

THE YOGA OF THE INDIAN NATION

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It would be a tragic irony of fate if India were to throw away her spiritual heritage at the very moment when in the rest of the world there is more and more a turning towards her for spiritual help and a saving Light. This must not and will surely not happen; but it cannot be said that the danger is not there.

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Part I

Times of Transition

These are times of transition when we are moving from one Age to another or to put it more succinctly from the Age of Kali to the Age of Satya. The gift of Kali was man's discovery of the secrets of our material existence. It was an Age when all else was veiled as if by a thick iron curtain except our physical self. As a deft surgeon working upon one part of our body covers up the rest with a thick clean sheet so that his vision and mind are not distracted, so did the operations of Kali drape our souls with the thick sheet of Ignorance so that nothing was visible to us except our physical bodies. Our mind was anaesthetised or rather hypnotised into believing that there was nought else save our material universe and its forces and man's sole business was to survive and protect himself physically against the threat of other forms of physical life, and of course by physical means alone. But as we walk into the New Cycle where a greater Truth dawns upon man, we wake up slowly from our swoon to a New Light and with it to new seekings and a renewed labour. Therefore we have today very clearly two seemingly opposite and conflicting tendencies driving man or rather pulling him in apparently different directions albeit towards the same end of a grand synthesis of human existence itself. These two tendencies can be broadly considered for want of better terms, as the material and the spiritual. The material pull and attraction for physical betterment, comfort, etc. is the remnant of our immediate past. It is the strong hold of Kali rooting our consciousness into the very physical stuff of things. On the one side, this rooting into the physical has grounded us well into the body preventing an easy exit out of the physical universe, testing and retesting everything in the crucible of the physical and its power to change the physical

world even as turning our gaze to earth and terrestrial aims provides a strong foothold on material life and material things. To make its task perfect and easier, in this Age of Kali that we leave behind us, a veil is put upon the mother of wisdom, mother India, so that the world is not blinded by her intense Light, and leaving the work upon earth too soon and incomplete, we do not vanish into some beyond of Nirvana and Bliss. But the side-effect of this prolonged engagement with matter is that we have been led into a state of hypnosis that fails to see or recognise anything but matter and judges everything by material appearances alone. Of all the hypnotics and anesthetics known to man, matter, especially when endowed with a vital glow, is the most powerful. But on the other side we are being slowly pulled out of our slumber with new openings and new discoveries and new powers waking up out of matter's sleep. There is an increasing interest the world over in the powers of life, as is evident in the emergent systems of alternate energy healing such as Reiki; in powers of the mind with biofeedback, guided imagery, creative visualisation, mind-body medicine, psychoneuroimmunology coming into the forefront of the human play. The authentic spiritual powers are yet waiting in the dusk of transition while their mental and vital dupes are being sold in marts of an imitative spirituality. That India has a great role to play in this new emergence is beyond question since it is India that has traditionally been the guardian of the keys to the doors of the Spirit. But whether India will take the definitive lead in this matter and instead of being continuously hypnotised with the physical and vital aspects of existence that Kali magnified to no end, it will dehypnotise itself and the world and show once more the ways of the Spirit, or else throw away this golden chance and opportunity and go the way the rest of the world goes tumbling on its head towards a progressive sinking into the oblivion of the atomic void is the still unanswered question. When we look at the surface, the appearances are no doubt dismal. What problems of the world have not been given as more than its fair share of India's destiny? Its very rebirth in modern times has been a fractured one. And then the two important aspects that are necessary for a nation's outer growth—wealth and power—have been usurped by the Asura in man. Cutting across party lines the managers of the nation stand united in corruption and legalised loot. Of deception they have made a decent profession and falsehood lurks in every corridor of the high and mighty where decisions of crucial importance are being taken. The forces of division still continue to divide us along lines of language, caste, religion and all the rest and are even craftily hidden under cover of acceptable names such as social justice, equality, secularism, tradition, and all the rest that men use as a shield to hide their evil intentions. This combined with the unconscious masses driven blindly by the whip of fear and passion, while the rest goaded by greed and given to crudity in every form makes an ugly sight to watch. It is as if the devil had adopted its most cunning strategy for subverting the truth by joining its bandwagon as a helper and loots it on the way rather than openly oppose it. Not to speak of poverty and population and a host of illnesses

and natural disasters. It is as if the spirit of Time had collected the bundle of unsolved problems of the human race since man's quest and struggle began beneath the stars and placed it in India's bag of destiny to resolve them.

Thus we see in India paradoxes aplenty. Here tradition and modernity, conservative orthodoxy and the progressive spirit, the space age and the bullock cart, the acme of virtues and sacrifice and the symbol of selfishness and dishonesty move close to each other. But has it not been always thus with India; the greatest Avatars and givers of Light as well as the darkness embodied as the Asuras; Rama and Ravana, Krishna and Kansa, Yudhishtira and Duryodhana meet each other on the same plane. It is as if the ancient adversary force met the "burdened great" to test their strength to suffer and to save. It is as if the gods sanctioned the paradox that the bringer of Light must be thrust into the densest darkness to heal the abyss and transform the valleys of death with the deathless Light and the flowers of an unflinching courage and faith. It is as if the body and mind of the mighty nation called India had become the field of the world's inner conflicts and its deepest afflictions, for so alone could a cure be found. It is as if a great and noble and mighty seer had drunk the bitter cup of poison as a representative of humanity so that the debt of man was paid and his strength confirmed that the wine of immortality could be released for earth.

