

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation Journal:

'Swami Abhedananda - Forgotten Hindu Mystic'

Issue Twenty Four

Compiled by Marilyn Hughes

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation!

www.outofbodytravel.org



SWAMI ABHEDANANDA

(To have your Questions, Articles, Poetry or Art included in future editions, submit to: MarilynnHughes1@outofbodytravel.org!)

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Having worked primarily in radio broadcasting, Marilynn Hughes spent several years as a news reporter, producer and anchor before deciding to stay at home with her three children. She's experienced, researched, written, and taught about out-of-body travel since 1987.

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The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation Journal:

'Swami Abhedânanda- Forgotten Hindu Mystic'

Issue Twenty Four

By Marilyn Hughes

This issue's forgotten mystic, Swami Abhedananda, wrote a series of profound works but is most known for his auspicious association with Sri Ramakrishna, a well-known and highly respected Hindu saint in the late 1900's. One of his original fifteen disciples, Swami Abhedananda had the distinction of spending much of his life in the presence of this

His name meant 'That Which Has no Differentiation,' and it was given to him shortly after Ramakrishna's death. His original name at birth was Kali Prasad Chandra.

In his youth, Swami Abhedananda was known for his scholarly pursuits, learning Sanskrit and studying Western Philosophy. When he first came into contact with Sri Ramakrishna, the saint immediately 'knew' him and said, "You were a great yogi in your previous birth. This is your last birth. I am going to initiate you in the practice of yoga." This according to the 'Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture.

During Sri Ramakrishna's final illness, Swami Abhedananda was one of those disciples who stayed closest to his side and nursed him in his final hours.

Swami Abhedananda had another well-known association, that of Swami Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna's direct successor. In 1896, Swami Vivekananda sent for Swami Abhedananda in New York and had him take over the running of the Vedanta Society of which he was very successful and stayed on until 1921. Upon return to India, he founded his own Vedanta Society.

Although many do not remember Swami Abhedananda, he led a profoundly holy life surrounded by very holy men of great note. There are many fascinating works to his own name of great worth and in 1939, he was the only living person and only disciple remaining (alive) who had met and known Sri Ramakrishna - a fact which gave him unusual distinction in his later years.

Perhaps a great introductory work to this great forgotten mystic is his work describing 'What is a Yogi?'

How To Be A Yogi, by Swâmi Abhedânanda, [1902], FOURTH EDITION, VEDANTA SOCIETY, NEW YORK, USA, NOTICE OF ATTRIBUTION, Scanned at sacred-texts.com, January, 2005. John Bruno Hare, redactor. This text is in the public domain in the United States because it was published prior to 1922. These files may be used for any non-commercial purpose, provided this notice of attribution is left intact.

How to be a Yogi

By Swami Abhedananda

Introductory

TRUE religion is extremely practical; it is, indeed, based entirely upon practice, and not upon theory or speculation of any kind, for religion begins only where theory ends. Its object is to mould the character, unfold the divine nature of the soul, and make it possible to live on the spiritual plane, its ideal being the realization of Absolute Truth and the manifestation of Divinity in the actions of the daily life.

Spirituality does not depend upon the reading of Scriptures, or upon learned interpretations of Sacred Books, or upon fine theological discussions, but upon the

realization of unchangeable Truth. In India a man is called truly spiritual or religious not because he has written some book, not because he possesses the gift of oratory and can preach eloquent sermons, but because he expresses divine powers through his words and deeds. A thoroughly illiterate man can attain to the highest state of spiritual perfection without going to any school or university, and without reading any Scripture, if he can conquer his animal nature by realizing his true Self and its relation to the universal Spirit; or, in other words, if he can attain to the knowledge of that Truth which dwells within him, and which is the same as the Infinite Source of existence, intelligence, and bliss. He who has mastered all the Scriptures, philosophies, and sciences, may be regarded by society as an intellectual giant; yet he cannot be equal to that unlettered man who, having realized the eternal Truth, has become one with it, who sees God everywhere, and who lives on this earth as an embodiment of Divinity.

The writer had the good fortune to be acquainted with such a divine man in India. His name was Râmakrishna. He never went to any school, neither had he read any of the Scriptures, philosophies, or scientific treatises of the world, yet he had reached perfection by realizing God through the practice of Yoga. Hundreds of men and women came to see him and were spiritually awakened and uplifted by the divine powers which this illiterate man possessed. To-day he is revered and worshipped by thousands all over India as is Jesus the Christ in Christendom. He could expound with extraordinary clearness the subtlest problems of philosophy or of science, and answer the most intricate questions of clever theologians in such a masterly way as to dispel all doubts concerning the matter in hand. How could he do this without reading books? By his wonderful insight into the

true nature of things, and by that Yoga power which made him directly perceive things which cannot be revealed by the senses. His spiritual eyes were open; his sight could penetrate through the thick veil of ignorance that hangs before the vision of ordinary mortals, and which prevents them from knowing that which exists beyond the range of sense perception.

These powers begin to manifest in the soul that is awakened to the ultimate Reality of the universe. It is then that the sixth sense of direct perception of higher truths develops and frees it from dependence upon the sense powers. This sixth sense or spiritual eye is latent in each individual, but it opens in a few only among millions, and they are known as Yogis. With the vast majority it is in a rudimentary state, covered by a thick veil. When, however, through the practice of Yoga it unfolds in a man, he becomes conscious of the higher invisible realms and of everything that exists on the soul plane. Whatever he says harmonizes with the sayings and writings of all the great Seers of Truth of every age and clime. He does not study books; he has no need to do so, for he knows all that the human intellect can conceive. He can grasp the purport of a book without reading its text; he also understands how much the human mind can express through words, and he is familiar with that which is beyond thoughts and which consequently can never be expressed by words.

Before arriving at such spiritual illumination he goes through divers stages of mental and spiritual evolution, and in consequence knows all that can be experienced by a human intellect. He does not, however, care to remain confined within the limit of sense perception, and is not contented with the intellectual apprehension of relative reality, but his sole aim is to enter into the realm of the

Absolute, which is the beginning and end of phenomenal objects and of relative knowledge. Thus striving for the realization of the highest, he does not fail to collect all relative knowledge pertaining to the world of phenomena that comes in his way, as he marches on toward his destination, the unfoldment of his true Self.

Our true Self is all-knowing by its nature. It is the source of infinite knowledge within us. Being bound by the limitations of time, space, and causation, we cannot express all the powers that we possess in reality. The higher we rise above these limiting conditions, the more we can manifest the divine qualities of omniscience and omnipotence. If, on the contrary, we keep our minds fixed upon phenomena and devote the whole of our energy to acquiring knowledge dependent entirely upon sense perceptions, shall we ever reach the end of phenomenal knowledge, shall we ever be able to know the real nature of the things of this universe? No; because the senses cannot lead us beyond the superficial appearance of sense objects. In order to go deeper in the realm of the invisible we invent instruments, and with their help we are able to penetrate a little further; but these instruments, again, have their limit. After using one kind of instrument, we become dissatisfied with the results and search for some other which may reveal more and more, and thus we struggle on, discovering at each step how poor and helpless are the sense powers in the path of the knowledge of the Absolute. At last we are driven to the conclusion that any instrument, no matter how fine, can never help us to realize that which is beyond the reach of sense-perception, intellect, and thought.

So, even if we could spend the whole of our time and energy in studying phenomena, we shall never arrive at

any satisfactory result or be able to see things as they are in reality. The knowledge of to-day, gained by the help of certain instruments, will be the ignorance of tomorrow, if we get better instruments. The knowledge of last year is already the ignorance of the present year; the knowledge of this century will be ignorance in the light of the discoveries of a new century.

The span of one human life is, therefore, too short to even attempt to acquire a correct knowledge of all things existing on the phenomenal plane. The life-time of hundreds of thousands of generations, nay, of all humanity, seems too short, when we consider the infinite variety to be found in the universe, and the countless number of objects that will have to be known before we can reach the end of knowledge. If a man could live a million years, keeping his senses in perfect order during that long period, and could spend every moment in studying nature and in diligently endeavoring to learn every minute detail of phenomenal objects, would his search after knowledge be fulfilled at the expiration of that time? Certainly not; he would want still more time, a finer power of perception, a keener intellect, a subtler understanding; and then he might say, as did Sir Isaac Newton after a life of tireless research, "I have collected only pebbles on the shore of the ocean of knowledge." If a genius like Newton could not even reach the edge of the water of that ocean, how can we expect to cross the vast expanse from shore to shore in a few brief years? Thousands of generations have passed away, thousands will pass, yet must the knowledge regarding the phenomena of the universe remain imperfect. Veil after veil may be removed, but veil after veil will remain behind. This was understood by the Yogis and Seers of Truth in India, who said: "Innumerable are the branches of

knowledge, but short is our time and many are the obstacles in the way; therefore wise men should first struggle to know that which is highest."

Here the question arises: Which is the highest knowledge? This question is as old as history; it has puzzled the minds of the philosophers, scientists, and scholars of all ages and all countries. Some have found an answer to it, others have not. The same question was voiced in ancient times by Socrates, when he went to the Delphic oracle and asked: "Of all knowledge which is the highest?" To which came the answer, "Know thyself."

We read in one of the Upanishads that a great thinker, after studying all the philosophies and sciences known at that time, came to a Seer of Truth and said: "Sir, I am tired of this lower knowledge that can be gained from books or through the study of the world of phenomena; it no longer satisfies me, for science cannot reveal the ultimate Truth; I wish to know that which is the highest. Is there anything by knowing which I can know the reality of the universe?"

The sage replied: "Yes, there is; and that knowledge is the highest, by knowing which you can know the true nature of everything in the universe." And he continued, "Know thyself. If thou canst learn the true nature of thine own self, thou wilt know the reality of the universe. In thy true Self thou wilt find the Eternal Truth, the Infinite Source of all phenomena. By knowing this thou wilt know God and His whole creation." As by knowing the chemical properties of one drop of water, we know the properties of all water wherever it appears, so by knowing who and what we are in reality, we shall realize the final Truth. Man is the epitome of the universe. That which exists in the macrocosm is to be found in the microcosm. Therefore the

knowledge of one's true Self is the highest of all knowledge. Our real Self is divine and one with God. This may seem to us at present a mere theory, but the nearer we approach the ultimate Truth, the more clearly shall we understand that it is not a theory but a fact, that now we are dreaming in the sleep of ignorance and fancying ourselves this or that particular person. But as all experience gained in dreams afterwards appears of little consequence; so, waking up from this sleep, we shall find that the knowledge of phenomenal nature, upon which we place so much value at present, is of little importance. We shall then realize that all research in the various branches of science depends upon Self-knowledge, and that Self-knowledge is the foundation upon which the structure of phenomenal knowledge is built.

Knowledge of the Self or Âtman is therefore the highest of all. It is the ideal of the Science of Yoga, and should be the aim of our life. We should hold it as our first duty to acquire this Self-knowledge before we try to know anything concerning the objects of sense-perception. How can we gain it? Not from books, not through the study of external phenomena, but by studying our own nature, and by practicing the different branches of Yoga.

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The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation Journal:
Question and Answer Forum!

Please Send Your Questions to:

MarilynnHughes1@outofbodytravel.org

For Future Inclusion in this Section!

Question from Henokh Howard, Jawa Barat, Indonesia:

Shalom Beloved Sister Marilynn. Please read my request. My name is Henokh Howard from Indonesia. Beloved, would you please pray for me? Ask God to pour out His blessing for me for the business I have. My life is so tired because of this burden. My business has not grown since four years. Do you want to help me? What is God saying for me (The Prophetic Word from Jesus)? Please ask God how my business can grow and bloom! Brother, I want you to pray for me especially, because **I want to walk in miracles, signs, and wonders like you. I know God will use me if I am faithful to His Command. I want you to impart - transfer the double portion anointing of Jesus' power** in a greater way (also prosperity anointing) into my life as you have anointed by God/Jesus. I would like to ask if you would send me a pot/vial of miraculous heavenly oil/holy oil or please just send me an anointed cloth as my point of contact.

