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A French Prophet of India's Resurgence
in the Nineteenth Century:
Saint Yves d'Alveydre and His
'Mission de l'Inde'

by

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A French Prophet of India's Resurgence in the Nineteenth Century: Saint Yves d'Alveydre and His 'Mission de l'Inde'*

At the time when the West's colonial sway over the rest of the world reached its acme, India had a hallowed place in the imagination of Europeans, and the study of the country's culture and history was coloured by the romantic or rather 'Romanesque' fascination with the exotic Indies.

Much of the 'Victorian' glamour that surrounded India has since faded, and modern Indological studies strive to be scientifically dry and almost clinical. Contemporary scholars tend to pride themselves in the high degree of their specialization and they generally ignore all references to what is broadly and rather contemptuously described as theosophical occultism. Marxism, Structuralism and Deconstructionism, among other schools of thought have led to the 'normalization' of Indian religion and history, starting from the 'objective' viewpoint that India is a country like any other and Hinduism just another socio-religious anthropological phenomenon.

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* Lecture delivered at the IIC on November 2, 2010 by Dr. Come Carpentier de Gourdon

It is little wonder that in this sanitized context, the figure and writings of Joseph Alexandre Saint Yves d'Alveydre have sunk into obscurity, in spite of the high profile this personage acquired in his lifetime (1843-1909), and the influence he had on a distinguished phalanx of writers and travellers such as Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, A. F. Ossendowski, Rene Guenon and Nicholas and Helena Roerich as well as Rudolf Steiner and R. Schwaller de Lubicz. Guenon dedicated one of his books to the enigma of the 'King of the World' for which Saint Yves is his main source, along with Ossendowski who brought back extensive reports about it from Turkestan and Mongolia and included some in his 1921 best seller *Beasts, Men and Gods*.

After surveying a large area of the Himalayas and Tibet during his 1924-28 periplum, —at the time when (in 1926) the USSR dispatched a team led by Komissar Yaakov Blumkin in search of Shambhala—in 1934-35, Roerich carried out an expedition into Central Asia and Mongolia with the support of the then US Secretary of Agriculture, Henry Wallace. Locating Shambhala-Agartha, a frequent source of inspiration for his artistic and spiritual work, was one of the unofficial goals of these missions and the Uruswati Himalayan Institute which he established in the Kullu Valley of the Indian Himalayas also aimed to find and record traces of a primeval 'Indo-Aryan' civilization. Later still, in 1934 and 1938, the Third Reich sent expeditions, the latter headed by Ernst Schafer, with the same goal, in the belief that this hidden Eden was the refuge of the unadulterated Aryan race.

The young Saint Yves was initiated in that small esoteric circle and continued to practise clairvoyance, astral travel and 'psychurgy' throughout his life

The son of a Parisian physician specialized in the treatment of mental diseases, Saint Yves was a rebellious youth his father placed in the correctional school of Mettray for a few years before sending him to the Brest Navy Academy where he studied medicine. There however he fell ill from cholera or 'black pox' and went to the island of Jersey to recover in 1863. It was his fortune to make the acquaintance of the greatest living French poet, Victor Hugo who was living as a political exile in the Channel Islands and dedicated much time to spiritualist sessions. The young Saint Yves was initiated in that small esoteric circle and continued to practise clairvoyance, astral travel and 'psychurgy' throughout his life, though he came to the conclusion that western spiritism and hypnotism were lowly shadows of the exalted techniques of extrasensorial perception known in the East. Those

practices however enjoyed greater public acceptance than they do now, even in the high reaches of society and were often associated with Oriental studies, which Saint Yves carried out on his own in Paris and in London where he went on numerous occasions, and had occasion to peruse some rare Indian texts not available in French at the time.

Two major intellectual influences were the reactionary spiritualist aristocrat and Scottish Mason Joseph de Maistre (1753-1821), a stern critic of liberal democracy, whom the young Joseph Alexandre had read on the advice of his teacher Abbe Rosseau, and Fabre d'Olivet (1767-1821), a scholar of Hebrew esotericism and ancient Egyptian philosophy who thought he had rediscovered the true meaning of the Pentateuch, of Pythagoreanism and of the original gnosis common to all traditions. Both referred to an ageless divine wisdom handed down from generation to generation by 'unknown superiors', supernatural spiritual teachers. During his stay in Jersey, Saint Yves met a relative of Fabre d'Olivet who entrusted to him some of the writings of the master.

One of the best selling novelists of the time was Lord Bulwer Lytton, the author of *The Last Days of Pompeii*, who was also regarded as a master of esoteric knowledge. In particular his 1871 novel, *The Coming Race*, described an Aryan people living in a vast underground world and possessing a secret 'Enochian' knowledge which gave them immense powers, such as the control of an energy called the *Vril*. We will find traces of Bulwer Lytton's writings in the works of Saint Yves who subsequently struck a friendship with his son, Robert, the first Earl of Lytton.

