Lincoln faced acute poverty and isolation, had almost no formal education and received very little love — he had no bonding with his father, lost his mother at the age of nine and subsequently lost his only sister. Despite the lack of resources, opportunities and guidance, he perseveringly and independently educated, refined and cultivated himself through sheer determination and drive — aided by a powerful intellect and will. It is a most remarkable story of a self-made man and his matchless meteoric rise in adversity.

However, what is more extraordinary about Lincoln is his humaneness. Personally he had suffered from loneliness and deprivation of love during his childhood, bouts of severe depression during his adolescence and adult life, melancholy during his Presidency, tragedies of losing two sons and caring for a temperamental wife. This hardship and suffering perhaps enhanced his innate sensitivity and made him exceedingly empathetic, understanding and compassionate to others — at times he extended generosity at the cost of his own health. Indeed, if there is one word that describes Lincoln it is 'Love'. Equally striking was his strong will, truthfulness, honesty, sense of justice or fairness to others, humility, magnanimity and his Job-like equanimity — he was never vindictive to those who had spited him, always calm and patient when dealing with erring colleagues, generals or hordes of people constantly asking him for favours. Such noble virtues are rare to have in one's personal life but to consistently maintain them in public life is truly beyond belief. History has unfolded its small share of saints in the spiritual field but rarely has a person been flung into the bustle of power politics and a vicious Civil War, hated by a large section of the population that constantly put his life at a risk, and yet maintained his saint-like demeanour without cracking under the strain of incessant crises during a Civil War whose result would entail serious repercussions for posterity. Forced to make critical decisions during the Civil War, Lincoln maintained a wonderful sense of sagacity, levelheadedness and kindheartedness to overcome

60. Website: www.greatmenquotations.blogspot.in

endless calamities. Further, he was the guiding strength and inspiration for his cabinet, administration and the army and his tender healing touch amicably resolved the numerous feuds within the Union and finally united the country. African Americans have hailed him as a saviour and messiah for having emancipated them from the oppressive and cruel institution of slavery, some decades ahead of time, in spite of the vitriolic racial prejudice of the day.

The Mother has said: “If one could create a magnificent story without any horror in it, nothing but beauty, it would have a *considerable* influence on everyone’s life. And this is what people don’t know.”⁶¹ Lincoln’s life is not only a magnificent and beautiful story — despite being woven with the backdrop of the horrors of America’s most difficult period in history — but it is a true and poignant story and thus that much more inspiring, spurring us to become better human beings by growing more kind and considerate to others.

(Concluded)

GAUTAM MALAKER

61. *Collected Works of the Mother*, 2nd Ed., Vol. 8, p. 118.

The Mother only speaks to people about their past births when she sees definitely some scene or memory of their past in concentration; but this happens rarely nowadays.

What is remembered mainly from past lives is the nature of the personality and the subtle results of the life-experience. Names, events, physical details are remembered only under exceptional circumstances and are of a very minor importance. When people try to remember these outward things they usually build up a number of romantic imaginations which are not true.

I think you should dismiss this idea about the past lives. If the memory of past personalities comes of itself (without a name or mere outward details) that is sometimes important as giving a clue to something in the present development, but to know the nature of that personality and its share in the present constitution of the character is quite enough. The rest is of little use.

Sri Aurobindo

(*Letters on Yoga*, SABCL, Vol. 22, p. 457)

Addendum

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
 The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
 The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
 While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
 But O heart! heart! heart!
 O the bleeding drops of red,
 Where on the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
 Rise up — for you the flag is flung — for you the bugle trills,
 For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths — for you the shores a-crowding,
 For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;
 Here Captain! dear father!
 This arm beneath your head!
 It is some dream that on the deck,
 You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still,
 My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will,
 The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done,
 From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won;
 Exult O shores, and ring O bells!
 But I with mournful tread,
 Walk the deck my Captain lies,
 Fallen cold and dead.

WALT WHITMAN

MOTHER INDIA AND YOGA

(The UN General Assembly on 11 December 2014 adopted without a vote a resolution commemorating 21 June as the International Day of Yoga)

Introduction:

This essay sets out the contribution of Bharat to the ancient science of Yoga and the immense future potential and role in store for India in the backdrop of the recent Declaration of the 11th December 2014, of the UN (United Nations General Assembly) proclaiming 21st June as the International Day of Yoga. The significance of this science is underscored in the light of the social undercurrent across the world and the need for developing the same on the basis of *Integral Yoga* which is the contribution of Sri Aurobindo's approach to this discipline and science. India has been acknowledged as the spiritual capital of the world which is implicit in this proclamation. The unity of mankind and the presence of a single consciousness, permeating and penetrating through all living races and creation which has manifested on the planet, with a common ultimate aim which now stands admitted by the World Body as a policy declaration. Sri Aurobindo prophesied a great role for independent India, which has now materialised. The golden opportunity is knocking at the doors of our country; it should be seized and put to the best use for the benefit of the human race.

The UN General Assembly *vide* Resolution no. A/69/L.17 of the UN, *vide* Agenda Item 124, on Global health and foreign policy, has proclaimed 21st June as the International Day of Yoga and invited all Member and observer States, the organisations of the UN system and other international and regional organisations, as well as civil society, including NGOs and individuals, to observe the International Day in an appropriate manner and in accordance with *national priorities*, in order to raise awareness of the benefits of practising Yoga. It has stressed that the cost of all activities that may arise from the implementation of the said resolution should be met from voluntary contributions and has requested the Secretary General of the UN to bring the present resolution to the attention of all Member and observer States and the organisations of the UN System. This resolution has been welcomed across the globe as a step forward in the march towards Global health and foreign policy. This marks and underscores the importance of the contribution of India, to which the ancient science of Yoga owes its origin, growth and development and has come as a major shot in the arm for the country to accelerate and take a giant leap by contributing to the global advancement of Yoga.

