

# THE YOGA ESSENTIALS

WILLIAM J. FLAGG



# YOGA

OR THE ART OF  
TRANSFORMATION

# **Yoga Or Transformation**

## ***A Comparative Statement Of The Various Religious Dogmas Concerning The Soul And Its Destiny, And Of Akkadian, Hindu, Taoist, Egyptian, Hebrew, Greek, Christian, Mohammedan, Japanese And Other Magic***

**William J. Flagg**

" This has often come upon me through repeating my own name to myself silently, till, all at once, as it were, out of the intensity of the consciousness of individuality, the individuality itself seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being, and this not a confused state, but the clearest of the clearest, the surest of the surest, utterly beyond words, where death was almost a laughable impossibility, the loss of personality (if so it were) seeming no extinction, but the only true life." -Tennyson

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## YOGA OR TRANSFORMATION

### PREFACE

I HAVE written this book to help myself think and now publish it to help others do so. It is, at its least, a call to thought and an aid to thinkers. With the materials I have amassed, and now put at their disposal, it would be strange if other students did not go much further than I have. To such I leave many a problem arising on the face of those materials that I have not been able to solve, and many others I have not even attempted to assail. Most of the conclusions reached have followed after the putting on paper of the facts which are their grounds, and the most important theory I have put forward is quite opposed to my former preconceptions, quite different from anything I had an idea of in the beginning.

More than a half century ago there came to my knowledge a series of strange occurrences just like those which a few years afterwards disturbed the quiet of the village of Hydesville, and which are at this time disturbing the quiet of scientific people the world over. From that time to this I have been an observer of such things and all other phenomena of occult origin. Twenty-five years ago, without having been in the meanwhile able to make anything out of them, I entered on a rather thorough course of reading in mystical literature, ancient and modern, and have continued it ever since. Fifteen years ago, baffled as much as ever, I undertook to write out some results of my

observation and study, to see how they looked on paper. But it was only scant three years ago that I saw my way clear to valuable results, and later still that I decided to publish a book about them.

If the space devoted to the various religious dogmas concerning the nature and destiny of the soul should seem too large in view of the unsatisfactory outcome, it should be considered that religion having appropriated and enveloped magic — which is the real subject of the book — it had to be dug into and through in order to get at what it hid as overlying rubbish hides a treasure; and such readers as are disposed to patiently assist at the excavation will not, I fancy, waste their time; but those who think otherwise can skip two chapters (elsewhere indicated) without serious breach in the thread of the main argument. In saying "the unsatisfactory outcome", I do not mean that the soul is not worth seeking for, but only that it is not worth while to seek for it in religion — nor, in fact, anywhere else — that, our knowing apparatus being what it is, one who shall have undertaken the quest, searching for the Egyptian soul, in pyramids and caves where mummies lie, in regions of the air where hawks fly, and under the earth where Osiris holds his feasts — for the Greek soul in the stars — for the Semite soul in tombs and graves and the prison of Allat -for the Hindu soul in the land of the fathers and land of the gods, through its series of re-births and in the bosom of Brahman — for the Mohammedan soul in Alla's hell and his prophet's paradise -for the soul of the modern spiritualist in a spiritual body and world -for souls undergoing metempsychosis, in bodies of reptiles and beasts — for the Christian soul in the raised-up and restored cadaver — will in the end be apt to remain contentedly where of old the Taoist sage, and in modern times the German one have told him he must perforce abide; namely, on the hither side of the unknowable. But if



he do thorough work, in searching through religion he will have come upon magic, in searching for the secret of magic he will have found transformation, and in transformation discovered evolution.

## **CHAPTER I - MODERN SPIRITUALISM ON THE SOUL**

An enquiry such as this book attempts, into the nature and destiny of the soul of man, must needs begin with at least a brief review of the theories respecting it which have been offered by the various great religions of the world, of which the oldest of all, so old that it may truly be called the mother of the others, is yet so new also that we now most commonly know it by the name of "modern spiritualism".