After joining the army and being wounded in battle during the 1870 war with Prussia, the young student of Occultism wrote his first esoteric work entitled *Le Retour du Christ* in 1874. He had by then joined the French Home Ministry, in which he remained until his 1877 marriage to a prestigious Russian aristocrat gave him the financial freedom to pursue his research and writing full time. In that same year, he published an important essay *Les Clefs de l'Orient* which sought to resolve the vexed 'Eastern Question' by restoring the unity of the three Semitic faiths on the basis of their primeval origins, the Gnosis recorded in the *Vedas* which he saw as the source of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

His new wife, Marie-Victoire de Riznich, divorced from the Count of Keller, was no ordinary lady. A great beauty, fourteen years older than her new husband, she belonged to a family of Russian Baltic nobility that had produced the famous Baroness von Krudener, the mystical inspirer and guide of Tzar Alexander the First—he who had defeated Napoleon in 1813—and she was also related to Countess Hanska, the wife of Honore de Balzac, the illustrious French novelist, deeply involved in esoteric research as well. She was known for her uncommon gifts as a medium and rumoured to have been a mistress to Tzar Alexander II. The philosophical moorings of her family were the occultist Oriental teachings transmitted within what was loosely known as the ‘Northern School’, connected to the eighteenth century. Strict Observance Templar Masonry of Freiherr Von Hundt, to which one can also connect Helena Blavatsky, another Russian noblewoman reputed for her extraordinary knowledge of magical and secret lore and for her alleged supernatural powers.

In the company of Marie-Victoire, Saint Yves was able not only to deepen and expand his psychic research, but also to rise in status as he was made a Marquis of the Holy See by Pope Leo XIII in 1880, an unlikely recognition for a man whose beliefs and writings should have attracted the condemnation or at least the suspicion of the Vatican. Truth is often stranger or less logical than fiction.

Between 1882 and 1887, the now socially prominent author produced his most important works, consisting in five long essays known as the Missions. *The Mission of India in Europe* (subtitled: *The Mission of Europe in India, the Problem of the Mahatma and its solution*) was written in 1886, and went to the core of his

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teaching for it expounded a secret Indian doctrine of Vedic origin already described in his earlier (1884) *La Mission des Juifs* (Mission of the Jews), and which he claimed to have learnt through his astral visits to the underground realm of Agartha in the Himalayas some ten years before. The Mission of the Jews held that the esoteric wisdom handed down by Moses was inherited from the Vedic ‘Atlantean’ science conveyed by the Pontiff Jethro, Moses’s father-in-law, and that the Hebrews had lost the keys to its true meaning when they had become disconnected from the original source. Hence it was necessary to go back to the teachings of Manu and his Indian successors.

La Mission de l'Inde was the only one that he did not bring out in his lifetime, allegedly because he was warned not to by the Himalayan masters whose existence and message he claimed to reveal. He therefore had all the copies in the press pulped except for one. It was left to his disciples to bring out a first edition in 1910 the year after his death, from the original kept by Marie-Victoire's son, Count Alexander von Keller. When they occupied Paris in 1940, the German authorities confiscated all the copies they could find, but subsequent editions were carried out after the war.

The strangest part of this crowning episode in the author's life is that he was visited by two mysterious but distinguished messengers from India in 1885; an Afghan prince who went by the name of Hardjij Scharipf (in the spelling he used when signing his letters: Hardjij Scharipf Baguristan) and a Rishi Bhagwan Das Raji Shrin who came to Paris, upon learning of his earlier writings that extensively referred to India's secret doctrines.

Though nothing is known about Rishi Bhagwan Das, Hardjij Scharipf has left a trace since letters from and to him and at least one portrait photograph have survived to this day. He was said to have been born in Bombay in 1838. He was obviously a man of distinction and noble bearing who wrote perfect French in admirable handwriting, styled himself Brahma-Guru-Pandit and taught Upanishadic philosophy as well as Sanskrit. He corresponded with Saint Yves and other eminent personages, including a French General who showed him great respect. He undertook to teach the language of the Hindu scriptures to Saint Yves, and may have been the first to bring to his knowledge a secret 22 letter alphabet called *Vattan* which allegedly went all the way back to Manu and the origins of civilization, 56000 years earlier (precisely from 53761 BC) in Atlantis and which had been kept hitherto solely within the scholarly hierarchy of Agartha.

The fact that the first written records were believed to be relatively recent in Indian history, given that the Indus valley glyphs had not been discovered yet, meant that in Saint Yves's view at least, *Vattan* proved the antiquity of writing in India and evinced a link with the much later but related Phoenician and Hebrew phonetic alphabets as well as with the 22 keys of Hermes Trimesgistus, the divine teacher of Alexandrian magical gnosis, astrology and alchemy.

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The author of the 'Missions' embraces the traditional Indian version that the bulk of the oldest and most extensive scriptures was lost or hidden when foreign invasions necessitated it for their protection. He quotes in support of this tradition a legal case (*Maharaj Libel and Bhatia conspiracy*) that had been tried in Bombay in 1862.

