



Meditation in Hinduism and Buddhism

Charles Eliot

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Indian religions lay stress on meditation. It is not merely commended as a useful exercise but by common consent it takes rank with sacrifice and prayer, or above them, as one of the great activities of the religious life, or even as its only true activity. It has the full approval of philosophy as well as of theology. In early Buddhism it takes the place of prayer and worship and though in later times ceremonies multiply, it still remains the main occupation of a monk. The Jains differ from the Buddhists chiefly in emphasizing the importance of self-mortification, which is put on a par with meditation. In Hinduism, as might be expected in a fluctuating compound of superstition and philosophy, the schools differ as to the relative efficacy of meditation and ceremonial, but there is a strong tendency to give meditation the higher place. In all ages a common characteristic appears in the most divergent Indian creeds—the belief that by a course of mental and physical training the soul can attain to a state of bliss which is the prelude to the final deliverance attained after death.

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We may begin by examining Brahmanic ideas as to meditation. Many of them are connected with the word Yoga, which has become familiar to Europe. It has two meanings. It is applied first to a definite form of Indian philosophy which is a theistic modification of the Sâṅkhya and secondly to much older practices sanctioned by that philosophy but anterior to it.

The idea which inspires these theories and practices is that the immaterial soul can by various exercises free itself from the fetters of matter. The soul is distinguished from the mind which, though composed of the subtlest matter, is still material. This presupposes the duality of matter and spirit taught by Jainism and the Sâṅkhya philosophy, but it does not necessarily presuppose the special doctrines of either nor do Vedântists object to the practice of the Yoga. The systematic prosecution of mental concentration and the idea that supernatural powers can be acquired thereby are very old—certainly older than Buddhism. Such methods had at first only a slight philosophic substratum and were independent of Sâṅkhya doctrines, though these, being a speculative elaboration of the same fundamental principles, naturally commended themselves to those who practised Yoga. The two teachers of the Buddha, Âlâra and Uddaka, were Yogis, and held that beatitude or emancipation consisted in the attainment of certain trances. Gotama, while regarding their doctrine as insufficient, did not reject their practices.

Our present Yoga Sûtras are certainly much later than this date. They are ascribed to one Patañjali identified by Hindu tradition with the author of the Mahâbhâshya who lived about 150 B.C. Jacobi however is of opinion that they are the work of an entirely different person who lived after the rise of the philosophy ascribed to Asanga sometimes called Yogâcâra. Jacobi's arguments seem to me suggestive rather than conclusive but,

if they are confirmed, they lead to an interesting deduction. There is some reason for thinking that Śankara's doctrine of illusion was derived from the Buddhist Śūnyavāda. If Patañjali's sūtras are posterior to Asanga, it also seems probable that the codification of the Yoga by the Brahmans was connected with the rise of the Yogâcâra among the Buddhists.

The Sūtras describe themselves as an exposition of Yoga, which has here the meaning not of union with God, but rather of effort. The opening aphorisms state that "Yoga is the suppression of the activities of the mind, for then the spectator abides in his own form: at other times there is identity of form with the activities." This dark language means that the soul in its true nature is merely the spectator of the mind's activity, consciousness being due, as in the Sāṅkhya, to the union of the soul with the mind which is its organ. When the mind is active, the soul appears to experience various emotions, and it is only when the mind ceases to feel emotions and becomes calm in meditation, that the soul abides in its own true form. The object of the Yoga, as of the Sāṅkhya, is Kaivalya or isolation, in which the soul ceases to be united with the mind and is dissociated from all qualities (guṇas) so that the shadow of the thinking principle no longer falls upon it. This isolation is produced by performing certain exercises, physical as well as mental, and, as a prelude to final and complete emancipation, superhuman powers are acquired. These two ideas, the efficacy of physical discipline and the acquisition of superhuman powers, have powerfully affected all schools of religious thought in India, including Buddhism. They are not peculiar to the Yoga, but still it is in the Yoga Sūtras that they find their most authoritative and methodical exposition.

