

A series of five articles, from *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (COMMENTS ON “A TREATISE ON THE YOGA PHILOSOPHY”) II pp. 453-73.¹ Frontispiece: The Palace of Culture, Punch Festival, 30th April 1951

Part 1

First published in: *The Theosophist*, Vol. I, No. 12, September 1880, pp. 312-15.

When, in America and Europe, we affirmed upon the authority of the testimony of eye-witnesses the quasi-miraculous physical endurance of certain ascetics in India, our statements were invariably received by the general public with incredulity; and sometimes by physicians, and men of science, with contemptuous sneers. Some of the most humoristic articles, ever printed in the New York newspapers, were written at our expense upon this text. When we mentioned that we had personally known, not only professional *fakirs* and *sannyāsis*, but private Jains, who, under the inspiration of fanaticism, would abstain from breathing for over twenty-two minutes, till they brought on a dead trance, while others would fast for over forty days and yet survive, our evidence was regarded as little better than that of a hopeless lunatic. Naturally, therefore, such an experience made us very guarded, and at last we came to speak with great diffidence upon the subject at all, except with good and trusted friends. Knowing what gigantic strides biological science was making, we thought it could not be long before some scientific experiment would turn up, which would prove the possibility of such phenomena and wrest from sceptical science the confession of its previous ignorance. It now seems that we were not to be disappointed.

A Reuter's telegram from New York, dated August 7, apprised the world of the following stupendous event:

Dr. Tanner, who announced his disbelief regarding medical theories about starvation, declaring he could live for forty days without food, and who began here his self-imposed task on the 28th June, completed it today, but is emaciated and exhausted.

¹ ["A Treatise on the Yoga Philosophy" by Dr. N.C. Paul, G.B.M.C., Assistant Surgeon. The original edition of 1850 is very rare; a 2nd ed. was published by the *Indian Echo Press*, Calcutta, 1883, 8vo., pp. ii, 52, and is available in the British Museum. A 3rd ed. was published by the Bombay Theos. Publ. Fund of Tukaram Tatya, in 1888, 56pp. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

A hard copy of the 4th ed. of 1899 can be made available to students upon request. — ED. PHIL.

At once the idea occurred to us that the time had at last arrived to make the world acquainted with certain facts which, before Dr. Tanner's courageous experiment, would have been most assuredly classed by the ignorant as fictions along with other facts that have heretofore appeared in our journal, but, although supported by trustworthy evidence, been ranked by the sceptics as incredible. These facts are discussed in a small pamphlet, published at Benares thirty years ago by an Anglo-Indian doctor, which, on account of its subject being so distasteful to the incredulous, failed to attract the attention of men of science at that time. It is through the obliging kindness of the venerable Pandit Lakshmi Narain Vyāsa, of Allahabad, that we are enabled to reproduce for the instruction and gratification of our readers, from the copy in his possession, this, Dr. Paul's excellent monograph on the Yoga Philosophy. Though written so long ago, and, of course containing none of the more recent speculations of science, yet this work has a distinct value as an honest attempt to explain, from the standpoint of a medical man, the reason for this, that, or the other of the Yogi's stages of discipline; which, as we have shown, have been repudiated as "scientifically" impossible. But, as we cannot say that in every case the author has succeeded in making himself or his facts clearly understood, we venture to accompany the text with commentaries. And this with the double object in view of silencing at once the malicious accusation that our Society is no better than a school of "magic," the word being used to signify ridiculous superstition and belief in *supernaturalism* and of preventing our readers from receiving wrong impressions in general.

We are glad to say that the eighteen months passed by us in this country, and the twelve month existence of our journal, have not been fruitless in experience. For, during this period, we have learned at least one most important feature pertaining to the actual state of Hindu society. We find that the latter comprises two distinct parties, one, that of the free-thinkers, *all*-denying, sceptical, and wholly materialistic, whether of the Bradlaugh party, or the "modern school of thought"; the other, orthodox, bigoted, full of the unreasoning superstitions of the Brāhmanical schools, and believing in anything if it only tallies with one or the other of the *Purānas*. Both the *ne plus ultra* of exaggeration and, as the saying goes, "each more Catholic than the Pope," whether the latter is represented by Bradlaugh or the Caste Almighty, the most inflexible of gods. The few honourable exceptions go but to enforce the general rule.