Belief in a spiritual world contemporaneous with this natural one, and a duplicate or counterpart of it, in which, as a spirit, endowed with a body which is in like manner a duplicate or counterpart of his natural one, man goes after death, to live eternally, is as old as the world and as wide. It has been held by all primitive peoples, as it is by all savages now, whether having much other religion, or little, or none, and despite its vagueness has lived and gone along with all forms of faith, whether accepted as a dogma or not, aiding to sustain them, furnishing soil for their growth, so far as they were growths, and foundation for them to rest on, so far as they were built-up structures. It is the earliest in origin, widest in extent, most persistent in continuance, and really the best proved of all the theories ever entertained concerning the state of man after death, entertained by the learned as well as the ignorant, and whatever else the priests may have exoterically taught, or esoterically kept to themselves, has mingled with and adulterated all faiths. As believed in by primitive peoples of old and savages of modern times, by the disciples of



Emanuel Swedenborg, and by all the modern spiritualists except the Kardec sect, the spiritual world is entered into immediately after death, and is man's final and eternal home, but when adopted into systematically constructed religions it has been given a subordinate place and a limited duration. Most of these consider man as having three parts, namely, a natural body that is material and perishable, a soul that is immaterial and imperishable and a shade, or form of thin matter, such as is the Karma Rupa of the Hindus, the spiritual body of the Swedenborgians and Spiritualists, the shades of the Greeks and the ghosts of all times; concerning the disposition made of these it will appear that well invented religions invest with eternal duration the soul, it alone, and never a body of any kind, whether of spirit or matter.

### *Probable Origin of the Belief in a Spiritual World*

The facts upon which the belief in question has arisen are as real as any in nature. Nothing has been better verified by experience or more insisted on in history than the countless phenomena commonly called supernatural for which no law is known even by the wisest, and which, for that reason, modern science and philosophy have found it convenient to persistently ignore and deny, in hopes, as it were, of thereby forcing them out of belief and making them as occult as their origin and meaning have ever been. But notwithstanding scientific and philosophic simulated scorn and real ignorance, the facts are good material for the truth-seeker, and their interpretation by the common mind is as plausible, respectable and rational as could be expected, all things considered. Apparitions, sometimes of the living, sometimes of the dead, have always abundantly been seen, and never were more common than they are now. Where they were likenesses of persons dead it was easy to suppose that by the primitive men they should be

taken to be the very originals they represented and as surviving after death, and the belief that they were so it is easy to suppose was the nucleus on which the belief in spirit immortality formed itself later. It is the mere spectre we are now considering, which, though a perfect likeness in face, form and movement of a living or dead person, comes without apparent purpose, and shows no meaning in expression or gesture, moving noiselessly, noticing no one, perceivable by no sense but the sight, and when accosted usually vanishing; letting stand aside for the present those others which come with an apparent purpose, as when, for instance, one is dressed in grave clothes, to signify death, or in wet ones to signify drowning, or has other accessories that tell a story, and with these others which, as if to prove themselves not merely phantasms but real presences, make themselves heard, and sometimes felt. The mere spectre seems to be without life or intelligence, very much as classic literature describes the mere shade (to which its soul had been after death temporarily united) when it was finally abandoned to endure an eternity of non-existence in Hades. In fact, it comes closely down to the natural, and closely down to the artificial too, so much so that M. D'Assier, a comtist and materialist, in his late book on "Posthumous Humanity", insists that it is not only natural but material as well, while of late other materialists have raised ghosts by artificial means, which they claim to be as good as any, and fondly think in doing so they have exploded supernaturalism forever. That in the minds of primitive men even such stupid shadows could induce a belief in a world of spirits is not hard to think; it would be hard to think otherwise. To such the conclusion must have been irresistible that forms so clearly shown to the sight must be discernible by the other senses also, and have life, thought and feeling like the once living, thinking and feeling men they stood for; that beings thus supposed, who came and went, and came and went again, must come from

and go to a somewhere of which they were habitual residents, and which somewhere might be in the skies that daily and hourly exhibited to those primitive minds even more wonderful things, or in the earth, also full of wonders, now heaving and shuddering in earthquakes and now spouting fire in volcanoes, in any case a region out of reach of man's powers of exploration. Such a belief, once induced, no matter how arising — whether in the way supposed or some other does not affect the argument — this most important consequence must have followed: thenceforth all messages to men from the occult powers, supposing such to be, and to send messages, must needs conform to it or go unheeded ; especially must conform to it such as related to the loved and mourned for dead. And just as pent-up waters escaping from the dam that held them must follow the course of the first little rill that finds a way over its crest, deepening and widening its channel as they flow, so did ghost and ghost-land belief, however slender its beginning, in time make place for itself in human belief. This but states a principle governing all teaching, namely, that it must be fitted to the receptivity of those who are to be taught. Respect must be had to their beliefs and unbeliefs, knowledge and ignorance, their religion, morality, superstitions and prejudices, only disturbing these so far as is necessary to convey the intended instruction. Just as molten metal has to submit to whatever limitations the mould it is poured into imposes, revelations, to gain reception have to adapt themselves to receptivities. It is the same even with discoveries men make in material nature provable to the senses; if they come out of time they have to bide their time for acceptance into scientific belief. In view of this Moses was right when he gave the Jews a cosmogony which they could, in their intellectual condition, understand, and a morality not too good for them to live up to, although as priest of Egypt he must have been learned

in all that was taught to Solon and Pythagoras, and known a morality as high and pure as theirs.