The practice of Yoga has its roots in the fact that fasting and other physical mortifications induce a mental state in which the subject thinks that he has supernatural experiences. Among many savage tribes, especially in America, such fasts are practised by those who desire communication with spirits. In the Yoga philosophy these ideas appear in a refined form and offer many parallels to European mysticism. The ultimate object is to dissociate the soul from its material envelopes but in the means prescribed we can trace two orders of ideas. One is to mortify the body and suppress not only appetite and passion but also discursive thought: the other is to keep the body in perfect health and ease, so that the intelligence and ultimately the soul may be untroubled by physical influences. These two ideas are less incongruous than they seem. Many examples show that extreme forms of asceticism are not unhealthy but rather conducive to long life and the Yoga in endeavouring to secure physical well-being does not aim at pleasure but at such a purification of the physical part of man that it shall be the obedient and unnoticed servant of the other parts. The branch of the system which deals with method and discipline is called Kriyâ-yoga and in later works we also find the expression Haṭha-yoga, which is specially used to designate mechanical means (such as postures, purification, etc.) prescribed for the attainment of various mental states. In contrast to it is Râja-yoga, which signifies ecstasy and the method of obtaining it by mental processes. The immediate object of the Kriyâ-yoga is to destroy the five evils, namely ignorance, egoism, desire, aversion and love of life: it consists of asceticism, recitations and resignation to God, explained as meaning that the devotee fasts, repeats mantras and surrenders to God the fruit of all his works and, feeling no more concern for them, is at peace. Though the Yoga Sūtras are theistic, theism is accessory rather than essential to their teaching. They are not a theological treatise but the manual of an ancient discipline which recognizes devotional feelings as one means to its end. The method would remain almost intact if the part relating to the deity were omitted, as in the Sāṅkhya. God is not for the Yoga Sūtras, as he is for many Indian and European mystics, the one reality, the whence and whither of the soul and world.

Eight branches of practice are enumerated, namely:--

1. Yama or restraint, that is abstinence from killing, lying, stealing, incontinence,

and from receiving gifts. It is almost equivalent to the five great precepts of Buddhism.

2. Niyama or observance, defined as purification, contentment, mortification, recitation and devotion to the Lord.

Purification is treated at great length in the later treatises on Haṭha-yoga under the name of Shaṭ-karma or sixfold work. It comprises not only ordinary ablutions but cleansing of the internal organs by such methods as taking in water by the nostrils and discharging it by the mouth. The object of these practices which, though they assume queer forms, rest on sound therapeutic principles, is to remove adventitious matter from the system and to reduce the gross elements of the body.

3. Āsanam or posture is defined as a continuous and pleasant attitude. It is difficult to see how the latter adjective applies to many of the postures recommended, for considerable training is necessary to make them even tolerable. But the object clearly is to prescribe an attitude which can be maintained continuously without creating the distracting feeling of physical discomfort and in this matter European and oriental limbs feel differently. All the postures contemplated are different ways of sitting cross-legged. Later works revel in enumerations of them and also recognize others called Mudrâ. This word is specially applied to a gesture of the hand but is sometimes used in a less restricted sense. Thus there is a celebrated Mudra called Khecharî, in which the tongue is reversed and pressed into the throat while the sight is directed to a point between the eyebrows. This is said to induce the cataleptic trance in which Yogis can be buried alive.

4. Prāṇayama or regulation of the breath. When the Yogi has learnt to assume a permanent posture, he accustoms himself to regulate the acts of inspiration and expiration so as to prolong the period of quiescence between the two. He will thus remove the veils which cover the light within him. This practice probably depends on the idea which constantly crops up in the Upanishads that the breath is the life and the soul. Consequently he who can control and hold his breath keeps his soul at home, and is better able to concentrate his mind. Apart from such ideas, the fixing of the attention on the rhythmical succession of inspirations and expirations conduces to that peaceful and detached frame of mind on which most Indian sects set great store. The practice was greatly esteemed by the Brahmans, and is also enjoined among the Taoists in China and among Buddhists in all countries, but I have found no mention of its use among European mystics.

5. Pratyāhāra, the retraction or withdrawing of the senses. They are naturally directed outwards towards their objects. The Yogi endeavours to bring them into quiescence by diverting them from those objects and directing them inwards. From this, say the Sūtras, comes complete subjugation of the senses.

6-8. The five kinds of discipline hitherto mentioned constitute the physical preparation for meditation comprising in succession (a) a morality of renunciation, (b) mortification and purification, (c) suitable postures, (d) regulation of the breathing, (e) diversion of the senses from their external objects. Now comes the intellectual part of the process, consisting of three stages called Dhāraṇâ, Dhyâna and Samâdhi. Dhāraṇâ means fixing the mind on a particular object, either a part of the body such as the crown of the head or something external such as the sky. Dhyâna is the continuous intellectual state arising out of this concentration. It is defined as an even current of thought undisturbed by other thoughts. Samâdhi is a further stage of Dhyâna in which the mind becomes so identified with the thing thought of that consciousness of its separate existence ceases. The thinking power is merged in the single thought and ultimately a state of trance is induced. Several stages are distinguished in this Samâdhi. It is divided into conscious and unconscious and of the conscious kind there are four grades, analogous, though not entirely corresponding to the four Jhânas of Buddhism. When the feeling of joy passes away and is lost in a higher sense of equanimity, there comes the state known by the remarkable name of Dharma-megha in which the isolation of the soul and its absolute distinctness from matter (which includes what we call mind) is realized, and

Karma is no more. After the state of Dharma-megha comes that of unconscious Samâdhi, in which the Yogi falls into a trance and attains emancipation which is made permanent by death.