Accordingly, he holds the currently available texts of both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* to be shorter surviving versions of much more voluminous and ancient works, presumably written in Vattan script. Though that view is contrary to the conclusions of modern scholarship, we should note that the main personages and events of the *Ramayana* for example are cited in the much older *Rig Veda* and some of the other *Vedas* so that the story must have been known in some form several centuries before Valmiki's classical epic was composed. The same can be argued for the *Puranas*, most of which are said to have been lost many centuries ago. The extant books appear in some cases at least to be fragments of larger collections accumulated by the *Vyasa*s, those enlightened composers, recorders and scribes who became subsumed into one mythical semi-divine author, Krishna Dvaipayana Vedavyasa ('the dark one born on an island who divided the Vedas') who is supposed to have written or put together the original *Ramayana* in ten trillion verses (the

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number quoted by Saint Yves) as well as the *Mahabharata* which was allegedly then even vaster than what remains of it.

According to the Indian initiate teachers, the 'lost' ancient writings had been taken to secret subterranean abodes in order to protect the portentous secrets of that mother of all civilizations from foreign invaders. The story about the last king of Ayodhya leaving that city and taking refuge in the underground labyrinth of Agartha in the Himalayas well before the time of Buddha Sakya Muni rings as a distant echo of a similar account in the *Skanda Purana* (Manaskanda) which talks of Ritupurna, a king of Ayodhya meeting the gods in a Himalayan cave often identified with the Patala Bhuvaneshwar site in Pithoragarh district of the state of Uttarakhand. It also refers to the exodus from Ayodhya which, according to the *Ramayana* became deserted when, after King Rama's departure all its citizens abandoned it and will remain a wasteland until the coming of the expected Rishabha ('the best of men').

Throughout ancient Indian literature, various rulers, beginning with the five Pandava brothers, are shown leaving for the Northern mountain ranges from where the first ancestor Manu is reputed to have come down into the Indo-Gangetic plains long after the great flood. Afghanistan is also known to harbour a vast network of caves as the present NATO occupiers, following their Red Army predecessors have experienced to their distress.

The account of Agartha given by Saint Yves is also consonant with the Indo-Tibetan descriptions of Shambhala (*Olmolungring*), traditionally said to be the ancient kingdom of Zhang Zhung around the source of the Satlej river and of its semi-divine kings, the Kalkins or Kulikas according to a tradition that appears to derive from the *Bon* Shamanistic religion of the Pre-Buddhist Himalayas though it already features in both the *Mahabharata* and *Puranas*. In Tibet seven such secret abodes are described in the *Nghe Beyul Khampalung* and one is said to be the Makalu-Barun valley in Eastern Nepal. References to a mythical realm of the gods in Tibet and Turkestan are also found in Chinese ancient books as in the texts of the Russian Orthodox Old Believers.

It is reasonable to conclude that our author was made privy to the teachings of a particular lineage or sect in India which seems to have practised a universalistic synthesis of 'reformed' Brahmanism and Sufi Islam while quietly working to reform some of the abuses and distortions in the practice of Hinduism, (such as the iniquitous segregation between castes) and preparing for India's independence. They appear to have used the Vattan alphabet, related to both Indic and Semitic writing systems, which is plausible keeping in mind that multiple alphabets and writing systems have been used in India and that many were invented in specific communities to protect their separate identity and escape persecution or assimilation.

It should also be noted that many of the more than 1200 languages spoken in the subcontinent have not been researched and that they are not all derived from known 'Indo-European', Dravidian or Semitic origins so that allowance should be made for the possible permanence of hitherto hidden linguistic and graphic families. The 'Saraswati-Indus' valley script, consisting of more than 600 glyphs remains

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undeciphered and though a few letters of the Vattan alphabet are similar to their equivalents in the Brahmi script of ancient India, there is no apparent connection between the two writing systems.

The community which initiated Saint Yves apparently did not wish to be brought out in public view. That would account for their urging him not to publish his 'Mission' at the time, possibly from fear of British repression, if indeed it was involved in a clandestine action to prepare for national liberation. There is insufficient information on the various movements that were hatching plans for emancipation of the country and it is logical to assume that various forces were at work. Some of the Westerners who got involved in the study of Indian spirituality, such as A.O. Hume and Annie Besant did play active roles in the freedom struggle, hinting that there were deep connections between esoteric currents and political forces, as some recent research into the nature and planning for the 1857 war of liberation has revealed.

Recent scholarly works such as Christopher Campbell's *The Maharaja's Box* (Harper Collins, 2002) and Jean Overton Fuller's *Blavatsky and Her Teachers* (East West, 1998) have revealed that there was an underground movement to overthrow British rule in India at the time. Madame Blavatsky seems to have acted, at times at least, as a Russian secret agent on behalf of her sponsor Mikhail Katkov, one of a group of fervent pan-Slavists who supported a scheme to invade India with Russian forces, both through Afghanistan and from the sea.

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In her travels throughout India, the Russian writer and occultist took contact with a number of Maharajas, including those of Kashmir, Indore and Gwalior in 1878 and, while expounding Theosophy, she reportedly sounded them on the prospect for an uprising against the colonizers. She openly supported the claim of Duleep Singh, the exiled son of the late King Ranjit Singh, the Lion of the Punjab, and may have been involved in a plot to foment a rebellion in that province with the support of Tzarist troops from the North West. Whatever one may think of the identities of her Masters of the Himalayas of the 'Great White Lodge', in their famous letters to various Theosophists, they explicitly supported the cause of India's liberation from foreign rule.

