Chapter VII
The Rhetoric of Raja Yoga

This chapter attempts to examine the rhetoric of raja yoga in Paramahansa Yogananda's *Autobiography of a Yogi* first published in 1946. 1946 was a significant year both for India and the world. At the national level India was about to gain independence while at the international level the world was witnessing significant changes in political thought at the end of the Second World War and scientific advancement in a post-Einsteinian world. Einstein's Theory of Relativity is a central motif in this chapter. This radical departure from Classical Physics has had a major impact on the rhetoric of various Western knowledge systems. The post-Second World War scenario is one instance of changing trends in political thought. This is of particular interest here since Yogananda's autobiography indicates these shifts at various levels in the emerging post-colonial era - in Hindu Spiritual discourse, the interpretation of the Holy Bible and in the larger discourses of the East-West encounter. *Autobiography of a Yogi* anticipates the evolution of nationalist thought in the post-colonial world and may be seen as deriving its character from a post-Einsteinian context. Certain aspects of the post-Einsteinian thematic will be addressed in the following sections of this chapter.

This chapter analyses *Autobiography of a Yogi* in four sections. The first section is titled "The Physics of Yoga" and traces certain trends in the Renaissance discourse and in science which anticipated the rhetorical shift in spiritual discourse. The second section is titled "Autobiography as Research" and demonstrates the architectonics" of the text. The third section is titled "Miracles — A Critique" and examines miracle discourse in the text as a strong reading of the *Yoga Sutra* in relation to modern scientific theories. Section four is titled "Linking Past and Future" and briefly traces the fusion of the rhetoric of the Bengal Renaissance with the persuasiveness of science in Yogananda.
in 1883 in Bengal. He followed the path of Swami Yukteswar Giri, his ‘Guru’, and was known as a yogi, the royal pathway to attain divine realisation.

Yoga is the systematic disciplining of the body, mental training and exercise of will power. Raja yoga is one of the several techniques of yoga. A yogi is hence a person who has achieved realisation.

Rajendra Prasad’s work on raja yoga shows how the power-discourses of a colonised nation as a reaction against the backdrop of the stereotypical spiritual East. The Renaissance however was a reaction. It attempted to break the rhetoric of philosophical and thinkers. The schism in the Brahma
Samaj, for example, showed that a satisfying balance between reason and religion could not be achieved. This was because rationalism as a colonial prop was also based on the mechanistic view of the Universe. Further, Swami Vivekananda's address in the United States upheld Hindu spiritual culture while welcoming scientific knowledge into its fold. Though the need for synthesis was felt, the dichotomy between matter and spirit remained unresolved. Sri Aurobindo's rhetoric in his treatises on yoga opened insights into the supramental experiences of yoga and anticipated the erection of consciousness into an important intellectual category. Nevertheless, a satisfying effective dialogue between the East and the West remained elusive. The deadlock between Eastern thought which promoted an organic holistic, harmonious view of matter and spirit and the West which held the two as dichotomous continued. The pre-occupation with dualism was reflected even in the way the Holy Bible was interpreted in the West. As Fritjof Capra puts it in his Tao of Physics,

from the second half of the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century, the mechanistic Newtonian model of the universe dominated all scientific thought. It was paralleled by the image of the monarchical God who ruled the world from above by imposing his divine law on it. The fundamental laws of nature searched for by the scientists where thus seen as the laws of God, invariable and eternal, to which the world was subjected (Capra 1982: 27).

Capra also points out that the philosophy of Descartes had a tremendous influence on the general Western way of thinking particularly in terms of the conflict between mind and body, the self and the other. He says,

this inner fragmentation mirrors our view of the world 'outside' which is seem as a multitude of separate objects and events. The natural
environment is treated as if it consisted of separate parts to be exploited by different interest groups. The fragmented view is further extended to society which is split into different nations races, religious and political groups. The belief that all these fragments — in ourselves, in our environment and in our society — are really separate can be seen as the essential reason for the present series of social ecological and cultural crises (28).

All Western knowledge systems that percolated into the colonised countries were based on this strain of thought and over-shadowed the organic view of life inherent in Eastern thought. The channels of the dissemination of these knowledge systems, as we are aware, were English education, Western Medical Science and Technology. David Frawley's point is pertinent here:

Modern educational systems derive from Western culture and reflect the dichotomy between science and religion that has arisen historically within it. Science is viewed as a secular pursuit that should be part of education for everyone. Religion is looked upon as a special belief or dogma that is a private or personal matter, outside the scope of secular education (Frawley 2001: 164).

Unfortunately, the hegemony of the Western educational system continues to have its impact in India while in the West itself there is an increasing realisation of its limitations. The significance of Yogananda's autobiography is that it provides an interpretation of yoga in a rhetoric that is "modern", "scientific", "clinical" and "secular" in spirit. David Frawley also points out how the influence of Yogananda and Ramana Maharishi laid the foundation in the West for spiritual aspiration to be understood more as "the quest for self-realisation" than as "the pursuit of salvation" (9). The role of Yogananda's rhetoric needs to be noted at every such point. Autobiography of a Yogi squarely addresses the problem of our current notions of "secularism".
Though the Theory of Relativity was proposed in 1905, its constructive possibilities was felt in the Western world only after the Second World War. As Capra points out, Einstein strongly believed in nature's inherent harmony. In his various writings Einstein articulated his sense of the cosmic experience as integral to scientific temperament: “...I maintain that the cosmic religious feeling is the strongest and noblest motive for scientific research” (Einstein (1954: 39). From his article titled, the "World as I See It", we can infer Einstein's idea of religion:

A knowledge of the existence of something we cannot penetrate, our perceptions of the profoundest reason and the most radiant beauty, which only in their most primitive forms are accessible to our minds — it is this knowledge and this emotion that constitute true religiosity; in this sense, and in this alone, I am a deeply religious man. I cannot conceive of a God who rewards and punishes his creatures, or has a will of the kind that we experience in ourselves. Neither can I nor would I want to conceive of an individual that survives his physical death; let feeble souls, from fear or absurd egoism, cherish such thoughts. I am satisfied with the mystery of the eternity of life and with the awareness and a glimpse of the marvelous structure of the existing world, together with the devoted striving to comprehend a portion, be it ever so tiny, of the Reason that manifests itself in nature (11).

This revolutionary find has yet to percolate into the Western psyche as well as into the psyche of those colonised by the West. The readings of Yogananda done by Richard Cronin and R.C.P.Sinha are examples which prove this point. They also show the quick sands which the age-old dichotomy of science and religion has created. They have failed to read Autobiography of a Yogi in context. Yogananda and Einstein were contemporaries and Yogananda's stay in the United States coincided with Einstein's presence and the American receptivity
to his path-breaking theories. Hence it is not surprising if Yogananda detected
the integration of yoga and science and employed the rhetoric of Science to
explain the workings of yoga not only in his autobiography but also in his
spiritual discourses in the United States.\textsuperscript{4}

It is against the above backdrop that one has to understand the spirit of
\textit{Yogananda}'s text and his rhetoric. Einstein's Theory of Relativity, as we can see
in Yogananda's deliberations on space and time, thus comes closer to what has
been intuitively perceived in Eastern Scriptures. In short, Yogananda resolves
the crises the Brahmas had originally encountered. \textit{Autobiography of a Yogi}
shows that without faith, knowledge has no sustenance and without knowledge,
faith cannot hold. The failure of Brahmaism was that knowledge and faith were
sacrificed one for the other. The difference in Yogananda is that he effectively
mediates the dialogue between faith and knowledge and between science and
\textit{religion} on the fertile ground of the Einstenian thematic. It is in this sense that
we should look at \textit{Autobiography of a Yogi} as the Physics of \textit{Yoga} that clearly
anticipated later philosophers of Physics like \textit{Fritjof Capra}.\textsuperscript{5} Einstein's relativity
theory inherently gave a new twist to the idea of consciousness. If Einstein
facilitated the interface between science and religion with consciousness as its
base then Yogananda mediated that dialogue.

\textit{Autobiography of a Yogi} transcribes the knowledge of Yoga from an ancient
code into a modern code of science. Accordingly, science is not merely a site
for spiritual discourse, but is a facilitator for the comprehension of the spiritual.
Further, the text shows how spirituality is the source and end of scientific
inquiry and how secularism is not negation or relegation of religion to
"personal affairs" but a vision of harmony that enables a perception of science
as a form of religion. This is clear in four of the eleven precepts set forth by
Yogananda for the Yogoda Satsanga Society of India/ \textit{Self-Realization}
Fellowship established by him in India and the United States. (Pursuing David
Frawley's point given a few paragraphs above, it is important to note that
Yogananda’s Ashram in the United States was named "Self-Realization Fellowship"):

To disseminate among the nations a knowledge of definite scientific techniques for attaining direct personal experience of God.

To reveal the complete harmony and basic oneness of original Yoga as taught by Bhagwan Krishna and original Christianity as taught by Jesus Christ; and to show that these principles of truth are the common scientific foundation of all true religions.

To point out the divine highway to which all paths of true religious beliefs eventually lead; the highway of daily, scientific, devotional meditation on God.

To unite science and religion through realization of the unity of their underlying principles.

To advocate cultural and spiritual understanding between East and West, and the exchange of their finest distinctive features (Yogananda 1975: x).

What this achieves is a harmonious blend of Christianity, Hinduism and science. The employment of the word "original" to qualify the teachings of Lord Krishna and Jesus Christ and the emphasis on this "original" as scientific in their spirit challenge the dichotomy set up by the West between science and religion. These precepts indicate Yogananda's penchant for authenticity and the scientific temper of his spiritual quest. The following sections attempt to examine these traits in his autobiography and their role in resisting Western cultural and intellectual hegemony.
II

Autobiography as Research

Chapter One to Chapter Ten of the autobiography are about Yogananda's childhood and his quest for his Guru; Chapters Eleven to Twenty Five are about the years of his initiation, his spiritual trials and experiences under the guidance of his Guru; Chapters Twenty Six to Thirty Six are about Yogananda's own initiatives as a Swami; Chapters Thirty Seven to Thirty Nine cover Yogananda's first American experience. Chapters Forty to Forty Six recount his meetings with Saints all over India and Chapters Forty Seven to Forty Nine about the activities undertaken by him on his return to the United States. When first published, the text ended with Chapter Forty Eight but Chapter Forty Nine subsequently added his years after 1946 till 1951 in the United States. I have followed the 1975 Indian edition of the book.