Marilynn: Dear Henokh, I have a relic blessed with holy anointed oil on its way to you! But let me be clear in that the oil has been anointed by a priest, as I have received no special anointing from God. Blessings, Marilynn

Question from Henokh Howard, Jawa Barat, Indonesia:

Dearest My Beloved Sister Marilynn, thank you so much for your kindness to send me a holy relic. I'm so glad to

receive it because it has been anointed by holy anointing oil of God.

Beloved Sister Marilyn would you mind sharing a few stories about your ministry or God's calling for you? Did you ever meet God (Our Lord Jesus Christ) face to face? If yes, please share a bit of your story Sister. Sister Marilyn, I'm so pleased to hear the testimony of others when they met Jesus. Sister Marilyn if you don't mind please share a few miracles in your ministry or share how you can experience the presence of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Beloved Sister, I want to ask an important question: Do you believe only the name of Jesus Christ is the Lord and Saviour? I'm asking this because on your website tell about many beliefs/faiths or religions like Buddhism, Islam, Hindu and others. I'm so sorry, Sister, if asking you this causes inconvenience, but I do so because my English is not very good (*these letters have been edited to reflect proper English*) so that I can not understand all the words on your website.

Sister, if God told you some things about me when you prayed for me, please let me know it. I need the new revelations/directions from Jesus about my life and business. Please would you ask Jesus what is the Lord's will for me?

Beloved Sister, Marilyn , once again I want to say that I'm so thankful for your kindness in sending the Blessed Relic and all your prayers. May Our Lord Jesus Christ bless you richly, I love you and bless you in the Mighty name of Jesus Christ.

Brother in Christ, Henokh Howard

Marilynn: Hello Henokh, you might enjoy downloading a book called 'Visions of Jesus and the Saints,' which can be downloaded FREE at:

<http://www.outofbodytravel.org/mysticknowledgeseries/visionsofjesusandthesaints.html>

The Mysteries of the Redemption and all its sequels includes all of my experiences, but this books breaks them down to some of the more interesting encounters with Jesus, the prophets and the saints.

Recently, we've added a new feature to our website which actually translates the entire website into eleven different languages. I'm not sure if your language would be among them, but please do let me know. If you go to the home page, you'll see eleven flags. If you select one of those countries it will translate the entire site for you into that language. Technology is pretty neat sometimes.

As to your question about our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I absolutely do believe that the name of Jesus Christ is the only name of our Lord and Saviour. However, within my writings, I discuss in much detail the line of the 'Royal Family of God' which includes prophets of all major and minor world religions such as the Buddha, Muhammad, Baha'u'llah, Krishna, Nanak, etc. They are much too innumerable to mention because it includes not only the prophets of every religion, but all the mystics, saints, ascetics and other holy ones who walked these paths. There are literally hundreds of them.

What I have been shown in my own experiences is that there is no question about the station of Jesus Christ, His Messiahship. But there is equally no question about the status of each of these others as prophets who work with

Christ in their own unique and particular purpose for the will of God.

I've had visions where Christ has come to me with the Buddha alongside Him, as well as, many extremely holy visions of each of these prophets from all these world religions.

One of the purposes I hope to achieve in putting out this series of magazines on Forgotten Mystics, is to give you a perspective on how many amazing souls have passed through these spheres unknown to us, but quite known to God.

And this relates to each and every one of us, because it helps us to realize that every one of us is known to God, He sees us, our individual paths have great importance to Him, and every single one of us who follows the line of the great ones before us in seeking Him - will find Him. In different ways, albeit, but we'll find Him.

And although each religion may present a different path to the all holy One, they all lead to the same place. This in no way diminishes the Lordship and position of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who is, was and ever shall be - irregardless of what we think.

But to give a balanced opinion, I've included an opposing opinion given by Swami Abhedananda in his article, 'Was Christ a Yogi?'

Many Blessings! Marilyn

Question from Henokh Howard, Jawa Barat, Indonesia:
Dearest Beloved Marilyn. Yes, Beloved Sister, I have tried to download the book, but my computer can not read the

files because my computer is an old computer (like Pentium 2). If you don't mind please share just a bit of your experiences, Beloved Sister Marilyn. But if you cannot, it will be allright.

Sister Marilyn, can I ask you about the meaning my dream? I'm asking you about the dream because on your website, you tell about dreams. Sister would you please help me to ask God to give you insights about my dream.

My dream on January 15, 2007: I had a dream in a dream. "I see a man and a woman (who I never knew) and then I saw my Lord Jesus Christ. I saw that Jesus was smiling for me and it seemed that the two people were a couple. The Lord then said they were a couple, and that was when I noticed my Islamic friend - she is a Muslim (her name is Nuniek Trisa Minasari). Then I saw the Lord Jesus smiling for me again. Sister in Christ, would you ask God whether this dream came from Jesus? And what is the meaning of my dream? Will she be my soulmate, my wife in the future? I have asked Pastor from Congo Africa, Kadima Albert Mukendi. He had asked God (Jesus Christ) what was the meaning of my dream. He said to me that he believes that God is planning for us to be together soon and that she (Nuniek) will be saved by Jesus and be my partner and my wife and that I have a divine call for the ministry."

Please asking God again because I need confirmation of the meaning. Because the bible said the matter is legal if you have two or three witnesses. I need more witnesses about the meaning of my Dream. This dream is very important to me because I believed this dream came from God! Please ask God to give me the clearly answer about this dream because another servant

of God gave me the opposite answer from Rev. Albert Kadima. He said that if I were to have a relationship with her, it cannot be long lasting and he said that she is not the one. (Meaning Nuniek is not my Helpmate in the future). Sister would you asked the Spirit of Jesus (The Holy Spirit) what is the right answer for me about her?

Thank you so much if you can help me to asking the meaning of the dream. Beloved Sister Marilyn, please keep praying for my business and I'm so glad to have a friend and Sister In Christ like you. May esus Bless you for your kindness for me.

Love in Christ, Henokh

Marilynn: I think your dream could mean something, but at the same time it may mean nothing. I'm sorry, but it's always good not to get stuck on a particular dream in matters such as this because you may miss what God may do in the meantime with somebody else. So be open to the woman in your dream, but also remain open to whatever Jesus might be doing around you.

It's not unusual for many of us to have dreams about more than one person in our lives being 'the one.' It is impossible to know whether this comes from our own subconscious desire, God's will or otherwise unless we take in the experience, follow through accordingly, but then also respond to what is actually happening to us on the ground.

So be open to the possibility of this, but don't close yourself to other possibilities which may present concretely in your life because of it.

In the spirit of your possible call to the ministry of Jesus Christ, and in response to your request, here are some experiences about Jesus, hope you enjoy:

"I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike." New American Bible, New Testament, Matthew 11:25, (Christianity, Catholic, Words of Christ)

Not long after my spirit had been sleeping, I began to hear the roaring sounds of a thunderous uprising in the heavens. Although I was unaware of the mechanism of this vision, somehow my spiritual eyes opened to a sight unimaginable prior to this awakening. The clouds had parted to reveal gold and marble steps leading high up into the sky, and at the top of this amazing spectacle was a throne. The Lord God sat in this seat, appearing to me in a human form wearing a white robe. Aside Him was the lamb, Jesus Christ who would remain silent for this very first vision. Angels were flying all around the holy sight, singing and performing celestial music of praise to the Lord. The power of God was so strong in this vision, that it cannot be expressed in words. "Holy, holy, holy," I thought. Humbling myself, I bowed in spirit form, to the Lord, my God. Motioning me to come forth, the Lord presented another vision that somehow overlapped this one. In it, the cross was on fire, and I was trying to put it out. Certain people in the world could only see the fire, not the cross. As a result, every time I put the fire out, they would re-light the flame to the cross. Battling our fundamental differences seemed to continue without end, but finally, due to the grace of God, I was able to put the fire out completely, allowing the cross to stand tall.

The Lord spoke to me, "The fire represents ignorance, and the cross, awareness." He conveyed that

there would be much fire in my life, but that I would bear the cross. Many people would never see it, and this would cause frustration. Pausing, I bowed again to His majesty. "At a future time, you will take that cross to the world and present it as a living vision of the reality of God. Though others may think you are foolish, you are special."

Thunder struck and the heavens began to close. As I watched the heavenly messengers and the Lord disappear behind the clouds, I bowed to them. The Lord had filled my spirit with a love I could not describe. During a time when my life was filled with Godlessness, it had given me a certain peace to withstand the times. I was nine years old.

"In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth uposn men, in slumberings upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction."

King James Bible, Old Testament, Job 33:15-16, (Christianity)

Entering into a realm of existence whose beauty was beyond words, the angel who had come for me and I sat atop two large gray rocks atop a hill in an iridescent plain of green grass and trees. Blue emeralds seemed to dot the sky as stars shot constantly to and fro across the dark sea-colored horizon. Feelings of love rushed through us; a playful, joyful love. And for a moment, I thought to myself that this place reminded me somewhat of the hill in Galilee where Christ taught. Up in the distance, a man wearing a white robe and clutching a tall cane began to approach. "Oh, my God!" I thought, "Could it be?" Jesus of Nazareth approached as light emanated from every oracle of his bountiful spirit. Smiling peacefully, he sat on a rock in front of us and began to telepathically convey.

"My dear child, you asked to be filled with My spirit and I have come to fill you. I am the pulse of life and love. All that I Am is all that you can be." (Christ was not

saying that I could be God, like Him, but rather, that the qualities that He personified in His existence as Jesus of Nazareth could be imitated by those of us on the Earth.) Responding, I cried, "I want to be like you, Jesus. I want to personify love." Lifting his arms up to the sky, I noticed the intensity of all that he created with a single movement of his arm. Shooting stars paraded from the sky like a palisade of ice in a winter mountain cathedral. "What I am is a thought on the canvas of life; I cannot be described in words, but felt through the soul." Intrigued, I said, "It is hard for me to understand. I am beginning to truly *feel* all that you have spoken. But it confuses me that so many speak your words with little or no feeling. I feel no understanding coming from them. Why?" Patiently, he replied, "The words of my incarnation as Jesus of Nazareth are vast and well-spoken among men, but their meaning is felt by only a few who have opened their hearts. Love is all that I am and everything I will always be, concepts cannot enclose me for I am vast when set free in the heart of man." Quieting, his light never waned in brilliance. "How can I become more like you, my Lord?" I asked. "Very good, my dear child!" he said, "a true yearning to know the truth. An open heart will hear the truth in whatever form it comes." A pause. "Set out to know me, not as a concept, but as a light within darkness, a touch when you're all alone, a true existence in the realms of consciousness. I am not dead, for I live in every crevice of every rock, in the rushing water of the streams, and all the pulsating rhythms of life. I am the consciousness of one known as Christ, and I love you greatly. Hear me call your spirit into service." "I hear you," I cried in ecstasy, "I want to serve God." "I know, my dear child, I know. What I am cannot be expressed through anything but love. Open your spirit and my spirit will flow ever so gracefully with your own for we are truly one. My guidance will help you

in times of confusion." Reaching out to touch my shoulders, I knew His love was vast enough to encompass every living soul who only so much as asked for his true guidance, not out of fear, but out of love for Him. His peaceful eyes met mine, and I began to disappear.

