

Yoga and Yoga Discipline

A Theosophical Interpretation

Charles J. Ryan

Theosophical Manuals Series

Published as part of a set in the 1930s and '40s by Theosophical University Press; Revised Electronic Edition copyright © 1998 by Theosophical University Press. Electronic version ISBN 1-55700-115-4. All rights reserved. This edition may be downloaded for off-line viewing without charge. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted for commercial or other use in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of Theosophical University Press. For ease in searching, no diacritical marks appear in the electronic version of the text.

Contents

[Chapter 1: The Yoga of Theosophy](#)

[Chapter 2: A Tibetan Aspect of Yoga](#)

[Chapter 3: Yoga in India](#)

[Chapter 4: The Buddhas of Compassion](#)

Chapter 1

The Yoga of Theosophy

"Does the Theosophical Society teach or recommend what are popularly known as yoga practices such as breath control, the development of psychic powers, or astral traveling, for seekers hungry for spiritual wisdom and who long to help humanity?"

This natural question is often asked because it is well known that the Theosophical Movement was founded by Oriental teachers and was associated for a short time with certain demonstrations of occult forces, shown to help break down the rampant scientific materialism of the age. The answer is definitely No. Theosophy,

indeed, offers a system of spiritual development or discipline suited to all people, regardless of creed or race; and if we like to call it yoga with the proper meaning of "union" or "yoking" with the higher self, it must be remembered that it has no resemblance to the lower psycho-physiological (and frequently commercialized) yoga methods so widely advertised in the West, which attract the unwise who seek to gratify cravings for preternatural experiences. When closely analyzed, these methods are seen to be misleading when not positively dangerous, and only too often do they stand as impediments to spiritual progress.

The popular Western conception of yoga, with its stress upon phenomenalistic results, is not far removed from plain psychical research, only the latter lacks the Oriental appeal associated with the word yoga. The inferior so-called yoga may be regarded as mainly an organized system of psychophysical training developed in the Orient, but the true yoga, as taught by all the great spiritual sages and seers and emphasized in theosophy, is well-ordered spiritual development, the training which leads to the discovery of the inner god. This knowledge was practically lost in the matter-of-fact West, being manifested only by a few illuminated Christian mystics, and conditions prevented their teaching it in the more explicit and scientific manner of the great Oriental teachers; although even in Western lands methods were devised to meet the needs of various mental and emotional types. Salvation was to be attained by love, by devotion, and by works. The monkish practices of self-mortification and bodily torture resembled the methods for strengthening the will and perhaps obtaining a few supernormal powers of a low order employed by false Hindu yogis who injure their bodies by various physical tortures — fire, knives, etc. Their hideous practices are sometimes, but quite erroneously, confused with what is called hatha-yoga.

A hundred years ago, even the genuine Eastern yoga was regarded in the West as a fantastic superstition, a fit subject for ridicule. In 1893 a sincere and eloquent Hindu *sannyasin* preached a high form of yoga in the West, but it was inevitably misunderstood by most of the hearers, largely superficial thinkers and curiosity seekers who were attracted by the Oriental glamour of what was to them the latest fashionable fad, promising mysterious revelations. The audiences melted away when they found that true yoga was not the practice of "magic arts" but meant strenuous efforts toward self-control and self-purification.

When the commoner forms of desire are overpassed, more insidious forms of egoism appear, such as the craving to obtain occult powers for personal gratification, however disguised under high-sounding names. Our motives are not always so pure as we cheat ourselves into believing, and the selfish personality is exceedingly cunning in using the lower mind to obtain what it wants. The yoga the world needs is founded on the love of truth, goodness, and wisdom for their own sake: it makes unselfish work for others a habit and a joy. The neophyte in theosophical yoga is told that "To live to benefit mankind is the first step," and he is asked, "Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer? Shalt thou be saved and hear the whole world cry?" (*The Voice of the Silence*)

Let there be no mistake: the theosophical idea of spiritual discipline or yoga, by whatsoever name it may be called, is founded on that principle, and it is the only way to those golden gates which lead out of the prison of the lower self into the light of eternal day. It is pathetic to see intelligent persons who have been disappointed with the conventional answers to the deeper problems of life and human nature, grasping ignorantly for satisfaction in unprofitable, misleading and hazardous directions

when the road is open, the landmarks clearly defined, and the guides ready to direct.

Among the lower yoga practices which the ill-formed West has begun to play with of late, the amateur experimentation with breath control or *pranayama* (literally "death of the breath"), with bodily postures and other psycho-physiological methods, has done grave harm to many. It may not only seriously injure the body, but it may only too easily arouse strange elemental forces inimical to man, "dread dwellers on the threshold," which threaten and sometimes destroy reason, the moral nature, and even life. A partial expansion of the lower astral vision that may temporarily satiate the craving for a glimpse behind the scenes is not accompanied, in the case of the tyro, by the power to close at will the doors he has forced open.

To speak plainly, the would-be practitioner of the psycho-physiological yoga of the breaths, etc., opens a psychological door within himself through which molesting nature-spirits can enter and obsess him. These objectionable forces lurk on the threshold of the astral light, the regions sometimes entered in nightmares and other abnormal states. He may also be the prey of earth-bound *kama-rupas*, lingering, shadowy, and soulless vestiges of persons who have passed on to their peace and rest in devachan. These "spooks" are eager to taste the sensual pleasures of the world again, and they quickly seize the chance of indulging their unbridled passions through the senses of the unprotected intruder into the astral region. Such entities are well known to the trained psychologists of the Orient, who take pains to keep them at a distance. Even some of the most skeptical Western psychic researchers have been forced to accept the reality of mischievous and often dangerous sprites which produce phenomena in haunted houses such as noises, violent displacement of objects, etc. These "poltergeists" may partake of

the nature of either of the above-named astral denizens, but their energies are normally released in physical manifestations. The spiritually developed and trained disciple of a Master can safely pass into the dregs of the astral light if his duty calls, but it would be no pleasure for him.

The proverb about letting sleeping dogs lie should be heeded by one who is tempted to unlatch the door to psychic experiences. H. P. Blavatsky in her *A Bewitched Life*, and Bulwer Lytton in his *Zanoni*, present in brilliant fictional form the suffering and havoc wrought by trespassing on "forbidden ground" on the part of well-meaning persons who had not given the right knock. Both occult writers had exact personal knowledge of their theme. In no way does amateur dabbling with the lower yoga practices resemble the tranquil process of a college course in modern psychology! No amount of intellectual training or Western scientific methods of research will make the venture secure, and this includes Orientals as well as Occidentals, as the writer has reason to know.