Even a chapter-wise survey will fail to single out the authorial voice consistently. In other words, the text is not a mere monologic narrative but is a dialogic exercise between science and religion. Moreover Autobiography of a Yogi is an interplay of generic forms like bhajans, scriptures, poetry, travel accounts, historical accounts, proverbs, letters, epitaphs and essays. It follows that there is a proliferation of discourses on Eastern and Western philosophy, religion, astrology, astronomy, physics, plant sciences, psychology, physiology, hermeneutics, music and art. These discourses are not articulated by a single authorial voice but by a multiplicity of voices such as scientists, poets, political figures, yogis, saints and devotees from various cultures, times, planes of consciousness and planes of existence. In short, as pointed out in Chapter Two, the term "interdiscursive" will be best suited to describe the architectonics of the text. Also a variety of texts that belong to the above disciplines, genres or discourses are employed explicitly or implicitly in the text to facilitate these narrative acts so that they may reinforce each other. The role
of the reader in this interdiscursivity and intertextuality is no less important. This will be addressed at various points in the following sections.

The text also strikes us as an excellent piece of research both in form and content. The term "research" in the Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary is defined as "studious inquiry or examination; esp: investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws". The elements of research thus are investigation, interpretation/application, substantiation and documentation that convert hypothesis into a thesis. The autobiography investigates into and interprets Scriptures and attempts a practical application of scientific discoveries to the understanding of yoga. A mere application is however not enough. It has to be logically concluded, with the help of authentic sources that tend to support the hypothesis. These sources are to be meticulously acknowledged and documented. What is most striking about the form of the autobiography as a research piece is the presence of copious footnotes, thorough documentation of sources and cross references either in comparison, extension, substantiation or elucidation of issues addressed in the main text. At several points footnotes occupy the entire page. In such situations the hierarchical place generally attributed to the main text in the mind of the reader gets dismanted. The content or the thesis of the text is the interpretation of miracles performed by spiritual masters of both the East and the West through a subtle application of the rhetoric and spirit of scientific theories with which to understand Yoga Sutra. We need to again recall here that the interpretative voice is not that of the author alone. The authorial voice is one among the many voices that facilitate dialogue between various discourses on a common platform provided by the text. This aspect is a point of study in the following section.
We may now retrace to examine the form of the text which makes it a piece of research. A number of illustrations can be provided to show this. The analysis will however show that the form is not to be seen as separate from content. Chapter Three, for instance, titled "The Saint with Two Bodies" records the author's meeting with Swami Pranabananda and the latter's recollection of his meeting with his Guru Lahiri Mahasaya. Interviews are relevant props of investigation in research. Interestingly, the autobiography has meticulous recordings of the author's meetings or interviews with saints and scientists. A special feature of these recordings is dialogues within dialogues. Given below is Yogananda’s meeting with Pranabananda who in turn recalls his meeting with his Guru, Lahiri Mahasaya: "Lahiri Mahasaya extended his hand in a benign gesture. *You may go now and meditate. I have interceded for you with Brahma*" (Yogananda 1975: 23-24). The asterisk indicates a footnote that explains "Brahma" as follows:

*God in His aspect of creator: from Sanskrit root *brih*, to expand. When Emerson's poem "Brahma" appeared in the Atlantic Monthly in 1857, most of the readers were bewildered. Emerson Chuckled, "Tell them," he said, "to say 'Jahovah' instead of 'Brahma' and they will not feel any perplexity" (24).

Now what is important here is the presence of four or more voices that contribute to making the act of interpretation a dialogic exercise. First, there is a dialogue within a dialogue when Swami Pranabananda quotes Lahiri Mahasaya in the main text — "You may go now and meditate...". The authorial voice appears in the footnote when the term 'Brahma' needs interpretation. The explanation at the footnote is not a one way literal translation of the term "Brahma". Instead, it urges the readers to re-visit Emerson's poem titled "Brahma" and further quotes Emerson's own interpretation of the poem. Emerson's voice that starts with "Tell them..." also brings in the author's strong sense of the audience. The "perplexity" that emerges out of assuming...
that 'Jehovah' in the West is different from 'Brahma' in the East also gets addressed. Another significant instance of polyphonic narrative can be illustrated from Chapter Ten, "I Meet my Master, Sri Yukteshwar". The context is Yogananda recounting the moment when he seeks permission from his father to take up Sannyas. "All attachment disappeared; my resolution to seek God as the friend of friends became adamantine" (84). The footnote for "attachment" compares Hindu Scriptures with the Holy Bible:

Hindu scriptures teach that family attachment is delusive if it prevents the devotee from seeking the Giver of all boons, including the one of loving relatives, not to mention life itself. Jesus similarly taught: "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me" Matthew 10: 37 (Bible) (84).

This sort of interpretation through comparison invites Christian audience to draw parallels and initiate similar dialogic readings of scriptures belonging to two different cultures. Another illustration can be taken from Chapter 26, "The Science of Kriya Yoga":

Aum is the creative Word, the whir of the Vibratory Motor, the witness** of Divine Presence (237).

The footnote to "witness" takes us to parallel readings in the Bible. The "Word" is not seen as the centre but as a witness, as a signifier of Divine Presence:

"These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the Creation of God." — Revelation 3:14. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made by him (the Word or Aum); and without him was not anything made that was made." - John 1:1-3. Aum of the Vedas became
the sacred word *Hum* of the Tibetans, *Amin* of the Moslems, and *Amen* of the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Jesus and Christians. Its meaning in Hebrew is *sure, faithful* (237).

The expression "Creative Word" signifies spirit and the expression "Vibratory Motor" signifies matter. Together they explain “*Aum*” and similar sounding expressions from other religious traditions. The "Word" is seen as a signifier, an indicator of the Divine Presence. Interdiscursivity occurs while comparing God-experience from various traditions. In the process, the aura of uniqueness and mystery generally attributed to the *yogis* of India is removed and we see God-experience as common to all:

The Hindu scriptures extol the yogic science because it is employable by mankind in general. The mystery of breath, it is true, has occasionally been solved without the use of formal yoga techniques, as in the cases of non-Hindu mystics who possessed transcendent powers of devotion to the Lord. Such Christian, Moslem, and other saints have indeed been observed in the breathless and motionless trance (*sabikalpa samadhi*) without which no man has entered the first stages of God-perception (482).

The footnote to “*sabikalpa samadhi*” provides an illustration:

“....Among Christian mystics who have been observed in *sabikalpa samadhi* may be mentioned St. Teresa of *Avila*, whose body would become so immovably fixed that the astonished nuns in the convent were unable to alter her position or to rouse her to outward consciousness (482).

References to the *Holy Bible* are not confined to footnotes alone. The interpretation of Hindu Scriptures in the light of the *Holy Bible* and vice-versa is interwoven in such a manner that the two merge into each other:
Ezekiel said: “Afterwards he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: and, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory” (Ezekiel 43:1-2, Bible). Through the divine eye in the forehead (east), the yogi sails his consciousness into omnipresence, hearing the Word or Aum, divine sound of "many waters": the vibrations of light that constitute the sole reality of creation (267-68).

Yogananda carves a place for his Guru in the world of Hermeneutics as he quotes his Guru's interpretation of the Adam and Eve story. We may note that Swami Yukteswar Giri, his Guru, goes beyond the literal interpretation and upholds human life as inherently divine in which the body, mind and soul are not seen in conflict with each other. Quoting passages from Genesis, Yogananda provides a graphic account of his Guru's interpretation. The authorial voice recedes as Swami Yukteswar takes over:

It was from my Hindu guru, unknown to the roll call of Christian membership, that I learned to perceive the deathless essence of the Bible, and to understand the truth in Christ's assertion . . . . “Why did God punish not only the guilty pair, but also the innocent unborn generations?” Master was amused, more by my vehemence than by my ignorance. "Genesis is deeply symbolic, and cannot be grasped by a literal interpretation," he explained. "Its 'tree of life' is the human body. The spinal chord is like an upturned tree, with man's hair as its roots, and afferent and efferent nerves as branches. The tree of the nervous system bears many enjoyable fruits, or sensations of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. In these, man may rightfully indulge; but he was forbidden the -experience of sex, the 'apple' at the centre, or 'in the midst' of the bodily garden (168-69).
Yogananda's strategy has persuasiveness and conviction. Autobiography as research in Yogananda is re-search into and interpretation of the "truths" embedded in the scriptures. It is natural for Yogananda to research the working of miracles in the context of science and that is the subject of the next section.

III

Miracles—A Critique

Miracles can be defined as those experiences or actions generally perceived as extraordinary viz., levitation, healing powers, materialisation and dematerialisation of body and objects at will, visions, clairvoyance, bilocation, prophecies, etc. Miracles are a familiar phenomenon across cultures. The modern mind is sceptical about miracles while others think of miracles as beyond "human" capacity and inexplicable. Miracles are often instruments of conversion; conversion to "faith" in God's powers or in the God-man who performs them. However, the inexplicability often leaves a sceptic at the threshold of faith. Yogananda in his autobiography dismantles the aura of mystery around miracles, demonstrates their ubiquity and shows how common they are in human life. Miracle discourse is a means of bringing East and West and science and religion together. Yogananda's thesis is that miracles shift our conception of God as "someone out there" to that subtle force in our consciousness of which everything we see around are signifiers. On a scientific note, miracles is a demonstration of the mastery of our consciousness over the constraints of space and time termed as "Maya" or illusion in Eastern thought.

Eastern Philosohy, has always maintained that space and time are constructs of the mind. The Eastern mystics treated them like all other intellectual concepts as relative, limited and illusory. For instance, Fritjof Capra quotes from a Buddhist text that "... the past, the future, physical space, ...and individuals are nothing but names, forms of thought, words of common usage,
merely superficial realities" (Capra 1982: 179) and "Be it clearly understood that space is nothing but a mode of particularisation and that it has no real existence of its own... Space exists only in relation to our particularising consciousness" (180). Another instance is the opening lines of the Narayaneeyam composed by Melpathur Bhattathiri, in which he invokes God as “Kaladeshabadibhyam”, beyond space and time.

