

When We Die by Geoffrey Farthing

When We Die
A Little Book to "Lighten Our Darkness"

by Geoffrey Farthing

Published in the late 1900's

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PREFACE

It is generally assumed that very little is known about what happens when we die. There are numerous accounts from spiritualist sources but they are not consistent among themselves in important detail. All religions have some teaching on the subject, but it is usually unspecific or incomplete, and often not convincing, especially to those of us of an enquiring mind. The account given in this book, even if regarded as only a theory based on a number of basic postulates, is at least reasonably complete and, if these postulates are accepted, credible. Some of them are confirmed by our common experience: for example, the cyclic nature of Nature's operations - days and nights, the seasons of the year. When used in the context of life and death, they certainly provide us with considerable food for thought.

It is claimed by Those who know that these postulates are facts. The idea that they are indeed facts and that they can be known appears more and more feasible as we begin to see something of the whole picture presented in this book. Broadly, the claim that there can be such knowledge is based on the tradition that there are men who possess it. It is posited that there are, beyond the human kingdom, evolutionary stages attainable by all of us, in time. Progress into these higher stages will, however, not be physical but subjective, that is, it will be by means of inner faculties not yet active within most of us at present. These faculties reach a point where an individual so developed is able to perceive the inner workings of Nature. This is not psychism but spiritual vision, something quite different from normal clairvoyance. By its means, even the thoughts and emotions of others become perceptible. These are the internal subjective activities that it is said we indulge in, although to a much lesser degree, after death, when we are in a corresponding subjective state. Normally in our daily lives our thoughts and emotions are quite private to ourselves, but this is not so to these spiritually developed individuals. They are known traditionally by various names: in this book the terms Adepts, Initiates, Masters or Masters of Wisdom are used.

To be more specific about the degree of their attainment, it is recognized that they are men who have worked out through many lives all the defects, deficiencies and limitations of the personal man. As we shall see, man has a divine spiritual component to his nature, such that when he can function consciously at that level he not only knows his own divinity (God) but also becomes virtually omniscient relative to even the highest genius in ordinary humanity. This omniscience extends into the inner realms of Nature. It is here that, to some extent, we ourselves are, not only in normal thought but also in the after-death states. The Adepts can function consciously in these realms and therefore know the states and activities in them of those we call the dead. Quoting one of the Masters, a little out of context:

We tell you what we know, for we are made to learn it through personal experience.

[M.L. 128:131]

Needless to say, Masters of this stature appear very rarely in the annals of the world's history, and in their life-times they were never publicly known for what they were. Among reputed Adepts or Initiates were Plato, Pythagoras, Apollonius of Tyana, and Paracelsus. Some of their more occult teachings, apart from a great mass of religious and philosophical literature known to mankind throughout the centuries, were made public for the first time at the end of the last century. This was done in some letters written by two of them to a Mr A.P. Sinnett (a journalist working in India at the time) and in the writings of one of their

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pupils, Mme H.P. Blavatsky.

Mme Blavatsky received a letter posing the question: "Enough has been given out at various times regarding the conditions of post-mortem existence, to furnish a solid block of information on this point. The writer would be glad to be told where this information may be found. Is it in print? Or must one be an Occultist enough to find it out in the "Symbology" of the Bible for himself?"

Her reply:

It is certainly necessary to be an "Occultist" before the post-mortem states of man can be correctly understood and realized, for this can only be accomplished through the actual experience of one who has the faculty of placing his consciousness on the Kamalokic and Devachanic planes. But a good deal has been given out in The Theosophist. Much also can be learnt from the symbology not only of the Bible but of all religions, especially the Egyptian and the Hindu. Only again the key to that symbology is in the keeping of the Occult Sciences and their Custodians.

[C.W.IX, 171]

Many of the expressions in the extracts and the literature are in English spelling (moulded for molded, favourable for favorable, etc.), and some of the expressions in the quoted passages from these writings are not in today's conventional English but are easily understood. No apology is made for the number and, in some cases, the length of these quotations, as they constitute the prime source of our information. Without these Letters we would have little more idea of the after-death states than common speculation provides.

Words inserted in the quoted extracts in square brackets are added into the text by the author of this book.

The quoted passages are from the following sources:

M.L. = The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett; two editions; page numbers to the 3rd edition are given first, those to the 1st and 2nd editions second, e.g. M.L. 128:131. The extracts are from the 2nd edition.

Key = The Key to Theosophy by H.P. Blavatsky; there are various editions of this work with different page numbering. Here chapter and page numbers refer to the original edition.

C.W. = The Collected Writings of H.P. Blavatsky; edited by Boris de Zirkoff in fourteen volumes, I to XIV.

S.D. = The Secret Doctrine by H.P. Blavatsky; first and second editions, originally in two volumes, I and II, but later published in a third edition with different page numbering, when a third volume, III, and an Index, were added. Later still a fourth edition, known as the Adyar edition, in six volumes including an

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Index, came out, and this also had its own page numbering. The references here quoted are to the original edition.

T.G. = The Theosophical Glossary by H.P. Blavatsky and others.

"When we die, our interior light (the soul) ascends, agreeably to the attraction of its star (the spirit), but it must first of all get rid of the coils of the serpent (earthly evil - sin); that is to say, of the unpurified astral light, which surrounds and holds it captive, unless, by the force of will, it frees and elevates itself. This immersion of the living soul in the dead light (the emanations of everything that is evil, which pollute the earth's magnetic atmosphere, as the exhalation of a swamp does the air) is a dreadful torture; the soul freezes and burns therein, at the same time."

Eliphas Lévi: Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie, Vol.I, p 219, as quoted in H.P. Blavatsky's Collected Writings, Vol.I, p 288

"They forget - or never knew that he who holds the keys to the secrets of Death is possessed of the keys of Life".

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FOREWORD

With the spread of western economic development into the so-called undeveloped countries and its intensification in the developed countries, human values are being subjected to enormous pressures and changes. Happiness is being sought in a multiplicity of possessions, in the distractions of modern entertainment both within and without the home, in holidays abroad; in general, in external things. Interest in religious matters, in ethical and moral codes of behaviour, is being ousted in the quest for immediate pleasure and gratification of even the smallest desires.

This is the age of unquietness and even those pockets of tranquillity that existed by way of religious communities in out-of-the-way places are being invaded with the march of so-called progress on one hand and tourism on the other. We now seldom stop to think, to consider what our lives are all about and certainly very seldom do we stop to think what may happen when we die.

Most of us have some sort of religious background and from the very earliest years of our lives have been inculcated with ideas about the hereafter which vary according to the religious tradition into which we were born. These we have accepted without question and so our lives proceed and the subject of death is pushed into the background for most of us in the ordinary course of our lives. Periodically, however, we suffer a staggering shock; someone near to us has had a fatal accident, a relative has cancer, a friend has AIDS. On an otherwise calm horizon suddenly death appears, stark and very real. There is no escape. In the course of a lifetime most of us manage somehow to cope with such situations; we can survive the shock and maybe the ultimate loss involved. Sometimes it falls to our lot to care for the dying, as do those in hospices. They see some die peacefully, reassured, maybe by the resident priest, maybe by the sympathetic understanding of a friend or relative, but maybe in complete faith that they are, so to speak, in the arms of the almighty who, to them, knows what he is about. Everything will be all right. There are those, however, who resent death and struggle to the end. For them the very prospect is agonizing and not a little frightening.

Maybe as a result of experiences like this the inevitability of death is borne in on us. We can accept it fairly calmly when it is associated with other people but can we face the prospect so calmly when it is our death that we have to contemplate, especially against the background of those ideas we may have gathered on the subject.

There is all sorts of counselling which can lead to our acceptance of the inevitable as calmly and peacefully as possible, to relax and go into a situation from which there is no escape. It has to be endured, whatever it is. Against this it is the experience of many who have attended the dying that Nature is not unkind in the vast majority of cases. This kind of acceptance is in-built into the process. The attitudes of the dying person change as the process progresses towards its climax. This is not always the case, but is common. So there is a twofold consolation: one is that Nature herself alters our attitudes, and the other is the possession of a great faith that all will be well.

There is, however, as a result of this book, WHEN WE DIE ..., a third possibility. If we can accept the information given in it, we can understand and know something about the processes of death, both by way of what happens to us as conscious entities and of what happens to us in consciousness. We also

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learn something of what the event of death is in the long processes of what we come to regard as life, which in itself goes on for ever, manifesting only periodically in temporary forms. Such temporary form is our present personality. The book further extends our horizon by introducing us to the idea that we, as spiritual beings as opposed to temporary personalities, persist into a seemingly endless future. Not only does it do that but it engenders the idea that this long sequence of lives has a progressive purpose. The end result is human perfection and this is attained by the efforts we make and the experiences we have when we are alive. Every life has a long-term purpose, whether we are aware of it or not. This purpose is in line with the universal process of evolution, the attainment of perfection by stages over a time period unimaginable to most of us as human personalities who regard life in terms of the usual three score years and ten.

Even if this book is read only for interest, it must leave some seeds of ideas which, as we dwell on them, must grow in feasibility and thereby in acceptance.

It is a book for all seriously thinking people to read and ponder on its ramifications, not only for themselves but for the whole of humankind. We can only be infinitely indebted to those great souls who made this information available to us.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

"To die, to sleep,
No more; and, by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep! perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: ...
... who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?"

Shakespeare.

The above is an extract from Hamlet's soliloquy on death in the third Act of the play (Scene i). It summarizes the thoughts of many of us about death, even though we are not, as Hamlet was, contemplating suicide. As we look further into the subject, we shall see how acute was Shakespeare's insight in talking of post-mortem dreams. He also reminds us that no one ever returns from the other shore when once he has died. Whether or not that is as true as we have come to accept, we shall also see. We must all at some time or another not only experience the death of others but die ourselves. Whatever we believe, we must at least wonder what is going to happen thereafter.

Much has been said on the subject, but what in fact does happen is not generally known and most of us have only vague ideas about what does or could survive death. We are even more vague about any conditions there may be for the soul or whatever it is that survives death. There are two ancient books, the Tibetan Book of the Dead and the Egyptian Book of the Dead, which go a long way towards answering these questions. These accounts, however, are not in plain language and require considerable knowledge of their symbolism before they can have a meaning for us. Later the Greek philosophers made pronouncements on the subject in plainer terms, but these also are somewhat incomplete, leaving much to be deduced.

In recent times we have had accounts of the after-death states given by spiritualists. These are certainly in plain language and cover a wide field of experience, but unfortunately are often inconsistent with each other. Nevertheless they do provide what for many people is powerful evidence of something personal surviving death.

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Innumerable books have been written about purported near-death experiences, and there must be many thousands of people who have seemingly received messages from their loved ones and others during spiritualistic séances. There can be no denying that such messages have been a great comfort to most of those who have received them. This was particularly true during the two world wars when many of the messages came from members of the armed forces who had been recently killed in action. At these and other times of disaster there seems to be an increase in the number of such communications.

Our religions have their beliefs about what happens after death, but especially in the West such teachings are often in simplistic terms of heaven and hell and of entering into the company of saints or the presence of God. At the same time we are often told of a day of judgment when all secrets will be revealed.

This book does not set out to address religious or spiritualistic views as such, but it deals with the after-death processes and circumstances in what must be, to most of us, a completely new way, against a background of postulates and in a language, with its own technical terms, to which we must accustom ourselves if we would really see something of the grand picture which unfolds.

The scheme of things to be described is in line with a stream of thought (some would claim - knowledge) which, tradition has it, has existed from time immemorial. It is touched on in much ancient literature, but with the passage of time, the central core of this ancient knowledge has become overlaid by myth and allegory and, in some religious systems, particularly those of modern times, has been nearly effaced altogether.

Some of the main features of the ancient doctrines, along with some ideas we may already have, are restated in this book. However, the various aspects of the teaching cannot be dealt with in isolation because they are all inter-related. They can also be seen as included, as integral parts, in a great body of knowledge with which they are completely consistent. This vast comprehensive knowledge is quite outside the scope of this book (the interested reader is referred to the writings of H.P. Blavatsky for it) but it is assumed that the reader will be prepared to accept some ideas which, to start with, will have to be taken completely on trust. He is asked to accept them as hypotheses. No beliefs are called for. What is set forth must stand or fall on its own merits. If an effort is made to relate what is said to our everyday experience and to what science in its various disciplines has discovered of the nature of the world we live in and of its laws, it will be seen to be reasonably justified. Many of the postulates used, however, go beyond what modern science has so far regarded as its field of investigation. This is because the subject matter largely relates to inner or subjective realms of being.

The ideas will be stated as facts, and it is hoped that, as the story unfolds, they will be seen to be at least feasible, even if not acceptable.

The story is told in several phases, mainly in the order in which the after-death processes occur. There is, however, a close relationship between the stages, and additional information about each of them has to be supplied occasionally to help us to understand what is happening. Some preliminary basic information - some of it maybe difficult to comprehend because it is different from commonly held concepts - is set out in this chapter. In Chapter Two, this general information is expanded and the whole subject put into a

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setting bigger than that of our personal lives and deaths. In Chapter Three, a description is given of the constitution of man from an esoteric viewpoint. It is complex, but a knowledge of the various elements of this constitution and the parts they play in our overall make-up is necessary to follow what happens to them after death. The other chapters tell what happens at the instant of death and just after, and what occurs afterwards in the inner worlds until the various processes have been completed. The final phase is described and discussed in considerable depth. It is in this state, corresponding somewhat to the heaven of Christian (and other) belief, that we spend the greater part of our time after death. It corresponds to a night's sleep after a day of activity. It is here that Shakespeare's "perchance to dream" has relevance.

One of the fundamental ideas concerning the after-life is that it does not last for ever. The teaching is that nothing whatever in the whole Cosmos, from worlds to men to the tiniest conceivable things, nor any event, time period or process, lasts for ever. Everything comes and goes: no state of being here or hereafter is everlasting. A realization of this fact has far-reaching consequences. If we accept that there are such things as after-death states, it means that they also do not last for ever. This being the case, we are faced with two alternatives: either nothing survives death, so there is no question of the term of survival, or there is an end to the term of the after-death states. This means a resuscitation, a coming again, a rebirth, a return to life, such as we see in Nature in the physical world in the springtime. The teaching says that this latter is indeed the case, but the process is not simple. There are many factors for consideration: what returns? what lives again? how does it return? And there are further associated questions: whence the great differences between people on rebirth and the various fates in store for them? Some answers to these questions are in the chapters which follow.

Then there is another interesting question: if "from whose bourn no traveller returns" is true, how does anyone know what occurs after death? For the purposes of this account, the powers of the fully developed Adept are the answer. As one of them said, they are made to learn it "through personal experience".

A chapter is devoted to exceptions to the normal process. These mostly concern those who for any reason die prematurely. Each case meets a different fate.

Then, because there is so much evidence of survival from spiritualistic sources, the nature of this evidence is examined and explanations of the more common phenomena are given.

Lastly, we have a mass of information further to enrich our understanding of all phases. We are even given glimpses of what the whole cosmic process, which obviously involves both life and death, is about. Each of us is involved and each plays a significant, an essential part. A vista of long-term progress is opened up, culminating in realms of glorious Being which eclipse all our familiar descriptions of Heaven or Paradise and make them appear trivial by comparison. We are told that the study of Death is the proper study of LIFE, everlasting and unlimited .. and it is certainly not morbid.

CHAPTER II

NECESSARY INFORMATION

The Universal Scene

One of the new ideas to which our study of the after-death processes as they affect us human beings introduces us is that the whole subject has to be seen against the vast background of the universal scene. The Universe has to be regarded not only as a dynamic whole with everything in it involved in progressive change, but as a living whole with everything in it manifesting some aspect of One Life. As an example of progressive change, there is our own life story: we are born, grow up, reach maturity and our prime, then we suffer a slow decline into old age and eventually we die. But we are changing all the time, in an irreversible direction. This is the normal course, which includes such common exceptions as accidents, fatal illnesses and other sudden deaths. All of these have to be taken into account, just as in Nature few things survive into really old age. We shall see that this process of an ageing existence between a coming into being and a going therefrom is universal; it is an aspect of universal Law and applies to everything.

The Universal Process is Endless

Another idea is that of continuity. The universal process is continuous and everlasting. However, whereas the process itself is endless, everything that plays a part in the scheme of things is ephemeral, lasting only for its day, whether that day be a fraction of a second or millions of years. This idea includes another, that of the continuum or state of being (or non-being) between life-periods, that is, between appearances in our physical realm. The idea is that between the death and re-birth of anything (an animal or human being, say, or even a universe) there is a causative thread relating that thing to similar things that existed both before its present existence and after its existence has apparently ceased. We are familiar with the genetic mechanism of inherited characteristics in plants and animals; the idea now being considered postulates that there is something similar in the inner invisible worlds. The chain of any particular stream of life is continuous, some links are visible and others, alternate ones, are invisible. As a bald statement this may seem questionable, but as an illustration let us take a baby with its individual character from the moment of its birth. An easy answer to the question, "Where does it (character) come from?", is "From its parents". But this, as we shall see, is not the complete answer. There is another question. How can it be that children of the same parents can be so very different from each other and from their parents, not only physically but also in character,? These character differences are much wider than the most diverse physical characteristics found in families. It must be that they came from some cause lingering somewhere before birth.

The Cycles of Existence

We see Nature as a continuous process. But do these cycles of days and nights, periods of activity and rest, of life and death, merely repeat themselves endlessly? The process itself is endless but it is apparently progressive. Each cycle is obviously terminable, but each cycle of whatever magnitude is part of a greater cycle along the axis of which the smaller cycle is only an incident, a component part, as a minute is within an hour, or a day in a lifetime of some years. This concept of cycles and of alternation and progression along an axis is fundamental to our subject of death in the context of the universal life process.

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The progress of cycles, say days, forming part of a larger cycle, say years, and of years forming part of a life-time, is also illustrative of the process of progressive change. This means that during any period of life we, like all other things, are subject to experiences which affect us. Experience is cumulative: at the end of a day we are not quite the same as we were at the beginning. Similarly, at the end of a life-time we are certainly not the same as we were when we were born. We have had a life-time of experience. This cumulative experience and change in the very long term is the rationale behind the evolutionary process because, as we shall see, the inner subjective world of experience can and does affect the outer objective world. The teaching is that all natural processes proceed "from the within to the without", from subjectivity to objectivity.

It becomes obvious that our ideas on evolution have to be modified and extended. Thinking in large-scale general terms, we see the kingdoms of Nature as examples of stages of evolutionary development: from the mineral comes the vegetable, from the vegetable comes the animal. Some regard man as a super-intelligent animal, others regard humanity as a distinct kingdom. The extension of thinking now required is the recognition that the evolutionary scheme does not stop with the human kingdom. The physical process may be regarded as stopping there, but the inner development of man does not. It continues into superhuman realms, of which there are said to be three stages. These are the further development of inner faculty and potency, to a degree - in the later stages - altogether beyond anything conceivable for man as we normally know him.

Evolution, according to this teaching, is a progressive unfolding of spiritual faculty. In man, for example, there is the slow development of moral responsibility, of an overriding control over his animal nature, a decreasing interest in the toys of life as he becomes more adult, accepting responsibility particularly for his own state, as well as manifesting more of the truly human characteristics of understanding, concern for others, altruism, sympathy, compassion, love, in short all that we term spirituality. This unfolding eventually leads to levels far transcending that of even the most gifted man we can imagine. He becomes a being of a different order altogether; of such are the Initiates and Adepts referred to earlier.

The evolutionary process is also cyclical. Overall it is progressive but each growth stage has to be recapitulated at the start of each new cycle before further progress can be made. For example, a new-born baby has to manifest in its new life what it has learned in terms of character in previous lives before it can begin to develop its faculties further through new experience and the learning of new skills.

Post-Human Kingdoms

The beings comprising the post-human kingdoms are, by definition, superhuman. They play significant parts in the development and government of Cosmos. Be it noted, however, that they are themselves products of the universal process. They have had to become what they are. They were not made as such. To us they may seem as gods; collectively they certainly are 'GOD', but they do not constitute an entity to which that term could be applied. Beyond them, or any manifest thing or being, is the Absolute, endless, immutable, and truly infinite, that which is "beyond the reach of thought". The superhuman beings still associated with our physical realm are the Masters of the Wisdom, Sages, Seers and founders of the great religions: Krishna, Lao Tse, Confucius, Apollonius of Tyana, St Paul, Plato, Buddha and Christ, for example.

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The existence of beings just higher than man as we ordinarily know him is germane to our subject. It is from them that we have this knowledge of the after-death states. Being under the constraints of Initiation they are for the most part under a vow of secrecy and may not divulge publicly what they know.

Divine Economy

Now we come to another idea, perhaps very unfamiliar and maybe difficult to accept at first. It is that nothing in the divine economy is ever wasted. This applies not only to physical things but also to subjective things in the inner worlds. There is, so to speak, a universal memory and a total conservation of 'what is'.

Invisible Worlds

These ideas lead us on to yet others. One is that of invisible worlds. We have just used the words "subjective" and "inner". These terms usually pertain to mind, feeling or consciousness, which are not physical phenomena; nevertheless they are entirely real; they are within everyone's experience. They are important to us. They are the rich stuff of our inner life. Both thinking and feeling are human faculties. In the next chapter we shall see that, for them to register in consciousness, they must have a sort of being: they must be something or we could not be aware of them. This is yet another important idea: everything in the universe, whether it be an insect, a flower, an atom, a tree, a man, or a feeling, a thought, an imaginary picture, a concept, a flash of anger, or an upwelling of affection, is something, an existence - whether enduring or fleeting, and its impress remains in the universal memory for ever.

The Idea of Principles or Vehicles

A corollary to this is that if it is something, it must exist in some form or another. There must be something to give it a being, something through and/or in which it operates. This may not be immediately obvious but an illustration may help. Suppose we want to move an object, lift a bucket, for example; we have to apply force. Now the force cannot by itself lift the bucket. It needs an instrument, a hand or an arm, to make it effective. Force by itself is a mere abstraction and cannot do anything without a means of application. The same rule applies in the inner worlds. That which gives effect to such things as thinking and feeling is known as a principle. We shall see that the inner man is composed of principles and, anticipating the next chapter, it is these which constitute man's soul, the fate of which is the subject of this book.

Life and Death Inseparable

In studying the subject of death, we soon discover that it is inseparable from life. Maybe up to now we have seen it as the end of life. We have perhaps known its awful finality, especially in our own bereavements, when those who, in terms of normal life and all it means, have gone from us. We know that our loved one has somehow left the body for ever, and that what departed was the real person. We are confronted with a corpse, an empty shell. We are now going to see what happens to the one just dead, both as regards his principles and his experiences.

A few more fundamental concepts are necessary before we can even reasonably comprehend the after-death processes.

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Universal Law

We have not mentioned universal Law as such, but we have seen something of its aspects: evolution, alternation and cycles. Now we must extend our view to include the idea of cause and effect. According to the Law, every effect - and that means everything that is, everything that now exists - is the result of antecedent causes. In our thinking about the Law and this aspect of cause and effect, we have to grasp the further idea that there are worlds or realms of causes, as in our life here, and there are after-death worlds or realms of effects, which are conditioned solely by the world (here) of causes. Whatever we do, think or say now is a cause in that sense. The chain of causation is infinitely complex and in its infinite workings is quite beyond the comprehension of man. But we can see it exemplified in simple instances. We rub a match-head on an abrasive surface, the match lights. This seems a simple cause and effect combination. On examination, however, it demonstrates how complex are the workings of the Law. Matches had to be invented. The ingredients for a match-head had to be assembled, mixed and applied to a match stick. The matches had to be made available to us via transport, the shop, the shop-assistant. We had to have the necessary money, and so on, and so on.

Because of this complexity we cannot possibly see how the Law will work in specific cases. For example, unbeknown to us, our matches may have been kept in a damp place, and the expected result of striking one would not happen. The Law would not have been defective; we would simply have been ignorant of all the factors involved.

