BOOK 4

BY: FRATER: PERDURABO:
AND: SOROR: VIRAKAM::

Typeset by:

A NOTE

THIS book is intentionally "not" the work of Frater Perdurabo. Experience shows that his writing is too concentrated, too abstruse, too occult, for ordinary minds to apprehend. It is thought that this record of disjointed fragments of his casual conversation may prove alike more intelligible and more convincing, and at least provide a preliminary study which will enable the student to attack his real work from a standpoint of some little general knowledge and understanding of his ideas, and of the form in which he figures them.

Part II, "Magick," is more advanced in style than Part I; the student is expected to know a little of the literature of the subject, and to be able to take an intelligent view of it. This part is, however, really explanatory of Part I, which is a crude outline sketch only.

If both parts are thoroughly studied and understood, the pupil will have obtained a real grasp of all the fundamentals and essentials of both Magick and Mysticism.

I wrote this book down from Frater Perdurabo's dictation at the Villa Caldarazzo, Posilippo, Naples, where I was studying under him, a villa actually prophesied to us long before we reached Naples by that Brother of the A∴ A∴ who appeared to me in Zurich. Any point which was obscure to me was cleared up in some new discourse (the discourses have consequently been rearranged). Before printing, the whole work was read by several persons of rather less than average intelligence, and any point not quite clear even to them has been elucidated.

May the whole Path now be plain to all!

Frater Perdurabo is the most honest of all the great religious teachers. Others have said: "Believe me!" He says:""Don't" believe me!" He does not ask for followers; would despise and refuse them. He wants an independent and self-reliant body of students to follow out their own methods of research. If he can save them time and trouble by giving a few useful "tips," his work will have been done to his own satisfaction.

Those who have wished men to believe in them were absurd. A persuasive tongue or pen, or an efficient sword, with rack and stake, produced this "belief," which is contrary to, and destructive of, all real religious experience.

The whole life of Frater Perdurabo is now devoted to seeing that you obtain this living experience of Truth for, by, and in yourselves!

SOROR VIRAKAM (Mary d'Este Sturges).

BOOK FOUR

BY FRATER
PERDURABO
AND SOROR
VIRAKAM

PART I
MEDITATION
THE WAY OF ATTAINMENT OF GENIUS OR GODHEAD
CONSIDERED
AS A DEVELOPMENT OF THE HUMAN BRAIN

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

EXISTENCE, as we know it, is full of sorrow. To mention only one minor point: every man is a condemned criminal, only he does not know the date of his execution. This is unpleasant for every man. Consequently every man does everything possible to postpone the date, and would sacrifice anything that he has if he could reverse the sentence.

Practically all religions and all philosophies have started thus crudely, by promising their adherents some such reward as immortality.

No religion has failed hitherto by not promising enough; the present breaking up of all religions is due to the fact that people have asked to see the securities. Men have even renounced the important material advantages which a well-organized religion may confer upon a State, rather than acquiesce in fraud or falsehood, or even in any system which, if not proved guilty, is at least unable to demonstrate its innocence.

Being more or less bankrupt, the best thing that we can do is to attack the problem afresh without preconceived ideas. Let us begin by doubting every statement. Let us find a way of subjecting every statement to the test of experiment. Is there any truth at all in the claims of various religions? Let us examine the question.

Our original difficulty will be due to the enormous wealth of our material. To enter into a critical examination of all systems would be an unending task; the cloud of witnesses is too great. Now each religion is equally positive; and each demands faith. This we refuse in the absence of positive proof. But we may usefully inquire whether there is not any one thing upon which all religions have agreed: for, if so, it seems possible that it may be worthy of really thorough consideration.

It is certainly not to be found in dogma. Even so simple an idea as that of a supreme and eternal being is denied by a third of the human race. Legends of miracle are perhaps universal, but these, in the absence of demonstrative proof, are repugnant to common sense.

But what of the origin of religions? How is it that unproved assertion has so frequently compelled the assent of all classes of mankind? Is not this a miracle?

There is, however, one form of miracle which certainly happens, the influence of the genius. There is no known analogy in Nature. One cannot even think of a "super-dog" transforming the world of dogs, whereas in the history of mankind this happens with regularity and frequency. Now here are three "super-men," all at loggerheads. What is there in common between Christ, Buddha, and Mohammed? Is there any one point upon which all three are in accord?

No point of doctrine, no point of ethics, no theory of a "hereafter" do they share, and yet in the history of their lives we find one identity amid many diversities.

Buddha was born a Prince, and died a beggar.

Mohammed was born a beggar, and died a Prince.

Christ remained obscure until many years after his death.

Elaborate lives of each have been written by devotees, and there is one thing common to all three – an omission. We hear nothing of Christ between the ages of twelve and thirty. Mohammed disappeared into a cave. Buddha left his palace, and went for a long while into the desert.

Each of them, perfectly silent up to the time of the disappearance, came back and immediately began to preach a new law.

This is so curious that it leaves us to inquire whether the histories of other great teachers contradict or confirm.

Moses led a quiet life until his slaying of the Egyptian. He then flees into the land of Midian, and we hear nothing of what he did there, yet immediately on his return he turns the whole place upside down. Later on, too, he absents himself on Mount Sinai for a few days, and comes back with the Tables of the Law in his hand.

St. Paul (again), after his adventure on the road to Damascus, goes into the desert of Arabia for many years, and on his return overturns the Roman Empire. Even in the legends of savages we find the same thing universal; somebody who is nobody in particular goes away for a longer or shorter period, and comes back as the "great medicine man"; but nobody ever knows exactly what happened to him.

Making every possible deduction for fable and myth, we get this one coincidence. A nobody goes away, and comes back a somebody. This is not to be explained in any of the ordinary ways.

There is not the smallest ground for the contention that these were from the start exceptional men. Mohammed would hardly have driven a camel until he was thirty-five years old if he had possessed any talent or ambition. St. Paul had much original talent; but he is the least of the five. Nor do they seem to have possessed any of the usual materials of power, such as rank, fortune, or influence.

Moses was rather a big man in Egypt when he left; he came back as a mere stranger.

Christ had not been to China and married the Emperor's daughter.

Mohammed had not been acquiring wealth and drilling soldiers.

Buddha had not been consolidating any religious organizations.

St. Paul had not been intriguing with an ambitious general.

Each came back poor; each came back alone.

What was the nature of their power? What happened to them in their absence?

History will not help us to solve the problem, for history is silent.

We have only the accounts given by the men themselves.

It would be very remarkable should we find that these accounts agree.

Of the great teachers we have mentioned Christ is silent; the other four tell us something; some more, some less.

Buddha goes into details too elaborate to enter upon in this place; but the gist of it is that in one way or another he got hold of the secret force of the World and mastered it.

Of St. Paul's experiences, we have nothing but a casual illusion to his having been "caught up into Heaven, and seen and heard things of which it was not lawful to speak."

Mohammed speaks crudely of his having been "visited by the Angel Gabriel," who communicated things from "God."

Moses says that he "beheld God."

Diverse as these statements are at first sight, all agree in announcing an experience of the class which fifty years ago would have been called supernatural, to-day may be called spiritual, and fifty years hence will have a proper name based on an understanding of the phenomenon which occurred.

Theorists have not been at a loss to explain; but they differ.

The Mohammedan insists that God is, and did really send Gabriel with messages for Mohammed: but all others contradict him. And from the nature of the case proof is impossible.

The lack of proof has been so severely felt by Christianity (and in a much less degree by Islam) that fresh miracles have been manufactured almost daily to support the tottering structure. Modern thought, rejecting these miracles, has adopted theories involving epilepsy and madness. As if organization could spring from disorganization! Even if epilepsy were the cause of these great movements which have caused civilization after civilization to arise from barbarism, it would merely form an argument for cultivating epilepsy.

Of course great men will never conform with the standards of little men, and he whose mission it is to overturn the world can hardly escape the title of revolutionary. The fads of a period always furnish terms of abuse. The fad of Caiaphas was Judaism, and the Pharisees told him that Christ "blasphemed." Pilate was a loyal Roman; to him they accused Christ of "sedition." When the Pope had all power it was necessary to prove an enemy a "heretic." Advancing to-day towards a medical oligarchy, we try to prove that our opponents are "insane," and (in a Puritan country) to attack their "morals." We should then avoid all rhetoric, and try to investigate with perfect freedom from bias the phenomena which occurred to these great leaders of mankind.

There is no difficulty in our assuming that these men themselves did not understand clearly what happened to them. The only one who explains his system thoroughly is Buddha, and Buddha is the only one that is not dogmatic. We may also suppose that the others thought it inadvisable to explain too clearly to their followers; St. Paul evidently took this line.

Our best document will therefore be the system of Buddha;[1] but it is so complex that no immediate summary will serve; and in the case of the others, if we have not the accounts of the Masters, we have those of their immediate followers.