The methods of the Kriyâ-yoga can be employed for the attainment not only of salvation but of miraculous powers. This subject is discussed in the third book of the Yoga Sûtras where it is said that such powers are obstructions in the contemplative and spiritual life, though they may lead to success in waking or worldly life. This is the same point of view as we meet in Buddhism, viz. that though the miraculous powers resulting from meditation are real, they are not essential to salvation and may become dangerous hindrances.

They are attained according to the Yoga Sûtras by the exercise of samyama which is the name given conjointly to the three states of dhâraṇâ, dhyâna and samâdhi when they are applied simultaneously or in immediate succession to one object of thought. The reader will remember that this state of contemplation is to be preceded by pratyâhâra, or direction of the senses inwards, in which ordinary external stimuli are not felt. It is analogous to the hypnotic state in which suggestions made by the hypnotizer have for the subject the character of reality although he is not conscious of his surroundings, and auto-suggestions—that is the expectations with which the Yogi begins his meditation—apparently have the same effect. The trained Yogi is able to exercise samyama with regard to any idea—that is to say his mind becomes identified with that idea to the exclusion of all others. Sometimes this samyama implies simply a thorough comprehension of the object of meditation. Thus by making samyama on the saṃskâras or predispositions existing in the mind, a knowledge of one's previous births is obtained; by making samyama on sound, the language of animals is understood. But in other cases a result is considered to be obtained because the Yogi in his trance thinks it is obtained. Thus if samyama is made on the throat, hunger and thirst are subdued; if on the strength of an elephant, that strength is obtained; if on the sun, the knowledge of all worlds is acquired. Other miraculous attainments are such that they should be visible to others, but are probably explicable as subjective fancies. Such are the powers of becoming heavy or light, infinitely large or infinitely small and of emitting flames. This last phenomenon is perhaps akin to the luminous visions, called photisms by psychologists, which not infrequently accompany conversion and other religious experiences and take the form of flashes or rays proceeding from material objects. The Yogi can even become many persons instead of one by calling into existence other bodies by an effort of his will and animating them all by his own mind.

Europeans are unfavourably impressed by the fact that the Yoga devotes much time to the cultivation of hypnotic states of doubtful value both for morality and sanity. But the meditation which it teaches is also akin to aesthetic contemplation, when the mind forgets itself and is conscious only of the beauty of what is contemplated. Schopenhauer has well expressed the Indian idea in European language. "When some sudden cause or inward disposition lifts us out of the endless stream of willing, the attention is no longer directed to the motives of willing but comprehends things free from their relation to the will and thus observes them without subjectivity purely objectively, gives itself entirely up to them so far as they are ideas, but not in so far as they are motives. Then all at once the peace which we were always seeking, but which always fled from us on the former path of the desires, comes to us of its own accord and it is well with us." And though the Yoga Sûtras represent superhuman faculties as depending chiefly on the hypnotic condition of samyama, they also say that they are obtainable—at any rate such of them as consist in superhuman knowledge—by pratibhâ or illumination. By this term is meant a state of enlightenment which suddenly floods the mind prepared by the Yoga discipline. It precedes emancipation as the morning star precedes the dawn. When this light has once come, the Yogi possesses all knowledge without the process of samyama. It may be compared to the Dibba-cakkhu or divine eye and the knowledge of the truths which according

to the Pitakas precede arhatship. Similar instances of sudden intellectual enlightenment are recorded in the experiences of mystics in other countries. We may compare the haplosis or ekstasis of Plotinus and the visions of St Theresa or St Ignatius in which such mysteries as the Trinity became clear, as well as the raptures in which various Christian mystics experienced the feeling of levitation and thought that they were being literally carried off their feet.

The practices and theories which are systematized in the Yoga Sûtras are known to the Upanishads, particularly those of the Atharva Veda. But even the earlier Upanishads allude to the special physical and mental discipline necessary to produce concentration of mind. The Maitrâyana Upanishad says that the sixfold Yoga consists of restraint of the breath, restraint of the senses, meditation, fixed attention, investigation, absorption. The Śvetâśvatara Upanishad speaks of the proper places and postures for meditation, and the Chândogya of concentrating all the senses on the self, a process which is much the same as the pratyâhâra of the Yoga.