Being a lawyer, I am tempted to refer to a legal document, *viz.* the UN Charter which governs the purposes and principles of the UN. The purposes of the UN as stated in the Charter (signed on 26.6.1945) demonstrate that it is primarily an organisation for maintaining peace and security, with the additional functions of *developing friendly relations among nations, of achieving international cooperation in economic, social, cultural and humanitarian matters*, of developing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and of providing a means for harmonising international action to attain these aims. Its membership is open to all peace-loving states accepting the obligations contained in the Charter and in the judgment of the UN, are able and willing to carry out these obligations. The admission to membership of the UN is effected by a decision of the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Security Council. It is thus a pivotal world organisation and the most sanctified international institution. The General Assembly is the only principal organ of the UN which is a deliberative body with substantive powers. It takes a leading role in questions of international peace and security. Thus, the UN declaration of Yoga and its practice as a subject of international importance exemplifies the need and dynamics of today's world. It also shows implicit respect for and recognition of India as a world leader in the discipline of Yoga and the purposive role which our country can play in making Yoga and its practice universal and beneficial to mankind.

Bharat and Yoga — Beyond borders:

Mother India, *i.e.* Bharat Mata should feel proud today that the science of Yoga has found global acceptance by no less a body than the UN. The 21st century has in the last decade and recent years witnessed serious global events and upheavals, which have come both as opportunities and challenges. The challenges are daunting, since they also involve the issue of *global peace and harmony* which is the bedrock of international brotherhood and integrated human fellowship. Yoga as a science and discipline can cut across nations, barriers of caste, creed, civilisations and dogmas. It has stood the test of time in India and is sanctified by the fact that both the Orient and Occident have come to accept Yoga as a system which fosters human well-being and peace. There is no dearth of persons coming from across borders to Indian shores and soil to keenly learn Yoga as a science and participate in yogic practices. There is no dearth either of qualified professional teachers across the length and breadth of this vast subcontinent who are mostly spiritually oriented and inclined towards a non-mundane way of life. Both the mountain regions and plains have countless practitioners of this ancient discipline in its different variations and forms.

India has been unique in the sense that it has since time immemorial produced great seers, saints, sages, savants, yogis and mystics who have envisioned the supremacy of Yoga by having practised the discipline and propagated the same

which has resulted in an unbroken tradition of antiquity being passed on from generation to generation, professed to this day as an instrument of yoking man's consciousness to the Divine by synchronous body-mind coordination. The human being, complex as he is, nevertheless possesses abundant will power, intuitional possibilities and intellectual ability capable of being refined transcending basic instincts.

Bharat (India), said the Master, Sri Aurobindo was not a mere landmass or territory. It stood for ancient wisdom and universal brotherhood and was the workshop of the spirit and factory of the soul. His writings on the subject of Yoga are monumental and stuff of legend. Swami Vivekananda, another pioneer and equally great son of India propagated Yoga and Vedanta both in India and overseas, particularly when Western skepticism had led people to have wrong notions about India as a land of snake charmers. Sri Aurobindo after his great experiences and intense experiments carved out the unique path of *Integral Yoga*. He stressed that the harmony between world experience and supra-cosmic freedom could be achieved through this Yoga, which stood for an all-embracing philosophy and practice (emphasising on *Samagram Mam* as it is called in the Gita). The Master said that entering into relations with the Divine is an exercise called Yoga developed within the compass of humanity variously called prayer, worship, adoration, sacrifice, thought, faith, science and philosophy. There are, he said, other relations beyond our developed capacity, but within the compass of the humanity we have yet to develop, which are attained by yogic practices. Yoga involves a change in consciousness and it is the science, the process, the effort and action by which man attempts to pass out of the limits of his ordinary mental consciousness into a greater spiritual consciousness. His conception of Yoga was that of a psychic discipline and not narrow and limited practice as is commonly understood by the term nowadays. It involves an inner field of experience, a growth of psyche and spirit to deepest realities and depths of consciousness, by practising which we become aware of a cosmic consciousness which is the secret of cosmic Energy, a cosmic Self or Spirit, the cosmic Divine, the universal Godhead apart from our own Self or true being which is one with the supreme Self and Spirit. Yoga, he said, may be perfect or partial, selective or comprehensive. Perfect and comprehensive Yoga avoids limitations and leads to entire divinity.

Now that Yoga has transcended international barriers and gone *beyond borders* and found acceptance at the highest international level, it is time to take cognisance of the following:

- a. Yoga, an integral part of spirituality has become global.
- b. Yoga is beyond borders and limits of any civilisation.
- c. Yoga has no barriers of caste, creed, doctrine, belief, race, community and dogma.

- d. Yoga is accepted as the key to global physical and mental well-being.
- e. Yoga now has international dimensions and recognition in all its facets, including self-discipline, self-regulation, posture, breath, recoil from erroneous action, concentration on action, meditation and approach to a reality which is one without a second.
- f. Yoga's acceptance demonstrates that there is no place for ignorance, ego, attachments, aversions, clinging to the body merely for the sake of the body.
- g. The human mind has enormous power and can triumph over matter.
- h. Vedanta and its basic ideal, Yoga, have universal application for well-being of mankind.
- i. Science and Yoga are now integrated and inseparable, since health of man's mind and body cannot be cured or suffering alleviated only by medicine and surgery but merits application of yogic practice which is a combination of mental and physical discipline.
- j. A doctor should preferably be either a practitioner of Yoga or seeker; or the patient should be one; and both need adequate training to treat and receive treatment.
- k. There is no place in the world for unjust violence, untruth, stealth, incontinence, possessions beyond real need, and unbridled consumerism.
- l. There is a place in the world for the pursuit of passive resistance, truth, righteous action, sacrifice — material and otherwise.
- m. There is an immediate need and role for purity, contentment, self-evaluation, surrender to the Divine grace and will through Yoga.
- n. Indian philosophy and spirituality have not been in vain and certain ancient Indian practices have been acknowledged as valid truths by science and time-tested results have proved yogic practices to be benevolent and beneficent to man.
- o. Spirituality and materialism are not alien, they can co-exist.
- p. There is an immense possibility for spiritual integration of the world order through Yoga.
- q. Yoga needs to be propagated and practised in all its manifestations, not restricting it to body posture.
- r. The supremacy of the teachings in the Bhagavad Gita and the Yoga Sutras are finding greater acceptance.
- s. The Indian system of a holistic study of the body-mind complex has been recognised as relevant, especially to today's needs.
- t. Spiritual ascendancy and evolution of a human being is the prime goal of life which is possible through Yoga.
- u. There is a Divine Force or principle known as Ishwara in Yoga, who or which is omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, controlling the Universe and its manifestation in all forms and beings, material or otherwise.