Father Abraham, always ready to receive his god Jehovah, certainly would never have allowed himself to be dictated to by Osiris or Bel. The apparition in the conventional form of Bacchus which gave the warning that saved Alexander's army from being destroyed in a night would have failed of its mission had it personated one of the gods of the enemy. So, too, when the city of Aphutus, being besieged by King Lysander, was saved by a dream sent to him by Jupiter Ammon, as he believed, in obedience to which he raised the siege and rapidly retreated, the King heeded the warning because it came from a deity he was acquainted with. Especially is it requisite that the accepted cosmogony of the times be humored. The scriptures of the Jews humored theirs, a poor one it is true, but the only one they had. To them the earth remained fixed and the heavens moved round it, and Jehovah let them have it so, although he must have known better, since the Book of Job, truly rendered, says he himself "hung the earth in its sockets". Had the fair spirit of the Spring of Lourdes made herself apparent to the little girl with sore eyes as her grandmother, the chapel that has since arisen there, begemmed with gifts from thousands of pilgrims whom the waters have healed, would not be seen to-day, but in its stead an iron fence and a policeman, such as the priests did, in fact, cause to be placed there, from fear that anything miraculous would in modern France only bring ridicule upon them, until its good-for-naught of an Emperor Napoleon III by decree made them let the thing go on. The Spirit, therefore, wisely gave as her name, when under direction of her priest the child asked for it, as "the Immaculate Conception", a droll phrase to make a name of, to be sure, but a popular catchword with good Catholics just then when the Church had woke up to the importance of the question how the

maternal grandmother of Jesus came by her baby. The beautiful, if improper, Aspasia, threatened with serious disfigurement by a growth upon her face, prayed to Venus to heal it, in response to which the goddess came in person and prescribed an unction to be made by pulverizing a dried rose from a chaplet then hanging on her image in the temple, which being done not only cured, but made her more beautiful than ever. But whether a goddess Venus ever ruled in earth or heaven remained as doubtful afterward as before. In fact, if we view these two last-named spirits as objective realities, it is conceivable that the ancient Goddess of Love and the modern Lady of the Spring were one and the same being. The Hindus make their god Siva say, pray to whatever god you please, I will answer your prayer, which is recognizing diversity of receptivities and acknowledging the necessity of recognizing them, and at the same time proving Great Siva to be high above jealousy and an example to some other gods we wit of.

And so the idea of a world of spirits peopled by the dead having once got hold on the minds of men, after that the entire body of mystical revelation must necessarily ratify and confirm it.

We have been considering the effect of the mere spectre on the simple minds of primitive men in causing them to believe in a world of spirits, a result which might not have happened to instructed minds, but when those occult powers which manifest an interest in human affairs by messages of instruction, warning and guidance, adapting their modes of communication to that primitive belief, and, so to say, taking advantage of it, spoke by the mouths of the spectres, put meaning into their eyes and expression into their actions, and through them predicted truly the future, prescribed medicines that cured, and gave comfort to the

bereaved, not only the simple, but the instructed must be excused if they believed. Instances to illustrate this are common today. Intelligent men who, like the body of educated people of European race during the last two centuries, have ignored all such manifestations of the occult, not deigning to honor them so far as to disbelieve them, when at length confronted with the facts in a way that compels belief are apt to accept not only the facts themselves, but the interpretation which believers in them had commonly put upon them, namely, that they prove a spiritual immortality. And such of them as have rejected religion on the ground that its origin was in the supernatural only and the supernatural impossible, as soon as they come to believe in the supernatural at all, will be apt to run and join the nearest church. Three college-bred men, all of them confirmed skeptics, all near sixty years of age, and, as veteran lawyers, experienced in examining proofs, one a brilliant orator and ex-governor, one a brilliant editor, an author and ex-judge, and the other a brilliant conversationalist, attended together, some twelve years ago, a series of séances held by Mrs. Hollis-Billing which had the effect to convince them that the supernatural was possible. Thus far one identical series of observed facts brought three men to one and the same conclusion. And what next? One, who had been bred in the Catholic Church, returned again to her bosom, and ten years later died happy in her communion and faith; one, whose wife happened to be an old-school Presbyterian, incontinently went and entered into that communion, became one of its shining lights, and died in it; while the other relapsed into his original skepticism and died an unbeliever.

