

## *A Curriculum in the Wisdom Tradition*

“ . . . The present tendency of education is to make them [Indians] materialistic and root out spirituality. With a proper understanding of what their ancestors meant by their writings and teachings, education would become a blessing whereas now it is often a curse. . . . This changed attitude toward the older philosophy would influence native Princes and wealthy men to endow normal schools for the education of pundits; and old Manuscripts hitherto buried out of the reach of the Europeans would again come to light, and with them the key to much of that which was hidden for ages from the popular understanding; for which your skeptical Sanskritists do not care, which your religious missionaries do not *dare*, to understand. Science would gain much—humanity everything. Under the stimulus of the Anglo Indian Theosophical Society, we might in time see another golden age of Sanskrit literature. . . .

“The same causes that are materializing the Hindu mind are equally affecting all Western thought. Education enthrones skepticism, but imprisons spiritualism. You can do immense good by helping to give the Western nations a secure basis upon which to reconstruct their crumbling faith. What they need is the evidence that Asiatic psychology alone supplies. . . .

“This is the moment to guide the recurrent impulse which must soon come, and which will push the age toward extreme atheism, or drag it back to extreme sacerdotalism, if it is not led to the primitive and soul-satisfying philosophy of the Aryans. . . . You and your colleagues may help furnish the materials for a needed universal religious philosophy; one impregnable to scientific assault because itself the finality of absolute science; and, a religion, that is indeed worthy of the name, since it includes the relations of man physical to man psychical, and of the two to all that is above and below them. Is not this worth a slight sacrifice?”

—first letter of K.H. to A. O. Hume, 1880

These words practically form the charter of a school whose “chief aim is to extirpate current superstitions and skepticism, and, from long sealed ancient fountains to draw the proof that man may shape his own future destiny, and know for a certainty that he can live hereafter, if he only wills; and that all ‘phenomena’ are but manifestations of natural law, to try to comprehend which is the duty of every intelligent being,” as the letter goes on to say. It is such a school that we felt the need to attempt.

To achieve this, we developed a systematic course of training in the essentials of the Wisdom Tradition. The Foundation Course core curriculum, requiring three years, includes four lines of study: (1) The Path, emphasizing the *bodhisattva* path, the path of compassion or altruism; (2) The Teachings of the Wisdom Tradition, a graded course culminating in *The Secret Doctrine*; (3) Sanskrit, the “language of the gods,” providing the access tool for the Wisdom Tradition teachings; (4) Meditation, emphasizing the Rāja Yoga system of meditation through controlling the mind. This core curriculum, detailed in the following pages, is designed to be full-time, and to be taken as a unit. It may be supplemented throughout as needed, by regularly offered electives, joint study of items of interest as they arise, and individual study and practice.

The traditional classroom format with an instructor is inappropriate for many of the books studied in this curriculum, such as *The Secret Doctrine*. H. P. Blavatsky advised us (via Robert Bowen) to “Come to *The Secret Doctrine* without any hope of getting the final Truth of existence from it, or with any idea other than seeing how far it may lead TOWARDS the Truth. See in study a means of exercising and developing the mind never touched by other studies.” Thus it is the book that is the instructor, and it is the student who must take responsibility to do the reading. Therefore a study group format with a facilitator is used, except for the language classes and those electives which are primarily presentations of information.

The purpose of this course is to provide preparation for more adequate service to humanity, the *bodhisattva* motivation. It is not intended for the personal spiritual development of any individual. In the words of the Mahā-Chohan: “It is not the individual and determined purpose of attaining oneself *nirvāṇa* (the culmination of all knowledge and absolute wisdom) which is, after all only an exalted and glorious *selfishness*, but the self-sacrificing pursuit of the best means to lead on the right path our neighbor, to cause as many of our fellow creatures as we possibly can to benefit by it, which constitutes the true Theosophist.” Renunciation of self and altruistic concern for the welfare of others must form the basis for entering the path of deeper knowledge. For as stated in *The Voice of the Silence*, “Compassion is no attribute. It is the Law of Laws—eternal Harmony, Ālaya’s Self; a shoreless universal essence, the light of everlasting Right, and fitness of all things, the law of love eternal.”