Many cases are known to theosophical students where dabbling with breath control and thereby disturbing the delicately balanced forces of the *pranas* on which life and health depend, has produced disastrous consequences, followed, alas, by bitter regret for the disregard of friendly warnings. Such tragedies usually come from ignorance of the dangers, but some minds, over-confident of their supposed security from harm, are willing to take any risk in order to steal forbidden powers — forbidden in the sense of being premature in this period of evolution, except for the very few who have earned the right to have them and have developed the power to control them. These powers are hedged around by nature's wise prohibitions, and the unfit becomes a victim instead of a master. H. P. Blavatsky says of such a victim that he is liable to "fall into sorcery and black magic, and

through many incarnations heap up for himself a terrible karma," and even "risk the annihilation of the present personality."

Attempts to get out of the physical body and travel in the astral plane are *not* recommended to students of the ancient wisdom. Although it is not a grateful task, we must warn our readers that the name of theosophy has been misused in certain quarters by the approval of methods to disentangle the subtle body from its physical sheath and wander in the astral plane of strange and bewildering illusions, unknown perils, and hostile denizens. Specious promises were made that great good can be done that way. Such a course is entirely opposed to H. P. Blavatsky's teachings and the wholesome theosophical ideals of service to humanity; and even on ordinary considerations of prudence cannot be too strongly condemned. Numerous cases, some personally known to the writer, testify to the disastrous mental and physical results that have fallen upon well-meaning but ill-advised persons who artificially released themselves from the protection of the body.

Warnings against irresponsible attempts to induce abnormal states of consciousness by breath control and other hatha-yoga exercises do not, of course, apply to the perfectly wholesome methods of breathing and physical exercise taught in athletic training.

It is unfortunate that misleading notions about yoga persist and that so many cunning sirens sing their alluring songs to entice the unwary by specious advertising of psychic powers, "arcane knowledge leading to success in life, privately given at so much a course," etc. Some clairvoyants, more or less genuine, practice under the name of yogi, but they should be more properly called fortunetellers. For one serious and valuable book on the higher yoga *philosophy* of the Orient, dozens of spurious ones are foisted

on the public which pander to an unhealthy curiosity about phenomena, the authors being careless whether the practices they recommend are dangerous or not — possibly being themselves ignorant in some cases — so long as they can produce a salable article. Some of the more unscrupulous offer correspondence courses for money, professing to awaken psychic centers in the body and pranic forces connected therewith which become dangerous to health and sanity when the natural balance is disturbed. Others promise "initiation" for two dollars! Is it any wonder that the genuine schools of the Mysteries were (and are) sacredly protected from profanation?

Other forms of psychic yoga, though not so vulgarly commercialized, are far from being spiritual. They have what may be called a scientific technique to penetrate a little way behind the veil of material nature, but it is no more spiritual or ethical than, say, chemistry, and it can, like chemistry, be used for abominable purposes. In the hands of those whose hearts and minds are not absolutely pure and unselfish — and how few such there are — it can prove as destructive as a combination of dangerous chemicals in the hands of an ignorant and inquisitive child. Alexandra David-Neel, the Buddhist scholar and authority on Tibetan occult lore, the Lama Yongden, and other qualified observers describe many cases where revenge, ambition or vanity inspired malevolent persons in Tibet to acquire this technique, regardless of consequences to others, and sometimes to themselves.

But far removed from such low ambitions, there are many sober-minded persons who renounce not only the vanities of this world but its wholesome activities and duties in order to obtain personal success in the lower yoga technique. They mistakenly conceive this to be the only road to knowledge, and concentrate on their own salvation, regardless of the general welfare of

humanity, which may get along as best it can for all they care. The same principle, we may remember, is not unknown under other aspects in so-called Christian countries, but in the long run it defeats its own ends.

Such a self-centered attitude is the last thing that any yogi worthy of the name theosophical would approve, for it ignores the first principles of brotherhood. True yoga cannot exist without a sympathetic and helpful understanding of human nature and a genuine effort to lift the heavy burden of spiritual and intellectual ignorance in the most undeveloped, "even the least of these." It has no Untouchables. In her *Studies in Occultism*, H. P. Blavatsky writes:

true *Occultism or Theosophy* is the "Great Renunciation of SELF," unconditionally and absolutely, in thought as in action. — p. 28

It is impossible to employ *spiritual* forces if there is the slightest tinge of selfishness remaining in the operator. For, unless the intention is entirely unalloyed, the spiritual will transform itself into the psychic, act on the astral plane, and dire results may be produced by it. The powers and forces of animal nature can equally be used by the selfish and revengeful, as by the unselfish and the all-forgiving; the powers and forces of spirit lend themselves only to the perfectly pure in heart — and this is DIVINE MAGIC. — pp. 4-5

This earth of ours is, and long will be, our home, and it needs all the help strong souls can give. As we make progress on that line, all the powers — spiritual, intellectual, and even psychic — will come to our aid in natural evolution as they are called forth by right aspiration. Unselfish labor to arouse the spiritual intuitions of a discouraged and materialistic world is the only worthwhile

yoga, the yoga of theosophy. We are challenged by one searching question: Am I becoming more useful, more willing and capable to give the service my conscience demands of me?

The Masters who established the Theosophical Society are perfectly familiar with the psycho-physical yoga system which makes certain bodily exercises and breathing processes (the lower hatha-yoga) the precursor or foundation of higher activities, but their experience has shown serious objections to it, and they have never permitted its introduction into the activities of the Movement, interesting as it may be to scientific students of abnormal psychology. Any tendency toward what is called "sitting for yoga" has been firmly discouraged, and for excellent reasons. In this regard we may recall the experience of the Buddha, who began his search for truth by trying the lower yoga of extreme bodily asceticism. He soon found that it was a hindrance to progress, even in such an exalted case as his.

To the sincere aspirant for soul-wisdom the time comes when unusual psycho-spiritual powers and faculties begin to develop in a perfectly natural way, and under such favorable auspices he will find no difficulty in meeting a real teacher who can direct his further development. There is an occult saying, "When the disciple is ready the teacher will appear." The wise ones are always on the watch for recruits to the army of light and liberation. Many examples are on record down the ages of the reception of such guidance by the worthy, regardless of religious or philosophical belief, and there are instances in the Theosophical Movement.

An outstanding case is that of an intellectually and spiritually advanced Hindu lad who came to Blavatsky's assistance soon after she reached India and when she was bringing out her first theosophical journal under great difficulties. This young man,

Damodar K. Mavalankar, abandoned his proud Brahmanical caste and brilliant worldly prospects to devote his life to unselfish work for humanity through theosophy. His sincerity and devotion attracted the notice of the Masters of wisdom and compassion who are behind the work of the Theosophical Movement; and gradually and without strain he found new powers, bodily, mental, and even psycho-spiritual, awaking and becoming available for the great opportunities for service which soon came to him. Damodar is a shining example of true discipleship. The faculties he developed were perfectly normal under the conditions he provided. They had not been desired for personal gratification, and they were never displayed as inducements to persons with selfish ambitions for psychic powers. Another and perhaps more noble example of a similar line of conduct within the Theosophical Society was William Q. Judge; and others are on record.

