



# After-Death Life: A Study of George Saunders' Novel "Lincoln in the Bardo" In The Light Of Indian Philosophy

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**Abstract:** The novel *Lincoln in the Bardo* revolves round the after-death experiences of various characters. According to Indian philosophy, the human body is made of three aspects. These are Gross body, Subtle body and *Atman*. After death, the gross body (human body) is eradicated but the subtle body and the *Atman* follow up their next after-death journey to get a new gross body or salvation. Their after-death course decides their next birth. But between death and the next life there is a place where one's subtle body lingers due to the state of his consciousness. In the title of the novel, *Lincoln in the Bardo*, the word *Bardo* signifies after-death world in which a man lingers because of his ignorance, unfulfilled desires, resolutions etc. The theme of the novel shares an identical resemblance with the Indian philosophy. The *Upniṣhad* such as *Praśna Upniṣhad* and *Chāndogya Upniṣhads* throw light on the journey of life as well as of death. They describe how one's *karma* decides his after-death course. At what extent, the consciousness of a man is stable, the more firmly, he accepts death. The characters of the novel show how due to their fluctuating consciousness, they linger in the after-death world. They do not accept their approaching end. They desire to go back to their own life. The present paper puts forth how these dead characters after realizing the truth, get salvation or a new life according to their states of consciousness.

**Keywords:** Karma, upniṣhad, prāna, smṛti vṛtti, sick-box, consciousness.

## I. Introduction

George Saunders' novel "Lincoln in the Bardo" is the story of unfulfilled aspirations, resolutions and dreams as well as of desires that become the cause of bondage, after their death, for every character of the novel. The after-death experiences of

these characters, find in the novel, are universal as they represent the experiences of every human being. The novel revolves round the various Indian philosophical doctrines about life and death as sin and righteousness, revenge and clemency, satisfaction and dissatisfaction, courage and cowardice, repentance and impenitence, etc. that are depicted in our *vedas* and *upniṣhads*. *Chāndogya Upniṣhads* states that there are three kinds of courses after death. They are: *Devayāna Mārga*, *Pitryāna Mārga* and the Downward world:

All the rituals performed along with meditation on *Prāṇa* (Vital force) and other deities, become the cause of reaching *Brahmaloka* (the region of *Hiraṇyagarbha*) through the Solar Path (*Devayāna Mārga*—the Path of gods); and rituals alone (performed without such meditation) become the cause of attaining the Lunar region through the Path of Smoke (*Pitryāna Mārga*—the Path of manes). And it has been said that those who, prompted by personal tendencies, become distracted from either of the two paths fall downwards. (*Chāndogya Upniṣhads* 3)

Similarly, in the present novel, there are three types of sick-box dwellers. Firstly those who are free to move from the one place to another. Secondly, North-Hill dwellers and the third one are those who live in the swamp. The dwellers of the swamp “distracted from either of the two paths fall downwards (*Chāndogya Upniṣhads* 3)” do not have proper physical appearance. They cannot utter words. They talk with gestures.

*Praśna Upniṣhad* describes that when a person passes away, he gets one of the two ways according to their *Karma*: the Southern course and the Northern course. Geographically these ways are based on the sun's movement from north to south. Philosophically, these courses are created by the God of time, “*Prajapati*” (*Praśna Upniṣhad* 14). “now those who perform. . . (sacrifices and charitable works (thinking them) as

works of supreme value, attain the world of the moon and afterwards return (there) again. Therefore the *Rishis* who desire offspring go by the Southern (Path)" (*Praśna Upaniṣhad* 14). The southern course is for those who realize their own true self with the help of meditation and penance. "But those who have sought the *Atman* by austerity, abstinence, faith and knowledge, attain the *Aditya* by the Northern Path. This is the source of all the forces. This is the immortal and free from danger,—this is the supreme resort. From there they do not return, (for) it is the end" (*Praśna Upaniṣhad* 14).