Duleep Singh, who was in Paris, attempted to return to India in that very year 1886 but was stopped by the British at Aden and forced to come back to France; hence the conspiracy, in which some native princes seem to have participated or with which they at least sympathized, was foiled. Ranbir Singh, the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, closely tied to Duleep's family died in 1885. He was regarded by Theosophists as a high initiate, personally acquainted with the Mahatmas of Agartha according to both H.P. Blavatsky and her partner Colonel Olcott. Another source, the Russian traveller and suspected spy, Nicholas Notovitch who claimed to have found manuscripts proving Jesus Christ's visit to the Hemis Monastery in Ladakh in 1887 had reported in previous years that Ranbir Singh was secretly favourable to a Russian invasion.

Duleep Singh had been convinced to reclaim his throne by his kinsman Sirdar Thakar Singh Sandhanwalia, well known to Blavatsky: and a leader, with the Raja of Faridkot of the Singh Sabha, a reformed Singh movement. The Sirdar had come to see his royal cousin on his Elveden estate in England in 1884 with that purpose. Early theosophy also had links with the Aryan League of Honour, set up in 1881 to pave the way for India's liberation, although its Russian Founder seems to have remained ambiguous about the desirability of a Russian conquest since she was more committed to India's interests than to her countrymen's ambitions.

All this shows that esotericism, the Great Game and the struggle for Independence were intimately related, as could be expected in a deeply religious culture like India's, imbued with supernatural elements. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, another great scholar and pioneer of the freedom movement penned *Orion, the Antiquity of the Vedas* in 1893 (Saint Yves writes that according to Agartha's gnosis, the souls of the departed rise to Orion from the North Pole) and *Arctic Home of the Vedas* in 1903, seeking to prove that the Vedic peoples were the Hyperboreans described by the Greeks. That belief is rooted in the symbol of Meru, the polar mountain which is generally said to be in the Himalayas. It is hence possible that Prince Hardjij Scharipf and his travelling companion were connected to the wider clandestine activity surrounding the exiled Duleep Singh who visited Saint Petersburg in the fall of 1887 in the hope of enlisting the Tzar's support but was met with a courteous refusal.

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Like many Hindu reformists of his day, d'Alveydre refers consistently to the dynasty founded by Sri Rama 9000 years ago and to his descendents who went 'underground' 3100 years before the Common Era, that is at the beginning of the Kali Yuga when a certain Irshu rose against the ancient hierarchy of *Paradesha* (the root word for *Pardesh*, *Firdaus*, *Paradeisos*), and brought about the decline of that civilization whence the Egyptian, Greek and Hebrew sacred traditions are said to be derived. His estimates for Sri Ram or Rama's place in history reflect the traditional Puranic and ancient Greek chronologies of Indian kings which both begin on or about 6776 BC.

According to the revelation he gained, Agartha holds the treasures of that ancient realm and is ruled by a mighty and saintly triad that represents the three branches of all power: scientific, judicial and socio-economic respectively. In that order, the three powers are held by the *Brahatma* (or *Brahmatma*) symbolically adorned with a seven-crowned tiara, the *Mahatma* and the *Mahanga*, at the peak of an elaborate pyramid of enlightened beings, in ascending order *dvijas*, *yogis*, *bhagwandases*

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and the twenty two *Rishis* (or *Archis* he etymologically equates with the Archons of Greek Gnosis) who help them govern the twenty some million inhabitants of that blessed domain and pursue the unending quest for the secrets of the universe while studying the enormous capital of knowledge accumulated over the many past millennia.

Agartha itself is inaccessible being invisible, at least to most people (presumably because it is partly in another dimension) and much of it lies deep underground but surrounding areas are indeed reachable in spite of their remoteness. Though he does not give names, he claims that these adjacent kingdoms are ruled by rajas, the outer guardians of Agartha, whose secret they zealously keep, probably referring to the Buddhist and Hindu kingdoms of Kashmir, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Ladakh and other Tibetan and Mongolian principalities of the Himalayas-Hindu Kush-Tian Shan area. He adds that the sadhus and faqirs who travel the length and breadth of Hindustan are envoys and messengers acting the eyes and ears of Agartha which has 'charged' them with some of its miraculous energy.

Saint Yves comments that Agartha itself is the heavenly *Asgard* of Norse mythology, the secret Pole of the world, and that it is alluded to in the Epistles of Saint Paul (*Aggarta* meaning an Epistle or Message in Hebrew). He writes that it is the central sanctuary among twenty two sacred seats located in the Himalayan and Kun Lun chains but that he is not allowed to give more information about its location. All that mythology is obviously reflected in the Shangri La of James Hilton's 1933 novel, *Lost Horizon*. The mention of Meru orients us towards Mount Kailash, the sacred abode of the cave of Shiva in the Western Himalayas where Hindu tradition places the ultra-dimensional and subterranean kingdom of the semi-divine *Vidyadharas* who treasure the wisdom and knowledge of the entire universe. The information conveyed by Saint Yves is therefore broadly in conformity with the Hindu Puranic tradition.