Such true devotees have visioned the path to the supreme goal of human evolution union — with the inner god, the Father in Heaven. To step on this sublime path, to develop this spiritual clairvoyance, demands no physical processes or bodily tortures, and above all no withdrawal from contact with our fellow pilgrims on the uphill road of life. The experiences we need are found in the rough and tumble of the world, by cheerful endurance of what cannot be avoided, and by a sympathetic understanding of the karmic difficulties of others, who so frequently need help *to help themselves*. The theosophical "brahma yogi" is a man or woman to whom those in trouble will instinctively turn for advice, a peacemaker at home and abroad.

A devoted servant of humanity, William Q. Judge, sums up the yoga of theosophy in these eloquent words:

What then is the panacea finally, the royal talisman? It is

DUTY, Selflessness. Duty persistently followed is the highest yoga. . . . If you can do no more than duty it will bring you to the goal. . . . It is that boundless charity of love which led Buddha to say: "Let the sins of this dark age fall on me that the world may be saved," and not a desire for escape or for knowledge. It is expressed in the words: "THE FIRST STEP IN TRUE MAGIC IS DEVOTION TO THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS." -- *Letters That Have Helped Me*, vol. 2

Chapter 2

A Tibetan Aspect of Yoga

It is not long since reports of occult mysteries and magic in Tibet and elsewhere were ridiculed by serious Western scholars; they were not admitted into academic "good society." The deadly, intolerant persecution from which H. P. Blavatsky suffered in the nineteenth century arose partly from the contemptuous denial of such possibilities among the Western educated classes intoxicated by the materialistic theories and brilliant practical achievements of science. Even the allegorical interpretation of the bewildering legends of gods and heroes in the Hindu and Buddhist scriptures was rejected.

When Col. H. S. Olcott, then President of the Theosophical Society, discussed that subject with Professor Max Muller, the famous Orientalist, about a little over a century ago, the latter pleaded with him to advise the scholars in the Theosophical Society to abandon the claim that the Hindu scriptures contained such hidden meanings as the "superstitious" pandits asserted. Today, however, we find a few Orientalists who not only speak of such matters with more respect and intelligence but accept the fact that some yogis possess so-called supernatural powers. Some, like

Mme David-Neel, even claim a practical though limited knowledge of the *rationale* of certain Oriental psycho-magical processes of an elementary nature. Dr. Richard Wilhelm, sinologist; Dr. Carl Jung, psychologist; Sir Wallis Budge, late Director of Egyptology of the British Museum; Dr. Alexis Carrel, writer of *Man the Unknown*; and other distinguished scholars and travelers have given testimony to the existence of that Occult knowledge which was regarded in the West as the grossest superstition until Blavatsky began "to break the molds of mind."

Mme David-Neel's records of experiences behind the veil in Tibet have done much to open the eyes of the West to the fact that the life of the people of that mysterious land is permeated by psycho-occult activities which are no mere fancies, and Dr. W. Y. Evans-Wentz's scholarly works on Tibetan religion have drawn worldwide attention to the curious blend of advanced spiritual teaching with lower magical practices which flourishes in Tibet and its borderlands. The spiritual and philosophical side is practically the same as the fundamentals of theosophy, which is not surprising as both come from the same source, the ancient wisdom-religion, preserved by the Great White Lodge, whose chief esoteric center is the mysterious Sambhala in Tibet.

It is generally believed that about the seventh or eighth century of the Christian era, Buddhism was first introduced into Tibet. Padma Sambhava, a noted Hindu teacher, is credited with being the chief exponent. His presentation of the teachings was, no doubt, a great improvement on the superstitious native Bon religion, but it was tainted with the lower Tantric magic, therefore far from the pure teachings of the Buddha. Blavatsky says, however, that the Buddha, foreseeing future dangers to Buddhism in India, sent some of his Arhats to the slopes of the Kailas Range in Tibet nearly a thousand years earlier to establish the kernel of his teaching, the true "esoteric" Buddhism. She also

says that the Tibetan population was too deeply steeped in sorcery at that time to accept the purer faith, and so it was not until far later "that Buddhism was finally engrafted with its two distinct Schools — the Esoteric and the exoteric divisions — in the land of the Bon-pa."

It is known, however, from Chinese sources that some great adept teachers had long been living in the "Snowy Ranges of Tibet."

In regard to Padma Sambhava, still much admired by many in Tibet, Col. Yule, the Orientalist, says "he was a great master of enchantments," presumably referring to his lower Tantric methods. Blavatsky distinguishes the lower from the higher Tantric in these words:

So little is known outside Bengal about Tantrik rites and ceremonies that space has been given this interesting paper [an article on Tantrik rites known as "Savasadhana"], despite the disgusting and horrid ceremonial it describes. As there are both magic (pure psychic science) and sorcery (its impure counterpart) so there are what are known as the "White" and "Black" Tantras. The one is an exposition, very clear and exceedingly valuable, of occultism in its noblest features, the other a devil's chap-book of wicked instructions to the would-be wizard and sorcerer. Some of the prescribed ceremonies in the latter are far worse even than the *Savasadhana*, . . . — *The Complete Works of H. P. Blavatsky*
4:360

W. Q. Judge also speaks of the "noble philosophy" of many of the tantric writings, but of course severely condemns the lower tantrism. It is most unfortunate that this "exceedingly valuable" exposition of occultism in its noblest features, as Blavatsky calls the "white" tantras, has been so largely obscured by the

prevalence of black magic among tantrists that the very name has become a reproach.

Unfortunately, in spite of various efforts to purify the state religion of Tibet, it was still adulterated by superstitions, magical practices, and excessive ritualism with its accompanying pride and pomp — human failings similar to those that have crept into other faiths. At various intervals reforms were attempted with some success, but it was not until the fourteenth century that the great adept and avatara, Tsong-khapa, made a forcible revolution and purified the religious conditions by exiling 40,000 self-seeking monks and lamas who were making Buddhism a marketable commodity. Tsong-khapa is the noblest and wisest of the reformers of Northern Buddhism, and though he was originally an apostle of the semi-reformed "Kargyutpa" School, he attached himself to another Order, the "Khadampas," "Those bound by the Ordinances," in order to build the regenerated system which developed into the "Gelugpas," or Yellow Cap Order, which became the established church of Tibet. He also reorganized the esoteric or mystic brotherhood (the "esoteric division" of Blavatsky, quoted above) with which a few of the highest lamas have the privilege of affiliation. Very little is known of this brotherhood in the outside world.

Since Tsong-khapa's reform, conditions never descended to the former low levels, but as mentioned before they were not ideal. The Gelugpas, however, were far superior to some of the Red Cap sects in western Tibet which remained addicted to the old Bon black magic.