The Theosophical Society — whatever any inimical paper may say — knew why it was wanted in India, and came just in time to place itself between the above-named parties. Our journal, its organ, has from the beginning pursued the distinct policy of lending a friendly ear to both these parties, and biding its time to have its full say. By doing so it has puzzled many, given offense to a few — through no malice or fault of ours, though — but afforded instruction, we hope, to such as have had the wit to understand its policy. And now that the end of the year is reached, we mean to commence our intended series of explanations by reprinting Dr. Paul's treatise, from month to month, with a commentary upon the text as before stated. At the same time the criticisms of all persons, learned in the Yoga, upon either Dr. Paul's views or our own, are invited.

This Treatise mainly relates to the practices of the *Hatha*, not the *Raja*,¹ Yoga — though the author has devoted to each a distinct chapter. We will notice the great difference between the two, later on.

[In the introductory part of this series of articles, the author, Dr. N.C. Paul, explains that by the practice of certain postures, and the subjection of the body to certain processes, the Hindu ecstatic acquires the power of abstaining from eating and breathing for long periods of time; the final objective being a state of self-induced trance during which the ecstatic experiences clairvoyant visions and a state of bliss. The successful practice of this form of Yoga is dependent upon the expiration and retention of carbonic acid within the body. Thus by the observance of every means of regulating the outflow of carbonic acid the ecstatic accomplishes his purpose. This outflow can be regulated in every normal function of the human organism and in every environment, according to Dr. Paul. He says, among other things: “The use of alcoholic liquor causes a considerable diminution in the amount of carbonic acid given out. The Aghoras, a sect of Hindu fakirs, consume a large quantity of alcoholic liquor in the course of the 24 hours.”]

The Aghoras, or Aghora Panthas, can hardly be fairly compared with or even be said to follow any *Yoga* system at all, not even the Hatha Yoga. They are notorious for their filthy habits; eat carrion of various kinds, and, in days of old, were even accused of devouring human flesh! These persons certainly made spirituous liquors their habitual drink, and, unlike *real* Yogis, extorted alms and used their system as a mere pretext for making money. Reduced to a few miserable and disgusting wretches, they were finally suppressed, and have now disappeared.

[One of the most profitable means of reducing the outflow of carbonic acid is the abstention from food to the fullest extent consistent with the maintenance of life. Abstinence from food diminishes the number of respirations, thus diminishing the waste of carbon. We are told that: “The suppression of expiration . . . is the daily practice of the Brahman mendicants who aspire to human hibernation or Yoga.”]

Human hibernation belongs to the Yoga system and may be termed one of its many results, but it cannot be called “Yoga.”

[The prolongation of the interval between expiration and inspiration is another important means of regulating the outflow of carbonic acid. “The absolute quantity of carbonic acid evolved from the lungs in a given time, is less in retarded than in normal expiration.”]

Thus we find, in this portion of the Treatise, a full vindication of the habits of the Hindu ascetics — nay those even of the Christian saints of every period, from the first century down to our own days, as we will prove. And hence the laugh of the ignorant, the sceptic and the materialist, at what seems to them the most absurd of practices, is turned against the jokers. For we now see that — if an ascetic prefers a subterranean cave to the open fresh air, takes (apparently) the vow of silence and

¹ [See “Theoretical and practical arcane terms,” in our Theosophy and Theosophists Series.]

meditation, refuses to touch money or anything metallic, and, lastly, passes his days in what appears the most ludicrous occupation of all that of concentrating his whole thoughts on the tip of his nose — he does this, neither for the sake of playing an aimless comedy nor yet out of mere unreasoned superstition, but as a physical discipline, based on strictly scientific principles. Most of the thousands of fakirs, gosāins, bairāgīs and others of the mendicant order, who throng the villages and religious fairs of India in our present age, may be and undoubtedly are worthless and idle vagabonds, modern clowns, imitating the great students of the philosophic ages of the past. And, there is but little doubt that, though they ape the postures and servilely copy the traditional customs of their nobler brethren, they understand no more *why* they do it than the sceptic who laughs at them. But, if we look closer at the origin of their school and study Patañjali's *Yoga-Vidyā*¹ — we will be better able to understand and hence appreciate their seemingly ridiculous practices. If the ancients were not as well versed in the details of physiology as are our physicians of the Carpenterian modern school — a question still *sub judice* — they may perhaps be proved, on the other hand, to have fathomed this science in another direction by other methods far deeper than the former; in short, to have made themselves better acquainted with its occult and exceptional laws than we are. That the ancients of all countries were intimately acquainted with what is termed in our days “hypnotism” or self-mesmerisation, the production, in a word, of voluntary trance — cannot be denied. One of many proofs is found in the fact that the same method, described here, is known as a tradition and practiced by the Christian monks at Mount Athos even to this very day. These, to induce “divine visions,” concentrate their thoughts and fix their eyes on the navel for hours together. A number of Russian travellers testify to such an occupation in the Greek convents, and writers of other nationalities, who have visited this celebrated hermitage, will bear out our assertion . . .