# Core Curriculum Foundation Course

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## FIRST YEAR

### First Term, Jan.-June (24 weeks)

#### **First-year Sanskrit**

text: *Devavāṇīpraveśikā: An Introduction to the Sanskrit Language*, by Robert Goldman and Sally Sutherland

#### **The Path**

*A Guide to the Path sādhana catuṣṭaya: Śaṅkarācārya, At the Feet of the Master*, etc.  
*The Three Principles of the Path*, by Tsong-kha-pa  
*Initiation, Human and Solar* by Alice Bailey

#### **The Teachings**

*Foundations of the Wisdom Tradition Esoteric Bud(d)hism*, by A. P. Sinnett

#### **Meditation**

*Yoga Sūtras*, by Patañjali

### Second Term, Aug.-Dec. (20 weeks)

text: selected readings, including *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad*  
*Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya Sūtra*  
*Daśa-slokī*, by Śaṅkarācārya etc.

*Letters on Occult Meditation*, by Alice Bailey

“Some Inquiries Suggested by Mr. Sinnett’s *Esoteric Buddhism*”  
*Māṇḍūkya Kārikā*, Gauḍapāda  
*Mūla-madhyamaka Kārikā*, Nāgārjuna  
*Sanmati Tarka*, Siddhasena Divākara

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## SECOND YEAR

### First Term, Jan.-June (24 weeks)

#### **Second-year Sanskrit**

text: *Bhagavad Gītā*  
emphasis: syntax

#### **The Path**

*Light on the Path*, Mabel Collins  
*Lamp for the Path*, by Atiśa

#### **Meditation**

*Yoga Sūtras*, by Patañjali, with *bhāṣya* by Vyāsa

### Second Term, Aug.-Dec. (20 weeks)

*Bhagavad Gītā* (repeated)  
emphasis: vocabulary

#### **The Teachings**

*The Key to Theosophy*, by H. P. Blavatsky  
selected Mahatma letters, etc.

*Yoga Sūtras* with *bhāṣya*, continued

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## THIRD YEAR

### First Term, Jan.-June (24 weeks)

#### **Third-year Sanskrit**

text: *Sāṃkhya Kārikā*, by Īśvara-kṛṣṇa, with *bhāṣya* by Gauḍapāda

#### **The Path**

*The Voice of the Silence*, H. P. Blavatsky  
“The Golden Stairs”

#### **The Teachings**

*The Secret Doctrine*, by H. P. Blavatsky  
(with *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*)

### Second Term, Aug.-Dec. (20 weeks)

text: *Śāli-stamba Sūtra*  
optionally also in Tibetan

#### **Meditation**

selected readings, including “Samathavipaśyanāyuganaddha,” by Geshe Sopa

*The Secret Doctrine*, continued

## The Path

The path to perfection or liberation or enlightenment has been described down through the ages. For ages these descriptions, such as the *sādhana catuṣṭaya*, took for granted the knowledge that this perfection is the evolutionary goal for a human, and thus is part of the natural order of things. There was no explicit statement of why a person should tread this path. In the time of Gautama Buddha, already well into the *kalī-yuga*, or “Dark Age,” the element of selfishness had apparently entered significantly into the picture. Persons undertook to tread the path to free themselves from the endless cycle of rebirth for their own personal benefit, without an understanding of their interconnectedness with other living beings, and therefore with no concern for the many. One of the major reforms undertaken by Gautama Buddha was the promulgating of the *bodhisattva* path. The *bodhisattva* path is the path of compassion, or altruism, wherein one renounces one’s own liberation and remains behind to help others achieve liberation from suffering. The *bodhisattva* path is here taught as a graded path of development, in which the qualities that alone allow one to genuinely benefit others are acquired one by one. This graded path was expounded in the *lam-rim* literature of Tibet, of which Tsong-kha-pa is the foremost exponent. An understanding of the path and why it is trod is essential to achieve the purposes of this curriculum, which is based entirely on the graded path of the *bodhisattva*. Thus readings on the path open each school year, culminating in that exposition of the *bodhisattva* path which should be etched in every student’s heart, *The Voice of the Silence*.