The methods advised by all these people have a startling resemblance to one another. They recommend "virtue" (of various kinds), solitude, absence of excitement, moderation in diet, and finally a practice which some call prayer and some call meditation. (The former four may turn out on examination to be merely conditions favourable to the last.)

[1] We have the documents of Hinduism, and of two Chinese systems. But Hinduism has no single founder. Lao Tze is one of our best examples of a man who went away and had a mysterious experience; perhaps the best of all examples, as his system is the best of all systems. We have full details of his method of training in the "Khang "Kang "King, and elsewhere. But it is so little known that we shall omit consideration of it in this popular account.

On investigating what is meant by these two things, we find that they are only one. For what is the state of either prayer or meditation? It is the restraining of the mind to a single act, state, or thought. If we sit down quietly and investigate the contents of our minds, we shall find that even at the best of times the principal characteristics are wandering and distraction. Any one who has had anything to do with children and untrained minds generally knows that fixity of attention is never present, even when there is a large amount of intelligence and good will.

If then we, with our well-trained minds, determine to control this wandering thought, we shall find that we are fairly well able to keep the thoughts running in a narrow channel, each thought linked to the last in a perfectly rational manner; but if we attempt to stop this current we shall find that, so far from succeeding, we shall merely bread down the banks of the channel. The mind will overflow, and instead of a chain of thought we shall have a chaos of confused images.

This mental activity is so great, and seems so natural, that it is hard to understand how any one first got the idea that it was a weakness and a nuisance. Perhaps it was because in the more natural practice of "devotion," people found that their thoughts interfered. In any case calm and self-control are to be preferred to restlessness. Darwin in his study presents a marked contrast with a monkey in a cage.

Generally speaking, the larger and stronger and more highly developed any animal is, the less does it move about, and such movements as it does make are slow and purposeful. Compare the ceaseless activity of bacteria with the reasoned steadiness of the beaver; and except in the few animal communities which are organized, such as bees, the greatest intelligence is shown by those of solitary habits. This is so true of man that psychologists have been obliged to treat of the mental state of crowds as if it were totally different in quality from any state possible to an individual.

It is by freeing the mind from external influences, whether casual or emotional, that it obtains power to see somewhat of the truth of things.

Let us, however, continue our practice. Let us determine to be masters of our minds. We shall then soon find what conditions are favourable.

There will be no need to persuade ourselves at great length that all external influences are likely to be unfavourable. New faces, new scenes will disturb us; even the new habits of life which we undertake for this very purpose of controlling the mind will at first tend to upset it. Still, we must give up our habit of eating too much, and follow the natural rule of only eating when we are hungry, listening to the interior voice which tells us that we have had enough.

The same rule applies to sleep. We have determined to control our minds, and so our time for meditation must take precedence of other hours.

We must fix times for practice, and make our feasts movable. In order to test our progress, for we shall find that (as in all physiological matters) meditation cannot be gauged by the feelings, we shall have a note-book and pencil, and we shall also have a watch. We shall then endeavour to count how often, during the first quarter of an hour, the mind breaks away from the idea upon which it is determined to concentrate. We shall practice this twice daily; and, as we go, experience will teach us which conditions are favourable and which are not. Before we have been doing this for very long we are almost certain to get impatient, and we shall find that we have to practice many other things in order to assist us in our work. New problems will constantly arise which must be faced, and solved.

For instance, we shall most assuredly find that we fidget. We shall discover that no position is comfortable, though we never noticed it before in all our lives!

This difficulty has been solved by a practice called "Asana," which will be described later on.

Memories of the events of the day will bother us; we must arrange our day so that it is absolutely uneventful. Our minds will recall to us our hopes and fears, our loves and hates, our ambitions, our envies, and many other emotions. All these must be cut off. We must have absolutely no interest in life but that of quieting our minds.

This is the object of the usual monastic vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience. If you have no property, you have no care, nothing to be anxious about; with chastity no other person to be anxious about, and to distract your attention; while if you are vowed to obedience the question of what you are to do no longer frets: you simply obey.

There are a great many other obstacles which you will discover as you go on, and it is proposed to deal with these in turn. But let us pass by for the moment to the point where you are nearing success.

In your early struggles you may have found it difficult to conquer sleep; and you may have wandered so far from the object of your meditations without noticing it, that the meditation has really been broken; but much later on, when you feel that you are "getting quite good," you will be shocked to find a complete oblivion of yourself and your surroundings. You will say: "Good heavens! I must have been to sleep!" or else "What on earth was I meditating upon?" or even "What was I doing?" "Where am I " "Who am I?" or a mere wordless bewilderment may daze you. This may alarm you, and your alarm will not be lessened when you come to full consciousness, and reflect that you have actually forgotten who you are and what your are doing!

This is only one of many adventures that may come to you; but it is one of the most typical. By this time your hours of meditation will fill most of the day, and you will probably be constantly having presentiments that something is about to happen. You may also be terrified with the idea that your brain may be giving way; but you will have learnt the real symptoms of mental fatigue, and you will be careful to avoid them. They must be very carefully distinguished from idleness!

At certain times you will feel as if there were a contest between the will and the mind; at other times you may feel as if they were in harmony; but there is a third state, to be distinguished from the latter feeling. It is the certain sign of near success, the view-halloo. This is when the mind runs naturally towards the object chosen, not as if in obedience to the will of the owner of the mind, but as if directed by nothing at all, or by something impersonal; as if it were falling by its own weight, and not being pushed down.

Almost always, the moment that one becomes conscious of this, it stops; and the dreary old struggle between the cowboy will and the buckjumper mind begins again.

Like every other physiological process, consciousness of it implies disorder or disease.

In analysing the nature of this work of controlling the mind, the student will appreciate without trouble the fact that two things are involved – the person seeing and the thing seen – the person knowing and the thing known; and he will come to regard this as the necessary condition of all consciousness. We are too accustomed to assume to be facts things about which we have no real right even to guess. We assume, for example, that the unconscious is the torpid; and yet nothing is more certain than that bodily organs which are functioning well do so in silence. The best sleep is dreamless. Even in the case of games of skill our very best strokes are followed by the thought, "I don't know how I did it;" and we cannot repeat those strokes at will. The moment we begin to think consciously about a stroke we get "nervous," and are lost.

In fact, there are three main classes of stroke; the bad stroke, which we associate, and rightly, with wandering attention; the good stroke which we associate, and rightly, with fixed attention; and the perfect stroke, which we do not understand, but which is really caused by the habit of fixity of attention having become independent of the will, and thus enabled to act freely of its own accord.

This is the same phenomenon referred to above as being a good sign.

Finally something happens whose nature may form the subject of a further discussion later on. For the moment let it suffice to say that this consciousness of the Ego and the non-Ego, the seer and the thing seen, the knower and the thing known, is blotted out.

There is usually an intense light, an intense sound, and a feeling of such overwhelming bliss that the resources of language have been exhausted again and again in the attempt to describe it.

It is an absolute knock-out blow to the mind. It is so vivid and tremendous that those who experience it are in the gravest danger of losing all sense of proportion.

By its light all other events of life are as darkness. Owing to this, people have utterly failed to analyse it or to estimate it. They are accurate enough in saying that, compared with this, all human life is absolutely dross; but they go further, and go wrong. They argue that "since this is that which transcends the terrestrial, it must be celestial." One of the tendencies in their minds has been the hope of a heaven such as their parents and teachers have described, or such as they have themselves pictured; and, without the slightest grounds for saying so, they make the assumption "This is That."

In the Bhagavadgita a vision of this class is naturally attributed to the apparation of Vishnu, who was the local god of the period.

Anna Kingsford, who had dabbled in Hebrew mysticism, and was a feminist, got an almost identical vision; but called the "divine" figure which she saw alternately "Adonai" and "Maria."

Now this woman, though handicapped by a brain that was a mass of putrid pulp, and a complete lack of social status, education, and moral character, did more in the religious world than any other person had done for generations. She, and she alone, made Theosophy possible, and without Theosophy the world-wide interest in similar matters would never have been aroused. This interest is to the Law of Thelema what the preaching of John the Baptist was to Christianity.

We are now in a position to say what happened to Mohammed. Somehow or another his phenomenon happened in his mind. More ignorant than Anna Kingsford, though, fortunately, more moral, he connected it with the story of the "Annunciation," which he had undoubtedly heard in his boyhood, and said "Gabriel appeared to me." But in spite of his ignorance, his total misconception of the truth, the power of the vision was such that he was enabled to persist through the usual persecution, and founded a religion to which even to-day one man in every eight belongs.

The history of Christianity shows precisely the same remarkable fact. Jesus Christ was brought up on the fables of the "Old Testament," and so was compelled to ascribe his experiences to "Jehovah," although his gentle spirit could have had nothing in common with the monster who was always commanding the rape of virgins and the murder of little children, and whose rites were then, and still are, celebrated by human sacrifice.¡¡footnote: The massacres of Jews in Eastern Europe which surprise the ignorant, are almost invariably excited by the disappearance of "Christian" children, stolen, as the parents suppose, for the purposes of "ritual murder."[2]

Similarly the visions of Joan of Arc were entirely Christian; but she, like all the others we have mentioned, found somewhere the force to do great things. Of course, it may be said that there is a fallacy in the argument; it may be true that all these great people "saw God," but it does not follow that every one who "sees God" will do great things.