Interestingly, space and time have always been the central concern of physicists. After traversing the "erroneous" paths of the mechanistic and absolute notions of time and space through History, scientific inquiry meets spiritual vision in Einstein's Theory of Relativity. As Capra points out: "There is no law of physics which does not require the concepts of space and time for its formulation. The profound modification of these basic concepts brought about by relativity theory was therefore one of the greatest revolutions in the history of science" (177). Miracles as a central concern in Autobiography of a Yogi gain strong cultural dimensions as well.

The autobiography serves another purpose which can be traced from the preface to the autobiography itself. The preface is written by W. Y. Evans-Wentz, author of a number of books on Tibetan saints and yoga. The book, according to him, satisfies what the Western audience always looks for — an autobiography, written in English that is not just the life sketch of the author alone but an account of the entire yogi race which is often seen as mysterious, grossly misunderstood and misrepresented:

THE VALUE of Yoganandaji's Autobiography is greatly enhanced by the fact that it is one of the few books in English about the wise men of India which have been written, not by a journalist or foreigner, but by one of their own race and training - in short, a book about yogis by a yogi.... His unusual life-document is certainly one of the most revealing of the depths of the Hindu mind and heart, and of the
spiritual wealth of India, even to be published in the West (Yogananda 1975: v)

This in fact provides a new dimension to the investigative aspect of autobiography as research. While writing about yogis, Yogananda's narrative shows that he has in fact investigated, conducted interviews, compared and contrasted his findings as an insider. Yogananda thus emerges as an interpreter, a biographer and a mediator between curious readers and those who are beyond the cognizance of the readers. As cultures meet, saints from across the continents meet, religions, language and forms of literature meet, the dichotomy constructed between what is commonplace and what is extraordinary vanishes.

The fact that miracles find a narrative space in the text, demonstrates the popular understanding of miracles as a phenomenon which can be performed by a chosen few — the spiritually initiated. The text demystifies this phenomenon and dismandes this proposition by revealing both the ubiquity and uniqueness of miracles. And finally by invoking the power of human consciousness in performing miracles, Yogananda pronounces the paradigmatic shift of both scientific inquiry and religious discourse from mind to consciousness. The ubiquity-uniqueness interplay in the autobiography demystifies miracles and impels the readers to engage themselves in a dialogue with the text. It is interesting to see how this works:

I find my earliest memories covering the anachronistic features of a previous incarnation. Clear recollections came to me of a distant life in which I had been a yogi amid the Himalayan snows. These glimpses of the past, by some dimensionless link, also afforded me a glimpse of the future (1).

However Yogananada is quick to avoid any attribute of uniqueness to his transcendence of "time":

My far-reaching memories are not unique. Many yogis are known to have retained their self-consciousness without interruption by the dramatic transition to and from "life" and "death". If man be solely a body, its loss indeed ends his identity. But if prophets down the millenniums spake with truth, man is essentially a soul, incorporeal and omnipresent (2).

As the readers are about to attribute such anachronism to prophets and yogis as a class, Yogananda, intervenes:

Although odd, clear memories of infancy are not extremely rare. During travels in numerous lands, I have heard very early recollections from the lips of veracious men and women (ibidem, emphasis mine).

Yogananda speaks of "men and women" and not of saints who possess sidhis. Yogananda perceives such experiences as universal, not confined to India when he says "during travels in numerous lands". The unique becomes ubiquitous at once. Such a perception conveys an impression that every man and woman is a prospective yogi and that extraordinary experiences are not reserved for yogis alone. The reading becomes a self-reflexive act when the text elicits a reaction like "This can happen / has happened to me...." from the reader. Autobiography as a discourse of conversion works at such points of the reader-text interaction.

There is a definite discursive pattern in Yogananda's demystification of miracles, particularly from chapter one titled "My Parents and Early Life" to chapter thirty tided "The law of miracles". It reads more like an investigation than as a quest of a seeker. It begins with low-intensity miracles through middle intensity ones which culminates in high intensity interpretation in the "Law of Miracles". In this respect it is very much like a musical rendition because the text as a whole reads like a fugue. (We have hinted at this aspect while
examining the polyphonic **structure** of the text. See end note 4). Accordingly chapter one and two - "My Parents and Early Life" and "Mother's Death and the Mystic Amulet" respectively - depict Yogananda's casual encounters with miracles viz., the experience of healing through prayers (7), a dream-like spiritual vision (9), appearance of a boil on his fore arm (9-10), procurement of stray kites through prayers (11), premonition regarding mother's death (13) and procurement of the mystic amulet (17). Except for the last experience, the rest are those that can be accommodated much within childhood experience. The episode relating to the mystic amulet incidentally refers to one aspect of the erstwhile community life in India which can be seen in other spiritual autobiographies as well - that of the significant presence of itinerant sadhus who are spiritual benefactors of Hindu households.

Yogananda's conscious quest for a Guru commences with "The Saint with Two Bodies", in chapter three. An aspirant's finding of his or her Guru will always be preceded by numerous encounters with saintly people who usually facilitate the find either through rigorous tests or through helpful tips. Yogananda's encounters are mostly with people who work miracles and with those who predict his future. Chapters three, five, six and seven viz., "The Saint with Two Bodies", "A Perfume Saint Displays his Wonders", "The Tiger Swami" and "The Levitating Saint" respectively depict metaphorically in succession a gradual widening of his yogic vision and increasing intensity of God-consciousness. The first shows the power of bilocation, the second incessantly produces any kind of fragrance at will, the third was a vanquisher of tigers in his pre-monastic life and the fourth shows the power of levitation. In consonance with the quest motif, these chapters can be interpreted as a yogi's consciousness transcending in succession the lures that the five senses and the body are often subjected to. Yogananda at every point of these encounters unveils the mystery of such wonders. The power of bilocation that Pranabananda demonstrated is explained in Pranabananda's own words:
"Why are you stupefied at all this? The subtle unity of the phenomenal world is not hidden from true yogis. I instantly see and converse with my disciples in Calcutta. They can similarly transcend at will every obstacle of gross matter" (22, emphasis mine).

The emphasised words suggest the interplay between uniqueness and ubiquity of miracles. However Yogananda admits his response to this feat as that of "only an awe stricken fear" quite characteristic of a twelve year old boy. The chapter, "Flight toward the Himalayas" also depicts self-critically his immaturity as a seeker; for, the power to work miracles is always luring:

As soon as the train, like ourselves was in flight, I gave utterance to a few of my glorious anticipations. "Just imagine!" I ejaculated. "We shall be initiated by the masters and experience the trance of cosmic consciousness. Our flesh will be charged with such magnetism that wild animals of the Himalayas will come tamely near us. Tigers will be no more than meek house-cats awaiting our caresses!" (27).

Besides a reader's strong urge to read this as the author's dream of the spirit winning over the flesh, the passage reveals the dynamic tension between Mukunda, the little boy and Yogananda, the prospective yogi; and between the lure of miraculous powers and the real cosmic experience. This chapter incidentally provides glimpses of the coloniser-colonised relationship during the railway journey as we have in Swami Ramdas and Gandhiji. The search for the young boys was already intimated to the railway officials and Mukunda sensed it:

At this moment a European station-agent accosted me. He waved a telegram whose import I immediately grasped.... “What is your name?” "I am called Thomas. I am the son of an English mother and a converted Christian Indian father."
"What is your friend's name?"
"I call him Thompson".
"By this time my inward mirth had reached a zenith; I unceremoniously made for the train, which was providentially whistling for departure. Amar, followed with the official who was credulous and obliging enough to put us into a European compartment. It evidently pained him to think of two half-English boys travelling in the section allotted to natives (28-29).

The colonial cultural ethos imbued with racial discrimination and creation of class distinctions is significant though not a central idea in writings by Indians of the period. Here there is no conscious attempt by the boys to challenge such a colonial scheme, but they spontaneously makes use of this awareness only to escape being tracked down by the family.

The greatest challenge to Yogananda's spiritual aspiration was posed by Ananda, his elder brother. It is important to note that like Purohit Swami, Yogananda was also under tremendous pressure to lead a "normal family life". The autobiography shows that the patriarchal, sceptical Ananda's roving eye was subdued through Yogananda's sheer determination. In Gandhiji, Yogananda, Ramdas, Purohit Swami and to a certain extent in Tattvabhushan, there is a dominance of the 'feminine' aspect of their personality. The spirit of surrender, non-violence, and passive resistance basically seen as feminine traits are the basis of their spiritual temperament. This aspect gets foregrounded as they face various oppressive forces that challenge their spiritual inclinations...be it the British, an elder brother, father or hostile people.

Yogananda's interview with Swami Vishuddhananda, "the perfume saint", reveals the interviewer's critical attitude towards such methods of wasting spiritually acquired powers:

"Harnessing God to make odours?"
"... My own purpose is to demonstrate the power of God."
"Sir is it necessary to prove God? Isn't He performing miracles in everything, everywhere?"
"Yes, but we too should manifest some of His infinite creative variety."
"How long did it take to master your art?"
"Twelve years."
"For manufacturing scents by astral means! It seems my honoured saint, you have been wasting a dozen years for fragrances that you can obtain with a few rupees from a florist's shop" (44).

Yogananda points out in this chapter that ostentatious display of unusual powers acquired in the course of one's sadhana are discouraged by self-realised masters. They may be spectacular but are spiritually useless and are digressions from a serious search for God. Yogananda also illustrates in the words of his Guru Sri Yukteswar Giri, how miracles performed by true masters are different from ostentatious display of miraculous powers acquired by the uninitiated. In Sri Yukteswar's words,

"Afzal was not a man of God-realization"...
"Miracles of a permanent and beneficial nature are performed by true saints because they have attuned themselves to the omnipotent Creator. Afzal was merely an ordinary man with an extraordinary power of penetrating a subtle realm not usually entered by mortals until death" (184).

