



GREAT SYSTEMS OF YOGA

ERNEST WOOD

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CONTENTS

Preface

Chapter 1. The Ten Oriental Yogas

Chapter 2. Patanjali's Raja Yoga

Chapter 3. Shri Krishna's Gita-Yoga

Chapter 4. Shankaracharya's Gnyana-Yoga

Chapter 5. The Hatha And Laya Yogas

Chapter 6. The Bhakti And Mantra Yogas

Chapter 7. The Occult Path Of Buddha

Chapter 8. The Chinese Yoga

Chapter 9. The Sufi Yogas

CHAPTER 8. THE CHINESE YOGA

WHEN the Buddha wished to allude to the final achievement or attainment of human life he spoke of *nirvāna*, a "blowing-out." This means that in that experience, there will be an absence of our familiar limitations known as body and mind. Even the mind is for us an object of knowledge. The field of our knowledge can be divided into objective and subjective. Both are within the field—both the knower and the known, the subject and the object.

Buddha's doctrine was that only in the presence of knowing are "subject and object" to be seen. Mind with its reasoning activity—its logic—generally considered as the subject, is in reality only an instrument. It does not know.⁶ Behind or beyond this mind is what among Chinese Buddhists came to be called Essence of Mind. It is Bodhi, Wisdom. If a man could put aside the error or delusion of the-self-as-mind there would be the elimination of object and subject relation from his experience, and then—*nirvāna*.

It was always held that only man can perform this feat, because he—not the lower animals—has mind as *reason*. Of course, there was lower mind, or instinct, in the animals, but this was accumulated knowledge—recognition and memory. And every idea or mental picture in this store of knowledge was accompanied by feeling and therefore by desire. In modern terms we would call this collection the subconscious mind, instinct. The sub-conscious mind could not be regarded as merely a matter of bodily habit. The body is always changing its particles. The incoming particles cannot be regarded as possessing the habits which have been learned by the outgoing particles. So even the continuity of its form is carried on by the "sub-conscious mind"—not by any powers of the body. This continuity governs not only the bodily reactions to environmental impacts, but also the emotions and flow of mental pictures, or association of ideas. So there is instinct. Buddha called this complex of continuity the *skandhas*.

⁶ In my own terms: there is no such thing as body-consciousness, and no such thing as mind-consciousness, but only, in these cases, consciousness of the body and consciousness of the mind.