Having made clear this first point and vindicated the Hindu Yogi's in the name and upon the authority of modern science, we will now leave the further consideration on the subject to our next number.

Part 2

First published in: *The Theosophist*, Vol. II, No. 1, October 1880, pp. 4-6.

[By abstention from food, water, and air, except in well defined and restricted quantities, the Yogi acquires the power of hibernation.]

Dr. Tanner of New York, who has set himself to prove “that it is possible to do without any food — sustaining the body on water and air only for forty days and forty nights,” is said by the American papers to have been suggested through a reference to the duration of Christ's temptation in the wilderness. But this special number of “forty days” is older than Christianity, and was practiced by more than one pre-Christian ascetic, on the strength of ancient pathology which knew the limit of man's endurance and had well calculated the powers of the vital organs. Beyond — no man, unless he is in a complete state of hibernation, can go. Thus, is the extreme limit to the Jain fast prescribed as “forty days”; and we hope to furnish an unimpeachable

¹ [Descriptive name of Patañjali's Sūtras. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

proof in some future number that there are here, in Bombay, men who practice and carry out this forty days' fast successfully. We know personally two such fanatics. A month earlier our statement would have been not only questioned but positively denied, "as the opposite of Dr. Tanner's theory has been stoutly maintained by the orthodox American physicians."

[The normal number of respiratory movements differs in the various animals and man, and according to the scale of differences, so is the longevity of the animals. The greater the number of respiratory movements per minute the shorter is the life-period. The tortoise has the least respiration, its normal rate being 3 respirations per minute. "It lives to a great age; one instance is recorded of a tortoise having lived 110 years."]

We believe this period underrated. At Colombo, Ceylon, we were shown in a garden a gigantic land turtle, about five feet long and three-and-a-half wide, which — if we have to believe the inhabitants — has lived in that place and known the Dutch in its palmy days. But this is not yet scientifically proved to us.

[The tortoise is notorious for its long abstinence. It can refrain from eating and breathing for a great part of the year, its usual period of hibernation being 5 months, during which it neither breathes nor eats, and is insensible to severe wounds.]

When Dr. Tanner had fasted for over twelve days, some interesting experiments were made by the physicians to determine whether or not his sensibility was diminished. Says the *New York Tribune* of July 8th:

The aesthesiometer was employed, an instrument consisting of two sharp points which are arranged at right angles to a graduated scale upon which they can be moved backward and forward. This was applied to Dr. Tanner's feet, legs, hands, and arms. He was almost invariably able to tell whether one point or two had been applied, even when they were very near together. He distinguished distances as small as three-eighths of an inch, and the opinion of the physicians was that his sensibility had not diminished.

Had the physicians gone on with these experiments, they would have probably ascertained that he gradually became quite insensible to physical pain.

[Abstinence from food induces the loss of animal heat, which in turn produces sleep and favours hibernation. "Fasting is a common practice among the Hindus . . . more especially at Benares, the focus of Hindu superstition."]

Simple justice compels us to remind the reader that rigid fasts do not pertain merely to "Hindu superstition." The Roman Catholics have as many, and more than one community of monks — especially in the East — in their incessant endeavour to "subdue flesh," adds to such fastings self-torture in the way of hair cloth, and constant flagellation. In India, Native Christians and Roman Catholic converts are made, as a penance after confession, to whip themselves in the presence of their priests till "the blood trickles in torrents," according to the expression of an eyewitness who saw the scene but a short time ago.

[The Yogi, when about to assume the trance-condition, seeks a cave or subterranean retreat where there is neither ventilation nor intrusion of light or sound, and where there is the greatest possibility of repose and the retention of animal heat. He prepares his bed of kuśa grass, cotton, and the wool of sheep.]