The first year includes: (1) *A Guide to the Path*, a collection of articles from the early Theosophical journals, authors unknown, of timeless value; (2) a study of the *sādhana catuṣṭaya*, the four qualifications, the most ancient formulation of the qualifications for the path known, expounded in the writings of Śaṅkarācārya and in *At the Feet of the Master*, by Alcyone; (3) *The Three Principles of the Path*, by Tsong-kha-pa, giving us one of the latest formulations of the requirements for the path, emphasizing the *bodhisattva* ideal, which latter is not found in the older *sādhana catuṣṭaya*; (4) *Initiation, Human and Solar*, by Alice Bailey, including the fundamental “Rules for Applicants.”

The second year includes: (1) *Light on the Path*, written down by M.C. (Mabel Collins), one of the Theosophical classics of the path; (2) *Lamp for the Path*, by Atiśa, the basis for all the *lam-rim* or graded path literature of Tibet, teaching the *bodhisattva* path.

The third year includes: (1) *The Voice of the Silence*, translated by H. P. Blavatsky from the “Book of the Golden Precepts,” an exposition of the *bodhisattva* path that is the central text of all the readings on the path in this curriculum; (2) “The Golden Stairs,” from Blavatsky’s Esoteric Section Instructions.

Blavatsky gave only extracts from the “Book of the Golden Precepts” in *The Voice of the Silence*, saying, “Nor could they be all translated and given to a world too selfish and too much attached to objects of sense to be in any way prepared to receive such exalted ethics in the right spirit.” Atiśa seems to have felt the same way when he brought to Tibet the Lojong teachings on transforming the mind through compassion, since they remained secret there until his disciple’s disciple Geshe Langri Tangpa brought out some of them in his “Eight Verses on Thought Transformation.” Even he taught their application only to his closest disciple, from whom Geshe Chekawa begged this knowledge, and put it into his “Seven Points on Transforming the Mind.” Other texts on how to transform the mind through generating compassion also emerged, becoming famous in Tibet, such as Dharma-rakṣita’s “Wheel of Sharp Weapons.” These hitherto secret teachings have in the last couple decades become available in English translations, and these may be studied in the fourth and following years of the curriculum. Whatever texts may be studied, the essential thing is to recall to mind every single day that the reason for everything undertaken here is solely to benefit others.

## The Teachings of the Wisdom Tradition

The fundamental text presenting the teachings of the Wisdom Tradition in this curriculum is *The Secret Doctrine*, by H. P. Blavatsky, based on stanzas translated from the “Book of Dzyan.” No other book presents so comprehensively the worldview of the Wisdom Tradition. A specific aim of the school we undertook was to prepare a group of translators for the eventual discovery of an original language (i.e., Sanskrit or Tibetan) manuscript of the “Book of Dzyan” or the “Book of the Golden Precepts.” This would bring the teachings of the Wisdom Tradition to the attention of the intelligentsia, who in turn influence the masses. While most persons taking this course have already done other Theosophical reading, it is helpful as a preparation for studying *The Secret Doctrine* to read the book which served that purpose when *The Secret Doctrine* was written: *Esoteric Buddhism* by A. P. Sinnett. This book provides teachings that are presupposed in

*The Secret Doctrine*. Similarly, after *The Secret Doctrine* was published, Blavatsky's own response to requests for a simpler presentation of the Wisdom Religion was *The Key to Theosophy*. It provides teachings which are not clearly laid out in *The Secret Doctrine*.