The novel depicts the most crucial experiences of the various characters that they have after death. It tells how even after death the man entangles in a stage that Saunders named as "Bardo". After death, the man struck at this stage because of the three reasons. First, they are not conscious about their own death. They imagine themselves as sick or wounded and so always wait for their loving ones to bring them back from their sick-boxes. They consider their coffin as sick-boxes and its surroundings as a hospital yard from where after the recovery, they will go back to their previous lives. Secondly, their resolutions, unfulfilled wishes that are not diminished with their body as they are stored in their mind whether it is the resolution to take revenge, to consummate, to live ones live for more time. Thirdly, they are the sinners. So the term Bardo signifies another dreamy world that exists in the consciousness of a dead only after death. Although death is a mysterious incident of life, it can be felt only by the dead one. But it is being created with life itself by the supreme power. According to *Aitareya Upaniṣhad*, the eight deities dwell in human body respectively, Fire in the mouth, Air lives in nostrils, Sun in the eyes, Directions dwell in ear, The Herbs and Tress in to the skin and in the form of hair, the Moon in the heart, Death in the naval and water in the limbs of generation. In the naval organ, death lives in the form of one

of the *prāna* namely *apāna*. *Praśna Upaniṣhad* also throws light on it:

According to the Brahman, it is the *Udana* energy that carries the soul after death to the different worlds according as the good or bad karma done in this world. Evidently then the *Udana* is that subtle aspect of *Prana* which not only pervades the whole system and sustains it but also controls the *Lingasharira* (the subtle body) in which the soul resides after leaving the physical. (*Praśna Upaniṣhad* 41)

## II. After-death World

The experiences of this after-life world are different for everyone. All the dwellers of sick-box feel seasons in their own way. As in the winter season, each of them is comforted differently. "A warm breeze arose, fragrant with all manner of things that give comfort: grass, sun, beer, bread, quilts, cream--this list being different for each of us, each being differently comforted" (Saunders 89). They are aware about the natural phenomena. "Flowers of extraordinary color, size, shape and fragrance sprang forth fully from the earth." (Saunders 89). Like their previous lives, they are aware of the changing seasons, are aware of their thirst, hunger etc. "The gray February tress began to blossom ... Fruit responsive to one's wishing: only let the mind drift in the direction of a certain color (silver, say) and shape (star) and, of the instant, a bounty of star-shaped silver fruits would sag and limbs of a tree that seconds before had stood fruitless and winter-dead." (Saunders 89)

Saunders in his novel depicts this after death life experience of forty seven sick-box dwellers. In this way, the readers find an opportunity to know more about the after death world. The characters namely Hans Vollman, Roger Bevins, Mrs. Elizabeth Crawford, Traynor Girl, Jane Ellis, Mrs. Abigail

Blass, A.G. Coombs, Mrs. Delaney, Merkel, Poster Bell, Mr. Dill, Trevor Williams, Collier, Benjamin Twood, Jasper Randell, Mr. Paper, Flanders Quinn, Cafferty Obelist, Tobin Badger Muller, Captain William Prince, Miss Tamara Doolittle, Robert T. Twistings, Lance Durning, Tobin "badger" Muller, Vesper Johannes, Professor Edmund Blooms, Lawrence t. Decroix, Elson Farwell, Thomas Havens, A Negro Woman depict their previous lives as well as their after-death lives about which they all are unaware. Unaware about their death, they all consider themselves as blessed, are waiting for their return into their previous lives "... for the mysterious blessing of our continued abiding". (Saunders 123).

### **III. After-death life: unfulfilled desires and resolutions**

The novel commences with Hans Vollman, a printer by profession who passes away on the same day when he decides to consummate with his second wife. He dies suddenly as, "A beam from the ceiling came down, hitting me just *here*, as I sat at my desk. And so our plan must be deferred, while I recovered, per the advice of my physician, I took to my— A sort of sick-box was judged—was judged to be—" (Saunders 5). His unfulfilled wish to consummate with his wife becomes the cause of his after-death life. Being not aware about his own death, he is waiting to meet his wife. For him, the coffin in which his body is laid is a sick box from where he will return to his wife after the recovery:

*There I lay, in my sick box, feeling foolish, in the parlor, the very parlor through which we had recently (gleefully, guiltily, her hand in mine) passed en route to her bedroom. Then the physician returned, and his assistants carried my sick box to his sick-cart, and I saw that—I saw that our plan must be indefinitely delayed. What a*

*frustration! When, now, would I know the full pleasure of the marriage-bed; when behold her naked form ... Well, it seemed we must wait until my recovery was complete. (Saunders 5)*