The well-known peculiarity of the serpent to live for months together without food, and to cast off its skin, or to rejuvenate; and, its extreme longevity having suggested to the ancient naturalists and philosophers the idea that the secret and instinctive habits of the ophidians might be tried upon the human system, they set to watching, and found that invariably before retiring for the cold season into its hole, the serpent rolled itself in the juice of a certain plant which it did by crushing the leaves. This plant — its name being a secret among the Rāja-Yogis — brings on without any elaborate preparation or training for the occasion as in the case of the *Hatha-Yogis* — a dead coma, during which all the vital functions are paralyzed and the processes of life suspended. The Yogis have learned to regulate the duration of this trance. As, while this state lasts, no wear and tear of the organs can possibly take place, and hence they cannot “wear out” as they slowly do even during the natural sleep of the body, every hour of such a state generally produced towards night and to replace the hours of rest, is an hour gained for the duration of human life itself. Thus the Rāja-Yogis have been sometimes known to live the double and triple amount of years of an average human life, and occasionally, to have preserved a youthful appearance for an unusual period of time and when they were known to be old men — in years. Such at least is *their* explanation of the apparent phenomenon. For one who has seen such cases and assured himself that the assertion was an unimpeachable *fact*, and who, at the same time, utterly disbelieves in the possibility of magic, whether divine or infernal, unless the existence of its wondrous phenomena can be accounted for on the principles of exact science and shown as due to *natural* forces, cannot well refuse to listen to any such explanation. It may be but little plausible, and the probabilities against the advanced theory seem great. Yet — it is not one *utterly impossible*; and this, till we have a better reason to reject it, than our simple ignorance of the existence of such a plant — must be considered sufficient. How often exact science is led astray by its dogmatism is once more proved in the following defeat of the orthodox “regular” physicians, as noted by the *New York Tribune* and in the same case of Dr. Tanner.

Another account, issued on the 7th July states:

Dr. Tanner claims that the crisis is past. No severe craving for food was experienced this morning. Should none make itself felt the test will hereafter devolve entirely upon the ability of the vital organs to maintain their functions without food. One physician expresses the opinion that Dr. Tanner will suddenly become delirious after the twelfth or thirteenth day. Following that event he may die at any moment from lock-jaw or convulsions of the muscles. He might be resuscitated if his condition were discovered in time, but the chances would be against this owing to his excessive weakened condition. The principal change today in his condition is a decline in temperature, it being 98.25 at 6 p.m. If it falls five degrees more the result will be fatal. The doctor is still resolute and hopeful.

And yet the telegram from New York given in our last number announcing that Dr. Tanner has gone without any food for *forty* days and has survived — is there!

Part 3

First published in: *The Theosophist*, Vol. II, No. 2, November 1880, pp. 29-32.

[Human hibernation is prolonged sleep, the repose of the organs of sense and motion. There are instances on record of individuals sleeping for months, even for years.]

We have ourselves known a Russian lady — Madame Kasherininoff — whose sister, then an unmarried lady, about 27, slept regularly for six weeks at a time. After that period she would awake, weak but not very exhausted and ask for some milk — her habitual food. At the end of a fortnight, sometimes three weeks, she would begin to show unmistakable signs of somnolence, and at the end of a month fall into her trance again. Thus it lasted for seven years, she being considered by the populace as a great saint. It was in 1841. What became of her after that, we are unable to say.

["By Yoga I understand the act of suspending the circulation and respiration. Yoga is chiefly divided into *Rāja-Yoga* and *Hatha-Yoga*."]]

Here the author falls into an unmistakable error. He confounds the *Raja* with the *Hatha-Yogins*, whereas the former have nothing to do with the physical training of the *Hatha* or with any other of the innumerable sects who have now adopted the name and emblems of *Yogins*. Wilson in his *Essays . . . on the Religion of the Hindus* falls into the same confusion and knows very little, if anything at all, of the true *Raja-Yogins* who have no more to do with *Śiva* than with *Vishnu* or any other deity. Alone, the most learned among the Śankara's *Dandis* of Northern India, especially those who are settled in Rajputana who would be able if they would — to give some correct notions about the *Raja-Yogins*; for these men, who have adopted the philosophical tenets of Śankara's *Vedanta*, are, moreover, profoundly versed in the doctrines of the *Tantras* — termed devilish by those who either do not understand them or reject their tenets with some preconceived object. If, in speaking of the *Dandis*, we have used above the phrase beginning with the conjunction "if," it is because we happen to know how carefully the secrets of the real *Yogins* — nay even their existence itself — are denied within this fraternity. It is comparatively but lately that the usual excuse adopted by them, in support of which they bring their strongest authorities, who affirm that the *Yogi* state is unattainable in the present or *Kali* age — has been set afloat by them. "From the unsteadiness of the senses, the prevalence of sin in the *Kali*, and the shortness of life, how can exaltation by the *Yoga* be obtained?" enquires *Kāśikhanda*.¹ But this declaration can be refuted in two words and with their own weapons. The duration of the present *Kali-Yuga* is 432,000 years of which 4,979 have already expired.² It is at the very beginning of *Kali-Yuga* that Krishna and Arjuna were born. It is since Vishnu's eighth incarnation that the country had all its *historical* *Yogins*, for as to the prehistoric ones, or claimed as such, we do not find our-

¹ [One of seven parts of the *Skandha-Purāna*, the largest *Mahā-Purāna*.]