MY MESSIAH

*Destiny calls the night wind's cause
 The birth of wisdom flies in the stars
 The name emblazoned, a holy being
 My Messiah, you've come again
 Flutes fill the spaces deep in my heart
 But travelers reckon the pathways to chart
 The vision of love, the glory of light
 My Messiah, My Lord, I saw you tonight
 Embers of knowing and truths of the past
 The spirit of love fills lands with its cast
 The eyes hold a vision, the seer of thoughts
 I call for your wisdom, my Messiah, you're home
 A moment is captured, a moment of love
 Reuniting, assembling, returning to God
 My thanks fill the hour with all that's divine
 My Messiah, you've come, you knew it was time
**"Jesus said, 'Come to me, for my yoke is easy and my
 mastery is gentle, and you will find rest for yourselves.'
 They said to him, 'Tell us who you are so that we may
 believe in you.' He said to them, 'You examine the face of
 heaven and earth, but you have not come to know the one
 who is in your presence, and you do not know how to
 examine this moment.'"***

<p><i>The Gospel of Thomas, No. 90-91, (Christianity, Gnostic/Essene, Words of Christ)</i></p>

*"Beloved, we are God's children now; what we shall be
 has not yet been revealed. We do know that when it is
 revealed we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*

Everyone who has this hope based on him makes himself pure, as he is pure."New American Bible, New Testament, 1 John 3:2, (Christianity, Catholic)

Soaring to a celestial realm beyond time and space, shooting stars cascaded across a deep emerald oceanic sky. Waves of rhythm could be felt in the canvas of sky that serenaded my soul as I stood on the ethereal ground below my feet. Walking with peace towards the holy family, the sacredness of the moment filled me with a reverence for the Lord. The Holy Mother Mary, Joseph, and their son, Jesus Christ, were sitting upon a large stone bench amidst a plain of grass and trees. Jesus sat on the ground at their feet, looking upon them with reverence and love. As their robes lay motionless and surrounded in light, they looked up towards me. Mary gave me a peaceful smile, Joseph, a knowing look, and the savior emitted a familiar beckon.

Joseph calmly arose and walked towards me, his calm gaze never wavering. Opening his hands, he held a sacred amulet that had a large faceted diamond in the center, and a string of exactly eight small diamonds that surrounded it (which represented the immortal). Hanging this around my neck, I was surprised that it felt weightless. "You are now immortal," he conveyed to me, "there is only life, now." Intuitively, I reached into my own pocket, retrieving a heart-shaped rose-quartz pendant. Hanging it around Joseph's neck, I replied, "We are now forever love."

"Jesus said, 'Fortunate are those who are alone and chosen, for you will find the kingdom. For you have come from it, and you will return there again.'"

The Gospel of Thomas, No. 49, (Christianity, Gnostic/Essene, Words of Christ)

Night fell in the spaces beyond time, as a formless hand led my soul to a mysterious corridor. Unable to break free from the impending importance I felt, I began soaring down a blue-green tunnel until I reached a set of

barren bleachers and sat alone. Out of the ether, the spirit of Jesus Christ appeared, his face exhibiting tremendous pain and torment, his hands and feet bound in metal shackles. But despite his tortured demeanor, light glowed all around him. A white robed man surrounded in light with a very long beard sat next to Jesus, whose features were barely perceptible. "It is your purpose," he said, "to release the bondage Christianity has put upon Christ's spirit." His powerful comment shocked me, and I didn't know how or what he had in mind. As I gazed upon Jesus' tortured countenance and his beckoning eyes, they both disappeared into the ether.

"But the seed of man hath not understood all of which Thou hast made it heir, neither have men known Thee whensoever Thou hast spoken."

The Dead Sea Scriptures, The New Covenant, Page 438, Paragraph 1, (Christianity, Gnostic/Essene)

Appearing from behind, another spoke. "Look at me!" he commanded, as I turned to look into his deeply intensive eyes. "What you have come to do carries a far greater significance than you know. Do you realize how rare it is to have someone with full consciousness on both sides of existence who resides primarily in the physical?" I'd taken that for granted, since it hadn't occurred to me that others did not live in this manner. "Express the music of your soul, your time has come." Beginning to waver into the ether, he whispered these words over and over again, "Far Greater Significance, Far Greater Significance, Far Greater Significance . . .," and then he was gone.

"The psychic race is like light from a fire . . . through a voice it was instructed and this was sufficient, since it is not far from the hope according to the promise, since it received, so to speak as a pledge, the assurance of the things which were to be."

<p><i>The Nag Hammadi Library, The Tripartate Tractate, No. 14, Page 94-95, (Christianity, Gnostic/Essene)</i></p>
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"And suddenly there will come to the temple the Lord whom you seek, and the messenger of the covenant whom you desire. Yes, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts. But who will endure the day of his coming? And who can stand when he appears" *New American Bible, Old Testament, Malachi 3:1-2, (Christianity, Catholic)*

Flying high up in the sky above the mountains, the beauty of the clear night awed me as I was pulled towards a particular destination. At the side of a mountain, a huge golden cross lay, bearing unintelligible hieroglyphics etched in the gold. Soaring closer, I touched it.

As soon as my hand touched the cross, my spirit began melting into it. Suddenly, I was at the site of an alteration. The old and haunted office building didn't seem real at first, as hundreds of ghosts were overlapping the present humans who sat in the chairs the ghosts once knew as their own. Cause of death was apparent in their energy fields; heart attacks, accidents, and even one who had died after a heavy door fell on him, but why were so many of these former workers from the past 100 years still in this building?

Wandering about them, I began to ask that question, and they all nodded as if they didn't know. Laughing and making merry, they were good friends and made fun of each other. These spirits were not dark, just average people who died and didn't want to leave the physical illusion behind.

A woman walked towards me who had apparently died a violent death. "What do you do when you meet a mass murderer?" she asked me, as another woman answered, "You ask what he can teach you." Bolting in, I shouted. "WRONG!" Looking at me angrily, the woman who had spoken wasn't happy with my outburst. "There is much more to energetic encounters than that." I said. "Perhaps you must learn that darkness believes that it

attains power by taking life, but the light knows that true power is achieved by giving life."

"Her murderer has killed many more, most of whom have not yet been discovered." I said as in my mind, I could see the skulls of the many. Instantly, I became aware that this same murderer was presently holding a woman hostage whom he had already raped in front of her two children. "Come," I beckoned to them both. "We must de-energize destruction."

Shooting through space, both women came with me to the sight of a potential murder, now occurring in the energetic realms where it could be altered. (These alterations occur in a realm called, 'Management,' which is where things occur in energy before they happen on the ground. Many psychics tune into this realm, but it is a realm of potential reality, not absolute destiny, which is one reason they can be inaccurate. Some people have dreams of their potential futures in this realm, forewarning them of events which may be able to be changed. Sometimes, they cannot be changed, as the causes are too well rooted to be altered.)

Standing there with his pants down, the murderer was holding the woman, as the two children were tied up next to him. "Watch me now as I teach you of alteration." I said. Calling all energies towards me, I allowed the eternal to guide my thoughts. Energetically placing a pair of pants on the man, the woman was then severed from his hold by a beam of light. As the eternal guided the police in her direction, I could see them on nearby city streets. Sending waves of thought to guide them to this back alley, the criminal's weapon was then locked by another ray of light towards the trigger. Rewinding the scene, our purpose was to prevent as much trauma to the children and the mother as possible. Going back to the point in which he had just taken her hostage, but had not completed the rape, one

lone police officer responded to the eternal beckon, coming to the back alley. Others had been given the beacon, but had not trusted their instincts and intuition. But it was enough, because he was armed and the criminal had been rendered benign. Reinforcements arrived, and he was taken away, the woman and children tended to in the hospital.

Leaving the scene, we returned to the old office building as I spoke to the woman who had died at the hands of this man previously. "It is the recognition that you are eternal, that there is no harm that can come to your soul, which lends freedom. If you believe that your mortal life is all you are or ever will be, you will also believe that there is something to fear from the darkness that would destroy one of your many forms. Revel not in the loss of one form to the hand of darkness, but delight in your ability to create yet another to explore with." "My God, I think I understand!" she said, "he didn't destroy me, I'm still here." "Yes," I replied. "He destroyed himself by taking life, but he *cannot* destroy me!" She said. "Yes, you do understand. He has brought destruction upon himself; he will now be going backwards. One who dies in darkness ceases awareness of himself for a time, because darkness only has awareness of itself as a limited fragment, and that fragment dies. If unaware of the soul, the garment becomes reality. Recognizing the eternal nature negates death. Birth into another spiritual garment becomes simultaneous with the death of the former garment."

Suddenly, they began to speak of having met Jesus, and I sparkled with delight. "So you all had a chance to meet with Jesus?" I asked. "Yes, we did. He came to our building once and spoke to all of us disincarnates." "Well, what was it like?" I asked. "Well, I hate to say this, but many of us were disappointed." Shocked by this response, I asked, "Why?" "Because he was very normal, He wasn't

what we expected. He was very inspiring and knowledgeable in what he said, but . . ." Interrupting them, I replied, "Let this be a lesson to you, the truth is not always what you expect. You can hear the truth from the mouth of Christ himself, but if you do not have within your own heart the soul of that truth, you will hear nothing."

Coming forward as I spoke of this, the disincarnates were not ready to leave this building. Some might return gradually over the next several months, but those who resided here were the middle-of-the-roaders who served the material world. For this reason, they held to this physical life as if it were their only lifetime, when in fact, it held them to their death. But no matter where you may strand yourself in the spectrum of life, you are never lost to God. Even in our years of wandering, He knows exactly when we will return. Even in the years of darkness, he anticipates our return to His divine bosom.

"Some . . . who were neither in the deep sleep of folly nor able to awaken in the light of wisdom, misled by the variety of innumerable customs, thought that there was no such thing as absolute justice but that every people regarded its own way of life as just . . . They have not understood . . . that 'what you do not wish to have done to yourself, do not do to another . . . When this idea is applied to the love of God, all vices perish."

On Christian Doctrine, Book Three, XIV, No. 22, (Christianity, Catholic, Words of St. Augustine)

Painted and dressed for the ceremony to honor the dead, the natives came into the room. Dancing around a fire, a man handed me a bowl with an herb inside it. Bidding me to take a piece and eat, I was hesitant. Placing it in my mouth, I felt the coarseness as I swallowed.

Speaking to me as the others danced around the fire, the native man said, "We must honor the dead even

when they are as he is. Because he is dead in spirit, as well, we mourn for his lost soul." Feeling the immense sadness of it, I listened to him carefully. "It is our ceremony for the dead that honors our loss, as well as our knowing that all souls return in their own time." A tear dropped from my eyes. "But there must be no mistake; there is no tolerance here for that. Evil will not be allowed here, in our love we will not hesitate to dismantle him." (This and the following experience were not in reference to the previous experience, but rather, to an experience with a murdered Satanist who actually had been purely evil and had tried to take my life when I came to assist him in crossing over fully in that he was stuck between two worlds.)

Turning to the fire, he said, "Now you must sweat." Beginning to cry, he comforted me. "It is the cleansing of your soul. You have walked directly into the very heart of evil and now we must cleanse you." Afraid to sweat, I knew it would hurt. "Don't be afraid to sweat," he said, "all of these energies will come out and it will not be comfortable, but you *must* sweat." With that, I did so, feeling pain in every joint of my body as the toxins poured forth. An honored guest quietly walked towards me. He was so quiet that I didn't notice His coming until I saw His sandals before me on the ground. Looking up, the beautiful face of Jesus was looking at me. "You have courage, my daughter. You are truly a warrior of light for the forces of the Lord, thy God." I couldn't speak as my body was shaking while the sweat poured out. Walking away quietly, his sandals made no noise upon the ground.

"He renounces himself, and takes up his cross, who, from having been unchaste becomes chaste; from having been immoderate becomes temperate; from having been weak and timid becomes strong and courageous."

*The Voice of the Saints, Contrition, Page 78, No. 3,
(Christianity, Catholic, Words of St. Jerome)*

Powerful and frightening to watch, the tribunal stood before me, as Christ had bid me to go with him. Sitting in the audience, we were watching the judgment of the soul who had tried to overtake me. In a grave position, the one who had tried to crush me had violated eternal law. There was no vengeance towards him; his actions were simply not to be tolerated. Now he would face the consequence of the intentional misuse of power. Quickly, I ascertained that the fate of those who came before this tribunal was greatly determined by their intent and remorse. There was no remorse here.

Twelve Old Ones wearing long white robes filed in to stand as judge before this soul and others. Christ made it clear to me that I had no say in this matter; this was not in my hands, and it was not up to me. Allowing me to come because He'd wanted me to know that I was safe; He wanted me to see the protection of the Lord in action. For he who wished to crush me they pronounced sentence. "Death," they said.

Starting to cry, I felt conflicted. My caring for this lost soul clashed with my awareness of the depth of his evil. Not fully understanding, I didn't know what this sentence would mean, because he'd already died an Earthly death. Christ took my hand and led me away, for He knew I didn't understand. "It is not for you to understand," He said, "it is just for you to know." Asking again for further clarification, He simply repeated His words. "It is not for you to understand, it is just for you to know." The tribunal filed out of the room, as I gazed into my savior's eyes, and then He disappeared.