Roger Bevins, a young boy commits suicide as his marriage proposal is being rejected by a girl, named Isabella, "I took a butcher knife to my room and, after writing a note to my parents (I am sorry, was the gist), and another to him (I have loved, and therefore depart fulfilled), I slit my wrist rather savagely over a porcelain rub" (Saunders 25) but suddenly realizing the importance of life, wishes to call his mother to save him, "I changed my mind. Only then (nearly out the door, so to speak) did I realize how unspeakably beautiful all of this was, how precisely engineered for our pleasure, and saw that I was on the brink of squandering a wondrous gift, the gift of being allowed, every day ..." (Saunders 25) but dies at the moment. He is entrapped in the after-death life because of his wish to be found by someone, so that his life can be saved:

*I am waiting to be discovered (having come to rest on the floor, head against the stove, upended chair nearby, silver of an orange peel against my cheek), so that I may be revived, and rise, and clean up the awful mess I have made (Mother will not be pleased), and go outside, into that beautiful world, a new and more courageous man, and begin to live ... once revived, intend to devoutly wander the earth, imbibing, smelling, sampling, loving whomever I please ... (Saunders 27)*

At the age of fourteen, Elise Traynor indulges with so many affairs and so become pregnant and dies during it "Brite promises of nights and nights of that, culminating in a choice, and love would become baby, and that is all I ask. I want ed so much to hold a dear Babe" (Saunders 39). Her wish to give birth to her baby becomes the cause of her lingering in the

after-death life. The reason for Jane Ellis' stay in the sick-box is the most pathetic one. She is a mother of three daughters namely Cathryn, Maribeth and Alice. She dies during a minor surgery. Her love as well as worry for her daughters is the cause of her bondage in the after-death life. She depicts her worries for her daughters:

*Is he to care for them? In my absence? Cathryn is soon to begin school. Who will make sure her clothes are correct? Maribeth has a bad foot and is self-conscious and often comes home in tears? To whom will she cry? Alice is nervous, for she has submitted a poem. It is not a very good poem. I have a plan to give her Shakespeare to read, and, Dante, and we will work on some poem together. ( Saunders 78)*

Even after death about which Elise is ignorant, she, "have been thinking of them since arrived here and am trying to make my way home, and that even as the ether was administered, I was thinking of them, of them and only—" (Saunders 80). Mrs. Abigail Blass is interested in the materialistic pleasures of the world and that is why she has to linger in the after-death life, "I have thousands three hundred dollars in the first bank. In an upstairs room I will not specify I have four hundred in gold coin ... what seems like abundance is in fact scarcity" (Saunders 81). Lieutenant Cecil Stone is proud of his power and post. He exploits the people physically and mentally, "... my SHARDS would step aside, awed, as I passed. This is what I should like the young Swain to know. And many was the time I pounded my Lust out in the Nights to good Result, pounding my good wife or, if she was indisposed, pounding my SHARDS, whom I all SHARDS, for they were, indeed, dark as Nights..." (Saunders 82). A.G. Coombs also proud of his position and power. Whenever he comes out of his sick box, "was always heard to bark, "Do you



know who I am sir (Saunders 102)? The wish to meet her husband and to say her husband sorry for marrying his younger brother, Mrs. Delaney is wandering in the after-death world. In a puzzled mental state she, "never know which Delaney she was calling out" (Saunders 110). Merkel is "kicked by a bull but still looking forward to the dance" (Saunders 127). Poster bell is the other dwellers of the sick box. He devotes his life to fashion and style and so cannot accept his growing age. His wish to get his good look and charm, he is struck in the after-death life, "A dandy whose looks had gone, who fervently wished that his hair might be restored and his gums might reverse their recession and the muscles of his arms might no longer resemble flaccid straps and his dinner suit be brought to him, and a bottle of scent and a bouquet of flowers, so that he might once again go for courting" (Saunders 127). Mr. and Mrs. West spend their life in doing the arrangements of the fire for the hearth. This routine becomes so inherent in them that even after death they have its impression and that causes their lingering in the sick box, "fire with no possible cause, as they were always meticulously careful regarding management of the hearth" (Saunders 127). Mrs. Dill's attachment with his grandson does not let him get salvation and so he lingers here, "mumbling contentedly about his grandson's excellent university marks, eagerly anticipating the spring graduation" (Saunders 127). Trevor Williams is a hunter. He sees himself sitting on the heap of the dead animals that he killed during his life time. The sin of violence is the cause of his lingering in the after-death life. William was not, "permitted to ever stand and stroll about" (Saunders 128). Mr. Collier, a rich man, spends his life in taking care of his properties. He, "one will of necessity spend a great deal of time racing between homes and from garden to garden." (Saunders 129). He passed away, "One afternoon rushing to check on the progress of a dinner one's cook preparing for the board of one's favorite charity, one finds oneself compelled to