We have no space to describe the interesting vicissitudes of Buddhist yoga in Tibet, but the student will find the information in Evans-Wentz's authoritative works, which have greatly added to Western knowledge of Lamaism. His *Tibetan Yoga and Secret*

Doctrines covers a hitherto unknown field of first-hand information and, as he says, the seven principal treatises translated from the Tibetan represent a comprehensive expression of Mahayana or Northern Buddhism, the "greater path." They are not all, however, of equal value to seekers for spiritual light.

The treatises were translated from the Tibetan by the late Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdub, Professor of Tibetan at Calcutta University and an initiated lama of the Kargyutpa Order of Mahayana Buddhism — whose chief doctrines are pure and elevating. He was well qualified to interpret teachings and yoga methods little known, if at all, outside the lamaseries. Even with the assistance of his careful translations and Evans-Wentz's admirable commentaries, many Western scholars find the subject matter difficult to comprehend because so few even suspect the existence of the widely differing inner planes of nature with their corresponding states of consciousness, which are familiar to occultists.

We may mention in passing that the Lama Dawa-Samdub is a notable witness in defense of Blavatsky against the absurd charges made in her lifetime that she invented the teachings of the ancient wisdom, theosophy. In another work, the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, Evans-Wentz writes:

The late Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdub was of opinion that, despite the adverse criticisms directed against H. P. Blavatsky's works, there is adequate internal evidence in them of their author's intimate acquaintance with the higher lamaistic teachings, into which she claimed to have been initiated. — p. 7

But Blavatsky belonged to a higher order of instruction and achievement than the word "lamaistic" usually signifies, unless

the words "higher lamaistic teachings" are construed to mean the ancient wisdom, the "Esoteric Buddhism," as she called the teachings of the Great White Lodge. It would not be fair, however, to infer that all the lamaistic institutions in Tibet lost their spiritual life, for the Master K. H. and Blavatsky mention certain lamaseries in Lhasa and elsewhere where true and initiated occultists lived and worked in the training schools for chelas in genuine spiritual yoga. Blavatsky says that many Orientalists confuse the genuine lamas of certain lamaseries in Lhasa, etc., with the numerous charlatans and sorcerers of the Bon sectarians.

It is reassuring to learn from Dr. Evans-Wentz and Mme David-Neel that the teachers most respected in Tibet consider such attainments as the ability to perform occult phenomena quite unimportant and merely incidental features in the process of spiritual development.

Returning to the yoga treatises mentioned above, we learn from Evans-Wentz that the first two are "fundamentally non-tantrik." The seventh is also sound and is one of the most widely-circulated Mahayana writings. It is an abridgment of the Sanskrit Prajna-Paramita (Transcendental Wisdom) and it deals with the profound theory of *sunyata*, the "Void." This treatise is especially important to theosophists because it supports Blavatsky's definite claim that the Buddha taught a secret doctrine to his inner group. Some Buddhist scholars deny this and claim that any really secret teaching in the possession of the Tibetan lamas is only instruction in practical magic of no spiritual or philosophical value. Evans-Wentz's Commentary on the Seventh Treatise indicates that they are mistaken, for Nagarjuna, the thirteenth of the Buddhist Patriarchs, gave out some of the Buddha's esoteric teachings in the second century A.D. Evans-Wentz writes:

According to Nagarjuna, the Buddha Shakya-Muni Himself composed and placed the teachings in the custody of the *Nagas* (Serpent Deities), to be kept hidden in the depths of a vast lake or sea till such time as men should be fit to receive them. This seems to be a symbolic way of stating that the Buddha taught the teachings esoterically, and that since prehistoric times they had also been so taught by the Buddhas Who preceded Shakya-Muni, as by the *Bodhic* Order of Great Adepts of *Yoga*, the wisest of the Wise Men, who have long been symbolized by the Nagas, or Serpent Demigods. . . . The Lamas, too, maintain, on the authority of an oral tradition, said to have been at first secretly transmitted by the Buddha's most intimate disciples, that the Buddha taught the *Prajna-Paramita* sixteen years after His Enlightenment . . . and that Mahakashyapa, His most learned disciple and apostolic successor, secretly recorded it. The Japanese also have a tradition that the Buddha taught esoterically to His disciples as well as exoterically to the multitude. — *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, p. 344

The third to the sixth treatises deal largely with psychological and physical exercises for the development of personal willpower and the like, a very different teaching from the wholesome, impersonal, and beneficent yoga of the Lord Buddha and the Masters of wisdom who are behind the Theosophical Movement. These parts treat of the alluring byways in occultism which lead away from the strait and narrow path that leads to life, and are derived from the early pre-Buddhistic Bonpa sources. Blavatsky describes the Bon religion as:

itself a degenerated remnant of the Chaldean mysteries of old, now a religion based entirely upon necromancy, sorcery and soothsaying. The introduction of Buddha's name into it means nothing. — *The Complete Works of H. P.*

The fifth treatise presents the "Chod" rite of the "short path," a violent and desperate method to grasp adeptship by the mystical sacrifice of the personality to the elementals, a ghastly process which is likely to result in insanity or death to the rash adventurer. The ostensible purpose of the grim and revolting rite is to deliver the participant by a short cut from the necessity of rebirth. It is, however, more probably carried out to gain magical powers by controlling a low order of elementals. As mentioned above, Mme David-Neel found that many evil-minded persons in Tibet use such sinister and destructive methods to accomplish their desire for revenge and the like.

It is unfortunate that even the first (Kargyutpa) treatise ("The Supreme Path of Discipleship") should be associated with certain phenomenalistic instructions which exhibit the weaker side of Lamaism and are out of place in a work whose tone is, on the whole, spiritually elevated. Such pseudo-occult ideas can do no good in a world which is turning toward the exploitation of psychic powers for purely selfish ends, or at best for the gratification of curiosity disguised under high-sounding names. They may possibly shake some Western scholars out of their unabashed and arrogant denials of the occult side of nature, and suggest to them that the Orient is not unreasonable in regarding it as being subject to laws as "natural" as those of the physical world, however miraculous they may seem to the ignorant. The working of such laws is demonstrated in Tibet on a lower plane by such phenomena as the control of fire or water, levitation, transfer of consciousness to a distance, or the power to modify the action of the bodily functions. *Tummo*, the control of the bodily temperature, is a semi-occult process well known to certain lamas or hermits in Tibet. By its means the expert can keep warm and comfortable when exposed to extreme cold and

without warm clothing. Mme David-Neel and other observers testify to their personal knowledge of tummo, and on one occasion at least she applied it with success when she was caught without fuel in the bitter cold of an icy mountain wilderness.