Like many of his contemporaries, the French esotericist was keenly aware of the scientific preoccupations and discoveries of his age and he credits the Agarthans with very advanced technologies which he describes in some detail. He anticipates by almost one century, the creation of fiberoptics when he reports that in Agartha "*electrical pathways, not made of steel but of ... flexible glass... (which do not) imprudently deplete the carbon reserves of the planet... nor saddle it with an iron framework no less conducive to the spread of some cosmic plagues*" (*Mission de l'Inde*, Dualpha Editions, 2006, p. 74), showing an environmental awareness that most of his contemporaries could only shrug off. He depicts the eerie light (provided by oxyhydric gas) that shines in the caverns of Agartha, in words similar to Coleridge's evocation in the poem *Kubla Khan* of Kublai's subterranean abode, Xanadu: '*A stately pleasure dome ..., Through caverns measureless to man... For he on honey dew hath fed and drunk the milk of Paradise*', and further says that the central giant dome in which the rulers gather is lit by catoptric devices that shine forth with the enharmonic spectrum of which the visible prism is the diatonic version (*ibid.*, p. 66-67).

The visionary Marquis provides detailed descriptions or at least evocations of the extensive discoveries that have been made and are still daily being made by the scientists from that hidden kingdom, in all areas from biology to physics, astronomy, chemistry, geology and anthropology: '*the physiological constitution of the planet and of the cosmos is known in its smallest details, material as well as essential, visible and invisible*' (*ibid.* p. 73).

He marvels at the precision and scope of the Agarthans' knowledge of vanished continents such as Atlantis that now lie sunken beneath the oceans as of the strange species (including winged, batlike humanoid beings, evocative of John Keel's Mothman) (*The Mothman Prophecies*, Review Press, 1975) inhabiting the depths of the earth. He mentions their expeditions into the atmosphere and beyond in vast 'dirigible' aircraft as well as their astral travels along with the spirits of the dead, and depicts briefly the sprawling labyrinth of underground libraries filled with tablets of stone carved with inscriptions only accessible to the students of Agartha.

The mixture of geopolitical realism, prophetic foresight and fantastic imagination in his writings is indeed typical of myths that some modern psychologists have defined as 'truer than the truth' since the latter consists in the mere account provided by our impressions, memories and measurements of what we can both physically perceive and intellectually rationalize.

We cannot help but think of the novels of Jules Verne when we read his panorama of Agartha, and that comparison is even more relevant if one admits that Saint Yves's

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early work on the industrial use of algae may have been used by the famous science-fiction novelist to evoke Captain Nemo's innovative utilization of the natural resources of the sea in his futuristic *Nautilus* submarine in *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*. His account of the aircraft of Agartha may have been influenced by the reports, backed by photographs in some cases, about mysterious flying vessels sighted in the United States in the late nineteenth century by a relatively large number of witnesses. Jacques Vallee has recorded some of those news stories in his book *Le College Invisible* (J'Ai Lu, 1975) when some zeppelin-shaped craft stopped over Florida and one of the crews, when asked about their origins, replied enigmatically: 'We come from anywhere, but tomorrow we will be in Cuba' (*ibid.* p. 39)

There is no need to say that the story of the subterranean Central Asian realm is dismissed as a fanciful legend by orthodox academics. However, the author of the Missions did not invent this account, doubtlessly based on the existence of extensive and unexplored caverns beneath the Himalayas and the Hindu Kush. He was at least in part

reporting the teachings of one of the many Indian esoteric schools. Thus the knowledge that he was imparted about the metaphysical and sonic meaning of the *Aum* (in his 1885 work) is quite authentic and shows that his sources were bona-fide at least with regard to the underlying philosophy and linguistics they expounded.

So convinced and confident was Saint Yves of the hard evidence for the story that he offered in writing to introduce the world's major heads of state to the ambassadors of Agartha and to bring them in contact with that hidden power.

In particular, he gave to the head of State of his country the opportunity to meet with the representatives of the Himalayan masters and send a mission there. Though Saint Yves was respected in France and was even awarded the Legion d'Honneur, there was no official response to his proposal to President Jules Grevy which must have appeared bizarre at the very least.

Predictably, he had no better luck with the foreign potentates he approached yet nonetheless, there was some strange convergence between the positions some of them adopted and his unsolicited advice. Was he aware of their own political tendencies, in tune with the *zeitgeist* or was it mere coincidence?

As a matter of fact, in the very period when Saint Yves was trying to make his discovery known to the world, several other researchers were writing about their own insights on Indian occult lore so that he did voice at least some of the spirit of that age of Symbolism, Orientalism and Exoticism in literature, in which science was often combined with ancient mysticism. While Helena Blavatsky established the Theosophical Society in Madras in 1883 and was to publish her *Secret Doctrine* in 1888 in which she often quoted Saint Yves; O.P. Sinnett, editor of *The Pioneer* in Allahabad wrote, allegedly under the dictation of the Himalayan Mahatmas, his very popular books *The Occult World* (1881) and *Esoteric Buddhism* (1883); while A.O. Hume, who fathered the Indian National Congress in the very same year of 1885, claimed to have been in touch with the mysterious quasi-immortal masters while residing in his Rothney Castle in Simla.