take a little rest, briefly dropping to one knee, then both knees, then pitching forward on to one's face and, unable to rise, proceeding *here* for a more prolonged rest, only to find it not restful at all" (Saunders 129).

Miss Tamara Doolittle is neglected by others during her life time. She have so intense feeling of inferiority complex about herself that its impression does not diminish even after her death, "One thing I don't lie is I am dumb! Everyone treats me like I am dumb all my life. And I am! Dumb" (Saunders 206). She wants to get the love of everyone even the attention of men. Unfortunately she lives a solitary life.

*who would want to hold or love one so dull.  
Unless she is fair. Which I am not. Just plain.  
Soon I am too old for the young men to come and  
be bored and that is that. And my teeth go yellow  
and some fall out. But even when you are a  
solitary older lady it is no treat to be dumb.  
Always at a party or so on you are left to sit by the  
fire, smiling as if happy, knowing none desire to  
speak to you. (Saunders 207)*

Tobin "badger" Muller is a labor. At the time of his death, he was thinking about the money that he lends to his relatives. He wants to tell his wife, Edna to collect the money from them so that she can take care of the family. So even after death, he is worried about how his wife and daughters will get the amount s they all do not about it, "Once I am better will get right back at it ... What Daugherty owes me— Edna knows not of it— & it will go uncollected I fear—it is much needed just now— As I cannot work" (Saunders 207). Professor Edmund Blooms is a researcher. He is so indulges in his work that his mind becomes habitual of thinking about his researches. He is worried about his notes, "I produced eighteen distinct brilliant tomes, each breaking entirely new ground on such topics ... I find myself temporarily unable to recall my exact area of

learning ... after my departure, and before I was propelled here ... my house was emptied and my papers lugged into a vacant lot ..." (Saunders 208). Vesper Johannes is molested by a man named Mr. Johns Melburn. This incident during his childhood has an intense impression on his mind that still it becomes alive even after his death. During his life time, he could not share this incident to anyone. "take me to a remote part of the manse and touch me in an evil way. I was just a boy. And he an eminence. Not a word of protest did I (could I) speak. Ever to anyone, I should like to speak it over" (Saunders 207). Lawrence t. Decroix is a businessman of pickles. His much indulgence in his profession becomes the cause of his lingering into the after-death world, "There, there. Do you know what become of my pickle factory? Not to change the subject? It stands. Of that, at least, I am proud. Although pickles are no longer made there.it is now some sort of boat building establishment. And the name of DeCroix has been all ..." (Saunders 208) He wishes to get fame and popularity. Elson Farwell have a lot of complaint with his life, "Born to an unlucky fate, perforce, what attraction if, saddling sad fate unremorsed, I only succumbed, but, rather was, instead happy to have loaded upon me any fulsome burdens, never dimaying those febrile opportunities to better oneself" (Saunders 214). Although Farwell does everything to make his life better, but somewhere in his mind those complaints never eradicated. During his last moments of life, these hidden impressions become alive and that become the cause of his stay in the after-death life. "Born to an unlucky fate, perforce what attraction if saddling sad fate unremorsed" (Saunders 214). Although Elson faces the challenges of life with courage, "instead always happy to have laoded upon me any fulsome burdens never dismay those febrile opportunities to better oneself, such as books (which I many tumes stole from, abjectly accruing ample notes, on pages gleaned from Mr. East's discard), to wit: find out and spelunk what was best and