Such things, however, are not regarded by the wise as spiritual attainments nor as valuable in themselves, though under certain circumstances they may be of service. A quaint story is current in the Orient in regard to this subject. A merchant and a yogi of a low order met on the bank of a river and the latter, after expatiating on the immense labor he had spent in learning to levitate, proceeded to waft himself across the river in the air. The practical merchant paid a boatman to row him over. When they met on the other side the triumphant yogi expected congratulations but was nonplussed when the merchant showed him a small coin and remarked, "That is the value of your miracle!"

The higher Lamaism, as already mentioned, presents many of the leading principles of theosophy, and the diffusion of such teachings explains the well-known good qualities of the Tibetans in general. The Lama Yongden in his instructive and delightful romance *Mipam*, referring to a quixotic act of kindness writes:

He thought his young companion was crazy, but in Tibet every action inspired by compassion arouses, even amongst the coarsest and most materially-minded peasants or traders, an intuitive feeling of respectful admiration. Chenrezigs (1) of the thousand arms, the symbol of Infinite Compassion, was not chosen in vain to be the Supreme Lord and Protector of the lofty Land of the Snows.

The characteristic good humor of the Tibetans is seen in the following aphorisms quoted by Evans-Wentz in his *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*:

For a religious devotee to try to reform others instead of reforming himself is a grievous mistake. — p. 87

To preach religion and not practice it is to be like a parrot saying a prayer; and this is a grievous failure. — p. 77

Many Western writers and travelers have spoken well of the Tibetan national character. One, an Englishman who studied the Buddhist teachings for some years among the lamas of the southern border of Tibet, states that the lamas and other Tibetans he met possess a spirit of love and kindness that is marked by an unusual note of serenity, new to him. He soon recognized that this rare quality is not based on a vague emotionalism, but is the result of their outlook on life, a wide-extending insight into the structure of the universe which sees the intimate relationship of all things and principles. To the enlightened lamas the laws of nature and the ethics or rules of right living are not independent but identical. This is an essential in the theosophical yoga teaching. In the West the fatal mistake is still made of separating religion from science. G. de Purucker places the matter in a few words:

Ethics are no mere conventions however much man may clothe them in conventional thoughts, but are based on the harmony and love at the heart of the Universe. . . . Ethics are very real because based on Nature herself. Ethics means doing aright; right means harmony; right means law; and law is cosmic justice which is universal love. — *Questions We All Ask*, Series II, xxx

Chapter 3

Yoga in India

We are sometimes asked if H. P. Blavatsky did not go to India in

1878 to study yoga. No; after establishing the Theosophical Society in America she went to India to arouse a higher spirit of humanitarianism, brotherhood, where it was sadly lacking in spite of the thousands of yogis of one kind or another. She also went, under the direction of her Masters, to awaken India to the opportunities it had to present a great religious philosophy to a world that was vaguely groping for a more logical and liberating solution to life's problems than those of dogmatic theologies or materialistic science. She answered the call of many Hindus who realized that the ancient teachings were perverted by superstitious interpretations and forms. Many leading societies of native Sanskrit scholars welcomed her to fellowship, and a strange phenomenon happened in many places: proud Brahmans, exclusive and self-sufficient, recognized her as a teacher, she, a foreigner, an "outcaste" and — a woman! She was publicly thanked by them and by other Indian associations on many occasions, and honored by various tributes for her self-sacrificing work in helping progressive India to higher ideals of thought and action. One of these, tendered by more than three hundred Hindu students at a Madras college, begins:

In according to you this our heartiest of welcomes on your return from the intellectual campaigns which you have so successfully waged in the West, we are conscious we are giving but a feeble expression to the "debt immense of endless gratitude" which India lies under to you.

You have dedicated your life to the disinterested services of disseminating the truths of Occult Philosophy. Upon the sacred mysteries of our hoary Religion and Philosophies you have thrown such a flood of light by sending into the world that marvelous production of yours, the "Isis Unveiled." — *Incidents in the Life of Madame Blavatsky* by A. P. Sinnett

At a certain time when many students thought it was necessary for their spiritual development to rush to India for "occult" training, W. Q. Judge protested, saying that it was not the wish of the Masters, nor was it the teaching of Blavatsky, for theosophists to think that Oriental methods should be slavishly followed or the present East be made an example or a goal. The West has to adopt a method of spiritual development suitable to its mentality and the environment of its people. But, of course, the West can and must draw very largely from the Oriental scriptures, whose importance has greatly increased for students since Blavatsky partially lifted the veil of Isis and interpreted many of their hidden meanings. But in spite of all that she did to arouse the ancient spirit of spiritual life in India, we cannot look to modern India as a teacher.

The Indian Masters themselves say plainly that they "are all convinced that the degradation of India is largely due to the suffocation of her ancient spirituality," and the Mahatma K. H. says that he "cannot endure for any length of time the stifling magnetism even of my own countrymen." (Quoted in *The Occult World*, by A. P. Sinnett.) And again, we read in *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* from the same source:

If it be permissible to symbolize things subjective by phenomena objective, I should say that to the psychic sight India seems covered with a stifling gray fog — a moral meteor — the odic emanation from her vicious social state. Here and there twinkles a point of light which marks a nature still somewhat spiritual, a person who aspires and struggles after the higher knowledge. If the beacon of Aryan occultism shall ever be kindled again, these scattered sparks must be combined to make its flame. And this is the task of the T. S., . . . — p. 384

There has always existed and exists what may be called an "esoteric circle" of knowers. Unseen and unknown to the world at large, they work for the spiritual advancement of mankind in many ways. In far-off ages Mystery schools were established to protect people against partial or misleading information about the occult half-truths which are more dangerous than complete error because they are not so easily detected. The historically known Mystery schools at Eleusis and elsewhere in Greece, at Philae in Egypt, and in many other parts of the world were their comparatively modern successors; their reputation was very high and they were revered and trusted by all. Their dramatic representations and other more or less exoteric ceremonies of the threshold were suited to the needs of the ordinary thoughtful man, but, even in these, deeper meanings were symbolized. In the more advanced working, as we know from the accounts of the School of Pythagoras at Krotona, the candidates spent long periods in silence. With their minds and bodies purified and disciplined, they finally were prepared to arouse high states of consciousness within themselves which are quite inaccessible to the untrained intelligence. St. Paul, an initiate, speaks of having been "caught up into the third heaven" (2 Cor., 12), an obvious reference to one of these stages or steps toward what is called in the East *samadhi*. The process of "drawing out" what is locked up within is the true meaning of "education," and this is the method of any genuine yoga or Mystery school.