Another principal aspect of the Law is its adjusting and harmonizing role. The Universe works according to Law in all its departments. Everything is subject to the Law. It is this Law which, in Cosmos, preserves the equilibrium between the mighty forces playing on the heavenly bodies on the macrocosmical scale, to maintain relative stability, and those which operate within the atoms of physical matter at the microcosmical level. This marvellous interplay throughout the whole scheme is the key to the self-preservation of the universe.

The Law works not only on the physical level but also in the inner (to us, subjective) worlds as well, where its workings have a moral element. In terms of consequences, a man's motives are as important, if not more so, than his actions. A cruelty or pain inflicted intentionally will have very different retributive effects on the perpetrator from a similar hurt inflicted unintentionally. The Eastern name now commonly used in the West for the Law, is Karma. We shall see how important is a knowledge of its workings to our understanding of what goes on after death.

Creation

Another new idea necessary for our understanding of the hereafter concerns what is commonly called creation. We are mostly used to the notion that if anything, from a universe to a man, exists, it must somehow have been created or brought into being. And with this we associate the idea of a creator. For many of us, when thinking in cosmic terms, that creator is God. In our present study we have to look at that idea from a new point of view. What do we mean by creation? Is it a bringing forth of something out of nothing? Is such an idea really tenable? For example, do parents really create their off-spring or do they initiate a process with all its elements already existent in themselves? And is not even the process already established? They certainly did not invent it. Neither can they design in looks and character what their children will be. Can the begetters then really be regarded as creators?

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Looked at like this, natural creation is not quite what we may have thought. Man-made creations like works of art, buildings, boats and so on, certainly appear to have been designed and manufactured by someone; but the final product did not result from nothing. Again we can ask, what is creation?

The Everlasting Something - Spirit

In this new view of things, it is postulated that behind all created things there is an everlasting something, an absolute SOMETHING that always IS. That self-existing SOMETHING, however, not only is the root of all the substance in the Universe but also has a life aspect in which the principle of consciousness is inherent. This SOMETHING is the very root or origin of being. From it stems all vitality or animation in every thing or being in Cosmos, and in its aspect as memory it is the origin of design and form in Nature. It tends to reproduce what was before, in other worlds. Everything, therefore, has two aspects: one is substance (or matter) to give it form, the other is sentiency or consciousness. These are rudimentary at the lowest evolutionary levels, but they become complex as the ladder of being is ascended. In this concept, therefore, everything in the whole cosmic scheme is living. There is no dead matter, and everything, even what is called inorganic substance, is conscious in its degree. The original SOMETHING behind all existence is dual, having itself the aspects of Matter and Consciousness. This latter may be regarded simply as the energy inherent in the atoms of matter. In the teachings we are considering it is called Spirit, and in this sense everything is spiritual in its essential nature.

In another sense, Spirit is all Potentiality. Evolution is the process whereby this potentiality is actualized, made manifest or expressed. To our finite minds the universe must appear as infinite both in extent, according to our ordinary ideas of magnitude, and in depth, in terms of inwardness or subjectivity with respect to our ordinary objective perceptions. The inner realms are the invisible, abstract ones, of powers, qualities and so on. It is from these inward, spiritual realms that physical things with their natures and characteristics are projected into objectivity. This is the true process of what is called creation.

The Potentialities of Spirit

It is not within the scope of this book to explain in detail where the forms, shapes and colours of things come from, but briefly they are the manifestations of some of the inherent potentialities of Spirit: they are the accumulated results of the actualized experience of living things, the aggregate results of their brief spells of physical existence. As everything in the Cosmos is living, so there are living beings in these worlds normally invisible to us. These beings also have their experiences and are changed by them. They too evolve. At lowly levels these beings are elementary entities, known as Elementals. (See Appendix for more information about them and the role they play in the scheme of things.)

Universal Law

It is necessary to introduce, even though without expanding, these ideas so as to show that nothing, not even creation, is arbitrary, i.e. comes about at the whim of a 'Creator'. Rather all that happens is according to Law. The whole sequential process is one of Law, of cause and effect, . The Law is intelligent (what this means is explained in the Appendix) and embraces not only retribution but also recompense. To regard Law as the highest Deity would accord with the teaching. In its workings it is inexorable. In our human terms, "God is not mocked, for whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (II Cor.vi.7): this is indeed the Law which in Eastern literature and throughout this book is recognized as Karma.

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We shall see how applicable are all these ideas to our after-life.

The Place of Human Values

One danger of explanations of the kind given here is that they may seem to omit consideration of the truly human values of kindness, love, compassion, mercy and all that otherwise makes up the meaningful content of our lives. But such is not the case. For life's richness, its beauties, the delights of colour, form, our habitually favourite things, our associations with people, events and places, even our efforts, hopes, disappointments and so on are the stuff of life. Our lives consist of this wealth of memories, responses, appreciations, the whole content of our inner life, and it is all this which determines the nature of our after life.

Various Levels of Existence

Another basic concept supplementary to that of the inner subjective realms is that they comprise a series of various levels, or that they operate in various modes. Primarily there are seven of these levels. These are often regarded as planes of existence or as modes of consciousness, or as the habitat of entities who function in them, from the physical up to the highest spiritual levels.

Spheres of Cause and Effect

Related to the concept of various levels is the further one that there are alternate spheres of existence: spheres of effects which are conditioned by what happens in spheres of causes. For example, much of what we dream is conditioned by our experience in daily life and our reactions to it, both emotional and mental. Our dream world in this case is one of effects with respect to our causative world of everyday activity. In the ordinary way, when we are in a dream state we do not know we are dreaming and we cannot alter the course of the dream. To that extent the dream state is one of effects and further, when we are in it we cannot alter or do anything - consciously or otherwise - to affect the real world. The Masters tell us that there are similar worlds of causes and worlds of effects at the cosmic level. When the life of a planet comes to an end, its period of activity, of causes, is then finished and there begins a period of inactivity or rest, a state of effects. These worlds of effects are sometimes referred to as intermediary spheres between those of active, causative existence.

Cycles of Life and Death

From the preceding information it should now be possible to see that the story of the after-death states reflects, among other things, the law of alternation, with its cycles of life and death continuously repeated. Rebirth or reincarnation is the culmination of the after-death processes. Our death and then our coming back into birth, the re-emergence from the state of non-being (from our physical point of view), with all the personal characteristics we then possess, are events in a continuous chain. As we shall see, our present personal lives are much more the parents of our next life than our future physical mothers and fathers will be.

Summary

To summarize: in this chapter we have introduced many ideas essential to an understanding of the after-death processes described in this book. They are all rich in associations and contemplation of them opens up wide vistas of understanding. Perhaps the most important is that of the Universe as a living

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Unity which necessarily includes each and every one of us. The corollary to this is that everything in the Universe is living, is indeed a life. There is no dead matter. Everything is sentient in its own degree. In later developmental stages of these lives, as the kingdoms are ascended, mere sentience becomes what we know as consciousness, until in man it becomes self-consciousness, and he achieves awareness not only of his environment but also of himself in it.

Everything in a Universe comes and goes; this is the law of cycles. Even the Universe itself manifests periodically, but the duration of its periods of activity and rest are unimaginably long in terms of our earth years.

Each cycle of existence, by reason of accumulated experience, is higher, that is, it is further along the road to perfection than its predecessor; this is the process of evolution. All is in a state of endless progressive change. The cosmic process is everlasting. Life, in this sense, is everlasting.

Because things necessarily come and go according to this cyclic law, life and death constitute a cycle and are inseparable. Death is the discarding of forms which have served their temporary purpose, since the irreversible ageing process must inevitably take its toll. With the disappearance of forms (such as our bodies), life enters into a state of non-being, but it does not cease.

The multitudinous functions of Nature, in a completely comprehensive sense, are all according to Universal Law. The Law has a number of aspects. The principal ones are: cyclic alternation; cause and effect; continuous adjustment, the preservation of equilibrium, balancing; perpetual motion, continuous change; progressive development, the unfolding of infinite spiritual potentiality.

Change is wrought by experience. Everything in Cosmos is learning, learning to fulfil an ever higher function. The One Life in its multitudinous forms moves up through the kingdoms. The culmination of this process on earth is Man. Humanity is qualifying to pass into super-humanity. This is the purpose of his many existences on this earth.

This immense achievement could not possibly be made in one lifetime. It takes many - very many - lifetimes, and this is the underlying reason for successive lives or reincarnation. What reincarnates and how each life's experience is assimilated and accumulated in each individual is the subject of this book.

Since humanity is made up of individuals, its progress can come only through each of its component units, and each of us is such a unit. Do we not therefore have a great responsibility, not only for ourselves but for the whole human family? That is an important idea that comes from this study, probably the most important we could ever have.

The Grand Doctrine - its Terminology

This chapter introduces the salient ideas of the grand doctrine as they relate to the post-mortem states, but in the extracts from the literature quoted in succeeding chapters, the Masters use unfamiliar words and terms. Explanations of these in the text would break the narrative, but many of these will be found in

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the Glossary and there is additional information in the Appendix.

CHAPTER III

MAN'S COMPLEX NATURE

It is now necessary to see what manner of being a man is and how he fits into the great scheme of things. Firstly, like everything else, he is a creature of Nature. However artificial his modern, civilized environment may now be, he is a natural being, and he forgets this at his peril. Incidentally, the word man here has nothing to do with sex. Man is simply a member of the human family, whether male or female. There are no distinctions between sexes as regards the after-death processes.

Everything that comprises man physically, emotionally, mentally and even spiritually, stems from Nature. There is nothing in his make-up that does not originate in Nature, nor that is exclusively his. In every aspect of his being, he is a child of Nature, and his coming into and going out of being is a natural process. More than this, what he is in terms of his character, his personal idiosyncrasies, his tendencies, his strengths, weaknesses and so on, are all his as a consequence of natural processes, the workings of the Law. Nothing is arbitrarily bestowed on him nor accidentally acquired.

Let us now take a look at some technicalities regarding the constituents of his total being. The chart (Table I) at the end of the chapter will be helpful in keeping track of the divisions and their names.

The constitution of man is seven-fold: we start our study of it at the bottom of the scale, in those areas that we know something about. The first of these constituents (referred to hereafter as principles) is man's physical body. This is his means of action and perception in the physical world. By it he relates to his earthly environment. His brain, his seat of consciousness in life, is obviously physical. Through his body via his brain he manifests his thoughts, emotions and volitions, themselves non-physical but registered in the physical brain.

The body is a living thing, and every part of it, every cell which composes it and its organs, is also living. The dynamic energy within these units is life. This animating aspect is regarded - for purposes of our present classification - as a separate principle, both in Cosmos and in man. Using Eastern terms (with which we should now become familiar because in the East there is a specific language to deal with these matters), this life or life force is referred to, in the general cosmic sense, as Jiva; and when in association with a single living being such as a man, it is known as Prana. It is that principle which, when it is present, bestows life on a form, and when it is absent, the form is dead and cannot operate any longer as a coordinated whole. For a time after the death of a body, its several parts continue to live their individual lives, but eventually they die because, as the waste elimination system no longer fulfills its function, putrefaction sets in and their forms break up. The physical body and the life principle (Prana) are regarded as two of man's seven principles.

When man is alive, in a physical body, there is a third principle which, in the invisible, subjective realms, acts not only as a collector and reservoir of the life force (Prana), but as a mould or pattern, around which the physical materials of his earthly body collect and assume their typical individual human form. It is also the conveyor not only of some elements of his physical appearance but also of his personal

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characteristics (Skandhas) which make him the individual man he is. This principle, called the Linga Sarira, is sometimes referred to as the man's double, his astral double or astral body. It has a precise organization corresponding to that of the physical body. In it there is an astral counterpart to his brain and other organs and to the nerve centres in the physical body. It is the seat of his inner subjective faculties. It acts as a medium of transmission between the inner and outer world for his purely subjective activities, his feelings, thoughts and volitions, such that they register in his physical brain, whence they may or may not result in physical actions which make the man effective in the physical world. Commonly this astral double or Linga Sarira is referred to as the second principle, and the life force, Prana, as the third, with the physical body as the first.

The fourth principle, Kama-rupa, is the vehicle of his feelings, his emotions and his desires; it is the seat of his passional nature. Even though certain of his bodily activities are instinctual and unconscious, he is still conscious of his animalistic urges and of his desires and emotions. These can either affect his actions in a purely impulsive way or be controlled by his will and reasoning mind.

It is in the mind principle, Manas, the fifth in order, that man becomes the thinker, the real man. It is this faculty of thought which distinguishes him from the animals. The mind is essentially one single principle, but during a man's life-time it is regarded as dual, with a lower and higher aspect. Its lower aspect is orientated towards and attracted to his desires and emotions (fourth principle), whereas the other, the higher, is orientated upwards and attracted to the more spiritual elements of his nature, his sixth and seventh principles. In the mind's association with the desires and emotions, it is seen to be personal; it is the part of mind which relates to all that concerns the personal man - his job, his interests, his family, his hobbies, his ambitions, and so on. All these are very closely associated with his wants and desires. In fact, these two middle principles (the fourth and lower part of the fifth), his mento-emotional principles, are commonly regarded in effect as one, Kama-Manas. They constitute the man's psyche, or, as St Paul said, his mortal soul. We shall see why the psyche is referred to as mortal later on. These middle principles constitute the inner nature of man as he normally knows himself. Together with the physical vehicle and its life principles, they constitute the whole of the personal man, his personality. The use of the word personality as defined here becomes important in our study of the after-death states.

The remaining principles, viz. the upper half of the fifth, (the mind), and the sixth and seventh, comprise the spiritual man, the Ego (notice the capital E). Taken together, they are referred to as the Individuality as opposed to the personality. In this sense the upper elements of mind are the areas of high-level cognition on the one hand and spiritual will on the other. This kind of volition does not imply doing what one wants, for in that case the spur to action is desire (kama). In the higher sense, the spur to action is this higher will. The higher mind is the inner seat of our individual consciousness and of our higher subjective faculties. These faculties are largely dormant in most of us. The lower mind is really a partial reflection, during earth life, of the higher. The lower is that of our ordinary thinking, in rational logical terms, and of our pictorial imagination. In the higher mind thinking is of a different order altogether. It is more in the nature of understanding by direct perception. So direct is this knowing as to be virtually an identification with what is known. This is because of the higher mind's close association with the sixth principle (Buddhi). Manas (individual human mind) is derived from Mahat, a name given to universal Mind. Mahat is a universal principle; so also is Buddhi. It only becomes individual when in association with the Manas of an individual man.

This sixth principle, Buddhi, is a passive one. It is that in which the seventh, the highest spiritual principle,

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has its operating base. As we saw in Chapter Two, a force or an energy requires something to give it expression, to act in and through, in order for it to become effective. Man's sixth principle fulfills that function for the seventh, Atma, and it is said to be its upadhi or vehicle.

Atma, the seventh principle, is also a universal one; it never becomes individual except as it informs or enlivens the fifth in man, via Buddhi. It is the ultimate dynamism, the enabling principle, in all things in Cosmos. It is man's purely spiritual principle. However, as is the case with Buddhi, it is not really an individual principle as such; we share it with the generality of existent things.

The spiritual combination of the seventh principle, Atma, with the sixth, Buddhi, is known as the Monad. This is an important term to remember. The Monad is, in effect, all life, the life essence throughout Cosmos. It is homogeneous and never differentiates or fragments itself. It is only regarded as a monad when in association with a single living entity, when it becomes, say, a mineral monad, or a vegetable, animal or human monad. The seventh principle in man's make-up corresponds to the highest level of being in Cosmos. It is really that from which the other six emanate and of which they are derivatives, with more and more of the nature and qualities of manifest existence coming into being as we pass down the levels of being. At the lowest end we have the physical objective plane which gives expression to them all, insofar as it has been evolved or developed to do so.

For purposes of our study of the after-death states, the above principles of man are grouped into duads and triads. The body and its two life principles are referred to as the lower triad. These three, together with the desire or passional fourth principle, are referred to as the lower quaternary, the personal man in physical existence. Sometimes the mind-cum-emotion complex (fourth and lower part of fifth principles) is referred to as the middle duad, and as the psyche. This middle duad, after death, becomes the man's mortal soul. The psyche or mortal soul becomes a mere shell when the higher principles leave it after death. It is then really a psychic corpse which, sooner or later, disintegrates and dissipates. The three higher principles (upper fifth, sixth and seventh), are referred to as the upper or higher trinity or triad. This upper triad is virtually immortal. It is the higher or divine Ego. The upper two principles taken together are, as said before, the Monad.

In this division of the principles into duads and triads we must never forget that, although the higher and lower aspects of mind are sometimes regarded as separate principles, the mind principle is in fact always one and indivisible. The Monad is a single universal principle which cannot be fragmented. It is like the life which only appears to be an attribute of separate living things for as long as those living things enjoy separate forms. In this study the term forms can signify something in the inner, invisible world as well as something physical. For example, we can say that an architect has an idea (a mental form) of a bridge to which later the construction workers give physical form in the actual bridge.

Man's physical body has its familiar form; this is a manifestation of an inner form provided by the astral double, on the next (inner) plane to the physical. Apart from this, as we shall see, there can be other forms associated with the personal man which can represent him either in life or in death. These will be described later.

Another important element of man's being is that which marks him out as a being distinct from other

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individuals and from the general pool of life. This entification must apply even at what are regarded as the formless (so-called) spiritual levels. By it he is an entity, as a drop of water is an entity distinct from the ocean. This further element is known as the Auric Envelope or Egg. It contains the whole man, both as an Individuality and as a personality. It is the container of what he has become as a result of all his experiences in many lifetimes; in short, what he has made of himself.

Quoting from H.P. Blavatsky's Instructions to her Esoteric Students,

.. the Auric Egg contains, and is directly related to, both the divine and the physical man. In its essence .. it is eternal; in its constant correlations and transformations, during the re-incarnating progress of the Ego on this earth, it is a kind of perpetual motion machine.

.. Thus the Auric Egg, reflecting all the thoughts, words, and deeds of the man, is:

a) the preserver of every Karmic record.

b) the storehouse of all the good and evil powers of man, receiving and giving out at his will - nay, at his very thought - every potentiality, which becomes, then and there, an acting potency ..

c) As it furnishes man with his Astral Form, around which the physical entity models itself, first as a foetus, then as a child and man, the astral growing apace with the human being, so it furnishes him .. after death, with his Devachanic Entity and Kama Rupa or Body of Desire.

[S.D.III, 494, C.W.XII, 608]

Some of the terms in this description are new, but they will all be defined later and used in the story of the after-death states and processes now to be unfolded.

Such is the constitution of man. It is summarized diagrammatically in Table I opposite.

CHAPTER IV

DYING AND SOON AFTER

The experiences of many people who have been regarded as clinically dead but who have recovered have been recorded and investigated during this century. The typical experience, of which there are many variations, has a number of common features.

Most sufferers who had been in pain reported an immediate release from it, much to their great relief. In some cases, the subjects said they had somehow become separated from their physical body which they then could see, for example on an operating table or lying in the road after an accident. They said that this was a strange experience as they could not understand their retention of consciousness without a body. Sometimes they tried to talk to doctors or nurses or on-lookers whom they could see, but they got no response. It became obvious that others could not see them; it was as if they were not there, or invisible, and certainly were not making themselves heard at the physical level. This was not a dream state or an hallucination because, on recovery, they could often relate accurately what had been going on and what people had said. Checks made afterwards on what had actually been happening and what people had in fact said often confirmed that what had been seen and heard was correct; sometimes, however, the account was not wholly accurate.

Another common element of this near-death experience is that of a review of the life just past in considerable detail. Sometimes everything seems to have been recalled, even details from early childhood.

Then commonly there was the feeling or visual impression of being confronted with some kind of barrier: a wall, fence, ditch, or even a tunnel. It seemed that in some way this had to be traversed, surmounted or passed through. Most subjects reported that at some moment after their 'demise' they had met an august Being, a "Figure of Light". All who had this experience felt an immediate and complete sympathy with this figure, and some were in awe of it. They felt it to be of some majesty, even divine. Many likened it to the subject of their devotions in their religious practices. The review of the past life sometimes took place in the presence of this Being, who always showed complete and sympathetic understanding, no matter what was being reviewed. No blame or criticism was uttered or felt.

Most subjects felt a great peace and happiness and did not want to return to their old lives. Sometimes, however, they felt that they had to do so, or they were told that they must return for the sake of a young family or some duty. Others were told that their time had not yet come.

Sometimes, as they passed over, they were met by previously deceased relatives or friends who welcomed them and said they had been expecting them. Such relatives and friends were often in idealized surroundings.

On returning from this experience, many found that both they and their outlook on life were changed.

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They sometimes said they had understood that earth-life was an education, and that they should learn what they could and use their time well. Many also felt their attitudes to others changed. Affection, love and compassion were dominant feelings.

We must remember that in all these cases the people were not actually dead, but they were certainly nearly so. Most of them felt that, if they had crossed the barriers or passed into the light at the end of the tunnel, they would have been really dead, as far as their physical bodies were concerned, and that then there would then have been no return.

There are other kinds of near-death experiences we should note. Sometimes, in the case of very old people, there are visions of beautiful gardens, loved ones long since departed, and, in some cases, those very near death seem to become second-sighted or clairvoyant. They see entities in their room that others cannot see. If the entities are human, they may even talk to them, so real are the presences. As we shall see, the story we are about to unfold will touch on most of these points. Our account lays stress on the review of the past life and the most prominent thoughts which occupy the dying person. These affect not only the post-mortem experiences, but even the next earthly life.

The greater part of the information about the after-death states in this book is taken from the long series of letters on this and other esoteric subjects which two of the Masters wrote to Mr A.P. Sinnett in the years 1880-85. These letters were all published in book-form as *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, the originals of which are in the British Library. In this account the many passages quoted are from these letters. It will be seen that they are authoritative and very descriptive because the Masters claim to KNOW what they are writing about.

One of the Masters who had described the process of dying was asked, "But do the thoughts on which the mind may be engaged at the last moment necessarily hinge on to the predominant character of its past life?" He answered:

It cannot be other wise. The experience of dying men - by drowning and other accidents - brought back to life, has corroborated our doctrine in almost every case. Such thoughts are involuntary and we have no more control over them than we would over the eye's retina to prevent it perceiving that colour which affects it most. At the last moment, the whole life is reflected in our memory and emerges from all the forgotten nooks and corners picture after picture, one event after the other. The dying brain dislodges memory with a strong supreme impulse, and memory restores faithfully every impression entrusted to it during the period of the brain's activity. That impression and thought which was the strongest naturally becomes the most vivid and survives so to say all the rest which now vanish and disappear for ever, to reappear but in Devachan. No man dies insane or unconscious - as some physiologists assert. Even a madman, or one in a fit of delirium tremens will have his instant of perfect lucidity at the moment of death, though unable to say so to those present. The man may often appear dead. Yet from the last pulsation, from and between the last throbbing of his heart and the moment when the last spark of animal heat leaves the body - the brain thinks and the Ego lives over in those few brief seconds his whole life over again. Speak in whispers, ye, who assist at a death-bed and find yourselves in the solemn presence of Death. Especially have you to keep quiet just after Death has laid her clammy hand upon the body. Speak in whispers, I say, lest you disturb the quiet ripple of thought, and hinder the busy work of the Past casting its reflection upon the Veil of the Future.

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[M.L., 167:170]

A passage in *The Key to Theosophy* supplements this:

At the solemn moment of death every man, even when death is sudden, sees the whole of his past life marshalled before him, in its minutest details. For one short instant the personal becomes one with the individual and all-knowing Ego. But this instant is enough to show him the whole chain of causes which have been at work during his life. He sees and now understands himself as he is, unadorned by flattery or self-deception. He reads his life, remaining as a spectator looking down into the arena he is quitting; he feels and knows the justice of all the suffering that has overtaken him.