² [This article was published in 1880.]

selves entitled to force them upon public notice. Are we then to understand that none of these numerous saints, philosophers, and ascetics from Krishna down to the late Vishnu Brahmachari Bawa of Bombay had ever reached the “exaltation by Yoga”? To repeat this assertion is simply suicidal in their own interests.

It is not that among the *Hatha-Yogins* — men who at times had reached through a physical and well-organized system of training the highest powers as “wonder-workers” — there has never been a man worthy of being considered as a true Yogi. What we say, is simply this: the *Raja-Yogin* trains but his mental and intellectual powers, leaving the physical alone, and making but little of the exercise of phenomena simply of a physical character. Hence it is the rarest thing in the world to find a real Yogi boasting of being one, or willing to exhibit such powers — though *he does acquire them as well as the one practicing Hatha Yoga, but through another and far more intellectual system*. Generally, they deny these powers point blank, for reasons but too well-grounded. The latter need not even belong to any apparent order of ascetics, and are oftener known as private individuals than members of a religious fraternity, nor need they necessarily be Hindus. Kabir, who was one of them, fulminates against most of the later sects of mendicants who occasionally become warriors when not simply brigands, and sketches them with a masterly hand:

I never beheld such a *Yogi*, Oh brother! who forgetting his doctrine roves about in negligence. He follows professedly the faith of MAHADEVA and calls himself an eminent teacher; the scene of his abstraction is the fair or market. MAYA is the mistress of the false saint. When did DATTATREYA demolish a dwelling? When did SUKHADEVA collect an armed host? When did NARADA mount a matchlock? When did VYASADEVA blow a trumpet? *etc.*

Therefore, whenever the author — Dr. Paul — speaks of *Raja-Yoga* — the *Hatha* simply is to be understood.

[When a Yogi by practice can maintain himself in certain postures and live upon restricted quantities of food, he proceeds to solitude, invoking the state of hibernation by means of suspension of the respiratory movements and the pronouncement of mantras.]

All the above are, as we said before, the practices of *Hatha Yoga*, and conducive but of the production of physical phenomena — affording very rarely flashes of real clairvoyance unless it be a kind of feverish state of artificial ecstasy. If we publish them, it is merely for the great value we set upon this information as liable to afford a glimpse of truth to sceptics, by showing them that even in the case of the *Hatha Yogins* the cause for the production of the phenomena as well as the results obtained can be all explained scientifically: and that, therefore, there is no need to either reject the phenomena *a priori* and without investigation or to attribute them to any but natural though occult powers, more or less latent in every man and woman.

Part 4

First published in: *The Theosophist*, Vol. II, No. 2, January 1881, pp. 72-75.

[The Yogi, by artificial means, confines the inspired air within his system, and by this practice is supposedly able to overcome death. “He becomes a pure soul, and can penetrate the secrets of the past, the present, and the future. Without it he can never be *absorbed* into God.”]

As the science and study of Yoga Philosophy pertains to Buddhist, Lamaic and other religions supposed to be atheistical, *i.e.*, rejecting belief in a personal deity, and as a Vedāntin would by no means use such an expression, we must understand the term “absorption into God” in the sense of union with the *Universal Soul*, or *Parama-Purusha* — the Primal or One Spirit.

[Mulabandha is a process by the practice of which an old man becomes a youth. It is attained by posture.]

This posture will hardly have the desired effect unless its philosophy is well understood and it is practiced from youth. The appearance of old age, when the skin has wrinkled and the tissues have relaxed, can be restored but temporarily and with the help of *Maya*. The Mulabandha is simply a process to throw oneself in sleep (thus gaining the regular hours of sleep).

[By the practice of certain postures, together with particular modes of respiration, the Yogi is enabled to overcome coryza, cephalalgia, worms in the frontal sinuses and other diseases.]

And if any one feels inclined to sneer at the novel remedy employed by the Yogis to cure “coryza,” “worms” and other diseases — which is only a certain mode of inhalation — his attention is invited to the fact that these *illiterate* and *superstitious* ascetics seem to have only anticipated the discoveries of modern science. One of the latest is reported in the last number of the *New York Medical Record*,¹ under the title of “A new and curious Plan for deadening Pain.” The experiments were made by Dr. Bonwill, a well-known physician of Philadelphia, in 1872, and have been since successfully applied as an anaesthetic. We quote it from the *Dubuque Daily Telegraph*.