## **CHAPTER II - HINDU SOULS**

In its essential nature Hinduism is beyond question the best, greatest and most admirable religious and philosophical system in the world. Its beginning was too early for its age to be computed, and, unlike all the other great religions of antiquity, it has endured down to the present time, and is in full life to-day. Its votaries, because largely restrained by its beneficent teachings from engaging in wars, whose attendants are forever pestilence and famine, and of the doctrine, inherited from still more early ancestor worship, that many sons are advantageous to the dead father of them, have multiplied by hundreds of millions on the soil of India while its offshoot, Buddhism, has spread over and now covers with other hundreds of millions, the larger and more enlightened parts of Asia, all of them holding steadfast to the faith of their fathers, despite the persuasions of Christian missionaries, however earnest or well backed by ships of war. And there can be no better proof that Hinduism is in full life to-day than the fact that pious Hindus are actually turning the tables on us, by sending hither learned and eloquent teachers to convert their would-be converters, teachers whom many of our learned men listen to with attention and profit, because they have indeed something to tell.

Hinduism rests on a body of scriptures of varying degrees of authority. Of these the Upanishads, a part of the Vedas, are firmly believed to be divine revelations, to which even the highest philosophy must conform, and the best work done in the less authoritative writings of saints and sages has been in efforts to reconcile them with reason and with each other. Of the Upanishads Max Müller in his *Vedanta Philosophy*, p. 23, says : "The impression they leave on the mind is that they are sudden intuitions or inspirations, which sprang up here and there and were collected afterwards, and yet there is system in all these dreams, there is background to all these visions. There is even an



abundance of technical terms used by different speakers so exactly in the same sense that one feels certain that behind all these flashes of religious and philosophical thought there is a distant past, a dark background of which we shall never know the beginning". The same good authority tells us that etymologically the word Upanishad means "sitting near a person", which cannot but remind us that the French word *séance* has been adopted to designate attendance at a modern spiritualistic circle and must favor the belief that these Hindu scriptures were revelations made to circles of ancestor worshippers of old, by automatic writing, trance speaking, etc., just as mediumistic "communications" are made to us now. It is also worthy of note, that like most such communications, the Upanishads are quite undevotional. Says Müller, page 16 of the same work: "These Upanishads are philosophical treatises, and their fundamental principle might seem with us to be subversive of all religion. In these Upanishads the whole ritual and sacrificial system of the Veda is not only ignored, but directly rejected as useless, nay, mischievous. The ancient gods of the Veda are no longer recognized. And yet these Upanishads are looked upon as perfectly orthodox, nay, as the highest consummation of the Brahmanic religion". On page 113 we read that most of Buddha's doctrines were really those of the Upanishads. There is no esoteric aspect to Hinduism. Excepting the lowest caste, who would hardly care for or be able to appropriate its higher teaching, all are free to draw from the abundant sources of its wisdom supplied by the sacred writings or the oral instructions of living sages, as much as they are mentally and morally fit to receive, and as fast as they become so fit. Symbols, idols and even the gods above are merely aids to thought and contemplation, and devotional worship of them but an introductory discipline for preparing the worshipper to do without them. The more a Hindu knows of his religion the less devout he is; the

perfected Yogi does not pray at all, he only meditates on what he wants and it comes to him. But it is a graded religion, wherein each grade of intelligence can find its fitting temple there to remain, content with the comfort it affords him, or going up higher when worship there has developed him beyond its power to satisfy him. A Hindu may attend on temple gods perhaps for ten years, and then having by that means rendered himself so spiritual as not to need them, abandon them forever. " This was brought about, " says Müller, page 16, " by the recognition of a very simple fact which nearly all other religions seem to have ignored. It was recognized in India from very early times that the religion of a man cannot be and ought not to be the same as that of a child ; and again that the religious ideas of an old man must differ from those of an active man of the world". From such a system toleration necessarily flowed. Hinduism punishes no man for his religious faith.

In the Bhagavadgita the Supreme Spirit says as generously as Siva, lately quoted, "even those who worship idols, worship me".

## *God*

Consistent with the foregoing is the instituting of two Brahmans, the one, an impersonal principle, exalted by negation of attributes quite out of sight, an It and not a He ; the other, masculine and personal, invested with all divine qualities and actively engaged in ruling the world. The higher god is found in only well elaborated religions; the lower is found in every religion. Zeus, the Egyptian Osiris, the Assyrian Bel, the Phoenician Bacchus and the Jewish Jehovah were of these latter.