[Key IX, 162]

The all-knowing Ego would correspond to the Figure of Light in the near-death experience, but then the Ego would be perceived against the mental or religious background of the dying person. The term Devachan has been introduced and needs clarifying at this point. It means a blissful subjective state that the Ego (the two and a half upper principles) enjoys after its emergence from a period of unconsciousness while the baser elements of the personal psyche are sloughed off. It is a state wholly conditioned by the spiritual content of the immediate past life on earth. In an earlier Letter the Master explains:

.. remember .. that we create ourselves our devachan as our avitchi while yet on earth, and mostly during the latter days and even moments of our intellectual, sentient lives. That feeling which is the strongest in us at that supreme hour when, as in a dream, the events of a long life, to the minutest details, are marshalled in the greatest order in a few seconds in our vision*, that feeling will become the fashioner of our bliss or woe, the life-principle of our future existence .. The real full remembrance of our lives will come but at the end of the minor cycle - not before.

* That vision takes place when a person is already proclaimed dead. Our brain is the last organ that dies.

[M.L., 124:127]

The minor cycle is explained in the Glossary, but it is necessary here to define Avitchi, which is a state opposite to Devachan. Devachan is compensative and blissful while Avitchi is retributive and unhappy.

The Master's statement that "we create ourselves our devachan as our avitchi .. and mostly during the latter days and even moments" of our lives, was not fully understood; and in answer to a further question, he said:

It is a widely spread belief among all the Hindus that a person's future pre-natal state and birth are moulded by the last desire he may have at the time of death. But this last desire, they say, necessarily hinges on to the shape which the person may have given to his desires, passions etc., during his past life. It is for this very reason, viz. - that our last desire may not be unfavourable to our future progress - that we have to watch our actions and control our passions and desires throughout our whole earthly career.

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[M.L., 167:170]

Now we come to what happens immediately after dying. It is necessary first, however, to define another critical term, Kama Loka, (with some variations of spelling). It is literally the place of emotion, of passion, desire, urges for carnal satisfactions, likes, dislikes and so on. It is a place where, in the case of normal death in due season from natural causes, the Ego subsides into unconsciousness during the early stages of post mortem existence. In other cases, mostly of premature death, it is the place of complete or partial personal consciousness and memory of the past life, often a sort of dream state, varying in intensity, occasionally of real suffering, remorse, etc., in what remains of the personal psyche. The Master gives us this description:

Thus, when man dies, his "Soul" (5th principle) becomes unconscious and loses all remembrance of things internal as well as external. Whether his stay in Kama Loka has to last but a few moments, hours, days, weeks, months or years; whether he died a natural or a violent death; whether it occurred in his young or old age, and whether the Ego was good, bad, or indifferent, - his consciousness leaves him as suddenly as the flame leaves the wick, when blown out. When life has retired from the last particle in the brain matter, his perceptive faculties become extinct forever, his spiritual powers of cogitation and volition - (all those faculties in short, which are neither inherent in, nor acquirable by organic matter) - for the time being.

[M.L., 125:128]

Confirmation was sought about the Master's statement that at death a man's "consciousness leaves him as suddenly as the flame leaves the wick ..", and the reply was:

Well? can a physical brain once dead retain its perceptive faculties; that which will perceive in the shell is something that perceives with a borrowed or reflected light.

[M.L., 144:147]

Here we should notice the precision of the wording.

Perceptive faculties are the means by which we are able to be aware both of what is going on around us in the physical world (via our senses), and also of our inner reactions to it (our thoughts and feelings). All this perception must stop at death. We must also understand what the shell is. It is the still integrated active personal psyche - the remains of the ordinary man when his physical vehicle, its life principle and his upper principles have left it. There is more on this subject of consciousness in these psychic remains in Chapter Five.

There were further corroborations of the Ego's unconsciousness at this stage, for example:

Every just disembodied four-fold entity [i.e. the middle duad (Kama-Manas) and the two highest principles (Atma, Buddhi)] - whether it died a natural or a violent death, from suicide or accident, mentally

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sane or insane, young or old, good, bad, or indifferent - loses at the instant of death all recollection, it is mentally annihilated; it sleeps its akasic * sleep in the Kama Loka. This state lasts from a few hours (rarely less), days, weeks, months - sometimes to several years. All this according to the entity, to its mental status at the moment of death, to the character of its death, etc.

[M.L., 184:186]

* Akasha is matter of extreme refinement, e.g. the substance dreams are made of, at their level.

Then concerning further what happens at death, we have:

When man dies his second and third principles die with him; the lower triad disappears, and the fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh principles form the surviving Quaternary) [the four-fold entity above].

[M.L., 101:103]

We are also told that immediately after death has occurred:

his Mayavi-rupa [i.e. ethereal body-shadow; see Glossary] may be often thrown into objectivity, as in the cases of apparitions after death; but, unless it is projected with the knowledge of [the projector] (whether latent or potential), or, owing to the intensity of the desire to see or appear to someone, shooting through the dying brain, the apparition will be simply - automatical; it will not be due to any sympathetic attraction, or to any act of volition, and no more than the reflection of a person passing unconsciously near a mirror, is due to the desire of the latter.

[M.L., 125:129]

The reference to apparitions after death is interesting because the phantom appearance of someone just dead to a loved one - even at a distance, and who may not even have known that the death was imminent - is by no means uncommon. Similarly it may happen that the ethereal likeness of one recently dead may appear, under certain atmospheric conditions, over a new grave. That would not be the Mayavi-rupa, as we shall learn later.

The Master gives much information on spiritualistic phenomena including the cases when those in Kama Loka can communicate (indirectly through mediums) with those on earth. This is dealt with in Chapter Nine.

There is another passage concerning possible states of consciousness in Kama Loka:

In Kama Loka those who retain their remembrance, will not enjoy it at the supreme hour of recollection. Those who know they are dead in their physical bodies can only be either adepts - or sorcerers; and these two are the exceptions to the general rule. Both having been "co-workers with nature", the former for good, the latter - for bad, in her work of creation and in that of destruction, they are the only ones who

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may be called immortal - in the Kabalistic and the esoteric sense of course.

[M.L., 124:128]

Other cases of exceptions and premature deaths are dealt with in Chapter Eight, and the Master said more on immortality which is included in Chapter Ten. The "supreme hour of reflection" is the time when normally all Egos (if not either Adepts or Sorcerers) become aware of all their previous existences. This hour comes at the end of the minor cycle referred to later.

In this chapter, then, we have described the typical experiences of those who have been declared clinically dead but who have recovered. We have seen how some very aged people before they die have visions of those who have gone before and sometimes of entities visiting them in their rooms. The Masters have told us how our last-minute thoughts have a significant effect not only on our post mortem states but even on our next life on earth. This was followed by the clear statement that in the normal way we all go unconscious at the moment of death and then such visions as we may have had cease.

Immortality has been mentioned; we shall see later what that could mean.

At the instant of death certain processes concerned with the inner principles of the deceased begin. These are described in detail in the following chapters. In the study of the information we have of the after death states, it is necessary to keep in mind the unfamiliar notion that man is essentially dual, i.e. (1) as a personality and (2) as an individuality, the Ego. In life these two aspects operate together but after death they separate. The personal, lower two principles (Kama and half of Manas) remain after the demise of the lower triad (physical body, astral body and life principle) and enter into the subjective realm of Kama Loca. Here they may, while still conjoined to the Ego, have a variety of experiences from virtually complete unconsciousness through a range of dreamlike states, to full consciousness for a time. The Ego itself during this period is unconscious, while any retained consciousness is in the personal psychic remains only for the time of their duration. The content of any such consciousness is drawn entirely from the past life's experience, as indeed is that of the Ego, when consciousness returns to it in Devachan. Finally, only what was spiritually worthy can be assimilated into the Ego, as will be seen in the next chapter.

The fuller meaning of all the key terms used in this chapter will become apparent as they are used in their different contexts in the following chapters.

CHAPTER V

THE DEATH STRUGGLE AND GESTATION STATE

We now come to those parts of our account which deal with the post-mortem processes in the inner realms and the subjective experiences of the dead. Death occurs at a distinct moment, when the silver cord, as it is sometimes called, between the physical body and the astral double is severed. This link between the earthly man and his 'soul' principles is of ethereal matter. At this time these principles include not only the fourth and lower fifth (the lower duality), but the upper fifth, sixth and seventh (the upper triad), the Egoic individuality.

After the severing of the cord there is no possibility of return. The man, as we have seen, suddenly becomes unconscious, and the astral double, along with the physical body, begins to disintegrate. The coordinating life of both of them has departed. It is this withdrawal of a person's life from the physical body which inhibits the action of the brain; it then dies and the death of the counterpart brain in the astral body follows. The deceased then has no more contact with the physical world and falls into unconsciousness. All the visions and feelings of the pre-death state now disappear.

The next major stage in the post-mortem journey is what the Masters refer to as the death struggle. Bearing in mind the distinction between the personality and the individuality and their respective natures, we can get an idea of what the death struggle means. The personal man is largely selfish, i.e. egocentric, with his habitual attention given to a mixture of urges, ambitions, loves, hates, indulgences, aspirations, character weaknesses and strengths, etc. all according to the man and his circumstances in life. Very little of this is spiritual, as understood in theosophic or esoteric science. Spiritual here pertains to the entirely unselfish, the purely altruistic elements in man's character and all else that is entirely noble or worthy, such as real unselfish love (not passion), desire to be of service, compassion, behaviour according to the dictates of highest conscience, wisdom and understanding. All these are of a different order from the normal considerations of personality.

The death struggle is the sorting out of these two aspects of man's inner nature, like separating the cream from the milk of experience. The Ego attracts the spiritual cream and can assimilate that only. None of the baser milk can possibly enter it or become part of it. The milk of the essentially selfish personality stays with what is left in the inner world of the personality. This becomes the content of that entity's memories etc. and remains after the death-struggle in Kama Loca, while its heavenly counterpart, the Ego, enters into Devachan, enriched by the cream (and only the cream) of the last personal existence.

Here is the passage introducing us to the idea:

Thenceforth [i.e. after the separation of the four-principled post mortem entity from second and third principles] it is a "death" struggle between the Upper and Lower dualities. If the upper wins, the sixth, having attracted to itself the quintessence of Good from the fifth - its nobler affections, its saintly (though they be earthly) aspirations, and the most Spiritualized portions of its mind - follows its divine elder (the

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7th) into the "Gestation" State; and the fifth and fourth remain in association as an empty shell - (the expression is quite correct) - to roam in the earth's atmosphere, with half the personal memory gone, and the more brutal instincts fully alive for a certain period - an "Elementary" in short. This is the "angel guide" of the average medium. If, on the other hand, it is the Upper Duality which is defeated, then it is the fifth principle that assimilates all that there may be left of personal recollection and perceptions of its personal individuality in the sixth.

[M.L., 101:103]

If the upper duality is defeated there is then nothing of the experience of the just-past life to interest the Ego or worthy to be built into it. It is then as if that life were, in the Master's words, "a page missing from the book of lives".

In the above quotation a "Gestation" state following the "Death struggle" is referred to. The processes of Nature and those after death are natural ones and take time. The period between the conception of a human embryo and the birth of the foetus is referred to as the gestation period. Gestation is the process by which the embryo develops after quickening. This continues up to a critical point when the foetus is ready for entry into the outside world, when it can begin an independent existence.

A corresponding process takes place after the "Death struggle". The seeds of the spiritual content of the late life, having been gathered and quickened in the struggle, gestate to form suitable material to enter into the spiritual world of the Ego. This is an order of being we can hardly imagine because no terms descriptive of personal existence apply to it. In it we are in the realm of spacelessness, timelessness, complete wholeness, unity, purity, omniscience, omnipotence, and where consciousness suffers none of the limitations of personal existence and is not private to an individual but shared with the commonality of all Egos, on their own plane. This state beggars description, but the spiritual fruit of our personal living has to be transmuted to make it suitable to contribute to our developing Ego.

The conception of the shell or Elementary "roaming in the earth's atmosphere" might cause some difficulty. Firstly, the shell is not physical, it has no physical size in our sense, but it is perceptible to a psychic clairvoyant whose powers are suitably developed. The term shell, as indicated above, is applied to the middle duad (4th and lower 5th principles) when the spiritual Ego has separated from and left it. The earth's atmosphere in this sense is not the physical space surrounding our globe, but a psychic atmosphere attaching to it. This kind of atmosphere is not simply a habitat for Elementaries: it is in fact composed of elemental lives (Elementals: see Appendix), the "soul" of things, in a sense, at our physical level. Nothing happens at our level except by their agency. Elementals must be distinguished from Elementaries. The latter are shells, the psychic remains of men after the Ego has left them, which have no conscience or morality. They are quite irresponsible and manifest (when they do) the worst in human nature.

Regarding further the nature of what can be ingested into the Spiritual Ego, we read:

.. neither of the two emanations [Buddhi and Atma] are capable of assimilating but that which is good, pure and holy; hence no sensual, material or unholy recollection can follow the purified memory of the

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Ego to the region of Bliss. The Karma for these recollections of evil deeds and thoughts will reach the Ego when it changes its personality in the following world of causes [i.e. the next life on earth].

[M.L., 102:105]

The remaining personal entity, in the case when there was not enough purely spiritual material assimilable by the higher principles, does not remain in Kama Loca, but rather:

.. it is caught up and drawn into the great whirlpool of human [personal] Egos; while the sixth and seventh - now a purely Spiritual, individual MONAD, with nothing left in it of the late personality, having no regular "gestation" period [see later] to pass through (since there is no purified personal Ego to be reborn), after a more or less prolonged period of unconscious Rest in the boundless Space - will find itself reborn in another personality on the next planet.

[M.L., 101:104]

[Note: The word Ego (capital 'E') gradually became reserved for the spiritual Individuality, the upper fifth, sixth and seventh principles. Sometimes, as above, it is used otherwise, but when it is, it is usually clearly qualified, in this instance by the word 'personal', and is the same as the ego (small 'e') in modern psychology. What is meant by the 'next planet' is explained in the Appendix.]

We are also told that:

Until the struggle between the higher [spiritual] and middle [personal] duad begins - (with the exception of suicides who are not dead but have only killed their physical triad, and whose Elemental parasites (4th and lower 5th principles) therefore, are not naturally separated from the Ego as in real death) - until that struggle, I say, has not begun and ended, no shell can realize its position.

[M.L., 168:171]

The position of suicides, together with other 'exceptions', is explained later in Chapter Eight.

The term "gestation state" is applied to both the personal ego and the spiritual Ego while still conjoined. During the gestation period the purest contents of the personal mind are being assimilated into the upper triad. During this time, and while the Ego is still attached to the middle duad in Kama Loca, unconsciousness reigns in both the spiritual Ego and the kama-manasic principles which have not yet been abandoned by the Ego and become merely a shell.

The gestation process has been described as follows:

Kama-loka may be compared to the dressing-room of an actor, in which he divests himself of the costume of the last part he played before rebecoming himself properly - the immortal Ego or the Pilgrim cycling in his Round of Incarnations. The Eternal Ego being stripped in Kama-loka of its lower terrestrial

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principles, with their passions and desires, it enters into the state of Devachan. And therefore it is said that only the purely spiritual, the non-material emotions, affections and aspirations accompany the Ego into that state of Bliss. But the process of stripping off the lower, the fourth and part of the fifth, principles is an unconscious one in all normal human beings. It is only in very exceptional cases that there is a slight return to consciousness in Kama-loka: and this is the case of very materialistic unspiritual personalities, who, devoid of the conditions requisite, cannot enter the state of absolute Rest and Bliss.

[C.W.IX, 164]

Regarding the consciousness of the shell after the gestation state, we have:

When the sixth and seventh principles are gone, carrying off with them the finer, spiritual portions of that which once was the personal consciousness of the fifth, then only does the shell gradually develop a hazy kind of consciousness of its own from what remains in the shadow of personality.

[M.L., 168:171 (19)]

This matter was raised in another place, by the question, "Then what is the nature of the remembrance and self-consciousness of the shell?" The answer:

All that which pertains to the materio-psychological attributes and sensations of the five lower skandhas; all that which will be thrown off as a refuse by the newly born Ego in the Devachan, as unworthy of, and not sufficiently related to the purely spiritual perceptions, emotions and feelings of the sixth, strengthened, and so to say, cemented by a portion of the fifth, that portion which is necessary in the Devachan for the retention of a divine spiritualized notion of the "I" in the Monad - which would otherwise have no consciousness in relation to object and subject at all - all this "becomes extinct for ever": namely at the moment of physical death, to return once more, marshalling before the eye of the new Ego at the threshold of Devachan and to be rejected by It. It will return for the third time fully at the end of the minor cycle, after the completion of the seven Rounds when the sum total of collective existences is weighed - "merit" in one cup, "demerit" in the other cup of the scales.

[M.L., 168:171]

The last eight lines of this passage relate to two further reviews of the previous earth life which occur, in addition to the one at the time of physical death: one on the entry of the Ego into Devachan and the other at the end of the minor cycle (i.e. at the completion of the seventh Round).

Regarding further the nature of the consciousness of the shells or elementaries, as the fourth and half-fifth principles bereft of the higher triad are sometimes called, it was explained:

As I said, .. no better than a reflected or borrowed light. "Memory" is one thing, and "perceptive faculties" quite another. A madman may remember very clearly some portions of his past life; yet he is unable to perceive anything in its true light for the higher portions of his Manas and his Buddhi are paralysed in him, have left him.

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[M.L., 169:173]

The Master was pressed for more information concerning the degree and quality of the consciousness of the shell:

A more or less complete, still dim recollection of its personality, and of its purely physical life. As in the cases of complete insanity the final severance of the two higher duads (7th 6th and 5th 4th) at the moment of the former going into gestation, digs an impassable gulf between the two. It is not even a portion of the fifth that is carried away .. The Manas shorn of its finest attributes, becomes like a flower from which all the aroma has suddenly departed, a rose crushed, and having been made to yield all its oil for the attar manufacture purposes; what is left behind is but the smell of decaying grass, earth and rotteness.

.. [Such shells] remind anyone who will have the privilege of enjoying an hour's chat with the illustrious disembodied angels [the shells], more of the inmates of a lunatic asylum made to play parts in private theatricals as means of hygienic recreation, than of the Caesars and Hamlets they would represent. The slightest shock will throw them off the track and send them off raving.

[M.L., 171:174]

This last sentence is a reference to the sort of material that is received through mediums at spiritualistic séances. It is included here to indicate the nature of the entities that 'come through' and how much credence we should place in these messages (see Chapter Nine).

Another question was, "Is the shell conscious of losing anything that feels like life as it gradually disintegrates?". The answer:

No, it is not conscious of this loss of cohesion. Besides, such a feeling in a shell being quite useless for nature's purposes, it could hardly realize something that could be never even dreamed by a medium or its affinities. It is dimly conscious of its own physical death - after a prolonged period of time though - that's all. The few exceptions to this rule - cases of half successful sorcerers, of very wicked persons passionately attached to Self [personal self] - offer a real danger to the living. These very material shells, whose last dying thought was Self, - Self, - Self - and to live, to live! will often feel it instinctively. So do some suicides - though not all. What happens then is terrible for it becomes a case of post mortem lycanthropy [lycanthropy: the ability to change into a wolf]. The shell will cling so tenaciously to its semblance of life that it will seek refuge in a new organism in any beast - in a dog, a hyaena, a bird, when no human organism is close at hand - rather than submit to annihilation.

[M.L., 172:175]

The transition from the gestation state to the return of consciousness is described a number of times but the following is apt at this point:

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Reviving consciousness begins after the struggle in Kama-Loka at the door of Devachan, and only after the "gestation period".

[M.L., 197:199]

A little earlier on the previous page there was another reference to this returning consciousness:

From Kama Loka, then, in the great Chilocosm [a subjective region which includes Kama Loka] - once awakened from their post-mortem torpor, the newly translated "Souls" go all (but the shells) according to their attractions, either to Devachan or Avitchi. And those two states are again differentiating ad infinitum ..

[M.L., 197:199]

We should notice this further reference to the post-mortem torpor or unconsciousness, which some find so hard to accept because of spiritualistic communications and other psychic phenomena. Some of these occur soon after death, and we shall see later something of their true nature, which involves a number of factors including the fate of man's principles after death. We must remember when considering the interval between incarnations that the periods of most of the states after death are long, sometimes very long, in terms of earth years.

In this chapter we have been introduced to the idea of post mortem processes as they affect man's soul in terms of the principles we had previously described. In the normal case he is unaware of what is going on, but there are exceptions. The significant process is that of the "death struggle" where the experience and character of the deceased are sorted so that all that is of a worthy spiritual nature can be assimilated, during the gestation state, by the divine Ego, while all ordinary personal content is rejected. This content does, however, condition the next life via the Skandhas.

CHAPTER VI

THE SECOND DEATH AND DEVACHAN

There are altogether three occasions when we review our past lives: first when we are in the process of dying and leaving our physical bodies; second after the gestation period when the Ego begins to enter the next after-death condition of Devachan; and a third when our whole series of lives on a planet, like earth, is finishing. Then we see them strung out as beads on a necklace and know the significance of them all. Only those rare personal lives which had no spiritual contribution to make to our Egoic triads will be entirely missing as if they had never been.

Concerning the revival of consciousness as we enter Devachan (or Avitchi, as the case may be) and the second review of our immediate past life, we were told that it commences after the akasic sleep in the Kama Loca:

This state [Kama Loca] lasts from a few hours (rarely less), days, weeks, months - sometimes to several years. All this according to the entity, to its mental status at the moment of death, to the character of its death, etc. That remembrance will return slowly and gradually toward the end of the gestation (to the entity or Ego), still more slowly but far more imperfectly and incompletely to the shell, and fully to the Ego at the moment of its entrance into the Devachan. And now the latter being a state determined and brought by its past life, the Ego does not fall headlong but sinks into it gradually and by easy stages. With the first dawn of that state appears that life, or rather is once more lived over by the Ego, from its first day of consciousness to its last. From the most important down to the most trifling event, all are marshalled before the spiritual eye of the Ego; only, unlike the events of real life, those of them remain only that are chosen by the new liver (pardon the word) clinging to certain scenes and actors, these remain permanently - while all the others fade away to disappear for ever, or to return to their creator - the shell. Now try to understand this highly important, because so highly just and retributive law, in its effects. Out of the resurrected Past nothing remains but what the Ego has felt spiritually - that was evolved by and through and lived over by his spiritual faculties - be they love or hatred. All that I am now trying to describe is in truth - indescribable. As no two men, not even two photographs of the same person, nor yet two leaves resemble line for line each other, so no two states in Devachan are like ..

[M.L., 184:187]

There is much information in this passage repeating or supplementing what has been said before. It tells us that normally the period of unconsciousness - of both the shell (personal psychic remains) and the Ego - lasts up to several years (for more information about the duration of each post mortem state see Chapter Seven). Consciousness and the remembrance of the past life return slowly as the Ego enters the devachanic state, as a baby through infancy gradually awakens to the (to it) novel surroundings of earth life. Similarly, after the departure of the Ego the shell recovers a partial consciousness and remembrance. As will be seen later, both these can be enhanced on contact with a spiritualistic medium.

After the Egoic review of the past life, prior to the Ego's entering Devachan, all the purely personal memories are relinquished by it until the end of the seventh Round. Only the truly pure spiritual content of

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the previous life is transferred to Egoic consciousness. It is this content which conditions the Egoic consciousness in Devachan. Without it the Ego would have no Egoic existence there. It would be unconscious. This was explained as follows:

To awaken in it [the Monad] to life the latent consciousness especially that of personal individuality, requires the monad plus the highest attributes of the fifth - the "animal Soul"; and it is that which makes the ethereal Ego that lives and enjoys bliss in the Devachan.

[M.L., 102:105]

Immediately prior to this it had been explained:

.. the sixth and seventh principles apart from the rest constitute the eternal, imperishable, but also unconscious "Monad". [It is not generally realized that the Monad, in itself, is unconscious.]

The Master was then asked, "Who goes to Devachan?" The answer:

The personal Ego of course, but beatified, purified, holy. Every Ego - the combination of the sixth and seventh principles - which after the period of unconscious gestation is reborn into the Devachan, is of necessity as innocent and pure as a new-born babe. The fact of his being reborn at all, shows the preponderance of good over evil in his old personality. And while the Karma (of evil) steps aside for the time being to follow him in his future earth-reincarnation, he brings along with him but the Karma of his good deeds, words, and thoughts into this Devachan. "Bad" is a relative term for us ... and the Law of Retribution is the only law that never errs. Hence all those who have not slipped down into the mire of unredeemable sin and bestiality - go to the Devachan. They will have to pay for their sins, voluntary and involuntary, later on. Meanwhile they are rewarded; receive the effects of the causes produced by them.