Of course, the problems that India is facing are neither new nor unique to India. Only, in India we find them in their acuteness of severity as if a sick and desperate man was knocking at the hospital doors to find some radical cures for an intractable malady. These problems have been partially contained rather than treated in other nations by strong and violent remedies with many side-effects in the passing. True, there is a time and place for such measures — judicial, administrative, political — yet these are temporary solutions. They appear powerful and instantaneous but in the end they solve nothing. Only the symptoms are suppressed for the moment. Sooner or later, they re-emerge, wear other names and forms, and baffle us again. They were not cured but masked, only to return at a later date. India is perhaps destined to find the deeper radical cure; therefore the problems that it confronts are not only severe but appear almost intractable.

The Problem of Unity: An Illustrative Example

To understand what this deeper cure is and how we can find it we have to first understand India's complexity. For the being of a nation as ancient as India is bound to be complex and rich with a many-sided experience. There are at least three layers at which India exists. First of course is the surface India which people notice when they look at India superficially. This surface gives the impression of a huge building broken in several places with the walls cracked and the plaster disfigured. But right behind this we also find it bubbling with activity and dynamism as if a lot of outworn things needed

mending and a lot of work was going on. When we have borne this first shock and moved a little towards its inner being, we feel the sweetness of a fresher air, a different atmosphere the kind of which one finds nowhere in the world, it is literally so to say Air India. This inner atmosphere carries in itself something that supports and nurtures hope, washes off cynicism and gives strength and peace despite all outer appearances. While most nations exist largely on the material and intellectual plane we find in India the sudden surprise of meeting life in many shades and colours. We are led into the inner India through many a door, each carved with rich artistry even though the door appears as if it had gathered dust over the centuries. We begin to feel the magic of India of the old, its many-tiered existence with wonderful creative possibilities for the future. And if, like the rare few, we can venture into India's great and mighty soul we are wonderstruck with its magnanimity of thought, nobility of feelings, its heart rich with the mysteries of the Beyond. We see an ancient face full of deep wisdom and compassion, as of a graceful goddess that has been long suffering and yet carries a Light upon her face and a Strength in her bosom that yet can save the world. It is this inmost India, the soul of India, the mighty goddess and the wise and compassionate Mother that we must first discover as a nation, love her and identify with her. Then alone can we truly help in the task of national resurrection. Then India herself will reveal her secrets and the way to truth and harmony and progress. But now she hides herself in oblivion, in a shroud of darkness, her dress covered with dirt and smoke thrown upon her by her own children whom she loves and gives shelter in her arms. On the surface is the shadow, in the depth she carries a Light that is greater than reason and thought, and if brought to the forefront, this Light can solve problems that seem insoluble to the human race.

One illustrative example is the problem of unity that threatens India and the world today, perhaps more than any other problem. It is in fact one of the core problems that the world faces, for much of our earth's resources are sapped out, much of the disparity generated, much of war and famine and eco-disasters spring from this one core issue of division between one group of humanity and another. With regard to this diversity India is incomparable so much so that the term 'subcontinent' has been coined for it. India has this big problem of an amazing range of diversity of groups,— ethnic, religious, cultural, temperamental, social, political, ideological, even philosophical. What India needs most at this moment is unity and what India suffers most from is division. And it is prevented from solving the problem arbitrarily by either repressing one group or another or else blurring out all distinctions. The politicians who profess to solve it only deepen the divide further either through the politics of appeasement or through the politics of revenge. The politics of reservations and the politics of discrimination stand at par and are two aspects of the same farce—the force of division and disunity. Both of these stand at the same level and the existence of one is justified by the existence of the other. They are like counterbalancing forces. Another way must be found, the

right key to harmonise all without each one losing its separate identity. It must discover the means to fulfil that which Nature secretly intends,—to create unity in diversity. And this cannot be done by any mere surface manipulation, whether political, governmental, social or legislative means. We must find a more durable way, some secret key lost within our own being. For it is true that Nature never gives a problem without first creating the means to solve it, and never are we given a difficulty without being given at the same time the strength to endure and resolve it. And India must find that lost key.

Strangely the soul of India carries the memory of an earlier solution which can be applied even today, albeit modified to our own times. In far ancient times when the spiritual impulse was strong, India saw human beings as children of one family, the family of the One Divine immanent in man whom no sole religion or group or cult could monopolise, whom all could discover and discover their secret oneness with all. This inner Self cut across the boundaries of class and caste, race and religion, custom and tradition, country and education, it was one for all. Deep inside, mankind shares a common aspiration, or let us say, some common aspirations and it is in that that we must unite. This aspiration is not simply about food, shelter and clothing as our more biologically oriented friends may suggest. In fact it is the distortion of a profound truth. We are indeed one and we have a common seeking but it is not simply a common seeking to satisfy our most basal animal needs but a seeking for something lasting and permanent, something that transcends the human mould and yet fulfils it,—an aspiration for lasting Peace, durable Happiness, true Knowledge, unconditional Love,—in short a perfect life here upon earth irrespective of our beliefs and non-beliefs. It is these that must be emphasised as the enduring needs of the race and the basis of our mutuality. The success story of Science is partly due to its attempt to satisfy these common seekings of the race and no wonder very soon it gathered almost a mass following trampling under its feet as it marched, religion and orthodoxy and whatever else governed the world in the Middle Ages. But Science has its limitations; it can bring diverse groups of humanity together in its common seeking for practical knowledge and material comfort; its limitation is that it cannot satisfy man's hunger for the Permanent, the Real and the Eternal. It cannot fulfil our thirst for Love and Joy and Beauty and all that makes life hope and dare and dream and endure despite being haunted by failure, defeat, and even death. But just as Science is the gift of our physical mind playing with matter and the body of the universe, there exists in man, in his own depths the gift of goodness, beauty and joy that can endure, the gift of love that triumphs over division and death. Man must be shown the way to contact these depths beyond the outer forms of his beliefs and non-beliefs, religious or otherwise, or even through these initial scaffoldings to pass beyond them to the reality that the religious symbols represent. This cannot be done merely through intellectual debates and discussions, though that can be a starting point, but most of all by the force of realisation. The more such realised men

arise, men who live and breathe upon the summits of consciousness, men who have drunk the nectar-wine of truth and love and joy in their own depths, the sooner they will create a force-field for unity to thrive and blossom and spread. And who knows, as an ancient Indian saying goes, each such spiritually realised man may neutralise a hundred-thousand-fold the darkness of the human race. And who else but India must lead the way.

