



THE EXTINCT YOGI

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This is a plea for the preservation of another kind of 'wild life' that may go extinct in India. In fact, this cry is more poignant since this wild life concerns one of the most highly developed species of mankind. It is the bearers of our ancient cultural traditions that have maintained an unbroken link of the finest process of evolution of man. If we are today proud of our contribution to world peace, to the concept of *Pañcasīla*, to non-violence and non-co-operation, if we are proud of any aspect of Indian culture, of classical Indian music or of *Bhārat Nāṭyam*, we may as well become aware of the sources of this cultural expression—the *guru* concept, the *sādhaka* and the *yogi*. In fact, the *yogi* was the greatest inspiration of many of our cultural traditions. Before the sculptor carved out of the stone a form, he had already visualised this form in yogalike meditation. The musician himself was a devotee of a type of Yoga referred to as *Nādayoga*.

If we are pained to learn that 30 years ago there were as many as 30,000 tigers burning bright in the forests and jungles and that today they were dwindling to an estimated 2000, then we should be even more concerned that, while at the time of British, the census of *Nāth-Panthis* ran into six figures today we have no proper statistics of the *Gorakh-Nāthis* and the *Haṭhyogis*. In fact, the author has sadly scratched out the names of some of the old yogic practitioners from his survey of Yoga centres carried out incompletely for the Ministry of Education year after year.

The old masters and teachers of traditional arts are not able to cope up with the changing times since primarily they are engaged in creative work, undisturbed by the outside world. We may compare them with the modern scientists who are experimenting upon transformation of the baser aspects in man into the sublime. The *yogi* speaks of permanent attitude to life, while the artist speaks of a *Śānta-rasa*. For thousands of years, these experiments yielded profound results. In fact, we possess some of the finest traditions of art, architecture, medicine, dancing, music and techniques of spiritual evolution etc. If we are respected as a nation, it is rightly because of the past glory and cultural achievements besides our incorporation of some of these aspects of the past into the present like non-violence, non-cooperation, non-alignment, *upekṣa* of yoga etc.

Today the extreme development of materialism in medicine, education *et al.*, calls for a corrective. The interest in Yoga today therefore is not without significance. It is not only Yoga *āsanas* or *prāṇāyāmas* that people are interested in. They are also interested in relaxation, peace of mind, joy of living, and the tranquillity aspects of Yoga. If some of the old masters and the traditions can be allowed to blossom, this may become a great boon to the modern sick society. But are we giving it a chance? My own suggestion to the Central Council of Research of which I have had the honour to be a Governing Body member is to allow the



indigenous centres of learning to develop. The Government should do nothing more than assisting uniformly all such old masters of more than 20 years standing. Different social problems could be placed before these gurus to find their own answers through their own techniques. If we can think and be enthusiastic of a sanctuary for wild life, we may as well think of preserving not only the physical habitate but also the social and political environments that govern the functions of these gurus and their centres. But, who hears ! Who cares !!

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Religious experience is absolute. It is indisputable. You can only say that you have never had such an experience. And your opponent will say, 'sorry I have' And then your discussion will come to an end. No matter what the world thinks of religious experience, the one who has it possesses the great treasure of a thing that has provided him with a source of life, meaning and beauty, and that has given new splendour to the world and mankind.

—Dr. Clark