[M.L., 98:100]

Devachan is really the after-death state. All that precedes it is preparation. The reviews of the past life, the death struggle, the gestation period and Kama Loca are all preliminary. The extracts quoted above are from a long Letter about the Devachan. The subject had been briefly mentioned before but now we are ready for much more information about a number of aspects of the state. What we are told, however, is condensed and its full import is only realized after considerable study and thought. Continuing the extract:

Of course it [Devachan] is a state, one, so to say, of intense selfishness during which an Ego reaps the reward of his unselfishness on earth. He is completely engrossed in the bliss of all his personal earthly affections, preferences and thoughts, and gathers in the fruit of his meritorious actions. No pain, no grief nor even the shadow of a sorrow comes to darken the bright horizon of his unalloyed happiness; for, it is a state of perpetual "Maya".. Since the conscious perception of one's personality on earth is but an evanescent dream that sense will be equally that of a dream in the Devachan - only a hundred fold intensified. So much so, indeed, that the happy Ego is unable to see through the veil the evils, sorrows and woes to which those it loved on earth may be subjected. It lives in that sweet dream with its loved

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ones - whether gone before, or yet remaining on earth; it has them near itself, as happy, as blissful and as innocent as the disembodied dreamer himself; and yet, apart from rare visions the denizens of our gross planet feel it not.

[M.L., 98:101]

It has been objected that if, in effect, physical life "is but an evanescent dream", the word dream means nothing - everything is dream. This was also a difficulty to those who received these Letters. They could not comprehend the Eastern idea that all manifest existence is a Maya - an illusion or dream. This is a new and strange concept for a Westerner. It has some meaning when we realize that everything in existence is ephemeral, and further that it is continually changing throughout its life period, however long or short that may be. What then is the 'thing' itself? It is only something with its peculiar present-time qualities, for an instant of time. The next instant it has changed. The question then arises, "What is permanent? What is unchangeable?" It is soon realized that nothing in manifestation can be. So it is considered to be illusory, in that sense. But our normal environment is real enough for us, in spite of its transient nature, like that of a dream.

So it is with our state in Devachan: everything there is real enough for us then, in spite of the fact that it is a product of our own minds - again like a dream.

The Letter goes on to deal with the possibility of communication between Devachanees and those on earth. This will be returned to in Chapter Nine. Meanwhile there is some more pertinent information:

Certainly the new Ego, once that it is reborn [into Devachan] retains for a certain time - proportionate to its Earth-life, a "complete recollection of his life on earth" .. But it can never return on earth, from the Devachan, nor has the latter - even omitting all "anthropomorphic ideas of God" - any resemblance to the paradise or heaven of any religion ..

[M.L., 98:100]

As there is no suffering in Devachan it could be asked how the Devachanee's recollection of the past life is complete when all the painful content has been left behind. It is complete because he will observe or see all the painful incidents of his last life quite objectively or dispassionately, i.e. without normal personal reactions because he has no passional (kamic) nature left; the passional part of him is left behind in the shell. This remembrance is more fully described later.

Questioned as to whether those in Devachan can be aware of life on Earth, the Master said:

But "the life of Earth" can be watched by none of these ["an immense number of those who have gone before"], for reasons of the Law of Bliss plus Maya ..

[M.L., 103:106]

It is explained that to be aware of the events of physical life, physical senses are required. Those in

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Devachan have long since parted with both their physical and their psychic senses. It was asked whether there was a wide variety of experience in Devachan:

Yes, there are great varieties in the Devachan states, .. As many varieties of bliss, as on earth there are shades of perception and of capability to appreciate such reward. It is an ideated paradise, in each case of the Ego's own making, and by him filled with the scenery, crowded with the incidents, and thronged with the people he would expect to find in such a sphere of compensative bliss. And it is that variety which guides the temporary personal Ego into the current which will lead him to be reborn in a lower or higher condition in the next world of causes. Everything is so harmoniously adjusted in nature - especially in the subjective world, that no mistake can ever be committed by the Tathagatas - or Dhyan Chohans - who guide the impulses.

[M.L., 100:102]

The guidance of natural processes by the Dhyan Chohans is an important notion. Everything in nature is a life and everything in a lower or less evolved state is subject to the lives in a higher or more evolved state. The Dhyan Chohans, the beings constituting the post human evolutionary kingdoms, apart from their vast accumulated knowledge of natural processes, have the power to affect them. They also know more about the workings of the Law than the beings at all levels below them, so that they have the competence to guide them accordingly.

The recipient of these Letters was worried about how ordinary people could qualify for existence in this purely spiritual state and was answered:

It is "a spiritual condition" only as contrasted with our own grossly "material condition", and, as already stated - it is such degrees of spirituality that constitute and determine the great "varieties" of conditions within the limits of Devachan. A mother from a savage tribe is not less happy than a mother from a regal palace, with her lost child in her arms; and although as actual Egos, children prematurely dying before the perfection of their septenary Entity do not find their way to Devachan, yet all the same the mother's loving fancy finds her children there, without one missing that her heart yearns for. Say - it is but a dream, but after all what is objective life itself but a panorama of vivid unrealities? The pleasures realized by a Red Indian in his "happy hunting grounds" in that Land of Dreams is not less intense than the ecstasy felt by a connoisseur who passes aeons in the wrapt delight of listening to divine Symphonies by imaginary angelic choirs and orchestras. As it is no fault of the former, if born a "savage" with an instinct to kill - though it caused the death of many an innocent animal - why, if with it all, he was a loving father, son, husband, why should he not also enjoy his share of reward? The case would be quite different if the same cruel acts had been done by an educated and civilized person, from a mere love of sport. The savage in being reborn would simply take a low place in the scale, by reason of his imperfect moral development; while the Karma of the other would be tainted with moral delinquency ..

Every one but that ego which, attracted by its gross magnetism, falls into the current that will draw it into the "planet of Death" [Avitchi] .. is fitted to pass into a relatively spiritual condition adjusted to his previous condition in life and mode of thought ..

[M.L., 100:102]

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Here again the question can be raised of objective life being "a panorama of vivid unrealities". This was explained earlier in terms of the dream state. Every manifested thing lacks permanence. In the Masters' eyes - and from the point of view of the Ego - all things are unreal. Reality is a word reserved by them for the unchanging, eternal substratum, so to speak, to existence. This idea is enlarged on later when the matter of immortality is discussed.

About the possibility of intercourse between entities in Devachan, the Master said:

Two sympathetic souls will each work out its own devachanic sensations making the other a sharer in its subjective bliss, but yet each is dissociated from the other as regards actual mutual intercourse. For what companionship could there be between two subjective entities which are not even as material as that ethereal body-shadow - the Mayavi-rupa?

[M.L., 195:198]

In a number of places we are told, or it is implied, that the Monad itself could have no personal memories and could not relate in consciousness in Devachan to its previous personality unless some manasic (higher) experience of that personality followed it into the devachanic state. This was reiterated:

.. man's sixth principle, as something purely spiritual could not exist, or have conscious being in the Devachan, unless it assimilated some of the more abstract and pure of the mental attributes of the fifth principle or animal Soul, its manas (mind) and memory.

[M.L., 101:103]

This matter was referred to and expanded a little later:

Spirit, or the unalloyed emanations of the ONE - the latter forming with the seventh and sixth principles the highest triad - neither of the two emanations are capable of assimilating but that which is good, pure and holy; hence, no sensual, material or unholy recollection can follow the purified memory of the Ego to the region of Bliss. The Karma for these recollections of evil deeds and thought will reach the Ego when it changes its personality in the following world of causes. The Monad), or the "Spiritual Individuality", remains untainted in all cases. "No sorrow or Pain for those born there (in the Rupa-Loka of Devachan); for this is the Pure-land. All the regions in Space possess such lands (Sakwala), but this land of Bliss is the most pure.

[M.L., 102:105]

Concerning the return of remembrance on the Ego's entry into Devachan from its previous unconscious state in Kama Loka and the nature of the remembrance, a later Letter went on to say:

Most of those, whom you may call, if you like, candidates for Devachan - die and are reborn in the Kama-Loka "without remembrance"; though (and just because) they do get some of it back in the Devachan. Nor can we call it full, but only a partial remembrance. You would hardly call "remembrance" a dream of

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yours; some particular scene or scenes within whose narrow limits you would find enclosed a few persons - those whom you loved best, with an undying love, that holy feeling that alone survives, and - not the slightest recollection of any other events or scenes? Love and Hatred are the only immortal feelings, the only survivors from the wreck of Ye-dhamma, or the phenomenal world. Imagine yourself then, in Devachan with those you may have loved with such immortal love; with the familiar, shadowy scenes connected with them for a background and - a perfect blank for everything else relating to your interior, social, political, literary and social life. And then, in the face of that spiritual, purely cogitative existence, of that unalloyed felicity which, in proportion with the intensity of the feelings that created it, lasts from a few to several thousand years, - call it the "personal remembrance of A.P. Sinnett" - if you can. Dreadfully monotonous! - you may think. - Not in the least - I answer. Have you experienced monotony during - say - that moment which you considered then and now so consider it - as the moment of the highest bliss you have ever felt? Of course not. - Well, no more will you experience it there, in that passage through Eternity in which a million of years is no longer than a second. There, where there is no consciousness of an external world there can be no discernment to mark differences, hence, - no perception of contrasts of monotony or variety; nothing in short outside that immortal feeling of love and sympathetic attraction whose seeds are planted in the fifth [principle], whose plants blossom luxuriantly in and around the fourth, but whose roots have to penetrate deep into the sixth principle, if it would survive the lower groups .. remember, both, that we create ourselves our devachan as our avitchi while yet on earth, and mostly during the latter days and even moments of our intellectual, sentient lives.

[M.L., 123:127]

The matter of monotony in Devachan was further discussed in another Letter.

Because it is so important that we should understand properly the state of Devachan and its relationship to our earth lives, and how our circumstances there must be seen in the light of our personal characters, worldly circumstances and opportunities, the Master emphasized his points:

The Devachan State, I repeat, can be as little described or explained, by giving a however minute and graphic description of the state of one ego taken at random, as all the human lives collectively could be described by the "Life of Napoleon" or that of any other man. There are millions of various states of happiness and misery, emotional states having their source in the physical as well as the spiritual faculties and senses, and only the latter surviving. An honest labourer will feel differently from an honest millionaire. Miss Nightingale's state will differ considerably from that of a young bride who dies before the consummation of what she regards as happiness. The two former love their families; the philanthropist - humanity; the girl centres the whole world in her future husband; the melomaniac knows of no higher state of bliss and happiness than music - the most divine and spiritual of arts. The Devachan merges from its highest into its lowest degree - by insensible gradations; while from the last step of Devachan, the Ego will often find itself in Avitchi's faintest state, which, towards the end of the "spiritual selection" of events may become a bona fide "Avitchi". Remember, every feeling is relative. There is neither good nor evil, happiness nor misery per se. The transcendent, evanescent bliss of an adulterer, who by his act murders the happiness of a husband, is no less spiritually born for its criminal nature. If a remorse of conscience (the latter proceeding always from the Sixth Principle) has only once been felt during the period of bliss and really spiritual love, born in the sixth and fifth, however polluted by the desires of the fourth, or Kamarupa - then this remorse must survive and will accompany incessantly the scenes of pure love .. Search in the depths of your conscience and memory and try to see what are the scenes that are likely to take their firm hold upon you, when once more in their presence you find yourself living them

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over again; and that, ensnared, you will have forgotten all the rest ..

[M.L., 185:187]

The Master had previously referred to love and hate:

Unless a man loves well or hates as well, he will be neither in Devachan nor in Avitchi. "Nature spews the luke-warm out of her mouth" means only that she annihilates their personal Egos (not the shells, nor yet the sixth principle) in the Kama-Loka and the Devachan. This does not prevent them from being immediately reborn - and, if their lives were not very very bad, there is no reason why the eternal Monad should not find the page of that life intact in the Book of Life.

[M.L., 131:134]

In other words, our personal lives must have some significant content if they are to make a mark on the Egoic consciousness.

Love and Hatred are mentioned again:

Yes, Love and Hatred are the only immortal feelings; but the gradations of tones along the seven by seven scales of the whole key-board of life, are numberless. And, since it is those two feelings - (or, to be correct, shall I risk being misunderstood again and say those two poles of man's "Soul" which is a unity?) - that mould the future state of man, whether for Devachan or Avitchi, then the variety of such states must also be inexhaustible.

[M.L., 185:188]

In the matter of Devachan being monotonous because it is so largely coloured by the spiritual highlights only of the past life, necessarily in most cases few, coming up repeatedly for review, the Master said:

Why should it be supposed that Devachan is a monotonous condition only because some one moment of earthly sensation is indefinitely perpetuated - stretched, so to say, throughout aeons? It is not, it cannot be so. This would be contrary to all analogies and antagonistic to the law of effects under which results are proportioned to antecedent energies. To make it clear you must keep in mind that there are two fields of causal manifestation, to wit: the objective and the subjective. So the grosser energies, those which operate in the heavier or denser conditions of matter manifest objectively in physical life, their outcome being the new personality of each birth included within the grand cycle of the evolving individuality. The moral and spiritual activities find their sphere of effects in "Devachan". For example: the vices, physical attractions, etc. - say, of a philosopher - may result in the birth of a new philosopher, a king, a merchant, a rich Epicurean, or any other personality whose make-up was inevitable from the preponderating proclivities of the being in the next preceding birth. Bacon, for inst.: whom a poet called - "The wisest, greatest, meanest of mankind" - might reappear in his next incarnation as a greedy money-getter, with extraordinary intellectual capacities. But the moral and spiritual qualities of the previous Bacon would also have to find a field in which their energies could expand themselves. Devachan is such a field. Hence - all the great plans of moral reform, of intellectual and spiritual research into abstract principles of

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nature, all the divine aspirations, would in Devachan come to fruition, and the abstract entity previously known as the great Chancellor would occupy itself in this inner world of its own preparation, living, if not quite what one would call a conscious existence, at least a dream of such realistic vividness that none of the life-realities could ever match it. And this "dream" lasts until Karma is satisfied in that direction, the ripple of force reaches the edge of its cyclic basin, and the being moves into the next area of causes.

[M.L., 188:191]

In answer to a query as to whether there was change of occupation in Devachan:

Yes, certainly there is "a change of occupation", a continual change in Devachan, just as much - and far more - as there is in the life of any man or woman who happens to follow his or her whole life one sole occupation whatever it may be; with that difference, that to the Devachanee his special occupation is always pleasant and fills his life with rapture. Change then there must be, for that dream-life is but the fruition, the harvest-time of those psychic seed-germs dropped from the tree of physical existence in our moments of dreams and hopes, fancy-glimpses of bliss and happiness stifled in an ungrateful social soil, blooming in the rosy dawn of Devachan, and ripening under its ever fructifying sky. No failures there, no disappointments! If man had but one single moment of ideal happiness and experience during his life - as you think - even then, if Devachan exists, - it could not be .. the indefinite prolongation of that "single moment", but the infinite developments, the various incidents and events, based upon, and outflowing from , that one "single moment" or moments, as the case may be; all in short that would suggest itself to the "dreamers" fancy. That one note, as I said, struck from the lyre of life, would form but the Key-note of the being's subjective state, and work out into numberless harmonic tones and semi-tones of psychic phantasmagoria. There - all unrealized hopes, aspirations, dreams, become fully realized, and the dreams of the objective become the realities of the subjective existence. And there behind the curtain of Maya its vapours and deceptive appearances are perceived by the adept, who has learnt the great secret how to penetrate thus deeply into the Arcana of being.

[M.L., 194:197]

All this was amplified in the next extract. The subject of variety of experience in Devachan appeared to be quite a problem to the two enquirers. The difficulty seems to have stemmed from the idea that Devachan was only a dream, wholly conditioned by highlights only of the last life's experience.

Then - how can you think that "but one moment of earthly sensation only is selected for perpetuation"? Very true, that "moment" lasts from the first to last; but then it lasts but as the key-note of the whole harmony, a definite tone of appreciable pitch, around which cluster and develop in progressive variations of melody and as endless variations on a theme, all the aspirations, desires, hopes, dreams, which, in connection with that particular "moment" had ever crossed the dreamer's brain during his lifetime, without having ever found their realization on earth, and which he now finds fully realized in all their vividness in Devachan, without ever suspecting that all that blissful reality is but the progeny begotten by his own fancy, the effects of the mental causes produced by himself. That particular one moment which will be most intense and uppermost in the thoughts of his dying brain at the time of dissolution will of course regulate all the other "moments"; still the latter - minor and less vivid though they be - will be there also, having their appointed place in his phantasmagoric marshalling of past dreams, and must give variety to the whole. No man on earth but has some decided predilection if not a domineering passion; no person, however humble and poor - and often because of all that - but indulges in dreams and desires unsatisfied

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though these be. Is this monotony?

[M.L., 189:192]

The question of Devachan's monotony was still further pursued, especially in view of the very long duration, in terms of earth years, of the period spent in Devachan. The Master added later:

No; there are no clocks, no timepieces in Devachan, .. though the whole Cosmos is a gigantic chronometer in one sense. Nor do we, mortals, - *ici bas même* [even here below] - take much, if any, cognizance of time during periods of happiness and bliss, and find them ever too short: a fact that does not in the least prevent us from enjoying that happiness all the same - when it does come. Have you ever given a thought to this little possibility that, perhaps, it is because their cup of bliss is full to its brim, that the "devachanee" loses "all sense of the lapse of time".

[M.L., 190:193]

The Master then gives a dissertation on time that need not be dwelt on here, but in the course of it, he makes a very significant statement justifying the authoritative nature of the mass of information he is giving: "To realize the bliss in Devachan, or the woes in Avitchi, you have to assimilate them - as we do" [M.L., 191:194].

The end of the devachanic term prior to rebirth comes gradually. The cycle of births and deaths continues until either a consummation of many lives is attained by the personal man becoming so pure and Karma-less that there can be a conscious complete union with the Ego, or, not having completed his development, the man passes with the world into Nirvana at the end of the seventh Round. Until that time the cycle of births and deaths continues. Prior to another birth the devachanic period comes gradually to its end:

As in actual earth-life, so there is for the Ego in Devachan - the first flutter of psychic life, the attainment of prime [of life], the gradual exhaustion of force passing into semi-unconsciousness, gradual oblivion and lethargy, total oblivion and - not death but birth: birth into another personality, and the resumption of action which daily begets new congeries of causes, that must be worked out in another term of Devachan, and still another physical rebirth as a new personality. What the lives in Devachan and upon Earth shall be respectively in each instance is determined by Karma. And this weary round of birth upon birth must be ever and ever run through, until the being reaches the end of the seventh round, or - attains in the interim the wisdom of an Arhat, then that of a Buddha and thus gets relieved for a round or two, - having learned how to burst through the vicious circles - and to pass periodically into the Paranirvana.

[M.L., 192:195]

As said before, the fate of Egos in Devachan will depend on the nature of the personality and its doings in the last preceding life. Two examples are given:

But suppose it is not a question of a Bacon, a Goethe, a Shelley, a Howard, but of some hum-drum person, some colourless, flackless personality, who never impinged upon the world enough to make

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himself felt: what then? Simply that his devachanic state is as colourless and feeble as was his personality. How could it be otherwise since cause and effect are equal. But suppose a case of a monster of wickedness, sensuality, ambition, avarice, pride, deceit, etc., but who nevertheless has a germ or germs of something better, flashes of a more divine nature - where is he to go? The said spark smouldering under a heap of dirt will counteract, nevertheless, the attraction of the eighth sphere [Avitchi], whither fall but absolute nonentities, "failures of nature", to be remodelled entirely ..

[M.L., 192:196]

As we have seen, although this period of bliss is long, sometimes millennia in terms of earth years, it, like everything else, comes to an end. Consciousness then gradually diminishes; the process was likened to the onset of old age in physical existence until death and unconsciousness close in, and the processes of re-birth are started:

".. in all these Rupa-Lokas, the Devas (Spirits) are equally subjected to birth, decay, old age, and death", means only that an Ego is borne thither, then begins fading out and finally "dies", i.e. falls into that unconscious condition which precedes re-birth .. "As the devas emerge from these heavens, they enter the lower world again"; i.e. they leave a world of bliss to be reborn in a world of causes.

[M.L., 103:106]

In this long chapter we have seen what happens to the Ego after the preparatory stages of the post-mortem process in Kamaloka. There is a "second death" when the psychic remains of the mortal soul (4th and 5th principles) are severed from the Ego, the higher Triad (upper 5th, 6th and 7th principles). Prior to final separation there is a second review of the immediate past life, and then a slow return of consciousness to the Ego as it enters Devachan. It is explained that for this consciousness to arise there must be some content of the manasic (mind) principle of the late personality sufficiently pure and spiritual to be assimilated by the Ego. Without this content nothing of the last personality could condition the Ego, and in respect of that particular life, there could be nothing in Devachan.

The conditions in Devachan, while always necessarily pure and spiritual, are as varied in nature as the devachanees enjoying it, for the state is entirely subjective and private to the devachanee. No other human being nor devachanee (except a Master who has learned to operate objectively at Egoic level, i.e. free from all personal limitations) can actually share that state, although it seems to the devachanee that all those whom he would most like to be there, are in fact there with him. Devachan is a state of recuperative rest between lives with no trace of the painful experiences of earth life.

It is as sleep at night between days of activity in our ordinary lives - the parallel is very close. "Perchance to dream?" wondered Hamlet: the whole devachanic experience is dreamlike in the sense that it is completely subjective, of our own making entirely, but it is nevertheless completely real to us - as real as our objective lives are on earth.

Those in Devachan can never know what is going on on earth. They can never know the fate of their projects, nor of their loved ones. Only a little imagination tells us what suffering such knowledge could entail.

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Devachan, however, is a state of complete fulfillment, of the working out of all our highest dreams and aspirations. We cannot, as ex-persons, learn anything there. It is wholly, and only, a world of effects - the result of causes we set going when we were alive. We are told, however, that the Ego, free of the limitations of the personal element in Devachan, can learn about things of a spiritual nature towards which it aspires.

CHAPTER VII

REBIRTH AND KARMA

On first starting our studies of the after-death states, we may never have entertained the idea of reincarnation or Karma, except perhaps in the most superficial way and with much reservation. Now having become acquainted with other ideas which would have seemed improbable but which we now perhaps see as feasible, the ideas of re-birth or re-incarnation and of universal Law governing the life-processes are possibly more acceptable.

We are now coming full circle - the period in Devachan is ending, the processes of rebirth are starting, with the Egos about to leave Devachan. In the light of some of what has been written about the Ego's return to earth life since these Letters were published, its unconsciousness prior to rebirth according to the Masters should be particularly noted.

We have dealt with all the phases of the after-death process and seen that none of them lasts for ever. There is no eternity spent in any of them. As to how long we spend in each of the states, we were told that:

the period between death and rebirth (Bardo) .. may last from a few years to a kalpa. It is divided into three sub-periods (1) when the Ego delivered of its mortal coil enters into Kama-Loka (the abode of Elementaries); (2) when it enters into its "Gestation State"; (3) when it is reborn in the Rupa-Loka of Devachan. Sub-period (1) may last from a few minutes to a number of years - the phrase "a few years" becoming puzzling and utterly worthless without a more complete explanation; Sub-period (2) is "very long" .. longer sometimes than you may imagine, yet proportionate to the Ego's spiritual stamina; Sub-period (3) lasts in proportion to the good KARMA, after which the monad is again reincarnated.