## *The Cosmos*

The impersonal Brahman creates the Universe by breathing it out, and again destroys it by breathing it in, both the creation and destruction being periodical. This may be called the real Universe, which is Brahman itself, and not merely pervaded by it. The Universe, as man knows it, is the creature of man's avidya, Nescience, Ignorance; in fact, his knowledge of things consist in his ignorance of them, each one's individual ignorance being helped by the erroneous thought of the race collectively, amounting to something like a cosmic force. Which suggests Berkeley's statement that each one of us perceives as really existing what does not exist, not merely by force of his own thinking so, but by the aid also of the concentrated thought of all mankind.

### *The Origin of Man*

Every religion has a different account to give of the reasons which moved its creative god to make man, as well as of the way in which he did it. As to the reason that prevailed with the Hindu creator, " we are told that Pragapate (Visva) stood alone in the beginning, that he had no happiness when alone, and that meditating on himself he created many creatures. He looked on them and saw they were like stone, without understanding, and standing about like lifeless posts. He had no happiness, and thought that he would enter into them that they might awake". Thus it may be said that man was made that God might be happy. As to the way it was done, in the Upanishad treating of it various details are given, which are, however, included in the following general statement, same page: "O Saint, this body is without intelligence, like a cart. By whom has this body been made intelligent, and who is the driver of it? Then Pragapate answers that it is He who is standing above, passionless amid the objects of the world, endless, imperishable, unborn and independent; that it is Brahman

that made this body intelligent, and is the driver of it". It is the higher Brahman which does this, of which man is, so to speak, the manifoldness.

### *Nature of the Soul*

According to Hindu belief, the soul is "neither our body nor our minds, not even our thoughts, of which most philosophers are so proud, but all of these are conditions merely to which it has to submit, as fetters by which it is chained, nay, as clouds by which it is darkened, so as to lose the sense of its substantial oneness with God".

Soul is Brahman and Brahman is soul. Soul has but three qualities — it is, it perceives and it enjoys. But the word "Atman", commonly translated soul, is better rendered as Self, whether regarded in its divine or human aspect, by knowing which we are more helped to a comprehension of what in our terminology must still be called, for want of a better phrase, the union of the soul with God, than we could be by a whole chapter of explanation. The importance of this distinction is made to appear by the following passages from the Upanishads :

"In the beginning there was Self" ; "He, therefore, who knows the Self, after having become quiet, subdued, satisfied, patient and collected, sees self in Self, sees all as Self" ; "The Self, smaller than small, greater than great, is hidden in the heart of the creature" ; " Verily a husband is not dear that you may love the husband, but that you may love the Self, therefore the husband is dear".

### *Earthly Life an Evil*

Like all civilized peoples, except our three Jewish sects of Jews, Christians and Mohammedans, the Hindus believe

undoubtedly that the life of man on earth consists of a succession of lives of one soul in many bodies, lives which are not blessings but curses, and will continue to succeed each other in a vicious round that must be unending while the world lasts, unless the sufferer, by a resolute renunciation of the will to live, and yoga practice soon to be described, can slip out of it and by a short path get into the bosom of Brahman.

### ***The Land of the Fathers***

As a place of demure for the Hindu soul between reincarnations a portion of the old spiritual world of Vedic hymns is appropriated. It is called "the land of the fathers", and is reached by "the pathway of the fathers", which means a life of good works, charitable or devotional. There it is that clothed in the "subtle bodies" they wore under their fleshly ones souls enjoy refuge from the ills of earth life until they have exhausted the stock of acquired merit that gave them admission, after which they must return to earth, enter new bodies and undergo renewed tribulation. It is while tarrying in this paradise that they receive the devotional offerings of their surviving descendants, in the form of sacrifices and feasts, and which they repay with guardian counsel and care.

The land of the fathers corresponds to the spiritual world of Swedenborg and modern spiritualism, as the "subtle body" temporarily worn as above does to the spiritual body in which, according to these the unreturning soul exists eternally, and as it is presumable it was believed to do by the primitive Hindus while yet ancestor worship was their only religion.

### ***The Land of the Gods***

This is a higher paradise than the other, which mere good works will not win, appropriated to ascetics who have gone so far on the way to final deliverance from all life as to have become unfitted for earthly life. In the land of the gods, the subtle body is still worn. This is not cast aside until final enfranchisement from all embodiment is obtained, which can be done without return to earth, for it seems yoga can be practiced in the land of the gods as well as here below.