Opening this line of study in the curriculum is *Foundations of the Wisdom Tradition*, a collection of primary source material providing a basis in the true aims and principles of the Ageless Wisdom Tradition. It includes five Mahātma letters: the "Occult World letter," Mahātma letter 2, the "Mahā-Chohan's letter," and Mahātma letters 10 and 22, supplemented by the article, "What Is Matter and What Is Force," and by Brian Hodgson's account of the Svābhāvika Buddhism of Nepal. Then follows the Robert Bowen notes on how to study *The Secret Doctrine*, and the relevant excerpts from *The Secret Doctrine* (the "Three Fundamental Propositions," etc.). In the second half of the first term we read *Esoteric Bud(d)hism* by A. P. Sinnett, which was written on the basis of letters from the Mahātmās, since published as *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett*. In the second term we continue with the long and important article giving replies by the Mahātmās, "Some Inquiries Suggested by Mr. Sinnett's *Esoteric Buddhism*." The first year concludes with a quick reading of the *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā* by Gauḍapāda, which is the cardinal formulation of the Advaita Vedānta philosophy of the Hindu tradition, the *Mūla-madhyamaka Kārikā* by Nāgārjuna, which is the cardinal formulation of the Madhyamaka philosophy of the Buddhist tradition, and the *Sanmati Tarka* by Siddhasena Divākara, for its formulation of the cardinal Anekānta-vāda philosophy of the Jaina tradition, all in English translation. The idea here is to become familiar with the greatest systems of thought that have been produced in ancient India, home of the Wisdom Tradition.

The second year takes up this line of study in the second term (as immediate preparation for starting *The Secret Doctrine* at the beginning of the third year), reading *The Key to Theosophy* by H. P. Blavatsky. This is followed by selected Mahātma letters dealing with philosophical teachings, such as letter 16, with follow-up of its advice to study the doctrine of karma as a key to the metaphysics of Abhidharma. Also included are the "Cosmological Notes," and letter 118, both published in *The Letters of H. P. Blavatsky to A. P. Sinnett*.

In the third year *The Secret Doctrine* is read from beginning to end, at the rate of about 35 pages per week. It is supplemented by *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*, giving Blavatsky's answers to questions on the "Stanzas of Dzyan" found in *The Secret Doctrine*. We also recommend having Blavatsky's *Theosophical Glossary*. This is the intensive study of the third year of the curriculum.

After the Foundation Course, this line of study continues in two two-year increments. Year four takes up Alice Bailey's *A Treatise on White Magic* in the first term, and Alice Bailey's *A Treatise on the Seven Rays: Esoteric Psychology*, vol. 1, in the second term. Year five undertakes Alice Bailey's *A Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, extending over both terms. In the optional years six and seven, other volumes of Alice Bailey's *A Treatise on the Seven Rays* are taken up, going along with the study of the Kālacakra texts in Sanskrit and Tibetan. These are: *Esoteric Astrology*, in conjunction with Kālacakra chapter one, *loka-dhātu*, which includes a system of astronomy/astrology; *Esoteric Healing*, in conjunction with Kālacakra chapter two, *adhyātma*, which includes a system of medicine. Also, the six-limbed yoga taught in Kālacakra is studied in conjunction with the section on the six stages of building the *antaḥkaraṇa* in *The Rays and the Initiations*.