[M.L., 103:105]

A further question was asked, presumably to get some more specific information: "Does this state of spiritual beatitude [Devachan] endure for years? for decades? for centuries?" The answer:

For years, decades, centuries and millenniums oftentimes multiplied by something more. It all depends upon the duration of Karma. Fill with oil Den's [Sinnott's small son's] little cup, and a city Reservoir of water (sic), and lighting both see which burns the longer. The Ego is the wick and Karma the oil; the difference in the quantity of the latter in the cup and the reservoir) suggesting to you the great difference in the duration of various Karmas. Every effect must be proportionate to the cause. And, as man's terms of incarnate existence bear but a small proportion to his periods of inter-natal existence in the manvantaric cycle, so the good thoughts, words and deeds of any one of these "lives" on a globe are causative of effects, the working out of which requires far more time than the evolution of the causes occupied.

[M.L., 103:106]

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Having seen that none of the phases of our after-life states lasts for ever, we can examine what happens at the end of them. The physical body is disposed of by burning, burying or, in some countries, given to vultures. The astral double disintegrates along with it and eventually the constituents of our mortal souls also disperse. None of these, however, disappears without trace; each leaves a residue behind it in the inner worlds. These are the physical, psychic and mental tendencies and predispositions (skandhas) which, so to speak, constitute the accumulated experience of our past life, the balance in the account-book of that life, and are brought forward to the next incarnation. The new man will be conditioned by these residues, the results of previous lives. It is through these skandhas that we come into a new life with predispositions in all the elements of our personal make-up, our characters in short, and all this according to the working of the perfectly just law of Karma.

The Master explains:

If you ask a learned Buddhist priest what is Karma? - he will tell you that Karma is what a Christian might call Providence (in a certain sense only) and a Mahomedan - Kismet, fate or destiny (again in one sense). That is that cardinal tenet which teaches that, as soon as any conscious or sentient being, whether man, deva, or animal dies, a new being is produced and he or it re-appears in another birth, on the same or another planet, under conditions of his or its own antecedent making. Or, in other words, that Karma is the guiding power, and Trishna (in Pali Tanha) the thirst or desire to sentiently live - the proximate force or energy, the resultant of human (or animal) action, which, out of the old Skandhas produce the new group that form the new being and control the nature of the birth itself. Or to make it still clearer, the new being is rewarded and punished for the meritorious acts and misdeeds of the old one; Karma representing an Entry Book, in which all the acts of man, good, bad or indifferent, are carefully recorded to his debit and credit - by himself, so to say, or rather by these very actions of his. There, where Christian poetical fiction created, and sees a "Recording" Guardian Angel, stern and realistic Buddhist logic, perceiving the necessity that every cause should have its effect - shows its real presence. The opponents of Buddhism have laid great stress upon the alleged injustice that the doer should escape and an innocent victim be made to suffer, - since the doer and the sufferer are different beings. The fact is, that while in one sense they may be so considered, yet in another they are identical. The "old being" is the sole parent - father and mother at once - of the "new being". It is the former who is the creator and fashioner of the latter, in reality; and far more so in plain truth, than any father in the flesh. And once that you have well mastered the meaning of Skandhas you will see what I mean.

[M.L., 107:110]

The Master describes skandhas, which are the basic mechanisms at all levels, including the physical, by which individual characteristics are transmitted from the old to the new personality. They are the attributes that:

form and constitute the physical and mental individuality we call man (or any being). This group consists (in the exoteric teaching) of five Skandhas, namely: Rupa - the material properties or attributes; Vedana - sensations; Sanna - abstract ideas; Samkara - tendencies both physical and mental; and Vinnana - mental powers, an amplification of the fourth - meaning the mental, physical and moral predispositions. We add to them two more .. connected with, and productive of Sakkayaditthi, the "heresy or delusion of individuality" and of Attavada "the doctrine of Self", both of which (in the case of the fifth principle, the soul) lead to the maya of heresy and belief in the efficacy of vain rites and ceremonies, in prayers and

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intercession.

Now, returning to the question of identity between the old and the new "Ego". I may remind you once more, that even your Science has accepted the old, very old fact distinctly taught by our Lord, viz. - that a man of any given age, while sentiently the same, is yet physically not the same as he was a few years earlier (we say seven years and are prepared to maintain and prove it): buddhistically speaking, his Skandhas have changed. At the same time they are ever and ceaselessly at work in preparing the abstract mould, the "privation" of the future new being. Well then, if it is just that a man of 40 should enjoy or suffer for the actions of the man of 20, so it is equally just that the being of the new birth - since he is its outcome and creation - should feel the consequences of that begetting Self or personality.

[M.L., 108:111]

This is a very important passage as, put another way, it means that during every moment of our present earth life, we are making what will be ourselves in the next earth life. It also means that as well as punishing the guilty, Karma avenges and compensates the innocent. We are further told:

Motive is everything and man is punished in a case of direct responsibility, never otherwise.

[M.L., 129:132]

In response to an objection that it is only the body that changes because of molecular transformation which has nothing to do with mental evolution, the Master replied with a question:

But perhaps, to our physiological remark the objectors may reply that it is only the body that changes, there is only a molecular transformation, which has nothing to do with the mental evolution; and that the Skandhas represent not only a material but also a set of mental and moral qualities. But is there, I ask, either a sensation, an abstract idea, a tendency of mind or a mental power, that one could call an absolutely non-molecular phenomenon? Can even a sensation or the most abstract of thoughts which is something, come out of nothing, or be nothing?

[M.L., 109:112)]

In the Letters, the Masters discuss special cases of cause and effect. One of these covers the case of a generous public benefactor, as follows:

The "reward provided by nature for men who are benevolent in a large, systematic way" and who have not focused their affections upon an individual or speciality, is that - if pure - they pass the quicker for that through the Kama and Rupa-Lokas into the higher sphere of Tribhuvana, since it is one where the formulation of abstract ideas and the consideration of general principles fill the thought of its occupants. Personality is the synonym for limitation, and the more contracted the person's ideas, the closer will he cling to the lower spheres of being, the longer loiter on the plane of selfish social intercourse.

[M.L., 197:200]

Another special case concerns the Master's correspondent who was a man accepted in Society and who

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was concerned with social standing. The Master was well aware of this. In this case:

The social status of a being is, of course, a result of Karma; the law being that "like attracts like". The renascent being is drawn into the gestative current with which the preponderating attractions coming over from the last birth make him assimilate. Thus one who died a ryot may be reborn a king, and the dead sovereign may next see the light in a coolie's tent. This law of attraction asserts itself in a thousand "accidents of birth" - than which there could be no more flagrant misnomer. When you realize at least the following - that the skandhas are the elements of limited existence, then will you have realized also one of the conditions of Devachan which has now such a profoundly unsatisfactory outlook for you. Nor are your inferences (as regards the well-being and enjoyment of the upper classes being due to a better Karma) quite correct in their general application. They have an eudaemonistic [moralizing] ring about them which is hardly reconcilable with Karmic Law, since those "well-being and enjoyment" are oftener the causes of a new and overloaded Karma than the production or effects of the latter. Even as a "broad rule" poverty and humble condition in life are less a cause of sorrow than wealth and high birth ..

[M.L., 197:200]

In the light of the statement "like attracts like" there could be a question as to why a king might be reborn a ryot (one of low birth). Obviously the effective affinity would be one of character, inner nature, not physical circumstances. The determining karmic factor in this case would be thoughts and feelings. A rich man (a king) born to his surroundings would pay them no more heed than a poor man born to his. A poor man might have a very rich nature, a rich man a very poor or mean one, like Chancellor Bacon referred to earlier.

In answer to another question the Master replied:

What has the number of incarnations to do with the shrewdness, cleverness, or the stupidity of an individual? A strong craving for physical life may lead an entity through a number of incarnations and yet these may not develop its higher capacities. The Law of Affinity acts through the inherent Karmic impulse of the Ego, and governs its future existence. Comprehending Darwin's Law of Heredity for the body, it is not difficult to perceive how the birth-seeking Ego may be attracted at the time of rebirth to a body born in a family which has the same propensities as those of the reincarnating Entity.

[M.L., 398:404]

The whole of this account of death and the complicated inter-life states has to be seen against the background of the vast universal scheme of which it forms an integral part. The after-death processes of human beings are reflected in the grand cosmic process of Life with its everlasting comings and goings of living beings, and its own periods of rest and activity. We humans play a significant or, according to the doctrine, a central role in the great cyclic pageant of existent being.

In general, then, we have shown that Karma is the all-embracing Law of cosmic action, and under it, as the law of cause and effect, everything, collectively and individually, and all that we do and all that befalls us here and hereafter is within its embrace.

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Late in the series of Letters there is one which expands our ideas about Karma and its application to our reincarnating Egos. Their accumulated Karma - or rather the carried-forward balance of it - is stored in the Auric Envelope. It is this which forms the skandhas of the next personality. These skandhas as we have seen determine our mental and moral propensities. The skandhas are, however, themselves made by the efforts, habits, urges, strengths, weaknesses and so on of personalities in life. They are parents, mother and father of the next life more truly than are the physical ones.

Although the after-death processes reach a climax in Devachan (or Avitchi), it is not the end of the inter-life period. When the stay in Devachan is finished unconsciousness gradually overcomes the Ego, like the enfeeblement of old age, and the processes of rebirth are started. These are complex.

Firstly, the quickening process is begun when the karmic residue of the last life has been exhausted in Devachan by the ever-living Ego (Monad plus the higher or spiritual aspects of Manas) revivifying the dormant (during the inter-life period) Auric Egg, the container of the skandhas. These skandhas are conditioned (by previous lives) elementals or life atoms, ready to be awakened and to become effective again. They form a new astral body and a new Kama-rupa with their residual characteristics to manifest themselves in the character of the new foetus. Here is a descriptive passage:

Now, the Linga-Sarira remains with the Physical Body, and fades out along with it. An astral entity then has to be created (a new Linga-Sarira provided) to become the bearer of all the past Tanhas and future Karma. How is this accomplished? The mediumistic "spook", the "departed angel", fades out and vanishes also in its turn as an entity or full image of the Personality that was, and leaves in the Kamalokic world of effects only the records of its misdeeds and sinful thoughts and acts, known in the phraseology of the Occultists as Tanhic or human "Elementals". It is these Elementals which - upon entering into the composition of the "astral form" of the new body, into which the Ego, on its quitting the Devachanic state, is to enter according to Karmic decree - form that new astral entity which is born within the Auric Envelope, and of which it is often said "Karma, with its army of Skandhas, waits at the threshold of Devachan". For no sooner is the Devachanic state of reward ended, than the Ego is indissolubly united with (or rather follows in the track of) the new Astral Form. Both are Karmically propelled towards the family or woman from whom is to be born the animal child chosen by Karma to become the vehicle of the Ego which has just awakened from the Devachanic state. Then the new Astral Form, composed partly of the pure Akasic Essence of the Auric "Egg", and partly of terrestrial elements of the punishable sins and misdeeds of the last Personality, is drawn into the woman. Once there, Nature models the foetus of flesh around the Astral, out of the growing materials of the male seed in the female soil. Thus grows out of the essence of a decayed seed the fruit or eidolon of the dead seed, the physical fruit producing in its turn within itself another and other seeds for future plants.

[C.W.XII, 609]

According to this, then, not only is the model of the new human-to-be and who shall be its mother wholly determined by his past lives, but also the very environment and likely circumstances of upbringing in their major aspects are decided by Karma, and are, according to law, perfectly appropriate. The Ego does not choose any of these but it does have an outline preview of the life to come:

As the man at the moment of death has a retrospective insight into the life he has led, so, at the moment

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he is reborn on to earth, the Ego, awaking from the state of Devachan, has a prospective vision of the life which awaits him, and realizes all the causes that have led to it. He realizes them and sees futurity, because it is between Devachan and rebirth that the Ego regains his full manasic consciousness, and rebecomes for a short time the god he was, before, in compliance with Karmic law, he first descended into matter and incarnated in the first man of flesh. The "golden thread" sees all its "pearls" and misses not one of them.

[Key IX, 162]

So the cycle is completed from death to rebirth. From the sudden onset of unconsciousness at death through a possible series of Kamalokic dreams to certainly a prolonged abundance of blissful ones in Devachan, we pass into unconsciousness again prior to the dawning of a new life when we awake as an infant into whatever our new life has in store for us. We start with some initial know-how gleaned in past lives, but also with some handicaps, Karmic limitations. We have now, however, another opportunity of overcoming them. This little book may have given us some hints as to how this is accomplished.

CHAPTER VIII

EXCEPTIONS: SUICIDES AND ACCIDENTS

All that has been described so far is what happens in the normal course of events to anyone dying after a reasonable span of earth life and from natural causes. Even then there are very wide differences in what befalls us after death because of the wide differences in individual cases: in character, experience, deeds done, thoughts, and even in dreams, aspirations and so on. There are, however, specific exceptions to the general rule, and they can all be grouped under the heading of premature deaths. The Master spends much time in telling us what happens to those who commit suicide or who are killed by accident. Accidents include sudden deaths from all natural causes, e.g. earthquakes, cyclones, floods, as well as from wars, riots, murder and so on. It is these cases of premature death which are so important in spirit communications through mediums. This is dealt with more specifically in the next chapter.

What the Master said earlier concerning "exceptions" and the death struggle is very relevant here:

Until the struggle between the higher [spiritual] and middle duad begins ("with the exception of suicides who are not dead but have only killed their physical triad and whose Elemental parasites [4th and lower 5th principles] therefore are not naturally separated from the Ego as in real death") - until that struggle, I say, has begun and ended, no shell can realize its position.

[M.L., 168:171]

It is because of this non-severance that a post-mortem consciousness (of varying degrees) can be retained.

There is a passage saying that suicides and accidents can communicate through a medium, and it also tells us something of their state of consciousness in the Kama Loca:

Exceptional cases, my friend. Suicides can and generally do, but not so with the others. The good and pure sleep a quiet, blissful sleep, full of happy visions of earth-life, and have no consciousness of being already for ever beyond that life. Those who were neither good nor bad will sleep a dreamless, still a quiet sleep; while the wicked will in proportion to their grossness suffer the pangs of a nightmare lasting years: their thoughts become living things, their wicked passions - real substance, and they receive back on their heads all the misery they have heaped upon others. Reality and fact if described would yield a far more terrible Inferno than even Dante had imagined!

[M.L., 119:123]

Concerning cases of people dying or being killed before their time (i.e. the life span allotted by Karma) as well as suicides, and any attempts that may be made to contact them on the other side, the Master said:

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But there is another kind of "Spirits", we have lost sight of, the suicides and those killed by accident [whose 4th and 5th principles are not dissevered from their 6th and 7th principles]. Both kinds can communicate, and both have to pay dearly for such visits. .. They are an exception to the rule, as they have to remain within the earth's attraction, and in its atmosphere - the Kama-Loka - till the very last moment of what would have been the natural duration of their lives. In other words, that particular wave of life-evolution must run on to its shore. But it is a sin and cruelty to revive their memory and intensify their suffering by giving them a chance of living an artificial life; a chance to overload their Karma, by tempting them into open doors, viz. mediums and sensitives, for they will have to pay roundly for every such pleasure. I will explain. The suicides, who, foolishly hoping to escape life, found themselves still alive, - have suffering enough in store for them from that very life. Their punishment is in the intensity of the latter. Having lost by the rash act their seventh and sixth principles, though not for ever, as they can regain both - instead of accepting their punishment, and taking their chances of redemption, they are often made to regret life and tempted to regain a hold upon it by sinful means. In the Kama-Loka, the land of intense desires, they can gratify their earthly yearnings but through a living proxy; and by so doing, at the expiration of the natural term, they generally lose their monad for ever. As to the victims of accident - these fare still worse. Unless they were so good and pure, as to be drawn immediately within the Akashic Samadhi, i.e. to fall into a state of quiet slumber, a sleep full of rosy dreams, during which they have no recollection of the accident, but move and live among their familiar friends and scenes, until their natural life-term is finished, when they find themselves born in the Devachan - a gloomy fate is theirs. Unhappy shades, if sinful and sensual they wander about - (not shells, for their connection with their two higher principles is not quite broken) - until their death-hour comes. Cut off in the full flush of earthly passions which bind them to familiar scenes, they are enticed by the opportunities which mediums afford, to gratify them vicariously. They are the Pisachas, the Incubi, and Succubi of mediaeval times. The demons of thirst, gluttony, lust and avarice, - elementaries of intensified craft, wickedness and cruelty; provoking their victims to horrid crimes, and revelling in their commission! They not only ruin their victims, but these psychic vampires, borne along by the torrent of their hellish impulses, at last, at the fixed close of their natural period of life - they are carried out of the earth's aura into regions where for ages they endure exquisite suffering and end with entire destruction.

[M.L., 106:109]

This gloomy picture, we must remember, applies only to those who are "sinful and sensual"; the fate of the average victim of accident is kinder and is described below:

Although not "wholly dissevered from their sixth and seventh principles" and quite "potent" in the séance room, nevertheless to the day when they [suicides] would have died a natural death, they are separated from the higher principles by a gulf. The sixth and seventh remain passive and negative, whereas, in cases of accidental death the higher and the lower groups mutually attract each other. In cases of good and innocent Egos, moreover, the latter gravitates irresistibly toward the sixth and seventh, and thus - either slumbers surrounded by happy dreams, or sleeps a dreamless profound sleep until the hour strikes. With a little reflection, and an eye to eternal justice and fitness of things, you will see why. The victim whether good or bad is irresponsible for his death, even if his death were due to some action in a previous life or an antecedent birth: was an act, in short, of the Law of Retribution, still, it was not the direct result of an act deliberately committed by the personal Ego of that life during which he happened to be killed. Had he been allowed to live longer he may have atoned for his antecedent sins still more effectually: and even now, the Ego having been made to pay off the debt of his maker (the previous Ego) is free from the blows of retributive justice. The Dhyān Chohans who have no hand in the guidance of the living human Ego, protect the helpless victim when it is violently thrust out of its element into a new one,

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before it is matured and made fit and ready for it. We tell you what we know, for we are made to learn it through personal experience. You know what I mean and I CAN SAY NO MORE! Yes; the victims whether good or bad sleep, to awake but at the hour of the last Judgment, which is that hour of the supreme struggle between the sixth and seventh, and the fifth and fourth at the threshold of the gestation state. And even after that, when the sixth and seventh carrying off a portion of the fifth have gone to their Akashic Samadhi, even then it may happen that the spiritual spoil from the fifth will prove too weak to be reborn in Devachan; in which case it will there and then reclothe itself in a new body, the subjective "Being" created from the Karma of the victim (or no-victim as the case may be) and enter upon a new earth-existence whether upon this or any other planet. In no case then, - with the exception of suicides and shells, is there any possibility for any other to be attracted to a séance room ..

[M.L., 127:131]

Where the exceptional death is referred to above as good or bad it must be remembered, to avoid confusion, that it applies to "victims", not to suicides. The question of being reborn on any other planet needs explanation: see Appendix under "Globes, Rounds and Races". Akashic Samadhi referred to in this extract is Devachan and the passage refers to the case dealt with before when there is not enough spiritual experience from the last life to ensure a stay in Devachan.

A questioner, realizing that in suicides and accidents the proper death hour has been anticipated, wondered if there might be a difference whether a suicide killed himself violently (blew his brains out) or killed himself by debauching or overwork. Also he wondered if there might be a difference whether a man was hanged for murder, killed in battle, or knocked over by disease or some other such cause. According to the Master:

There is a great difference in our humble opinion. We .. say that there are very few if any of the men who indulge in the above enumerated vices, who feel perfectly sure that such a course of action will lead them eventually to premature death. Such is the penalty of Maya. The "vices" will not escape their punishment: but it is the cause not the effect that will be punished, especially an unforeseen though probable effect. As well call a suicide a man who meets his death in a storm at sea, as one who kills himself with "overstudy". Water is liable to drown a man, and too much brain-work to produce a softening of the brain which may carry him away. In such a case no one ought to cross the Kalapani nor even to take a bath for fear of getting faint in it and drowned (for we all know of such cases;) nor should a man do his duty, least of all sacrifice himself for even a laudable and highly-beneficent cause, as many of us - (H.P.B. for one) - do. Would Mr Hume call her a suicide were she to drop down dead over her present work? Motive is everything and man is punished in a case of direct responsibility, never otherwise. In the victim's case the natural hour of death was anticipated accidentally, while in that of the suicide, death is brought on voluntarily and with a full and deliberate knowledge of its immediate consequences. Thus a man who causes his death in a fit of temporary insanity is not a *felo de se*, to the great grief and often trouble of the Life Insurance Companies. Nor is he left a prey to the temptations of the Kama Loka but falls asleep like any other victim. A Guiteau will not remain in the earth's atmosphere with his higher principles over him - inactive and paralysed, still there. Guiteau [adjudged mad after shooting President Garfield] is gone into a state during the period of which, he will be ever firing at his President), thereby tossing into confusion and shuffling the destinies of millions of persons; where he will be ever tried and ever hung. Bathing in the reflections of his deeds and thoughts - especially those he indulged in on the scaffold .. As for those who were "knocked over by cholera, or plague, or jungle fever" they could not have succumbed had they not the germs for the development of such diseases in them from birth.

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[M.L., 128:132]

The following small extract confirms that even such cases of abnormal death become unconscious at the instant of death, but in those cases consciousness returns in Kama Loca because of the presence of the higher triad. These premature deaths are not yet shells:

Even in the case of suicides and those who have perished by violent death, even in their case, consciousness requires a certain time to establish its new centre of gravity and evolve .. its "perception proper", henceforth to remain distinct from "sensation proper".

[M.L., 125:128]

In this chapter all the most frequent variations on the normal state of unconsciousness after death have been dealt with. In all such variations the common factor is that the physical life span has not run its allotted course. It has been shortened by accident or other cause. The allotted span would have been that determined by the entity's Karma, involving many factors, most of which would be the result of the entity's mode of living, motives, etc. The shortened life means that the anticipated experience cycle of acquisition and education (learning and assimilation) has not been completed. This affects what happens in the Kama Loca and in Devachan, both periods being shortened to the point where in the case of infant or child deaths they are virtually non-existent and rebirth is almost immediate. In the case of very young children, if the spiritual (higher triad) did not separate from the lower duad (personal psyche), only the physical body would have been affected and the result is the only case of real reincarnation of a personality. In all other cases the Ego, the continuing spiritual 'Soul', puts down a ray of itself to quicken the dormant personal skandhas (resulting from the life activities of the previous personality) of a new personality (i.e. a new astral double, new life principles and a new physical body), distinct except for its conditioning skandhas, from the previous one. It is in effect a new being, with a new sense of "I", and it does not normally remember its last life. Only in the case of very premature death (e.g. children) is the old personality (i.e. its still-intact inner principles) itself reborn into a new physical body, sometimes with a memory of its previous life.

The principal difference between suicides and victims of accidents which affects their immediate post mortem experience is that the suicides intended to put an end to their earthly existences whereas the victims of accidents did not. Both regain some consciousness in Kama Loca and both can communicate with those on earth through mediums for a time. In the case of accidents the normal kamalokic experience is not unpleasant - varying from near unconsciousness to vivid but dream-like memories of earth (dream-like because of their subjective nature). They are usually unaware of what is going on on earth except insofar as they can use the perceptive faculties of the medium. In due course, i.e. at the time when death would naturally have occurred, the death struggle and the gestation state proceed.

In the case of suicides, their after-death state will again be determined by what kind of person they were and so will that of their experience in the Kama Loca, but there is a difference between them and victims of accidents. Suicides stay "awake" in Kama Loca until such time as they would normally have died. During this time they suffer (or otherwise) according to the motive for taking their own lives. If their deed was from a high, unselfish motive, then their period of consciousness is not intolerable and sometimes even rewarding. If the motive was selfish or cowardly they will suffer remorse and regret, and this

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continues until the normal time of death. After that, the death processes take their course. If in either case the deceased does contact a medium - and not all do - a certain amount of new experience may be gathered. This affects the skandhas, seemingly seldom for the better. The practice of recalling such entities from the other side (necromancy, in short) is therefore strongly condemned by those who know of these likely ill-effects. The spiritualistic aspects of the post mortem experience of exceptions is more fully dealt with in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IX

SPIRITUALISM

Much interest in what happens after death belongs to the curious who regard spiritualistic phenomena, in the form of messages from the other side, as significant evidence for survival. There is no doubt that the apparent contact with their departed loved ones has given solace to many bereaved persons. They are told, for example, that those on the other side are all right and are happy, usually in pleasant surroundings, and often in the company of friends and relatives who have died before them. Occasionally information of real use or benefit is given to one still alive on earth, and sometimes information which could only have been known to the deceased is given. All this seemingly provides a convincing justification for a belief in continued personal life after death. But how can it be reconciled with our present account?

