

# Karma in the Mahatma Letters

## When Does Man Become Responsible for his Actions?

Like the lower *lives* and beings during his first, second and third round and while he is an irresponsible compound of *pure* matter and *pure* spirit (none of them as yet defiled by the consciousness of their possible purposes and applications) from sphere I, where he has performed his *local* sevenfold round of evolutionary process from the lowest class of the *highest* species of — say — anthropoids up to rudimentary man [he] certainly enters No. 2 as an *ape* (the last word being used for your better comprehension). At this round or stage his individuality is as dormant in him as that of a foetus during his period of gestation. He has no consciousness, no sense, for he begins as a rudimentary astral man and lands on our planet as a primitive physical man.

So far it is a mere passing on of mechanical motion. Volition and consciousness are at the same time self-determining<sup>1</sup> and determined by causes, and the volition of man, his intelligence and consciousness will awake but when his fourth principle *Kama* is matured and completed by its (*seriatim*)<sup>2</sup> contact with the *Kamas* or energizing forces of all the forms man has passed through in his previous three rounds.

The present mankind is at its *fourth* round<sup>3</sup> (mankind as a genus or a kind, not a RACE *nota bene*<sup>4</sup>) of the *post-pralayan* cycle of evolution; and as its various races, so the individual entities in them are unconsciously to themselves performing their *local* earthly sevenfold cycles — hence the vast difference in the degrees of their intelligence, energy and so on.

Now every individuality will be followed on its ascending arc by the Law of retribution — Karma and death accordingly<sup>5</sup>. The perfect man or the entity which reached full perfection, (each of his seven principles being matured) will not be reborn here. His local terrestrial cycle is completed and he has to either proceed onward or — be annihilated as an individuality. (The incomplete entities have to be reborn or reincarnated).<sup>6</sup> (ML44, B13)

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<sup>1</sup> **Self-determining**: Determination of one's own fate or course of action without compulsion; free will.

<sup>2</sup> Seriatim is Latin for sequential or "point by point."

<sup>3</sup> The Secret Doctrine tells us that:— [in 1887] The number of years passed, since the Dhyani Chohan, known in India as Manu Vaivasvata, inaugurated the human Manvantara on our planet D, in the present Round—equals 18,618,725 years. (SD2, 69) (CW13, 302)

<sup>4</sup> **Nota bene** is Latin for "take special notice."

<sup>5</sup> This would imply that the Law of Retribution went into effect midway through the 4<sup>th</sup> Root race.

<sup>6</sup> **M**: By-the-bye, I'll re-write for you pages 345 to 357, Vol. I., of *Isis* — much jumbled, and confused by Olcott, who thought he was improving it!

## The Problem of Evil - (ML88, B10)

*Our ideas on Evil* — Evil has no existence *per se* and is but the absence of good and exists but for him who is made its victim. It proceeds from two causes, and no more than good is it an independent cause in Nature. Nature is destitute of goodness or malice; she follows only immutable laws when she either gives life and joy, or sends suffering [and] death, and destroys what she has created.

Nature has an antidote for every poison and her laws a reward for every suffering. The butterfly devoured by a bird becomes that bird, and the little bird killed by an animal goes into a higher form. It is the blind law of necessity and the eternal fitness of things, and hence cannot be called Evil in Nature.

The real evil proceeds from human intelligence and its origin rests entirely with reasoning man who dissociates himself from Nature. Humanity then alone is the true source of evil. Evil is the exaggeration of good, the progeny of human selfishness and greediness.

Think profoundly and you will find that save death — which is no evil but a necessary law, and accidents which will always find their reward in a future life — the *origin* of every evil whether small or great is in human action, in man whose intelligence makes him the one free agent in Nature.

It is not nature that creates diseases, but man. The latter's mission and destiny in the economy of nature is to die his natural death brought by old age. Save accident, neither a savage nor a wild (free) animal die of disease. Food, sexual relations, drink, are all natural necessities of life; yet excess in them brings on disease, misery, suffering, mental and physical, and the latter are transmitted as the greatest evils to future generations, the progeny of the culprits.

Ambition, the desire of securing happiness and comfort for those we love, by obtaining honours and riches, are praiseworthy natural feelings but when they transform man into an ambitious cruel tyrant, a miser, a selfish egotist they bring untold misery on those around him, on nations as well as on individuals.

All this then — food, wealth, ambition, and a thousand other things we have to leave unmentioned — becomes the source and cause of evil whether in its abundance or through its absence. Become a glutton, a debauchee, a tyrant, and you become the originator of diseases, of human suffering and misery. Lack all this and you starve, you are despised as a *nobody* and the majority of the herd, your fellow men, make of you a sufferer your whole life. Therefore it is neither nature nor an imaginary Deity that has to be blamed, but human nature made vile by *selfishness*.

Think well over these few words; work out every cause of evil you can think of and trace it to its origin and you will have solved *one-third* of the problem of evil.

And now, after making due allowance for evils that are natural and cannot be avoided, — and so few are they that I challenge the whole host of Western metaphysicians to call them evils or to trace them directly to an independent cause — I will point out the greatest, the chief cause of nearly two thirds of the evils that pursue humanity — ever since that cause became a power. It is religion under whatever form and in whatsoever nation. It is the sacerdotal<sup>7</sup> caste, the priesthood and the churches; it is in those illusions that man looks upon as sacred, that he has to search out the source of that multitude of evils which is the great curse of humanity and that almost overwhelms mankind.