- v. Ego has to be transcended by humanity and give way to fraternity and acceptance.
- w. There is a difference between the manifest and yet to be manifested forces, which can be studied through the science of Yoga.
- x. The requirement of instruction in Yoga can be met by trained instructors who have theoretical and practical knowledge, skill and expertise and are spiritually inclined.
- y. The brain, mind or intellect are not final; there is an intuitive force controlled by another supreme power.
- z. Human tendencies that are inherent can be changed through yogic practice and inherited tendencies are not final but can be eliminated or fostered through yogic techniques.

This is not just an inventory, but an illustrative summary of the potentialities of Yoga which have found acceptance. Therefore there is no gainsaying that Yoga is beyond territorial limits and transcends human borders. Vedanta has found its place as a science of the spirit.

Sri Aurobindo on India as a spiritual leader of the world:

In his writings for the *Bande Mataram* a century ago, Sri Aurobindo made crucial assertions, which go to the core of his conception of the role of India in the context of Yoga, and a summary thereof is provided below giving his view of India's future mission and vision.

On 21.2.1908 he said:

So with India rests the future of the world. Whenever she is aroused from her sleep, she gives forth some wonderful shining ray of light to the world which is enough to illuminate the nations. Others live for centuries on what is to her the thought of a moment. God gave to her the book of Ancient Wisdom and bade her keep it sealed in her heart, until the time should come for it to be opened. Sometimes a page or a chapter is revealed, sometimes only a single sentence. Such sentences have been the inspiration of ages and fed humanity for many hundreds of years. So too when India sleeps, materialism grows apace and the light is covered up in darkness. But when materialism thinks herself about to triumph, lo and behold! a light rushes out from the East and where is Materialism? Returned to her native night. (CWSA, Vol. 7, p. 890)

Again on 5.3.1908, he said while dealing with Swaraj

. . . This peaceful and inert nation is going to be rudely awakened from a century of passivity and flung into a world-shaking turmoil out of which it will come transformed, strengthened and purified. . .

India is the *guru* of the nations, the physician of the human soul in its profounder maladies . . .

(*Ibid.*, pp. 905-06)

While on the subject of spirituality he wrote on 28.3.1908,

When scepticism had reached its height, the time had come for spirituality to assert itself and establish the reality of the world as a manifestation of the spirit, the secret of the confusion created by the senses, the magnificent possibilities of man and the ineffable beatitude of God. This is the work whose consummation Sri Ramakrishna came to begin and all the development of the previous two thousand years and more since Buddha appeared has been a preparation for the harmonization of spiritual teaching and experience by the *avatar* of Dakshineshwar.

The long ages of discipline which India underwent are now drawing to an end. A great light is dawning on the East, a light whose first heralding glimpses are already seen on the horizon; a new day is about to break . . . Mankind has long been experimenting with various kinds of thought, different principles of ethics, strange dreams of a perfection to be gained by material means, impossible millenniums and humanitarian hopes. Nowhere has it succeeded in realising the ultimate secret of life. Nowhere has it found satisfaction. . . . The East alone has some knowledge of the truth, the East alone can teach the West, the East alone can save mankind. . . . this is why God has breathed life into her once more, why great souls are at work to bring about her salvation . . .

(*Ibid.*, pp. 977-79)

Sri Aurobindo on the Bhagavad Gita and Yoga:

In a speech delivered at Khulna on 25.6.1909, the Master said:

Yoga means freedom from *dwandwa*. The Yogin is free from the bondage of pleasure and pain, of anger and hatred and attachment, of liking and disliking, because he looks with equal eyes on all. He does not shrink from misfortune or misery, happiness or unhappiness. He rises above the bondage of the body, because no man can give him pleasure or pain, because he has his own source of strength, of delight and happiness. This is the freedom which the Gita says the *yoga* gives . . . you look to wider things. You see yourself in the family, in the community, race, humanity, and all things in the world. You forget yourself

altogether. You work for the race and others, for mankind. It is not God's work when you follow after your selfishness. The Gita says: "Your welfare is God's business." If you work for Him you have no fear, because God stretches out His hand of mercy to you. It is to that which the *yoga* leads. The teaching of the Gita, if it is followed, delivers you from all possibility of sin, of sorrow. . . . It is *yoga* which gives utter perfection in action.

(CWSA, Vol. 8, pp. 51-53)

Sri Aurobindo's Independence Day Message:

In his message that was broadcast from the All India Radio on the eve of Indian Independence, on 14.8.1947, the Master and Mahayogi *inter alia* said that the birthday of free India was significant not only for India, but for the whole world, as it signified the entry into the comity of nations of a new power with untold potentialities which has a great part to play in determining the political, social, cultural and spiritual future of humanity. He also had this to say:

. . . Indeed almost all the world movements which I hoped to see fulfilled in my lifetime, though at that time they looked like impossible dreams, I can observe on this day either approaching fruition or initiated and on the way to their achievement. . . .

I have always held and said that India was arising, not to serve her own material interests only, to achieve expansion, greatness, power and prosperity, — though these too she must not neglect, — and certainly not like others to acquire domination of other peoples, but to live also for God and the world as a helper and leader of the whole human race. Those aims and ideals were in their natural order these: . . . the rise of a new, a greater, brighter and nobler life for mankind which for its entire realisation would rest outwardly on an international unification of the separate existence of the peoples, preserving and securing their national life but drawing them together into an overriding and consummating oneness; the gift by India of her spiritual knowledge and her means for the spiritualisation of life to the whole race; finally, a new step in the evolution which, by uplifting the consciousness to a higher level, would begin the solution of the many problems of existence which have perplexed and vexed humanity, since men began to think and to dream of individual perfection and a perfect society. . . .

Nationalism will then have fulfilled itself; an international spirit and outlook must grow up and international forms and institutions . . . A new spirit of oneness will take hold of the human race. . . .

The spiritual gift of India to the world has already begun. . . . That movement will grow; amid the disasters of the time more and more eyes are

turning towards her with hope and there is even an increasing resort not only to her teachings, but to her psychic and spiritual practice. . . .

Here too, if this evolution is to take place, since it must come through a growth of the spirit and the inner consciousness, the initiative can come from India and although the scope must be universal, the central movement may be hers.