most beaming in my soul" (Saunders 214). Although he tried a lot to distract himself from the hardships of life but all in vain, "I would obtain that life which, more tender (i.e., less bashing, more kindlike smiles, would, ah. . ." (Saunders 215). These impressions become active in his mind during death and so become the cause of his lingering in the sick-box. Betsy baron says about him, "He always forgets "assuage right there" (Saunders 215). Farwell accepts this fact, "My previous unhappiness was not assuaged" (Saunders 216). One day, when he went to Washington, he fell ill there " I stumbled along the trail, ad could not get up, and the sun burning down brightly, how I writhed upon the—" (Saunders 216). From there a man named Reginald passed. Farwell tell him to call someone for help. The man assured him but did not come. Farwell dies during waiting for him. At the time of death, he realizes, "I regretted every moment of conciliation" (Saunders 217). He smiled and, "convivial waiting ... that my health might be restored to me" (Saunders 217). He wanted to overcome from all kind of fear and, "false talk and preening diction" (Saunders 217). He does not have the feeling of forgiveness to those who hurts him during his life time, "Never will I leave here until I have had my revenge" (Saunders 218). He wants to punish them all, "stride back to those always-happy Easts and club and knife and rend and destroy them and tear down the tent and burn down the house and thus secure for myself" (Saunders 217). Farwell was even not criminated properly. "when my absence was noted next day, they sent Mr. Chasterly back, and he, having found me, did not deem it necessary to bring me home, but contracted with a German, who threw me on a cart with several others—" (Saunders 218). A raped Negro Woman does not forget those pangs of torture and pain through which she undergoes. The other sick dweller, Mrs. Francis hodge describes her pathetic condition, "What was done to her was done by big men, small men, boss men, men who happened to

be passing the field in which she worked . . . What was done to her could not be resisted ...." (Saunders 222).

Sometimes the unfulfilled wishes, pain and sufferings are not the cause of after-life. The impressions of a happy and satisfied life and a temptation to live it more also create after-life experiences. It is true with the reference of Thomas havens, a servant who lived a peaceful and happy life. "I was (I felt, for the most part) living simply an exaggerated version of *any man's life*. I adored my wife and our children, and did what any working man would do: exactly what would benefit them and keep us all living convivially together; i.e. I endeavored to be a good and honorable people themselves" (Saunders 219). His consciousness still revive those pleasurable moments, "Strange, though: it is the memory of *those* moments that bothers me most" (Saunders 220).

Captain William Prince dies during a war. At that time he was thinking to write a letter to his wife, Laura. That is why, after death, he imagines himself to write a letter to his wife in which he describes what has happened that day, " I take up my pen in a state of such great exhaustion that only my deep love for all of ypu coud so compel me agter a day of such unholy slaughter and fear" (Saunders 137). By reading the account of his letter, it seems really astonishing that William is aware about the death of one of his soldier but does not realizes the fact that he is also dead. Whatever he sees or feels at the time of his death, he only has those impressions after death. "Our position being located in a corpse. Much firing during which I heard a cry. Tom is hit and fallen ... Such is the state of my mind that tho I know we set off in that direction and with that intent, what happened next, I cannot recall. Only that all is well and I embrace my faithful pen to inform you I am at present safe." (Saunders 137). The journey of death seems far long to Williams. He writes to his family, "I arrived here at this distant place by Distant journey. And confin'd all the while"

(Saunders 137). In a puzzled state of mind, he "scarcely tell where I am or how I got there" (Saunders 137).

Captain William is the first one to get free from the after-death life. He dies during a war while writing a letter to his wife, Laura in a camp. So after death, he still has the same impression, "Wife of my heart lura lura. I take up my pen in a state of great exhaustion that only my love for all of you could so compel me after a day of such unholy slaughter" (Saunders 137). He is in an illusionistic state. He does not know exactly where he is now, "I am Weary to the point I can scarcely tell where I am or how I got here" (Saunders137) but he feels, "I arrived here at this place by Distant Journey. And confined all the while" (Saunders137). Captain William gets free from the Bardo because of his meditation on God. With surprise not being able to get free from the sick-box, Captain devoted to God by saying that, "He who preserves or destroys by his Whim saw fit to preserve me to rite these lines to you. To say that although confin'd, I count my Blessings" (Saunders 137). As soon as he devoted himself to God, he realizes the reality:

*O my dear I have a foreboding. And feel I must not linger. In this place of great sadness. He who preserves and Loves us scarcely present. And since we must endeavor always to walk beside Him, I feel I must not linger. But am confin'd, in Mind & Body, and unable, as if manacled, to leave at his time, dear Wife. (Saunders138)*