That this has happened and can still happen is exemplified in India's own history of the Sufi movement. It was indeed Nature's first strong experiment in recent times to see how far the spiritual force can unite even extremely diverse groups such as the Hindu and the Musalman, diverse not only in language, customs, traditions and beliefs, but also in temperamental cast of the inner being. One comes from a large-spirited, calm, secular and richly complex refreshingly rejuvenating spiritual striving of the Hindu, the other is born of a breakaway fiery and passionate spirit of a narrow and exclusivist religious outlook, full of zeal and fervour, that easily borders onto fanaticism. Yet, the Sufi mystics found no contradictions in it and easily reconciled the two. Their body and outer mind, their vital nature, habits and customs belonged to the religious tradition to which they were born, while their soul soared into oneness and radiated the spirit of Truth and Love. Both Hindus and Muslims approached these living embodiments of Light, whether they came from the Hindu background as Guru Nanak Dev did, or a Muslim background as Sheikh Salim Chishti and Hazrat Nizamuddin, or a doubtful background as Saint Kabir. All differences of caste and creed and orthodox religion melted in their spiritual embrace and even enriched each other. That the movement could not sustain itself was due to various reasons. The movement was largely limited to the heart, its appeal was to some deeper emotion from where some rejuvenating streams of love could flow out and unite us in a common spiritual bond. But the intellect and the crude vital was not touched. It was subdued or sublimated but not purified. Therefore the movement could not involve our entire being. The conflicts were not healed but overridden for a moment by a strong spiritual impulse that uplifted us beyond the limits of our pettiness and smallness, but only for a moment. The subconscious parts pulled us back again but not without showing that there exists in us a strong force of unity in our own depths. Perhaps the masses were not yet ready and the movement dwindled, lacking in the force that comes from realised men. Perhaps the time had not yet come and more water had to flow before the bridge could be ready. Most of all, the movement started taking more and more an other-worldly turn and began losing its grip on earthly realities and failed to check the onslaught of the adverse powers there. The fanatics like Aurangzeb and the cunning divisive policies of the British came in and occupied the outer field left unconquered by these great mystics. Yet they prepared the way for a more complete realisation to come later on and showed in their passing the first promise and hint in our more recent memory of reconciling outer differences by the force of an inner truth.



Photo by Eeshaan Mahesh (www.binduartaaura.com)

It is little wonder then that the forces of disruption and division targeted the very centre of this unity. For though Sufism travelled from Persia to India, it flourished most along the banks of the Indus and Sutlej and Beas in regions that we know today as Pakistan and Punjab. In the beautiful valleys of Kashmir it grew not only in its spirit but also in its outward expressions. The glad and friendly co-existence of the chaste Kashmiri Pandits and the devout Muslims, the rich and happy confluence of the two traditions became widely appreciated and known as "*Kashmiriyat*", which in essence reflected the natural outflowing of the Sufi culture. It is no wonder then that Kashmir became the target of violent attacks of the worst kind, for if Kashmir or rather "*Kashmiriyat*" remains, then there remains a possibility of uniting two diverse streams of spiritual and vital energies, of uniting two diverse strains of national thought and ideologies and making each stronger and richer by this union. In fact the Sufi movement may well have been an attempt for the collective consciousness of Islam to find its own soul, but it could not endure it for long and ended up confusing its hardened vital will for the authentic soul. The heart was ready but the mind was small and narrow, not ready for receiving its soul intimations, the vital forceful but obstinately rigid lacking in plasticity and suppleness. It is only for a brief period that a few Mughal kings, coming in contact with the Indian ethos, developed their own deeper aesthesis and suffused a touch of gentleness and beauty and grace in an otherwise savagely warring lot of humanity. The Muslims like the Christians came to India to learn from her the deeper ways of unity and the eternal truths of life. But instead they paid the great mother's debt by plundering or dismembering her. Yet the great mother took them in her fold as one would take a sick child in one's arms to heal his misery and anguish by a deeper Light and Love.

Therefore the forces of division and disorder that wish to delay the manifestation of unity have furiously attacked this centre of a rare kind of unity. In fact one may well say that Kashmir is of crucial importance to the very existence of Islam, it is the only hope left today for Islam to yet find its