(CWSA, Vol. 36, pp. 474-77)

Swami Vivekananda and Yoga:

Swami Vivekananda inspired by his teacher Sri Ramakrishna took Vedanta to the West, and was a pioneer in preaching and propagating the principles of Vedanta including Yoga. Both of them in turn deeply inspired Sri Aurobindo. The Swami in one of his lectures on Raja Yoga, while explaining the sutras of Patanjali, says:

According to Yoga philosophy, it is through ignorance that the soul has been joined with nature. The aim is to get rid of nature's control over us. That is the goal of all religions. Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this Divinity within, by controlling nature, external or internal. Do this either by work, or worship, or psychic control, or philosophy — by one or more of all these — and be free. . . . Doctrines, dogmas, rituals, books or temples, or forms are but secondary details. The Yogi tries to reach this goal through psychic control. Until we can free ourselves from nature, we are slaves; as she dictates so we must go. The Yogi claims that he who controls mind controls matter also. The internal nature is much higher than the external and much more difficult to grapple with, much more difficult to control. Therefore he who has conquered the internal nature controls the whole universe; it becomes his servant. . . .

What profound words these. No wonder Swami Vivekananda in an age which had no advanced communication systems or transport network or information broadcasting satellites, made profound impact on world opinion through his matchless oratory. His contribution to Vedanta and Yoga was immense and stands out in recent times.

Yoga should be comprehensive — the importance of Patanjali's Sutra Patha:

It is seen that Yoga currently in vogue particularly abroad, is mostly one-sided and confined to the physical aspect, i.e. asana. It ought to be appreciated that Yoga is *eight-limbed* — “Ashtanga Yoga” i.e. *ashta* in Sanskrit meaning eight and *anga* meaning limbs. Patanjali Maharshi, believed to be the compiler of the aphorisms or sutras on Yoga, in his monumental treatise delineates these eight limbs as: *yama*,

niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and *samadhi*. He enumerates the principles governing the science of yogic practices and the discipline of Yoga under four *Padas*, i.e. *samadhi pada, sadhana pada, vibhuti pada* and *kaivalya pada*. Patanjali's Yoga aphorisms are acknowledged as the most comprehensive and illuminative aphorisms on the science of Yoga, which are complementary to the Bhagavad Gita, the latter being a grand exposition of virtually every aspect of life to be lived practically in the yogic way. The Gita divides the teaching of Lord Krishna into eighteen chapters, each chapter having a title with the suffix *yoga*, commencing from Arjuna Vishada Yoga and ending with Sannyasa Yoga. There are various chapters governing *bhakti* or devotion, *jnana* or knowledge, *karma* or works, *vibhuti* or powers, *Purushottama* or the Supreme reality, *kshetra kshetragna vibhaga* or the division of the knower and the known, *guna-traiya vibhaga* or distinction of three characteristic features etc. This is not an essay where more can be written about these chapters at length. The translation of the eight limbs of Patanjali's Yoga sutras into English is rather fraught with difficulty. To put it in simple words, they are the following:

1. Checks, curbs, restraints and balances known as *yamas*.
2. Rules and regulations called *niyamas*.
3. Posture of body viz. *asanas*.
4. Breathing techniques and controls, called *pranayama*.
5. Recoiling from erroneous action or prohibited actions, i.e. *pratyahara*.
6. Concentration practices called *dharana*.
7. Meditations of different types, viz. *dhyana*.
8. State of oneness with a supreme force or the Divine, which is a combination of truth, consciousness and bliss otherwise known as *samadhi*.

There is currently a belief or misconception that yoga would merely involve postures, exercise and breathing. This is akin to missing the forest for the murmuring pines. Yoga as a discipline integrates several aspects of life through the *Ashtanga*, apart from the discipline of leading life as prescribed by the principles of the Bhagavad Gita, which have been referred to earlier, which would merit a separate and detailed discussion which is neither possible nor attempted here. It is an integrated system which requires the blending of all the eight limbs enumerated above, with utmost faith, devotion and incessant effort and prolonged practice. Yoga can transform the psyche apart from physically benefiting the practitioner. It requires instruction by a properly trained and well practised Guru, who can be a layman or a professional. Its practice is very important, which presupposes intense effort which should be prolonged and incessant. There are no full stops in Yoga.

The theory of Yoga has to be studied and its dimensions properly understood and comprehended before an effort is made to practise it. Yoga is not dry asceticism

as some may wrongly construe it to be. It is a highly practical science, which blends real living with time-tested techniques and can rejuvenate both body and mind apart from transforming humans. Yoga ought to be seen as a way forward by looking beyond egoism, materialistic achievements, transcending common human traits which lead to friction, imbalance in relationships and mutual harm. It should be perceived as a discipline of self-perfection. By self-perfection is meant righteousness in all endeavours and aspects of human life.

Yogic practices if followed by even a section of society in all countries and propagated can result in universal peace, brotherhood, exchange of goodwill, eradication of all types of violence and falsehoods, establishment of truth in pursuit of human endeavours, harmonious living, sacrifice, purity, contentment, self-evaluation and surrender to Divine will, firm resolves in dealing with challenging situations and many other attendant benefits for mankind.

K. S. RAVI SHANKAR

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1. UN Declaration dated 11.12.2014.
2. *Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA), Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry: Vol. 7, Bande Mataram; Vol. 36, Autobiographical Notes; Vol. 8, Karmayogin.
3. *The Bhagavad Gita*.
4. *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras*.
5. *J. G. Starke on International Law*, 10th Ed. Aditya, Butterworths, 1989 Ed., 1994 Indian Reprint.
6. *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 1989 Ed., Advaita Ashrama, Calcutta.