This is true enough. In fact, the majority of people who claim to have "seen God," and who no doubt did "see God" just as much as those whom we have quoted, did nothing else.

But perhaps their silence is not a sign of their weakness, but of their strength. Perhaps these "great" men are the failures of humanity; perhaps it would be better to say nothing; perhaps only an unbalanced mind would wish to alter anything or believe in the possibility of altering anything; but there are those who think existence even in heaven intolerable so long as there is one single being who does not share that joy. There are some who may wish to travel back from the very threshold of the bridal chamber to assist belated guests.

Such at least was the attitude which Gotama Buddha adopted. Nor shall he be alone.

[2]WEH: This unfortunate perpetuation of the "blood-libel" myth was later recanted by Crowley. The blood-libel was visited upon early Christians by the Romans and is visited today upon Thelemites by Christian Fundamentalists.

Again it may be pointed out that the contemplative life is generally opposed to the active life, and it must require an extremely careful balance to prevent the one absorbing the other.

As it will be seen later, the "vision of God," or "Union with God," or "Samadhi," or whatever we may agree to call it, has many kinds and many degrees, although there is an impassable abyss between the least of them and the greatest of all the phenomena of normal consciousness. "To sum up," we assert a secret source of energy which explains the phenomenon of Genius.footnoteWe have dealt in this preliminary sketch only with examples of religious genius. Other kinds are subject to the same remarks, but the limits of our space forbid discussion of these. We do not believe in any supernatural explanations, but insist that this source may be reached by the following out of definite rules, the degree of success depending upon the capacity of the seeker, and not upon the favour of any Divine Being. We assert that the critical phenomenon which determines success is an occurrence in the brain characterized essentially by the uniting of subject and object. We propose to discuss this phenomenon, analyse its nature, determine accurately the physical, mental and moral conditions which are favourable to it, to ascertain its cause, and thus to produce it in ourselves, so that we may adequately study its effects.

CHAPTER I
ASANA

THE problem before us may be stated thus simply. A man wishes to control his mind, to be able to think one chosen thought for as long as he will without interruption.

As previously remarked, the first difficulty arises from the body, which keeps on asserting its presence by causing its victim to itch, and in other ways to be distracted. He wants to stretch, scratch, sneeze. This nuisance is so persistent that the Hindus (in their scientific way) devised a special practice for quieting it.

The word Asana means "posture; but, as with all words which have caused debate, its exact meaning has altered, and it is used in several distinct senses by various authors. The greatest authority on "Yoga"[3] is Patanjali. He says, "Asana is that which is firm and pleasant." This may be taken as meaning the result of success in the practice. Again, Sankhya says, "Posture is that which is steady and easy." And again, "any posture which is steady and easy is an Asana; there is no other rule." Any posture will do.

In a sense this is true, because any posture becomes uncomfortable sooner or later. The steadiness and easiness mark a definite attainment, as will be explained later on. Hindu books, such as the "Shiva Sanhita," give countless postures; many, perhaps most of them, impossible for the average adult European. Others insist that the head, neck, and spine should be kept vertical and straight, for reasons connected with the subject of Prana, which will be dealt with in its proper place. The positions illustrated in Liber E (Equinox I and VII) form the best guide.[4] The extreme of Asana is practised by those

[3] Yoga is the general name for that form of meditation which aims at the uniting of subject and object, for "yog" is the root from which are derived the Latin word "Jugum" and the English word "Yoke."

[4] Here are four:

1. Sit in a chair; head up, back straight, knees together, hands on knees, eyes closed. ("The God.")

Yogis who remain in one position without moving, except in the case of absolute necessity, during their whole lives. One should not criticise such persons without a thorough knowledge of the subject. Such knowledge has not yet been published.

However, one may safely assert that since the great men previously mentioned did not do this, it will not be necessary for their followers. Let us then choose a suitable position, and consider what happens. There is a sort of happy medium between rigidity and limpness; the muscles are not to be strained; and yet they are not allowed to be altogether slack. It is difficult to find a good descriptive word. "Braced" is perhaps the best. A sense of physical alertness is desirable. Think of the tiger about to spring, or of the oarsman waiting for the gun. After a little there will be cramp and fatigue. The student must now set his teeth, and go through with it. The minor sensations of itching, etc., will be found to pass away, if they are resolutely neglected, but the cramp and fatigue may be expected to increase until the end of the practice. One may begin with half an hour or an hour. The student must not mind if the process of quitting the Asana involves several minutes of the acutest agony.[5]

It will require a good deal of determination to persist day after day, for in most cases it will be found that the discomfort and pain, instead of diminishing, tend to increase.

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2. Kneel; buttocks resting on the heels, toes turned back, back and head straight, hands on thighs. ("The Dragon.")

3. Stand; hold left ankle with right hand (and alternately practise right ankle in left hand, etc.), free forefinger on lips. ("The Ibis.")

4. Sit; left heel pressing up anus, right foot poised on its toes, the heel covering the phallus; arms stretched out over the knees: head and back straight. ("The Thunderbolt.")

[5] It is important to distinguish between cramp and severe chronic muscle spasm which can tear ligaments. Muscle spasm tends to result from pinching or compressing nerves, and can lead to permanent injury. Also beware of constricted circulation, which produces numbness more than it does pain. Wear loose clothing and avoid pressing on hard objects.

On the other hand, if the student pay no attention, fail to watch the body, an opposite phenomenon may occur. He shifts to ease himself without knowing that he has done so. To avoid this, choose a position which naturally is rather cramped and awkward, and in which slight changes are not sufficient to bring ease. Otherwise, for the first few days, the student may even imagine that he has conquered the position. In fact, in all these practices their apparent simplicity is such that the beginner is likely to wonder what all the fuss is about, perhaps to think that he is specially gifted. Similarly a man who has never touched a golf club will take his umbrella and carelessly hole a putt which would frighten the best putter alive.

In a few days, however, in all cases, the discomforts will begin. As you go on, they will begin earlier in the course of the hour's exercise. The disinclination to practise at all may become almost unconquerable. One must warn the student against imagining that some other position would be easier to master than the one he has selected. Once you begin to change about you are lost.

Perhaps the reward is not so far distant: it will happen one day that the pain is suddenly forgotten, the fact of the presence of the body is forgotten, and one will realize that during the whole of one's previous life the body was always on the borderland of consciousness, and that consciousness a consciousness of pain; and at this moment one will further realize with an indescribable feeling of relief that not only is this position, which has been so painful, the very ideal of physical comfort, but that all other conceivable positions of the body are uncomfortable. This feeling represents success.

There will be no further difficulty in the practice. One will get into one's Asana with almost the same feeling as that with which a tired man gets into a hot bath; and while he is in that position, the body may be trusted to send him no message that might disturb his mind.

Other results of this practice are described by Hindu authors, but they do not concern us at present. Our first obstacle has been removed, and we can continue with the others.

CHAPTER II
PRANAYAMA AND ITS PARALLEL IN SPEECH, MANTRAYOGA

THE connection between breath and mind will be fully discussed in speaking of the Magick Sword, but it may be useful to premise a few details of a practical character. You may consult various Hindu manuals, and the writing of Kwang Tze, for various notable theories as to method and result.

But in this sceptical system one had better content one's self with statements which are not worth the trouble of doubting.

The ultimate idea of meditation being to still the mind, it may be considered a useful preliminary to still consciousness of all the functions of the body. This has been dealt with in the chapter on Asana. One may, however, mention that some Yogis carry it to the point of trying to stop the beating of the heart. Whether this be desirable or no it would be useless to the beginner, so he will endeavour to make the breathing very slow and very regular. The rules for this practice are given in Liber CCVI.

The best way to time the breathing, once some little skill has been acquired, with a watch to bear witness, is by the use of a mantra. The mantra acts on the thoughts very much as Pranayama does upon the breath. The thought is bound down to a recurring cycle; any intruding thoughts are thrown off by the mantra, just as pieces of putty would be from a fly-wheel; and the swifter the wheel the more difficult would it be for anything to stick.

This is the proper way to practise a mantra. Utter it as loudly and slowly as possible ten times, then not quite so loudly and a very little faster ten times more. Continue this process until there is nothing but a rapid movement of the lips; this movement should be continued with increased velocity and diminishing intensity until the mental muttering completely absorbs the physical. The student is by this time absolutely still, with the mantra racing in his brain; he should, however, continue to speed it up until he reaches his limit, at which he should continue for as long as possible, and then cease the practice by reversing the process above described.