A later and mysterious but most important method of Yoga is known to the Tantras as Shaṭcakrabheda or piercing of the six cakras. These are dynamic or nervous centres distributed through the human body from the base of the spinal cord to the eyebrows. In the lowest of them resides the Devî Kuṇḍalinî, a force identical with Śakti, who is the motive power of the universe. In ordinary conditions this Kuṇḍalinî is pictured as lying asleep and coiled like a serpent. But appropriate exercises cause her to awake and ascend until she reaches the highest cakra when she unites with Śiva and ineffable bliss and emancipation are attained. The process, which is said to be painful and even dangerous to health, is admittedly unintelligible without oral instruction from a Guru and, as I have not had this advantage, I will say no more on the topic except this, that strange and fanciful as the descriptions of Shaṭcakrabheda may seem, they can hardly be pure inventions but must have a real counterpart in nervous phenomena which apparently have not been studied by European physiologists or psychologists.

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When we turn to the treatment of meditation and ecstasy in the earlier Buddhist writings we are struck by its general resemblance to the programme laid down in the Yoga Sûtras, and by many coincidences of detail. The exercises, rules of conduct, and the powers to be incidentally obtained are all similar. The final goal of both systems also seems similar to the outsider, although a Buddhist and a Yogi might have much to say about the differences, for the Yoga wishes to isolate a soul which is complete and happy in its own nature if it can be disentangled from its trammels, whereas Buddhism teaches that there is no such soul awaiting release and that religious discipline should create and foster good mental states. Just as the atmosphere of the Pitakas is not that of the Brâhmanas or Sûtras, so are their ideas about Jhâna and Samâdhi somewhat different. Though hypnotic and even cataleptic phases are not wanting, the journey of the religious life, as described in the Pitakas, is a progress of increasing peace, but also of increasing intellectual power and activity. Gotama did not hold Jhâna or regulated meditation to be essential to nirvana or arhatship, for that state was attainable by laymen and apparently through sudden illumination. But such cases were the exception. His own mental evolution which culminated in enlightenment comprised the four Jhânas. Also in the eightfold path which is essential to arhatship and nirvana the last and highest stage is sammâsamâdhi, right rapture or ecstasy.

Jhâna is difficult for laymen, but it was the rule of the order to devote at least the afternoon to it. We might compare this with the solitary prayer of Christians, and there is real similarity in the process and the result. It brought peace and strength to the mind and we hear of the bright clear faces and the radiantly happy expression of those who returned to their duties after such contemplation. But Christian prayer involves the idea of self-surrender and throwing open the

doors and windows of the soul to an influence which streams into it. Buddhist meditation is rather the upsoaring of the mind which rises from ecstasy to ecstasy until it attains not some sphere where it can live *in* bliss but a state which is in itself satisfying and all-comprising.

All mental states to which such names as ecstasy, trance, and vision can be applied involve a dangerous element which, if not actually pathological, can easily become so. But the account of meditation put in the Buddha's own mouth does not suggest either morbid dejection or hysterical excitement and it is stated expressly that the exercise should be begun after the midday meal so that any visions which may come cannot be laid to the charge of an empty stomach. *Jhâna* is not the same as *Samâdhi* or concentration, though the *Jhânas* may be an instance of *Samâdhi*. This latter is capable of marvellous extension and development, but essentially it is a mental quality like *Sammâsati* or right mindfulness, whereas *Jhâna* is a mental exercise or progressive rapture passing through defined stages.

Any system which analyzes and tabulates stages of contemplation and ecstasy may be suspected of being late and of having lost something of the glow and impetus which its cold formulæ try to explain. But the impulse to catalogue is old in Buddhism and one important distinction in the various mental states lumped together under the name of meditation deserves attention, namely that according to the oldest documents some of them are indispensable preliminaries to nirvana and some are not. Buddhaghosa reviewing the whole matter in scholastic fashion in his *Way of Purity* divides the higher life into three sections, firstly conduct or morality as necessary foundation, secondly *adhicitta*, higher consciousness or concentration which leads to *samatho* or peace and thirdly *adhipaññâ* or the higher wisdom which leads to *vipassanâ* or insight. Of these *adhipaññâ* and *vipassanâ* are superior inasmuch as nirvana cannot be obtained without them but the methods of *adhicitta*, though admirable and followed by the Buddha himself, are not equally indispensable: they lead to peace and happiness but not necessarily to nirvana. It is probably unwise (at any rate for Europeans) to make too precise statements, for we do not really know the nature of the psychical states discussed. *Adhipaññâ* assuredly includes the eightfold path ending with *samâdhi* which is defined by the Buddha himself in this connection in terms of the four *Jhânas*. On the other hand the doctrine that nirvana is attainable merely by practising the *Jhânas* is expressly reprobated as a heresy. The teaching of the Pitakas seems to be that nirvana is attainable by living the higher life in which meditation and insight both have a place. In normal saints both sides are developed: raptures and trances are their delight and luxury. But in some cases nirvana may be attained by insight only: in others meditation may lead to ecstasy and more than human powers of mind but yet stop short of nirvana. The distinction is not without importance for it means that knowledge and insight are indispensable for nirvana: it cannot be obtained by hypnotic trances or magical powers.