"But as for cowards, the unfaithful, the depraved, murderers, the unchaste, sorcerers, idol-worshipers, and deceivers of every sort, their lot is in the burning pool of fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

*New American Bible, New Testament, Revelations 21:8,
(Christianity, Catholic)*

"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."

*King James Bible, New Testament, Matthew 10:28,
(Christianity, Words of Christ)*

"It is of no importance to me how you or any other human court may judge me: I will not even be the judge of my own self. It is true that my conscience does not reproach me, but that is not enough to justify me: it is the Lord who is my judge. For that reason, do not judge anything before the due time, until the Lord comes; he will bring to light everything that is hidden in darkness and reveal the designs of all hearts. Then everyone will receive from God the appropriate commendation."

*New Jerusalem Bible, New Testament, 1 Corinthians 4:1-5,
(Christianity)*

"Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."

King James Bible, New Testament, John 1:29, (Christianity)

As I stood outside of my body upon the earthen bank, my spirit was directed to look towards the sky. My face became ecstatic, staring in a fixed state upon the heavens with joy and elusive wisdom. Utter peace filled me as the skies began to whirl and heave. A purple, blue and white vortex began swirling as the clouds began to part. From beneath their depths, the Mother Mary appeared. Angelic mercy strewn towards me, my ecstatic state grew deeper. 'A New Journey.' She wrote with her finger into the clouds, 'The Final Chapter.' Nodding, the vortex pulled Mary back towards heaven. Feeling her winds slowly release my soul, I fell to the ground in awe. The next day, I found out that I was pregnant with my second child, a daughter, Mary.

"If the most pure Mary has reached the highest pinnacle in the ranks of the just, She may also on this very account be considered as the instrument or the motive power through which the saints themselves have reached their station."

The Mystical City of God (Abrid.), The Transfixion, Page 400, Paragraph 1, (Christianity, Catholic, Author: Ven. Mary of Agreda)

On the ground below me I suddenly noticed two feet wearing old, old sandals. Looking up to see their bearer, Jesus Christ stood with light glowing all around His white flowing robes. Conveying to me great and wonderful things, He spoke of what I must do to fulfill them. Bowing to the ground, the Lord Jesus honored my soul with secret tasks. In obedience, I lowered my head to acknowledge my duty.

As the Earth began to tremble, a powerful being appeared before Him whose essence was airy and white. "I am Yammeth/Symmeth, he who controls the movements of the Earth." "Will you come with me to Exodus?" he asked. Not understanding what this meant, I simply replied, "Yes, I will." "You and I will go to Exodus alone!" he commanded, as the rumbling increased and he disappeared. Jesus directed me to stand, and as I did He transformed what I was wearing into a gleaming white robe, much like His own. Feeling unworthy, I bowed my head down. "Retrieve the ancient texts," He said, as my mind filled with the vision of the sacred texts of all the world's religions throughout time, "all of them." Energy pulsed through me, as the Lord directed me to consider the part-time job I had recently taken. "I fear it was not well chosen," he said, "you now begin your Essene training; you must allow no defilements in your retreat." A huge pink and glistening cross appeared in the sky, adorned with jewels. "You shall never make a living from

the cross," he said, as I began to understand that I was never to consider my work for the Lord as a means of financial support. "There are many ways in which abundance can come to you." Seeing financial support coming from many different avenues, but none from my own work, He began to disappear. "Retrieve the ancient texts," He repeated, and then He was gone.

"Every man who in this world does not wrap himself in the ceremonial garb and clothe himself therewith, when he enters the other world is covered with a filthy garment and is brought up for trial. Many are the garments prepared for man in this world, and he who does not acquire the garment of religious observance is in the next world clad in a garment which is known to the masters of Gehinnom, and woe to the man who is clad therein, for he is seized by many officers of judgement and dragged down to Gehinnom, and therefore King Solomon cried aloud, 'At all times let thy garments be white.'"

The Zohar (Kaballah), Volume V, Shelah Lecha (Numbers), Page 236-237, Bottom & Top, (Judaism)

"When God saw that his people would perish because they did not see the Light of Life, He chose the best of Israel, so that they might make the Light of Life to shine before the sons of men, and those chosen were called Essenes, because they taught the ignorant and healed the sick, and they gathered on the eve of every seventh day to rejoice with the Angels."

The Essene Gospel of Peace, Book Three, Page 19, Prologue, (Christianity, Gnostic/Essene)

His body was writhing as my soul watched this ancient sacred event taking place upon the Earth from above. Energetic bursts pierced His soul like lightning, as His body hurled and purged, accepting the living immortal energy that was now being forced into His body from His Father. Violently, He was accepting the finality

of His destiny, relinquishing the parts of Him that were not ready for such an immense task.

Sweat poured from His brow into His thick mustache and beard, as more pulses of energy hit Him. He *knew* what the acceptance of these final vibrational thrusts would mean, that the Messiah would indeed be birthed and He would die to achieve the destiny of His coming. As the energy pulse slowed in completion, Jesus Christ allowed Himself to have one last peaceful slumber. In honor, I bowed to the invisible guardian who allowed me to bear witness to this incredible moment, and then I was gone.

"Watch and pray that you not come to be in the flesh, but rather that you come forth from the bondage of the bitterness of this life. And as you pray, you will find rest, for you have left behind the suffering and the disgrace. For when you come forth from the sufferings and passions of the body, you will receive rest from the good one, and you will reign with the king, you joined with him and he with you, from now on, for ever and ever. Amen."

The Nag Hammadi Library, The Book of Thomas the Contender, Page 207, Paragraph 3, (Christianity, Gnostic/Essene, Words of Christ)

For several nights, I awoke with voices in my ears. "The eastern star has come to keep the native going." "Reading Buddhist texts will make you fly more." And the following night, "Unite the East and the West, the religions of the world. Darkness and light exist within all of them, illumine the four quarters." Conveying to me that it was my task to discover and distribute such knowledge, and bring unity to the people, I understood.

"Then, pointing to His wounded Heart: 'This wound is the fiery furnace to which chosen souls, especially the brides of My Heart, must come to enkindle theirs. This wound is theirs; It belongs to them with all the graces it contains,

that they may distribute them to the world, to the many souls who do not know where to seek them, and to so many others who despise them."

*The Way of Divine Love, Page 405, Paragraph 7-8,
(Christianity, Catholic, Words of Christ, Author: Sister Josefa
Menendez)*

Spiraling rock walls circled themselves until they reached a center point within. The ancient monument had secret columns and passageways below ground where I stood, but only the initiated knew how to get to them. Energies came and hit like torrents of wind from the ground beneath my feet, and the earth began to shudder and shake. Crevasses opened within the Earth and ancient artifacts were exposed to the top-most layer of the ground. Looking at them, I knew they held secrets and wisdoms from the ancient past. Little did I know, I was about to meet some members of God's royal family.

The earthquake ceased, but its quaking had laid me upon the ground, so I looked up, preparing to stand. Two bare feet stood before me with a singular hole in the center of each. I knew who had come, as I whisked myself to my feet so that I could bow to Christ, my divine visitor. Beginning to walk together, we quietly followed the spiraling columns from the farthest point out to the farthest point within, the core center. When we had reached this point, we stopped walking and Christ began to mutter sacred words. As He did, we immediately fell through the rock into the secret columns below ground.

Absolute calm was inside as hundreds of monks from all religions of the world were there awaiting our arrival. As the abbot approached, I noticed that some of the monks glowed very brightly with light, while others did not glow at all. It didn't seem to matter which faith the monks were from, for there were glowing and non-glowing monks of all faiths. Christ conveyed to me that

the monks who glowed were true monks, while the others who did not were still in training to become 'true' monks.

Looking at me deeply in the eyes, he motioned to the monks who did not glow, "One must understand the isness. They do not understand the isness." Reaching to take my hand, I placed mine in his as Christ disappeared.

"Every perfect being naturally communicates itself to others so far as is possible, and this belongs to each thing in imitation of the first perfect being, namely God . . . but the good of a person is communicated to others both as regards being and as regards knowledge."

On Evil, Question IX, Page 339, Reply to 3, (Christianity, Catholic, Author: St. Thomas Aquinas)

Brilliant air filled my soul, as the song of a particular Buddhist Sutra began exploding in melodious streams all around me, 'A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life,' also called, 'Bodhisattvacharyavatara;' the epitome of self-sacrifice on behalf of other living beings. My soul began dancing in flight to the musical stream. But almost as quickly as it had come, it stopped.

In the distance, I saw the outline of the Buddha sitting in a lotus position. The white descended. As it did, the Buddha approached me, floating through the air in the same position. Pulsing white energy throughout my spirit, I immediately felt complete and total calm. Conveying to me that he was now going to place me within the actual energy of three qualities of attainment, I surrendered in awe as the white and absolute serenity covered me in a blanket of solitude.

First, I was surrounded in wonderment.

Then, devotion.

And last, humility.

In these spaces, I knew isness.

With this experience also came a deep sorrow, humility and repentance for all I had done in my many lifetimes that caused harm to others.

Inherently, I understood that all religions serve a pathway, a cause in evolution. Following these very high roads requires a sense of true devotion in order to be understood, followed and embraced. Because they are ensconced in karmic purification, most souls cannot yet understand true devotion. Because their minds are deluded and misled, they may *intend* to be devoted, but their minds are incapable in their present state, of the discipline required to attain true devotion. A karmic soul serves the will of the self, while an eternal soul serves the will of the Lord. As Christ said:

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

*King James Bible, New Testament, Matthew 22:37-38,
(Christianity, Words of Christ)*

In the white energies of wonderment, devotion and humility, I saw my own vices and how displeasing they were to God, and in the same breath I was given to observe true virtue as it manifests among the heavenly realms. Looking upon great holiness and purity of heart, I yearned for it . . .

"The truly awake know all things, are nondual, beyond duality, all equal, inherently pure as space, not distinguishing self and nonself. As the ocean reflects beings' bodies and is therefore called ocean, enlightenment reflects all mental patterns and hence is called true awareness."

*The Flower Ornament Scripture, Manifestation of the Buddha,
Page 1011, Stanza 1-2, (Buddhism, Mahayana)*

The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation Journal:

Different Voices!

This is our section devoted to the writings and opinions of others, which may not reflect the views of author, Marilyn Hughes. Inclusion of any author's writings or work does not denote an endorsement or recommendation in regards to their writings.

Some of these will be individual writings of others on subjects of spiritual interest, other people's out-of-body experiences - some which may agree with and/or contradict the experiences of the author, poems, journals of spiritual transformation, and critiques - both positive and negative opinions and/or analysis, of the author's work.

We choose to include ALL of these because we feel that the ability to discuss our similarities and differences openly is 'ALL GOOD' as GANDHI used to say.

We welcome and encourage your submissions for possible future inclusion in this section, although we stress that we are a non-profit organization and payment is not available:

MarilynnHughes1@outofbodytravel.org

We have found that some of the best critiques, analysis, writings and experiences come from people all over the world in different walks of life who are pursuing their spiritual path with passion and are completely unknown.

THANK YOU ALL, whether you agree or disagree with our work, FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO SEEK THE TRUTH IN WHATEVER WAY THAT TRUTH MAY COME TO SEEK YOU!

Excerpts from the Writings of Swami Abhedananda

What is Yoga?

By Swami Abhedananda

IN all the Sacred Writings of the world as well as in the lives of the inspired teachers, prophets, saints, and Seers of Truth, we find frequent descriptions of miraculous events and powers, which, admitting a certain measure of exaggeration, must still have had some foundation in fact. We, indeed, know that from time immemorial in every age and in every country there have arisen among the different nations persons who could read the thoughts of others, who could foresee and could prophesy that which afterwards came to pass; but most of these people did not understand the causes of their own peculiar gifts, and tried to explain them by attributing them to the influence of external Beings, whom they called by various names-- gods, angels, good or evil spirits.

