

Contemporary Mystic Christianity **Bible Self-Study Supplement**

Initiation in India

There are many paths to God. Holy Mystics of Persia said there were as many as there are individuals, for everyone is his own path. This is irrefutable. God abides at center in every human soul. He is the Soul of the soul without which the latter could have no existence. In India it is recognized that there are many ways of achieving Yoga or union with God — the Mystic Marriage of Western Mysteries.

Four main paths are outlined in Indian Mystery Teachings, but these are subject to innumerable divisions. The Path of Knowledge, sacred to philosophers, is Jhana Yoga. This is pre-eminently the path of pure reason, for ascent of the ladder of consciousness must be achieved through the reasoning faculty given man by the Gods (Lords of Mercury) as the Rishis were passing and spiritual wisdom was fading like a flower. Jhana is the purest metaphysical teaching for it carries reason to the very throne of God, eschewing all material aids. In this respect it is not unlike Christian Science. Jhana Yoga makes use of reason to transcend intellect; Raja Yoga adheres strictly to intellection throughout. This is the Yoga most familiar to the West. It involves intellectual comprehension of intricate systems dealing with world periods, occult forces, the occult

anatomy of man, the control of bodily currents, the Kundalini-fire, and so on. It does not, therefore, turn its back upon the physical world, and mortal intellect is used as a means of ascent to higher states of consciousness. This is the path of the intellectualist. The Path of Reason (Metaphysics) is scarcely distinguishable from the Path of Intellect (Occultism). Initiatory systems of the West correspond to these two systems of Yoga.

The two most popular systems of Yoga are reflected in the popular religions of the West, by means of which an aspirant achieves Yoga without consciously aiming toward it. These are Bhakti marga (Yoga), the Path of Devotion, the Way of Love, or the Heart Path-and Karma marga, the Way of Action or the Path of Service. It is obvious that these really form a partnership, since Love and Service inevitably converge.

In a larger sense, however, ultimate development cannot be achieved without following all of the Ways, for the knower must learn to love and serve while the lover and servant of God and mankind must eventually come to the place of sure knowing. As rivers flow into the ocean and there become one, so all paths unite in God.

Hence, when Indian Initiation is spoken of it must be remembered that there is no such sharp line of demarkation between the path of devotion and service and

that of occult knowledge as is found in the West. India, wise in her ancient tradition, has never admitted any real conflict could exist between head and heart, so an aspirant may take any path he chooses, or combine them.

Early Schools of Initiation divided their work into seven steps or Degrees. Disciplines were severe, requirements high. Comparatively few seekers succeeded in passing beyond the Second Degree.

The First Degree necessitated a ten-year apprenticeship. During this period a disciple lived the life of a householder but at the same time underwent rigorous discipline aimed at purification of mind, emotions and body. The fruit of this discipline was the opening of extended vision so the student was able to contact nature spirits and other denizens of higher planes. "Blessed are the pure."

Aspirants for the Second Degree continued their work as householders, and also became Temple-priests. They partook of food once daily, and that at the setting of the Sun. Much of the night was spent in the Temple with their teachers. At an advanced stage in this Degree certain occult forces were activated to effect specific changes in their physiological organization. Previously dormant organs with inherent powers were stimulated into functioning.

The Third Degree was the Degree of Mastership, as it is in all initiatory Schools, ancient and modern. At this stage the aspirant received "Master's Wages" with the privilege of "traveling in foreign countries."

The final work of Initiation was breaking of the chain which binds an ego to the Wheel of Rebirth. This was not easily accomplished so there was an interval, often of many lifetimes, between the First and Fourth Degrees. The latter was Liberation. Once Liberation had been achieved, the ego was under no compulsion to return to earth life. Instead, it had a choice between remaining on higher planes or returning to earthly service as a Compassionate One.

Beyond the Third Degree, and preparatory to Liberation, came various lesser Initiations conferring many subtle and miraculous powers. Also of a lesser sort were the powers bestowed in early Degrees; the Second Degree correlated with the element Water, the Third with Fire, the Fourth with Air. By means of these powers an Initiate brought nature under his control.

Such feats as fire-walking, levitation, burial alive, control of wind and weather, are vestigial reminders of ancient Initiations and the powers conferred by them. Initiates of higher Degrees did not perform such feats publicly, even when to their personal advantage to do so. Wonderful beyond telling are the miracles they work on inner planes of

nature, where their effectiveness is a thousandfold greater than any spectacular wonder-working visible to mortal eye.

The Fifth Degree bestowed powers granted only to one who was more than man. The Initiate became a member of the Law of the Lotus. His great works were largely confined to higher worlds, but for those lesser brethren who could receive him he performed many ministrations of healing. With consciousness of Divine Unity, he knew that the good of one is the good of all and the ill of one is the ill of the whole. Early Initiates of this Degree could have no earthly possessions for they took a vow of celibacy and poverty. Like the Master Jesus, they were wanderers with no place to lay their heads.

The austerity of the Fifth Degree was further accentuated in the Sixth. The purity and selflessness of this Degree were symbolized in a Rite of Baptism. A calabash for drinking and a gazelle's skin upon which to sleep were the Initiate's only material comforts. A lotus flower and the symbolic seven-pointed stick he carried were subtly indicative of the transcendent power to which he had attained.

The Seventh Degree was that of Brahmatma or Grand Master. An Initiate now received the full powers of the Trinity, in token whereof the Sacred Three Letters (comparable to the Hebrew Tetragrammaton) were graven on a golden triangle to be kept within the Temple. Upon his

golden tiara were two crossed keys guarded by two kneeling Brahmins. The Grand Master lived in a state of ecstatic contemplation and was never seen outside the Temple except during the great Fire Festival held at intervals of five years. Then, at the midnight hour, he showed himself — aureoled in a splendor of light and to the accompaniment of supernal harmony — above the Temple grounds, whereon devout worshippers saw many unearthly wonders.

During his contemplative ecstasy the Grand Master was privileged to see the earth's physical form dissolve so as to reveal at its heart a glorious scene focused there for the duration of planetary existence. He there beheld the luminous substance permeating every atom of the globe as it assumes the form of a majestic Being bound upon a great cross of light. He opened this vision to his Initiates at the Holy Midnight hour of the Winter Solstice, after which he elucidated the process whereby it would manifest to humanity as the Light of the World when the age had run its course.

In this manner pre-Christian Aryans were prepared for Christ's coming. Many who had made their dedication to the great Light in those ancient Temples of India met again in Palestine and renounced all to follow Him.

Plato, the Wisdom Messenger of Greece, was undoubtedly recounting what he himself had seen in the course of Initiation when he declared that "the World Soul is crucified." Tradition avers that Plato had taken the Indian as well as the Egyptian Initiations, a fact everywhere patent in his writings. He must have seen the vision of the Blessed Androgynous Figure bearing the Sun in one hand and the Moon in the other, while across the vast expanse of the ethereal and luminous form were limned the seas and continents comprising the outer vestment of this glorious Planetary Spirit. He must also have seen in Egypt a representation (as at Philea) of Osiris with corn sprouting from his body, and the accompanying inscription: "This is the form of Him, whom we may not name, of the Mysteries.

— ***Corinne Heline***