The Buddha is represented as saying that in his boyhood when sitting under a tree he once fell into a state of contemplation which he calls the first *Jhâna*. It is akin to a sensation which comes to Europeans most frequently in childhood, but sometimes persists in mature life, when the mind, usually under the influence of pleasant summer scenery, seems to identify itself with nature, and on returning to its normal state asks with surprise, can it be that what seems a small distant personality is really I? The usual form of *Jhâna* comprises four stages. The first is a state of joy and ease born of detachment, which means physical calm as well as the absence of worldly desires and irrelevant thoughts. It is distinguished from the subsequent stages by the existence of reasoning and investigation, and while it lasts the mind is compared to water agitated by waves. In the second *Jhâna* reasoning and investigation cease: the water becomes still and the mind set free rises slowly above the thoughts which had encumbered it and grows calm and sure, dwelling on high. In this *Jhâna* the sense of joy and ease remains, but in the third stage joy disappears, though ease remains. This ease (*sukham*) is the opposite of *dukkham*, the

discomfort which characterizes all ordinary states of existence. It is in part a physical feeling, for the text says that he who meditates has this sense of ease in his body. But this feeling passes away in the fourth Jhâna, in which there is only a sense of equanimity. This word, though perhaps the best rendering which can be found for the Pali *upekkhâ*, is inadequate for it suggests merely the absence of inclination, whereas *upekkhâ* represents a state of mind which, though rising above hedonistic views, is yet positive and not merely the negation of interest and desire.

In the passage quoted the Buddha speaks as if only an effort of will were needed to enter into the first Jhâna, but tradition, supported by the Pitakas, sanctions the use of expedients to facilitate the process. Some are topics on which attention should be concentrated, others are external objects known as *Kasina*. This word (equivalent to the Sanskrit *kr̥tsna*) means entire or total, and hence something which engrosses the attention. Thus in the procedure known as the earth *Kasina* the Bhikkhu who wishes to enter into the Jhâna makes a small circle of reddish clay, and then gazes at it fixedly. After a time he can see it as plainly when his eyes are closed as when they are open. This is followed by entry into Jhâna and he should not continue looking at the circle. There are ten kinds of *Kasina* differing from that described merely in substituting for the earthen circle some other object, such as water, light, gold or silver. The whole procedure is clearly a means of inducing a hypnotic trance.

The practice of tranquillizing the mind by regulating the breathing is recommended repeatedly in Suttas which seem ancient and authentic; for instance, in the instruction given by the Buddha to his son Râhula. On the other hand, his account of his fruitless self-mortification shows that the exercise even in its extreme forms is not sufficient to secure enlightenment. It appears to be a method of collecting and concentrating the mind, not necessarily hypnotic. All Indian precepts and directions for mental training attach far more importance to concentration of thought and the power of applying the mind at will to one subject exclusively than is usual in Europe.

Buddhaghosa at the beginning of his discussion of *adhicitta* enumerates forty subjects of meditation namely, "the ten *Kasinas*, ten impurities, ten reflections, four sublime states (*Brahmâ-vihâra*), the four formless states, one perception and one analysis." The *Kasinas* have been already described. The ten impurities are a similar means of inducing meditation. The monk fixes his attention on a corpse in some horrible stage of decay and thus concentrates his mind on the impermanence of all things. The ten recollections are a less gloomy exercise but similar in principle, as the attention is fixed on some religious subject such as the Buddha, his law, his order, etc.

The *Brahmâ-vihâras* are states of emotional meditation which lead to rebirth in the heavens of *Brahmâ*. They are attained by letting love or some other good emotion dominate the mind, and by "pervading the whole world" with it. This language about pervading the world with kindly emotion is common in Buddhist books though alien to European idiom. The mind must harbour no uncharitable thought and then its benevolence becomes a psychic force which spreads in all directions, just as the sound of a trumpet can be heard in all four quarters.