### *Karma*

The doctrine of Karma, or the subjection of the soul in a given earth life to conditions having a punitive, disciplinary and compensatory relation to its conditions and actions in a former one is something superadded to the doctrine of re-incarnation and not necessarily connected with it. Hindu teachers present it as resulting by the automatic working of the law of cause and effect, whereby, without calling in the aid of a presiding deity, sin committed in one life necessarily causes a corresponding punishment in another, error in one brings about its own correction in another, and hardship in one induces compensating advantage in another. As Plotinus states the same principle in the *Enneads*, ii. 474: "The divine law is inevitable and has the power to carry its judgment into effect". But by divine law he means, as he writes in the *Enneads*, ii. 291, the law of nature. No acknowledged facts prove this Karma doctrine to be true. It is usually defended by appeal to some law of compensation by which human conditions which are so unequal, when viewed within the range of a single life, are intended to be averaged up, so that conditions of wealth and poverty, health and sickness, grandeur and abasement shall be equalized, and the dealings of God with man justified. But the doctrine is defective and inconsistent with itself; to minds of the common sort this gloss put upon it to make it presentable can hardly bring conviction. It is easier

to see in it a convenient and most effective priestly device for keeping the vulgar in order, and to understand how, that being so, it was set up as a religious dogma, than to find for it any scientific basis.

### *Yoga in Hinduism*

Like our own word religion, taken in its original sense, yoga means junction, but to the Hindu believer it means more than to any other, signifying nothing less than this, that having always been Brahman, a man, by means of certain practices, comes to know it — that's all. For a soul to become God is more than is compassed by the word in its simple sense, but it is less than a Hindu means when he pronounces it. For it to be absorbed in God is still less. For a soul, by works of grace or other means, to raise itself to the level of God, and be united to Him in whatever way conceivable, is still less. Yoga makes the soul to know that from eternity unto eternity it is God, that, as Sankara states it, "it has become God by being God". The process by which one attains to the knowledge that makes him consciously Brahman will be given at length later on. For the present, it is enough to say that it consists in renouncing the will to live, and all earthly allurements and interests, and in solitude and quietude holding the mind to meditations such as will best concentrate it, and thereby reduce the flow of thought to the least possible point, so that, in the language of a Hindu sage, the man "is as it were delivered from his mind". Yoga may be practiced either with or without devotion. The manuals of Yoga are mostly made up from the Upanishads, which are philosophical and magical, rather than religious works. The priest is not called in nor the temple resorted to. Alone in the forest, the seeker after enfranchisement goes through mental and physical exercises that have their beginning and end within his own body and mind. Postures are carefully taken, but kneeling



is not one of them. The eyes are turned in this direction and that, but not to heaven, not higher than the forehead or the top of the brain. Word formulas are repeated, but they are not prayers. In his early religious life, perhaps, the recluse has concentrated his mind on God Siva in the sky or his image in the temple, but now he directs it to this and that part of his own body, or on some one point of fact or thought or thing, or on simple vacuity, the best of all.

The doctrine is that Yoga operates the perfecting of the body, and such perfecting Plotinus no doubt had in mind when, in the *Enneads*, ii. 298, he wrote: "If each body were as perfect as the Universe is, it would be completely sufficient unto itself. It would have no danger to fear, and the soul which is present in it, instead of being present there, could communicate life to it without quitting the intelligible world".

And being thus an affair of the body, in bodily life alone, either physical or spiritual, must yoga work be done. But the striving and waiting that is to lead the soul out of the darkness that hides it from itself into the light that reveals its eternal godship may not accomplish its end in one life, nor perhaps in more than one. Time is required for all the operations of nature, and yoga is a natural operation. As it goes on certain miraculous powers are developed, but the true yogi seldom exerts them. To him they are like flowers by the wayside to one who hastens on a long journey. They tell him the end is near, but the gathering of them would hinder him in reaching it. The enfranchisement, when at last it is gained, finds the soul still bound to a body, and then there is a being "whose feet", in the words of Plotinus, "touch the earth while his head lifts itself above the sky", and this consciously.

Of such beings wonderful stories are told and believed in India, for they are there held to be more than demi-gods. They determine the duration of their own lives as men, and sometimes indefinitely extend them. Sometimes they largely influence the affairs of men, sometimes they bodily vanish and sometimes drop the body in death, as unenfranchised souls do. And though thus becoming completely rid of the flesh, some have, after long lapses of time, voluntarily and consciously re-embodied themselves and returned as messiahs to endure humanity for the good of humanity.

The points of difference between the great sect of Buddhism, with its 400 millions of followers and its parent Hinduism, though in many respects they are important, are still not so for the purposes of this our enquiry, but the following statement of a Buddhist of the Ceylon school, found in the "Buddhist Catechism" of Subhadra Bikshu, S. 150, is well worth quoting:

Question : " What is the main difference between the doctrine of Buddha and other religions ?"