Some among them even fancied that they were especially chosen to be the instruments of these higher powers and sought to be worshipped as the elect of God or of their particular deity, just as the leaders of certain sects in this country to-day desire to be adored by their followers. In some instances, those who possessed these unusual powers were looked upon as divine exceptions, as Jesus by the Christians, Mahomet by the Mahometans, and Buddha by the Buddhists. Others again were condemned as sorcerers or witches, and the fear aroused by such persecutions led to the secret practice of divers methods which resulted in still further extraordinary manifestations.

These methods were never written down, but were passed orally from the master to the disciple, who in turn carefully guarded them as sacred mysteries. This is the reason why among ancient nations there grew up so many secret societies, the object of which was to develop certain powers through various kinds of discipline and practices. The Egyptians, the Essenes, Gnostics, Manicheans, Neo-Platonists, and the Christian mystics of the middle ages all had their secret organizations, and some of them still exist, as, for example, the Masonic Lodge. None of the members of these societies ever gave out their secret instructions, nor did they write any books offering a logical or scientific explanation of their practices. Therefore, while there were some among them who advanced far in the attainment of higher powers, the unusual manifestations resulting therefrom were never understood by Western nations, neither were they generalized into a system or science.

In ancient India, on the contrary, as there was no fear of persecution, the case was altogether different. Every Hindu was obliged, as a part of his religious duty, to develop through daily practice certain powers and to strive to attain to the realization of higher truths. In the streets, on the market-place, in the courts, and on the battle-field were many who had not only reached such realization, but who had carefully classified their experiences and discovered those laws which govern our higher nature and upon which was gradually built up the profound Science of Yoga.

Thus we see that this science, like all others, was based on experience; while the method used in it was the same as that employed by modern science in making all its discoveries of natural law--the method of observation and experiment. This method is regarded in the West as a

distinctly modern innovation, but as a matter of fact it was adopted in India in very ancient times by the "Rishis," or Seers of Truth. Through the process of close observation and constant experiment they discovered the finer forces of nature, as also the laws that govern our physical, mental, and spiritual being. The truths thus gained through their own experience and investigations, they wrote down in books, preached in public, and expounded to their pupils. Before, however, they affirmed anything about the nature of the soul or God, they had realized it. Before they asked a disciple to practice anything they had practiced it themselves, and had obtained definite results from that practice.

In this way, as the outcome of ages of research in the realms of nature, carried on by a succession of earnest seekers after light, there grew up in India various systems of science, philosophy, psychology, metaphysics, and religion, both speculative and practical, which were grouped under the one common name, "Aryan Religion." The term "religion" was used to include all, because at no epoch in India has religion been separated from these different branches or from the general conduct of everyday existence; and the methods by which these scientific truths were applied in the daily life of an individual to further his spiritual development, were called by the general term "Yoga."

"Yoga" is a Sanskrit word commonly used to signify the practical side of religion; and the first concern of the training for which it stands, is to enforce proper obedience to the laws of our moral and physical nature, upon which depend the attainment of perfect health and of moral and spiritual perfection. In Western countries the word has been grossly misunderstood and misused by many

writers, who have employed it in the sense of jugglery, hypnotism, trickery, and fraud. Whenever people hear the word "Yogi," which signifies one who practices Yoga, they think of some kind of juggler, or charlatan, or identify him with a fakir or one who practices black magic. The Theosophists have been more or less responsible for this abuse of the term; but those who have studied the Sacred Books of India, as, for instance, the Bhagavad Gita or Song Celestial, as Sir Edwin Arnold calls it in his translation, will remember that each chapter of that Celestial Song is devoted to some kind of "Yoga," or method of realizing the Ultimate Truth and of attaining the highest wisdom; and that a "Yogi" is one who through various practices reaches the highest ideal of religion. This highest ideal, according to the Bhagavad Gita, is the union of the individual soul with the Universal Spirit.

Hindu writers, however, have used the word "Yoga" in various other senses. I will mention a few of them in order to give some conception of the vastness of the field covered by this term. First, "Yoga" means the union of two external objects. Second, the mixing of one thing with another. Third, the interrelation of the causes which produce a common effect. Fourth, the orderly equipment of a soldier or of any person in any profession. Fifth, the application, discrimination, and reasoning that is necessary for the discovery of a certain truth. Sixth, that power of sound which makes it convey a specific idea. Seventh, the preservation of what one possesses. Eighth, the transformation of one thing into another. Ninth, the union of one soul with another or with the universal Spirit. Tenth, the flowing of a thought current towards an object. Eleventh, the restraint of all thought action through concentration and meditation. Thus we see how many different branches of art, science, psychology, philosophy,

and religion are included in the various definitions of this one word. It seems, indeed, in its scope and range to take in every department of nature. If, however, we consider the literal meaning of the word, we shall more easily understand why it is so all-inclusive.

It is derived from the Sanskrit root "Yuj," which means to join. The English word "yoke" also comes from the same root. Originally the literal signification of the two words was almost the same. The root-verb "Yuj" signifies to join oneself to something, or to harness oneself for some task. Thus in its primary meaning it conveys the same idea of preparing for hard work as the common English expressions "to go into harness," or "to buckle to." The effort required is mental or physical, according to the object in view. If the object be the acquirement of perfect health or longevity, then the effort of both mind and body to accomplish this through certain practices is called "Yoga." So is it again if the object be the development of psychic powers. The same word is used likewise to indicate the mental training necessary for the attainment of self-control, of the union of the individual soul with God, of divine communion or of spiritual perfection. Volumes upon volumes have been written in India describing the different branches and methods of this applied science of "Yoga," and the various ideals that can be attained through its practice; also what qualifications fit a beginner for undertaking any of these methods, what stages he must pass through in order to reach the goal, what obstacles stand in the way, and how they can be overcome.

Patience and perseverance are absolutely necessary for any one who desires to enter upon the path of Yoga; those who are not patient cannot hope to arrive at true realization. Those, again, who take it up out of curiosity or through an

impulse of temporary enthusiasm, must not expect to get results, and must not blame the teacher for their failure to do so, since the fault is entirely their own. The same teachings, when carried out with understanding and in the right spirit, will bring wonderful results. They will only come, however, to the student who follows strictly the instructions of a living master, who will direct him in the practice of both physical and mental exercises.

Aspirants to the study of Yoga can be divided into three classes: First, those who are born Yogis. There are some who, having practiced Yoga in a previous incarnation, come here as awakened souls, and as such manifest remarkable powers from their very childhood. Their natural tendency is to lead a pure life, for right living and right thinking are their sole concern, and they possess wonderful powers of self-control and of concentration. Sense pleasures and those things which fascinate the ordinary mind have no charm for them. Even when they are surrounded by all the comforts of life and have every material resource at their command, they yet feel like strangers in a strange land. Few there are who can understand properly the mental condition of these characters. Physicians may be brought to them, but medical treatment may only make them worse; the writer knows of cases where harm has been done in this way. By the law of attraction, however, they are bound to be drawn sooner or later into the companionship of some Yogi. Here they find exactly what their inner nature has been craving, and at once they feel happy and at home. The instructions of the Yogi appeal to their minds; they begin the practice of Yoga under his direction, and proving easy and natural to them, they soon obtain excellent results. Thus from youth they take up the thread of the practice at the very point where they dropped it in their past existence; and

through a firm determination to overcome all obstacles in their way, they progress rapidly and gradually attain to the highest ideal of spiritual life. Nothing in the world can prevent their onward march, so intense and strong is their longing for realization.

The second class includes those who are born as half-awakened souls. In need of further experience, they go through various paths without finding the right one. They take each new step tentatively, and in this constant experimenting, they waste a great deal of energy and a large portion of their lives. If such partially awakened souls, following out a tendency created in their previous existence, have the good fortune to come in contact with a Yogi and take up the practice of Yoga, they may, through perseverance and earnestness, achieve much in this life, although they will necessarily advance more slowly in the path of spirituality than those who belong to the first class.

In the third class are to be found all those unawakened souls who begin their search after Truth and the practice of Yoga for the first time in this life. Even from childhood they are irresistibly drawn towards sense objects and sense pleasures; and if they take up the practice of Yoga, they find great difficulty in following its teachings and meet numerous obstacles along the way. Their environment is not favorable for the practice, and even when they try, they cannot easily conquer it. Their health is not good, their mind is scattered, and they suffer from various kinds of disease and mental disturbance. They also lack determination, find it well-nigh impossible to control the senses, and have to fight hard to adjust their mode of living to the new requirements. With so much to contend against they naturally obtain but small results even after long practice. If, however, such persons can persevere and

strengthen their wills through a slow and regular practice of Hatha Yoga, struggling manfully to overcome the many obstacles in their way by the practice of breathing exercises and by following the directions of a competent teacher, who understands them, they may in this life be able to control in a large measure their physical health and acquire a certain amount of Yoga power. Hatha Yoga is especially useful for this class of aspirants. Through the practice of breathing exercises they will gradually gain control over their bodies, and will, in course of time, be prepared for the study of Râja Yoga, which will arouse the powers latent in their souls.

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Science of Breathing

By Swami Abhedananda

THE Science of Yoga with its various branches justly claims, as we have already seen, to unravel the mysteries of life and death. Some of the advanced thinkers in Western countries are beginning to understand the importance of this noble science and to explain the problems of existence by it; but modern physiologists, anatomists, biologists, and medical practitioners are still uncertain as to the proper solution of these problems; the more they investigate, the more doubts arise in their minds. Within the last fifty years the various researches in the different departments of science, such as physics, chemistry, physiology, and biology, have apparently ended in the conclusion that life is nothing but the result of physical and chemical actions in the organic structure, that there is no such thing as vital force distinct and separate from the physical and chemical forces which have been discovered in the scientist's laboratory.

Some of the students of science are even anxiously waiting in the vain expectation that some day they will hear of the discovery of a substance, artificially produced in the laboratory, which will live, move, grow, multiply, and die like a particle of living matter. The majority of modern thinkers, in fact, hold that vitality is merely the result of the mechanical activity of the organs; that life comes directly from dead matter, and obeys physical, chemical, and mechanical laws; that a living animal is nothing but a machine; and that all of his actions whether of body or mind are purely mechanical. They say that a living protoplasm is only a combination of certain chemical elements, subject to ordinary chemical laws; that living

and non-living are one; and that the living comes directly from the non-living. According to these scientists a human being is no more than a mechanical resultant of certain chemical changes governed by the laws of physical nature. If, however, we ask them what force it is that determines these physical and mechanical modifications, what is the power that causes all these chemical changes in such numberless varieties, they answer that they do not know.

Are we really like machines, subject to mechanical laws and nothing more? Is our growth entirely due to the process of accretion and aggregation of matter in the non-living world? Are we merely some accidental precipitation, deposition, or crystallization of atoms and molecules which are governed by no power higher than the chemico-physical forces? Students of physiology now learn in their text-books this physico-chemical theory of the origin of life. They laugh at those who use such expressions as "vital energy," "vital force," "vitality," or "life force," in the sense of some power separate and distinct from the physico-chemical forces of nature. In fact, when they study physiology they throw aside all ideas of vitality or life force; they believe in a nature devoid of vitality or life, and try to explain the formation of brain cells, nerves, tissues, and the construction of the various organs of a living animal without recognizing the existence of a vital agency. A reaction, however, has taken place recently in Europe, and a class of scientific thinkers has appeared, Dr. Lionel S. Beale being the most prominent, who, having found no satisfactory explanation of life through these theories, have, after closer observation and experiment, come to the conclusion that there is a vital force entirely distinct from mechanical or physico-chemical forces, and which manifests itself through living particles of matter.

It is true that the human body is a machine, but not like any machine made by man. It is a self-moving, self-regulating, and self-adjusting, vital machine governed by will-power and intelligence. It was produced by a germ of life which possessed vitality, and which had the capability of becoming conscious, of willing, thinking, and producing psychic activity, in which are included all emotions and thoughts belonging to a human being. By a germ of life is meant that germ of matter or substance which contains the potentiality of life and mind. Although the manifestation of this vital force depends upon organic structure, still it is not the same as any of the familiar forces known to us; it is not like heat, electricity, magnetism, or molecular attraction. On the contrary, it is a force which governs and directs all these grosser physical forces. It is the director of the telegraphic current which notifies the energy of the muscle when and how to exert itself. It coordinates all automatic movements, controls the system as a whole as well as in detail, and is itself the principle of purely animal life. The special organ through which it functions chiefly, and which has been constructed to differentiate it from other energies, to give it a form and a purpose, and to afford it a vehicle of expression, is the spinal nerve of the vertebrate and the equivalent organ in other animals.