No, not necessarily. It [study of Logic] is a theoretical training; you learn by it some rules of logical thinking. But the application depends on your own intelligence. In any sphere of knowledge or action a man may be a good theorist but a poor executist. A very good military theorist and critic if put in command of an army might very well lose all his battles, not being able to suit the theories rightly to the occasion. So a theoretical logician may bungle the problems of thought by want of insight, of quickness of mind or of plasticity in the use of his capacities. Besides, logic is not the whole of thinking; observation, intuition, sympathy, many-sidedness are more important.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga, SABCL, Vol. 24, p. 1277)

ADDENDUM
AT THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

On 27 September 2014, the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, said:

We need to change our lifestyles. Energy not consumed is the cleanest energy. We can achieve the same level of development, prosperity and well-being without necessarily going down the path of reckless consumption. It doesn't mean that economies will suffer; it will mean that our economies will take on a different character. For us in India, respect for nature is an integral part of spiritualism. We treat nature's bounties as sacred. Yoga is an invaluable gift of our ancient tradition. Yoga embodies unity of mind and body; thought and action; restraint and fulfilment; harmony between man and nature; a holistic approach to health and well-being. It is not about exercise but to discover the sense of oneness with yourself, the world and the nature. By changing our lifestyle and creating consciousness, it can help us deal with climate change. Let us work towards adopting an International Yoga Day.

On 7 November 2014, the draft resolution was ready.

TEXT OF UNGA RESOLUTION A/69/L.17

United Nations
General Assembly

A/69/L.17

Distr.: Limited
7 November 2014
Original: English

Sixty-ninth session

Agenda item 124

Global health and foreign policy

International Day of Yoga

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 66/2 of 19 September 2011 on the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases and 68/98 of 11 December 2013 on global health and foreign policy.

Reaffirming General Assembly resolutions 53/199 of 15 December 1998 and 61/185 of 20 December 2006 on the proclamation of international years, and Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/67 of 25 July 1980 on international years and anniversaries.

Noting the importance of individuals and populations making healthier choices and following lifestyle patterns that foster good health.

Underscoring the fact that global health is a long-term development objective that requires closer international cooperation through the exchange of best practices aimed at building better individual lifestyles devoid of excesses of all kinds.

Recognizing that yoga provides a holistic approach to health and well-being.

Recognizing also that wider dissemination of information about the benefits of practising yoga would be beneficial for the health of the world population.

1. *Decides* to proclaim 21 June the International Day of Yoga;
2. *Invites* all Member and observer States, the organizations of the United Nations system and other international and regional organizations, as well as civil society, including non-governmental organizations and individuals, to observe the International Day, in an appropriate manner and in accordance with national priorities, in order to raise awareness of the benefits of practising yoga;
3. *Stresses* that the cost of all activities that may arise from the implementation of the present resolution should be met from voluntary contributions;
4. *Requests* the Secretary General to bring the present resolution to the attention of all Member and observer States and the organizations of the United Nations system.

On 11 December 2014, India's Permanent Representative, Asoke Mukerji introduced the draft resolution. He said:

It is a matter of great satisfaction to all of us in this Assembly that today, less than 90 days after the proposal for an International Yoga Day was made, we have the honour to introduce before you a very forward looking, simple, yet substantive, draft Resolution calling for establishing the International Day of Yoga.

Arrived at by consensus after just two rounds of informal consultations with all member states, the text of the draft Resolution conforms to the General Assembly's basic template for establishing International Days. The Resolution fully addresses the concern of some of our colleagues, notably from the European Union, that this proposal does not entail any additional budgetary implications for the UN system. All activities held in connection with this Day would be resourced solely through voluntary contributions.

The draft Resolution itself is premised on six preambular and four operative paras. The preambular paragraphs draw from mostly agreed language, and

recognize that Yoga provides a holistic approach to health and well-being, while acknowledging that wider dissemination of yoga's benefits would be beneficial for the health of the world population. The main operative paragraph proclaims 21st June each year as the International Day of Yoga, while inviting all of us, member and observer states, international and regional organizations, including NGO's, civil society and individuals to join in and raise awareness about its benefits.

Mr. President, when we started this journey, all we had was the vision articulated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, which was warmly welcomed by a small yet committed corpus of friends of this initiative. The very fact that today in the UN General Assembly, this draft Resolution has garnered a record number of one hundred and seventy five co-sponsors, including the vast majority of member states of all the regional and sub-regional groups of the General Assembly, as well as all the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, is a testimony to the enthusiastic cross cultural and universal appeal that Yoga enjoys amongst members of the United Nations.

I, on behalf of my Government, would like to place on record our sincerest appreciation to each and every member state that has put its name behind this initiative of the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India, and assure them that we would collectively work together in making the first International Day of Yoga a grand success next year on 21st June. . . .

Mr. President, as we are about to adopt the Resolution, it is perhaps also appropriate to recall what the late Shri B K S Iyengar, one of the most famous modern practitioners of Yoga, said:

Yoga, an ancient but perfect science, deals with the evolution of humanity. This evolution includes all aspects of one's being, from bodily health to self realization. Yoga means union — the union of body with consciousness and consciousness with the soul. Yoga cultivates the ways of maintaining a balanced attitude in day to day life and endows skill in the performance of one's actions.

Mr. President, in the Sanskrit language, the meaning of the word Yoga, is 'to join' or 'to yoke'. We hope that the impact of this Resolution will yoke our efforts in the area of Global Health with our aspirations for a meaningful post-2015 Development Agenda.

I therefore recommend this draft Resolution for adoption by consensus, and thank all of you.

The draft text received broad support from Member States and the Resolution was adopted without a vote commemorating 21 June as the International Day of Yoga.

RHETORIC IN SRI AUROBINDO'S PROSE

(Continued from the issue of May 2015)

XVII

We are studying the figures of speech based on indirectness, four of which have already been seen and two more are left. The first of these is Euphemism.

This is a figure in which an unpleasant truth or fact is stated in a pleasant manner. We make use of it every day in our life. For example we say “he passed away” instead of saying “he died”. This figure often takes circumlocution on its way as well. This is seen in Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s well-known description of Cowper’s madness:

Discord fell on the music of his soul; the sweet sounds and wandering lights departed from him; yet he wore no less a loving face, although he was broken-hearted.¹

Here the unpleasant truth is that Cowper had become mad. It is stated in a pleasing, even melodious, but indirect manner. It is also expressed in a long sentence containing thirty words, where three would have been quite enough if the truth had been stated baldly. This is circumlocution.

The example from our author, however, does not involve circumlocution. In fact it is the opposite that we have:

Yes, he would dine with her — after he had done his work.²

It is necessary to know the context in order to appreciate the euphemism used here. Sturge Maynard (in *The Phantom Hour*) will kill the assassin who is going to come to kill his beloved before he dines with her. That is the “work” he is going to do. Here in one brief clause “after he had done his work” the writer implies the doing of a most unpleasant work, that of killing a man. But this is done without any sentimentalising or circumlocution, both of which are present in Elizabeth Browning. Here, on the other hand, we have understatement, if anything. As the sentence is not self-explanatory we cannot say it has innuendo.