These *Brahmâ-vihâras* are sometimes represented as coming after the four Jhânas, sometimes as replacing them. But the object of the two exercises is not the same, for the *Brahmâ-vihâras* aim at rebirth in a better world. They are based on the theory common to Buddhism and Hinduism that the predominant thoughts of a man's life, and especially his thoughts when near death, determine the character of his next existence.

The trances known as the four formless states are analogous to the *Brahmâ-vihâras*, their object being to ensure rebirth not in the heaven of *Brahmâ* but in one of the heavens known as Formless Worlds where the inhabitants have no material form. They are sometimes combined with other states into a series of eight, known as the eight deliverances. The more advanced of these stages seem to be hypnotic and even cataleptic. In the first formless state the monk who is meditating

risers above all idea of form and multiplicity and reaches the sphere in which the infinity of space is the only idea present to his mind. He then passes to the sphere where the infinity of thought only is present and thence to the sphere in which he thinks “nothing at all exists,” though it would seem that the consciousness of his own mental processes is undiminished. The teaching of Alâra Kâlâma, the Buddha’s first teacher, made the attainment of this state its goal. It is succeeded by the state in which neither any idea nor the absence of any idea is specially present to the mind. This was the goal of Uddaka Râmaputta, his second teacher, and is illustrated by the simile of a bowl which has been smeared with oil inside. That is to say, consciousness is reduced to a minimum. Beyond these four stages is yet another, in which a complete cessation of perception and feeling is attained. This state differs from death only in the fact that heat and physical life are not extinct and while it lasts there is no consciousness. It is stated that it could continue during seven days but not longer. Such hypnotic trances have always inspired respect in India but the Buddha rejected as unsatisfying the teaching of his masters which made them the final goal.

But let us return to his account of Jhâna and its results. The first of these is a correct knowledge of the body and of the connection of consciousness with the body. Next comes the power to call up out of the body a mental image which is apparently the earliest form of what has become known in later times as the astral body. In the account of the conversion of Angulimâla the brigand it is related that the Buddha caused to appear an image of himself which Angulimâla could not overtake although he ran with all his might and the Buddha was walking quietly.

The five states or faculties which follow in the enumeration are often called (though not in the earliest texts) *abhiññâ*, or transcendental knowledge. They are *iddhi*, or the wondrous gift: the heavenly ear which hears heavenly music: the knowledge of others’ thoughts: the power of remembering one’s own previous births: the divine eye, which sees the previous births of others. It would appear that the order of these states is not important and that they do not depend on one another. *Iddhi*, like the power of evoking a mental image, seems to be connected with hypnotic phenomena. It means literally power, but is used in the special sense of magical or supernatural gifts such as ability to walk on water, fly in the air, or pass through a wall. Some of these sensations are familiar in dreams and are probably easily attainable as subjective results in trances. I am inclined to attribute accounts implying their objective reality to the practice of hypnotism and to suppose that a disciple in a hypnotic state would on the assurance of his teacher believe that he saw the teacher himself, or some person pointed out by the teacher, actually performing such feats. Of *iddhi* we are told that a monk can practise it, just as a potter can make anything he likes out of prepared clay, which is a way of saying that he who has his mind perfectly controlled can treat himself to any mental pleasure he chooses. Although the Buddha and others are represented as performing such feats as floating in the air whenever it suits them, yet the instruction given as to how the powers may be acquired starts by bidding the neophyte pass through the four stages of Jhâna or meditation in which ordinary external perception ceases. Then he will be able to have the experiences described. And it is probable that the description gives a correct account of the sensations which arise in the course of a trance, particularly if the trance has been entered upon with the object of experiencing them. In other words they are hypnotic states and often the result of suggestion, since he who meditates knows what the result of his meditation should be. Sometimes, as mentioned, Jhâna is induced by methods familiar to mesmerists, such as gazing at a circle or some bright object but such expedients are not essential and with this European authorities agree. Thus Bernheim states that even when a subject is hypnotized for the first time, no gestures or passes are necessary, provided he is calm. It suffices to bid him look at the operator and go to sleep. He adds that those who are most susceptible to the hypnotic influence are not nervous and hysterical subjects but docile and receptive natures who can concentrate their attention. Now it is hardly possible