true soul and integrate with the great evolutionary impetus that is carrying the world today with a mighty force. If Kashmir falls to the radicals then Islam may well lose its way and fail to live up to its own aspiration for a fairer and equal world that belongs to God. How the forces of evolutionary transformation would deal with such a scenario is anybody's guess but the signs are growing clearer. But if Kashmir lives, not just physically but spiritually (for which it must remain part of India), then it may well become a strong force-field for unity. The very same Kashmir that we consider today as part of the problem carries in itself the seed of its own remedy. If applied rightly it would become not only a means and a force for uniting India and Pakistan but also generate a larger movement for uniting the best in Islam with the best in Hindu thought. And who knows if this symbolic union will not spread to other groups spontaneously as a contagion. Kashmir is making the two nations talk; it bleeds with fate's whip so that both the nations can look deeper to discover the inner solution to the problem of their own self-identity. What appears today as the hard bedrock of difficulties, may well be the seat of solution tomorrow. But it is unlikely that this solution can come about by any mere political means. Rather if the political interference is reduced to a minimum from both sides of the fence, if the state of Kashmir is allowed to discover its own hidden springs of harmonious energies, it will bring out of its own depths the force for unity. The main focus of any facilitator solving the Indo-Pak problem should be to encourage the emergence of the true composite culture of Kashmir, its "*Kashmiriyat*" that expressed itself through the lips of the Sufi mystics and the rest will follow. Unfortunately it is this that the terrorists and hard-core Islamic radicals have targeted and largely destroyed,—in form but not yet in spirit and essence. And everything must be done to preserve and bring it to the forefront and even actively popularise it among the hardened groups on both sides. Such efforts as cultural exchanges through Sufi music and poetry may seem small in their power to solve big problems but they act like homeopathic medicines that if rightly used in optimal dilution, can create sudden reversals and great effects. Happily such a movement has begun. The sharing of common sentiments whether in cricket or the earthquake further cement the fault-lines. What seem today as opposites and therefore a source of conflict for the group-ego are in reality complementarities for the soul.

Part II

The Need for a National Yoga

How will unity in diversity come about, how will this sense of complementarity grow? It has to be tackled at three different levels of our being. At the outermost level it will help to engage representatives of different groups and nations

“together” in a common action, a common sentiment, a common ground of association. There are many issues of common interest where a joint action would be much more beneficial to both than each going its way alone. These issues can be sports, environmental, commercial, ecological, resource management, scientific, etc. and we are actually being pushed towards this by necessity rather than choice, by negative means such as terrorism and ecological disasters rather than positive means such as resource pooling and commerce for mutual benefit. In this sense Science and Commerce are doing well to link up the different units of the world into a unity of necessity. But this is not enough. A second and deeper work is needed at the level of the inner being of the nation-unit. This inner being is best represented through “culture” in its deepest sense. This inner and deeper side of each culture needs to be brought out and rightly represented through media and cultural exchange programmes. Unfortunately, most often this “inner side” is neglected or wilfully ignored and what is presented is simply a set of customs and traditions. One has to simply tune in to the TV documentaries on “India” which will show ash-smearred half-naked “sadhus” with begging bowls, taking a dip in the Ganges, the crowded temple-streets, the weird practices of piercing the tongue, etc. as a representative of Indian culture. This is either a wilful mis-interpretation or a gross ignorance. It has only generated confusion or an idle curiosity for something “different” rather than bridging the gaps and building bridges through a deeper intellectual and philosophical understanding of different ethos. Finally, and most importantly there has to develop a nucleus of persons who can go deeper within themselves not merely as individuals (that is indeed the first step) but as representatives of different groups. These must discover the group-soul that they belong to and by a natural spiritual extension rediscover their complementary oneness with other groups.

The more such human beings of deeper understanding and spiritual unity grow, the more shall we have Peace and unity upon earth. Indeed, Auroville is precisely such a threefold effort at unity.

What applies to the problem of unity applies in every field of humanity. Corruption, greed, hate, conservatism, fanaticism are all basically spiritual problems. They arise because the individual and the group live in the sense of the ego and not in their soul. What India therefore needs most is not just a national reconstruction but a national yoga. For along what lines are we going to construct a new India if we have not the vision to reconstruct,—along the lines of Western polity and science that revel in well-polished external surfaces and a crafty manipulation of outward things while the inner being remains hollow, lacklustre, struggles and suffers since stifled by appearances? Or along the lines of our own native genius that built such a mighty nation once by the ancient power of yoga, that it has resisted millenniums of shocks, invasions, subjugation and calamities? True, its centuries of struggle, especially in the past few hundred years have made it weary and tired. Its resistance against

foreign invasions and influences has hardened into fixed tradition its own fluid adaptability to evolutionary forces. But these are momentary lapses and temporary setbacks. The Indian genius will bounce back and rediscover the splendours of the spirit and restore the true glory of life by connecting it to its divine origin. That is India's unique and difficult and dangerous task fulfilling which it will fulfil its highest destiny. And failing which it will frustrate itself and frustrate the world in its attempt to create a new world order. Of all the nations India is most suited for this purpose, given its deep spiritual background and several strata of spiritual experience in its inner being and the subconscious memory of the race; its unique and complex temperament and subtle intelligence combined with deliberate faith and qualities of the heart, its sense of the collective, its resilient vital are especially suited for such a work. But it has to do it now under difficult circumstances due to the various admixtures that have taken place but in the process the results are going to be far more superior in quality and universal, applicable to the whole human race, since now it carries upon itself the additional imprint of the Middle East and the Western world.