1. Nesfield, J. C., *Manual of English Grammar and Composition*, Macmillan, 1898.

2. *Collected Plays and Stories*, CWSA, Vols. 3-4, p. 958.

Allusion can be of many kinds. One can allude to myths, to literary works, to religion, legends, history etc. etc. Again, there could be very clear-cut allusions, with quotations from an author and the author and the work duly named; there could be hidden allusions that only a scholar can catch and enjoy. There are allusions that stand out from the context, calling attention to themselves, and there are those that blend so well with the background that they are hardly noticed unless one is very alert. A typical example of the former is, of course, the last passage of Eliot's *The Waste Land*. It is a passage of eight lines, in the first four of which

London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam uti chelidon — O swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie

he refers to (a) a nursery rhyme (b) Dante (c) Swinburne (d) Gérard de Nerval. But still not content, he says:

These fragments I've shored against my ruins.
 Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
 Datta, Daydhvam, Damyata
 Shantih, shantih, shantih.³

Here there is the line from Kyd (line 2) and then the famous reference to our own Brihadāranyaka Upanishad. All these allusions, and there are many others throughout the poem, stand out from the context. They are meant to do so — to obtrude themselves on our attention. It is deliberate artistry.

At the other extreme are those allusions that not only do not stand out but are so artistically given that even if the reader does not catch the allusion it does not harm the appreciation of the poem. Gray's *Elegy* is perhaps the best example of such a method. It is a perfect mosaic of hundreds of allusions and echoes. One example will be enough:

Now drooping, woeful wan, like one forlorn,
 Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love⁴

This alludes to Spenser's *Colin Clout*:

For pale and wan he was (alas the while)
 May seem he lov'd or else some care he took.

3. *Collected Poems 1909-1935*, London, Faber & Faber, p. 77.

4. Palgrave, *The Golden Treasury*, p. 148.

As is quite clear from the lines of Gray, this obscure allusion, even if it is not perceived by the reader, does not hamper one's enjoyment of the poem, though knowledge of it will definitely enhance one's appreciation.

Now we come to our own author. As has already been pointed out, allusions are of many kinds and attempts will be made here to give examples of different kinds. In the introductory chapter of *The Future Poetry* there is a literary allusion, an easy one that can be caught by an undergraduate:

. . . while I stand, Cortes-like, on the peak of the large impression created for me by Mr. Cousins' book.⁵

Keats, of course has given the name of Cortez, instead of Balboa, by mistake, but that does not matter here. What matters is the aptness of the allusion as well as its easy comprehensibility. Everyone is familiar with these lines of Keats — it is not, like Gray's, an obscure allusion.

This is a simple one but sometimes his literary allusions are not so simple. The allusions themselves can be quite easily detectable, simple ones, but the technique may not be a simple one. There might, for example, be two allusions in the same sentence. Our next example will be such a one.

(To be continued)

RATRI RAY

5. *The Future Poetry* (1953 ed.), p. 5.

If a cell becomes conscious of its own personality, is it not liable to act only in its own self-interest, taking no account of the collective interest?

What is the self-interest of a cell!

The Mother

(On Education, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 12, p. 341)

AMID THE LEAVES THE INMATE VOICES CALLED

(Continued from the issue of May 2015)

17. Metaphysics Becomes Poetry

If the Greek, Italian, French and Saxon elements in English literature draw us repeatedly to Sri Aurobindo's canon, his mystic poetry makes us look back in astonishment at the metaphysical poets who followed the Elizabethan times. Though some critics have considered his poetry as more metaphysical than mystical, and dissertations on his works have studied him as a metaphysical poet, *The Future Poetry* has nothing to offer on the metaphysical poets. He moves to Milton and Dryden straight after Shakespeare.

However, when the sequence of essays in *Arya* was prepared for publication as a book, he revised many portions and even brought in new additions. The editors in Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research speaking of the revisions of *The Future Poetry* essays say that Sri Aurobindo considered the *Arya* sequence to have had the usual hazards of serial publications leaving the overall plan "straggling and ill-arranged".

Sri Aurobindo had plans for much more extensive additions. In particular he wished to write a chapter or chapters on contemporary poetry, and was considering a treatment of the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century.¹

This is not surprising, for the metaphysical poets were very close to (some of them even a part of) the age of Shakespeare, and Sri Aurobindo's engagement with the Elizabethan period is well known. It is sad we do not have this proposed chapter but then obviously Sri Aurobindo subsumed what he admired in the metaphysical poetry into his own writings. For the metaphysical poets were the first to deal more with thoughts than sensations. They bound their intellectuality to mystic experiences. But they never called themselves mystical or metaphysical or spiritual. 'Metaphysical' is a term attributed to Samuel Johnson for he found the poems of some of these post-Spenserian poets indulging in a variety of conceits, not easily comprehensible. They had brought religion into English poetry in a big way and at the same time were no sombre poets of the 'other world' or minstrels of the Church. Their star figure John Donne (1573-1631) himself could write about earthly love with the same fervour as when he wrote speculating upon afterlife. He took holy orders

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Future Poetry*, CWSA, Vol. 26, p. 399.

when he was past forty and we learn that the bulk of his work was written when he was still in secular life. Donne could never resist giving the highest place to wit in his poetry. No wonder his poems often appear to be clustered with hyperboles. Do I take him literally? Is he pulling my leg? Perhaps this uncertainty made him a favourite with my classmates. Our eyes never drooped when the Professor began to declaim from Donne's 'The Canonization':

For God's sake hold your tongue, and let me love,
 Or chide my palsy, or my gout,
 My five gray hairs, or ruined fortune flout,
 With wealth your state, your mind with arts improve,
 Take you a course, get you a place,
 Observe his honour, or his grace,
 Or the king's real, or his stamped face
 Contemplate; what you will, approve,
 So you will let me love.

The prosaic explanation came later. The poet was asking his listener just to shut up and allow him to go his own way. If his listener wants to live as a self-satisfied courtier with a high position, he was welcome to it. He can watch the royal court to his heart's content and keep looking at the real face of the King or the mask put on for the sake of his court. What is the significance of the title, 'The Canonization'? Obviously he wants to canonise the lover much as they canonise a saint. This juxtaposition of a very earthy emotion with the godward rising thoughts of a saintly person comes through well because of Donne's poetic aplomb. He would surprise us at every step.