### **Sanskrit: The Language of the Gods**

More than anything else, what keeps modern western students at a distance from the source teachings of the Wisdom Tradition is the language barrier. This is made abundantly clear in *The Mahatma Letters*, with repeated statements such as: "First of all and again I will draw your attention to the tremendous difficulty of finding appropriate terms in English which would convey to the educated European mind even an approximately correct notion about the various subjects we will have to treat upon." (p. 60, 2nd & 3rd eds.) "Our mystic terms in their clumsy re-translation from the Sanskrit into English are as confusing to us as they are to you—" (p. 84, 2nd ed.; p. 83, 3rd ed.); "Such is unfortunately the inherited and self-acquired grossness of the Western mind; and so greatly have the very phrases expressive of modern thoughts been developed in the line of practical materialism, that it is now next to impossible either for them to comprehend or for us to express in their own languages anything of that delicate seemingly ideal machinery of the Occult Kosmos." (p. 29); "I would only draw your attention to the formidable difficulties encountered by us in every attempt we make to explain our metaphysics to Western minds, even among the most intelligent. Alas, my friend, you seem as unable to assimilate our mode of thinking, as to digest our food, or enjoy our melodies!" (p. 193; 190). Further, it is our responsibility to fit ourselves for receiving these teachings if we

want them, not passively wait for handouts: “If you really want to be a *chela* i.e. to become the recipient of our mysteries, *you* have to adapt yourself to *our* ways, not we to *yours*.” (p. 235; 232). Fortunately, we can do something about this by learning Sanskrit. Sanskrit, says H. P. Blavatsky, which is the language of the gods, is the only language capable of dealing with these transcendental subjects with any degree of adequacy (*The Secret Doctrine*, vol. I, p. 269). A good working knowledge of Sanskrit can generally be attained by a western student in three years. Thus it is studied throughout the Foundation Course. For those wishing further proficiency, the Sanskrit curriculum continues in two two-year increments for a total of seven years.

First-year Sanskrit has for its textbook the excellent *Devavāṇīpraveśikā: An Introduction to the Sanskrit Language*, written by Robert Goldman and Sally Sutherland as an alternative to the old and ethnocentric Edward Perry *Sanskrit Primer*, and now being widely adopted at western universities. Students will also need William Dwight Whitney’s *Sanskrit Grammar*, and his *Roots, Verb-forms, and Primary Derivatives of the Sanskrit Language*, and eventually Monier Monier-Williams’ *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. We recommend doing some preparatory study before starting this class, such as with Judith Tyberg’s *First Lessons in Sanskrit Grammar and Reading*, at least learning the alphabet. Students may wish to consult the bibliographic listing, “Sanskrit Language Study: A Selected Bibliography with Annotations,” available at [www.easterntradition.org](http://www.easterntradition.org). This class is the time-intensive study of the first year of the curriculum, and one should plan to devote four hours per day to study for it during the first term (24 weeks). During the second term a series of very brief but very important works, including the *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* and the *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya Sūtra* (*Heart Sūtra*) that epitomize the Vedānta and the Madhyamaka philosophies respectively, are carefully read and thoroughly analyzed grammatically. Also included here are some of the short works of the *avatāra* and greatest teacher of Advaita Vedānta, Śaṅkarācārya, such as his *Daśa-slokī*.

Second-year Sanskrit takes up that world classic, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, at the rate of about thirty verses per week, utilizing the Annie Besant/Bhagavan Das edition, which gives accurate word-by-word meanings. This allows one to concentrate on the syntax, or learning to think in Sanskrit. It is also the traditional Indian method of teaching Sanskrit, where the teacher gives the meanings of the words, rather than the student trying to find the applicable meaning in the dictionary. This edition has the unique feature of giving the traditional *vigraha* or analysis of compounds, an essential part of classical Sanskrit. The *Bhagavad Gītā* is gone through again in the second term to solidify one’s grasp of the syntax, and to allow more attention to be given to acquiring vocabulary (about 3,000 words), which is normally a focus of second-year Sanskrit.

Third-year Sanskrit undertakes the study of the *Sāṃkhya Kārikā* by Īśvara-kṛṣṇa, a verse treatise of India’s original and oldest religio-philosophic tradition, quite possibly a direct remnant of the primeval Wisdom Tradition, along with its prose commentary by the great sage, Gauḍapāda. This is the normal format of texts of the various Indian religio-philosophic traditions, so it is necessary to learn how to read a commentary in order to study Indian religion and philosophy. In the second term, the *Śāli-stamba Sūtra* is studied, teaching the chain of causation, the twelve *nidānas*, or dependent origination, *pratītya samutpāda*. With this profound doctrine, the Buddha explained the causes of everything in the world, questions that theistic religions address by recourse to the inscrutable will of God. Here Maitreya explains this doctrine on behalf of the Buddha to the Buddha’s close disciple, Śāriputra. Prose dialogue is the normal format of Buddhist *sūtras*, so it is necessary to also be familiar with this type of prose.