to imagine better hypnotic subjects than the pupils of an Indian religious teacher. They are taught to regard him with deep respect and complete confidence: they are continually in a state of expectant receptivity, assimilating not only the texts and doctrines which he imparts, but his way of life: their training leads them to believe in the reality of mental and physical powers exceeding those of ordinary mankind and indeed to think that if they do not have such experiences it is through some fault of their own. The teachers, though ignorant of hypnotism as such, would not hesitate to use any procedure which seemed to favour progress in meditation and the acquisition of supernatural powers. Now a large number of Indian marvels fall under two heads. In the first case Buddha, Krishna, or any personage raised above the ordinary human level points out to his disciples that wonders are occurring or will occur: he causes people to appear or disappear: he appears himself in an amazing form which he explains. In the other case the possessor of marvellous powers has experience which he subsequently relates: he goes up to heaven or flies to the uttermost parts of the earth and returns. Both of these cases are covered by the phenomena of hypnotism. I do not mean to say that any given Indian legend can be explained by analyzing it as if it were a report of a hypnotic operation, but merely that the general character of these legends is largely due to the prevalence of hypnotic experiences among their composers and hearers. Two obscure branches of hypnotism are probably of great importance in the religious history of the human race, namely self-hypnotization without external suggestion and the hypnotization of crowds. India affords plentiful materials for the study of both.

There is no reason to doubt that the Buddha believed in the existence of these powers and countenanced the practices supposed to lead to them. Thus Moggallâna, second only to Sâriputta among his disciples, was called the master of iddhi, and it is mentioned as a creditable and enjoyable accomplishment. But it is made equally plain that such magical or hypnotic practices are not essential to the attainment of the Buddha's ideal. When lists of attainments are given, iddhi does not receive the first place and it may be possessed by bad men: Devadatta for instance was proficient in it. It is even denounced in the story of Pindola Bhâradvâja and in the Kevaddha sutta. In this curious dialogue the Buddha is asked to authorize the performance of miracles as an advertisement of the true faith. He refuses categorically, saying there are three sorts of wonders namely iddhi, that is flying through the air, etc. the wonder of manifestation which is thought-reading: and the wonder of education. Of the first two he says "I see danger in their practice and therefore I loathe, abhor and am ashamed of them." Then by one of those characteristic turns of language by which he uses old words in new senses he adds that the true miracle is the education of the heart.

Neither are the other transcendental powers necessary for emancipation. Sâriputta had not the heavenly eye, yet he was the chief disciple and an eminent arhat. This heavenly eye (*dibba-cakkhu*) is not the same as the eye of truth (*dhamma-cakkhu*). It means perfect knowledge of the operation of Karma and hence a panoramic view of the universe, whereas the eye of truth is a technical phrase for the opening of the eyes, the mental revolution which accompanies conversion. But though transcendental knowledge is not indispensable for attaining nirvana, it is an attribute of the Buddha and in most of its forms amounts to an exceptional insight into human nature and the laws of the universe, which, though after the Indian manner exaggerated and pedantically defined, does not differ essentially from what we call genius.

The power of recollecting one's previous births, often mentioned in the Pitakas, has been described in detail by Buddhist writers and Buddhaghosa distinguishes between the powers possessed by various persons. The lowest form of recollection merely passes from one mental state to a previous mental state and so on backwards through successive lives, not however understanding each life as a whole. But even ordinary disciples can not only recollect previous mental states but can also travel backwards along the sequence of births and deaths and bring

up before their minds the succession of existences. A Buddha's intelligence dispenses with the necessity of moving backwards from birth to birth but can select any point of time and see at once the whole series of births extending from it in both directions, backwards and forwards. Buddhaghosa then goes on to prescribe the method to be followed by a monk who tries for the first time to recollect previous births. After taking his midday meal he should choose a quiet place and sitting down pass through the four Jhânas in succession. On rising from the fourth trance he should consider the event which last took place, namely his sitting down; and then in retrograde order all that he did the day and night before and so backwards month after month and year after year. A clever monk (so says Buddhaghosa) is able at the first trial to pass beyond the moment of his conception in the present existence and to take as the object of his thought his individuality at the moment of his last death. But since the individuality of the previous existence ceased and another one came into being, therefore that point of time is like thick darkness. Buddhaghosa goes on to explain, if I apprehend his meaning rightly, that the proper recollection of previous births involves the element of form and the mind sharpened by the practice of the four trances does not merely reproduce feelings and impressions but knows the name and events of the previous existence, whereas ordinary persons are apt to reproduce feelings and impressions without having any clear idea of the past existence as a whole. This, I believe, corresponds with the experience of modern Buddhists. It is beyond doubt that those who attempt to carry their memory back in the way described are convinced that they remember existences before the present life. As a rule it takes from a fortnight to a month to obtain such a remembrance clearly, and every day the aspirant to a knowledge of previous births must carry his memory further and further back, dwelling less and less on the details of recent events. When he reaches the time of his birth, he feels as if there were a curtain of black darkness before him, but if the attention is concentrated, this curtain is rent and the end of the previous life is recovered behind it. The process is painful for it involves the recollection of death and the even greater pains of birth and many have not courage to go beyond this point. It is not uncommon in Ceylon, Burma, Siam and probably in all parts of the Far East, to find people who are persuaded they can remember previous births in this way, but I have never met anyone who professed to recall more than two or three. There is no room in these modest modern visions for the long vistas of previous lives seen by the earlier Buddhists.