This mysterious and invisible vital energy or vital force is called in Sanskrit "Prâna." That branch of the Science of Yoga which treats of this mysterious force, describing its origin and nature, and teaching how it can be controlled and utilized to produce wonderful results, is known as the Science of Prâna. Ordinarily it is translated into English by the word "Breath," and called the "Science of Breath"; but Prâna is not simple breath. In the Upanishads it is defined as the cause of all motion and life in both the organic and inorganic worlds. Wherever there is the slightest

expression of motion, life, or mind, from the smallest atom, or animalcule, or amœba, or bioplasm, up to the largest solar system and the highest man, it is the manifestation of the all-pervading force called Prâna. It is one, yet appears as manifold through its divers expressions. It is the mother of all forces, psychical, chemical, and physical. Vedânta Philosophy describes it as the ultimate generalization of the multiple forces of nature. It is indestructible; the death of the form through which it manifests cannot destroy it; but it must not be confounded with molecular attraction for it is much finer; it cannot be seen, touched, weighed, measured, or captured by any means.

According to Vedânta, before the beginning of creation the unconditioned causal state of the universe contained potential Prâna; Vedânta does not make the absurd statement that life has come from non-life. It does not admit that vital energy is the result of mechanical forces, but, on the contrary, tells us that it is a force which operates simultaneously with physico-chemical forces. They are all, in fact, expressions of the one living energy of Prâna. Although some of the modern scientific monists acknowledge that all matter and force spring from a common source, or from one eternal energy, still at the same time they deny the existence of life or vitality in that energy and declare that it is not living. They try to prove that life is the product of some kind of motion of dead matter; while Vedânta teaches that all the phenomena of the universe have evolved out of the one eternal substance which possesses Prâna or cosmic vital force, cosmic mind, cosmic intelligence, and consciousness. These may be interdependent, but as they all exist in a human being, so the infinite variety of forces exist in that one eternal living Being whose body is the universe.

The Science of Yoga claims that this Prâna is the final cause of all the manifested forces of nature. Why does an atom move and vibrate? A scientist does not know, but a Yogi says because of Prâna. That force which produces vibration in an atom or a molecule is one of the expressions of the energy of Prâna or the cosmic Life-principle. The same Prâna appears as that power by which a germ of life works on the physical plane, arouses motion in the molecules of its cells and builds up a suitable structure, repairs injuries and reproduces its kind. It causes activity in a protoplasm, in a bioplasm or an amoeba, as well as in the highest man. It is closely related to the mind, which includes all the psychic activities and intelligence displayed by that germ in the different grades of its evolution. Vital power and mind are, indeed, two aspects of one Prâna. A germ of life possesses mentality as well as vitality, and the phenomena of these two aspects are most intimately connected with one another. In the science of Yoga the relation between mind and Prâna is described as that of a horse and a rider, Prâna being the horse which the individual mind rides. The body moves like an automobile carriage when it is propelled from within by the force of Prâna and guided by the driver of the intelligent mind. The activity of the mechanism of the body stops if Prâna or vital force ceases to vibrate. Again, when the vibration of Prâna is arrested, the mind no longer operates on the physical plane. It is for this reason that vital force or Prâna is called the medium through which the mind expresses its powers on the physical plane.

The animal organism is nothing but a mechanism for the manifestation of the powers of the soul. When the soul wishes to express certain powers on the material plane it creates through Prâna some suitable organism to fulfill its desire. If the mental activities of any living creature

change, the organic structure of the nerves and cells will also change. Various experiments have been made by different scientists which clearly show that mental effort underlies all physiological conditions and organic functions. An abnormal activity of the mind will invariably give rise to certain pathological conditions, because it will affect the vital action; and when the vital power, which gives life to every cell of the body, is influenced, the cells will begin to vibrate in a different manner; and the result will be abnormal activity in the cells of the organs, which in turn will produce various diseases. Conversely, when the vital activity is normal, the psychic function is also natural. The mind is just as much affected by a diseased body as the physical system is disturbed by a diseased mind. He who can regulate his mentalities knows how to preserve his vitality and keep a healthy body; while he who has control over his vital functions understands the secret of keeping a healthy mind. The man who is thus able to dominate both body and mind is the master of himself, the king in his own conscious domain. But he who is not the master of himself lives like a slave to passion, to sense-objects, to wealth, property, ambition, and all earthly desires. Those who do not know how to regulate their vital forces are always unhappy, for they constantly suffer either mentally or physically.

Every irregular activity of the mind will produce chemical and physiological change in the nerve centers, in the organs, and eventually in the whole body. This can be shown by analyzing the chemical properties of the secretions of different organs, and especially by analyzing the breath. If we analyze the breath of a person who is strongly moved by anger or any other violent passion, we shall find that his whole system is poisoned for the time being. By letting his breath pass through a certain solution

in a glass tube, we shall readily see that distinct changes are produced in the solution. These variations, furthermore, are only the outward signs of the internal modifications that have taken place in the entire nervous system. It is, in fact, these organic changes that modify the breath; but in a normal, healthy state of mind and body the chemical solution will remain perfectly unchanged. The breathing is then regular, deep, and strong. Every impulse of passion that takes possession of the mind, causes a corresponding variation in the respiratory functions; anger, hatred, or jealousy for instance, are marked by short, quick breath, while thoughts of peace, of true happiness, and of divine love produce long, deep breath.

There are various ways of learning the relation that exists between vital activity and mentality. A Yogi says that all abnormal and diseased conditions of the body are caused directly by imperfect or weak expression of the vital energy, and indirectly by improper mental activity. The curing of a disease, therefore, means the removing of the obstacles which prevent the Prâna from working in an absolutely normal way. This can be done either by physical processes or by regulating the mental functions. A Yogi heals disease in himself by increasing the vital action; by rousing the latent powers of the Prâna, which is the source of all life force. He knows how to fill his whole body, nay, every cell, with increased vitality. By regulating the polarity of the cells through the higher vibrations of Prâna he generates a strong current of vibratory Prâna, directs its course through the disordered cells of his organs, and changes the structure of these cells by creating a rapid circulation of the blood charged with the healing power of Prâna, and sending it to the parts affected. In this way the cells are restored to their normal condition and the disease is cured. The Yogi does this consciously and in the

most scientific manner with the help of breathing exercises accompanied by concentration. According to the Science of Yoga all nervous currents and all molecular motion in the brain cells and nerve centers are caused by this Prâna. If the molecules of the cells be filled with a new and strong current of Prâna or vital force, their vibration will be enormously increased; and this will enable them to throw off the impure matter that retarded their natural activity, and recover their normal healthy condition.

The same Prâna is also the propelling power in circulation. A Yogi says that the vital energy is stored up in the nerve centers of the spinal cord. It is the cause of the motion of the lungs, which in turn produces respiration; and respiration is the cause of the circulation of the blood and of all other organic activity. Modern physiology tells us that every portion of our body, every tissue and cell breathes; that the lung is nothing more than an instrument in the respiratory process, the chemical operation, which is the essential part of this function, occurring elsewhere in the cells and tissues themselves. The lung is only the door through which oxygen enters the system. The physiologists of the eighteenth century held quite different views; even the father of modern chemistry, Lavoisier himself (1743-1794), supposed that the main act of respiration took place in the lungs. What really happens is that oxygen, introduced into the lungs, filters through the thin walls of the pulmonary capillaries, where it finds in the red corpuscles of the blood a substance called hemoglobin, with which it unites to form a compound known as oxy-hemoglobin. And a very unstable compound it is, for throughout the tissues, in the capillary vessels of the whole body, oxygen is allowed to escape freely and to effect its work upon the cells. The blood, therefore, is merely a vehicle. The "organic combustions"

do not occur in the lungs, their seat being in the cells and tissues throughout the whole system.

Physiological chemistry tells us that all things mineral, vegetable, and animal, are mainly composed of four principal elements--oxygen, hydrogen, carbon, and nitrogen. Of these oxygen is of the greatest importance, since it is the most widely diffused, constituting by weight one-fifth of the atmosphere, eight-ninths of the ocean and all water, nearly one-half of solid rock and of every solid substance, and more than one-half of all vegetables and animals. If a man weighs one hundred and fifty pounds, one hundred and ten of his weight is oxygen. It is the chief cause of all activity in mechanical, chemical, muscular, and mental forces. The amount of energy or activity of an animal is determined by the amount of oxygen he respire; and the degree of force manifested in the human organism is in proportion to the rate at which oxygen is introduced into the system. It is the first requisite of vital action. Without it all other materials of life will be of little avail; and the respiratory organs are the medium through which it enters the system. The blood which has been once used in our bodies would be of no further service if it were not purified by the lungs. Ordinarily air when inhaled, contains 21 per cent oxygen, and when exhaled, 12 per cent, having lost 9 per cent. In a healthy adult man the average pulsation is 75 in a minute and about two ounces of blood are driven by each pulsation from the heart to the lungs, or nine pounds and six ounces in a minute. The quantity of blood in the human body is considered to be about one-fifth of the weight of the entire body, or twenty-eight pounds in a man weighing one hundred and forty pounds. The full quantity of blood in the system will, therefore, flow through the lungs in the short period of three minutes; in other words, the vast amount of thirteen

thousand five hundred pounds in every twenty-four hours.

It is well known now that as a rule only one-sixth of the full capacity of the lungs is used; if the remaining five-sixths were properly brought into play who can say what marvellous results might not follow? Nature has not given capacity to any organ without a purpose; and we are sure that, if every one were to use the full capacity of his lungs, weak or diseased lungs would be a thing of the past. If we understand the science of breathing, we can develop our lung power to its utmost capacity; then by well-regulated breathing exercises we can purify every particle of matter in the cells of the organs, and with the help of the current of Prâna can ultimately drive out all physical weakness.

Faith-healers, mental-healers, and Christian Scientists cure disease without giving drugs; the Yogis of India do the same, but in a more scientific manner. Faith-healers and Christian Scientists ask us to believe in a certain thing and to declare that we are not suffering. A Yogi says that we can get better and surer results if through breathing exercises we can control the Prâna, increase the vital current, and fill the whole system with the healing power of Prâna. By polarizing the activity of the cells, and removing the obstacles that prevent the proper manifestation of the vital current in those cells, we shall get rid of the disease. If mental-healers and faith-healers knew the secret of controlling the Prâna, they would have been undoubtedly more successful in their attempts. Some among them are now beginning to take up breathing exercises, and perhaps in time they will learn the truths contained in the wonderful science of breathing.

Generally people who know nothing of this science think that it teaches merely the mechanical process of breathing in and out; but its province is much more extended, for it likewise shows how to control the Prâna, how to increase the vitality of the system by generating new nerve currents of a higher order, how to polarize the vibration of the cells, and how to awaken those powers which lie dormant on the sub-conscious plane as well as in the nerve centers of the spine. It also tells us that when the powers begin to manifest, we rise above the influences and changes to which ordinary mortals are subject. India is the only country where from ancient times this science of breathing has been carefully studied in all its aspects by the Yogis. Through centuries of investigation they discovered different methods of regulating the breath, following which marvellous results, both mental and physical, could be obtained. Out of these various discoveries grew up the science of breathing, which, besides the control of the breath, also explains what relation the process of respiration bears to Prâna, and how, by harmonizing the vibrations of nerve cells with the higher laws of life force, one gains mastery over Prâna. This control of Prâna brings complete subjugation of all the forces which govern the mind and body.