Photo by Eeshaan Mahesh (www.binduartaaura.com)

The Initiating Mantra

The national yoga of India had indeed started in 1905 when goaded by the forces of division the cry of '*Bande Mataram*' rang through India's heart. It was an invocation not only to the Soul of India but also to the World-Mother, *Shakti* of the Supreme, to come and manifest in the land of India, to liberate it from error, falsehood and division; to awaken it out of its *tamas* and darkness in which it had sunk deep. This was and still is the initiating mantra of this nation. Its aspiration—*purna swaraj*, a perfect self-conquest, self-mastery, self-rule; its path,—*satyameva jayate*, victory to the Truth, a

constant choice of the growing Truth over the falsehoods of our mental, vital, physical nature. The World-Mother did arrive in India, in her physical embodiment, but few recognised her. Her coming from the Western world towards the East was itself a clear indication that while the drama of the previous millennium, the Age of rational enlightenment, was played out with Europe as its centre, the next Act of Her creative play would be played out in the East with India as the main stage. The path of Truth, *satya pantha* did open up and the boon of *purna swaraj* was brought close to our trembling hands, but our limbs were too weak to receive it. India responded to the descending Light of Truth first with a flurry of *rajasic* activity engaged in acts of petty violence driven often by a blind sentimental patriotic fervour. As was inevitable, this force soon spent and exhausted, the nation lapsed into *tamoguna* again with the few elements embodying the *sattwic* impulse and the spirit of authentic sacrifice carrying the flag further. That freedom still came was a boon and a grace, the result of a silent *tapasya* of Sri Aurobindo who had indeed initiated the nation and awakened its aspiration. But as happens, the *sattwic* and *rajasic* elements took the credit and went on to glorify their own greatness refusing to see the Hand of the Eternal, refusing to listen to the voice of the prophet of Life Divine and the true progenitor of Indian nationalism. The story of the Pandavas believing themselves to be the cause of the victory; the story of the gods narrated in the *Kena Upanishad* believing theirs was the victory was repeated again. And once again the Eternal had to break our *sattwic* and *rajasic* egoism so that kneaded as dough by the divine Hands we may become supple and pliant to the Light that has dawned and is already active upon earth.

Indeed we forgot the very mantra that woke our soul from its slumber and replaced it with an artificial mental light! A long period of preparation must now intervene, the period when the Pandavas are repeatedly exiled from the Kingdom and the Kauravas loot the nation and enjoy the booty. Yet this too is grace, for when we refuse to wake up to the call of the flute and rush to join the dance of Krishna, then we need to hear the world-shaking, world-destroying laughter of Kali. For the purification must be as thorough as the crown of victory that we seek. Therefore we see broken again like helpless reeds even the strong and the mighty, slain with their dreams buried under their eyelids. For these are dreams of men who wish to see in India only a show of military strength, political power, and the rupee swaying the world market in a swoon of luxury and comfort. But wherefore is her greatness born—only for these perishable gifts? These boons of the vital gods creating an imitation of heaven upon earth, luring us with false glimmers towards a blinding abyss are not for India. These boons are for lesser hearts, for nerves that tire too soon, minds that are entrapped in the hedge of the senses, and its charmed fragrances. India has asked for more and therefore India must meet with a much greater challenge. For it is a subtle law of life that the difficulties we meet are in proportion to our capacities and the scope of our destiny.

India has lived through the ages to deliver a greater Light to the world and therefore greater must be the darkness that it must slay and deeper the abyss that it must fill with the Light and heal. For this too is a subtle law of life that the higher the prize we demand the greater must be our endurance and the obstacles to conquer. India lives to deliver not only itself but the world, therefore must India be riddled with all the problems and must become symbolic of all the representative difficulties of the world. For this too is a subtle law of our growth that the wider we grow in our consciousness, our own being begins to take a more and more universal character, both in terms of the possibilities and also in terms of the difficulties. The little pool of clear reflecting water with a garden around it may be an idler's dream to rest and relax but mighty spirits born to tame the sea must be prepared to meet the whales and the sharks, to rise with the billowing waves and fall into the blue deeps till one day they make the storms their companions and delight in the strong piercing gaze of the sun-god, and the tossing manes of the wind-gods. That which lesser hearts dread and fear, the strong must meet and bear and conquer. This rather long period of preparatory purification is a threefold process. First is the period when the nation must confront its unique as well as universal problems. It must come face to face and acknowledge not only the problems of the present moment but those buried deep into its own and the earth's subconscious memory. Next, it must try the various physical, vital, mental ways to solve them. Finally as a result of the growing pressure within and outside and the failure of outer means it must perforce seek its own true identity and in the process end up finding its national soul. The first part of this process is nearly over, the next is going on even as we are beginning to have the first few glimpses of the third. It is interesting to note that the question of a national identity is being raised before the Indian nation through various means and circumstances. And during the first centenary of India's spiritual new birth, that is the year 2005 (the anniversary of 'Bande Mataram') it was made clear that the issue of our national identity is far from being settled. True, our impatient hearts may find this long period of preparation painful and indeed it is long compared to the human lifespan. But what are fifty years or even a hundred or five hundred years but its growth from childhood into adolescence moving into youth. Truth cannot be seen by impatient eyes, *tamatmasthan yenu pasyanti dhira*, nor felt by nerves that succumb under duress and shatter under pressure of adverse circumstances. Those would serve India's interest best who can thus grow vast, who can look beyond the immediate gains into the deeper forces that are at work and the Light that is slowly but steadily emerging from its depths.

The Complexity and Difficulty of the Task

We must therefore understand that the task of reconstructing India is not a simple one and there are no quick-fix solutions as our childish minds

may rush to suggest. Firstly, India is not a new nation. It had many lives and as happens with souls that have lived many lives, the Indian temperament has become exceedingly complex.