Captain confesses his infidelity to his wife how he has an extra marital affair with a lady, "I tell all to you, cry out to you, in trust voice (I fucked the smaller of the 2, I did, I did it), in hopes that you, and He who Hears & forgives all, will hear & forgive all and allow me now to leave this wretched—" (Saunders140). His consciousness becomes pious by confessing his sin. He pleads to God to forgive him and thus

God let him go from the Bardo, "Then a blinding flash of light came from near the obelisk, and the familiar, yet always bone-chilling, fire sound associated with the matterlightblooming phenomenon...And he was gone" (Saunders140). But the other ignorant dwellers consider it as an escape of the captain. Roger Bevens iii says, "My goodness, I thought, poor fellow! You did not give this place a proper chance, but fled it recklessly, leaving behind forever the beautiful things of this world. And for what? You do not know. A most unintelligent wagger" (Saunders 140).

#### **IV. After-death life: Created by the sinners**

The other after-death world is created by the sinners, "swampy little section populated by our very lowest" (Saunders 131) who did severe crimes during their life time and do not repent over it, live in the swampy areas. They do not have a particular body. They cannot speak. They converse with each other with the help of the gestures. Mr. Benjamin Twood, Mr. Jasper Randall, I.b. Papers, The woman, The Bass, A British, Vermont and Flanders Quinn are the dwellers of the swampy area. The woman is a murderer. Vermont molested children. The Bass murdered a child and the British murdered a number of people. Mr. Randall was a pianist, "yield the seat Here's a fellow who can really Tinkle The twinklers And the blokeat the piano would proffer his Then it was all me." (Saunders 132). After death, Randall assumes that he is still performing in front of his audience. "near sunrise ... Mr. Randall could be found bowing over and over again, as if to an imagined audience"( Saunders 132). The life of Mr. Paper is not known. He always calls out the passersby for help, "cannery any helpmate? Come. To heap me? Cannery help? Can any wonder? Help. Cannery ayone heap? Unclog? May?" (Saunders 134) Flanders Quinn is a robber. He has so dense impression of his previous life that even after leaving

his gross body, he wants to kill more people. He threatens Vollman and Bevins," Bevins, I'll piss a line of toxic in yr wretched twin wristcuts Gropping you by yr clubdick, Vollman, I'll slang you into the blackfence" (Saunders 134). During his previous life, he has killed a number of people. He admits, "slit the throat of a merchant and his daughter beside a broken-wheeled Fredericksburg cariole (plucked the pearls from her neck and wiped them blood-free with her own silk wrap)" (Sunders 135)? As Roger Bevins says that Quinn feels fear here because he had frightened and killed a number of people, "he was frightened to stay in that place" (Saunders 135) but at the same time does not want to go back from the swamp in order to go back to his previous life from there and so, "more frightened to leave it" (Saunders 135).

## **V. Willie: His Realization of their being dead and freedom from the Bardo**

All these dwellers of sick box want to get rid from their sick boxes. But they all cannot as their consciousness is in an illusionistic state. They neither realize their reality nor do they want to know it. Their subtle bodies still want to go back to their previous lives. Willie is different among them. In his character, we find a variation. Willie recently enters in the sick-box. No sooner, he understand anything, all the sick box dwellers suggest him to go there. According to them, who go from there return back to their previous lives. But Willie thinks that his father would come back here to take him with him, "Father promised, the boy said. How would that be, if he came back and found me again" (Saunders 106). He decides to stay there. Earlier, he is as ignorant as others. Like others he has aspirations and dreams regarding life. He recalls his mother how she makes him dream for his future. He misses his parents, "Mother comes in close Touches her nose to mine This is called "nee-nee" Which I find babyish But still I allow it