Meditation also plays a considerable part in the Buddhism of the Far East under the name of Ch'an or Zen of which we shall have something to say when we treat of China and Japan.

As already indicated the methods and results of meditation as practised by Brahmanic Hindus and by Buddhists show considerable resemblance to the experiences of Christian mystics. The coincidences do not concern mere matters of detail, although theology has done its best to make the content and explanation of the experiences as divergent as possible. But the essential similarity of form remains and there is clearly no question of borrowing or direct influence. It is certain that what is sometimes called the Mystic Way is not only true as a succession of psychic states but is, for those who can walk in it, the road to a happiness which in reality and power to satisfy exceeds all pleasures of the senses and intellect, so that when once known it makes all other joys and pains seem negligible. Yet despite the intense reality of this happy state, despite the illumination which floods the soul and the wide visions of a universal plan, there is no agreement as to the cause of the experience nor, strange to say, as to its meaning as opposed to its form. For many both in the east and west the one essential and indubitable fact throughout the experience is God, yet Buddhists are equally decided in holding that the experience has nothing to do with any deity. This is not a mere question of interpretation. It means that views as to theism and pantheism are indifferent for the attainment of this happy state.

The mystics of India are sometimes contrasted with their fellows in Europe as being more passive and more self-centred: they are supposed to desire self-annihilation and to have no thought for others. But I doubt if the contrast is just. If Indian mysticism sometimes appears at a disadvantage, I think it is because it is popular and in danger of being stereotyped and sometimes vulgarized. Nowadays in Europe we have students of mysticism rather than mystics, and the mystics of the Christian Church were independent and distinguished spirits who, instead of following the signposts of the beaten track, found out a path for themselves. But in India mysticism was and is as common as prayer and as popular as science. It was taught in manuals and parodied by charlatans. When mysticism is the staple crop of a religion and not a rare wild flower, the percentage of imperfect specimens is bound to be high. The Buddha, Śankara and a host of less well-known teachers were as strenuous and influential as Francis of Assisi or Ignatius Loyola. Neither in Europe nor in Asia has mysticism contributed much directly to political and social reform. That is not its sphere, but within the religious sphere, in preaching, teaching and organization, the mystic is intensely practical and the number of successes (as of failures) is greater in Asia than in Europe. Even in theory Indian mysticism does not repudiate energy. No one enjoyed more than the Buddha himself what Ruysbroeck calls “the mysterious peace dwelling in activity,” for before he began his mission he had attained nirvana and such of his disciples as were arhats were in the same case. Later Buddhism recognizes a special form of nirvana called *apratishṭhita*: those who attain it see that there is no real difference between mundane existence and nirvana and therefore devote themselves to a life of beneficent activity.

The period of transition and trial known to European mystics as the Dark Night of the Soul, is not mentioned in Indian manuals as an episode of the spiritual life, for such an interruption would hardly harmonize with their curriculum of regular progress towards enlightenment. But mystic poetry testifies that in Asia as in Europe this feeling of desertion and loneliness is a frequent experience in the struggles and adventures of the soul. It is apparently not necessary, just as the incidental joys and triumphs of the soul—strains of heavenly music, aerial flights, and visions of the universal scheme—are also not essential. The essential features of the mystic way, as well as its usual incidents, are common to Asia and Europe, and in both continents are expressed in two forms. One view contrasts the surface life and a deeper life: when the intellect ceases to plague and puzzle, something else arises from the depth and makes its unity with some greater Force to be felt as a reality. This idea finds ample expression in the many Brahmanic systems which regarded the centre and core of the human being as an *âtman* or *purusha*, happy when in the undisturbed peace of its own nature but distracted by the senses and intellect. The other view of mystic experiences regards them as a remaking of character, the evolution of a new personality and in fact a new birth. This of course need not be a denial of the other view: the emergence of the latent self may effect a transformation of the whole being. But Buddhism, at any rate early Buddhism, formulates its theory in a polemical form. There is no ready-made latent self, awaiting manifestation when its fetters and veils are removed: man’s inner life is capable of superhuman extension but the extension is the result of enlargement and training, not of self-revelation.

Charles Eliot. *Hinduism and Buddhism: An Historical Sketch*. Vol. 3. London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1921.

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