Any sentence may be used as a mantra, and possibly the Hindus are correct in thinking that there is a particular sentence best suited to any particular man. Some men might find the liquid mantras of the Quran slide too easily, so that it would be possible to continue another train of thought without disturbing the mantra; one is supposed while saying a mantra to meditate upon its meaning. This suggests that the student might construct for himself a mantra which should represent the Universe in sound, as the pantacle[6] should do in form. Occasionally a mantra may be "given," "i.e.," heard in some unexplained manner during a meditation. One man, for example, used the words: "And strive to see in everything the will of God;" to another, while engaged in killing thoughts, came the words "and push it down," apparently referring to the action of the inhibitory centres which he was using. By keeping on with this he got his "result."

The ideal mantra should be rhythmical, one might even say musical; but there should be sufficient emphasis on some syllable to assist the faculty of attention. The best mantras are of medium length, so far as the beginner is concerned. If the mantra is too long, one is apt to forget it, unless one practises very hard for a great length of time. On the other hand, mantras of a single syllable, such as "Aum,"[7] are rather jerky; the rhythmical idea is lost. Here are a few useful mantras:

1. Aum.

2. Aum Tat Sat Aum. This mantra is purely spondaic.

3. Aum mani padme hum; two trochees between two caesuras.

[6] See Part II.

[7] However, in saying a mantra containing the word "Aum," one sometimes forgets the other words, and remains concentrated, repeating the "Aum" at intervals; but this is the result of a practice already begun, not the beginning of a practice.

4. Aum shivaya vashi; three trochees.[8]

5. Allah. [9]

6. Hua allahu alazi lailaha illa Hua.

Here are some longer ones:

1. The famous Gayatri.

   Aum! tat savitur varenyam
   Bhargo devasya dimahi
   Dhiyo yo na pratyodayat.

   Scan this as trochaic tetrameters.

2. Qol: Hua Allahu achad; Allahu Assamad; lam yalid walam yulad; walam yakun lahu kufwan achad.

3. This mantra is the holiest of all that are or can be. It is from the Stele of Revealing.[10]

   A ka dua
   Tuf ur biu
   Bi aa chefu
   Dudu ner af an nuteru.

Such are enough for selection.[11]

[8] Note that "shi" means rest, the absolute or male aspect of the Deity; "va" is energy, the manifested or female side of the Deity. This Mantra therefore expresses the whole course of the Universe, from Zero through the finite back to Zero.

[9] The syllables of this are accented equally, with a certain pause between them; and are usually combined by fakirs with a rhythmical motion of the body to and fro.

[10] See Equinox VII.

[11] Meanings of mantras:

There are many other mantras. Sri Sabapaty Swami gives a particular one for each of the Cakkras. But let the student select one mantra and master it thoroughly.

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1. Aum is the sound produced by breathing forcibly from the back of the throat and gradually closing the mouth. The three sounds represent the creative, preservative, and destructive principles. There are many more points about this, enough to fill a volume.

2. O that Existent! O! – An aspiration after reality, truth.

3. O the Jewel in the Lotus! Amen! – Refers to Buddha and Harpocrates; but also the symbolism of the Rosy Cross.

4. Gives the cycle of creation. Peace manifesting as Power, Power dissolving in Peace.

5. God. It adds to 66, the sum of the first 11 numbers.

6. He is God, and there is no other God than He.

7. O! let us strictly meditate on the adorable light of that divine Savitri (the interior Sun, etc.). May she enlighten our minds!

8. Say:

   He is God alone!
   God the Eternal!
   He begets not and is not begotten!
   Nor is there like unto Him any one!

9. Unity uttermost showed!
   I adore the might of Thy breath,
   Supreme and terrible God,
   Who makest the Gods and Death
   To tremble before Thee: –
   I, I adore Thee!

You have not even begun to master a mantra until it continues unbroken through sleep. This is much easier than it sounds.

Some schools advocate practising a mantra with the aid of instrumental music and dancing. Certainly very remarkable effects are obtained in the way of "magic" powers; whether great spiritual results are equally common is a doubtful point. Persons wishing to study them may remember that the Sahara desert is within three days of London; and no doubt the Sidi Aissawa would be glad to accept pupils. This discussion of the parallel science of mantra-yoga has led us far indeed from the subject of Pranayama.

Pranayama is notably useful in quieting the emotions and appetites; and, whether by reason of the mechanical pressure which it asserts, or by the thorough combustion which it assures in the lungs, it seems to be admirable from the standpoint of health. Digestive troubles in particular are very easy to remove in this way. It purifies both the body and the lower functions of the mind,[12] and should be practised certainly never less than one hour daily by the serious student.

Four hours is a better period, a golden mean; sixteen hours is too much for most people.

[12]Emphatically. Emphatically. Emphatically. It is impossible to combine Pranayama properly performed with emotional thought. It should be resorted to immediately, at all times during life, when calm is threatened. On the whole, the ambulatory practices are more generally useful to the health than the sedentary; for in this way walking and fresh air are assured. But some of the sedentary practice should be done, and combined with meditation. Of course when actually "racing" to get results, walking is a distraction.

CHAPTER III

YAMA[13] AND NIYAMA

THE Hindus have place these two attainments in the forefront of their programme. They are the "moral qualities" and "good works" which are supposed to predispose to mental calm.

"Yama" consists of non-killing, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence, and non-receiving of any gift.

In the Buddhist system, "Sila", "Virtue," is similarly enjoined. The qualities are, for the layman, these five: Thou shalt not kill. Thou shalt not steal. Thou shalt not lie. Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt drink no intoxicating drink. For the monk many others are added.

The commandments of Moses are familiar to all; they are rather similar; and so are those given by Christ[14] in the "Sermon on the Mount."

Some of these are only the "virtues" of a slave, invented by his master to keep him in order. The real point of the Hindu "Yama" is that breaking any of these would tend to excite the mind.

Subsequent theologians have tried to improve upon the teachings of the Masters, have given a sort of mystical importance to these virtues; they have insisted upon them for their own sake, and turned them into puritanism and formalism. Thus "non-killing," which originally meant "do not excite yourself by stalking tigers," has been interpreted to mean that it is a crime to drink water that has not been strained, lest you should kill the animalcula.

But this constant worry, this fear of killing anything by mischance is, on the whole, worse than a hand-to-hand conflict with a grizzly bear. If the barking of a dog disturbs your meditation, it is simplest to shoot the dog, and think no more about it.

[13] Yama means literally "control." It is dealt with in detail in Part II, "The Wand."

[14] Not, however, original. The whole sermon is to be found in the Talmud.

A similar difficulty with wives has caused some masters to recommend celibacy. In all these questions common sense must be the guide. No fixed rule can be laid down. The "non-receiving of gifts," for instance, is rather important for a Hindu, who would be thoroughly upset for weeks if any one gave him a coconut: but the average European takes things as they come by the time that he has been put into long trousers.

The only difficult question is that of continence, which is complicated by many considerations, such as that of energy; but everybody's mind is hopelessly muddled on this subject, which some people confuse with erotology, and others with sociology. There will be no clear thinking on this matter until it is understood as being solely a branch of athletics.

We may then dismiss Yama and Niyama with this advice: let the student decide for himself what form of life, what moral code, will least tend to excite his mind; but once he has formulated it, let him stick to it, avoiding opportunism; and let him be very careful to take no credit for what he does or refrains from doing – it is a purely practical code, of no value in itself.

The cleanliness which assists the surgeon in his work would prevent the engineer from doing his at all.

(Ethical questions are adequately dealt with in "Then Tao" in "Konx Om Pax," and should be there studied. Also see Liber XXX of the A. A. Also in Liber CCXX, the "Book of the Law," it is said: "DO WHAT THOU WILT shall be the whole of the Law."[15] Remember that for the purpose of this treatise the whole object of Yama and Niyama is to live so that no emotion or passion disturbs the mind.)

[15]WEH: SIC, should be: "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law."

CHAPTER IV
PRATYAHARA

PRATYAHARA is the first process in the mental part of our task. The previous practices, Asana, Pranayama, Yama, and Niyama, are all acts of the body, while mantra is connected with speech: Pratyahara is purely mental.

And what is Pratyahara? This word is used by different authors in different senses. The same word is employed to designate both the practice and the result. It means for our present purpose a process rather strategical than practical; it is introspection, a sort of general examination of the contents of the mind which we wish to control: Asana having been mastered, all immediate exciting causes have been removed, and we are free to think what we are thinking about.

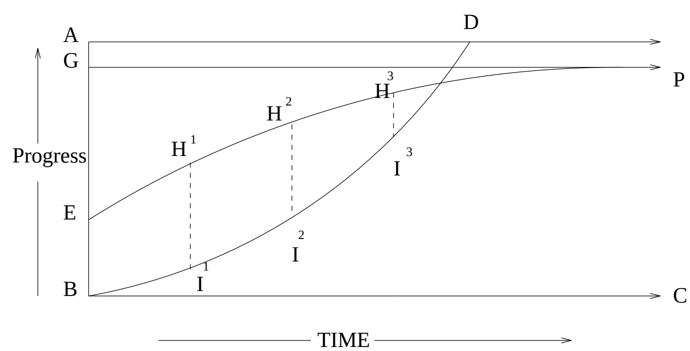
A very similar experience to that of Asana is in store for us. At first we shall very likely flatter ourselves that our minds are pretty calm; this is a defect of observation. Just as the European standing for the first time on the edge of the desert will see nothing there, while his Arab can tell him the family history of each of the fifty persons in view, because he has learnt how to look, so with practice the thoughts will become more numerous and more insistent.