This happens because several layers or states of consciousness and memories pile up in its subconscious and subliminal layers with complex knots of karmic energies that need to be disentangled, worked out, their own truths discovered, reintegrated with the whole in the Light of a greater Truth. This is no easy task even for an individual, what to speak of a nation. Unlike other nations, the Indian psyche is very complex and lives at many levels at the same time. It is reflected even in its physical components. The Space Age mingles here with the Stone Age; the jet aircraft and the bullock cart exist in the same city and, the ancient Vedas are recited in the same house where complex atomic problems are being tackled in the light of the discoveries of modern physics. Deep inside, India is always spiritual, it has an innate intelligence that is subtle and plastic but there has also gathered as a result of its recent past experiences the rule-book mind and the school-master mentality. Such a method cannot work with India; its nature is too complex to accept it. The impersonal law, the dictat of a faceless government is too unimaginative to the Indian mind that has peopled its inner worlds with gods and demons. It is much more likely to accept a religious authority, obey the command of a spiritual master, even perform extraordinary sacrifices in a fit of emotional and religious fervour, or else logically analyse and think out for itself what it should do or should not do in a certain situation than simply follow a rule because some government made it legal. This applies to simple things like observing traffic rules, to filing incometax. returns truthfully and honestly. The sense of Government, the idea of 'legally binding' and the feeling of political unity that prevails in the world do not easily take root here. The Indian will more readily unite for sentimental, religious, cultural and social reasons than for the sake of law and administration for its own sake. He acts either because moved by some vital interest or deep emotion or a logical thought or else a soul motivation. In either case, as is true for most complex beings, he must find his *locus standi* inside. Indeed India is best adapted to discover the psychic law and live by it rather than by man-made mental rules.

This complexity of the Indian temperament creates another difficulty. His being is like a melting pot of many things—sacred and profane. He is moved by passion, struck by emotions, haunted by logicising and philosophising reason, attracted by vital charm; yet long periods of asceticism create in him a poor hold on outer life. He is drawn to soul depths, yet holds parleys with the demons at night. The gods and the djinns both visit him in his dreams and therefore the Indian often experiences more internal conflict, becomes less focused not because of any deficiency of concentration but rather because he has too many internal things to handle which prevent him from being one-pointed. He has many simultaneous goals that are often self-contradictory,

from making a quick and huge buck to solving his family problems and emotional issues, to satisfying his social expectations, enjoying a quiet time with friends as well as spending time in isolated contemplation on cosmic problems. He loses a lot of creative energy in internal conflicts and therefore takes a long time to succeed outwardly in anything. But once he has worked out a path through the complex maze of his inner nature, his victory is much more complete, stable and enduring. And he arrives at this stability and victory by finding his spiritual reference point. The Light of Buddha, the word of Krishna, the call of Vivekananda, the cry of the Vedas, the myths and legends of the Puranic literature, the fascination for Sanskrit and many such high achievements have not only endured but continue to grow and inspire mankind. The greatest of Indian empires were built and governed in a spiritual mood; its greatest works of art and science and polity and law inspired by its spiritual genius. Even as many empires fell and vanished, great traditions collapsed or are on their decline and in the passing, the Indian 'shine' still endures and its light though covered with the dust of centuries still attracts and illumines. By his very nature and temperament the Indian lives in large spaces of time. He is more subjective, imaginative, and personal than objective, concretely real and impersonal. Therefore he lacks the killer instinct though not for that matter the survival instinct. In fact the latter is more developed, the adaptability to foreign atmospheres much more, the ability to take defeat as a passage rather than a permanent failure,—the resilience factor, quite developed. On the one hand it snatches away from him the do-or-die mentality and the sense of urgency and expediency or for that matter a thing as simple as punctuality. But in return it arms him with an endurance and forbearing perseverance that is useful in the long run. The yoga of the Indian nation has to carve its way through this uniqueness of the Indian temperament; it cannot be otherwise.

There are however two more difficulties that the national soul must tackle which are like the obverse and reverse side of a single problem before it can be fit for national yoga. It comes from its more recent past of a couple of thousand years when India lost the original Vedas in its heart and replaced it with a dubious script of other-worldly salvation, *moksa*, *mukti*, *nirvana* as the primary goal and the abrupt close of the creative delight of God. This has led to a loss of hold over physical reality and the world of concrete matter. But almost as a counterbalancing force, centuries of asceticism have suddenly led to a return of the suppressed elements and impulses with a vengeance. It is necessary for India to come to grips with these things. This duality and conflict has unfortunately encouraged the hypocrite in us. We have become experts at the art of posturing, of professing something publicly that our private acts contradict. We speak so casually of high things as if we breathed them but give little more than lip service. We speak of *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, the whole world is one family of God but can shout our lungs out over differences of languages and dare not marry outside our caste and religion. Now, when

God wants us to make a lasting progress He brings us face to face with that which must be truly conquered and not simply escaped from, bypassed or suppressed. This we see happening today. The quarrel of the castes, the disputes of sects, the dogmas of religion, the hidden attraction to the lower vital impulses, the roots of division and falsehood and unconsciousness buried deep in the subconscious parts are suddenly emerging before the nation's waking mind and taking the form of one problem or the other. These problems are not unique to India but their intensity is felt most acutely here. For the role of India is to be the spiritual guru of the world and to befit this role as a true spiritual leader it must carry upon its shoulders not only its own but the cross of the world. The unsolved or partially or temporarily solved problems do not vanish in one lifetime. They change forms and appearances, the ghosts of our buried and bygone self raise their heads again in the present to pull us back. Old ideas return, the slain past survives, forgotten memories resurface and prolong the drama and adventure of life upon earth. This is as true for an individual as for a nation. And there is no way but to go through it, with patience and perseverance, with courage and faith and hope in our hearts, and if possible to strive and ask for the vision that can pierce through the clouds and see behind appearances.