There are many passages in which this question is dealt with. The Masters' correspondents were spiritualistically inclined and found many of their statements hard to accept. To start with they tried to reconcile them not only to their spiritualism but also to their orthodox Christian religious views. The Masters had to reiterate their points many times. They also gave out some fundamental data upon which their account of the after-death states depended. One of these was the sevenfold nature of man, which included his division into two principal aspects during life, viz. one the mortal psychic aspect, his character personality, and the other the spiritual, immortal individuality (Ego). The former during life comprises the four lower principles (the quaternary). The disintegration of the physical body and the dissipation of the life principles after death leave the two middle (or more accurately one and a half) principles of Kama-Manas, which later comprise the shell or elementary. The two spiritual principles, together with the higher half of Manas, form the upper triad (Monad + Manas), the divine thinker (man). The spiritualists and religionists did not make the distinction between the lower group and the higher. For them man was a body with a soul or spirit, no distinction being made between the two. In the Masters' system, however, the soul (Kama-Manas) is mortal, whereas the Egoic triad, the real spiritual man, is immortal. It is only the latter to which they apply the word spirit, as an entity. It is about the possibility of communication of such spirits, in this sense, with those on earth, directly or through mediums, that the Master says:

They cannot even if they would span the abyss that separates their world from ours. They can be visited in Spirit, their Spirit cannot descend and reach us. They attract, they cannot be attracted, their Spiritual polarity being an insuperable difficulty in the way ..

[M.L., 45:45]

The Master gave a long technical explanation of this; part of it is reproduced in Chapter Ten. However, it is possible for sensitives in a state of exalted consciousness to feel that their loved ones have come down to them. The Master says:

It is in this, during such a condition of complete Maya [such as that of a Devachanee] that the Souls or astral Egos of pure, loving sensitives, labouring under the same illusion, think their loved ones come

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down to them on earth, while it is their own Spirits that are raised towards those in the Deva-Chan. Many of the subjective spiritual communications - most of them when the sensitives are pure minded - are real; but it is most difficult for the uninitiated medium to fix in his mind the true and correct pictures of what he sees and hears. Some of the phenomena called psychography (though more rarely) are also real. The spirit of the sensitive getting odylied [see Glossary], so to say, by the aura of the Spirit in the Deva-Chan, becomes for a few minutes that departed personality, and writes in the hand writing of the latter, in his language and in his thoughts, as they were during his life time. The two spirits become blended in one; and the preponderance of one over the other during such phenomena determines the preponderance of personality in the characteristics in such writings, and "trance speaking." What you call "rapport" is in plain fact an identity of molecular vibration between the astral part of the incarnate medium and the astral part of the disincarnate personality.

[M.L., 99:101]

The astral part of the "disincarnate personality" here refers to the remaining principles after the death of the body and the disintegration of the 2nd principle (Linga-Sarira) along with it. H.P.B. occasionally used the word 'astral' for the inner man generally, and "molecular vibration" here refers to the matter of the inner worlds, not the outer physical ones.

It was objected that some spiritualistic communication might in fact be with Spirits proper, to which the Master replied:

But why should they "communicate"? Do those you love communicate with you during their sleep objectively? Your Spirits, in hours of danger, or intense sympathy, vibrating on the same current of thought - which, in such cases, creates a kind of telegraphic spiritual wire between your two bodies - may meet and mutually impress your memories; but then you are living, not dead bodies. But how can an unconscious fifth principle impress or communicate with a living organism, unless it has already become a shell? If, for certain reasons, they remain in such a state of lethargy for several years, the spirits of the living may ascend to them .. and this may take place still easier than in Deva-Chan, where the Spirit is too much engrossed in his personal bliss to pay much attention to an intruding element. I say - they cannot.

[M.L., 129:133]

The latter part of this paragraph might need some explanation. The 5th principle is unconscious during the gestation period, which is sometimes very long. Consciousness in the Ego or the shell can only occur after that process is over. If the process is prolonged, the gestating entity would remain in a state of lethargy, like a chrysalis.

The Masters' correspondents were spiritualists; they had not yet fully appreciated the difference between personality and individuality and they tried to have the Masters admit that some of their phenomena were due to the presence of real spirits, but he insisted:

In no case then, with the exception of suicides and shells, is there any possibility for any other to be attracted to a séance room. And it is clear that "this teaching is not in opposition to our former doctrine"

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and that while "shells" will be many, - Spirits very few.

[M.L., 128:132]

Even so, the Master's correspondent could not readily accept that there could not be any communication with spirits proper. He asked:

Is there any intermediate condition between the spiritual beatitude of Deva-Chan, and the forlorn shadow life of the only half-conscious elementary reliquiae of human beings who have lost their sixth principle? Because if so, that might give a locus standi in imagination to the Ernests and Joeys [names in vogue for controls] of the spiritual mediums - the better sort of controlling "spirits". If so surely that must be a very populous world, from which any amount of "spiritual" communications might come?

The answer was:

Alas, no, my friend; not that I know of. From "Sukhavati" down to the "Territory of Doubt" there is a variety of Spiritual States; but I am not aware of any such "intermediate condition". I have told you of the Sakwalas (though I cannot be enumerating them since it would be useless); and even of Avitchi - the "Hell" from which there is no return, and I have no more to tell about. "The forlorn shadow" has to do the best it can ..

[M.L., 105:108]

In general, then, the fact is that:

As soon as it has stepped outside the Kama-Loka, and crossed the "Golden Bridge" leading to the "Seven Golden Mountains" [regions of Devachan] the Ego can confabulate no more with easy going mediums. No "Ernest" or "Joey" has ever returned from the Rupa-Loka - let alone the Arupa-Loka - to hold sweet intercourse with mortals.

[M.L., 106:108]

There is, however, the possibility of communication between real spirits, those of the living and those in Devachan, at least in terms of the principle involved. H.P.B. wrote in a long letter of sympathy to a Professor W. Corson on the death of his daughter:

How willingly would I devote all my life, nay sacrifice it even, if I could only impart to some bereaved fathers and mothers, sons and often daughters, the grandest truth that ever was, a truth so easily learned and practised for whomever is endowed with a powerful will and faith.

[Some Unpublished Letters of H.P.B. (No.4),137]

It is obvious from this that H.P.B. herself was able so to communicate. The experience was real to her.

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Apart from the question of spirit communication, there are occasions when the form of the departed can seemingly appear to the living. One such occasion occurs when, soon after a person has died, his Mayavi-Rupa may be projected and seen by a loved one or even a friend, as was described in Chapter Four. The Mayavi-Rupa of an ordinary man (i.e. non-Initiate), however, cannot speak, so there is no communication by that means.

Having seen the circumstances under which communion between Devachanees and those on earth can be possible, we are told in much more detail what is behind the majority of spiritualistic type phenomena, in particular the nature of the entities that come through to give messages, describe after-death states, and so on. There is a mass of literature on this type of spirit-communication, some of it containing reports of visits over years, accounts of remarkable happenings, some at a distance, precognition, and impressive high-toned messages, all in contrast to the more usual intimately personal, sometimes very trivial, material.

As we have seen, in the normal case, the deceased becomes immediately unconscious and remains so while the processes of the initial after-death states are going on. Consciousness returns slowly at the entrance to Devachan. This can only happen when the Ego (the upper triad plus the truly spiritual elements of the past life experience) has separated out completely from what was purely personal. With the departure of the Ego, the remains of the 'soul', the kama-manasic, psychic residue become an empty shell with only a dim consciousness of its own. The shell, however, retains much of the personal memory, habits of thought, idiosyncrasies and so on, which were typical of the late personality. The shell, having lost contact with its spiritually responsible elder, becomes amoral, but its previous conditioning in behaviour, constraints and restraints, will still affect it. If its morality was low, or its predispositions and appetites depraved, the shell, sometimes (in these circumstances particularly) referred to as an elementary, can have, during such time as it may persist, a very evil influence on the living who may be sensitive to it. Such elementaries (one and a half principled) can communicate with the living through mediums but not otherwise; they can, as just said, however, influence the behaviour of those on earth who may be sensitive to them.

The quality of any communication will depend to a large extent on the nature of the last personality, of which the shell is a temporary and more or less pale image or reflection. The shell cannot, of itself, originate any action; it is an effect; it can generate no new causes. Shells are not capable of any development; they cannot learn anything new, but they can retain some powerful psychic links with those with whom they had strong bonds in life. Sometimes their influence is beneficent. There are some remarkable stories where such shells, under the right circumstances, have been able to protect loved ones still on earth, and where they have given positive aid and valuable information. The circumstances required are the presence of a medium, but the beneficiary might be the medium him- or herself.

Then there are the exceptions already described. They are the premature deaths, the suicides and victims of accidents, and between these classes of deceased there are important differences. In brief, the victims of accidents died from no deliberate act or intention on their part, whereas the suicides died deliberately; they were responsible for their own deaths; and, as we were told, "motive is everything" where Karma is concerned. The lot of the suicide is likely to be an unhappy one whereas, although the accident victim is at risk, fate tends to be more kind to him. In some cases they are even looked after by those great Beings, the Dhyani Chohans.

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In these exceptional cases of premature deaths the lower psychic (mento-emotional) principles are not severed from the upper (Egoic) triad until such time as death would normally have occurred. To this extent they are still alive, complete beings except for their physical bodies and life principles. In this capacity both types, as said, can communicate through mediums. However, whereas the suicides mostly retain some consciousness in Kama Loka, except in the period immediately after death when consciousness in all cases is snuffed out, the accident victims enter a degree of merciful oblivion, sometimes dreaming, sometimes not. Children dying young are cases of premature deaths and can be included in the accident category. They are usually reborn quickly as their Egoic triad has not been severed from the middle principles or they have very little experience to assimilate. In the former cases it is the same personality that reincarnates.

As to the nature of the entities in Kama Loka, the Master had this to say:

Of course there is a "better sort" of reliquia; and the "shells" or the "earth walkers" as they are here called, are not necessarily all bad. But even those that are good, are made bad for the time being by mediums. The "shells" may well not care, since they have nothing to lose, anyhow.

[M.L., 106:109]

The reference to shells being made bad - and thereby their skandhas being affected - means that by the mere opportunity (provided by the medium) to return to earth, i.e. communicate, get impressions, etc., they can be changed, in this case not improved.

Then follows the passage, previously quoted in Chapter Eight, which introduced the cases of suicides and accidents with the significant sentence:

Both kinds can communicate, and both have to pay dearly for such visits .. But it is a sin and cruelty to revive their memory and intensify their suffering by giving them a chance of living an artificial life; a chance to overload their Karma, by tempting them into open doors, viz. mediums and sensitives, for they will have to pay roundly for every such pleasure ..

[M.L., 106:109]

This topic is returned to many times both in the Letters and in H.P.B.'s Writings as a warning against necromancy, the raising of images of the dead, a practice of black magic. There is further explanation of this in a long description of the fate of suicides and accidents in the Kama Loka, the part played by Karma and the dire effect mediums can have on it, by affecting the skandhas of the deceased:

The [general] rule is that a person who dies a natural death will remain from "a few hours to several short years" within the earth's attraction, i.e. in the Kama-Loka. But exceptions are, in the case of suicides and those who die a violent death in general. Hence, one of such Egos, for instance, who was destined to live, say, 80 or 90 years, but who either killed himself or was killed by some accident, let us suppose at the age of 20 - would have to pass in the Kama-Loka not "a few years" but in his case 60 or 70 years, as an Elementary, or rather an "earth walker" [as said above, the term elementary is usually reserved for

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one whose 6th and 7th principles have gone into Devachan]; since he is not, unfortunately for him, even a "shell". Happy, thrice happy, in comparison, are those disembodied entities who sleep their long slumber and live in dream in the bosom of Space! And woe to those whose Trishna [thirst for life] will attract them to mediums, and woe to the latter, who tempt them with such an easy Upadhana [way to cling to life]. For in grasping them, and satisfying their thirst for life, the medium helps to develop in them - is in fact the cause of - a new set of Skandhas, a new body, with far worse tendencies and passions than was the one they lost. All the future of this new body will be determined thus, not only by the Karma of demerit of the previous set or group but also by that of the new set of the future being. Were the mediums and Spiritualists but to know, as I said, that with every new "angel guide" they welcome with rapture, they entice the latter into an Upadhana which will be productive of a series of untold evils for the new Ego that will be born under its nefarious shadow, and that with every séance - especially for materialization - they multiply the causes for misery, causes that will make the unfortunate Ego fail in his spiritual birth, or be reborn into a worse existence than ever - they would, perhaps, be less lavish in their hospitality.

[M.L., 109:112]

The Masters were at pains to repeat their warning:

But if the victim of accident or violence be neither very good, nor very bad - an average person - then this may happen to him. A medium who attracts him will create for him the most undesirable of things, a new combination of Skandhas and a new and evil Karma ..

[M.L., 107:110]

However, the Masters did point out that many suicides never allow themselves to be drawn into the vortex of mediumship (see M.L., 133:136). They emphasized the difference between two kinds of spiritualism; the one of mediumship and the other to do with the recognition of the difference between personality and individuality and the cultivation of our spiritual natures:

.. it is not against true Spiritualism that we set ourselves, but only against indiscriminate mediumship and physical manifestations, materializations and trance-possessiones especially. Could the Spiritualists be only made to understand the difference between individuality and personality, between individual and personal immortality and some other truths, they would be more easily persuaded that Occultists may be fully convinced of the Monad's immortality, and yet deny that of the soul - the vehicle of the personal Ego; that they firmly believe in, and themselves practise spiritual communications and intercourse with the disembodied Egos of the Rupa-Loka, and yet laugh at the insane idea of "shaking hands" with a "Spirit"!

[M.L., 110:113]

As to accidents and suicides being in danger from the attraction of the séance, there was a request for confirmation of what the Master had previously said. More information was given:

Accidents occur under the most various circumstances; and men are not only killed accidentally, or die as suicides but are also murdered - something we have not even touched upon. I can well understand your perplexity but can hardly help you. Bear always in mind that there are exceptions to every rule, and to

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these again and other side exceptions, and be always prepared to learn something new. I can easily understand we are accused of contradictions and inconsistencies - aye, even to writing one thing to-day and denying it to-morrow. What you were taught is the RULE. Good and pure "accidents" sleep in the Akasa, ignorant of their change; very wicked and impure - suffer all the tortures of a horrible nightmare. The majority - neither very good nor very bad, the victims of accident or violence (including murder) - some sleep, others become Nature pisachas [see later], while a small minority may fall victims to mediums and derive a new set of skandhas from the medium who attracts them. Small as their number may be, their fate is to be the most deplored.

[M.L., 132:136]

Regarding further the consciousness of the shell and its capabilities, the long letter quoted from in Chapter Seven contained the following information about the nature of its "remembrance and self-consciousness":

Thus with a shell; once in the aura of a medium, all he perceives through the borrowed organs of the medium and of those in magnetic sympathy with the latter, he will perceive very clearly - but not further than what the shell can find in the perceptive faculties and memories of circle and medium - hence often the rational and at times highly intelligent answers; hence also a complete oblivion of things known to all but that medium and circle. The shell of a highly intelligent, learned, but utterly unspiritual man who dies a natural death, will last longer and the shadow of his own memory helping - that shadow which is the refuse of the sixth principle left in the fifth - he may deliver discourses through trance speakers and repeat parrot-like that which he knew of and thought much over it, during his life-time. But find me one single instance in the annals of Spiritualism where a returning shell of a Faraday or a Brewster (for even they were made to fall into the trap of mediumistic attraction) said one word more than it knew during its life-time. Where is that scientific shell, that ever gave evidence of that which is claimed on behalf of the "disembodied Spirit" - namely, that a free Soul, the Spirit disenthralled from its body's fetters perceives and sees that which is concealed from living mortal eyes? .. Defy the best, the most reliable of mediums - .. to give you through that high disembodied shell .. to tell you what you will have hidden in your box [if the medium did not know it]; or to repeat to you a line from a Sanskrit manuscript unknown to [the] medium or anything of that kind.

[M.L., 170:173]

The Master goes on to say that even a good clairvoyant can do that and reiterates that spirits do not have personal remembrances of that kind. "As well call personal remembrances the sentences screeched out by a parrot." Then as another example:

Let the "Spirit" of Zöllner - now that he is in the "fourth dimension of space", and has put up an appearance already with several mediums - tell them the last word of his discovery, complete his astro-physical philosophy. No; Zöllner when lecturing through an intelligent medium, surrounded with persons who read his works, are interested in them - will repeat on various tones that which is known to others (not even that which he alone knew, most probably), the credulous, ignorant public confounding the post-hoc with the propter-hoc and firmly convinced of the Spirit's identity .. Yes; personal consciousness does leave everyone at death; and when even the centre of memory is re-established in the shell, it will remember and speak out its recollections but through the brain of some living human being.

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[M.L., 170:174]

The content of this chapter is important as it gives an explanation of the more common spiritualistic phenomena. The explanation is consistent with the overall teachings concerning the after-death states, themselves quite unique. They are not to be found in any other literature. These teachings also provide rational explanations of most of the various kinds of psychic phenomena, e.g. thought transference, psychokinesis, psychometry, clairvoyance, hypnotism, etc., which, however, require additional information not relevant to the immediate subject of this book. All such explanations, nevertheless, are consistent with the massive, general teaching which extends into all branches of knowledge.

Table II summarizes the information given about the after-death stages and what is occurring in each of them.

CHAPTER X

MORE ABOUT THE EGO, AND IMMORTALITY

In the Masters' account, they stressed that the after-death states are in the worlds of effects which are determined by our actions, thoughts and motives in this material world. It is here that the causes of those effects are generated. After death we cannot change the course of events, nor ourselves; we can only suffer from or enjoy those effects. We cannot, in either Kama Loka or Devachan, as some writers have said, go to school, receive instruction from the Masters and work out grand programmes of personal development. In those states we have no objective effectiveness because our existence there is purely subjective.

About what happens to the Ego, at its level of being, we are told little, except that it can learn and itself develop. We know that in Devachan it assimilates the spiritually worthy elements of our earthly experience, at the mental level, and thereby assumes for the time being some personal characteristics, which grant personal beingness to the Ego in Devachan. From the spiritual experiences of many personal lives, the Ego assimilates vast knowledge. Additionally, the Ego partakes of the nature of Monad of which there is only one. Similarly there is only one universal EGO, as there is only one LIFE: we all share it, which means that our individual Egos are essentially identical with it and with all others.

Regarding the post-mortem development of the Ego, we are told that:

we can acquire more knowledge; that is, we can develop further any faculty which we loved and strove after during life, provided it is concerned with abstract and ideal things, such as music, painting, poetry, etc., since Devachan is merely an idealized and subjective continuation of earth-life.

[Key IX, 156]

An enquirer asked, "But if in Devachan the Spirit is free from matter, why should it not possess all knowledge?" The answer was:

Because, as I told you, the Ego is, so to say, wedded to the memory of its last incarnation. Thus, if you think over what I have said, and string all the facts together, you will realize that the Devachanic state is not one of omniscience, but a transcendental continuation of the personal life just terminated. It is the rest of the soul from the toils of life.

[Key IX, 156]

As to where we are after death, we have been told of Kama Loka and Rupa Loka, but still it can be asked, where are they? Many times we are told that they are not localities as such: they are subjective states. On the other hand, Kama Loka is referred to as the earth's "atmosphere". This must be taken as figurative. It refers to the earth's psychic atmosphere, a subjective sphere of being associated particularly with our earth. Then we are told:

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Devachan is a state, not a locality. Kama-Loka, Rupa-Loka and Arupa-Loka are the three spheres of ascending spirituality in which the several groups of subjective entities find their attractions. In the Kama-Loka (semi-physical sphere) dwell the shells, the victims and suicides; and this sphere is divided into innumerable regions and sub-regions corresponding to the mental states of the comers at their hour of death. This is the glorious "Summerland" of the Spiritualists, to whose horizons is limited the vision of their best seers - vision imperfect and deceptive because untrained and non-guided by Alaya-Vyanyana [Vijnana - hidden knowledge]

[M.L., 195:198]

So far in what has been told us about death and the after-life, it has been instilled into us that nothing lasts for ever. Our life on earth is for a term, the after-death states each have their own period, however variable in individual cases these may be. By this doctrine even the grand cycle of our virtually innumerable lives on this planet must come to an end. What then?

Obviously that grand cycle is also part of an even greater one, but one of quite an inconceivable duration to our ways of thinking. Apart from that consideration there are two answers to our question: one is in terms of the developmental journey we are all involved in; the other is in terms of the life period of the world system of which our Egos form a part.

The whole universe and all that is in it is in a perpetual state of ever-becoming, a state of perpetual progressive change, of development. This is the process of evolution. The infinite potentialities of Spirit are for ever being unfolded, in appropriate periods of activity alternating with periods of rest. These correspond to our earth lives and their deaths, our objective existences and our periodical disappearances (from an earthly point of view) into the realms of subjectivity, Devachan.

One termination of this process as far as an individual man (Ego) is concerned occurs when he has completed his evolutionary journey as a man, i.e. when he is ready to move on to the next stage of becoming. Before he enters that stage, however, he enters a long rest, a period of pure subjective existence known as Nirvana, corresponding to the Devachan between earth lives. Similarly the whole of our system, with all that is in it, will enter a Nirvanic state (pralaya) at the end of its period of activity (manvantara). A man may even achieve a similar state during his earthly existence by making an enduring conscious contact with his spiritual Ego. This is known as Samadhi and is attained during prolonged deep meditation, coupled with a high degree of physical purity.

In the Nirvanic condition, when man identifies with the persisting SELF of the Cosmos, he is virtually in the state of immortality. Some extracts from the Masters' Letters expand on this theme.

We have heard the Ego, the upper triad, described as immortal - and certainly it is when compared with our ephemeral earth lives. But, as we have said, nothing in existence - and we must assume an existence as an entity even for our Ego, in some state - lasts literally for ever, even though its term of separate life may be millions of years. Life itself, as the everlasting Law which regulates the coming and going of Universes, may be said to be endless, but only because to our limited comprehension it appears as a virtual abstraction. There is also another view: that is, that as humans evolve to become members of

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a super-human, i.e. Dhyān Chohan, state, they become members of a hierarchy of such beings, and their consciousness then becomes that of the hierarchy. The restricted Personality has long since been transcended. There is also an expansion of consciousness as the hierarchical ladder is ascended until Cosmos itself is embraced. Even that, the Cosmos, as we have seen, is subject to cyclic existence in periodic manifest form.

Concerning immortality as we think of it, the Master had this to say:

Complete or true immortality, - which means an unlimited sentient existence, can have no breaks and stoppages, no arrest of Self-consciousness.