The aim of a Yogi is to establish absolute harmony between his vital actions and his mental functions, to transcend all laws, to rise above the influence of all environmental conditions, and to be the supreme ruler of the mind and of the entire system. According to the Yogi, this perfect self-mastery and consequent freedom do not come to one who has not learned the secret of regulating the vital energy, and who has not acquired the power to direct it wherever it is needed. Before anyone can control this invisible vital force, he must know its principal seat in

the body; he must learn where this unseen king of physical activities is enthroned, who are his attendants, and how he governs his kingdom.

A Yogi says that the king or Prâna resides with his attendants in the nerve centers of the spinal column. These centers are the main stations where this vital force is stored. There are many centers in the spinal cord out of which proceed the motor and sensory nerves which cover the whole body, including its organs. All sensations and motions of the limbs depend upon these nerve centers in the spinal column and the brain. There are two currents which flow in and out of the brain through the spinal column and nerves; they are called afferent and efferent currents--in Sanskrit, "Idâ" and "Pingalâ." They run through the anterior and posterior channels of the spinal cord, and these furnish the two paths over which the currents of Prâna travel. The nervous energy itself being scattered throughout the system, the only means of regulating it is by controlling the principal centers or stations in the spinal column. If, therefore, any one wishes to control the Prâna, he must first learn to govern the chief stations through which it works. After studying the relation of these different centers the Yogis found that there were six of primary importance. Those who wish to know their names can refer to the volume on "Râja Yoga" by the Swâmi Vivekananda.

According to the science of breath, the King of these six leading nerve centers in the spinal cord is enthroned in the center opposite the thorax; it is the respiratory center and in Sanskrit bears the name "Anâhata." It moves the lungs, causes respiration, and gives activity to all the other centers, which are dependent on it. If the royal center is disturbed or vibrates abnormally, those which are subject

to it, and through them the whole system will act in a corresponding manner; and the result will be disease, organic trouble, or continued ill-health. So long, however, as the royal center is in a normal condition, the movement of the lungs which causes inspiration and expiration will be regular. Therefore the Yogi who desires to subjugate the nerve centers first strives to gain control over the respiratory center. The science of breathing teaches that, by regulating the breath, the motion of the lungs and the functions of the whole nervous system can be regulated. It also says that, by controlling the nerve centers in the spinal column, mastery over the currents flowing throughout the system, and ultimately over the mind itself, with its various dormant powers, can be easily gained. If the mental powers that are now latent on the subconscious plane can be aroused, all the experiences of past incarnations, and the impressions gathered during previous lives, will come up on the conscious plane and we shall remember them all.

The Yogis say that the great majority of people breathe irregularly and that there are differences in the breathings of men and women. The causes of this irregular breathing are many--food, drink, fear, sickness, sorrow, nervous excitement, passion, anxiety. These do not affect the breath directly, but they do influence it indirectly by producing abnormal activity of Prâna, first in the nerve centers, then in the movement of the lungs, which expresses outwardly as irregular breathing. Hence irregularity of the breath is the external sign of abnormal action of the respiratory center in the spine.

A Yogi whose respiratory center functions regularly and is under perfect control is free from weakness, ill-health, and all disease. As, by controlling the activity of Prâna in the

nerve centers, the movement of the lungs and the respiration are regulated, so, conversely, by regulating the breath, the lungs and nerve centers will be controlled, for they work simultaneously. Those who are suffering from ill-health should devote especial attention to the study of the science of breathing, as it is absolutely necessary to the building up of a healthy mind and a healthy body.

The chief aim of a Yogi is to observe his own nature closely and to learn clearly what forces are operating in his system, and what relation they bear to one another; for by gaining a complete knowledge of his own nature he will gain correct knowledge of the whole universe, since the laws that govern the human body are universal. All these laws are nothing but the modes in which Prâna operates in nature. Therefore a Yogi seeks first to understand the individual Prâna and the vital laws which govern his own system.

In India this fact was recognized and the science of breathing was carefully studied by the sages, who had no other ambition or purpose in life than to acquire knowledge for its own sake. They explained this science, practiced breathing exercises (noting the results), and instructed their pupils, but not to make a profession of it, or to earn money, or to gain fame in society. On the contrary, they refused to teach those who came to learn for professional ends; and it is because of this disinterestedness on their part that the knowledge of the Yogis is so pure and unadulterated by ambition or selfish motives. They also realized the dangers which might arise from ignorant practice of these exercises. Those who are studying under inexperienced teachers should be on their guard, for there is great risk in letting the nerve currents flow in a wrong direction. It may produce abnormal

results and may even end in mental disorder. Right breathing, on the contrary, brings the greatest benefits to mankind when properly practiced; but if it is abused it must do a corresponding amount of harm, just as any medicine will when improperly applied. As by studying *Materia Medica* a man cannot cure himself without the aid of a trained physician, so the mere study of Yoga cannot bring about truly good results unless it is carried on under the guidance of an experienced Yogi. It should be remembered, furthermore, that in a written book everything is not given, that each constitution is different from every other, and that that which is helpful to one may not be so to another.

Anyone who practices faithfully, according to the instructions of an experienced living teacher, will surely gain highly beneficial results both in mind and body. He will learn how to manufacture vital force and to increase the vitality of his whole organism. He will be able to remove all impurities from his system and to overcome all abnormal and diseased conditions, that is, where decomposition and disorganization have not advanced too far. He will likewise no longer be a victim to cold, chills, Grip, fever, rheumatism, stiffness of the joints or muscles, paralysis, and other ills; for he knows how he can remove them by increasing the vibrations of Prâna and thus giving new life to the cells of the organs.

Every individual, whether old or young, man or woman, is bound to get some result if the breathing exercises be practiced faithfully for six months. By breathing exercises, however, is not meant here merely deep breathing, such as is taught by teachers of music, Delsarte, or physical culture. Deep breathing is very good for drawing a full supply of oxygen into the system, and undoubtedly has its

value, especially for women who wear tight dresses. Many of the diseases from which they suffer are directly traceable to a lack of the adequate quantity of oxygen necessary for organic combustion and for the maintenance of the activity of the organs. The organs of many people in this country are undeveloped, or abnormally developed, because of the unnatural clothes worn; and for all such deep breathing will be exceedingly beneficial. But too much of it is injurious, as it inflates and strains the lungs, and, if continued, the increased development of the tissues will after a time decay and produce various troubles. Those who are taking lessons in deep breathing from inexperienced teachers should stop to consider this. By breathing exercises we mean that process by which control over the motion of the lungs and of the nerve centers, as also, in the end, over the Prâna or vital energy can be acquired.

A Yogi declares that the practice of breathing will bring whatever result is desired, whether physical, psychical, or spiritual. He who has gained perfect control over his breath can suspend it for hours, and through this generate a power in the system which will levitate the body, even counteracting the tremendous force of gravitation. A Yogi conquers death by the control of Prâna. There are many Yogis in India who can tell the exact moment when they will leave their bodies. They say, "I am going to depart on such a day at such an hour," and at the appointed time consciously give up their bodies in the presence of many. There are some again who can prolong life indefinitely, and can subsist for long periods without taking any kind of solid or liquid food.

When so much can be accomplished through the control of the vital energy of Prâna, it is not strange that these Masters say to the world:

"Oh, ye mortals, study the science of breathing; learn the secret of controlling Prâna or the vital energy; strive diligently to regulate the breath; for the control of Prâna will bring all happiness, earthly and spiritual, and through it will come perfect health, mastery of the body, and that Supreme Bliss which is eternal and everlasting.

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Was Christ a Yogi?

By Swami Abhedananda

IN considering whether or not Christ was a Yogi we should first understand how spiritual and how divine one must be before he can be called a Yogi. A true Yogi must be pure, chaste, spotless, self-sacrificing, and the absolute master of himself. Humility, unostentatiousness, forgiveness, uprightness, and firmness of purpose must adorn his character. A true Yogi's mind should not be attached to sense-objects or sense-pleasures. He should be free from egotism, pride, vanity, and earthly ambition. Seeing the ephemeral nature of the phenomenal world, and reflecting upon the misery, suffering, sorrow, and disease with which our earthly existence is beset, he should renounce his attachment to external things, which produce but fleeting sensations of pleasure, and should overcome all that clinging to worldly life which is so strong in ordinary mortals.

A true Yogi does not feel happy when he is in the company of worldly-minded people who live on the sense plane like animals. He is not bound by family ties. He does not claim that this is his wife and these are his children; but, on the contrary, having realized that each individual soul, being a child of Immortal Bliss, belongs to the Divine Family, he severs all family relations and worldly connections and thus becomes absolutely free. A true Yogi must always preserve his equanimity in the face of the unpleasant as well as of the pleasant experiences of life; and rising above good and evil he should remain undisturbed by the success or failure, the victory or defeat, which may come to him as the result of the actions of his body and mind.

A true Yogi, again, must have unswerving devotion to the Supreme Spirit, the Almighty and Omniscient Soul of our souls; and realizing that his body and mind are the playground of the omnipotent Cosmic will, he should resign his individual will to the universal, and should be ever ready to work for others, to live for others, and to die for others. All his works, so long as he is in the society of people, should be a free offering to the world for the good of humanity; but at other times he should resort to secluded places and live alone, constantly applying his mind to the highest spiritual wisdom that can be obtained in the state of superconsciousness, through meditation on the oneness of the individual soul with God, the Universal Spirit.

A true Yogi must see the same Divinity dwelling in all living creatures. He should also love all human beings equally. He should have neither friend nor foe in the ordinary sense of those terms. A true Yogi is illumined by the light of Divine Wisdom, therefore nothing remains unknown to him. Time and space cannot limit the knowledge and wisdom of a true Yogi. Past and future events will appear to him like things happening before his eyes. For him the light of divine wisdom has dispelled the darkness of ignorance, which prevents one from realizing the true nature of the soul, and which makes one selfish, wicked, and sinful. All psychic and spiritual powers serve him as their real master. Whatever he says is sure to come to pass. He never utters a word in vain. If he says to a distressed or suffering person, "Be thou whole," instantly that person will become whole.

The powers of a true Yogi are unlimited, there is nothing in the world that he cannot do. Indeed, he alone has free access to the storehouse of infinite powers; but he never

draws therefrom any force merely to satisfy idle curiosity, or to gratify selfish motives, or to gain wealth and fame, or to get any return whatsoever. He does not seek worldly prosperity, and always remains unconcerned about the result of his works. Praise or censure does not disturb the peace of his mind. Angels or bright spirits and the spirits of ancestors rejoice in his company and adore him. A true Yogi is worshipped by all. Having neither home nor possessions of his own, he wanders from place to place, realizing that the canopy of heaven is the roof of his worldwide home. He is easily pleased by everybody irrespective of his caste, creed, or nationality, and with a loving heart he blesses those who rebuke or curse him. If his body be tortured or cut in pieces, he takes no revenge, but, on the contrary, prays for the welfare of his persecutor. Such is the character of a true Yogi.

From ancient times there have been many such true Yogis in India and other countries. The descriptions of their lives and deeds are furthermore as wonderful and as authentic as the life and acts of that illustrious Son of Man who preached in Galilee nearly two thousand years ago. The powers and works of this meek, gentle, and self-sacrificing Divine man, who is worshipped throughout Christendom as the ideal Incarnation of God and the Saviour of mankind, have proved that he was a perfect type of one who is called in India a true Yogi. Jesus the Christ has been recognized by his disciples and followers not only as an exceptionally unique character but as the only-begotten Son of God; and it is quite natural for those who know nothing about the lives and deeds of similar ideal characters of great Yogis and Incarnations of God who have flourished at different times both before and after the Christian era, to believe that no one ever reached such

spiritual heights or attained to such realization of oneness with the Heavenly Father as did Jesus of Nazareth.

The greater portion of the life of Jesus is absolutely unknown to us; and as He did not leave behind Him any systematic teaching regarding the method by which one may attain to that state of God-consciousness which He Himself reached, there is no way of finding out what He did or practiced during the eighteen years that elapsed before His appearance in public. It is, therefore, extremely difficult to form a clear conception of what path He adopted. But we can imagine that, being born with unusually developed spiritual inclinations, He must have devoted his life and time to such practices as led Him to the realization of absolute Truth and to the attainment of divine consciousness, which ultimately gave Him a place among the greatest spiritual leaders of the world as well as among the disinterested Saviours of mankind.