The Lines of our National Yoga

Indeed the entire line of our national yoga has not only been laid down but is also being conducted from behind the scenes by Sri Aurobindo. He has not only foreseen the destiny of India but has also kept it safe in the subtle atmosphere of the earth. Sri Aurobindo has already laid the foundations of the national yoga. Firstly, he awakened the national soul from its torpor and initiated it into the yoga of the new world. He brought back to its surface consciousness the memory of its past spiritual efforts, recovered the lost Vedas in their full and original glory and splendour, *vedanudharte*, connected them through the unbroken thread of spiritual continuity down the Ages of the *Upanishads*, the *Gita*, *Tantras* and the *Purana*, the lineage of the great *rishis* and *avatars* and finally linked it to our very own modern times! By doing this he was not only delivering the fully formed psychic being of India but also connecting it once again with the life and body of the nation. Secondly, he laid the broad lines for reshaping the inner being of India along the lines of its *swadharm*a so that India could find its true place and become a conscious instrument of the divine design in this universe. The inner being of a nation is represented by its culture, its highest and noblest thoughts and feelings and aspirations, its output in terms of art and literature and media. And finally, it has an outer body and this too has been formed and kept safe in the Mother's divine hands as the spiritual map of united India. This outward body is represented in the conduct and polity and administration, art and science, and other forms of activity of the nation. This too has been well laid

down for India through the Seer-Vision of Sri Aurobindo. And having inwardly attempted and achieved all for us, Sri Aurobindo is preparing us to be worthy of these boons. And as is characteristic of Sri Aurobindo, he is leading us from within outwards, handling and manipulating the play of forces in such a way that we are compelled to make a choice. There is such a constant subtle pressure upon India that it cannot rest. Perhaps all this would not have been necessary if India had hearkened to the one Voice that could save it. But years of contamination with various influences have made the inner being of India extraordinarily complex and years of subjugation enslaved the national mind and its vital to *tamas*, inertia. Therefore India slept when the hour of God arrived and the flaws in her armour invited the blow. For what else but the sharp sting of pain can wake up a country that has abandoned all effort at progress and fallen into inertia? And the pressure is going to be relentless if we still heed not that which summons us. For it is decreed that India must rise and show the way to the rest of the world. And if India fails then there is little hope for humanity finding a deeper way out of its present impasse.

Also we must not confuse the national yoga with the revival of old values and traditions and orthodox religious forms and age-old spiritual formulas. These things have been broken or shredded and cast together in the world cauldron where other forces have also been put alongside. A new and more fulfilling scheme is being prepared, a more comprehensive plan of God is being unveiled than any tradition has even imagined or ventured. The unity of matter and spirit, of man and the cosmos, of the individual and the collective, of science and spirituality, of secular and spiritual thought, of the earth and the beyond, is being increasingly sought and brought closer. We cannot, in fact no group can live anymore in a splendid isolation within its own Shangri-La except by mutilating its wholeness and suffering an eventual diminution of its total possibilities. To insist on old forms and old values and old methods is to demand from the Time-Spirit what the gods and demons prayed to Shiva when in a divine moment he cut off the head of Daksha, the progenitor of the old creation. Yielding to their demands the great and compassionate god indeed revived the body but the gods in their hurry perhaps prompted by the Will of the eternal sutured the severed head the wrong way so that each time Daksha Prajapati moved one step forward or so it seemed to him, he actually moved one step backward. Let us leave aside the slain body of the past but preserve its spirit. The body of Sati has been consumed by the fire and cut into pieces by the great preserver himself. But out of her force of fire there would arise Uma-Haimavati, daughter of the great mountain Himalaya and rebuild India along new lines, the lines of the *Shakti* that does not turn away from Shiva the eternal, but unites with him in a perfect creative union of delight. And from that clasp of oneness and Love re-create India and the world with its rejuvenating streams of Truth-Light and Truth-Power.

The Hour of the Unexpected

Above all, one must not hope and expect too much from the Government machinery. It is very doubtful that the nation will change with a change in political parties. What is much more likely is that politics and the parties will be forced to change because of an uprising in the national consciousness. And things are fast reaching a boiling point when a little ferment at an opportune moment may precipitate a chain reaction of the kind we never expected. Indeed the sense of the unexpected is clearly shaping the world much more than the planned execution of calculated ideas. This is another sign that the divine is behind this play and is forcing the change upon us by the power of crashing circumstances. Politics will perhaps be the last thing to change, more out of compulsion than choice. The major effort of national regeneration should therefore be directed towards this spiritual awakening and for this the most powerful tool is not politics but education. That is where the stress of the nation should be. That is also the instrument through which the Time-Spirit is working most swiftly. Instead of changing old-fashioned politicians and old-fashioned parents, it is changing the children! And they are changing very fast. Can we imagine a child born today or ten years from now carrying such a religious or regional identity as a generation before us did? Even his national identity will be more fluid and plastic, something not sentimental and political but temperamental. Already the first signs are appearing and the new generation is unlikely to carry the vendetta, the unfinished agenda of hatred and revenge beyond the history books, except perhaps in a few pockets of strong resistance. What we need is not the repair of the old lamps but to replace old lamps with new ones.