Fourth-year Sanskrit is held conjointly with first-year Tibetan, reading in both languages the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* by Śāntideva. This book is the classic of the *bodhisattva* path among the Buddhist scriptures, the text that the present Dalai Lama, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, takes as his highest inspiration. Unlike some Sanskrit Buddhist texts, it is written in correct and masterful Sanskrit.

Fifth-year Sanskrit is held conjointly with second-year Tibetan, reading in both languages the *Ratnagotravibhāga* by Maitreya along with its commentary by Asaṅga. This is the primary text on the *tathāgata-garbha* doctrine, teaching that everyone has inherent within them the *buddha*-nature. This doctrine is the closest known doctrine to that espoused by the Mahātmās, who teach it in the Theosophical and Bailey writings as the “One Life.” It is frequently used in Tibetan tradition to bridge the *sūtras* and *tantras*. It is a difficult text due to the technical nature of its subject matter.

Sixth- and seventh-year Advanced Sanskrit are also held conjointly with Advanced Tibetan, reading the *Kālacakra Tantra*, foremost of the “Books of Kiu-te” (*rgyud-sde*), with the *Vimala-prabhā* commentary by King Puṇḍarīka of Śambhala. This requires first having received the Kālacakra Initiation. The Kālacakra *sādhana*, or meditation practice, is perhaps the most powerful form of service known today.

## Meditation

The time-honored Rāja Yoga system of meditation is presented in the *Yoga Sūtras* of Patañjali. This system of meditation through controlling the mind forms the indispensable basis of all further growth. Thus the *Yoga Sūtras* along with Vyāsa’s commentary form the core of the meditation line of study in the Foundation Course curriculum. Buddhist meditation, consisting of *śamatha*, “meditative quiescence,” and *vipaśyanā*, “meditative insight,” has, by the Buddhists’ own admission, been unable to improve upon the Rāja Yoga methods. These constitute primarily the Buddhist *śamatha*. *Vipaśyanā*, where improvement is claimed, has to do with the *object* of meditation, not its methods. This object, for Buddhists, is emptiness. The *Yoga Sūtras* are written in extremely condensed form for the sake of ease of memorization. The actual system must be fleshed out by a commentary. As *sūtras* can be made to yield almost any meaning desired because of their brevity, it is vital to be aware of the meaning given by the authoritative Indian tradition. This is found in the commentary by Vyāsa, compiler of the Vedas and *śāstras* for each age. Persons who have read only the *Yoga Sūtras*, often in translations by translators who have not studied Vyāsa’s commentary, may be surprised at how the ancient Indian tradition recorded by him fleshes them out. Vyāsa’s commentary is available in several translations.

The bare text of the *Yoga Sūtras* is read in the first term of the first year of the curriculum, to get an outline of its four-part structure, and to become familiar with the eight-limbed Rāja Yoga system it teaches.

It is taken up in earnest with Vyāsa’s commentary (in English translation) in the second year, after students have had a chance to learn Sanskrit grammar in the first year. While Vyāsa’s commentary is too difficult to be studied from the Sanskrit alone by second-year students, they will be in a position to directly see the usage of the many hard to understand technical terms of the Rāja Yoga system. Students can put as little or as much time as they wish into the Sanskrit side of this study. Also included are comparisons with the Buddhist Yogācāra methods of achieving *śamatha*: the system of the five faults and the eight antidotes from Maitreya’s *Madhyānta-vibhāga*, chapter 4; and the system of the nine meditative stages from Asaṅga’s *Yogācāra-bhūmi*, section 13, the *Śrāvaka-bhūmi*. Study of the full Rāja Yoga system, because of how much new mental ground it breaks, will be the most intensive study of the second year of the curriculum, just as learning Sanskrit grammar is in the first year, and studying *The Secret Doctrine* is in the third year.

