

Chapter Three

Human Greatness

Greatness

Why should the Divine not care for the outer greatness? He cares for everything in the universe. All greatness is the Vibhuti of the Divine, says the Gita.

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Obviously outer greatness is not the aim of Yoga. But that is no reason why one should not recognise the part played by greatness in the order of the universe or the place of great men of action, great poets and artists etc.

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People have begun to try to prove that great men were not great, which is a very big mistake. If greatness is not appreciated by men, the world will become mean, small, dull, narrow and tamasic.

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By greatness is meant an exceptional capacity of one kind or another which makes a man eminent among his fellows.

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That kind of greatness [*scientific, literary, political*] has nothing to do with the psychic. It consists in a special mental capacity (Raman, Tagore) or in a great vital force which enables them to lead men and dominate them. These faculties are often but not always accompanied by something in the personality Daivic or Asuric which supports their action and gives to men an impression of greatness apart even from the special capacity — the sense of a great personality.

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Most great men know perfectly well that they are great.

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It is the power in them [*great men*] that is great and that power comes from the Divine — by their actions and greatness they help the world and aid the cosmic purpose. It does not matter whether they have ego or not — they are not doing Yoga.

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If a man rises to a higher plane of consciousness, it does not necessarily follow that he will be a greater man of action or a greater creator. One may rise to spiritual planes of inspiration undreamed of by Shakespeare and yet not be as great a poetic creator as Shakespeare. “Greatness” is not the object of spiritual realisation any more than fame or success in the world — how are these things the standard of spiritual realisation?

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Of course you can [*do Yoga without being great*] — there is no need of being great. On the contrary humility is the first necessity, for one who has ego and pride cannot realise the Highest.

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Each one can be truly great only in the measure in which he feels and opens to the source of all greatness, the Divine.

Greatness and Vices

It is not only the very very very big people who are of importance to the Divine. All energy, strong capacity, power of effectuation are of importance.

As for Napoleon, Caesar and Shakespeare, not one of them was a virtuous man, but they were great men — and that was your contention, that only virtuous men are great men and those who have vices are not great, which is an absurd contention. All of them went after women — two were ambitious, unscrupulous. Napoleon was most arrogant and violent.

Shakespeare stole deer, Napoleon lied freely, Caesar was without scruples.

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But do you really believe that men like Napoleon, Caesar, Shakespeare were not great men and did nothing for the world or for the cosmic purpose? that God was deterred from using them for His purpose because they had defects of character and vices? What a singular idea!

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Why should he [*the Divine*] care [*about the vices of great men*]? Is he a policeman? So long as one is in the ordinary nature, one has qualities and defects, virtues and vices. When one goes beyond, there are no virtues and vices, — for these things do not belong to the Divine Nature.

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Yes, certainly. Many great men even have often very great vices and many of them. Great men are not usually model characters.

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They [*great men*] have more energy and the energy comes out in what men call vices as well as in what men call virtues.

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Men with great capacities or a powerful mind or a powerful vital have very often more glaring defects of character than ordinary men — or at least the defects of the latter do not show so much, being like themselves, smaller in scale.

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Great or dazzling, or small in their field, ambition is ambition and it is necessary for most for an energetic action. What is the use of calling a thing a vice when it is small and glorifying it when it is big?