Everything will change if the children of today change. And change they must and change they will. It is already happening and this is perhaps the most happening thing in the world. Only we are not looking in that direction or perhaps so conditioned are we by our own old and worn-out value systems that we are unable to notice and appreciate the winds of change. Sri Aurobindo and the Mother have taken great pains to reveal to us the nature of these new children and the kind of education we need for them. If we still do not take heed then one day these children are going to upset the system and change it. For they come to wrestle with destiny and change it. Much more than we changing them it is they who are changing us! More than we transmitting some old traditional values into them it is they who are infusing some fresh life and a breath of inspiration from a sublimer realm into our narrow and cabined view of life. They are coming with a spiritual hunger and the carefree laughter of the gods and what they despise most is artificiality, hypocrisy, and false authority due to mere age or tradition. They respect none of these things: neither the priests nor the elders; yet they acknowledge genuine accomplishment, idolise true achievement and respect authenticity. The fact that they need so much more psychological space for themselves is itself an



Photo by Eeshaan Mahesh (www.binduarta.com)

unmistakable sign that they have a wider, subtler, freer consciousness; free from the trappings of the past, ready to surge towards the future with the whole wide world as their field of adventure. And they bring along with this a new subjective sense of the nation-unit. They do not look at a nation so much as a geo-political unit (that line is fast blurring with transcontinental travels, the TV and the Internet) but rather as an ideological unit. The nations are being increasingly described by the “temperamental adjectives” and are no more the last but the intermediate rung of our group life and collective existence. Today we are mulling over how to solve the problem of caste divide, religious divide, ethnic divide, national divide, even ideological divide. In the coming age of synthesis that is fast approaching us (we have already entered into it), the children a few decades later will laugh with surprise and wonder how we their ancestors thought and felt so narrowly, and thought and acted with such smallness and meanness!

Yes, the human race is getting increasingly “psychicised” or “spiritualised” if we may say so. *Homo sapiens erectus* is soon changing into *Homo sapiens psychicus* —and thankfully in spite of us. And one can clearly see that the epicentre of this new change is located in India. The great exodus of Indians is carrying a new Light to the world and a new way of living. The gift of India has already begun to the world. And the children here, in India at least, are distinctly different. They are a lot more confident, a lot more carefree, wide and integrated. They meet life with much more trust and confidence. They easily combine and reconcile in them the spirituality of the East and the materialism of the West; they also know how to separate Christ from the Church and Krishna from his followers. They may not have read the Vedas but the Vedas reveal themselves in their utterances, if we know how to listen. These are the “sun-eyed children of a marvellous dawn” whose “tread one day shall change the suffering earth” and not the crooked politician, the pot-bellied priest, or the rule-bound administrator. They are priests of wisdom and they play ball with Time and circumstance. They know the relativity of

all rules and do not fear to break the limits and barriers erected by an artificial and limited human standard. The only authority they follow is not external but internal. And these are multiplying by the hundreds and spreading like contagion through the world as if a new consciousness had exploded beyond limits and was looking for bodies fit and ready to inhabit it. It is they who are spreading the Light of "*Sanatana Dharma*" to the world.

Are our schools ready? Perhaps they are soon becoming redundant!

This indeed is the third phase of the national yoga, — the emergence of the true Indian soul, free from traditions and customs, wide and spiritual in its outlook. And each one of us can contribute to it by looking in that direction, inward to the soul rather than outwardly on surface events and circumstances. And upwards and forwards towards the future that is fast entering into us rather than downwards and backwards towards the shadows and ghosts of the various problems that we leave behind us. This is not to say that we must play the ostrich or be blind to the problems. Of course there are a good many of these waiting to eat up our energies and divert our attention from the true thing needed. Corruption, greed, red-tapism, goondalism, political vandalism and legalised loot, crass selfishness, grossness of appetites, smallness of aims, and most of all *tamas*, a laziness to think originally, feel widely and live largely. These are there but there is also the growing psychic impulse, the spiritual hunger, the seeking for truth and the more we concentrate in that direction, in the direction of Light and facilitate its growth in ourselves and others, the more we shall see the darkness receding. If instead of slogan-raising, pamphleteering, politicking, and wasting our time and energy on superficial analysis of surface events whose true significance escapes us on every side, we can focus our energies on the emergence of our soul-power and through that and by a spiritual contamination the soul-power of the children who gather near us then we would have done our bit. It is in our soul that we must recover the Vedas and their power to save and then cast our life into its mould. It is in our soul that we must first discover the true India and its mighty spirit that still survives with its power to illumine and guide the world grown mightier with defeat and greater by the fall it suffered in the last few centuries. Rather than changing policies and regulations or holding big seminars and conclaves and summit meetings and intellectual discussions, if we could focus on changing our consciousness then the circumstances will change of their own accord. We do not have to worry about them. For we have stepped into the Age of Truth and therefore outer methods that only polish the surface but leave the foundations hollow are foredoomed to failure. All such buildings of false hopes are bound to come crashing down sooner than later. The gods of mind and the vital have failed us and are destined to fail further. Let us stop trusting them and their methods.

Beyond the thinking mind there lies a greater and higher consciousness in which the Truth Eternal shines unbroken as in still waters. It is That

which will save us and not traditions and conventions. Neither democracy nor dictatorship; neither capitalism nor communism; nor any -ism: not even religionism or socialism or humanitarianism will save us though humanity is likely to go through experimenting and stumbling through all these fakes and imposters that have usurped the throne of Truth and imitate its gestures. In Truth lies our salvation. For the mantra of *Satyameva Jayate* given to the soul of India is clear:

*“Supreme Lord, Eternal Truth,
Let us obey Thee alone
and live according to
Truth.”¹*

And the message has gone to the nations:

*“Men, countries, continents!
The choice is imperative:
Truth or the abyss.”²*

1. The Mother’s message given for India during the 1971 Indo-Pak war.
2. The Mother’s New Year message of 1967.

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We have to solve for the human race the problem of harmonising and spiritualising its impulses towards liberty, equality and fraternity. In order that we may fulfil our mission we must be masters in our own home.

Sri Aurobindo
(CWSA, vol 8, p. 248)