from time to ...." (Saunders 115). He encourages himself to be strong, not to get afraid from the soreness and the strange atmosphere of the sick-box. He says, "Never If weak, May be if strong" (Saunders116). As long as Willie is willing to live in the sick-box, hoping for the return of his father to take him from there, Willie is entangled in the sick-box, "Mind your leg there kiddo, said Mr. Kane. Distracted by our guests, we had been remiss; the boy's left leg was now webbed to the roof by several stout new tendrils, each the width of a wrist" (Saunders 119). But Willie does not oppose or resist it as his consciousness wants to stay here in the sick-box, "He bore the considerable discomfort of that procedure with a soldierly fixing of mind for one so young..." (Saunders 120). The other dwellers of the Bardo suggest Willie to go from there as they know that it is not easy to go out from this place. As Willie is the new one, entered in the Bardo, they all wish Willie to go out from there as soon as possible. Roger bevins and Hans Vollman decide to help Willie. They decide to converse with Willie's father as he will come to meet him at the sick-box (He will come to the coffin of Willie to perform his last rites). They say to Willie's farther, "*Stand up, go back...Your boy requires your council. He is in grave danger.it is an anathema for children to tarry here*" (Saunders 166). But the father cannot listen to them as the dead are inaudible to the alive, "The gentlemen just sat, combing the grass, rather blank-minded" (Saunders 166). Now they all wish Willie to enter into his father and to talk to him, "Boy and father must interact" (Sunders 225), The boy blinked twice. Went in. By making to sit in his father's lap...Seated one inside the other now, they occupied the same physical space, the child a contained version of the man" (Saunders 280). Now Willie studies the musings of his father and come to know the truth, "May I tell you something? he said....You are not sick, he said....Dead, the boy said. Everyone, we are dead! (Saunders 296). To hear this all the dwellers puzzled. Roger bevins iii argues, "You are

wrong. If what you say is true—who is it that is saying it? Who is hearing it? I said. Who is speaking to you now? Said Mr. Vollman. To whom do we speak? I said....Tore away years of work and toil with each thoughtless phrase” (Saunders 297). Willie makes them understand that he himself hear this. His father says this so it is not a lie. Hans vollman also not agree with him. He states that if this is true, “But then you saw the truth. Saw that you moved around, and spoke, and thought, and that, therefore, must be merely *sick...*” (Saunders 298). But Willie accepts the truth. He replies, “Father will not return here. And none of us will ever be allowed back to that previous place” (Saunders 298). His raga has been vanished now. Al, his doubts are clear, “He was hoping with joy now, like a toddler too full of water. Look, join me, he said. Everyone! There’s nothing to it. We’re done. Don’t you see (Saunders 298)? His consciousness is ready to leave that own created world and surprisingly now is ready to enter in a new own created world. Whatever thought Willie has while leaving the Bardo, determines his new birth, his new world as *Praśna Upniṣhad* states:

According to the Brahman, it is the *Udana* energy that carries the soul after death to the different worlds according as the good or bad *karma* done in this world. Evidently then the *Udana* is that subtle aspect of *Prana* which not only pervades the whole system and sustains it but also controls the *Lingasharira* (the subtle body) in which the soul resides after leaving the physical. (*Praśna Upniṣhad* 41)

During leaving this Bardo or Downward World (as stated in *Chāndogya Upniṣhad*), the *udāna* energy of Willie reminds him all his previous births, “His form (as sometimes happens to those about to go) began flickering between the various selves he had been in that previous place: purple newborn, squalling naked infant, jelly-faced toddler, feverish boy on sick-bed” (Saunders 299). Here while going out from the

experience of Bardo (after-death experience), the consciousness (subtle body or *Udāna* energy) recalls his present birth how he takes birth in this life. But his consciousness is still struck to this birth. His aspirations and ambitions of this life flickers now and then. According to which the subtle body of Willie takes various forms:

*Then, with no change in the size at all (i.e., while still child-sized), he displayed his various future-forms (forms he had, alas, never succeeded in attaining): Nervous young man in wedding-coat; Naked husband, wet-groined with recent pleasure; Young father leaping out of bed to light a candle at a child's cry; Grieving widower, hair gone white; Bent ancient fellow with an ear trumpet, athwart a stump, swatting at flies. (Saunders 299)*

