

One and Zero

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Wherever you go, you can always find some mystical figures. Some are highly respected and some are dubious. Where Wong Haff belongs, you will need to figure out for yourself. In all respects, Wong Haff is not an average person. He doesn't own much: just two sets of clothes, a winter jacket, a towel, a toothbrush, maybe a few more things. He doesn't deal with money. He lives wherever possible: with his friends, in a cave, homeless shelter, etc. Certain fitness centers let him use their showers. He is not a big eater but eats whatever available: donation from his friends, wild fruits in a forest, foods from dumpsters, etc. He mainly travels on foot. Occasionally, he gets a ride from his friends or strangers. He doesn't have any health insurance (or insurance of any kind). When he gets sick or injured, which happens once in a while, he takes a rest. If he gets seriously sick or injured, which has not happened yet, he is prepared to expire (at least, that's what he says). He does not have a cell phone but does have a free email account, which he accesses in public libraries. If you want to get in touch, ask any of his friends for his email address.

This time, I will focus on just one topic which Wong Haff occasionally talks about. It is about "one" and "zero." No, it is not that binary system used in modern computers. What he talks about goes back thousands of years, well before the age of computers. So, here is what we heard one day.

"People confuse meditation type. People think yoga and Buddhist meditation is similar. Sure, both use similar technique. Both focus on breath. Both involve concentration and mindfulness. But two is very different. I explain. Simply, Yoga is ONE mediation and Buddhism is ZERO meditation."

Despite how he speaks, people understand Wong Haff all right. It is always the content of his

talk that intrigues people. The place from where Wong Haff came lacks everything, except for gocheep, a cross between a goat and a sheep. There are no stores, government offices, temples, or libraries. Actually, none of them have books. So, everything Wong Haff learned there was orally from other people. People there like to exchange ideas. After coming to this country, he got familiarized with the culture of this country. He also started to read books in libraries.

“This idea, ONE and ZERO, I first learn in Daniel Goleman’s book about meditation. Before that, Goleman learn this idea from someone else. This someone classify meditation into ONE and ZERO type. ONE meditation is unite with some supernatural being. ONE meditation is dream. ONE meditation is escape. Contrary, ZERO meditation is direct experience environment. ZERO mediation is reality. ZERO meditation is acceptance. In my country, people practice ZERO meditation. I not know ONE meditation until I come here. Distinction is interesting. People here mix ONE and ZERO meditation. People is confused. But worth understanding. Distinction is useful. Also, this apply to how people think, not just meditation.”

Wong Haff did not intend to come to this country. He did not pay for the flight either. Actually, there is no airport there. He came here because the military (of this country) kidnapped him. The military thought that he was a high profile political figure in disguise and in hiding. After the military realized that it was a mistake, they dumped Wong Haff on a street here. That’s why he ended up among us.

“After coming here, I learn a lot about Western culture. This is interesting. People practice ONE meditation. People like ONE idea. ONE idea is like this. Self is very important. Extremely important. People is obsessed. Philosophy study self. People try to become big. As big as God. People like to become God. In my country, people practice ZERO meditation. People like ZERO idea. ZERO idea is like this. Self is observed. Objectively. People is flexible. Path study observation. People try to become transparent. As clear as air. People like to become environment. I not say good or bad. Two is different way of thinking and path.”

Many of Wong Haff’s friends are intrigued about the contrast. In fact, many of them practice some sort of meditation. Some of them devote to one tradition. Others try different traditions. Many of them are still confused. They are also interested in the origin of the contrast and asked Wong Haff about it.

“I not know. But let’s look at India. ONE and ZERO idea meet there long time ago. India people is Westerner. They may not look like. But they is. Hinduism and Yoga is Western tradition. They like ONE idea. Then, Buddha come from Nepal. He is Easterner. He promote ZERO idea. But Buddhism and ZERO idea died in India. Because India like ONE idea. They like ONE meditation. Later, ZERO idea spread to other Eastern country. There, ZERO idea survive. They practice ZERO meditation. My country like ZERO idea. There, people not know ONE idea.”

Many of Wong Haff's friends are really surprised that there is such a significant chasm between Yoga and Buddhism. Many thought that these two traditions were very similar. Of course, if you read even a little about the history, these two traditions intersect. Buddhism developed in the backdrop of Yoga (I am talking about Yoga more as a way of living, not as exercise as commonly perceived in this country). One of the most well-known Yoga texts, *Yoga Sutra*, is written and affected by Buddhism. But Wong Haff emphasizes the contrast. In this country, both Yoga and Buddhism are becoming more and more popular. Another common question of his friends is about the impact of the ONE and ZERO ideas in the modern world.

“Situation change. World is smaller. Even I fly to this country. And even here, some people study ZERO idea. Some people practice ZERO meditation. ZERO idea can change even this country. Same time, many Eastern country become modern. Now, many people in Eastern country like ONE idea. ONE idea make modern. But some people there still like ZERO idea. They not need modern. People is confused. People fight. But this is not good or bad. We live in complex world. Now, in Western or Eastern country, things become ONE-HALF.”