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1884 was the year of the 'Coulomb affair', which pitted a French couple against the Theosophical Society when they alleged, with the support of Scottish clergymen that Blavatsky made fraudulent claims about being in touch with ascended masters. That controversy had a wide impact in the West and explains why Saint Yves gave his essay the subtitle 'The Problem of the Mahatma and his Solution' since he intended to unravel the mystery by revealing its real nature. It is worth pointing out in this context that more than twenty five people, many of them eminent in their respective fields, reported having been in touch in one way or another with the mysterious Himalayan guides.

One of the letters of Saint Yves was addressed to the reigning Tzar, Alexander III whom he beseeched to act as a liberator by recognizing the hidden kingdom of Agartha and rejecting colonialism while establishing cooperative relations with Britain and hence renouncing the Great Game which characterized the foreign policies of those two great powers in Asia. He particularly warned the Tzar against invading Afghanistan which, he wrote, was critically linked with Agartha and could hence not be successfully occupied.: '*Sire be prudent if you touch Afghanistan. Do not step into the territory of those Amphyctions (i.e 'those who live around it') without spelling out the hoary password of God's kingdom'* (*ibid.*, p. 152-153).

Once more we can see a relation between his advice and the contemporary conspiracy pursued at the time by some in the Russian military hierarchy with whom H.P. Blavatsky was in touch.

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Indeed, whether or not the Emperor paid any attention to that strange letter, his policies led to a détente in the Great Game, and to the formation of the *Entente* with France and the United Kingdom, in contradiction with his father's broadly philo-Germanic anti-British line. Alexander ignored the bellicose entreaties of his generals, thereby avoiding a looming conflict with the United Kingdom in central Asia as he did not venture into Afghanistan. His own quasi-mystical notion of his Imperial role and his aversion to liberalism and socialism were not antithetical to Saint Yves's rejection of Democracy and Socialism which he both painted with the brush of anarchy. The French visionary wrote in 1889 *L'Empereur Alexandre III – Une Epopée Russe* to mark

the visit to Paris of the Tzar who had become France's close and popular ally and financial partner.

It was hoped that the Franco-Anglo-Russian agreement could pave the way for European peace by holding in check German expansionism, although in fact it laid the ground for the First World War between two antagonistic alliances. Saint Yves's intervention seems to have been in line with French national policy which was to bring Russia and Great Britain together on France's side.

However, whereas the Russian Potentate, in spite of his friendship with the French Republic, loathed democracy and dedicated his efforts to the maintenance of traditional autocracy and religious orthodoxy, the French philosopher sought to bring about the universal rule of Synarchy, the regime of the Platonic philosopher-king in which metaphysics regulated and crowned the socio-economic edifice. Unsurprisingly, he rejected Communism as a new form of anarchy that would throw up new tyrannies as oppressive as the old Feudal and Capitalist oligarchies. In this as in many other verdicts, he proved prescient, however fictitious his other beliefs might appear to modern Orientalists. Yet both d'Alveydre's notions of India's hidden knowledge and his views on her future are of the same order as those expounded by Sri Aurobindo, who is almost universally regarded as one of India's greatest modern philosophers and prophets. The insights of his French predecessor can therefore not be lightly dismissed, as mere fancies either.

The theory of Synarchy had, as is too often the case with abstract concepts when they are translated into practice, a fate not in keeping with its author's deal. That name was given to the doctrine adopted in the years between the two world wars in France by a number of high-ranking engineers and technocrats who, disgusted with parliamentary democracy, conspired to overthrow the Republic and replace it by an authoritarian secretive government of their own class, based on knowledge and merit. Similar plots were hatched in a few Latin American nations according to the same ideology. Saint Yves would not have

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approved of that kind of elitist scientific materialism just as he did not support the Masonic affiliations of many of his admirers. He himself remained a free student of higher knowledge, did not seek to build a church or secret society of his own and disavowed even those set up by some of his pupils such as the then famous Gerard Encausse, better known as Papus.

Saint Yves, at about the time when he sought to influence the Tzar's policies, implored Queen Victoria to grant equality before the law and in education to her Indian subjects, and thereby bring India out of thralldom onto a status of equality with European states. He implied that he was aware of the Crown's inclination to do so in spite of the opposition of the bureaucracy and of the British settlers in India. It would seem logical for Whitehall and Westminster to be, *in petto* at least, more liberal in the matter than the colonizers and the administrators who occupied the country and whose vested interests were closely tied with racist prejudices. Saint Yves explicitly voiced in his letter the Indian demand for '*common universities, common courts of law and ...economic mediations for reducing the frightening tax*

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burden the people is loaded with'. One sentence in his letter reads: '*This agreement (between India and Europe) is as indispensable to the Renaissance of India as it is to the full fruition of European civilization*' (*ibid.* p.15-157), and he reiterates in a manner which seems to announce Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent campaign: '*India does not want to rebel: its ancient wisdom better inspired, only seeks its own life and resurrection*' (*ibid.*).