Answer: "Buddhism teaches the highest kindness and wisdom without a personal God; the highest understanding without revelation; a moral order of the world and just compensation which are of necessity consummated on the principle of the laws of nature and of our own being; a continuity of individuality without an immortal soul ; an eternal beatitude without a local heaven ; a possibility of redemption without a vicarious redeemer; a salvation at which each one is his own savior, and which can be attained by one's own strength, and already gained in this life and upon this earth without prayer, sacrifice, penance, and outward rites, without consecrated priests, without the

mediation of saints, and without the action of divine grace " — namely, by the practice of Yoga.

### **CHAPTER III - EGYPTIAN SOULS**

The Egyptian religion is a dead one, and considering how many thousand years it prevailed it is not strange that accounts given of it should vary and conflict, even those afforded by its own records and monuments. In a book of uncertain age and origin, but for which great antiquity and authority is claimed, entitled "The Virgin of the World" by "Hermes Trismegistus", we read that God formed out of a certain something to which the name of "self-consciousness" is given, "myriads of souls" and "traced the limits of their sojourn on the heights of nature, so that they might turn the wheel according to the laws of order and of their wise discretion, for the joy of their father", and commanded them thus: "Quit not the place assigned to you by my will. The abode which awaits you is Heaven, with its galaxy of stars and its thrones of virtue. If you attempt any transgression against my decree, I swear by my sacred breath, by that elixir of which I formed you, and by my creative hands, that I will speedily forge for you chains and cast you into punishment". And then he formed living beings of human shape (living and procreating, but without souls). Then he gave the rest of his stuff to the loftiest souls, inhabiting the region of the gods in the neighborhood of the stars, being those just named, saying: "Work, my children, offspring of my nature, take the residue of my task, and let each one of you make beings in his image. I will give you the models".

The souls thus commanded set to work and created the different races of animals below the degree of man; and thereupon became proud of their skill, and in their pride

disregarded the command to remain where they were placed and "moved about ceaselessly"; for which offense God punished them by imprisoning them in human organisms, a proceeding so much against their wills, we are told, that when they learned their sentence "they were seized with horror". Some sighed and lamented, as when some wild, free animal is suddenly enchained; some hissed like serpents, or gave vent to piercing cries. "Must we quit", they exclaimed, "these vast effulgent spaces, this sacred sphere, all these splendors of the Emyrean and of the Happy Republic of the gods, to be precipitated into those vile and miserable abodes?" Thus Egyptian wisdom made the fall of man to occur before he was born, and sinning souls to come to their punishment at birth instead of going to it at death.

Many Christian writers give out that the Egyptians believed in a resurrection of the body, arguing that otherwise they would not have built such costly tombs nor so carefully embalmed corpses to be held in them. For want of other reason, especially for the embalmment, it is insisted that it must have been believed that the mummies were to arise and again receive their souls. But there is nothing in Egyptian learning to prove this; on the contrary, we find there three other distinct reasons for embalming, either of which is good and sufficient to exclude the need of the supposition of any resurrection, if not to show the necessity of the practice itself.

The first reason was that it was to save the elements, held to be gods, from pollution. The book just quoted from tells us that when mankind began to die and dead bodies to abound, the four elements appeared before God the Creator, and each in turn protested against being made the receptacle of corpses. Earth objected to burial, fire to cremation, water to having its purity defiled by decaying

matter, and air to being tainted by effluvia from the unburied. In consequence of these embarrassing appeals Osiris and Isis were sent to earth, who taught men the art of mummifying. (So says this book, but Maspero, as we shall see, makes the instruction come from the god Anubis, master of sepulture).

Here was a most proper sanitary measure veiled by fable. The second reason was that the preserved corpses, like the Buddhist and Christian relics, were supposed to be effective in invoking the soul that had left it. The third, probably an afterthought, was that a soul thus at call must be excused from attendance before the high court of the dead, and from undergoing punishment decreed by it while the mummy lasted. A fourth and less well-considered reason was that unless the soul be held to attendance on the body it would be liable to enter into those of beasts and half-decayed astral "shells".

Professor Rawlinson, in his "Religions of the Ancient World", asserts that embalmment was for the purpose of keeping the body in good order to receive back its soul again in a subsequent re-incarnation, of which there was to be a long series ending at last in re-absorption in the supreme being. But he cannot be right. The Egyptians had too much brains to suppose a body without any in its cranium could serve as living receptacle of a returning soul, which could always find new-born babes to enter into without needing to rob the tomb. Again, that industrious Egyptologist, Gerald Massey, declares that the mummy once swaddled and confined never walked again; and Herodotus, who in the days of embalmment went to Egypt, studied the process, and learned of the beliefs then and there prevailing, says simply that the soul of the departed returned to earth and entered the body of a man. But there is yet another supposition.