As soon as the body was accurately observed it was found to be terribly restless and painful; now that we observe the mind it is seen to be more restless and painful still.

A similar curve might be plotted for the real and apparent painfulness of Asana.

Conscious of this fact, we begin to try to control it: "Not quite so many thoughts, please!" "Don't think quite so fast, please!" "No more of that kind of thought, please!" It is only then that we discover that what we thought was a school of playful porpoises is really the convolutions of the sea-serpent. The attempt to repress has the effect of exciting.

When the unsuspecting pupil first approaches his holy but wily Guru, and demands magical powers, that Wise One replies that he will confer them, points out with much caution and secrecy some particular spot on the pupil's body which has never previously attracted his attention, and says: "In order to obtain this magical power which you seek, all that is necessary is to wash seven times in the Ganges during seven days, being particularly careful to avoid thinking of that one spot." Of course the unhappy youth spends a disgusted week in thinking of little else.



BD shows the Control of the Mind, improving slowly at first, afterwards more quickly. It starts from at or near zero, and should reach absolute control at D.
EF shows the Power of Observation of the contents of the mind, improving quickly at first, afterwards more slowly, up to perfection at F. It starts well above zero in the case of most educated men.
The height of the perpendiculars HI indicates the dissatisfaction of the student with his power of control. Increasing at first, it ultimately diminishes to zero.

It is positively amazing with what persistence a thought, even a whole train of thoughts, returns again and again to the charge. It becomes a positive nightmare. It is intensely annoying, too, to find that one does not become conscious that one has got on to the forbidden subject until one has gone right through with it. However, one continues day after day investigating thoughts and trying to check them; and sooner or later one proceeds to the next stage, Dharana, the attempt to restrain the mind to a single object.

Before we go on to this, however, we must consider what is meant by success in Pratyahara. This is a very extensive subject, and different authors take widely divergent views. One writer means an analysis so acute that every thought is resolved into a number of elements (see "The Psychology of Hashish," Section V, in Equinox II).

Others take the view that success in the practice is something like the experience which Sir Humphrey Davy had as a result of taking nitrous oxide, in which he exclaimed: "The universe is composed exclusively of ideas."

Others say that it gives Hamlet's feeling: "There's nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so," interpreted as literally as was done by Mrs. Eddy.

However, the main point is to acquire some sort of inhibitory power over the thoughts. Fortunately there is an unfailing method of acquiring this power. It is given in Liber III. If Sections 1 and 2 are practised (if necessary with the assistance of another person to aid your vigilance) you will soon be able to master the final section.

In some people this inhibitory power may flower suddenly in very much the same way as occurred with Asana. Quite without any relaxation of vigilance, the mind will suddenly be stilled. There will be a marvellous feeling of peace and rest, quite different from the lethargic feeling which is produced by overeating. It is difficult to say whether so definite a result would come to all, or even to most people. The matter is one of no very great importance. If you have acquired the power of checking the rise of thought you may proceed to the next stage.

CHAPTER V
DHARANA

NOW that we have learnt to observe the mind, so that we know how it works to some extent, and have begun to understand the elements of control, we may try the result of gathering together all the powers of the mind, and attempting to focus them on a single point.

We know that it is fairly easy for the ordinary educated mind to think without much distraction on a subject in which it is much interested. We have the popular phrase, "revolving a thing in the mind"; and as long as the subject is sufficiently complex, as long as thoughts pass freely, there is no great difficulty. So long as a gyroscope is in motion, it remains motionless relatively to its support, and even resists attempts to distract it; when it stops it falls from that position. If the earth ceased to spin round the sun, it would at once fall into the sun.

The moment then that the student takes a simple subject – or rather a simple object – and imagines it or visualizes it, he will find that it is not so much his creature as he supposed. Other thoughts will invade the mind, so that the object is altogether forgotten, perhaps for whole minutes at a time; and at other times the object itself will begin to play all sorts of tricks.

Suppose you have chosen a white cross. It will move its bar up and down, elongate the bar, turn the bar oblique, get its arms unequal, turn upside down, grow branches, get a crack around it or a figure upon it, change its shape altogether like an Amoeba, change its size and distance as a whole, change the degree of its illumination, and at the same time change its colour. It will get splotchy and blotchy, grow patterns, rise, fall, twist and turn; clouds will pass over its face. There is no conceivable change of which it is incapable. Not to mention its total disappearance, and replacement by something altogether different!

Any one to whom this experience does not occur need not imagine that he is meditating. It shows merely that he is incapable of concentrating his mind in the very smallest degree. Perhaps a student may go for several days before discovering that he is not meditating. When he does, the obstinacy of the object will infuriate him; and it is only now that his real troubles will begin, only now that Will comes really into play, only now that his manhood is tested. If it were not for the Will-development which he got in the conquest of Asana, he would probably give up. As it is, the mere physical agony which he underwent is the veriest trifle compared with the horrible tedium of Dharana.

For the first week it may seem rather amusing, and you may even imagine you are progressing; but as the practice teaches you what you are doing, you will apparently get worse and worse.

Please understand that in doing this practice you are supposed to be seated in Asana, and to have note-book and pencil by your side, and a watch in front of you. You are not to practise at first for more than ten minutes at a time, so as to avoid risk of overtiring the brain. In fact you will probably find that the whole of your will-power is not equal to keeping to a subject at all for so long as three minutes, or even apparently concentrating on it for so long as three seconds, or three-fifths of one second. By "keeping to it at all" is meant the mere attempt to keep to it. The mind becomes so fatigued, and the object so incredibly loathsome, that it is useless to continue for the time being. In Frater P.'s record we find that after daily practice for six months, meditations of four minutes and less are still being recorded.

The student is supposed to count the number of times that his thought wanders; this he can do on his fingers or on a string of beads.[16] If these breaks seem to become more frequent instead of less frequent, the student must not be discourage; this is partially caused by his increased accuracy of observation. In exactly the same way, the introduction of vaccination resulted in an apparent increase in the number of cases of smallpox, the reason being that people began to tell the truth about the disease instead of faking.

Soon, however, the control will improve faster than the observation. When this occurs the improvement will become apparent in the record. Any varia-

[16] This counting can easily become quite mechanical. With the thought that reminds you of a break associate the notion of counting. The grosser kind of break can be detected by another person. It is accompanied with a flickering of the eyelid, and can be seen by him. With practice he could detect even very small breaks.

tion will probably be due to accidental circumstances; for example, one night your may be very tired when you start; another night you may have headache or indigestion. You will do well to avoid practising at such times.

We will suppose, then, that you have reached the stage when your average practice on one subject is about half an hour, and the average number of breaks between ten and twenty. One would suppose that this implied that during the periods between the breaks one was really concentrated, but this is not the case. The mind is flickering, although imperceptibly. However, there may be sufficient real steadiness even at this early stage to cause some very striking phenomena, of which the most marked is one which will possibly make you think that you have gone to sleep. Or, it may seem quite inexplicable, and in any case will disgust you with yourself. You will completely forget who you are, what you are, and what you are doing. A similar phenomenon sometimes happens when one is half awake in the morning, and one cannot think what town one is living in. The similarity of these two things is rather significant. It suggests that what is really happening is that you are waking up from the sleep which men call waking, the sleep whose dreams are life.

There is another way to test one's progress in this practice, and that is by the character of the breaks.

"Breaks" are classed as follows:

"Firstly," physical sensations. These should have been overcome by Asana.

"Secondly," breaks that seem to be dictated by events immediately preceding the meditation. Their activity becomes tremendous. Only by this practice does one understand how much is really observed by the sense without the mind becoming conscious of it.

"Thirdly," there is a class of breaks partaking of the nature of reverie or "day-dreams." These are very insidious – one may go on for a long time without realizing that one has wandered at all.

"Fourthly," we get a very high class of break, which is a sort of aberration of the control itself. You think, "How well I am doing it!" or perhaps that it would be rather a good idea if you were on a desert island, or if you were in a sound-proof house, or if you were sitting by a waterfall. But these are only trifling variations from the vigilance itself.

"A fifth class of breaks" seems to have no discoverable source in the mind. Such may even take the form of actual hallucination, usually auditory. Of course, such hallucinations are infrequent, and are recognized for what they are; otherwise the student had better see his doctor. The usual kind consists of odd sentences or fragments of sentences, which are heard quite distinctly in a recognizable human voice, not the student's own voice, or that of any one he knows. A similar phenomenon is observed by wireless operators, who call such messages "atmospherics."