In that spirit, he urged Victoria to conclude an agreement with Russia. Indeed such an understanding was reached in 1907, two years before the author's death though it was based on colonial premises and obviously not on the recognition of Agarthia and the emancipation of India.

In 1887, Lord Lytton, mentioned earlier who had been for four years a repressive and unpopular Viceroy of India between 1876 and 1880, came to Paris as Her Majesty's Ambassador. It was to him that Saint Yves probably communicated his views and his message to Victoria and subsequently Lytton, himself a well known poet under the *nom*

de plume of Owen Meredith, translated a long poem by Saint Yves addressed to the Queen.

During his tenure as the Viceroy, Lytton had summoned and held the Great Darbar of 1877 in Delhi in which Victoria was proclaimed Empress, thereby laying claim to the symbolic succession of the Great Mughals and of earlier Indian *Chakravartins*, *Chhatrapatis* and *Samrats*. He also started the second Afghan war which ended in disaster for the British troops. Lytton, who was well placed to understand the warning given by Saint Yves regarding Afghanistan, seemed, like many of his countrymen, comfortable with the notion that *Homo Britannicus* had a providential role in India and had been blessed with quasi-universal supremacy by divine dispensation. It is however to be noted that, in keeping with his friend Disraeli's own views, he saw India more as an empire with a British head and administration than as a colonial territory.

In Lytton's romantic vision of history, shared by many in his class, the sons of Albion carried out in the East the world-unifying (we might even say 'globalizing') mission of the Macedonian Alexander and his generals and he sought to assimilate the Indian princes into the English nobility by bestowing on them insignia and honours similar to those displayed by the members of the United Kingdom's peerage. It appears that he did not greet the Frenchman's emancipatory call with disfavour. His family remained associated with India in the next generations as one of his sons, the second Earl of Lytton was also briefly a Viceroy of India while one of his daughters married Edwin Lutyens, the planner and chief architect of the new imperial capital of New Delhi, and became a devotee of J. Krishnamurti whom the Theosophical Society had proclaimed the new Messiah Maitreya or 'Star of the East' in keeping with the theology of the Hidden Masters and their avatars.

The third sovereign whom Saint Yves addressed was Pope Leo XIII who had been announced under the motto *Lumen in Caelo* in Malachi's prophecies, as he reminded him and who was undertaking at that time a quiet but major reform of the Holy See's foreign policies, required by the loss of its territorial power following the annexation of Rome to the Kingdom of Italy in 1871. Since then, the Pope was confined to the Palace of the Vatican as a virtual prisoner of an anti-clerical Italian state, and even

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sought actively to leave Rome and move to a more hospitable country. At the 1869 Council, the dogma of Papal Infallibility had been proclaimed so that the Pontiff had assumed absolute authority on matters of faith and doctrine.

In that precarious context, the proposal made by the Marquis d'Alveydre was nothing short of revolutionary. Quoting various theological texts and Church prophecies he asked for his *Missions* to be studied in the Pontifical College and reiterated his earlier suggestion, made in his *Mission des Souverains* (1882) for the Holy Father to assume the role of spiritual leader of Europe as an heir of the esoteric divine wisdom of *Paradesa* handed down to the Western World by Jesus Christ, thus recognizing the Church's filiation with Agartha that Saint Yves identified as Saint Paul's Church of the Protogones.

Affirming that the Three Wise Kings who had come from the East to adore the newborn Jesus in Bethlehem were messengers of Agartha, he proposed that the Pontiff should move his headquarters to Jerusalem, and thereby relinquish the Roman imperial heritage which he saw as the causal factor for the degeneration of Christianity. He went so far as to say that he had received assurances from both the Jewish Gaon of Jerusalem and the Grand Mufti of Mecca that they were aware of the Agarthic tradition and knowledge.

Whether that was mere imagining or whether he only repeated the allegations of his Indian visitors remains an open question, but it was common for Indian spiritual teachers to assert the harmony and concordance of their wisdom with the other great Gnostic traditions of the world. Thus, many Hindu yogis and gurus, some attired as Sufi Qalandari dervishes, went on pilgrimage to Mecca and Jerusalem or at least were reported to have done so, just as it was frequently said that Jesus had studied in India.

Though Leo XIII did not emigrate to Jerusalem, he built good relations with the Russian Tzar and reached out to the Eastern Christian churches which he exhorted to keep their distinct liturgies and sacred languages. In that he was in tune with Saint Yves's call for restoring pristine Christian unity as a way of bringing Europe together in a synarchical union, just as in his 1892 Encyclical *Rerum Novarum*, he voiced commitment to social justice with regard to the impoverished working classes while condemning both Communism and Capitalism. There also the Church

seemingly reflected the call voiced in Saint Yves's 1882 brochure called *The Mission of the Workers*.