This serves a special purpose of forewarning the readers of the nature of a miracle. An acquired power is ephemeral while powers acquired through true sense of spiritual quest are permanent. Those who acquire such powers through spiritual means hardly demonstrate it for their material purposes. The attitude of only being a medium and not a centre is important while healing another through prayers and while performing miracles. As Yogananda points out, true masters who perform miracles do so to help mankind (276, footnote)
in a spiritually exalted state. This is reiterated in Kebalananda's recollection of his memories of his Guru, Lahiri Mahasaya: "It was evident in all miracles performed by Lahiri Mahasaya that he never allowed the ego-principle to consider itself a causative force. By the perfection of his surrender to the Prime Healing Power, the Master enabled It to flow freely through him" (38). Kebalananda also reiterates the ephemeral nature of miracles and the everlasting rewards of true spiritual awakening: "The numerous bodies that were spectacularly healed though Lahiri Mahasaya eventually had to feed the flames of cremation. But the silent spiritual awakenings he affected, the Christ-like disciples he fashioned, are his imperishable miracles" (38). The power of clairvoyance and the ability to transfer one's thought to another are interpreted in the chapter "The Cauliflower Robbery". Yogananda does not hold this power as a unique feature of saints, but as experienced by everyone at one point of time or the other:

Intuition is soul guidance, appearing naturally in man during those instants when his mind is calm. Nearly everyone has had the experience of an inexplicably correct "hunch", or has transferred his thoughts accurately to another person (151).

This passage is illustrative of the text-reader dialogue. Note that Yogananda uses the word "hunch" and "inexplicably", the vocabulary of the common readers when they possibly address such an experience. "Inexplicability" is what Yogananda solves in the paragraphs that follow in a common man's language - using a common man's gadget as analogy - the radio mechanism:

The human mind, freed from the disturbances or "static" of restlessness, is empowered to perform through its antenna of intuition all the functions of complicated radio mechanisms — sending as well as receiving thoughts, and tuning out undesirable ones. As the power of a radio-broadcasting station is
regulated by the amount of electrical current it can utilise, so the **effectiveness** of a human radio **depends** on the degree of will power possessed by each individual (151).

The use of the term "will power" is important in the era of science. One can infer that in the scientific era, when the individual's potential is foregrounded, the expression "faith" is simply replaced with "will power". Yogananda has effectively used the radio and television analogy to point out that scientific discoveries in the West prove empirically and tangibly, the all pervading nature of the spirit which the seers had perceived intuitively (152). The same analogy helps Yogananda to explain his direct experience of intuitive powers. The Chapter, "Kashi Reborn and Discovered" shows how a finely tuned, becalmed mind can work more subtly and powerfully than a radio or TV station. Yogananda's experiences in his attempt at locating Kashi, his reborn disciple, could not have been explained with a better trope:

Using a secret yoga technique, I broadcasted my love to Kashi's soul through the "microphone" of the spiritual eye, the inner point between the eyebrows. Using my upraised hands and fingers as antennae, I often turned myself round and round, trying to locate the direction of the place in which, I believed, he was already re-embodied as an embryo. I hoped to receive response from him in the concentration-tuned radio of my heart (257).

Yogananda points out how his proximity to Kashi was felt through "electrical" impulses tingling through his fingers. The description of the spiritual eye as a "microphone" to "broadcast" thought, of the fingers as antennae to facilitate reception of his response and of his mind as a "concentration-tuned" radio enable a common reader to understand the immense possibilities of the human body and integrates matter with the spirit. A 'unique' experience is explained through a 'ubiquitous' mechanism. In this manner, Yogananda's narrative can
be seen as a strong reading of the spiritual discourse in relation to scientific discourse. Consequendy the rhetoric reflects a very significant cultural experience of the period; and that is the felt dynamics between scientific discourse and spiritual discourse as both corroboratory and contradictory at the same time. The text epitomises this state of flux effected by the advent of modernity. This is made particularly clear in the chapter titled "The Law of Miracles" (265) which marks the culmination of a series of miracle narratives in the first half of the text. 

In the course of divulging certain yogic experiences and their interpretation, the text also shares a curious anxiety — the anxiety that the divulgence of yogic visions and their interpretation to a sceptical world will deem those visions as anachronistic. This interesting paradox of "the text against itself not only serves to reflect the dynamics between science and spirituality felt in the cultural moment but also allows for this dynamic tension to permeate the text rhetorically. "The Law of Miracles" structurally occurring almost in the middle of the text participates in decentering the narrative act. This may perhaps be seen as one of the effects of the advent of modernity on certain narratives of national culture. This narrative being one such, reflects a counter hegemonic ploy of not contradicting but accommodating certain aspects of modernity in order to put up a cultural and intellectual resistance. The rhetoric of science works as one such ploy. One can find the underpinnings of this accommodating strategy even in a reactionary rhetoric employed by Swami Dayananda Saraswati in his works as mentioned in the chapter, "Backgrounds" of this study. The cross-lighting between scientific discourse and spiritual discourse in "The Law of Miracles" will address some of the above mentioned views:

How did the three [Russian] saints walk on the water?
How did Christ resurrect his crucified body?
How did Lahiri Mahasaya and Sri Yukteswar perform their miracles? (266)

It is interesting to note that Yogananda refers to saints from various cultural backgrounds. For instance the above question is asked in the context of mentioning a miracle performed by Continental Saints, the second refers to the Christian world and the third to the Hindus. However all of them have performed miracles. Though their religious pursuits are different, the goal and experience are ultimately the same - self-realisation. Yogananda raises these questions from the point of view of an inquisitive modern reader who may have already been exposed to the immense possibilities of empiricism and rationality of science. It is now Yogananda's turn to speak: "Modern Science has, as yet, no answer; though with the advent of the Atomic Age the scope of the world-mind has been abruptly enlarged. The word "impossible" is becoming less prominent in man's vocabulary" (266). In the next paragraph Yogananda turns one's attention to see what ancient scriptures have to say on this:

The Vedic scriptures declare that the physical world operates under one fundamental law of maya, the principle of relativity and duality. God, the Sole Life, is Absolute Unity; to appear as the separate and diverse manifestations of a creation He wears a false or unreal veil. That illusory dualistic veil is maya. Many great scientific discoveries of modern times have confirmed this simple pronouncement of the ancient rishis (266).

Now what Yogananda does is to show the qualities of maya manifested in scientific discoveries of the times. Science provides us explanations for the workings of the dualities and relativities of the illusory veil but cannot guide us to transcend it:
Physical science, then, cannot formulate laws outside of 

maya, the very structure and fabric of creation. Nature herself is maya; natural science must perforce deal with her ineluctable quiddity. In her own domain, she is eternal and inexhaustible; future scientists can do no more than probe one aspect after another of her varied infinitude. Science thus remains in a perpetual flux, unable to reach finality; fit indeed to discover the laws of an already existing and functioning cosmos but powerless to detect the Law Framer and Sole Operator. The majestic manifestations of gravitation and electricity have become known, but what gravitation and electricity are, no mortal knoweth (266-67).

Like a true researcher Yogananda provides a footnote to the last statement. Here he subs tantitates his view with a similar point made by Marconi, the scientist who invented the radio. Also note the switch over to the archaic expression "knoweth" that indicates the sublime age-old mystery of the cosmos. This chapter is a brilliant exercise in both scriptural and scientific hermeneutics. Yogananda decodes passages from the Holy Bible written in figurative language, from the Vedas provided in sound language and scientific theories couched in formuilaic language to prove that "the law of miracles is operable by any man who has realized that the essence of creation is light" (271). Decoding becomes interdiscursive and counters hegemony:

In joining space as a dimensional relativity, time is now stripped to its rightful nature: a simple essence of ambiguity. With a few equational strokes of his pen, Einstein banished from the universe every fixed reality except that of light. In a later development, his Unified Field Theory, the great Physicist embodies in one mathematical formula the laws of gravitation and of electromagnetism. Reducing the cosmical structures to variations on a single law, Einstein has reached across the ages to the rishis who proclaimed a sole fabric of creation: a protean...
maya. On the epochal Theory of Relativity have arisen the mathematical possibilities of exploring the ultimate atom. Great scientists are now boldly asserting not only that the atom is energy rather than matter, but that atomic energy is essentially mind-stuff (268).

Consciousness is the key here. Yogananda’s spirit of investigation and mediation further draws upon new trends in Western scientific thought to underscore this point. Modern Physics challenges the Classical mechanistic view of the cosmos, recognises the potentiality of consciousness and finally arrives at the Vedic insight that provides for the organic view of the cosmos:

"The stream of knowledge," Sir James Jeans writes in The Mysterious Universe, "is heading towards a non-mechanical reality; the universe begins to look more like a great thought than like a great machine." Twentieth-century science is thus sounding like a page from the hoary Vedas (269-70).

The lines show Yogananda's interpretation at work. Persuasiveness of rhetoric is achieved through the documentation of sources from twentieth century science. However he is ill at ease when he apprehends sceptical responses to these prophetic insights. It is the same insight that lets him leave it to Science to have the final say: "From Science, then, if it must be so, let men learn the philosophic truth that there is no material universe; its warp and woof is maya, illusion. Under analysis all its mirages of reality dissolve" (270). The growing conviction that time and space are relative is a scientific mode of communicating the concept of maya. As Fritjof Capra puts it "Maya, therefore, does not mean that the world is an illusion…The illusion merely lies in our point of view…Maya is the illusion of taking these concepts for reality, of confusing the map with the territory" (Capra 100). Once again the irresistible
impulse of prophetic wisdom amalgamates with research and scientific temper when Yogananda explains the law of miracles:

In his famous equation outlining the equivalence of mass and energy, Einstein proved that the energy in any particle of matter is equal to its mass or weight multiplied by the square of the velocity of light…. Stated another way: only a material body whose mass is infinite could equal the velocity of light. This conception brings us to the law of miracles. Masters who are able to materialize and dematerialize their bodies and other objects, and to move with the velocity of light, and to utilize the creative light rays in bringing into instant visibility any physical manifestation, have fulfilled the lawful condition: their mass is infinite (Yogananda 1975: 270).