[M.L., 125:128]

To this he added:

We call "immortal" but the one Life in its universal collectivity and entire or Absolute Abstraction; that which has neither beginning nor end, nor any break in its continuity. Does the term apply to anything else? Certainly it does not. Therefore the earliest Chaldeans had several prefixes to the word "immortality", one of which is the Greek, rarely-used term - panæonic immortality, i.e. beginning with the manvantara and ending with the pralaya of our Solar Universe. It lasts the æon, or "period" of our pan or "all nature". Immortal then is he, in the panæonic immortality whose distinct consciousness and perception of Self under whatever form undergoes no disjunction at any time not for one second, during the period of his Egoship. Those periods are several in number, each having its distinct name in the secret doctrines of the Chaldeans, Greeks, Egyptians and Aryans .. Suffice for you, for the present, to know that a man, an Ego like yours or mine, may be immortal from one to the other Round. Let us say I begin my immortality at the present fourth Round, i.e. having become a full adept (which unhappily I am not) I arrest the hand of Death at will, and when finally obliged to submit to it, my knowledge of the secrets of nature puts me in a position to retain my consciousness and distinct perception of Self as an object to my own reflective consciousness and cognition; and thus avoiding all such dismemberments of principles, that as a rule take place after the physical death of average humanity, I remain as [Name] in my Ego throughout the whole series of births and lives across the seven worlds and Arupa-lokas until finally I land again on this earth among the fifth race men of the full fifth Round beings. I would have been, in such a case - "immortal" for an inconceivable (to you) long period, embracing many milliards of years. And yet am "I" truly immortal for all that? Unless I make the same efforts as I do now, to secure for myself another such furlough from Nature's Law, [Name] will vanish and may become a Mr Smith or an innocent Babu, when his leave expires. There are men who become such mighty beings, there are men among us who may become immortal during the remainder of the Rounds, and then take their appointed place among the highest Chohans, the Planetary conscious "Ego Spirits".

[M.L., 126:129]

There are many aspects of the subject of the after-death states about which information was given which enriches the overall picture. For example, we have now started to look at the vast vistas of the Cosmic scene, certainly in terms of enormously extended time periods and beings at very exalted levels, not included in our ordinary conceptions. It would be interesting to know, against this background, whether a remembrance of all our past lives returns to us; here is a passage which tells us:

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Yes; the "full" remembrance of our lives (collective lives) will return back at the end of all the seven Rounds, at the threshold of the long, long Nirvana that awaits us after we leave Globe Z [the highest in the evolutionary scale of the earth's six companion, subjective globes, constituting our Chain - see Appendix]. At the end of isolated Rounds, we remember but the sum total of our last impressions, those we had selected, or that have rather forced themselves upon us and followed us in Deva-Chan. Those are all "probationary" lives with large indulgences and new trials afforded us with every new life. But at the close of the minor cycle, after the completion of all the seven Rounds, there awaits us no other mercy but the cup of good deeds, of merit, outweighing that of evil deeds and demerit in the scales of Retributive Justice. Bad, irretrievably bad must be that Ego that yields no mite from its fifth Principle, and has to be annihilated, to disappear in the Eight Sphere [Avitchi]. A mite, as I say, collected from the Personal Ego suffices to save him from the dreary fate. Not so after the completion of the great cycle; either a long Nirvana of Bliss (unconscious though it be in, and according to, your crude conceptions); after which - life as a Dhyana Chohan for a whole Manvantara, or else "Avitchi Nirvana" and a Manvantara of misery and Horror as a -----, you must not hear the word nor I - pronounce or write it. But "those" have nought to do with the mortals who pass through the seven spheres. The collective Karma of a future Planetary is as lovely as the collective Karma of a ----- is terrible. Enough. I have said too much already.

[M.L., 167:171]

As to what a "Planetary" is, the Masters gave us descriptions. These and the meaning of Rounds are explained in the Appendix.

In this chapter we have learned more about the alternate cause and effect phases of existence which not only affect us in our days and nights of ordinary activity and rest but which relate to worlds, which also have their inner principles, their corresponding periods of activity and rest, and in the longer terms their life spans and their deaths, with a retirement - like us - into subjectivity, not total annihilation.

The Ego in man enjoys an almost indefinite existence as a spiritual entity, but it is not quite everlasting. Even its vast life span has an end.

Globes and even universes in their turn have a spiritual triad, a correspondence to a man's Ego: the sum total so to speak of all the Egos it has brought forth and nurtured. There is only One Life in Cosmos and everything in it partakes of it, including Egos for their term.

Cause and Effect are an endless continuum, an aspect of the ever-persisting Law. Everything, both large and small, has its being as a result of it. All of us humans, sub-humans and post-humans, even the loftiest, are its subjects BUT there is THAT which knows no end, from which all came and to which all will return. Therein, as the Master has told us, is the only true immortality - it is quite beyond our imagining or comprehension.

CHAPTER XI

THE KEYS OF LIFE

In one of their Letters the Masters made the paradoxical statement that "he who holds the keys to the secrets of Death is possessed of the keys of Life". Possibly before we had read this book, such a statement would have appeared quite meaningless. Now, although we can hardly claim to hold the keys to the secrets of death, we do have many ideas on the subject which we had not at the beginning. These new ideas must have amplified and possibly considerably reoriented our thinking.

We have now become used to the idea of the endless continuity in the grand process of life with its alternating periods of activity and rest, and of an ever-flowing process of cause and effect. Within that process we have seen how things come into being in the objective realms, from the (for us) subjective ones, and then return from being to non-being. These worlds of non-being are, for us, subjective ones, but they are the worlds of power, of constructive and destructive energy, of the animating principle of life, the source of all dynamism. In talking of our higher principles we have used such words as divine and immortal. We have seen that, whereas the total process of Nature is quite unending, nevertheless there are periodical manifestations into objectivity of the universe and all that is contained in it, and its periodic withdrawal into the inner depths. We have seen that this process reflects into man. He, as earthly man, has his days of earth-life activity and his nights of recuperation and assimilation in sleep in the non-physical worlds, the one alternating with the other. Each cycle of day and night is analogous to our earth lives and the after-death periods.

The teaching tells us that Cosmos is a living whole and that everything in it is living, giving expression in its own way to one Universal Life. We are told of the hierarchical structure of Cosmos on different levels or planes of being. The beings comprising these hierarchies range, as do the planes, from the physical up to the highest spiritual. The lowly beings (the Elementals) are, together with the Elements, the essential constituents of rudimentary Nature. They are associated with both the inner and the outer worlds: they underlie all creation. From these we pass through the many gradations of being, and beings, through man to the angelic or even god-like entities as the apex of the pyramid of lives is approached. At each level of being the lives of the lower levels are subservient to those of the level immediately above them. It is in this way that intelligence rules throughout. The high entities are both the creators and the governors of all existent things.

Evolutionary progression based on the collective experience of an infinity of living things from the beginning of time, results in ordered development, in expansion and growth. What exists in the present is continually being transformed into what will be in the future. Present time is as it were a section made at a given instant through this process. For example, we now are the result of all our yesterdays, and what we are and what we do now creates our tomorrows. This process is inevitable and inexorable; it is the Law.

We have learnt of this Law, the law of Karma, as it applies to the after-death condition. It operates in all the realms of being; it has a moral aspect which affects the consequences of any act or even thought; it

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is as certain in its action as any physical law of motion. The operations of this Law are immensely complex. No human mind can comprehend its complexity enough to predict the future, unless it be in a very general way, nor accurately foretell the outcome of any act with certainty.

Turning to ourselves as men and women, we have seen something of our total constitution, spiritual, mental, emotional, as well as physical. We now know we have principles corresponding to each of these faculties. We see that our psychic and mental abilities operate in us through our principles of Kama and Manas. We have followed the fate of these principles into the after-death states. We have also learned of something which can be of inestimable importance to us. In our personal lives each of us is overshadowed by what we can only regard as a divine entity, our higher Ego. We have also seen that this higher Ego is a reflection, maybe microcosmic - in any dimensional terms we can think in - of the universal macrocosmic upper principles of Cosmos.

So, individually each of us has this everlasting core of essential being, about which, however, we know very little in our normal lives. We have seen in this book that it is this essence of being that in fact is the seat of all our life functions and of our very consciousness as living beings. Our active functioning stems from this universal dynamic principle, in which, literally, in the limit everything moves and has its being. By processes of differentiation and transformation down through the planes of existence, this one life becomes all that we know. Ultimately it constitutes, by processes of differentiation down through the planes, our objective world and all that is in it, with which we are so familiar through our senses. It also constitutes the inner worlds and all that is in them.

When we are immersed in the activities of the world of objectivity, our normal being seems to us to be wholly related to it. We feel physically to be of its nature. We have learned, however, that our inner nature constitutes our life just as much as does our body. We know of both worlds: the one through our outer physical senses of perception, the other through our inner senses of response and appreciation. We know of both of these worlds through a central awareness, our unit of consciousness. Knowing is a result of something - a visual impression, or a feeling, or even a thought - registering in our consciousness. Acquired knowledge is when we remember our impressions, however gained. Each one of us, in the inner sense, is a unit of consciousness. We could define consciousness as the ability to be aware. This unit of consciousness is, as far as we are concerned, our ultimate being, it is the ultimate subject. It is the knower which, so to speak, cannot be known. It can never be objective to us. This ultimate "I" is, perhaps, the great mystery of existence - the final unknowable. It is said that we can consciously be "THAT", the indefinable universal "I" or SELF, and when we are, we are, so to speak, GOD. We are then in the state of Nirvanic immortality.

The teaching tells us that our higher faculties are capable of tremendous extension by purification and refinement and that one of the purposes of our living on this earth is eventually so to condition our physical and psychic vehicles as to make them proper vehicles for the reception and expression of the unimaginable wonders and powers of the Spirit which overshadows us all.

We are therefore all here on this purposeful evolutionary journey. It is not only a physical journey, it is also a psychic and a spiritual one. We are learning first to become properly human instead of largely animal, then we are learning to become supermen, in every sense, and finally to become Gods in our turn.

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We ended our account of the after-death processes with some thoughts on immortality. We cannot possibly conceive in any real terms and with our ordinary minds what this might be, but we have seen that it is an existence of unbroken consciousness, although not necessarily in terms of any consciousness we now know, but one running without any breaks through eternities of time. Nevertheless, even these obey the cyclic law. We have seen a vast, virtually endless process of which each of us is a part and wherein each of us in our embryonic human stage is nurtured so that we may take part in ever-ascending levels of being as ourselves and then as members of a hierarchy composed of greater and greater super-human entities. The vistas of this post-human journey are so great as to be beyond our very imagining. This would seem to be the message conveyed by the few words of the Masters that "he who holds the keys to the secrets of Death is possessed of the keys of Life". The very thoughts evoked by what we have learned surely liberate us from the cramping limitations of our everyday personalities. It is to these imprisoning illusions that we must die if we would be born again in spirit and enter Life, unlimited - Reality Itself.

TABLE I THE PRINCIPLES OF MAN

No.	PRINCIPLES	THE PRINCIPLES AS ELEMENTS OF MAN'S BEING				NOTES
1	<i>Physical Body</i>	↑ MAN in Life ↓	↑ Personality ↓	↑ Abandoned and disintegrate at death ↓	↑ * Mayavi-rupa composed of 'etheric' material ↓	Brain is last organ to cease functioning
2	<i>Etheric Double</i>					* Body of so-called "Astral" projections.
3	<i>Prana. Life Principle</i>					"Individualized" only in association with man's etheric body.
4	<i>Kama Rupa</i>	↑ Whole ↓	↑ Personality ↓	↑ The "Chrysalis", the MAN immediately after death. ↓	↑ The "Shell" "The Carapace" ↓ Lower Duality. Animal Soul	"Astral" body formed after death. Inhabits Kama-Loka, in Earth's atmosphere.
5	<i>Manas. Mind</i> <i>Lower. Personal and ordinary mind</i>					
	<i>Higher. Spiritual aspects and content of mind</i>				↑ Spiritual residue ↓	
6	<i>Buddhi. Spiritual vehicle</i>	↑ Individuality ↓	↑ The Ego ↓	↑ The "Chrysalis", the MAN immediately after death. ↓	↑ The "Butterfly" ↓ Higher Duality. Human or Spiritual Soul	Universal Principle. World Soul. Individual to man only by assimilated part of 5th Principle.
7	<i>Atma. Spirit</i>					Universal Spiritual Principle. In combination with Buddhi comprises the MONAD.

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TABLE II AFTER DEATH STATES AND PROCESSES

AFTER DEATH STATE	PROCESS		NOTES
<i>Dying</i>	Memory dislodging from physical brain – review.		
<i>Just After Death</i>	Ego goes unconscious – loss of 3 lower Principles – loss of perceptive objective faculties for ever; loss of spiritual powers of cogitation and volition, for the time being.		} No possibility of an EGO, other than a premature death, communicating with the living, even through a medium during this period.
“ <i>Death Struggle</i> ”	Ego unconscious in Kama-Loka – in Earth’s atmosphere – struggle develops between 4th and 5th Principles (Lower Duality) and 6th and 7th Principles (Higher Duality).		
“ <i>Gestation</i> ”	Ego unconscious. Egoic “butterfly” developing in “chrysalis” of 4th and 5th Principles. Process of “Assimilation” of spiritual content of 5th Principle into 6th Principle.		
<i>Entry into Devachan</i>	Second review of previous life memories. Consciousness slowly returns. An epitome of personal memory retained.	4th and 5th Principles sloughed off to become “shell”. Dim consciousness and personal memory returns to “shell”. “Shell” can now be attracted to seance room.	
<i>Devachan</i>	Subjective dream state. All the scenes and population of Devachan are as the Ego would most like them. The Ego cannot communicate with people on Earth even through a medium and knows nothing of what is going on on Earth.		Persons “en rapport” with Devachanees can, by raising their consciousness, feel to be “communicating” with them.
<i>Rebirth</i>	Ego goes unconscious at end of Devachan period prior to re-birth.	New personality will give expression to the Skandhas, the residual tendencies and characteristics of previous lives.	We cannot in the ordinary way modify our Skandhas after death. This can only be done in “the world of causes”, i.e. Earth life.

GLOSSARY

This Glossary gives the meanings of some non-English words and some English ones used in a special sense in the text. No accents are used and in some cases the spelling is anglicized. The definitions and meanings have been taken mostly from the Theosophical Glossary (H.P. Blavatsky) and Glossary of Sanskrit Terms (G. Barboroka).

Akasa: The subtle, supersensuous spiritual essence which pervades all space, primordial substance.

Alaya: lit. indissoluble; equivalent to Akasa. The Universal Soul. The name belongs to the Tibetan system of the contemplative Mahayana School. Identical with Akasa in its mystic sense, and with Mulaprakriti, in its essence, as it is the basis or root of all things.

Arhat: (Buddhism). A high initiated disciple.

Arupa: "Bodiless", formless, as opposed to rupa, "body", or form.

Astral Body: The ethereal counterpart or phantom or shadow of man and animal, the Linga-sarira, the second principle of man's constitution; sometimes called the astral double.

Astral Light: The invisible region that surrounds our globe, corresponding to the Linga-sarira in man; the vehicle of the life principle (third principle in Cosmos), Prana; the highest principle of the terrestrial atmosphere though undetectable physically.

Atma(n): The seventh principle in Cosmos and man. Spirit. The ONE SELF. The God above, rather than in man.

Auric Envelope (Egg): Demarks a man, or anything, as an entity, from the generality of Cosmos, by an akashic sheath. Contains, and is directly related to both the divine and the physical man. It is:

- a) the preserver of every karmic record
- b) the storehouse of all the good and evil powers of man
- c) furnishes man with his Astral form, etc.

Avitchi: "Hell", a state; not necessarily after death only or between two births, but on this earth also, for those who become totally spiritually bereft ... "the perfect antithesis of Devachan" (The Secret Doctrine, Vol.III, 494/5).

Bodishattva: lit. One whose essence is wisdom; one who renounces Nirvana.

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Buddhi: Universal Soul or Mind. Mahabuddhi is a name of Mahat (see Alaya); also the spiritual Soul in man (the sixth principle), the vehicle of Atma, esoterically the seventh.

Chain: In Esotericism our Earth is said to have six invisible (to us) companion globes on three subjective planes above the physical. These correspond to man's principles and also to evolutionary developmental stages. Three, A, B, C, are said to be on the descending (spirit to matter) arc, and three, E, F, G, on the ascending arc (returning to spirituality). The whole series of globes of which the 4th, D, is our earth, comprise a chain (sometimes referred to as a Ring).

Chiliocosm: Comprises several states of being within Devachan.

Cosmos: The ordered Universe generally - as opposed to chaos. Used in various orders of magnitude, e.g. our Solar System or the visible universe about us.

Deva: A god, a "resplendent" deity. Deva-Deus, from the root div, "to shine". A Deva is a celestial being - whether good, bad, or indifferent. Devas inhabit "the three worlds", which are the three planes above us.

Deva Chan: The "dwelling of the gods". A state intermediate between two earth-lives, into which the Ego (Atma, Buddhi, Manas, or Trinity made One) enters, after its separation from Kama-rupa, and the disintegration of the lower principles on earth.

Dhyan Chohans: The "Lords of Light". The highest gods, answering to the Roman Catholic Archangels. The divine Intelligences charged with the supervision of Cosmos; sometimes the denizens of the three superhuman kingdoms.

Eighth Sphere: See Avitchi.

Elementals: Spirits of the Elements. The creatures evolved in the four Kingdoms or Elements. Earth, Air, Fire, and Water. Except for a few of the higher kinds and their rulers they are rather forces of Nature. These Forces, as servile agents of the Occultists, may produce various effects; but if employed by "Elementaries" (see next) - in which they enslave the mediums - they will deceive the credulous.

Elementaries: The phantoms or spooks of disembodied persons; elementary "spirits" who have been men; souls divorced from their higher triads and their physical bodies, existing in kama-rupic envelopes and irresistibly drawn to earth amid elements congenial to their gross natures. The duration of their stay in Kama-loka varies but ends invariably in disintegration. See also Kama-rupa.

Fohat: (A Tibetan word) The active (male) potency of the female reproductive power (Sakti) in nature; the essence of cosmic electricity; in the manifest universe the ever-present electrical energy and ceaseless destructive and formative power; the universal propelling Vital Force, at once the propeller and the

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resultant.

Globe: See Chain.

Individuality: One of the names given in Theosophy and Occultism to the Human Higher Ego. The immortal and divine Ego as distinct from the mortal human ego which perishes. The latter, or "personality" (personal ego) survives the dead body only for a time in the Kama Loka; the Individuality prevails for ever.

Jiva: Life, as the Absolute; the Monad also or "Atma-Buddhi".

Jivatma: The ONE universal life, generally; but also the divine Spirit in Man.

Kabala: A cosmological and psychological system deriving from the Ancient Wisdom of the East, but committed to writing in its present form by a learned Rabbi in the Middle Ages.

Kalpa: A period of time; a 'day' and 'night' of Brahma - many millions of earth years.

Kama: Desire, the passional nature of man; the fourth principle in his constitution, associated with his emotions and desires, the cleaving to existence; volition.

Kama Loka: The semi-material plane, to us subjective and invisible, where the disembodied "personalities", the astral forms, called Kama-rupa (fourth and part of man's fifth principle) remain until they fade out from it by the complete exhaustion of the effect of the mental impulses that created these eidolons of human and animal passions and desires.

Karma: Action; metaphysically the Law of Retribution, the Law of Cause and Effect or Ethical Causation; it is the power that controls all things, the resultant of moral action, the moral effect of an act committed for the attainment of something which gratifies a personal desire.

Linga-Sarira (Sharira): The "astral body" of man or animal. The eidolon, the vital and prototypal body; the reflection of the man of flesh. It is born before, and dies or fades out with the disappearance of the last atom of the body.

Loka (Loca): A region or circumscribed place. In metaphysics, a world or sphere or plane. The Puranas in India speak incessantly of seven and fourteen Lokas, above, and below our earth; of heavens and hells.

Manas: The mind, the mental faculty which makes of man an intelligent and moral being and

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distinguishes him from the mere animal. Esoterically it means, when unqualified, the Higher Ego, or the sentient reincarnating Principle in man. When qualified it is Buddhi-manas or the Spiritual Soul in contradistinction to its human reflection, Kama-manas.

Manvantara: A period of manifestation, as opposed to Pralaya (dissolution, or rest), applied to various cycles, especially to a Day of Brahma, 4,320,000,000 Solar years - and to the reign of one Manu - 308,448,000.

Maya: That which is subject to change. Commonly, "illusion".

Mayavi-rupa: Illusive form; the body of "astral" projection, formed from the thought, as distinct from the emotional elements of the kama-manasic mortal soul (fourth and lower fifth principles) of man; it is to be distinguished also from the astral body, the Linga-Sarira, man's second principle, which cannot be separated far from his physical body. From the Mayavi-rupa can be formed a semi-material apparitional likeness of a man even while he lives, similar to a materialized "spook" at a séance.

Minor Cycle: The completion of Seven Rounds q.v. (See also ML 195:198)

Monad: The Unity, the One; in Occultism often applied to the higher duad, Atma-Buddhi; in man, in conjunction with the higher mind principle, Manas, it becomes the Ego, the reincarnating entity. Without an association with Manas, Monad is unconscious in any sense in which we understand that word.

Necromancy: The raising of the images of the dead, considered in antiquity and by modern Occultists as a practice of black magic. Many witches were necromancers and were condemned as such.

Nirvana: According to the Orientalists, the entire "blowing out", like the flame of a candle, the utter extinction of existence. But in the esoteric explanations it is the state of absolute existence and absolute consciousness, into which the Ego of a man who has reached the highest degree of perfection and holiness during life goes, after the body dies, and occasionally, as in the case of Gautama Buddha and others, during life.

Para-Brahm: lit. beyond Brahman. The Boundless All; Absoluteness; Eternal, Boundless, Immutable Principle.

Para-Nirvana: Absolute Non-Being, which is equivalent to absolute Being or "Be-ness", the state reached by the human Monad at the end of the great cycle.

Personality: In Occultism - which divides man into seven principles, considering him under the three aspects: 1) the divine, 2) the thinking or rational, and 3) the animal man, the lower four principles, the Quaternary or the purely astrophysical being. Individuality is the Higher Triad, considered as a Unity.

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Thus the Personality embraces all the characteristics and memories of one physical life, while the Individuality is the imperishable Ego which reincarnates and clothes itself in one personality after another.

Pisachas: In the Puranas, goblins or demons created by Brahma. In the southern Indian folk-lore, ghosts, demons, larvae, and vampires - generally female - who haunt men. Fading remnants of human beings in Kama Loca, as shells and Elementaries.

Plane: As used in Occultism, the range or extent of some state of consciousness or of the perceptive power of a particular set of senses, or the action of a particular force, or the state of matter (physical or otherwise) corresponding to any of the above. There are seven main planes, each of which has seven sub-planes, and each of these is of a nature corresponding to the particular one of a main plane. Our terrestrial main planes together constitute the lowest one of seven corresponding cosmic planes.

Pralaya: A period of obscuration or repose - planetary, cosmic or universal - the opposite of Manvantara.

Prana: The life principle, the third in man's constitution; the breath of life; vitality, the vital fluid. When it is absent from a body or organism that body is "dead", and the coordinating and controlling functions of other principles cannot then operate.

Races, Root: In Esotericism humanity is said to progress in its physical, psychical, and spiritual development by stages. There are seven main stages represented by Seven Root Races and each Root Race has seven Sub-Races which are themselves further divided. The physical characteristics (not the psychical nor spiritual) of the Root Races are roughly represented by colour, black (3rd), brown (4th) and white (5th); the earlier Races were not fully physical until the middle of the 3rd Root Race.

Round: In Esotericism a Round is the name given to the passage of the Life Wave round all the seven Globes of a Chain. On Earth it represents the time taken for all seven Root Races to develop.

Rupa: Form. Sometimes associated with the sense of sight.

Sakti: Power; the active female energy of a deity; universal energy.

Sakwala: This is a bana or "word" uttered by Gautama Buddha in his oral instructions. Sakwala is a mundane, or rather a solar system, of which there is an infinite number in the universe, and which denotes that space to which the light of every sun extends. Each Sakwala contains earth, hells and heavens (meaning good and bad spheres, our earth being considered as hell, in Occultism); attains its prime, then falls into decay and is finally destroyed at regularly recurring periods, in virtue of one immutable law.

Samadhi: A state of ecstatic and complete trance. The term comes from the words Sam-adha, "self-

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possession". He who possesses this power is able to exercise an absolute control over all his faculties, physical or mental; it is the highest state of Yoga.

Skandhas: Bundles, or groups of attributes; everything finite, inapplicable to the eternal and absolute. In Occultism there are seven "predispositions and tendencies" in every human living being. Five of these are, as usually translated: form, perception, consciousness, action, and knowledge. These unite at the birth of a man and constitute his personality. After the maturity, they begin to separate and weaken, and this is followed by decrepitude and death of the physical body.