With the coming of the Theosophical Movement in the nineteenth century, a beginning was successfully made by Blavatsky to revive the Mystery schools in the West. She writes:

But if the voice of the MYSTERIES has become silent for many ages in the West, if Eleusis, Memphis, Antium, Delphi, and Cresa have long ago been made the tombs of a Science once as colossal in the West as it is yet in the East,

there are successors now being prepared for them. — "The Esoteric Character of the Gospels," *Lucifer*, 1:310, Dec. 1887

When the "beacon of Aryan Occultism" referred to by the Master K. H. was burning bright, yoga was properly understood. In her *Theosophical Glossary* Blavatsky speaks of Hindu yoga as being one of the six *Darsanas* or philosophical schools of India, but her special definition sums it up as "the practice of meditation leading to spiritual liberation." She adds that "*psycho-spiritual*" powers are obtained by the high forms of yoga which "lead to the clear and correct perception of the eternal truths in both the visible and invisible universe." Note that these are not the *psycho-physical* nor even the psycho-intellectual powers, but are acquirements of a far higher order.

The Yoga *Darsana* or school is divided into five main classes which correspond with the five leading types of human psychology. G. de Purucker defines them as follows:

Now, what are these five Indian Yoga Schools? They are these, beginning with the simplest and lowest: Hatha-yoga, the yoga of physiological-psychical training, dealing almost wholly with the body and lower mind. Next, Karma-yoga, from the word "karma," action. Third, Bhakti-yoga, the yoga of love and devotion. Fourth, Jnana-yoga, the yoga of wisdom or knowledge, of study. Fifth, Raja-yoga, the yoga of *self-devised* effort to attain union with the god within, the yoga of discipline, such as the kings of the Kshatriya or Warrior Caste were supposed to exemplify as the leaders of their states; and the sixth, which we Theosophists add, is the Brahma-yoga, the yoga of the spirit, practically including the other five. — *The Theosophical Forum*, March, 1940

As the five Hindu systems of yoga, if fully studied and practiced,

would demand the entire energy, thought, and time of the practitioner, it is obvious that they would be found impracticable, even if desirable, in a modern Western environment. A teacher of the rank of a minor adept, at least, would be absolutely necessary, one who would constantly watch and protect his pupil when the latter was passing through certain stages of development. We are told that the hatha-yoga methods (*very rarely* used in the higher schools and only under exceptional conditions) are safe enough for chosen pupils when employed under a qualified guru or guide, but in the case of the rash, unprepared, and unprotected free-lance, the situation is very different and is likely to be very tragic.

Consider, for instance, the case of the *asanas*, or yoga postures, which are more or less familiar in the West by photographs and descriptions. These are purely physical exercises employed by some yogis to prepare the body for the terrific strain caused by the arousing of powerful and dangerous inner forces unknown to Western science. More than seventy asanas are known, most of them requiring a long preliminary preparation before they can be entered upon. Some of them are suited to one individual, others to another, and only the skilled and experienced guru can apportion them properly. The pupil has no means of knowing the difference, and it is a very serious matter to work on a wrong *asana*, the usual result, we are told, being death!

Not long ago, a thoughtful student of occultism published the results of a long search in "secret India" for higher wisdom. He found many so-called yogis, mostly fanatics or self-seekers who, he says, have discredited the very name of yogi among the younger generation of Hindus and the educated classes. There were some genuine psychics and magicians, seemingly of a low order. But he also found a few sincere and earnest men who were not "showing off" in any way, and who did not recommend the

psychic, so-called yoga practices of which so much has been heard in the West of late, but who give teachings of vital importance for spiritual progress. One South Indian teacher of whom the student rightly speaks with great respect and admiration, when asked what must be done to enter the Path, replied:

There is only one thing to be done. Look within yourself. *Do this in the right way* and you shall find the answer to all your problems. You have to ask yourself, Who am I? Know the real Self, and then the truth will shine forth within your heart like sunshine. — Paul Brunton, *A Search in Secret India*

The student need not have gone to India to learn this. It is an essential in theosophical books of spiritual training, such as Blavatsky's *Voice of the Silence* and G. de Purucker's *Golden Precepts of Esotericism*, where the path of discipleship is plainly set forth in a way suitable for all peoples, Eastern or Western. But what is "the right way"? Can it be right to withdraw from active participation in the life of the world and to concentrate on one's personal progress regardless of the welfare of others? Without fuller explanation, the advice just quoted might easily be misconstrued. The right way to gain self-knowledge is given in the *Bhagavad-Gita*, the greatest Hindu authority on yoga philosophy and self-discipline. It strongly enforces the necessity of doing one's whole duty in the world, which means duty to others as well as to oneself — *dharma*. This kind of yoga, *karma-yoga*, is most important for Westerners who need to learn how to direct their exuberant energies more wisely. It is "the performance of right action." The subject of impersonal, compassionate service is fully treated by Purucker in *Golden Precepts of Esotericism* from which we take a few extracts:

The law of laws of the universe is self-forgetfulness, not concentration of attention upon one's personal freedom, not even upon your individuality. The primal law of the universe is living unto all things, not the doctrine that each must live for himself in order to develop for himself the spiritual powers within. The latter is true enough as a bald and imperfect statement; but it is also misleading, dangerous, unwise, and therefore unholy as a statement of esoteric training, unless properly qualified — always qualified with the accompanying doctrine: Give up thy life if thou wouldst find it. Live to benefit mankind, for this is the first step. . . .

The man who thinks of others before himself is already great. The man who gives up his life that others may live is already great. The man who forgets himself in impersonal service to humanity is the greatest of all; and such a man reaps a destiny — because he has builded a corresponding character — which is godlike. — Chapter 4

In theosophy we find a high yoga which can liberate us, if we will follow it, from the illusions we mistake for real living. Such initiation depends upon the right use of the opportunities of daily life in the world. It is not necessary to withdraw from the world but from enslavement to its selfish demands. Do we not all wish to be able to discern without hesitation the wise from the foolish course of action, and to possess a sympathetic understanding of human nature so profound and unbiased that we can make no mistakes in our efforts to help our fellow-men? This higher clairvoyance will develop as the human race advances, but we can hasten its coming by following the yoga of duty and unselfishness. Some would call this "moral rearmament," a popular expression today, but the higher yoga includes more than is usually meant by those words. As it becomes better understood,

so will earnest students feel the stirring of intuitive faculties and, when they can be trusted not to misuse them, very marvelous powers will be allowed to develop, and very surprising expansions of consciousness will take place.

We have to fight our own battles, and it is a well-known occult saying that "the adept becomes, he is not made." We can find guides who will warn us of the pitfalls in the path, teachers who can bring our hidden weaknesses to light and show us how to overcome them; but we must be our own redeemers. There is no "vicarious atonement" on the yoga path but there is help, and, as mentioned previously, "When the disciple is ready the teacher will appear." Though it is a great blessing to have such an opportunity, the process of purification is bound to bring some unexpected and unpleasant revelations which must be honestly faced and conquered. But the sincere disciple expects this and does not ask the teacher to humor his egotism. On the other hand, there is increasing joy in the self-discipline which gradually reveals the fact that the self-centered animal-man, however intellectual, is not the real, immortal man, "for whom the hour shall never strike," and that we have everything to gain and nothing to lose by making the true self the master.