In this birth, he wants to get all the pleasures of life. He wants to get married, to have marital pleasures, wants to be a father and so on. But soon Willie consoles himself. He realizes the inevitability of death. He knows it is not possible now to get back to life. He does not know where will he go further but it is better now not to get sad on his death. He should accept it to get rid from this place. Otherwise he has to linger there like others for the unending period. His consciousness tries to resolve the mystery of life as well of death. He introspects like to be in the state of *vairāgya*. He feels the presence of supreme power according to which he acts and performs various roles not only in this birth but also in so many previous births, "I am Willie. I am Willie. I am even yet. Am not. Willie not Willie but somehow Less More All is Allowed now All is Allowed now All is Allowed lightening me now Getting up out of bed and going down to the pantry, allowed Candy bees, allowed...." (Saunders 103). He is now detached from his present life. He realizes he owes nothing. Neither his

name nor his identity, "Whatever that former fellow (willie) had, must now be given back (is given back gladly) as it never was mine (never his) and therefore is not being taken away, not at all! As I (who was of willie but is no longer (merely) of willie) return to such beauty" (Saunders 301). In this way, Willie after being enlightened merges in the matterlightblooming phenomenon. The Character of Willie can be declared most strengthen one on the ground that unlike Williams, he not only tells the truth to the other dwellers but also becomes able to change their thoughts regarding life and death.

## VI. Freedom of other characters from the after-death life

In the novel, the dwellers who get free from their after-death world, have two kinds of mental states which in turn decide their course, "Whatever his thoughts (at the dying moment), with that he comes to the *Prana*; the *Prana* united with the Fire leads on with the *Atman* unto the desired world" (*Praśna Upniṣhad* 44). One who detached from the world, "...reaching *Brahmaloka* (the region of *Hiraṇyagarbha*) through the Solar Path (*Devayāna Mārga*—the Path of gods);" (*Chāndogya Upniṣhad* 3). Secondly, who recall their life (their remaining aspirations) that creates the possibility of their reincarnation, "Since those alone who are attached to the material life go to the *Chandra loka* by this 'path of manes' and return again and again into this world" (*Praśna Upniṣhad* 16). Willie can be put in the first category. Bevins iii and Vollman come in the second one. Bevins iii at the time of thinking about his present life, makes remarkable statements about life. His consciousness realizes the truth of life. For him, life is none other than stages where people are send to present their roles, "The world went flat. It seemed a stage—set built for the telling of a specific joke, to be told on me" (Saunders 326) but soon

fluctuates with *smṛti vṛtti* (memory) (Yoga-sūtra 1, 11) recalls his beloved, "I would find Gilbert, come to love him" (Saunders 326). In the same way, Even after knowing that they all are dead, Vollman cannot able to detach from his life. His consciousness is still indulges in passion to consummate with his wife, ...a radiant young longer old, but young....and for the first time in years felt he had something to offer, someone to whom he hoped he might be allowed to offer it" (Saunders 358). By following three of them (Willie, Bevins iii and Vollman), the other dwellers of Bardo, respectively Ella Blow, her daughter Verna Blow, Purdy, Bark, The raped Mulatto, Eddie Baron and her husband Betsy Baron, Johannes and other ten more dwellers gets evacuated from the after-death life.

## V. Conclusion

In this way, the novel entitled *Lincoln in the Bardo* presents the after-death journey of various characters and their redemption from it. Each and every character through their journey represents the various fluctuating states of their consciousness. Their fluctuating consciousness becomes the cause of their lingering in the Bardo. It is astonishing to know that most of the time their mental states are being described by each other. Their consciousness is tend to move towards outside (they are in the habit of judging others), but not tend to move inside for introspection. Even they see their dead bodies lying in the coffin, but do not able to realize that they are dead. It shows at what extent a soul struck in an illusionistic state. They neither realize that they are dead nor do they have the awareness of being living in this world. They roam here and there like air but do not able to bse seen by their loving ones. They hear the voices of their family members but are not able to talk to them. They their selves watch their family members but in turn are not seen by them.

It shows that due to their attachment to this life, their subtle body still exist in the same world and so not able to transform further to get a new life or to get salvation. The after-death world is none other than the experiences felt by the fluctuated consciousness that is ignorant enough to not accept the reality or the one who does not know about the reality of death. After knowing the truth of their being dead, they get free. At this stage, their consciousness flickers so quickly that they remember their all previous births, unfulfilled desires etc. The *urtti* (felling) to which their consciousness clung more strongly becomes the cause of their next birth. Those who devoted themselves to God get salvation means their consciousness merges into the supreme power. In this way life recreates itself continuously. We are born in this world, loaded with the burden of our previous birth's resolutions, ambitions etc. We keep ourselves busy in getting them. But in turn, life gives new dreams, desires to the consciousness. And this unending cycle goes on and so the cycle of birth and death recreates itself until we realize our true self and get a transparent, calm and stable consciousness.

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