India is the only country where not only a complete system of practices is to be found, but also a perfect method, by following which well-qualified aspirants can attain to Christhood or to that spiritual unfoldment and divine enlightenment which made Jesus of Nazareth stand before the world as the ideal type of spiritual perfection. By studying the lives, the acts, and the most systematic and scientific teachings of the great Yogis of India, and by faithfully following their example and precepts, an earnest disciple can, through the Yoga practices given in the various branches of the Vedânta philosophy, hope some day to become as perfect as the Son of Man. This assurance must be a comfort and a consolation to the soul that is struggling for the attainment of spiritual perfection in this life. One peculiarity, however, of the teachings of the great Yogis of India is that the acquirement of spiritual

perfection is the goal for all, and that each individual soul is bound, sooner or later, to be perfect even as Christ was perfect. They claim that spiritual truths and spiritual laws are as universal as the truths and laws of the material world, and that the realization of these truths cannot be confined to any particular time, place, or personality. Consequently by studying the Science of Yoga anyone can easily understand the higher laws and principles, an application of which will explain the mysteries connected with the lives and deeds of saints, sages, or Incarnations of God, like Krishna, Buddha, or Christ.

A genuine seeker after Truth does not limit his study to one particular example, but looks for similar events in the lives of all the great ones, and does not draw any conclusion until he has discovered the universal law which governs them all. For instance, Jesus the Christ said, "I and my Father are one." Did He alone say it, or did many others who lived before and after Him and who knew nothing of His sayings, utter similar expressions? Krishna declared, "I am the Lord of the universe." Buddha said, "I am the Absolute Truth." A Mahometan Sufi says, "I am He"; while every true Yogi declares, "I am Brahman." So long as we do not understand the principle that underlies such sayings, they seem mysterious to us and we cannot grasp their real meaning; but when we have realized the true nature of the individual soul, and its relation to the universal Spirit, or God, or Father in Heaven, or the Absolute Truth, we have learned the principle and there is no further mystery about it. We are then sure that whosoever reaches this state of spiritual oneness or God-consciousness will express the same thought in a similar manner. Therefore if we wish to understand the character and miraculous deeds of Jesus of Nazareth, the surest way

open to us is the study of the Science of Yoga and the practice of its methods.

This Science of Yoga, as has already been stated, explains all mysteries, reveals the causes of all miracles, and describes the laws which govern them. It helps us to unravel the secrets of nature and to discover the origin of such phenomena as are called miraculous. All miracles like "walking on the sea," "feeding a multitude with a small quantity of food," "raising the dead," which we read of in the life of Jesus, are described by the Yogis as manifestations of the powers that are acquired through long practice of Yoga. These powers are not supernatural; on the contrary, they are in nature, are governed by natural though higher laws, and are therefore universal. When these laws are understood, that which is ordinarily called miraculous by ignorant people, appears to be the natural result of finer forces working on a higher plane. There is no such thing as the absolutely supernatural. If a person's conception of nature be very limited, that which exists beyond that limit will seem to him supernatural, while to another, whose idea of nature is broader, the same thing will appear perfectly natural; therefore that miracle, or that particular act which is classed as a miracle by a Christian, can be explained by a Yogi as the result of higher or finer forces of nature. Why? Because his conception of nature is much wider than that of an ordinary man. We must not forget that nature is infinite, and that there are circles within circles, grades beyond grades, planes after planes, arranged in infinite succession; and the desire of a Yogi is to learn all the laws which govern these various planes, and to study every manifestation of force, whether fine or gross. His mind is not satisfied with the knowledge of one particular plane of existence; his aim is to comprehend the whole of nature.

Those who have read the gospel of Buddha, by Paul Carus, will remember that, five hundred years before the birth of Jesus the Christ, Shâriputra, Buddha's illustrious disciple, walked on the surface of the water across a mighty river named Shrâvasti. A similar account of crossing a wide river by walking on the water, we find in the life of Padmapâda, the disciple of Sankarâchârya, the best exponent of the Vedânta philosophy, who lived about 600 A.D. Krishna, the Hindu Christ, whose other name is Lord of the Yogis, raised the dead nearly fourteen hundred years before the advent of Christ. The transfiguration of Krishna is likewise most beautifully described in the tenth and eleventh chapters of the "Song Celestial," and, like Christ, he also fed a vast multitude of people with a small quantity of food. There are other instances of similar powers shown by great Yogis who came later; and these accounts are in every way as historical and as authentic as those of Jesus the Christ. Thus we see that all the miracles performed by Jesus are to be found as well in the lives of Hindu Yogis, who lived both before and after Him.

So long as an event is isolated it appears supernatural and miraculous; but if we see the same thing happening elsewhere under similar conditions, it assumes the aspect of a natural occurrence governed by natural law, and then comes a proper solution of the mystery as well as the rational explanation of that which was called a miracle. It is in this that the Science of Yoga renders especial service to the world, for more than any science it helps to reveal the secrets of nature and to explain the causes of all miraculous deeds.

A true Yogi goes to the source of all power and of all forces, studies the laws behind them, and learns the method of controlling them. He knows that the various

forces of nature are but expressions of one universal, living, intelligent energy, which is called in Sanskrit "Prâna." He sees that all the forces of physical nature, like heat, gravitation, electricity, as also all mental forces such as mind, intellect, thought, are nothing but the manifestations of that one living self-existent force, "Prâna." This intelligent energy projects from its bosom innumerable suns, moons, stars, and planets into physical space. It has hurled this earth from the molten furnace of the sun, it has cooled it, bathed it in air and water, and clothed it with vegetable and animal life; it wings the atmosphere with clouds and spans the planes with rivers, it takes a fine minute substance and transforms it into something huge and gross; it moves the body, gives life and motion to every atom and molecule, and at the same time manifests itself as thought and intellect.

Why should it be impossible for one who has realized his oneness with this fountain-head of all power, who has learned the method of controlling all phenomena by comprehending the laws which govern them, and who has become the master of the world as was Jesus the Christ, to perform simple phenomena like walking on the sea, turning water into wine, or raising the dead? According to a true Yogi these acts of Jesus the Christ were only a few expressions of the Yoga powers which have been exercised over and over again by the Yogis in India. Thus we understand that Christ was one of these great Yogis born in a Semitic family.

Jesus was a great Yogi because He realized the transitory and ephemeral nature of the phenomenal world, and, discriminating the real from the unreal, renounced all desire for worldly pleasures and bodily comforts. Like a great Yogi He lived a life of seclusion, cutting off all

connections with earthly friends and relatives, and having neither home nor possessions of His own.

Jesus the Christ was a great Karma Yogi, because He never worked for results; He had neither desire for name nor ambition for fame or for earthly prosperity. His works were a free offering to the world. He labored for others, devoted His whole life to help others, and in the end died for others. Being unattached to the fruits of His actions, He worked incessantly for the good of His fellow-men, directing them to the path of righteousness and spiritual realization through unselfish works. He understood the law of action and reaction, which is the fundamental principle of Karma Yoga, and it was for this reason that He declared, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Jesus of Nazareth proved Himself to be a great Bhakti Yogi, a true lover of God, by His unswerving devotion and His whole-hearted love for the Heavenly Father. His unceasing prayers, incessant supplications, constant meditation, and unflinching self-resignation to the will of the Almighty made Him shine like a glorious morning-star in the horizon of love and devotion of a true Bhakti Yogi. Christ showed wonderful self-control and mastery over His mind throughout the trials and sufferings which were forced upon Him. His sorrow, agony, and self-surrender at the time of His death as well as before His crucifixion, are conclusive proofs that He was a human being with those divine qualities which adorn the soul of a true Bhakti Yogi. It is true that His soul labored for a while under the heavy burden of His trials and sufferings; it is also true that He felt that His pain was becoming wellnigh unbearable when He cried aloud three times, praying to the Lord, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."

But He found neither peace nor consolation until He could absolutely resign His will to that of the Father and could say from the bottom of His heart, "Thy will be done." Complete self-surrender and absolute self-resignation are the principal virtues of Bhakti Yoga, and as Christ possessed these to perfection up to the last moment of His life, He was a true Bhakti Yogi.

Like the great Râja Yogis in India, Jesus knew the secret of separating His soul from His physical shell, and He showed this at the time of His death, while His body was suffering from extreme pain, by saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." It is quite an unusual event to see one imploring forgiveness for his persecutors while dying on the cross, but from a Yogi's point of view it is both possible and natural. Râmakrishna, the greatest Yogi of the nineteenth century, whose life and sayings have been written by Max Müller, was once asked, "How could Jesus pray for His persecutors when He was in agony on the cross?" Râmakrishna answered by an illustration: "When the shell of an ordinary green cocoanut is pierced through, the nail enters the kernel of the nut too. But in the case of the dry nut the kernel becomes separate from the shell, and so when the shell is pierced, the kernel is not touched. Jesus was like the dry nut, i.e., His inner soul was separate from His physical shell, and consequently the sufferings of the body did not affect him." Therefore He could pray for the forgiveness of His persecutors even when His body was suffering; and all true Yogis are able to do the same. There have been many instances of Yogis whose bodies have been cut into pieces, but their souls never for a moment lost that peace and equanimity which enabled Jesus to forgive and bless His persecutors. By this Christ proved that, like other Yogis,

His soul was completely emancipated from the bondage of the body and of the feelings. Therefore Christ was a Yogi.

Through the path of devotion and love Jesus attained to the realization of the oneness of the individual soul with the Father or the Universal Spirit, which is the ideal of a Jnâna Yogi as well as the ultimate goal of all religions. A Jnâna Yogi says: "I am He"; "I am Brahman"; "I am the Absolute Truth"; "I am one with the Supreme Deity." By good works, by devotion, love, concentration, contemplation, long fasting, and prayer, Jesus the Christ realized that His soul was one with God, therefore He may be said to have attained the ideal of Jnâna Yoga.

Like Krishna, Buddha, and all other great Yogis of India, Jesus healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, made the lame walk, and read the secret thoughts of His disciples. He knew exactly what Judas and Peter were going to do; but there was nothing supernatural in any of His actions, there was nothing that cannot be done again over and over by a true Yogi, and there was nothing in His life that cannot be explained rationally by the Science of Yoga and the Philosophy of Vedânta. Without the help of this science and this philosophy Jesus the Christ cannot be fully understood and appreciated. By studying His character, on the other hand, in the light of the Vedânta Philosophy we shall be able not only to understand Him better, but to have a larger appreciation of His true glory.

Material science now scoffs at His miracles, but they are corroborated by the Science of Yoga and confirmed by the deeds of the great Yogis of India. No devout Christian need for a moment fear that physical science can ever undermine the work of Jesus so long as the Science of Yoga is there to sustain all that He did. Let him study the

character of Jesus through the Philosophy of Vedânta and I am sure that he will understand Him better and be a truer Christian, a more genuine disciple of the Son of Man than ever before. Let him follow the teachings of Yoga and he will some day become perfect like Christ.

It is through the teachings of Vedânta that the Hindus have learned how to glorify the character of Jesus; so also it is through Vedânta that a Christian will learn to adore the great Yogis like Krishna, Buddha, Râmakrishna, and others. It is through Vedânta that a Christian will be able to see how Divinity dwells in all animate and inanimate objects, and thus comprehending the true relation of the individual soul to the Supreme Spirit,

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'Swami Abhedânanda- Forgotten Hindu Mystic'

Issue Twenty Four

Compiled by Marilyn Hughes

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Author, Marilyn Hughes, Photo by Harvey Kushner

The twenty fourth issue of the 'The Out-of-Body Travel Foundation Journal' continues a series of issues covering forgotten mystics from different religious traditions, this issue following Swami Abhedananda - Forgotten Hindu Mystic.

This issue's 'Question and Answer' section contains several inquiries from Henokh Howard of Indonesia about visions of Jesus Christ, the true station of Jesus Christ and discerning your soul-mate from dreams.

And in 'Different Voices' we allow Swami Abhedananda to speak for himself with three articles, 'What is Yoga,' 'Science of Breathing,' and 'Was Christ a Yogi?'

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