In 1886 the Pope set up a nation-wide Catholic hierarchy in India. He also opened for the first time the Vatican archives to outside scholars, promoted the dogma of Immaculate Conception and proclaimed the Virgin Mary 'Co-Redemptrix' with the clear intent to place the feminine principle theologically on par with the masculine figure of Jesus Christ. Saint Yves could only approve of those reforms which were consonant with his recommendations but Catholic tradition holds that the Pope was inspired by a vision in Saint Peter's Basilica on October 13, 1884, when both the Devil and Archangel Michael appeared to him and indicated that unless he placed the Church under the protection of Saint Michael, the Prince of Darkness would destroy it within seventy five to a hundred years from that day. The Marquis d'Alveydre describes Michael as the Sun who stands for Christianity, symbolized by a pomegranate while the Moon's crescent evokes Islam which has Gabriel as its guardian angel in Agartha's symbology. Esoteric Alexandrian Christianity was, to him, an emanation of the Wisdom of Agartha and he calls it the 'Church of the Christ in Glory': the metaphysical *Christus Gloriosus*, as distinct from the western Church of Christ on the Cross which focuses on his human Passion.

The predictions of our mystical philosopher for the century that was to follow are even more enlightening than his political advice. He announced the rise of China and India a hundred years after the date of his writings and pointed out the difference between China, which he saw as a future economic and military juggernaut, and India which was called to be the world's teacher, thanks to the hidden guiding role played by Agartha. He referred to Britain's plans, then in agreement with Imperial Germany, to build up China militarily against Russia in the Far East (what the U.S.A. was to do from 1971, following the Nixon-Kissinger visit to Beijing and warned that if Europe did not come together as a synarchy, it would exhaust and destroy itself through internecine conflicts and would eventually fall under the sway of the resurgent Asia by the end of the twentieth century. Current developments in Europe, China and India so far tend to coincide with his predictions.

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Although it was not too difficult for a far-sighted observer to harbour forebodings of the future world wars, it is uncanny that in his *Mission de l'Inde*, Saint Yves writes (*ibid.* p. 120-121) that the current *Brahatma*—whom he describes in great physical detail as a thin man of 'Ethiopian type' with a high bald forehead and who wears glasses—came to power in 1848 and is guiding India through a period of great change and turmoil which will lead to its independence for which however the country is not ready yet. Significantly he notes that the Brahatma '*envisions the temporary occupation of (India) by England as a trial imposed from on High. He knows it will cease when its raison d'être will have borne fruit; he knows the exact moment of the alliance or of liberation*' (*ibid.* p.138)

Incidentally the future Mahatma Gandhi was only a seventeen years old law student when the *Mission de l'Inde Le Probleme du Mahatma* was being written.

As it turns out, the British Government in the aftermath of the second World War planned to grant independence to its Indian empire in June 1948, and only due to certain contingencies was the date moved up to August 15, 1947. If we keep in mind that according to the Kalachakra tradition of Vajrayana Tantric Buddhism, each one of the 32 Kalkis or rulers of Shambhala (who is also known as the 'king of the world') rules for a hundred years before leaving his physical body, the implication is that 1948 was indeed to mark the term of that particular cycle.

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However, in the nomenclature provided by John L. Newman (*A Brief History of the Kalachakra*, Snow Lion, 1983), the twentieth Kalki, Mahabala reigned from 1827 to 1927 so that the two chronologies do not appear to coincide, but it is interesting that in 1848 Mahabala would have been 21 years old. Intriguingly, the Himalayan Masters of Madame Blavatsky around 1880 also gave some indications about the time when British paramountcy would cease, hinting in at least one documented occasion to the middle of the twentieth century.

By calling for the unity of Europe and the end of colonial domination, Saint Yves d'Alveydre joined a succession of intellectuals and policy-makers who held a similar vision, on the Catholic Right as on the Socialist Left of the ideological spectrum, from Leibnitz and Kant to Victor Hugo, Aristide Briand and Annie Besant and a little later

H. G. Wells and Coudenhove Kalergi. However his proposal to base the future European Federation on the universal spiritual foundation of a rediscovered wisdom and science from a common fountainhead, revived by a reformed Holy See was inspiring and it did attract the open support of some eminent members of the Roman Catholic clergy and of the secular elite. Indeed, although our Utopian philosopher had his detractors, he was never publicly condemned for his opinions by the religious and political authorities of the times who appear in retrospect more tolerant than many of their present day successors.

Following the death of his beloved wife in 1895, Saint Yves increasingly became a recluse and devoted himself to what he saw as his 'magnum opus': the design of the *Archeometre*, a geometric synthesis of all sacred languages, arts and sciences, ruled by astrological and other esoteric laws.

In its appearance the Archeometer, which remains an enigma to this day, looks both like Indian Mandalas and the fourteenth Century Raimon Llull's *Ars Magna* table. It manifests its creator's return to his original researches in the field of Kabbala and western astrology and numerology although the influence of Indian gnosis remains.

The abundant notes taken by one of his friends from their conversations reveal the vast scope and diversity of Saint Yves's knowledge and interests as well as the originality or even strangeness of his mind which kept him intellectually and spiritually active almost to his last day. In his eyes, the departed Marie Victoire de Riznich had become an angel who came to him during his meditation and prayer sessions and conveyed visions from the higher spheres. His lifework had brought together within the *Philosophia Perennis*, the essence of the Western and Eastern esoteric traditions and charted a path for metaphysics and political science to recover their primeval Vedic—and Platonic—unity.

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