The noblest yoga teachings of ancient India, such as *The Crest Jewel of Wisdom* by Sankaracharya or the *Bhagavad-Gita*, present the essentials for high spiritual development without a trace of psychism or the lower forms of magic which disfigure portions of the mass of Hindu literature called the Tantras, and from which many of the Western yoga or so-called occult books derive their questionable and often dangerous information. Sankaracharya and the writer of the *Bhagavad-Gita* teach those methods of self-government which open the path to spiritual wisdom. Some extracts from Judge's rendition of the *Bhagavad-Gita* (*passim*) will indicate this line of instruction:

When the man, so living, centers his heart in the true Self and is exempt from attachment to all desires, he is said to have attained to yoga. . . . In this system of Yoga no effort is wasted, nor are there any evil consequences, and even a little of this practice delivereth a man from great risk. . . . There is no purifier in this world to be compared to spiritual knowledge; and *he who is perfected in devotion findeth spiritual knowledge springing up spontaneously in himself in the progress of time.* . . . Such illuminated sages whose sins are exhausted, who are free from delusion, who have their senses and organs under control, *and devoted to the good of all creatures,* obtain assimilation with the Supreme Spirit. . . . Seek this wisdom by doing service, by strong search, by questions, and by humility; the wise who see the truth will communicate it unto thee, and knowing which thou shalt never again fall into error. . . . (*italics ours*)

Sankaracharya writes:

Soul-vision belongs to him who is free from passion; steady inspiration belongs to the soul-seer. . . . The first cause of Freedom is declared to be an utter turning back from lust after unenduring things. Thereafter Restfulness, Control, Endurance, a perfect Renouncing of all acts that cling and stain . . . himself well-controlled, he gains the fruit and the reward, and his reward is the Real. . . . For the Self, all that is seen is but mirage; it lasts but for a moment, we see, and know it is not "I"; how could "I know all" be said of the personal self that changes every moment? -- *Oriental Department Papers, 1895-6, passim*

It is indeed significant that Krishna, the inner divinity, does not teach Arjuna in the solitude of the hermitage, but in the clash of

arms on the battlefield, which represents the activities and trials of the practical life in the world.

Chapter 4

The Buddhas of Compassion

In India the *Bhagavad-Gita* is the great classic of the Hindu yoga schools, and it is frequently mentioned or quoted by the mahatmas and H. P. Blavatsky with high appreciation. It is indispensable for all serious aspirants to knowledge of the self, but it does not plainly express the sublime expression of divine compassion which the Buddha teaches in his yoga of the great renunciation and which we are about to consider. Blavatsky seems to have felt this, and toward the close of her life she gave us that magnificent compilation from Eastern sacred literature, *The Voice of the Silence*, which she translated and annotated for "the Few" who ardently desire to live the theosophical ideal and serve humanity "to the endless end." It stands as a textbook of theosophical yoga. From this little volume we can learn the principles on which the training of the chelas of the Masters is founded and which, when widely adopted, will not only clear our vision to see eternal things, but will make the world an infinitely better place to live in. In regard to compassion, we find in *The Voice of the Silence*:

Canst thou destroy divine COMPASSION? Compassion is no attribute. It is the LAW of LAWS — eternal Harmony, Alaya's SELF; a shoreless universal essence, the light of everlasting Right, and fitness of all things, the law of love eternal. — pp. 69-70

Alaya is the "Oversoul" of Emerson. It "reflects itself in every object in the universe" (*The Secret Doctrine* 1:48). The same teaching of compassion is an essential of true Christianity: "He

that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." And "he who loveth God loveth his brother also." (1 John, 4.)

Many of the aphorisms quoted from Mahayana teachings in Dr. Evans-Wentz's *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* state the essential teachings of *The Voice of the Silence*, self-sacrifice and love for humanity being the guiding rules. For instance:

Unless the mind be trained to selflessness and infinite compassion, one is apt to fall into the error of seeking liberation for self alone. — p. 75

The smallest amount of merit dedicated to the good of others is more precious than any amount of merit devoted to one's own good. — p. 90

If only the good of others is sought in all that one doeth, no need is there to seek benefit for oneself. —p. 90

The disregard of phenomenalism by the true yogi is plainly stated:

For him who hath attained the Sublime Wisdom, it is the same whether he be able to exercise miraculous powers or not. — p. 92

The last quotation from the Yoga treatises relates to a teaching which is the very heart and soul of *The Voice of the Silence*. It is the sublimest possibility of spiritual aspiration:

The fact that there are Those who have attained Bodhic Enlightenment and are able to return to the world as Divine Incarnations and work for the deliverance of mankind and of all living things till the time of the dissolution of the physical universe showeth the virtue of the Holy *Dharma*. — p. 95

This refers to the great renunciation, an ideal higher than any other that is offered to the world today; and it speaks well for the Tibetans that they give greater honor to such holy men (bodhisattvas or nirmanakayas) than to any other advanced yogi or "saint," however exalted. Associated with this is the problem of the pratyeka buddhas, about whom some misunderstanding has prevailed, even among certain theosophists, although Blavatsky makes it clear enough in her *original* edition of *The Voice of the Silence* and in *The Theosophical Glossary*. Certain reprints of the former omit the significant passages. Owing to its importance we must devote some space to this matter.

Evans-Wentz rightly states that the ultimate object of Buddhism is the liberation from ignorance in its deepest sense, *maya*, which we inadequately translate as "illusion." But, as he points out, the Buddha taught that this desirable end, the attainment of nirvana, can be deferred by those devoted souls who are willing to follow the highest path of self-abnegation and to make the great renunciation. This means that the candidate for spiritual mastership resolves never to pass out of the *samsara* or phenomenal world-consciousness into the ineffable bliss of nirvana until the weary pilgrims in all the worlds have reached the culmination of their possibilities in this manvantara. This is surely the highest possible manifestation of universal brotherhood. The holy ones who have returned to help the world at the cost of their own progress are called buddhas of compassion in contradistinction to the pratyeka buddhas, whose ideal is not so exalted. According to the most authoritative Tibetan Mahayanists, and endorsed by the Lama Samdup, the accepted view in respect to the pratyeka buddhas is the following, as presented by Evans-Wentz:

Self-Enlightened (Skt. *Pratyeka*) Buddhas do not teach the Doctrine publicly, but merely do good to those who come

into personal contact with Them, whereas Omniscient Buddhas, of Whom was the Buddha Gautama, preach the Doctrine widely. . . .