Yogananda's spiritual interpretation of Einstein's "E=mc^2" has been attacked and misunderstood by critics like Richard Cronin: "But just as often science is called in to authenticate the claims of religion, as in this bizarre use of Einstein to explain the miraculous powers of yogis..." (Cronin 1989: 117). Clearly this springs from Cronin's inability to reconcile his science and religion and his ignorance of the possibility that Modern Physics has established. Cronin's criticism of Yogananda as "doing marketing", "vulgar", "unsophisticated", traces of which he finds in Gandhi as well, is impressionistic and shallow. One should perhaps be grateful to Yogananda and Gandhi for this lack of "sophistication" since religious discourses have down the centuries been coming down to us couched in sophistication and esotericism that further thickened their incomprehensibility. It is however clear that Cronin does have ample awareness of the race that produced this insightful and investigative reading of discoveries in Modern Physics and yoga experience. R.C.P.Sinha's reading of Yogananda's text also represents the demoralising influence of Western imperialism and of Western knowledge paradigms. This is clear from
the fact that he does not attack other authors examined in his study. Worse still is his invocation of Ramakrishna Paramahamsa’s views on miracles in order to substantiate his attack on Yogananda:

In the autobiography of Yogananda we do not encounter, as in the records of the great mystics, the trials and ecstasies of a spiritual journey or the illumination that may be vouchsafed at the end. We begin to suspect that midway in his journey Yogananda has forgotten his real spiritual goal and taken to the comparatively easier device of performing miracles. The words of Ramakrishna Paramahansa are memorable in this context: "Visit not miracle workers. There(sic] are wanderers from the path of truth. Their minds have become entangled in the meshes of psychic powers, which lie in the way of the pilgrim towards Brahman, as temptations. Beware of these powers, and desire them not" (Sinha 1978: 106-7).

It is precisely the words of Ramakrishna that Yogananda wishes to demonstrate and further extend in his investigation. Yogananda introduces us to people who are at various stages of their spiritual quest and answers a number of questions that any modern reader could have on miracle workings. For instance, one can definitely ask that if miracles are to be despised, how is it that Christ or a Ramakrishna himself performed them? Is it possible to distinguish between those who exploit gullible people and the true masters who work miracles to help humanity? Sinha however works on a level that sees "psychic” as different from spiritual consciousness and misses the true spirit of scientific inquiry in *Autobiography of a Yogi*. What both Sinha and Cronin fail to perceive is that everyone has the potential to experience and work "miracles" and that "psychic" is perhaps the first level experience of an aspirant. It is exactly against misuse of such powers that Yogananda warns us. He shows how an indiscriminate use of those powers once mastered can bring dangerous results.
Moreover an aspirant has to traverse various levels of consciousness to attain ultimate realisation and it is not certainly like "vouchsafing it at the end". It is a mode of becoming. Westernised education has annulled possibilities of collating faith and belief with scientific knowledge. It has projected man as a conqueror of nature and in a colonial context it provided the necessary justification for the unequal-power relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. R.C.P. Sinha's criticism of Yogananda is a relic of this cultural and intellectual demoralisation. The autobiographies of Western saints draw heavily upon Biblical metaphors and are in a sense, in comparison with Eastern writers, free from certain ambivalences. In autobiographies of the modern Indian masters what strikes us first is the felt dynamics between tradition and modernity and the effects of colonialism in their rhetoric. The rhetoric would expose the same dilemma even if these texts were originally written in Indian languages. For, colonial enterprise has made such deep inroads into our psyche that though our native languages have not fortunately paled into oblivion yet, our modes of expression betray colonial influence. Decolonising the mind thus also means decolonising the rhetoric. Like all other spiritual autobiographies examined so far, *Autobiography of a Yogi* also becomes a resistance text when it awakens us to these realities.

Unlike the intellectual elite who carried the brown man's burden on their backs, Gandhi's appeal, as Partha Chatterjee points out, was to the common masses particularly to the peasantry (Chatterjee 1996: 99-100). Ramdas's appeal was to the English educated devotees and Purohit Swami's was to the spiritually inclined Englishmen and women while Tattvabhusan's was to the Bengali Brahmas. Yogananda's appeal was to a generation groping in a "wasteland" created by the destructive powers of science. A bold appropriation of the creative powers of the one by the other was in fact the need of the hour. The text represents some of the intellectual trends that were emerging sporadically and spasmodically across the globe — among scientists, political
leaders and religious spokespersons. As we shall see, it is in this sense that the text becomes truly dialogic. Yogananda invokes passages from the *Holy Bible* which support the Modern Theory of Physics that light is the basis of the cosmic phenomena. Here again *science, Genesis, Yoga* all merge into a unity:

"Let there be light! And there was light". In the creation of the universe, God's first command brought into being the structural essential: light. On the beams of this immaterial medium occur all divine manifestations. Devotees of every age testify to the appearance of God as flame and light. "His eyes were as a flame of fire," St. John tells us, "...and his countenance as the sun shineth in his strength".

A yogi who through perfect meditation has merged his consciousness with the Creator perceives the cosmical essence as light (vibrations of life energy); to him mere is no difference between the light rays composing water and the light rays composing land. Free from matter-consciousness, free from the three dimensions of space and the fourth dimension of time, a master transfers his body of light with equal ease over or through the light rays of earth, water, fire, and air.

"If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be *full of light*. Long concentration on the liberating spiritual eye has enabled the yogi to destroy all delusions concerning matter and its gravitational weight: he sees the universe, as the Lord created it: an essentially undifferentiated mass of light.

"Optical images," Dr. L.T. Troland of Harvard tells us, "are built upon the principle of the ordinary *half tone* engravings; that is, they are made up of minute dottings or stipplings far too small to be detected by the eye. . . . *The law of miracles is operable by any man who has realized that the essence of creation is light*. A master is able to employ his divine knowledge of
light phenomena to project instantly into perceptible manifestation the ubiquitous light atoms. The actual form of the projection (whatever it be: a tree, a medicine, a human body) is determined by the yogi's wish and by his powers of will and visualization (Yogananda 1975: 271).

The above explanation reads like a harmonious orchestration of Christianity, yoga and Science with miracle as the theme. Its appeal to the readers is by way of removing the veil of esotericism particularly through the use of expressions like "any man". Further, the use of terms like "will and visualise" enables us to explore our understanding and practice of "faith" and "belief in God. Terms like "faith" and "belief may indicate our understanding of God "out there" terms like "will" and "power to visualise," appeal to our notion of God as the power within. In other words, Yogananda makes the dialogue open even to an agnostic or an atheist in a true sense of the term 'secular'. This is however not new in Hindu and Buddhist Philosophy.

This particular discourse on the law of miracles and the nature of light as vibrations of life energy takes us to Yogananda's own experiences of cosmic consciousness. One can notice a crescendo-like quality as the narrative intensifies from one experience to the other. The latter half of the chapter may be seen as a narrative of the most crucial and intense kind. However, in order to feel the crescendo one should retrace a few steps. Yogananda's first "intimations of immortality" is first recorded in Chapter One. God is seen as a wondrous glow of light, heard as "murmuring clouds" and felt as "ever-new Joy" (9):

"What is behind the darkness of closed eyes?" This probing thought came powerfully into my mind. An immense flash of light at once manifested to my inner gaze. Divine shapes of saints, sitting in meditation posture in mountain caves, formed like
miniature cinema pictures on the large screen of radiance within my forehead.
"Who are you?" I spoke aloud.
"We are the Himalayan yogis". The celestial response is difficult to describe; my heart was thrilled.
"Ah, I long to go to the Himalayas and become like you!" The vision vanished, but the silvery beams expanded in ever-widening circles to infinity.
"What is this wondrous glow?"
"I am Ishwara. I am light." The Voice was as murmuring clouds.
"I want to be one with Thee!"
Out of the slow dwindling of my divine ecstasy, I salvaged a permanent legacy of inspiration to seek God. "He is eternal, ever-new Joy!" This memory persisted long after the day of rapture (9).

The second remarkable intimation is the one he receives through the intercession of Master Mahasaya, Sri Mahendra Nath Gupta alias "M", a disciple of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahamsa. This experience of his transcendence of space, of possessing the omnipresent eye and of transcending body consciousness is explained through the analogy of silent motion pictures. Note the widening experience when compared to the previous one:

A transforming silence ensued. Just as the modern "talkies" become inaudible motion pictures when the sound apparatus goes out of order, so the Divine Hand by some strange miracle, stifled the earthly bustle. Pedestrians as well as the passing trolley cars, automobiles, bullock carts, and iron-wheeled hackney carriages were all in noiseless transit. As though possessing an omnipresent eye, I beheld the scenes that were behind me, and to each side, as easily as those in front. The whole spectacle of activity in that small section of Calcutta passed before me without a sound. Like a glow of fire dimly seen beneath a thin coat of ashes, a mellow luminiscence permeated the panoramic view.
My own body seemed nothing more than one of the many shadows, though it was motionless, while the others flitted mutely to and fro. Several boys, friends of mine, approached and passed on; though they had looked directly at me, it was without recognition. The unique pantomime brought me an inexpressible ecstasy. I drank deep from some blissful fount (79-80).

Yogananda takes us as much close to the unique experience as possible by using the analogy of the silent motion picture and the pantomime. The expression "talkies" once again reminds us of the use of other "languages" in Yogananda's narrative. The scope of his vision widens and the intensity increases when compared to the first vision. If the experience of space transcendence was confined to the terrestrial sphere in this vision, then the experience of samadhi or cosmic consciousness through his Guru's intercession gives him a multi-dimensional vision. The narrative gives us insights into the body-consciousness relationship in the state of samadhi. The body is not seen as dichotomous with soul but a facilitating medium to experience samadhi. This is particularly clear in the paragraph quoted below:

My body became immovably rooted; breath was drawn out of my lungs as if by some huge magnet. Soul and mind instantly lost their physical bondage and streamed out like a fluid piercing light from my every pore. The flesh was as though dead, yet in my intense awareness I knew that never before had I been fully alive. My sense of identity was no longer narrowly confined to a body but embraced the circumambiant atoms. People on distant streets seemed to be moving gently over my own remote periphery. The roots of plants and trees appeared through a dim transparency of the soil; I discerned the inward flow of their sap (141).
The experience of the immense force of cosmic consciousness is first delineated as the feeling of his body being "immovably rooted" and secondly by the drawing out of breath from his lungs as if "by some huge magnet". Transcendence of body consciousness is felt as if soul and mind were "streaming out like a fluid piercing light from my every pore". The use of terms like "immovably rooted", "huge magnet" "piercing light" convey the immensity of the experience. An interesting paradox can be noted in his mentioning that "flesh was as though dead", though "I knew that never before had I been fully alive". The experience of omnipresence, a widened sense of identity is conveyed when he says that "my sense of identity was no longer narrowly confined to a body but embraced the circumambiant atoms". Also note that he says "a body" and not "the body". Omnipresence means presence in every body and in no body. Yogananda’s consciousness now widens to the experience of omniscience:

The whole vicinity lay before me. My ordinary frontal vision was now changed to a vast spherical light, simultaneously all-perceptive. Through the back of my head I saw men strolling far down Rai Ghat Lane, and noticed also a white cow that was leisurely approaching. When she reached the open ashram gate, I observed her as though with my two physical eyes. After she had passed behind the brick wall of the courtyard, I saw her clearly still (141).