There is "a further kind of break, which is the desired result itself." It must be dealt with later in detail.

Now there is a real sequence in these classes of breaks. As control improves, the percentage of primaries and secondaries will diminish, even though the total number of breaks in a meditation remain stationary. By the time that you are meditating two or three hours a day, and filing up most of the rest of the day with other practices designed to assist, when nearly every time something or other happens, and there is constantly a feeling of being "on the brink of something pretty big," one may expect to proceed to the next state – Dhyana.

CHAPTER VI
DHYANA

THIS word has two quite distinct and mutually exclusive meanings. The first refers to the result itself. Dhyana is the same word as the Pali "Jhana." The Buddha counted eight Jhanas, which are evidently different degrees and kinds of trance. The Hindu also speaks of Dhyana as a lesser form of Samadhi. Others, however, treat it as if it were merely an intensification of Dharana. Patanjali says: "Dhrana is holding the mind on to some particular object. An unbroken flow of knowledge in that subject is Dhyana. When that, giving up all forms, reflects only the meaning, it is Samadhi." He combines these three into Samyama.

We shall treat of Dhyana as a result rather than as a method. Up to this point ancient authorities have been fairly reliable guides, except with regard to their crabbed ethics; but when they get on the subject of results of meditation, they completely lose their heads.

They exhaust the possibilities of poetry to declare what is demonstrably untrue. For example, we find in the Shiva Sanhita that "he who daily contemplates on this lotus of the heart is eagerly desired by the daughters of Gods, has clairaudience, clairvoyance, and can walk in the air." Another person "can make gold, discover medicine for disease, and see hidden treasures." All this is filth. What is the curse upon religion that its tenets must always be associated with every kind of extravagance and falsehood?

There is one exception; it is the A.'. A.'., whose members are extremely careful to make no statement at all that cannot be verified in the usual manner; or where this is not easy, at least avoid anything like a dogmatic statement. In Their second book of practical instruction, Liber O, occur these words:

"By doing certain things certain results will follow. Students are most earnestly warned against attributing objective reality or philosophical validity to any of them."

Those golden words!

In discussing Dhyana, then, let it be clearly understood that something unexpected is about to be described.

We shall consider its nature and estimate its value in a perfectly unbiassed way, without allowing ourselves the usual rhapsodies, or deducing any theory of the universe. One extra fact may destroy some existing theory; that is common enough. But no single fact is sufficient to construct one.

It will have been understood that Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi form a continuous process, and exactly when the climax comes does not matter. It is of this climax that we must speak, for this is a matter of "experience," and a very striking one.

In the course of our concentration we noticed that the contents of the mind at any moment consisted of two things, and no more: the Object, variable, and the Subject, invariable, or apparently so. By success in Dharana the object has been made as invariable as the subject.

Now the result of this is that the two become one. This phenomenon usually comes as a tremendous shock. It is indescribable even by the masters of language; and it is therefore not surprising that semi-educated stutterers wallow in oceans of gush.

All the poetic faculties and all the emotional faculties are thrown into a sort of ecstasy by an occurrence which overthrows the mind, and makes the rest of life seem absolutely worthless in comparison.

Good literature is principally a matter of clear observation and good judgment expressed in the simplest way. For this reason none of the great events of history (such as earthquakes and battles) have been well described by eye-witnesses, unless those eye-witnesses were out of danger. But even when one has become accustomed to Dhyana by constant repetition, no words seem adequate.

One of the simplest forms of Dhyana may be called "the Sun." The sun is seen (as it were) by itself, not by an observer; and although the physical eye cannot behold the sun, one is compelled to make the statement that this "Sun" is far more brilliant than the sun of nature. The whole thing takes place on a higher level.

Also the conditions of thought, time, and space are abolished. It is impossible to explain what this really means: only experience can furnish you with apprehension.

(This, too, has its analogies in ordinary life; the conceptions of higher mathematics cannot be grasped by the beginner, cannot be explained to the layman.)

A further development is the appearance of the Form which has been universally described as human; although the persons describing it proceed to add a great number of details which are not human at all. This particular appearance is usually assumed to be "God."

But, whatever it may be, the result on the mind of the student is tremendous; all his thoughts are pushed to their greatest development. He sincerely believes that they have the divine sanction; perhaps he even supposes that they emanate from this "God." He goes back into the world armed with this intense conviction and authority. He proclaims his ideas without the restraint which is imposed upon most persons by doubt, modesty, and diffidence;[17] while further there is, one may suppose, a real clarification.

In any case, the mass of mankind is always ready to be swayed by anything thus authoritative and distinct. History is full of stories of officers who have walked unarmed up to a mutinous regiment, and disarmed them by the mere force of confidence. The power of the orator over the mob is well known. It is, probably, for this reason that the prophet has been able to constrain mankind to obey his law. I never occurs to him that any one can do otherwise. In practical life one can walk past any guardian, such as a sentry or ticket-collector, if one can really act so that the man is somehow persuaded that you have a right to pass unchallenged.

[17]This lack of restraint is not to be confused with that observed in intoxication and madness. Yet there is a very striking similarity, though only a superficial one.

This power, by the way, is what has been described by magicians as the power of invisibility. Somebody or other has an excellent story of four quite reliable men who were on the look-out for a murderer, and had instructions to let no one pass, and who all swore subsequently in presence of the dead body that no one had passed. None of them had seen the postman.

The thieves who stole the "Gioconda" from the Louvre were probably disguised as workmen, and stole the picture under the very eye of the guardian; very likely got him to help them.

It is only necessary to believe that a thing must be to bring it about. This belief must not be an emotional or an intellectual one. It resides in a deeper portion of the mind, yet a portion not so deep but that most men, probably all successful men, will understand these words, having experience of their own with which they can compare it.

The most important factor in Dhyana is, however, the annihilation of the Ego. Our conception of the universe must be completely overturned if we are to admit this as valid; and it is time that we considered what is really happening.

It will be conceded that we have given a very rational explanation of the greatness of great men. They had an experience so overwhelming, so out of proportion to the rest of things, that they were freed from all the petty hindrances which prevent the normal man from carrying out his projects.

Worrying about clothes, food, money, what people may think, how and why, and above all the fear of consequences, clog nearly every one. Nothing is easier, theoretically, than for an anarchist to kill a king. He has only to buy a rifle, make himself a first-class shot, and shoot the king from a quarter of a mile away. And yet, although there are plenty of anarchists, outrages are very few. At the same time, the police would probably be the first to admit that if any man were really tired of life, in his deepest being, a state very different from that in which a man goes about saying he is tired of life, he could manage somehow or other to kill someone first.

Now the man who has experienced any of the more intense forms of Dhyana is thus liberated. The Universe is thus destroyed for him, and he for it. His will can therefore go on its way unhampered. One may imagine that in the case of Mohammed he had cherished for years a tremendous ambition, and never done anything because those qualities which were subsequently manifested as statesmanship warned him that he was impotent. His vision in the cave gave him that confidence which was required, the faith that moves mountains. There are a lot of solid-seeming things in this world which a child could push over; but not one has the courage to push.

Let us accept provisionally this explanation of greatness, and pass it by. Ambition has led us to this point; but we are now interested in the work for its own sake.

A most astounding phenomenon has happened to us; we have had an experience which makes Love, fame, rank, ambition, wealth, look like thirty cents; and we begin to wonder passionately, "What is truth?" The Universe has tumbled about our ears like a house of cards, and we have tumbled too. Yet this ruin is like the opening of the Gates of Heaven! Here is a tremendous problem, and there is something within us which ravins for its solution.

Let us see what what explanation we can find.

The first suggestion which would enter a well-balanced mind, versed in the study of nature, is that we have experienced a mental catastrophe. Just as a blow on the head will made a man "see stars," so one might suppose that the terrific mental strain of Dharana has somehow over-excited the brain, and caused a spasm, or possibly even the breaking of a small vessel. There seems no reason to reject this explanation altogether, though it would be quite absurd to suppose that to accept it would be to condemn the practice. Spasm is a normal function of at least one of the organs of the body. That the brain is not damaged by the practice is proved by the fact that many people who claim to have had this experience repeatedly continue to exercise the ordinary avocations of life without diminished activity.

We may dismiss, then the physiological question. It throws no light on the main problem, which is the value of the testimony of the experience.

Now this is a very difficult question, and raises the much larger question as to the value of any testimony. Every possible thought has been doubted at some time or another, except the thought which can only be expressed by a note of interrogation, since to doubt that thought asserts it. (For a full discussion see "The Soldier and the Hunchback," "Equinox," I.) But apart from this deep-seated philosophic doubt there is the practical doubt of every day. The popular phrase, "to doubt the evidence of one's senses," shows us that that evidence is normally accepted; but a man of science does nothing of the sort. He is so well aware that his senses constantly deceive him, that he invents elaborate instruments to correct them. And he is further aware that the Universe which he can directly perceive through sense, is the minutest fraction of the Universe which he knows indirectly.