The contradictions in the accounts we have of the religious beliefs of Egypt are no doubt mostly due to the enormous length of her history, though in the light of recent discoveries many accounts must be now wholly discredited. Then again, she had a migratory capital, each movement of which from the delta of the Nile upward towards its cataracts involved a change of gods and a modification of the worship of them. In the confusion thus arising the late work of M. Maspero on "The Ancient History of Oriental Peoples", and which gives the latest news from the explorations, brings welcome light, and by aid of it, in connection with what was before known, the natural history of the Egyptian soul may be clearly enough traced for present purposes. We now at last find the true rationale of the mummy and its pyramid. The key to their mystery and to Egypt's whole religious system is seen to be a dogma, originating in very early and savage times, which, though so arising, like others of equally low origin, has by virtue of that strange principle prevailing in all religions which makes a dogma seem true in proportion as the time is long, which removes its grounds and sanctions from reach of scrutiny, persisted through all stages of subsequent enlightenment, making even that enlightenment subservient to it, while in return rendering it of small avail for good. The dogma in question made the immortality of the soul depend on the preservation of the body, quite the opposite of the Christian fundamental belief that the soul confers immortality on the body, or at least will do so when the world comes to an end. Long before mummies were embalmed or pyramids built, the inhabitants of the Nile Delta in some way adopted this notion, first proclaimed, may be, by some naked worker of magic spells, the equal in wisdom of our red-skinned medicine-men, or a black-skinned mumbo-jumbo man, and fortuitously taking root in the minds of a tribe of other

naked people even more ignorant than he, afterwards, as centuries rolled on, to be consecrated by the developed intelligence of a civilized and great nation as infallible truth.

As a result the Egyptians very early selected for the interment of their dead rocky or sandy, rather than low and moist soils, because in dry ground bodies would keep longer and souls survive longer; which custom continued even after the god Anubis, master of sepulture, came and taught men the art of embalming as a better method of ensuring eternal life. But before the coming of the undertaker god, and even after considerable progress had been made in civilization, no better home for the soul (or what stood for it) was provided than the grave in dry sands or tomb among the rocks, where it had to lie with its body and live with it as best it could. In the more developed psychology of Egyptian sages the man was composed of a material body, a double of it in thin ghostly stuff, and a soul so far incorporeal that it could only manifest itself by taking the form of a hawk, in which to come and go and visit its body in its dire abode, though without ever entering either it or its double, either in life or death. But in the beginning this, the true soul, played no part. The survivor at death was the mere double. This was supposed, as it has everywhere been by those who have conceived it, including Swedenborg and modern spiritualists also, to be a duplicate of its late incasement, like it needing food, drink and raiment, so that there was danger notwithstanding its quasi immortality and the fact that its man had already died once, the poor thing in its gloomy hole would die of starvation, a fear confirmed by the common belief that famishing ghosts did actually come forth in the night season to prowl and plunder and even, as vampires, suck the blood of those who slept. It was to prevent this night walking that the custom arose (of awful



consequence to the human race) of burying with the dead at the first interment, and from time to time afterwards depositing within their reach supplies of food and drink and other comforts, which served not only to purchase exemption from such depredations, but secured to the givers the good will and friendly offices of the doubles, whatever that might count for. Thus the universal and long consecrated custom of feeding the dead is seen to have originated in fear, howbeit, since it was their surviving relatives on whom the duty devolved, it was natural that love would soon or late take the place of fear as motive or at least mingle with it.

Concerning the kind of existence the double was supposed to lead so interred with its body, whether in grave or tomb, Maspero says: "It there retained its character and its figure as above ground; double before the funeral, it remained double afterwards, with ability to accomplish in its way all the functions of animal life. It moved, went and came, breathed, spoke, received the homage of devotees, but without joy and like a machine, more by reason of an instinctive horror of annihilation than from any real love of life. Regret for the daylight world it had quitted troubled incessantly its inert and gloomy existence". And he quotes from a tablet as late as the time of the Ptolemies a lament supposed to be uttered by a double in its tomb:

"O, my brother, cease not to eat and drink, get drunk and make love. Give yourself up to your desires night and day and while you can live grieve for nothing. .... Here is a land of slumber and darkness, a place where the inhabitants sleep in their mummied forms never more to awake, never more to behold their brothers, fathers, mothers, oblivious of their wives and children O, give me to drink of running water Set my face to the wind from the north and my feet