His consciousness further widens to the experience of a third dimension, so to say, that of omnipotence:

All objects within my panoramic gaze trembled and vibrated like quick motion pictures. My body, Master’s, the pillared courtyard, the furniture and floor, the trees and sunshine, occasionally became violently agitated, until all melted into a luminiscent sea; even as sugar crystals, thrown into a glass of water, dissolve after being shaken. The unifying light
alternated with materializations of form, the metamorphosis revealing the law of cause and effect in creation (141-42).

The experience of "I am Brahman" or "Tatvamasi" while remaining in a bodily frame, of the dissolution of the sense of duality while living in a dualistic world is perhaps what one calls true liberation:

An oceanic joy broke upon calm endless shores of my soul. The Spirit of God, I realized, is exhaustless Bliss; His body is countess tissues of light. A swelling glory within me began to envelop towns, continents, the earth, solar and stellar systems, tenuous nebulae, and floating universes. The entire cosmos, gendy luminous, like a city seen afar at night, glimmered within the infinitude of my being. The dazzling light beyond the sharply etched global outlines faded slightly at the farthest edges; there I saw a mellow radiance, ever undiminished. It was indescribably sublime; the planetary pictures were formed of a grosser light ... I cognized the centre of the empyrean as a point of intuitive perception in my heart. Irradiating splendour issued from my nucleus to ever part of the universal structure. Blissful amrita, nectar of immortality, pulsated through me with a quick-silver like fluidity. The creative voice of God I heard resounding as Aum the vibration of the Cosmic Motor (142).

This narrative of the experience of God-communion also integrates East with West in a unique fashion. The concept or experience or vision of light as the essence of creation is supported by quotations from Genesis and of the voice of God in "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God" (John 1:1, Bible). This also conveys the ultimate universal vision that all religions lead to the same goal. When Yogananda narrates the experience, the body concept is not negated. When he comes round, he also talks about his disappointment at having to confine himself to the "humiliating
cage of a body' (142, emphasis mine) and not of the body as such (though "a body" in that context may sound idiomatic). One only needs to perceive the relative aspect in the sense that one is microcosmic while the other is macrocosmic, the former is immense, the viratswarupa, the latter is limited that holds only a spark of the infinite spirit. Yogic techniques, as enunciated in the chapter "The Science of Kriya Yoga", train the body and the mind to be receptive to the visitations of the high-voltage experience of the cosmic communion. Yogananda also dispels from himself the notion that body is independent of, controlled by or tends to drift human beings away from the call of the spirit:

The cosmic vision left many permanent lessons. By daily stilling my thoughts, I could win release from the delusive conviction that my body was a mass of flesh and bones, traversing the hard soil of matter... A master bestows the divine experience of cosmic consciousness when his disciple, by meditation, has strengthened his mind to a degree where the vast vistas would not overwhelm him. Mere intellectual willingness or open mindedness is not enough. Only adequate enlargement of consciousness by yoga practice and devotional bhakti can prepare one to absorb the liberating shock of omnipresence (144).

The next experience in cosmic consciousness Yogananda chooses to narrate is the one he experienced on his own without intercession, in order to intercede for his sister. The experience of omniscience, omnipresence, and omnipotence is subtler and sharper this time:

As if by a mystic syringe, the breath was withdrawn from my lungs; my body became very still, though not inert.

An ecstatic enlargement of consciousness followed. I could see clearly for several miles over
the Ganges River to my left, and beyond the temple into the entire Dakshineswar precincts. The walls of all buildings glimmered transparently; through them I observed people walking to and fro over distant acres.

Though I was breathless and though my body remained in a strongly quiet state, I was able to move my hands and feet freely. For several minutes I experimented in closing and opening my eyes; in either state I saw distinctly the whole Dakshineswar panorama (208).

Here Yogananda also explains the nature of this omniscience (the concept of centre as explained here is in fact de-centering). Yogananda uses the simile of X rays to explain the working of spiritual sight, a more intense experience than clairvoyance: "Spiritual sight, X-ray like penetrates into all matter, the divine eye is centre everywhere, circumference no-where" (208). Yogananda also feels his body achieving an ethereal dimension "ready to levitate". He remains fully conscious of the activities in the dual world while experiencing non-duality. This will prepare us to better comprehend Yogananda's experience of what may perhaps be termed as transmigration — in which the difference between the 'self and the 'other' is almost dissolved. Here he feels that he is at once both the self and the other, inside and outside, dead and alive and ultimately the knower and the known. Yogananda qualifies this experience as an instance of realising the "unity of the Eternal Light behind the painful dualities of maya" (272). The first experience is that of the blurring of the self/other dichotomy through transfer of consciousness; also important to note that he qualifies this experience as "a vision of strange contrasts" that vividly established "the relativity of human consciousness":

In 1915... The vision descended on me as I sat one morning in my little attic room ... For months the First World War had been raging in Europe; I had been reflecting sadly on the vast toll of death.
As I closed my eyes in meditation, my consciousness was suddenly transferred to the body of a captain in command of a battleship... A huge shell hit the powder magazine and tore my ship asunder. I jumped into the water, together with the few sailors who had survived the explosion.

Heart pounding, I reached the shore safely. But alas! A stray bullet ended its swift flight in my chest. I fell groaning to the ground (272).

For the moment, one finds it difficult to distinguish between the identity of the captain and of the author. What follows is the tension between one's concept of life and death and the blurring of it with comic interludes:

"At last the mysterious footstep of Death has caught up with me," I thought. With a final sigh I was about to sink into unconsciousness when lo! I found myself seated in the lotus posture in my Gurpar Road room (273).

Yogananda feels relieved to realise that he was not "dead". But again he finds his consciousness transferred to the captain's dead body by the shore. It is here that unity behind the apparent dualities of the knower and the known, the seer and the seen/scene, the speaker and the listener is revealed:

"Lord," I prayed, "am I dead or alive?"
A dazzling play of light filled the whole horizon. A soft rumbling vibration formed itself into words:
"What has life or death to do with light? In the image of my light I have made you. The relativities of life and death belong to the cosmic dream. Behold your dreamless being! Awake my child, awake!" (273).

Life and death are experienced as relativities, the Self as the dreamless being existing in a State of non-duality. This is also the state of consciousness in which one sees "the world as a stage" and all its inhabitants as actors in "God's
A cinema audience may look up and see that all screen images are appearing through the instrumentality of one imageless beam of light. The colourful universal drama is similarly issuing from the single white light of a Cosmic Source (274).

Yogananda further points out that "temporarily true to man's five sense perceptions, the transitory scenes are cast on the screen of human consciousness by the infinite creative beam" (274). This makes us both actors as well as audience in God's planetary theatre. This realisation is further intensified when his consciousness is transferred to a vision of the actual European battlefields as a "play within a play" (274). Yogananda's universal vision and empathy for suffering humanity lead him to further investigate the mystery of this drama. A divine voice convinces him that the way of escape from suffering is wisdom and that the tragedy of death is unreal: "My sons are children of light; they will not sleep forever in delusion" (275). The insight, makes him, realise that like motion pictures, man's reality lies "not in it, but beyond it" (275). No better simile could have been employed to explicate this subtle experience of the interplay between the dual and the non-dual.

However this vision only tells him that life is like a "motion picture". He is yet to experience how it actually works. He does experience it in one of his most sublime moments and reports it unfailingly to the curious readers. This direct experience marks the crescendo of his narratives of his experiences of samadhi. A soul elevating account, in a language comprehensible to the readers and in a witty style, of a sublime yet intimate moment of God-communion is worth quoting here. The translation of a highly subtle vision of light, visible only to a finely tuned inner eye, into similes and images which the outer eye can relate to; the translation of God's subtle voice, audible only to a finely tuned
inner ear, into language; the translation of the sublime *rasa* of the holy communion into comprehensible *bhava* without losing the loftiness, sublimity and exaltation make this account a true discourse of conversion and interpretation. Yogananda qualifies this experience as "singular" for this is Yogananda's moment of conversion as well:

After I had finished writing this chapter, I sat on my bed in the lotus posture. My room was faintly illumined by two shaded lamps. Lifting my gaze, I noticed that the ceiling was dotted with small mustard-coloured lights, scintillating and quivering with a radiumlike lustre. Myriads of pencilled rays, like sheets of rain, gathered into a transparent shaft and poured silently upon me.

At once my physical body lost its grossness and became metamorphosed into astral "texture. I felt a floating sensation as, barely touching the bed, my weightless body shifted slightly and alternately to left and right. I looked around the room; the furniture and walls were as usual, but the little mass of light had so multiplied that the ceiling was invisible. I was wonder-struck.

"This is the cosmic motion-picture mechanism." A Voice spoke as though from within the light. "Shedding its beam on the white screen of your bed sheets, it is producing the picture of your body. Behold, your form is nothing but light!"

I gazed at my arms and moved them back and forth, yet could not feel their weight. An ecstatic joy overwhelmed me. The cosmic stem of light, blossoming as my body, seemed a divine reproduction of the light beams that stream out of the projection booth in a cinema house and manifest as pictures on the screen.....As the illusion of a solid body was completely dissipated, and as my realization deepened that the essence of all objects is light, I looked up at the throbbing stream of lifetrons and spoke entreatingly.
"Divine Light, please withdraw this, my humble bodily picture, into Thyself; even as Elijah was drawn up to heaven in a chariot of flame."

This prayer was evidently startling; the beam disappeared. My body resumed its normal weight and sank on the bed; the swarm of dazzling ceiling lights flickered and vanished. My time to leave this earth had apparently not arrived.