Selected readings on meditation continue this line of study in the second term of the third year. These are intended to tie together the various teachings on meditation already encountered in the curriculum. The Rāja Yoga system of meditation through controlling the mind, the basis of the Foundation Course, has its parallel in the Buddhist system of meditation. This latter is clearly delineated in Geshe Sopa’s article, “*Śamathavipaśyanāyuganaddha*: The Two Leading Principles of Buddhist Meditation.” Occult meditation, as was seen from reading *Letters on Occult Meditation* in the first year, differs from the Rāja Yoga system and its parallel Buddhist system. The most important difference is in the use of visualization and mantras as the primary technique of occult meditation. But it connects back. Successful visualization requires a specific level of ability in controlling the mind, i.e., in Rāja Yoga. This is specified in the parallel Buddhist system as achieving the fourth of the nine stages of *śamatha*. Once this fourth stage has been achieved, visualization itself can be used to achieve the remaining stages of *śamatha*. Thus, one can here switch over to the path of occult meditation in order to more quickly attain the same results. Occult meditation, as distinguished by the techniques of visualization and mantras, is called in the East tantric meditation, being the kind taught in the tantras, the “Books of Kiu-te.” It is known as the quick path, because by following it one can achieve in a single lifetime what would otherwise take many lifetimes. Visualization in tantric meditation termed “deity yoga,” since one visualizes oneself as a divine form. Occult or tantric meditation, and its primary technique of visualization or deity yoga, is explained in great detail in Tsong-kha-pa’s *Snags rim chen mo*. The first section of this difficult work has been summarized by Jeffrey Hopkins in his article, “Reason as the Prime Principle in Tsong kha pa’s Delineation of Deity Yoga as the Demarcation Between Sūtra and Tantra.” Deity yoga is the primary technique of the first of the the two stages of tantric meditation, called the generation stage. An overview including this and the second stage, the completion stage, is found in Geshe Sopa’s article, “The Subtle Body in Tantric Buddhism.” The completion stage practice of the highest *tantra*, Kālacakra, is the six-limbed yoga, which has a parallel in the six stages of building the *antaḥkaraṇa* taught in *The Rays and the Initiations*, by Alice Bailey. Kālacakra, however, requires initiation to be practiced. There is one tantric meditation that can be practiced without initiation: Vajra-sattva. Vajra-sattva seems to be what is called in the Ageless Wisdom Tradition the Solar Angel. It is the first tantric meditation taught,

and it continues to be used as an initial part of more advanced tantric meditations. There are now many sources available on this, some of which are included in these selected readings.

There are also a number of helpful books available that students may wish to read for individual study, supplementing the curriculum, such as H. Saraydarian's *The Science of Meditation*, which includes teachings on occult meditation, Samdhong Rinpoche's *Buddhist Meditation*, and books by Alan Wallace specializing in *samatha* meditation.