The *Gurus* of the Great Symbol School . . . teach that *Nirvana* is not to be regarded as a final state. wherein its realizer selfishly abides in absolute rest and bliss. That is to say, *Nirvana* is not a state to be realized for one's own good alone, but for the sake of the greater good which will accrue to every sentient thing merely in virtue of a realization of It. Thus it is that in Tibet all aspirants for the Divine Wisdom, for the Full Enlightenment known as *Nirvana*, take the vow to attain the state of the Bodhisattva, or Great Teacher. The vow implies that the *Nirvanic* State will not be finally entered, by the one taking the vow, until all beings, from the lowest in subhuman kingdoms . . . are safely led across the Ocean of the *Sangsara* to the Other Shore. Southern Buddhists are inclined to regard *Nirvana*, at least when attained by *Pratyeka* (or Non-teaching) Buddhas, as a state of finality. Mahayanists, however, say that *Nirvana* is a state of mind reached as a result of evolutionary spiritual unfoldment, and that it cannot, therefore, be regarded as a final state, inasmuch as evolution has no conceivable ending, being an eternal progression. — *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, pp. 94, 144

Here we learn that the pratyeka buddhas are highly advanced in spirituality, yet Blavatsky speaks of their "spiritual selfishness"! This peculiar expression caused ill advised editors of certain reprints of *The Voice of the Silence*, wherein it occurs, to suppress her remarks on that subject under the plea that they had been written hastily without due consideration. She, however, repeated them in her *Theosophical Glossary*, published at a later

date. G. de Purucker has explained the apparent difficulty in his *Golden Precepts of Esotericism* from which we extract a few passages, as the subject is of great importance to students of the "right-hand path":

[The pratyeka buddhas are] very great men, very holy men, very pure men in every way, whose knowledge is wide and vast and deep, whose spiritual stature is great; but when they reach Buddhahood, instead of feeling the call of almighty love to return and help those who have gone less far, they go ahead into the supernal light — pass onwards and enter the unspeakable bliss of nirvana — and leave mankind behind. Such are the Pratyeka Buddhas. Though exalted, nevertheless they do not rank in unutterable sublimity with the Buddhas of Compassion.

The Pratyeka Buddha, he who achieves Buddhahood for himself, does not do it selfishly, however; does not do it merely in order to gratify self, and he does no harm to others; if he did he could never reach even his solitary Buddhahood. But he does it and achieves nirvana automatically, so to speak, . . .

It is a wonderful paradox that is found in the case of the Pratyeka Buddha — this name *pratyeka* means "each for himself." But this spirit of "each for himself" is just the opposite of the spirit governing the Order of the Buddhas of Compassion, because in the Order of Compassion the spirit is: give up thy life for all that lives. . . .

The time comes when the Pratyeka Buddha, holy as he is, noble in effort and in ideal as he is, reaches a state of development where he can go no farther on that path. But, contrariwise, the one who allies himself from the very beginning with all nature, and with nature's heart, has a

constantly expanding field of work, as his consciousness expands and fills that field; and this expanding field is simply illimitable, because it is boundless nature herself. He becomes utterly at one with the spiritual universe; whereas the Pratyeka Buddha becomes at one with only a particular line or stream of evolution in the universe. . . .

. . . Thus the time comes when the Buddha of Compassion, although having renounced everything, will have advanced far beyond the state that the Pratyeka Buddha has reached; and when the Pratyeka Buddha in due course emerges from the nirvanic state in order to take up his evolutionary journey again, he will find himself far in the rear of the Buddha of Compassion. — Chapter 7

The pratyeka path is not a *downward* path except in comparison with the "secret way," the path of the buddhas of compassion, as Blavatsky calls it in *The Voice of the Silence*. At first the path is one, but finally the great choice has to be made, and the pratyeka buddha chooses the direction which leads away from the human world, while the other takes the course in which "he remains in that glorious body he has woven for himself, invisible to uninitiated mankind, to watch over it and protect it," as a stone in the mystic "guardian wall."

Gautama the Buddha heartened the average person by showing the way to break the terrifying and seemingly endless cycles of deaths and rebirths, the turning of the Wheel of Karma, during which we forge the fetters which hold us back. By following the Good Law faithfully we may reach the unspeakable bliss of liberation in due time. But for those who were qualified by their overwhelming love for mankind, the Buddha set forth the self-sacrificing and sublime path of the great renunciation.

The erroneous doctrine that creation is divided into two distinct

and opposite parts, spirit and matter, has been the root of much confusion. The higher Lamaism contains the important theosophical teaching that it is possible for man by proper training to realize beyond a doubt the fundamental unity of the universe. This has profound implications. The samsara (the phenomenal or mayavi) and the nirvana (the noumenal or spiritual aspect) are really one, a most significant principle which can be studied in *The Secret Doctrine*. Only the illusion under which we live prevents us from realizing it. It is the basic principle behind the vital teaching in theosophy that brotherhood is a fact in nature, and the way to discover it is by putting it into practice. Evans-Wentz, speaking of the illuminated sage, says that he comprehends:

the root-nature of things, he sees phenomena from the view-point of noumena; and for him, therein, in the True State, there is neither the ego, nor the non-ego, neither the *Sangsara* nor Nirvana but only Divine At-one-ment. . . .

Nirvana is, therefore, the liberating of the mind from the sangsarically-produced illusions of the human state, the arriving at Right Knowledge, the transcending of personality, or of ego, and the conquest of Life and the World. Truly, therefore, an Enlightened One is called a Conqueror. In the rapturous words of Asanga, "Thenceforth his one joy is to bring Enlightenment to all living things." — *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, p. 19

In another place Evans-Wentz refers to the Tibetan tribute in which the Conqueror of Maya is called a Master of Life and Death, a Light in the Darkness, a Guide to the Bewildered, and a Liberator of the Enslaved, and, in the case of a *bodhisattva*, a stone in the "Guardian Wall" that protects humanity throughout the ages.

On pages 43-4 of *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*, an interesting remark is made by the Mahatma K. H. on this subject:

When our great Buddha — the patron of all the adepts, the reformer and the codifier of the occult system, reached first *Nirvana* on earth, he became a Planetary Spirit; i. e. — his spirit could at one and the same time rove the interstellar spaces in *full consciousness*, and continue at will on Earth in his original and individual body. For the divine Self had so completely disfranchised itself from matter that it could create at will an inner substitute for itself, and leaving it in the human form for days, weeks, sometimes years, affect in no wise by the change either the vital principle or the physical mind of its body. By the way, that is the highest form of adeptship man can hope for on our planet. But it is as rare as the Buddhas themselves, the last Khobilgan who reached it being Sang-Ko-Pa [Tsong-khapa] of Kokonor (XIV Century) the reformer of esoteric as well as of vulgar Lamaism.

[Contents](#)

FOOTNOTE:

1. Pronounced Chen-rah-zee. In Sanskrit Avalokitesvara, the "Onlooker," the higher self, the Logos, celestial and human, ever on watch to discover distress and succor the troubled. ([return to text](#))

[Theosophical Society Homepage](#)