[The method is that of causing the patient to breathe rapidly — 100 respirations per minute — for from two to five minutes at the end of which an “entire or partial absence of pain results for half a minute or more.” Several minor operations were made by this method, and it is claimed that it may supplant the common anaesthetics.]

And if it be well proved that about 100 respirations per minute ending in rapid puffing expirations can successfully deaden pain, then why should not a varied mode of inhaling oxygen be productive of other and still more extraordinary results, yet unknown to science but awaiting her future discoveries?

¹ September, 1880.

["How the Puñjabi fakir, by suspending his breath, lived 40 days without food and drink, is a question which has puzzled a great many learned men of Europe."]

But Dr. Tanner's successful experiment of fasting 40 days that has just been completed, verifies the Puñjabi phenomenon which otherwise would be disbelieved altogether by scientists.

[" . . . I have treated of the various branches of Raja-Yoga by which a Yogi analyses the various corporeal, intellectual, moral, sensual, and religious principles of which man is composed. . . . I will now give a succinct account of Hatha Yoga."]

This system, evolved by long ages of practice until it was brought to bear the above-described results, was not practiced in India alone in the days of antiquity. The greatest philosophers of all countries sought to acquire these powers; and certainly, behind the external ridiculous postures of the Yogis of today, lies concealed the profound wisdom of the archaic ages; one that included among other things a perfect knowledge of what are now termed physiology and psychology. Ammonius Saccas, Porphyry, Proclus and others practiced it in Egypt; and Greece and Rome did not shrink at all even in their time of philosophical glory to follow suit. Pythagoras speaks of the celestial music of the spheres that one hears in hours of ecstasy; Zeno finds a wise man who having conquered all passions, feels happiness and emotion, but in the midst of torture; Plato advocates the man of meditation and likens his powers to those of the divinity; and we see the Christian ascetics themselves through a mere life of contemplation and self-torture acquire powers of levitation or aethrobacy, which, though attributed to the miraculous intervention of a personal God, are nevertheless real and the result of physiological changes in the human body. "The Yogi," says Patañjali, "will hear celestial sounds, the songs and conversations of celestial choirs. He will have the perception of their touch in their passage through the air," — which translated into a more sober language means that the ascetic is enabled to see with the spiritual eye in the Astral Light, hear with the spiritual ear subjective sounds inaudible to others, and live and feel, so to say, in the *Unseen Universe*. "The Yogi is able to enter a dead or a living body by the path of the senses, and in this body to act as though it were his own." The "path of the senses" — our physical senses supposed to originate in the astral body, the ethereal counterpart of man, or the *jiv-ātma*, which dies with the body — the senses are here meant in their spiritual sense — volition of the higher principle in man. The true Raja-Yogi is a Stoic; and Kapila, who deals but with the latter — utterly rejecting the claim of the *Hatha-Yogis* to converse during Samadhi with the *Infinite Īsvara* — describes their state in the following words:

To a Yogi, in whose mind all things are identified as spirit, what is infatuation? What is grief? He sees all things as one; he is destitute of affections; he neither rejoices in good, nor is offended with evil. A wise man sees so many false things in those which are called true, so much misery in what is called happiness, that he turns away with disgust . . . He who in the body has obtained liberation (from the tyranny of the senses) is of no caste, of no sect, of no order, attends to no duties, adheres to no shastras, to no formulas, to no works of merit; he is

beyond the reach of speech; he remains at a distance from all secular concerns; he has renounced the love and the knowledge of sensible objects; he flatters none, he honours none, he is not worshipped, he worships none; whether he practices and follows the customs of his fellow men or not, this is his character.

And a selfish and disgustingly misanthropical one this character would be, were it that for which the TRUE ADEPT would be striving. But, it must not be understood *literally*, and we will have something more to say upon the subject in the following article which will conclude Dr. Paul's Essay on Yoga Philosophy.

Part 5

First published in: *The Theosophist*, Vol. II, No. 3, April 1881, pp. 144-47.

[“The Hatha-Yogi, like the Rāja-Yogi . . . lives in a *gumphā* or subterranean cell, and avoids the society of men.” He practices six processes. One is that of “swallowing a bandage of linen moistened with water, measuring 3 inches in breadth and 15 cubits in length. This is rather a difficult process.”]

And a happy thing it is, that the process is so difficult, as we do not know of anything half so disgusting. No *true* Rāja-Yogi will ever condescend to practice it. Besides, as every physician can easily tell, the process, if repeated, becomes a very dangerous one for the experimenter. The following “processes” are still more hideous and as useless for psychological purposes.