One could have a sense of relief with his poetry, though. We had had enough of Greek myths and ancient imagery and were able to read him with ease. We did not realise that he would be actually a more difficult poet to write about in our answer papers. His *Holy Sonnets* were welcome though he would shock us by his speech now and then. Mercifully the Professor was able to confine himself to explaining only a couple of them that had been set up "for detailed study". One of them was the tenth sonnet:

Death, be not proud, though some have called thee
 Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;
 For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow
 Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
 From rest and sleep, which but thy pictures be,
 Much pleasure; then from thee much more must flow,
 And soonest our best men with thee do go,

Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
 Thou art slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
 And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,
 And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well
 And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?
 One short sleep past, we wake eternally
 And death shall be no more; Death, thou shalt die.

This sounded more like an Indian yogi writing a poem in English. Anyway we had a professor (the same who taught us Old English) for whom the Indian scriptures had made such statements long before the shaping of the English language. Krishna had said it all, nullifying the very existence of Death:

That Reality which pervades the universe is indestructible. No one has the power to change the Changeless.

Bodies are said to die. But That which possesses the body is eternal. It cannot be limited, or destroyed.²

Some of his poems learnt in those early days of my English studies have followed me down the decades, helping me to come up with the right thought or turn of phrase at the right moment when writing an essay or a review. High philosophy, perhaps, but the need for the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of god was never verbalised as effectively as Donne in "No man is an island". It is a gentle knock to the egos of mankind, the triple sin of self-destructive pride: "Me, Mine, for My Sake." Donne comes through the centuries and stands before us warning us sternly not to ignore nor delight in the suffering of others:

No man is an island,
 Entire of itself,
 Every man is a piece of the continent,
 A part of the main.
 If a clod be washed away by the sea,
 Europe is the less.
 As well as if a promontory were.
 As well as if a manor of thy friend's
 Or of thine own were:
 Any man's death diminishes me,
 Because I am involved in mankind,
 And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;
 It tolls for thee.

2. *The Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter II. Translated by Swami Prabhavananda and Christopher Isherwood.

Yet, mankind is helpless and the bell keeps tolling. Some poems of Donne have remained with me for different reasons. This poem is one of them because Ernest Hemingway picked up the phrase, “for whom the bell tolls” as title to his masterpiece on the Spanish Civil War. Not only the phrase but the entire poem seems to have affected Hemingway deeply since it is used as the epigraph to *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940). Because of the title and the epigraph one could have empathy with the hero Jordan who is an expert dynamiter and Maria who has been completely scorched by the Civil War. Even the others too: almost everyone a prisoner of circumstances because of a few egoistic personalities who start such conflagrations. Other phrases of Donne that have remained with us spreading a magical glow include “go and catch a falling star” and “a valediction: forbidding mourning”.

It is not just John Donne who cannot be easily forgotten though he is the best and most famous among them. The other poets who were inspired by him (mostly his contemporaries) have left behind poems which have stood the test of time very well. Like him they keep away from the received tradition of myths and legends. Not for them the Greek pantheon or Roman Caesars. George Herbert was just forty when he passed away. Educated at Cambridge and well-endowed with wealth and looks, Herbert also took holy orders when he was thirty-seven years old. Unlike Donne who wrote sensuous poetry, Herbert wrote sweet and moving poems as a dedication to God. Here is a simple prayer, ‘Discipline’:

Throw away Thy rod,
 Throw away Thy wrath;
 O my God,
 Take the gentle path!

For my heart’s desire
 Unto Thine is bent:
 I aspire
 To a full consent.

Not a word or look
 I affect to own,
 But by book,
 And Thy Book alone.

Though I fail, I weep;
 Though I halt in pace,
 Yet I creep
 To the throne of grace

Then let wrath remove;
 Love will do the deed;
 For with love
 Stony hearts will bleed . . .

Throw away Thy rod;
 Though man frailties hath,
 Thou art God:
 Throw away Thy wrath!

Indian religion would call this '*saranagati*', surrender. You cannot argue with the Divine on why there is this or that dispensation. Especially in times of war, natural calamities and man-made destruction it appears as though God is always wrathful, as if He were intent on drawing pleasure seeing man in pain. Can this be true? Is not this beautiful world divine? Is not the emotion of love in its varied colours the handiwork of God? All one can do is to speak of the heart's pain and pray to the Lord for times of peace and joy. One is reminded of Sri Aurobindo's sonnet, 'The Cosmic Dance':

Two measures are there of the cosmic dance.
 Always we hear the tread of Kali's feet
 Measuring in rhythms of pain and grief and chance
 Life's game of hazard terrible and sweet.

The ordeal of the veiled Initiate,
 The hero soul at play with Death's embrace,
 Wrestler in the dread gymnasium of Fate
 And sacrifice a lonely path to Grace,

Man's sorrows made a key to the Mysteries,
 Truth's narrow road out of Time's wastes of dream,
 The soul's seven doors from Matter's tomb to rise,
 Are the common motives of her tragic theme.

But when shall Krishna's dance through Nature move,
 His mask of sweetness, laughter, rapture, love?³

Herbert's religious poems have touches of the mystical. He took care with the visible presentation of his poem, structuring some of them in a way as to suggest an altar or a bird in flight. He did not shock his devout readers as Donne did, but wrote in tune with the religious turn of the common man. As when he writes on 'Faith' which is the staff that helps man safely cross sorrows and disappointments:

When creatures had no real light
 Inherent in them, thou didst make the sun
 Impute a lustre, and allow them bright;
 And in this show what Christ hath done.

That which before was darkned clean
 With bushy groves, pricking the looker's eye,
 Vanisht away, when Faith did change the scene:
 And then appear'd a glorious sky.

What though my body run to dust?
 Faith cleaves unto it, counting every grain
 With an exact and most particular trust,
 Reserving all for flesh again."