Sthula-Sarira: The physical body.

Sukhavati: The Western Paradise of the uneducated. The popular notion is that there is a Western Paradise of Amitabha, wherein good men and saints revel in physical delights until they are carried once more by Karma into the circle of rebirth. This is an exaggerated and mistaken notion of Devachan.

Tanha: The thirst for life. Desire to live and the clinging to life on this earth, causing rebirth or reincarnation.

Tathagata: "One who is like the coming"; he who is, like his predecessors (the Buddhas) and successors, the coming future Buddha or World-Saviour. One of the titles of Gautama Buddha, and the highest epithet, since the first and the last Buddhas were the direct immediate avatars of the One Deity.

Triad: Atma-Buddhi and the "Envelope" which reflects their light, the three in one. Also applied to Atma, Buddhi, and Manas, and in the Kabala to the three supernal Sephiroth of the Tree of Life, Kether, Chokmah, and Binah, the One and its two aspects, male and female.

Tribuvana: The three worlds - Swarga, Bhumi, Patala - or Heaven, Earth and Hell in popular beliefs; esoterically, these are the Spiritual and Psychic (or Astral) regions, and the Terrestrial sphere.

Trishna: See Tanha.

Upadana: (Lit. acquiring) material cause ; specifically clinging to earth life.

Upadhi: Basis; the vehicle, carrier or bearer of something less material than itself; as the human body is the upadhi of its spirit; a mould, a defining or limiting substance. Literally, a substitute, a disguise, hence a "veil of spirit"; e.g., Buddhi is the upadhi of Atma.

Vijnana: Consciousness, intelligence; one of the Nidanas.

APPENDIX

SOME SUPPLEMENTARY GENERAL INFORMATION

In the voluminous writings of H.P. Blavatsky and in the Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett, much more information concerning what happens after death was given out and with it a mass of supporting material. It has not been the purpose of this book to present all this material but to outline the subject so as to give to the general reader a reasonably clear connected story, with some references to the source books.

However, some material additional to that given in the body of the book may help to give an idea of the larger setting into which the post-mortem states fit and it may help to make clearer matters referred to by the Masters but not fully explained in the extracts.

The information in this Appendix concerns:

1. After-death Unconsciousness
2. Chains, Globes (Planets), Rounds, Races
3. Constitution of Man
4. Denizens of the Inner Worlds
5. Devachanees' Dimensions
6. Elements and Elementals
7. Kama, Rupa and Arupa Locas (Devachan)
8. Karma
9. Masters of the Wisdom
10. Origins, Deity and Cosmos
11. Planetary Spirits
12. Space
13. Final Recollection of All Lives, Nirvana, Absolute Rest

1. AFTER-DEATH UNCONSCIOUSNESS

After a repeat of the statement that "consciousness leaves as suddenly as the flame leaves the wick" of a snuffed candle, we were told:

Blow out your candle, good friend. The flame has left that candle "for ever"; but are the particles that moved, their motion producing the objective flame annihilated or dispersed for all that? Never. Relight the candle and the same particles drawn by mutual affinity will return to the wick. Place a long row of candles

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on your table. Light one and blow it out; then light the other and do the same; a third and fourth, and so on. The same matter, the same gaseous particles - representing in our case the Karma of the personality - will be called forth by the conditions given them by your match, to produce a new luminosity; but can we say that candle No.1 has not had its flame extinct for ever? Not even in the case of the "failures of nature", of the immediate reincarnation of children and congenital idiots, etc., .. can we call them the identical ex-personalities; though the whole of the same life-principle and identically the same MANAS (fifth principle) re-enters a new body and may be truly called a "reincarnation of the personality" - whereas, in the rebirth of the Egos from devachans and avitchis into Karmic life it is only the spiritual attributes of the Monad and its Buddhi that are reborn. [But it must be remembered that the new physical body and the middle (kama-manas) principles will be conditioned by the skandhas produced during the life of the last personality]. All we can say of the reincarnated "failures" is, that they are the reincarnated Manas, the fifth principle [of the late personality] but certainly not that these are the reincarnations .. [of late personalities].

[M.L., 169:172]

2. CHAINS, GLOBES (PLANETS), ROUNDS, RACES

In the Masters' Letters, Chains, Globes, Rounds, Races and even Rings are mentioned. All these terms relate to the developmental stages of our Earth (or any other globe). Just as a man has a system of heredity for his inner principles, continuing from life to life, corresponding to genes at physical level and skandhas in the inner levels, so have planets. They die and are "reincarnated" - the previous one being the parent of the present one. All the principles of the deceased one are transferred to form the new one.

The doctrine says that each physical globe like our Earth has six invisible companion globes in the subjective realms (not recognized by physical science). These six invisible globes correspond to man's principles. The globes are represented in diagrams as circles. These are arranged in pairs, on three of what are called the planes of manifestation. There are four of these planes, corresponding to the lower quaternary in man. The lowest is the physical objective one on which is represented by a circle our single globe, Earth. This is the only objective, physical globe in our Chain or system, represented pictorially in Table III.

The globes interpenetrate the physical one, i.e. occupy the same space. The diagram is merely a representation. The series of the seven globes is referred to as a Chain. Each globe is allotted a letter ranging from A to G (or sometimes Z). It is said that during the life of a Chain, and therefore say of our Earth, the life-wave passes round it, visiting each globe in turn and then passing on to the next, seven times. Each such cycle is called a Round. During the progress of the life-wave round the chain and during the time it is visiting a globe, that globe is said to nurture seven Root Races of men. Each globe also has its 'men' and counterparts to the denizens of our kingdoms, and as on earth, each kingdom is developed in turn. On our planet there have been four Root Races; we are now in the fifth Root Race.

In their Letters the Masters occasionally make reference to men being reborn on this (our) planet, Earth, or on another. In this sense another planet may be one further along on our Chain system, say Globe E, or it may be even a globe in another future Chain. Chains succeed one another, as do the personalities of men, and there is similarly, as we have seen, a causative link between them by way of transferred principles (like skandhas in the case of man).

3. THE CONSTITUTION OF MAN

When the information about the Auric Egg was given, alternative classifications and numbering of the principles were introduced in discussing various aspects of man's constitution but the sevenfold classification given above, is used consistently throughout not only the Mahatma Letters but also in the bulk of H.P.B.'s massive literature. The Masters' account of what happens when we die cannot be understood in terms of other classifications because, among other reasons, the numbering of the principles is different. So for purposes of this account of our after-death adventures, man is regarded as a sevenfold being. The seven principles, however, are divided not only into duads and triads but also into two groups: four of them comprising the personal man and three of them the spiritual individual man, the Ego. This distinction has large ramifications and must ever be borne in mind. As far as this book is concerned, apart from the after-death states, the classification given here is important if we would understand the Masters' explanations of psychic and spiritualistic phenomena.

4. DENIZENS OF THE INNER WORLDS

The Master gave us information about the classes of denizens of the inner, subjective (to us) realms of being. Using Sanskrit terms, they are:

- (1) Rupa-devas - Dhyan Chohans, having forms)) Ex-men
- (2) Arupa-devas - Dhyan Chohans, having no forms)
- (3) Pisachas - (two principled) ghosts
- (4) Mara-rupa - Doomed to death (three principled)
- (5) Asuras - Elementals - having human form)) Future men
- (6) Beasts - Elementals 2nd class - animal Elem.)
- (7) Rakshasas - Demons - Souls or Astral Forms of sorcerers; men who have reached the apex of knowledge in the forbidden art. Dead or alive they have, so to say, cheated nature; but it is only temporary - until our planet goes into obscurity, after which they have nolens volens to be annihilated.

Concerning group (1) there is a footnote:

The Planetary Spirits of our Earth are not of the highest, as you may well imagine - since .. no Eastern Adept would like to be compared with an angel or a Deva.

[Note: Stock (3), Pisachas, are the shells (4th and 5th principled) from which the Ego has departed on its entry into Devachan. In the letter, Stock (4), Mara-rupas, are described as "bodies doomed to annihilation".]

It is these seven groups that form the principal divisions of the Dwellers of the subjective world around us. It is stock No.1 that are the intelligent Rulers of this world of Matter, and who, with all this intelligence are but the blindly obedient instruments of the ONE; the active agents of a Passive Principle.

[M.L., 104:107]

5. DEVACHANEE'S DIMENSIONS

A question was asked as to how the stages of subjectivity were related to states of matter. The Master said it was difficult to see what the questioner wanted to establish but he went on:

If it be supposed that in Deva-Chan the Ego passes through all these states of matter [not enumerated], then the answer would be that existence in the seventh state of matter is Nirvana and not Devachanic conditions. Humanity, although in different stages of development, yet belongs to the three dimensional condition of matter. And there is no reason why in Deva-Chan the Ego should be varying its "dimensions".

[M.L., 398:404]

Presumably this applies to the nature of the Devachanee's subjectively created environment and companions, not to the Devachanees themselves, as they must be dimensionless in any sense of that word as applied to physical reality.

6. ELEMENTS AND ELEMENTALS

It is said the planes are of matter of an appropriate grade, of various kinds and various states. These are the Elements, commonly thought of archaically as Earth, Water, Air and Fire. The doctrine says that all known elements in fact derive from these. Note, however, that not even the lowest or grossest inner plane or material thereof can affect any physical measuring instrument, however sensitive.

There is a degree or mode of consciousness peculiar to each plane, related to the beings on it. All these beings have their own characteristics, which reflect into the conditions, qualities and characteristics of things - and man - not only at the physical level but also at the psychic, mental and spiritual levels. These characteristics comprising a series of correspondences of qualities, reflecting, for example, into the nature of the planets in our solar system. The whole cosmic scheme is an integrated whole. The qualities referred to are, for example, colour, states of matter (i.e. solid, liquid, gaseous) and those that constitute the human temperaments, and his faculties and principles, viz of feeling and thinking. Another correspondence is the musical tone scale.

The invisible beings comprising these planes are, like everything else in Cosmos, at various stages of evolutionary development. These stages are typified by our kingdoms of nature. We recognize the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms, with humanity representing a separate one. The esoteric doctrine, however, discovers three kingdoms below the mineral and three above the human. Those below the mineral are referred to as the Elemental Kingdoms, comprising primitive non-material (non-physical) beings, Elementals, at three distinct stages of development. The beings of the kingdoms above the human are those Great Ones who have outgrown the need for physical bodies. They play the role of architects and directors of the grand processes of cosmic development, always within the Law, while the Elementals are the workmen doing their bidding, so to speak.

Elementals are in one sense nature spirits, centres of forces, behind all physical phenomena. They are the 'souls' of the Elements. Nothing can happen without them. The kingdoms are hierarchies of lives, each is subservient to the one above it.

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7. KAMA, RUPA and ARUPA LOCAS

Some further, helpful information on the subjective states of Kama Loca and the Rupa and Arupa Locas of Devachan was given. Kama Loca is the next level up from our earth, figuratively sometimes referred to as its "atmosphere", the place of the densest of the non-physical human remains and some of the elementals. It is so near the earth as sometimes to be described as semi-physical.

Rupa Loca is the lower state of Devachan. The inner worlds are roughly divided into two levels - the rupa and the arupa. The rupa level is where its denizens (subjective to us, of course), have forms, e.g. thought forms that can be seen by some clairvoyants, the elementals or mayavi-rupas [see Glossary]. The arupa levels are the more subjective, the place of thought processes (which do not use symbols or images, etc.) - abstracts, the plane of spiritual experiences, such as devotion, aspiration, etc.:

Deva-Chan is a state, not a locality. Rupa Loka, Arupa-Loka and Kama-Loka are the three spheres of ascending spirituality in which the several groups of subjective entities find their attractions. In the Kama-Loka (semi-physical sphere) dwell the shells, the victims and suicides [see Chapter Seven]; and this sphere is divided into innumerable regions and sub-regions corresponding to the mental states of the comers at their hour of death.

[M.L., 195:198]

It is explained that from Kama Loca, Egos go either to the Devachan or Avitchi about which we are told:

And those two states are again differentiating ad infinitum - their ascending degrees of spirituality deriving their names from the lokas in which they are induced. For instance; the sensations, perceptions and ideation of a devachanee in Rupa-Loka will, of course, be of less subjective nature than they would be in Arupa-Loka, in both of which the devachanic experiences will vary in their presentation to the subject-entity, not only as regards form, colour, and substance, but also in their formative potentialities. But not even the most exalted experience of a monad in the highest devachanic state in Arupa-Loka (the last of the seven states) - is comparable to that perfectly subjective condition of pure spirituality from which the monad emerged to "descend into matter", and to which at the completion of the grand cycle it must return. Nor is Nirvana itself comparable to Para-Nirvana.

[M.L., 196:199]

The Master's Letters were addressed to men, mostly to Mr Sinnett, to whom nearly all the ideas expressed in them were new and strange, especially against a background of the conventional religious thinking of the time. Many supplementary questions were asked involving the Master in lengthy replies like those already quoted, but every reply, while consistently in line with the general thesis, adds richness to our newly forming concepts and helps us to formulate a fuller picture. Here is some such information:

The stay in Devachan is proportioned to the unfinished psychic impulses originating in earth-life: those persons whose attractions were preponderatingly material will sooner be drawn back into rebirth by the force of Tanha [see Glossary] ..

[M.L., 197:200]

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We are given some more information of this intermediate state as it affects us individually:

The lower world of effects is the sphere of such distorted Thoughts [conventional ideas of "hells and purgatory, of paradises and resurrections .. all caricatures"]; of the most sensual conceptions, and pictures; of anthropomorphic deities, the out-creations of their creators, the sensual human minds of people who have never outgrown their brutehood on earth. Remembering thoughts are things - have tenacity, coherence, and life, - that they are real entities - the rest will become plain. Disembodied - the creator is attracted naturally to its creation and creatures; sucked in by the Maelstrom [lit. a whirlpool] dug out by his own hands ..

[M.L., 49:49]

This passage clearly tells us how we make ourselves the conditions in the early stage after death. In some exceptional cases, as we have seen, the deceased is conscious in this realm, the Kama Loka, when his body of consciousness during such time is the Kama Rupa, which forms after death.

We are given two other pieces of information:

Between the Kama-Loka and the Rupa-Loka there is a locality, the dwelling of 'Mara'(Death). This Mara filled with passion and lust, destroys all virtuous principles, as a stone grinds corn. (Footnote: This Mara .. is the allegorical image of the sphere called the "Planet of Death" - the whirlpool whither disappear the lives doomed to destruction. It is between Kama- and Rupa-Lokas that the struggle takes place.)

[M.L., 104:106]

Every such "world" within the Sphere of Effects has a Tathagata, or "Dhyan Chohan" - to protect and watch over, not to interfere with it.

[M.L., 105:108]

There is more about these subjective realms and what happens to a man's principles when he dies:

The worlds of effects are not lokas or localities. They are the shadow of the world of causes, their souls - worlds having like men their seven principles which develop and grow simultaneously with the body. Thus the body of man is wedded to and remains for ever within the body of his planet; his individual jivatma life principle, that which is called in physiology animal spirits returns after death to its source - Fohat; his linga shariram will be drawn into Akasha; his Kama rupa will recombine with the Universal Sakti - the Will-Force, or universal energy: his "animal soul" borrowed from the breath of Universal Mind will return to the Dhyan Chohans; his sixth principle - whether drawn into or ejected from the matrix of the Great Passive Principle must remain in its own sphere - either as part of the crude material or as an individualized entity to be reborn in a higher world of causes. The seventh will carry it from the Devachan and follow the new Ego to its place of rebirth ..

[M.L., 71:71]

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And then another supplementary statement:

All is one Law. Man has his seven principles, the germs of which he brings with him at his birth. So has a planet or a world. From first to last every sphere has its world of effects, the passing through which will afford a place of final rest to each of the human principles - the seventh principle excepted.

[M.L., 73:73]

Then follows a description of the great cosmic cycles of activity and rest and their parallels in the case of man:

We know that periods of action and rest follow each other in everything in nature from the macrocosm with its Solar Systems down to man and its parent-earth, which has its seasons of activity followed by those of sleep; and that in short all nature, like her begotten living forms has her time for recuperation. So with the spiritual individuality, the Monad which starts on its downward and upward cyclic rotation. The periods which intervene between each great manvantarian "round" are proportionately long to reward for the thousands of existences passed on various globes; while the time given between each "race birth" or rings - as you call them - is sufficiently lengthy to compensate for any life of strife and misery during that lapse of time passed in conscious bliss after the re-birth of the Ego. To conceive of an eternity of bliss or woe, and to offset it to any conceivable deeds of merit or demerit of a being who may have lived a century or even a millennium in the flesh, can only be proposed by one who has never yet grasped the awful reality of the word Eternity, nor pondered upon the law of perfect justice and equilibrium which pervades nature ..

[M.L., 68:68]

8. KARMA

.. There is the Karma of merit and the Karma of demerit. Karma neither punishes nor rewards; it is simply the one Universal Law which guides unerringly and, so to say, blindly, all other laws productive of certain effects along the grooves of their respective causations. When Buddhism teaches that "Karma is that moral kernel (of any being) which alone survives death and continues in transmigration" or reincarnation, it simply means that there remains naught after each Personality but the causes produced by it; causes which are undying, i.e. which cannot be eliminated from the Universe until replaced by their legitimate effects, and wiped out by them, so to speak, and such causes - unless compensated during the life of the person who produced them with adequate effects - will follow the reincarnated Ego, and reach it in its subsequent reincarnation until a harmony between effects and causes is fully re-established. No "personality" - a mere bundle of material atoms and of instinctual and mental characteristics - can of course continue, as such, in the world of pure Spirit. Only that which is immortal in its very nature and divine in its essence, namely the Ego, can exist forever. And as it is that Ego which chooses the personality it will inform, after each Devachan, and which receives through these personalities the effects of the Karmic causes produced, it is therefore the Ego, that self which is the "moral kernel" referred to and embodied Karma, "which alone survives death".

[T.G.]

.. the ultimate Law of the universe, the source, origin and fount of all other laws which exist throughout

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Nature. Karma is the unerring law which adjusts effect to cause, on the physical, mental and spiritual planes of being. As no cause remains without its due effect from greatest to least, from a cosmic disturbance down to the movement of your hand, and as like produces like, Karma is that unseen and unknown law which adjusts wisely, intelligently and equitably each effect to its cause, tracing the latter back to its producer. Though itself unknowable, its action is perceivable.

[Key XI, 201

9. MASTERS OF THE WISDOM

All that has been said in this book rests on the authority of the two Masters who gave out the information. Some of it had never been made public before, neither had it been presented in plain language in so orderly a fashion. Who or what Masters are becomes a matter of prime importance. The Masters of the Wisdom referred to in this book are said to be men who have qualified for entry into the post-human kingdoms. They corresponded with A.P. Sinnett, and one of them was H.P. Blavatsky's Teacher. They had achieved their Masterhood while still in their physical bodies. At that time a number of other such were known but this degree of spiritual attainment is exceedingly rare. It is only beings of this order of psycho-spiritual development who KNOW what is happening in the subjective realms when forms (like those of the bodies of men) disappear at the end of their cycle of physical existence. They know the processes and the states, even the content, of consciousness of the deceased, and all the factors which determine the nature and conditions of rebirth. The whole chain of cause and effect is known to them, including even our numerous past lives, which we too will know in due time.

10. ORIGINS, DEITY AND COSMOS

Some points might be raised here by religionists concerning the role of the Deity in both the creation and government of Cosmos. The usual idea is that first there was the so-called Creator. But then questions arise: Where did such a one come from? Where did his or her ability to imagine his or her creation come from? Where did the necessary stuff of a universe come from? Firstly the creator and his or her faculties of imagination or skill must have been already in existence, but is it feasible to postulate that the Creator could have made all the stuff of the universe from nothing? Surely whatever exists now must have previously been something, in some form, already in existence beforehand. The act of creation could only be one of transforming whatever already was into something different. Is it not axiomatic that something, anything, cannot possibly come from absolutely nothing? Did this creator create him- or herself? Out of what?

Regarding the Creator as governor of Cosmos, we have now seen something of the nature and working of the Law and how it is inherent in the total being of - and of all beings in - Cosmos. The whole cosmic process is ordered by it - from within itself.

We have also seen that, because the cosmic process is endless, there could never have been any ab initio beginning. Everything that is, was, or ever will be must have its antecedents, themselves the products of and therefore conditioned by their antecedents.

As to the original stuff of Cosmos and the original dynamism which never ceases (although all manifestation must come to a temporary end), these are postulated as dual aspects of an eternal ONE.

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All consideration of that and other fundamentals, however, is well outside our theme and would lead us into the realms of the most abstract metaphysics. It is, however, dealt with in the writings of H.P. Blavatsky, notably The Secret Doctrine.

Cosmos has a structure. It, like man, is said to be sevenfold. There are seven planes or levels of existence; one objective, of physical material, our normal sphere of activity, and six others. These are invisible to our normal senses and are subjective. Each plane has seven sub-planes, each corresponding in nature to its respective main plane. They correspond to the principles in Man and commonly share the same Sanskrit names. On each inner plane there are beings, again invisible to our ordinary senses, constituted to function on them.

11. PLANETARY SPIRITS

The Masters made reference to a "Planetary". This in the literature has two meanings. One is that of the Great Entity, the Spirit of a Planet. Everything in Cosmos is a Life, and this includes not only atoms (physical and otherwise) but planets - in fact, all heavenly bodies. Another meaning is that of a being who has graduated into the post-human states of being and, so it is said, can then retain full consciousness in the vast interplanetary spaces and be cognizant of the heavenly bodies therein.

There are many stages in the post-human kingdoms and many titles given to those who attain to them. They vary with the language - national or religious - whose terms are being used. They are Celestial Beings, Regents, Bodhisatwas, Nirmanakayas, Buddhas, Gods (many names), Archangels and Angels, etc. etc. The teaching has it that all of them must have been men. Man has a central and unique position in the evolutionary scheme. Everything in our world scheme aspires to become man. Our system works to a pattern with the Heavenly Man as an archetypal model.

12. SPACE

In answer to some points raised in the correspondence, the Master explains:

Molecules occupying a place in infinity is an inconceivable proposition. The confusion arises out of the Western tendency of putting an objective construction upon what is purely subjective. The book of Kiu-te teaches us that space is infinity itself. It is formless, immutable and absolute. Like the human mind, which is the exhaustless generator of ideas, the Universal Mind or Space has its ideation which is projected into objectivity at the appointed time; but space itself is not affected thereby .. infinity can never be conceived by any series of additions. Whenever you talk of place in infinity, you dethrone infinity and degrade its absolute, unconditioned character.

[M.L., 398:404]

13. FINAL RECOLLECTION OF ALL LIVES, NIRVANA, ABSOLUTE REST

The Masters give us some further information on this and also on the final state of One who has completed his round of earth lives: Nirvana, Parabrahman, Absolute Rest:

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But the complete recollection of all the lives - (earthly and devachanic) omniscience - in short - comes but at the great end of the full seven Rounds (unless one had become in the interim a Bodhisatwa, an Arhat) - the "threshold" of Nirvana meaning an indefinite period. Naturally a man, a Seventh-rounder (who completes his earthly migrations at the beginning of the last race and ring) will have to wait longer at that threshold than one of the very last of those Rounds. That Life of the Elect between the minor Pralaya and Nirvana - or rather before the Pralaya is the Great Reward, the grandest, in fact, since it makes of the Ego (though he may never have been an adept, but simply a worthy, virtuous man in most of his existences) - virtually a God, an omniscient, conscious being, a candidate - for eternities of aeons - for a Dhyana Chohan .. Enough - I am betraying the mysteries of initiation. But what has NIRVANA to do with the recollections of objective existences? That is a state still higher and in which all things objective are forgotten. It is a State of Absolute Rest and assimilation with Parabrahm - it is Parabrahm itself. Oh, for the sad ignorance of our philosophical truths in the West, and for the inability of your greatest intellects to seize the true spirit of those teachings. What shall we - what can we do!

[M.L., 195:198]