[A Hatha Yogi also practices the mudras or immovable postures.]

It is needless to remind the constant readers of this magazine of our comments upon the vital difference between the *Rāja* and *Hatha*-Yogis. But it may be of some use to the general reader, ignorant of what has been written, to turn to page 31 of this volume,¹ and see for themselves.² Many are those who have in our days adopted the name of *Yogis*, with as little idea of *true* “Yogism” as a poor Chinaman has of the ceremonies and etiquette of the Queen's Drawing-room.

[An authentic case of human hibernation is that of the Punjabi fakir who upon arriving in Lahore engaged to bury himself for any length of time, without food or drink. He was entombed and the strictest watch kept for 40 days and 40 nights. He was then disinterred by the Mahārāja. The body was warm and restoration was quickly accomplished.]

While in Lahore, we had this identical story from an eyewitness, a native gentleman, who was clerk to Sir Claude Wade at the time of the occurrence. His interesting narrative will be found at page 94 of this volume.^{3, 4}

[One Hatha-Yoga fakir is famous for the cessation of the growth of hair during hibernation.]

¹ November, 1880.

² [See the November, 1880, instalment of this serial essay. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

³ February, 1881.

⁴ [*The Theosophist*, Vol. II, February, 1881, pp. 94-95, an account entitled “The Sadhoo's Burial Alive at Lahore: Important New Testimony.” — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

In reference to the arrest of the growth of the hair, some adepts in the secret science, which is generally known in India under the name of *Yoga*, claim to know something more than this. They prove their ability to completely suspend the functions of life each night during the hours intended for sleep. Life then is, so to say, held in total abeyance. The wear and tear of the inner as well as the outer organism being thus artificially arrested, and there being no possibility of waste, these men accumulate as much vital energy for use in their waking state as they would have lost in sleep during which state, if natural, the process of energy and expanse of force is still mechanically going on in the human body. In the induced state described, as in that of a deep swoon, the brain no more dreams than if it were dead. One century, if passed, would appear no longer than one second, for all perception of time is lost for him who is subjected to it. Nor do the hairs or nails grow under such circumstances, though they do for a certain time in a body actually dead, which proves if anything can, that the atoms and tissues of the physical body are held under conditions quite different from those of the state we call death. For, to use a physiological paradox, life in a dead animal organism is even more intensely active than it ever is in a living one, which as we see, does not hold good in the case under notice. Though the average sceptic may regard this statement as sheer nonsense, those who have experienced this in themselves know it is an undoubted fact. Two certain fakirs from Nepal once agreed to try the experiment. One of them, previous to attempting the hibernation, underwent all the ceremonies of preparation as above described by Dr. Paul, and took all the necessary precautions; the other, simply threw himself by a process known to himself and others into that temporary state of complete paralysis, which imposes no limits of time, may last months as well as hours, and which is known in certain Tibet lamaseries as The result was that while the hair, beard, and nails of the former had grown at the end of six weeks, though feebly yet perceptibly, the cells of the latter had remained as closed and inactive as if he had been transformed for that lapse of time into a marble statue. Not having personally seen either of the two men, or the experiment, we can vouch only in a general way for the possibility of the phenomenon, not for the details of this peculiar case, though we would as soon doubt our existence as the truthfulness of those from whom we have the story. We only hope that among the sceptical and materialistic who may scoff, we may not find either people who nevertheless accept with a firm and pious conviction the story of the resurrection of the half-decayed Lazarus and other like miracles, or yet those who, while ready to crush a theosophist for his beliefs would never dare scoff at that of a Christian.

[The Yogi who practices the Unumani Mudra is said to be able to recall the soul, to awaken it, and enjoy heavenly felicity.]

This is more like the real *Raja-Yoga*, and is the true scientific one.

["A Yogi acquires an increase of specific gravity (garima) by swallowing great draughts of air, and compressing the same within his system."]

This is what, three years ago, in describing the phenomenon in *Isis Unveiled*, we called "interpolarisation."¹

¹ See Vol. I, pp. xxiii & xxiv; paragraphs on AETHROBACY.