"Besides," I thought philosophically, "Elijah might well be displeased at my presumption!" (275-77).

Yogananda's motion picture analogy marks an epochal rhetorical shift from Adi Sankaracharya's powerful mirror analogy in “Dakshinamurthi Stotram” which begins as "Vishvamdarpanadrushyamaananagaritulyam nijantarga tam pashyannatmani mayaya bahirvobbutam yadha nidraya..." (the whole of the world is found to exist entirely in the mind, like a city's image mirrored in a glass, though, like a dream, through maya's power it appears outside...) and Swami Ramdas's drama analogy in his autobiography to convey the awakening of consciousness into the nature of maya (illusion). The language of poetry is qualified as the language of paradox because poets, one must conclude after reading this chapter, are seers. Seers speak of spiritual experience through Vedas and Puranas written in the poetic form. Ancient Indian poets were thus seers, and wrote of their experience of divine ecstasy and inner vision. Poems by Western poets like Milton, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, Donne and others are a testimony to their intimations of immortality. "Negative capability" is the hallmark of both the seer and the poet — in fact it is this capability that makes a seer a poet and a poet's seer. Sage Valmiki who wrote the Ramayana exemplifies the former while Kalidasa the latter. Yogananda's narratives of spiritual experiences are no exceptions. Yogananda takes us on a full round of the ubiquity-uniqueness interplay in our perceptions of the miraculous when he ultimately mentions in his foot notes to this chapter that "Nothing may truly be said to be a "miracle" except in the profound sense that everything is a miracle. That each of us is
encased in an intricately organized body, and is set upon on earth whirling through space among the stars - is anything more commonplace? Or more miraculous?” (276, emphasis mine). God experience, as Yogananda himself points out, is “rasa”, something that can only be relished. The experience of the atman, of cosmic consciousness is mentioned in the Bhagavad Gita as evoking “ascharya” (wonder) in the seeker (2.29). In fact the bhava evoked by the rasa of God communion, is ascharya. As Yogananda rightly puts it and as the nursery rhymes go - "How I wonder what you are" - the ineffability remains.

The second part of the autobiography, the chapters that follow "The Law of Miracles", examines the positive aspect of the "miraculous". It uncovers the lives of Lahiri Mahasaya, Babaji, the women saints of India and of the West. Babaji, Yogananda's Paramguru, who still lives in the Himalayas is introduced to the readers. Yogananda shows how powerful masters like Babaji who still live in the Himalayas have been taking interest in world affairs and helping to smoothed out the course of events. In the second half of the autobiography, Yogananda shares the activities of such masters as though he is addressing an informed audience. Two aspects will be examined here — one is Yogananda's conversation with his Guru Sri Yukteswar after he reappears to him following his samadhi and the second is his visit to Gandhiji in Wardha.

Yogananda's conversation with Yukteswar in the latter part of the text reveals a challenging experience of the unknown made known through speech. Sri Yukteswar's revelation of a world in which language is unnecessary to communicate takes us closer to certain observations made in the background chapter of this study regarding the existence of language as a sign of spiritual ignorance. Yukteswar points out that the nature of life in the astral world, is always already present within human consciousness, which some people recognise, in the terrestrial world as well:
"Communication among all astral world residents is effected entirely by telepathy and astral television. The confusion and misunderstanding of the spoken and written word, prevalent on earth, are unknown in the astral realms" (414).

What is perceived as knowledge in one realm is, relatively speaking, ignorance in another. However the language of spiritual knowledge achieves a remarkable degree of sublimity and subtlety as Yukteswar explains the nature of the causal world:

"Souls in the causal world recognize one another as individualized points of joyous spirit; their thought-things are the only objects that surround them. Causal beings see the difference between their bodies and thoughts to be merely ideas. As a man, closing his eyes, can visualize a dazzling white light or a faint blue haze, so causal beings by thought alone are able to see, hear, smell, taste, touch; they create anything, or dissolve it, by the power of cosmic mind. Both death and rebirth in the causal world are in thought" (420).

This chapter also reveals the fact that there is certain foreknowledge which (saints cannot share with the world. But Yogananda wrote this chapter to reveal certain aspects of spiritual truth to the world. The text at this point reveals the author becoming conscious of the act of writing the autobiography for a certain audience. The autobiography also becomes an articulation of significant silences on certain world truths:

Sri Yukteswar gave me light on certain matters which I cannot reveal here. During the two hours that he spent with me in the Bombay hotel room he answered my every question. A number of world prophesies uttered by him that June day in 1936 have already come to pass . . ."Tell all! Whosoever knows by nirbikalpa realization that your earth is a dream of God can come to the finer dream-created
Such a criticism springs from a scientific understanding of human necessity to exercise their will to cause change. This should now lead us to look at Yogananda's representation of women saints in the autobiography. Among those represented through his interviews are the wife of Lahiri Mahasaya, **Anandamoyi Ma**, Giri **Bala** and **Terese** Neumann. Yogananda's research shows how sainthood has not been the monopoly of men. But life has been different for women saints for sure. Yogananda's narrative conveys this sensitivity to woman's social positioning in the early part of the twentieth century. His autobiography also bears other genres within it like biographical accounts of women saints. The women saints he met were those empowered by virtue of having become enlightened. Yogananda's interview with Gribala, the non-eating woman saint's life shows that her turning to spirituality was a protest against the oppression and humiliation she suffered under her mother-in-law. As Yogananda records Gribala's spiritual narrative, another narrative within a narrative unfolds in which spirituality becomes an empowering path for the oppressed. The camaraderie that saints share despite gender differences is notable in Yogananda's report of the meetings he had with women saints. For instance when **Anandamoyi Ma** meets him, she instandy shows unreserved sense of recognition:
"Father, you have come!" With these fervent words (in Bengali) she put her arm around my neck and her head on my shoulder. Mr. Wright, to whom I had just remarked that I did not know the saint, was hugely enjoying this extraordinary demonstration of welcome. The eyes of the hundred chelas were also fixed with some surprise on the affectionate tableau.

I had instantly seen that the saint was in a high state of *samadhi*. Oblivious to her outward garb as a woman, she knew herself as a changeless soul; from that plane she was joyously greeting another devotee of God" (447-48).

Further Anandamoyi Ma tells Yogananda that there is nothing to say about her life because

"My consciousness has never associated itself with this temporary body. Before I [here Yogananda gives a foot note and says — 'Ananda Moyi Ma does not refer to herself as “I”; she uses humble circumlocutions like "this body" or "this little girl" or "your daughter" Nor does she refer to anyone as her "disciple". With impersonal wisdom she bestows equally on all human beings the divine love of the Universal Mother'] came on this earth, Father, 'I was the same'. As a little girl, 'I was the same'. I grew into womanhood, but still 'I was the same'. When the family in which I had been born made arrangements to have this body married, 'I was the same'. 'And, Father, in front of you now, 'I am the same'. Ever afterword, though the dance of creation change around me in the hall of eternity, 'I shall be the same'" (450).

Anandamoyi Ma's reply throws light on the fact that saints who have attained a certain level of consciousness, who choose to remain in that state or attain higher levels do not consider it necessary to say anything about themselves. The third person reference to oneself also reminds us of saints like Ramdas who could not say "I" at all. It is interesting to note that Yogananda also has
more to say about other saints than about himself in the autobiography. However the text is not one saint's message to the readers but of various saints through whom the reality, the supreme intelligence that everyone seeks, has revealed itself very discreetly.

Yogananda reports how Anandamoyi Ma was instrumental in bringing about social change. The words of the "woman chela reveals sainthood as opposed to caste" consciousness and the breaking out from constraints that marriage generally imposes on women:

"Her courageous efforts have brought about many desirable social reforms. Although a Brahmin, the saint recognizes no caste distinctions.... One of her chief disciples is her husband. Many years ago, soon after their marriage, he took the vow of silence." The chela pointed to a broad-shouldered, fine featured man with long hair and hoary beard. He was standing quietly in the midst of the gathering, his hands folded in a disciple's reverential attitude (448-49).

It is interesting to see how spirituality worked as resistance and empowerment to a number of women saints of India like Mira Bai and Bahina Bai in Maharashtra centuries ago, Ananda Moyi Ma, Giri Bala, and Mother Krishna Bai during the early and middle part of the twentieth century and Mata Amritanandamayi of the present times.

Yogananda also reports another person's account of his witnessing the exalted conversation between Babaji and his sister who also leads an ageless life. Her appearance is described in the most dramatic manner. She is one who leads secluded, independent existence and is quite capable of outwitting Babaji, who is her brother

"'Blessed sister,' Babaji said, 'I am intending to shed my form and plunge into the Infinite Current.'
'I have already glimpsed your plan, beloved master, I wanted to discuss it with you tonight. Why should you leave your body? The glorious woman looked at him beseeingly.

'What is the difference if I wear a visible or an invisible wave on the ocean of my Spirit?'

Mataji replied with a quick flash of wit. 'Deathless guru, if it makes no difference, then please do not ever relinquish your form.'

'Be it so,' Babaji said solemnly. 'I shall never leave my physical body. It will always remain visible to at least a small number of people on this earth. The Lord has spoken His own wish through your lips.' (304).

Einstein's influence on Yogananda comes out in his recording of his meeting with Tcrese Neumann, the woman saint of the West who felt Christ's passion and manifested Christ's stigmata on her. She was also like Giri Bala, the Indian saint who never fed on gross food:

"Don't you eat anything?" I wanted to hear the answer from her own lips.
"No, except a Host at six o'clock each morning."
"How large is the Host?"
"It is paper-thin, the size of a small coin." She added. "I take it for sacramental reasons; if it is unconsecrated, I am unable to swallow it".
"Certainly you could not have lived on that, for twelve whole years?"
"I live by God's light."
How simple her reply, how Einsteinian!
"I see you realize that energy flows to your body from the ether, sun, and air."
A swift smile broke over her face. "I am so happy to know you understand how I live."
"Your sacred life is a daily demonstration of the truth uttered by Christ: 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' Again she showed joy at my explanation. "It is indeed so. One of the reasons I
am here on earth today is to prove that one can live
by God's invisible light, and not by food only."
"Can you teach others how to live without food?"
She appeared a trifle shocked. "I cannot do that;
God does not wish it" (362-63).