**Electives** (These are the ones we offered, and are included here as examples.)

“Survey of the Hindu, Jaina, and Buddhist Scriptures” covers the scriptures of the three religions of ancient Āryāvarta, or greater India, regarded in the Wisdom Tradition as the spiritual motherland of our planet. The teachings of the Ageless Wisdom Tradition, once universally diffused, and the inheritance of all humanity, have been preserved in these scriptures more completely and in less altered form than elsewhere in the world. These scriptures are found in two broad divisions: the revealed texts such as the Hindu Vedas and the Buddhist *sūtras*, and the texts putting these revelations into systems of thought, such as the Hindu *darśanas* and the Buddhist *śāstras*. The former group, recorded in the language of symbolism, is fully accessible only to faculties beyond the mind, such as *buddhi* (which is why they often seem strange and fantastic to many of us). The latter group systematizes into thought the revelations of the former from three standpoints, which are well-attested in these writings, but are generally disregarded. When this fact is recognized, these texts will not be seen as contradictory to each other, but rather as complementary. This class is where in the curriculum systems of thought such as Yogācāra, so often referred to by Blavatsky, are surveyed. Attention is here also called to the texts presenting models of the universe in their respective traditions, for comparison with that of *The Secret Doctrine*: the Buddhist *Abhidharma-kośa*, the Jaina *Tattvārthādhigama Sūtra*, and the Hindu Purāṇas.

“Introduction to Literary Tibetan” is offered as an elective in the third year of the curriculum, even though first-year Tibetan is not offered until the fourth year of the curriculum. In our experience, persons who do not complete their Sanskrit language studies before getting involved in Tibetan language studies rarely go on to complete their Sanskrit studies. It is for this reason that full Tibetan language studies are not scheduled in the curriculum until the fourth year (it takes most westerners three years to acquire a working knowledge of Sanskrit). This short introductory course, however, is offered near the end of the first term of the third year, before the *Śāli-stamba Sūtra* is taken up in the second term in the Sanskrit line of study, for those who wish to also follow this *sūtra* in Tibetan. Literary Tibetan here refers to the language of Tibetan Buddhist writings, particularly to that of the Tibetan Buddhist canon. Tibetan grammar is learned from the simple Tibetan text used by Tibetan children, the *Legs bsad ljon pa'i dbaṅ po*, translated into English by Noble Ross Reat as *The Divine Tree*. This is followed by reading the *Prajñā-pāramitā-hṛdaya Sūtra* (*Heart Sūtra*) in Tibetan, which was earlier read in Sanskrit in the first year of the curriculum.

“Survey of Kālacakra Material in English” was originally offered at a time when no books on Kālacakra existed in English, so it covered journal articles, portions of books, etc., pertaining to Kālacakra. Now that several books on Kālacakra do exist in English, it would draw largely on these, including *The Wheel of Time*, by Geshe Lhundub Sopa, et al. Geshe Sopa says about Kālacakra that “most Tibetan Buddhists believe it to represent the very pinnacle of Buddhist esoterism. The Kalachakra presents the Buddha's most profound and complex statement on matters both worldly and religious, and its intricacies have placed it beyond the ken of all but a specialized few scholars and practitioners who can master it only by understanding a vast range of traditional ideas and practices. In Tibet, it traditionally was a specialty of the Panchen Lama and the monks of bKra shis lhun po (Tashilunpo).” (*The Wheel of Time*, p. 91 & fn.). Kālacakra, because of its close association with *The Secret Doctrine*, forms an integral part of this curriculum, with the reading of the original texts in Sanskrit and Tibetan scheduled in the sixth and seventh years. The regular performance of the full Kālacakra *sādhana* as world service was a major goal of this school.

This curriculum is designed for the school year to begin in January, after the winter solstice when the sun begins to move northward. The first term lasts 24 weeks. A six-week break begins about the time of the summer solstice. The second term begins in early August, lasting 20 weeks. This is followed by a two-week year-end break. There are no fees.

[The foregoing article was written by David Reigle. It is an adapted and expanded version of his article, "Eastern School and Its Curriculum," published in *The Eclectic Theosophist*, n.s. vol. 22, no. 4, Winter 1993, pp. 23-27. This school no longer exists. The three-year Foundation Course was offered from 1984-1986 in southern Oregon, U.S.A. At the time it existed, we did not realize that the simple and unpretentious name, "Eastern School," was once used by H. P. Blavatsky for her Esoteric Section of the Theosophical Society, as "Eastern School of Theosophy." Since we never had any presumption of any possible connection with this, we have not retained this name. This online edition is published by Eastern Tradition Research Institute, copyright 2005.]