["A Yogi, in a state of self-trance, acquires the power of predicting future events,¹ of understanding unknown languages (*a*), of curing divers diseases (*b*), of divining the unexpressed thoughts of others (*c*), of hearing distant sounds, of seeing distant objects, of smelling mystical fragrant odours . . . and of understanding the language of beasts and birds (*d*)."]

a As a deaf and dumb person learns to understand the exact meaning of what is said simply from the motion of the lips and face of the speaker and without understanding any language phonetically, other and extra senses can be developed in the soul as well as in the physical mind of a mute; a sixth and as phenomenal a sense is developed as a result of practice, which supplies for him the lack of the other two.

b Magnetic and mesmeric aura or "fluid" can be generated and intensified in every man to an almost miraculous extent, unless he be by nature utterly passive.

c We have known of such a faculty to exist in individuals who were far from being adepts or Yogis, and had never heard of the latter. It can be easily developed by intense will, perseverance and practice, especially in persons who are born with natural analytical powers, intuitive perceptions, and a certain aptness for observation and penetration. These may, if they only preserve perfect the faculty of divining people's thoughts to a degree which seems almost supernatural. Some very clear but quite uneducated detectives in London and Paris, develop it in themselves to almost a faultless perfection. It can be also helped by mathematical study and practice. If then such is found to be the case with simple individuals, why not in men who have devoted to it a whole life, helped on by a study of the accumulated experience of many a generation of mystics and under the tuition of real adepts?

d The bi-part Soul is no fancy and may be one day explained in scientific language, when the psycho-physiological faculties of man shall be better studied, when the possibility of many a now-doubted phenomenon is discovered, and when truth will be no longer sacrificed to conceit, vanity, and routine. Our physical senses have nothing to do with the spiritual or psychological faculties. The latter begin their action where the former stop, owing to that Chinese wall about the Soul Empire, called — MATTER.

["By Prakāmya is meant the power of casting the old skin and maintaining a youth-like appearance for an unusual period of time. By some writers it is defined to be the property of entering into the system of another (*e*)."]

e Perhaps the Hobilgans and the Shaberons of Tibet might have something to tell us if they chose. The great secret which enwraps the mystery of the reincarnations of their great Dalai-Lamas, their Supreme Hobilgans, and others who as well as the former are supposed, a few days after their Enlightened Souls have laid aside their mortal clothing, to reincarnate themselves in young and always previously to that very weak bodies of children, has never yet been told. These children who are invariably on the point of death when designated to have their bodies become the tabernacles of the Souls of deceased Buddhas, recover immediately after the ceremony,

¹ In the eternity there is neither Past nor Future; hence — for the disenthralled Soul (or Inner *Ego*) the three tenses merge into one, the PRESENT. [H.P. Blavatsky]

and barring accident, live long years, exhibiting trait for trait the same peculiarities of temper, characteristics, and predilections as the dead man's. But of this no more for the present.

[“Pythagoras, who visited India, is said to have tamed, by the influence of his will or word, a furious bear, prevented an oxen from eating beans, and stopped an eagle in its flight (*f*) . . .”]

f These are mesmeric feats and it is only by (in)exact scientists that mesmerism is denied in our days. It is largely treated of in *Isis*; and the power of Pythagoras is explained in Vol. I, *pp.* 283 *et seq.*¹

[“When the passions are restrained from their desires, the mind becomes tranquil and the soul is awakened. The Yogi becomes full of Brahma (the Supreme Soul) (*g*) . . . A Yogi who acquires this power, can restore the dead to life (*h*).”]

g In which case it means that the Soul being liberated from the yoke of the body through certain practices, discipline, and purity of life, during the life-time of the latter, acquires powers identical with its primitive element, the universal Soul. It has overpowered its material custodian; the terrestrial gross appetites and passions of the latter, from being its despotic masters have become its slaves, hence the Soul has become free henceforth to exercise its transcendental powers untrammelled by any fetters.

h Life once extinct can never be recalled. But *another* life and *another* Soul can sometimes reanimate the abandoned frame if we may believe learned men who were never known to utter an untruth.

Wherever the word “Soul” has occurred in the course of the above comments, the reader must bear in mind that we do not use it in the sense of an immortal principle in man, but in that of the group of personal qualities which are but a congeries of material particles whose term of survival is limited, this survival of the physical, or material, personality being for a longer or shorter period, proportionately with the grossness or refinement of the individual.

Various correspondents have asked whether the Siddhis of Yoga can only be acquired by the rude training of Hatha-Yoga; and the *Journal of Science* (London) assuming that they cannot, launched out in the violent expressions which were recently quoted in these pages. But the fact is that there is another, an unobjectionable and rational process, the particulars of which cannot be given to the idle inquirer, and which must not even be touched upon at the latter end of a commentary like the present one. The subject may be reverted to at a more favourable time.²



¹ [Also cf. “Pythagoras’ ban of beans” in our Down to Earth Series.]

² From *Blavatsky Collected Writings*, (COMMENTS ON “A TREATISE ON THE YOGA PHILOSOPHY”) II *pp.* 453-73