For example, four-fifths of the air is composed of nitrogen. If anyone were to bring a bottle of nitrogen into this room it would be exceedingly difficult to say what it was; nearly all the tests that one could apply to it would be negative. His senses tell him little or nothing.

Argon was only discovered at all by comparing the weight of chemically pure nitrogen with that of the nitrogen of the air. This had often been done, but no one had sufficiently fine instruments even to perceive the discrepancy. To take another example, a famous man of science asserted not so long ago that science could never discover the chemical composition of the fixed stars. Yet this has been done, and with certainty.

If you were to ask your man of science for his "theory of the real," he would tell you that the "ether," which cannot be perceived in any way by any of the senses, or detected by any instruments, and which possesses qualities which are, to use ordinary language, impossible, is very much more real than the chair he is sitting on. The chair is only one fact; and its existence is testified by one very fallible person. The ether is the necessary deduction from millions of facts, which have been verified again and again and checked by every possible test of truth. There is therefore no "a priori" reason for rejecting anything on the ground that it is not directly perceived by the senses.

To turn to another point. One of our tests of truth is the vividness of the impression. An isolated event in the past of no great importance may be forgotten; and if it be in some way recalled, one may find one's self asking: "Did I dream it? or did it really happen?" What can never be forgotten is the "catastrophic". The first death among the people that one loves (for example) would never be forgotten; for the first time one would "realize" what one had previously merely "known". Such an experience sometimes drives people insane. Men of science have been known to commit suicide when their pet theory has been shattered. This problem has been discussed freely in "Science and Buddhism,"[18] "Time," "The Camel," and other papers. This much only need we say in this place that Dhyana has to be classed as the most vivid and catastrophic of all experiences. This will be confirmed by any one who has been there.

It is, then, difficult to overrate the value that such an experience has for the individual, especially as it is his entire conception of things, including his most deep-seated conception, the standard to which he has always referred everything, his own self, that is overthrown; and when we try to explain it away as hallucination, temporary suspension of the faculties or something similar, we find ourselves unable to do so. You cannot argue with a flash of lightning that has knocked you down.

Any mere theory is easy to upset. One can find flaws in the reasoning process, one can assume that the premisses are in some way false; but in this case, if one attacks the evidence for Dhyana, the mind is staggered by the fact that all other experience, attacked on the same lines, will fall much more easily.

In whatever way we examine it the result will always be the same. Dhyana may be false; but, if so, so is everything else.

Now the mind refuses to rest in a belief of the unreality of its own experiences. It may not be what is seems; but it must be something, and if (on the whole) ordinary life is something, how much more must that be by whose light ordinary life seems nothing!

[18] See Crowley, "Collected Works."

The ordinary man sees the falsity and disconnectedness and purposelessness of dreams; he ascribes them (rightly) to a disordered mind. The philosopher looks upon waking life with similar contempt; and the person who has experienced Dhyana takes the same view, but not by mere pale intellectual conviction. Reasons, however cogent, never convince utterly; but this man in Dhyana has the same commonplace certainty that a man has on waking from a nightmare. "I wasn't falling down a thousand flights of stairs, it was only a bad dream."

Similarly comes the reflection of the man who has had experience of Dhyana: "I am not that wretched insect, that imperceptible parasite of earth; it was only a bad dream." And as you could not convince the normal man that his nightmare was more real than his awakening, so you cannot convince the other that his Dhyana was hallucination, even though he is only too well aware that he has fallen from that state into "normal" life.

It is probably rare for a single experience to upset thus radically the whole conception of the Universe, just as sometimes, in the first moments of waking, there remains a half-doubt as to whether dream or waking is real. But as one gains further experience, when Dhyana is no longer a shock, when the student has had plenty of time to make himself at home in the new world, this conviction will become absolute.[19]

Another rationalist consideration is this. The student has not been trying to excite the mind but to calm it, not to produce any one thought but to exclude all thoughts; for there is no connection between the object of meditation and the Dhyana. Why must we suppose a breaking down of the whole process, especially as the mind bears no subsequent traces of any interference, such as pain or fatigue? Surely this once, if never again, the Hindu image expresses the simplest theory!

That image is that of a lake into which five glaciers move. These glaciers are the senses. While ice (the impressions) is breaking off constantly into the

[19]It should be remembered that at present there are no data for determining the duration of Dhyana. One can only say that, since it certainly occured between such and such hours, it must have lasted less than that time. Thus we see, from Frater P.'s record, that it can certianly occur in less than an hour and five minutes.

lake, the waters are troubled. If the glaciers are stopped the surface becomes calm; and then, and only then, can it reflect unbroken the disk of the sum. This sun is the "soul" or "God."

We should, however, avoid these terms for the present, on account of their implications. Let us rather speak of this sun as "some unknown thing whose presence has been masked by all things known, and by the knower."

It is probable, too, that our memory of Dhyana is not of the phenomenon itself, but of the image left thereby on the mind. But this is true of all phenomena, as Berkeley and Kant have proved beyond all question. This matter, then, need not concern us.

We may, however, provisionally accept the view that Dhyana is real; more real and thus of more importance to ourselves than all other experience. This state has been described not only by the Hindus and Buddhists, but by Mohammedans and Christians. In Christian writings, however, the deeply-seated dogmatic bias has rendered their documents worthless to the average man. They ignore the essential conditions of Dhyana, and insist on the inessential, to a much greater extent than the best Indian writers. But to any one with experience and some knowledge of comparative religion the identity is certain. We may now proceed to Samadhi.

CHAPTER VII
SAMADHI

MORE rubbish has been written about Samadhi than enough; we must endeavour to avoid adding to the heap. Even Patanjali, who is extraordinarily clear and practical in most things, begins to rave when he talks of it. Even if what he said were true he should not have mentioned it; because it does not sound true, and we should make no statement that is "a priori" improbable without being prepared to back it up with the fullest proofs. But it is more than likely that his commentators have misunderstood him.

The most reasonable statement, of any acknowledged authority, is that of Vajna Valkya, who says: "By Pranayama impurities of the body are thrown out; by Dharana the impurities of the mind; by Pratyahara the impurities of attachment; and by Samadhi is taken off everything that hides the lordship of the soul." There is a modest statement in good literary form. If we can only do as well as that!

In the first place, what is the meaning of the term? Etymologically, "Sam" is the Greek $\sigma\upsilon\nu$ the English prefix "syn-" meaning "together with." "Adhi" means "Lord," and a reasonable translation of the whole word would be "Union with God," the exact term used by Christian mystics to describe their attainment.

Now there is great confusion, because the Buddhists use the word Samadhi to mean something entirely different, the mere faculty of attention. Thus, with them, to think of a cat is to "make Samadhi" on that cat. They use the word Jhana to describe mystic states. This is excessively misleading, for as we saw in the last section, Dhyana is a preliminary of Samadhi, and of course Jhana is merely the wretched plebeian Pali corruption of it.[20]

[20]The vulgarism and provincialism of the Buddhist cannon is infinitely repulsive to all nice minds; and the attempt to use the terms of an ego-centric philosophy to explain the details of a psychology whose principal doctrine is the denial of the ego, was the work of a mischievous idiot. Let us unhesitatingly reject these abominations, these nastinesses of the beggars dressed in rags that they have snatched from corpses, and follow the etymological signification of the word as given above!

There are many kinds of Samadhi.[21] "Some authors consider Atmadarshana, the Universe as a single phenomenon without conditions, to be the first real Samadhi." If we accept this, we must relegate many less exalted states to the class of Dhyana. Patanjali enumerates a number of these states: to perform these on different things gives different magical powers; or so he says. These need not be debated here. Any one who wants magic powers can get them in dozens of different ways.

Power grows faster than desire. The boy who wants money to buy lead soldiers sets to work to obtain it, and by the time he has got it wants something else instead – in all probability something just beyond his means.

Such is the splendid history of all spiritual advance! One never stops to take the reward.

We shall therefore not trouble at all about what any Samadhi may or may not bring as far as its results in our lives are concerned. We began this book, it will be remembered, with considerations of death. Death has now lost all meaning. The idea of death depends on those of the ego, and of time; these ideas have been destroyed; and so "Death is swallowed up in victory." We shall now only be interested in what Samadhi is in itself, and in the conditions which cause it.

Let us try a final definition. Dhyana resembles Samadhi in many respects. There is a union of the ego and the non-ego, and a loss of the senses of time and space and causality. Duality in any form is abolished. The idea of time involves that of two consecutive things, that of space two non-coincident things, that of causality two connected things.

These Dhyanic conditions contradict those of normal thought; but in Samadhi they are very much more marked than in Dhyana. And while in the latter it seems like a simple union of two things, in the former it appears as if all things rushed together and united. One might say that in Dhyana there was still this

[21] Apparently. That is, the obvious results are different. Possibly the cause is only one, refracted through diverse media.

quality latent, that the One existing was opposed to the Many non-existing; in Samadhi the Many and the One are united in a union of Existence with non-Existence. This definition is not made from reflection, but from memory.