This emotional involvement with religion was no doubt a forerunner to Milton's sublime epic. Herbert was the mentor of Henry Vaughan, a doctor by profession and a poet who could verbalise his mystic experience as memorable images that takes us beyond the merely physical world by a deft weaving of familiar words. His most famous image opens 'The World':

I saw Eternity the other night,
 Like a great ring of pure and endless light,
 All calm, as it was bright;
 And round beneath it, Time in hours, days, years
 Driv'n by the spheres
 Like a vast shadow mov'd; in which the world
 And all her train were hurled.

With such a turn of mind, meditation comes easy to him but there are no knotty passages. Quite often it is a recollection of the happy days of innocent childhood. After all this innocence is divinity! Here is a moment when he listens to a waterfall that seems to be in action through Time incalculable. Does it indicate that all must fall like the stream or the fall is only to rise elsewhere in a finer atmosphere? For Vaughan, the water's murmur brings only positive thoughts:

Dear stream! dear bank, where often I
 Have sate and pleased my pensive eye,
 Why, since each drop of thy quick store
 Runs thither whence it flowed before,
 Should poor souls fear a shade or night,
 Who came, sure, from a sea of light?
 Or since those drops are all sent back
 So sure to thee, that none doth lack,
 Why should frail flesh doubt any more
 That what God takes, he'll not restore?

This poem stands witness to the triumph of philosophy as subject-matter for writing exquisite poetry. There had been religious poetry in English literature since Old English times. But such mystical-metaphysical-spiritual poetry had not been handled by English poets and thus the metaphysical poets did pave the way for William Wordsworth. Wordsworth would write long poems with philosophical statements which became favourites with my class. It all seemed so new, modern and a big change when we were studying Old English poetry and Geoffrey Chaucer.

All this would lead me naturally towards Sri Aurobindo and for me it seemed perfectly natural to have a sprinkling of eternity and soul and spirit in Sri Aurobindo's poetry when I began studying him seriously. As for the Metaphysicals, Richard Crashaw and Andrew Marvell are the distinguished younger contemporaries of Donne. There is an elegance about the word-play of Crashaw when he seeks to convey a religious theme with undertones of amazement and gratitude, as in 'Christ Crucified':

Thy hands to give Thou canst not lift,
 Yet will Thy hand still giving be;
 It gives, but O, itself is the gift!
 It gives though bound, though bound 'tis free!

He was an Anglican who became a Catholic and had enormous admiration for Saint Teresa. 'The Flaming Heart' reveals his passionate devotion for Saint Teresa of Avila and is certainly one of his finest poems. She had recorded in her autobiography a mystic experience in which she recognised a seraphim (an angel from heaven) plunging his flaming sword into her heart. From then onwards she burnt with passion for God, she could not be content with anything else. The angel had injected love into her heart teaching her how the Creator loves his entire creation. While the metaphysical poets avoided the base of mythology, because of their religious background they do occasionally draw help from a Christian legend. Crashaw's poem is a fine piece which chides painters who show a seraphim plunging

a fiery dart into the saint's heart. Where is the need for an external flame to ignite her? Why should another person come to inspire her? Isn't she herself the flame divine?

This is the mistresse flame; and duteous he
 Her happy fire-works, here, comes down to see.
 O most poor-spirited of men!
 Had thy cold Pencil kist her Pen
 Thou couldst not so unkindly err
 To show us This faint shade for Her.
 Why man, this speakes pure mortall frame;
 And mockes with female Frost love's manly flame. . . .
 Leave Her alone The Flaming Heart.
 Leave her that; and thou shalt leave her
 Not one loose shaft but love's whole quiver.

This poem has been described by Legouis and Cazamian as “the most ardent product of English religious poetry.” Seeing the guardian as a flaming mother (Crashaw would rather see her as a mother without the veil which symbolises ‘shame’) is not new for us who have hailed Aditi as the Mother of gods. Sri Aurobindo's Savitri is constantly referred to as a Flame in the epic, a burning brazier of spiritual power:

She burned in the passion and splendour of the rose,
 She was the red heart of the passion-flower,
 The dream-white of the lotus in its pool.
 Out of subconscious life she climbed to mind,
 She was thought and the passion of the world's heart,
 She was the godhead hid in the heart of man,
 She was the climbing of his soul to God.⁴

Light, Flame, Rain . . . undying images all to indicate the Power, the Glory and the Compassion of the Divine.

What is most charming about the metaphysical poets is their varied backgrounds. Andrew Marvell was a politician who is significant for us who follow the history of English literature. If Donne was a contemporary of Shakespeare, Marvell was a friend of John Milton, thus ensuring a dogged continuity for our studies. It has been said that he saved Milton from the gallows by pleading with Charles II not to execute him. While his poem, ‘To his Coy Mistress’ is considered a classic, I

4. *Savitri*, CWSA, Vol. 34, p. 557.

would rather vote for his 'A Dialogue Between the Soul and Body', the tension that is so pithily expressed in Sri Aurobindo's 'A Tree'.

The soul is anxious to get out of the prison that the body is where the bolts are made of bones, the eye cannot see what is within, nor can the ear hear the voice of God as there is the cacophony of life's noises.

A Soul hung up, as it were, in Chains
Of Nerves, and Arteries, and Veins.
Tortured, besides each other part,
In a vain Head, and double Heart.

But the body is equally frustrated with the soul which makes it feel restless all the time, whatever be the situation. There are medicines for the sickness of the body, but who can be a physician of the malady of the soul?

But Physic yet could never reach
The maladies Thou me dost teach;
Whom first the cramp of Hope does tear:
And then the palsie shakes of Fear.
The pestilence of love does heat:
Or hatred's hidden ulcer eat.

This is very close to the intellectualisation of poetry but welcome too when searching for an answer to the incandescent question: Who am I? Body or Soul? Or both? Or neither, once death overtakes the body? But death shall not be proud, such is the assurance given by the great Metaphysical poet, Donne. Professor V. K. Gokak described Sri Aurobindo's 'Who' and 'Parabrahman' as metaphysical poems. So the regret remains, for the unwritten chapter on the Metaphysicals by Sri Aurobindo.

(To be continued)

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

The Avatar is not supposed to act in a non-human way — he takes up human action and uses human methods with the human consciousness in front and the Divine behind. If he did not his taking a human body would have no meaning and would be of no use to anybody. He could just as well have stayed above and done things from there.

Sri Aurobindo

(Letters on Yoga – I, CWSA Vol. 28, p. 473)



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