Yogananda is careful to repeat the same question to Giri Bala and she too
replies in the same vein. What is remarkable about the latter half of
Yogananda's autobiography is his assumption of an inquisitive reporter role
while interviewing the saints he meets. He alternates between a yogi's insight
and a non-clairvoyant person's curious, realistic outlook which in itself creates
an inner dialogue. Yogananda lets the readers also notice this as his self-
conscious act, a performance. Besides the above quoted conversation, another
instance of his role play is his meeting with Giri Bala:

In the manner of the American newspaper reporter,
who had unknowingly taught me his procedure, I
questioned Giri Bala on many matters that I thought
would be of interest to the world (463).

This conscious questioning indicates Yogananda's consistent sense of his
audience. Moreover, through this audience consciousness, Yogananda also
creates an alienating effect in the narrative.

IV

Linking past and future

The text ends on a note that urges humanity to realise that the "world" is our
homeland and to rise above parochial concerns. This has in fact been the
message of all the autobiographies chosen for my study. The last chapter of
Autobiography of a Yogi titled "The Years 1940-51" that was published in later
editions shares with the readers Yogananda's vision that the East and West
shall meet on the platform of spirituality.
Yogananda does speak of the independence of India since the publication of the autobiography took place through those years. He recalls, "like so many Indians,...a now-it-can-be-told story" (479). Some of his college mates urged him to take up a revolutionary movement to oust the British during the First World War. Yogananda declined with these words:

"Killing our English brothers cannot accomplish any good for India. Her freedom will not come through bullets, but through spiritual force." I then warned my friends that the arms-laden German ships, on which they were depending, would be intercepted by the British at Diamond Harbour, Bengal. The young men, however, went ahead with their plans, which proceeded to go awry in the manner which I had mentioned. My friends were released from prison after a few years. Abandoning their violent convictions, several of them joined Mahatma Gandhi's ideal political movement. In the end they saw India's victory in a unique "war" won by peace (479,n).

Yogananda's chapter on his meeting with Gandhiji expresses the views shared by Swami Ramdas and Purohit Swami. Yogananda calls him India's "political saint". Yogananda's lines on their first meeting make us feel that they "knew" each other: "Though this was our first meeting, we beamed on each other affectionately" (428). Yogananda's perceives Gandhiji as one who could influence the common people:

The tiny 100-pound saint radiated physical, mental, and spiritual health. His soft brown eyes shone with intelligence, sincerity, and discrimination; this statesman has matched wits and emerged the victor in a thousand legal, social, and political battles. No other leader in the world has attained the secure niche in the hearts of his people that Gandhi occupies for India's unlettered millions. ...For them alone Gandhi confines his attire to the widely
cartooned loincloth, symbol of his oneness with the downtrodden masses who can afford no more (428-29).

Yogananda initiates Gandhiji into Kriya Yoga at his request. This chapter on Gandhiji also has Yogananda's comments on Gandhiji's autobiography in a foot note. He calls his description of his life as done with "devastating candour". Yogananda further compares Gandhiji's autobiography with those of others and finds that the text is remarkable for his inner analysis; "he exposes his faults and subterfuges with an impersonal devotion to truth rare in annals of any age" (434). Yogananda also pays a fitting tribute to Kasturba Gandhi in a remarkable manner by quoting Kasturba's tribute to Gandhiji.

Anticipating as though the question in the bloody Partition, he sees it as essentially due to economic factors and not due to religious fanaticism as is so often portrayed. He invokes years of amicable existence between Hindus and Muslims in the sub-continent and envisions the difficult years of India as a passing "karmic" phase.

Yogananda's autobiography interestingly takes us on a full round to where we began this study - the non-violence principle of Gandhiji and the universal vision of essential unity between human beings. Yogananda also completes in a sense, the Brahma's quest for reason in religion. However there are other traits of Brahmaism traceable in Yogananda. Besides the appeal to rationalism in Yogananda's autobiography, certain other traits in his spiritual rhetoric have interesting parallels with Brahma rhetoric. The most notable trait is the way in which Yogananda introduced the method of prayer in the United States by translating Indian hymns into English. He uniquely blended the Christian and Hindu methods of worship for Western devotees. If Ram Mohan Roy and Keshub Chandra Sen introduced this method in India, Yogananda adopted this method primarily for Western devotees. In Yogananda's Cosmic Chants, the translation of Sadashiva Brahendra's composition is given as follows:
No birth, no death, no caste have I.
Father, mother, have I none.
I am He, I am He; blessed Spirit, I am He.
Mind, nor intellect, nor ego, chitta;
Sky nor earth, nor metals am I.
I am He, I am He; blessed Spirit, I am He
(Yogananda 1983: 18).

The other is the use of the terms like “Yogi Christ" and "angelic guru" to
describe saints like Babaji and Sri Yukteswar. There are expressions like "Christ
like sages" used while referring to spiritual masters. It is interesting to note that
Keshub Chandra Sen in one of his historical New Dispensation speeches,
proclaimed that "Christ is a True Yogi" (Sastri 1974: 206).

Though there are no instances in the autobiography to indicate that
Yogananda was directly influenced by the intellectual zeal of Brahmaism, he is a
unique blend of the syncretic spirit of Brahmaism, the nationalist zeal of
Vivekananda and the yogic appeal of Aurobindo. Yogananda is also an amalgam
of bhakti, karma, jnana and raja yoga.

The text also reveals methodically, the nationalist thought of other saints.
There are, for instance, anonymous saints like the one he meets in a Kali
temple. He prophesies that India's spiritual potentiality is her strength. He
mentions Bahaduri Maliasaya who teaches India's yoga to the West, and of
course Sri Yukteswar, Lahiri Mahasaya and Babaji whose keen interest in
bringing about an effective East-West Synthesis permeate their teachings and
yogic vision. Babaji, for instance during his meeting with Sri Yukteswar tells him:

"‘...East and West must establish a golden middle
path of activity and spirituality combined.' He
continued, 'India has much to learn from the West
in material development; in return India can teach
the universal methods by which the West will be able
to base its religious beliefs on the unshakable
Though yogic techniques remain the same as enunciated in the Yoga Sutra of Patanjali, Yogananda's instruction of yoga through the rhetoric of science has been instrumental in providing conversational experience and in making self-realisation a reality for the modern mind. It is scientific in the sense that yoga is conducted as "experiments" with God-quest in the laboratory of one's own body. Yogananda's autobiography is a masterpiece because the use of scientific terminology as the rhetoric of yoga launched the ultimate resistance ploy to the de-stabilising forces of modernity.

As Rama Rao pointed out in his unpublished thesis on Yogananda's yogic vision, Yogananda achieves a rare East-West synthesis in his architectonics of the text as well. He strikes a fine balance between the two by choosing to speak on Gandhiji from India and Washington from America; Tagore from India and Walt Whitman in from America; Giri Bala, the non-eating saint from India and Terese Neumann, the non-eating saint from England; Bahaduri Mahasaya, the levitating Saint from India and St. Joseph of Cupertino, the levitating saint from the Christian world; Luther Burbank, the Plant scientist from America and Jagdish Chandra Bose, the Plant Scientist from India. The narrative, like a fugue orchestrates multitudinous forms of texts, cultures, discourses, people, levels of existence, consciousnesses, time and place which reveal Yogananda's vision as a yogi and as a unique nationalist who like his guru truly realised that "the world is my homeland":

"World brotherhood" is a large term, but man must enlarge his sympathies, considering himself in the light of a world citizen. He who truly understands that it is "my America, my India, my Philippines, my Europe, my Africa" and so on, will never lack scope for a useful and happy life (473).
Notes

1 Yogananda needs no introduction in this respect. As David Frawley points out, "Great Hindu Gurus like Ramana Maharishi or Paramahansa Yogananda are lauded by many in the West as being as great as Jesus or St. Francis. Such teachers have changed the spiritual landscape of the West permanently and 'radically'" (Frawley 2001: 9).

2 I have gained insights from my research on the representation of India in American missionary fiction. Sushil Madhava Pathak's American Missionaries and Hinduism (1967) and Michel Foucault read together give a picture of the ways colonial practices were facilitated in India.

3 This significantly influenced political thought in colonised nations. Partha Chatterjee’s study, Nationalist Thought and Colonial World shows how Post-Enlightenment Western thought as a "thematic" greatly influenced nationalist thought in a colonial context. Chatterjee points out how Indian nationalists of the colonial period though caught in their affinities to Post-Enlightenment thought (which is the thematic) ascertained differences from it (which is the problematic). It is by virtue of these différences that their discourses contributed to nationalist thought.

4 His spiritual discourses are gathered and published as The Divine Romance (1992) and Man’s Eternal Quest (1986).

Science and Consciousness: Two Views of the Universe (1984) is an outcome of the proceedings of the France-Culture and Radio-France Colloquium. In this colloquium, consciousness was approached from various scientific angles viz., Quantum Mechanics and neuropsychophysiology. The colloquium acknowledged the need to adopt an inter-disciplinary approach in science to understand consciousness which in turn would help in understanding the nature of the universe.

6 "Heteroglossia is another's speech in another's language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such a discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they - as they were - know about each other. Double-voiced discourse is always internally dialogized" (Bakhtin 1981: 324).
7 In Bakhtin and here as well this "orchestration" that leads to "polyphony" indicates the appeal more to the "ear" than to the eye. The terms "fugue", "contrapuntal", "orchestration" and "polyphony" have been employed at various points in the study to indicate the careful crafting of utterances and also possibilities of such crafting creating a symphony not intended by the author.

8 Madame Blavatsky's and Annie Besant's rhetoric of interpretation of miracles comes close to Yogananda's. For instance, Annie Besant says that Madam Blavatsky, "would remind us that there was no such thing as a 'miracle'; that all the phenomena she had produced were worked by virtue of knowledge of nature deeper than that of average people, and by the force of a well-trained mind and will; ....(Besant 1939: 322)

9 The Divine Romance, a collection of spiritual discourses by Paramahansa Yogananda has a series of speeches on Mahatma Gandhi titled "The Mystery of Mahatma Gandhi". These speeches reveal Yogananda's insight into the spiritual dimension of Gandhiji's political life (Yogananda 1992: 116-127).