Further, it is easy to master the "trick" or "knack" of Dhyana. After a while one can get into that state without preliminary practice; and, looking at it from this point, one seems able to reconcile the two meanings of the word which we debated in the last section. From below Dhyana seems like a trance, an experience so tremendous that one cannot think of anything bigger, while from above it seems merely a state of mind as natural as any other. Frater P., before he had Samadhi, wrote of Dhyana: "Perhaps as a result of the intense control a nervous storm breaks: this we call Dhyana. Samadhi is but an expansion of this, so far as I can see."

Five years later he would not take this view. He would say perhaps that Dhyana was "a flowing of the mind in one unbroken current from the ego to the non-ego without consciousness of either, accompanied by a crescent wonder and bliss." He can understand how that is the natural result of Dhyana, but he cannot call Dhyana in the same way the precursor of Samadhi. Perhaps he does not really know the conditions which induce Samadhi. He can produce Dhyana at will in the course of a few minutes' work; and it often happens with apparent spontaneity: with Samadhi this is unfortunately not the case. He probably can get it at will, but could not say exactly how, or tell how long it might take him; and he could not be "sure" of getting it at all.

One feels "sure" that one can walk a mile along a level road. One knows the conditions, and it would have to be a very extraordinary set of circumstances that would stop one. But thought it would be equally fair to say: "I have climbed the Matterhorn and I know I can climb it again," yet there are all sorts of more or less probable circumstances any one of which would prevent success.

Now we do know this, that if thought is kept single and steady, Dhyana results. We do not know whether an intensification of this is sufficient to cause Samadhi, or whether some other circumstances are required. One is science, the other empiricism.

One author says (unless memory deceives) that twelve seconds' steadiness is Dharana, a hundred and forty-four Dhyana, and seventeen hundred and twenty-eight Samadhi. And Vivekananda, commenting on Patanjali, makes Dhyana a mere prolongation of Dharana; but says further: "Suppose I were meditating on a book, and I gradually succeeded in concentrating the mind on it , and perceiving only the internal sensation, the meaning unexpressed in any form, that state of Dhyana is called Samadhi."

Other authors are inclined to suggest that Samadhi results from meditating on subjects that are in themselves worthy. For example, Vivekananda says: "Think of any holy subject:" and explains this as follows: "This does not mean any wicked subject."(!)

Frater P. would not like to say definitely whether he ever got Dhyana from common objects. He gave up the practice after a few months, and meditated on the Cakkras, etc. Also his Dhyana became so common that he gave up recording it. But if he wished to do it this minute he would choose something to excite his "godly fear," or "holy awe," or "wonderment."[22] There is no apparent reason why Dhyana should not occur when thinking of any common object of the sea-shore, such as a blue pig; but Frater P.'s constant reference to this as the usual object of his meditation need not be taken "au pied de la lettre." His records of meditation contain no reference to this remarkable animal.

It will be a good thing when organized research has determined the conditions of Samadhi; but in the meantime there seems no particular objection to our following tradition, and using the same objects of meditation as our predecessors, with the single exception which we shall note in due course.

The first class of objects for serious meditation (as opposed to preliminary practice, in which one should keep to simple recognizable objects, whose definiteness is easy to maintain) is "various parts of the body." The Hindus

[22]It is rather a breach of the scepticism which is the basis of our system to admit that anything can be in any way better than another. Do it thus: "A., is a thing that B. thinks 'holy.' It is natural therefore for B. to meditate on it." Get rid of the ego, observe all your actions as if they were another's, and you will avoid ninety-nine percent. of the troubles that await you.

have an elaborate system of anatomy and physiology which has apparently no reference to the facts of the dissecting-room. Prominent in this class are the seven Cakkras, which will be described in Part II. There are also various "nerves", equally mythical.[23]

The second class is "objects of devotion," such as the idea or form of the Deity, or the heart or body of your Teacher, or of some man whom you respect profoundly. This practice is not to be commended, because it implies a bias of the mind.

You can also meditate on "your dreams." This sounds superstitious; but the idea is that you have already a tendency, independent of your conscious will, to think of those things, which will consequently be easier to think of than others. That this is the explanation is evident from the nature of the preceding and subsequent classes.

You can also meditate on "anything that especially appeals to you."

But in all this one feels inclined to suggest that it will be better and more convincing if the meditation is directed to an object which in itself is apparently unimportant. One does not want the mind to be excited in any way, even by adoration. See the three meditative methods in Liber HHH (Equinox VI.).[24] At the same time, one would not like to deny positively that it is very much "easier" to take some idea towards which the mind would naturally flow.

The Hindus assert that the nature of the object determines the Samadhi; that is, the nature of those lower Samadhis which confer so-called "magic powers." For example, there are the Yogapravritti. Meditating on the tip of the nose, one obtains what may be called the "ideal smell"; that is, a smell which is not any particular smell, but is the archetypal smell, of which all actual smells are modifications. It is "the smell which is "not" a smell." This is the only reasonable description; for the experience being contrary to reason, it is only reasonable that the words describing it should be contrary

[23] WEH: Not quite correct. Western anatomical knowledge has advanced since Crowley wrote this!

[24] These are the complements of the three methods of Enthusiasm (A∴ A∴ instruction not yet issued up to March 1912.)

to reason too.[25]

Similarly, concentration on the tip of the tongue gives the "ideal taste"; on the dorsum of the tongue, "ideal contact." "Every atom of the body comes into contact with every atom in the Universe all at once," is the description Bhikku Ananda Metteya gives of it. The root of the tongue gives the "ideal sound"; and the pharynx the "ideal sight."[26]

The Samadhi "par excellence," however, is Atmadarshana, which for some, and those not the least instructed, is the first real Samadhi; for even the visions of "God" and of the "Self" are tainted by form. In Atmadarshana the All is manifested as the One: it is the Universe freed from its conditions. Not only are all forms and ideas destroyed, but also those conceptions which are implicit in our ideas of those ideas.[27] Each part of the Universe has become the whole, and phenomena and noumena are no longer opposed.

But it is quite impossible to describe this state of mind. One can only specify some of the characteristics, and that in language which forms no image in mind. It is impossible for anyone who experiences it to bring back any adequate memory, nor can we conceive a state transcending this.

There is, however, a very much higher state called Shivadarshana, of which it is only necessary to say that it is the destruction of the previous state,

[25]Hence the Athanasian Creed. Compare the precise parallel in the Zohar: "The Head which is above all heads; the Head which is "not" a Head.'

[26]Similarly Patanjali tells us that by making Samyama on the strength of an elephant or a tiger, the student acquires that strength. Conquer "the nerve Udana," and you can walk on the water; "Samana," and you begin to flash with light; the "elements" fire, air, earth, and water, and you can do whatever in natural life they prevent you from doing. For instance, by conquering earth, one could take a short cut to Australia; or by conquering water, one can live at the bottom of the Ganges. They say there is a holy man at Benares who does this, coming up only once a year to comfort and instruct his disciples. But nobody need believe this unless he wants to; and you are even advised to conquer that desire should it arise. It will be interesting when science really determines the variables and constants of these equations.

[27]This is so complete that not only "Black is White," but "The Whiteness of Black is the "essential" of its Blackness." "Naught = One = Infinity"; but this is only true "because" of this threefold arrangement, a trinity or "triangle of contradictories."

its annihilation; and to understand this blotting-out, one must not imagine "Nothingness" (the only name for it) as negative, but as positive.

The normal mind is a candle in a darkened room. Throw open the shutters, and the sunlight makes the flame invisible. That is a fair image of Dhyana.[28]

But the mind refuses to find a simile for Atmadarshana. It seems merely ineffective to say that the rushing together of all the host of heaven would similarly blot out the sunlight. But if we do say so, and wish to form a further image of Shivadarshana, we must imagine ourselves as suddenly recognizing that this universal blaze is darkness; not a light extremely dim compared with some other light, but darkness itself. It is not the change from the minute to the vast, or even from the finite to the infinite. It is the recognition that the positive is merely the negative. The ultimate truth is perceived not only as false, but as the logical contradictory of truth. It is quite useless to elaborate this theme, which has baffled all other minds hitherto. We have tried to say as little as possible rather than as much as possible.[29]

Still further from our present purpose would it be to criticise the innumerable discussions which have taken place as to whether this is the ultimate attainment, or what it confers. It is enough if we say that even the first and most transitory Dhyana repays a thousandfold the pains we may have taken to attain it.

And there is this anchor for the beginner, that his work is cumulative: every act directed towards attainment builds up a destiny which must some day come to fruition. May all attain!

[28]Here the dictation was interrupted by very prolonged thought due to the difficulty of making the image clear. Virakam.

[29]Yet all this has come of our desire to be as modest as Yajna Valkya!