Ignorance created gods and cunning took advantage of the opportunity. Look at India and look at Christendom and Islam, at Judaism and Fetichism<sup>8</sup>. It is priestly imposture<sup>9</sup> that rendered these gods so terrible to man; it is religion that makes of him the selfish bigot, the fanatic that hates all mankind out of his own sect without rendering him any better or more moral for it.

It is belief in God and gods that makes two-thirds of humanity the slaves of a handful of those who deceive them under the false pretence of saving them. Is not man ever ready to commit any kind of evil if told that his god or gods demand the crime? Voluntary victim of an illusionary god, the abject<sup>10</sup> slave of his crafty ministers. The Irish, Italian and Slavonian<sup>11</sup> peasant will starve himself and see his family starving and naked to feed and clothe his padre and pope.

For two thousand years India groaned under the weight of caste, Brahmins<sup>12</sup> alone feeding on the fat of the land, and today the followers of Christ and those of Mahomet are cutting each other's throats in the names of and for the greater glory of their respective myths. Remember the sum of human misery will never be diminished unto that day when the better portion of humanity destroys in the name of Truth, morality, and universal charity, the altars of their false gods.

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<sup>7</sup> **Sacerdotal** – adj. (Ecclesiastical Terms) of, relating to, or characteristic of priests

<sup>8</sup> **Fetichism** - a belief in the magical power of fetishes (or the worship of a fetish) an object regarded with awe as being the embodiment or habitation of a potent spirit or as having magical potency. any object, idea, etc., eliciting unquestioning reverence, respect, or devotion:

<sup>9</sup> **Imposture** - the action or practice of imposing fraudulently upon others. Deception using an assumed character, identity, or name, as by an impostor.

<sup>10</sup> **Abject** - utterly hopeless, miserable, humiliating, or wretched:

<sup>11</sup> **Slavonia** - A historical region of Croatia between the Drava and Sava Rivers. Originally part of the Roman province of Pannonia, it became a Slavic state in the seventh century and has long been allied with Croatia. Part of Yugoslavia after 1918, Slavonia was invaded by Serbia in 1991 following Croatia's declaration of independence from Yugoslavia. Croatia regained control of western Slavonia in 1995 and eastern Slavonia in 1998.

<sup>12</sup> The **Brahmins** are regarded as the highest of the four castes (varnas) in the traditional Hindu societies of Nepal and India, and it is composed by the priestly class.

### With Respect to Buddhism

If it is objected that we too have temples, we too have priests and that our lamas also live on charity . . . let them know that the objects above named have in common with their Western equivalents, but the name. Thus in our temples there is neither a god nor gods worshipped, only the thrice sacred memory of the greatest as the holiest man that ever lived. If our lamas to honour the fraternity of the *Bhikkhus*<sup>13</sup> established by our blessed master himself, go out to be fed by the laity, the latter often to the number of 5 to 25,000 is fed and taken care of by the *Samgha* (the fraternity of lamaic monks) the lamasery providing for the wants of the poor, the sick, the afflicted. Our lamas accept food, never money, and it is in those temples that the origin of evil is preached and impressed upon the people. There they are taught the four noble truths — *ariya sakka*<sup>14</sup>, and the chain of causation (the 12 nidanas)<sup>15</sup> gives them a solution of the problem of the origin and destruction of suffering.

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<sup>13</sup> **Bhikkhu** - an ordained male monastic ("monk") in Buddhism.

<sup>14</sup> **Ariya Sakka** or *Ariya Sacca* - The central teachings of the Buddha are called the **Four Noble Truths**. The first of these truths is that ordinary existence is suffering. The second is that suffering is caused by ignorance and craving. The third is that suffering can be transcended. And the fourth Noble Truth is the way and means to transcend suffering, which is The Noble Eightfold Middle Path. **The Noble Eightfold Path** (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*) is the last of The Four Noble Truths, the central teachings of Buddhism. It is called noble (*ariya*) because it ennobles one who practices it; and it is called a path (*magga*) because it leads from one place to another, from the distress of *samsara* to the freedom of *Nibbana* [*Sanskrit: nirvāṇa*]. The Noble Eightfold Middle Path is also sometimes called the 'Middle Way' because it advocates a life-style that avoids both self-mortification and hedonism. The steps on the Eightfold Path are Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration. Traditionally the Noble Eightfold Path is divided into three parts – Virtue, Concentration and Wisdom. Another useful way to divide it is as intellectual training, ethical training and psychological training.

<sup>15</sup> **The Twelve Nidānas** ("cause, motivation, link") are twelve links doctrine of Buddhism where each link is asserted as a primary causal relationship between the connected links. These links present the mechanistic basis of repeated birth, *Samsara*, and resultant *Dukkha* (suffering, pain, unsatisfactoriness) starting from *avidyā* (ignorance, misconceptions).

Read the Mahavagga<sup>16</sup> and try to understand not with the prejudiced Western mind but the spirit of intuition and truth what the Fully Enlightened one says in the 1st Khandhaka. Allow me to translate it for you.

"At the time the Blessed Buddha was at Uruvella<sup>17</sup> on the shores of the river Nerovigara as he rested under the Boddhi tree<sup>18</sup> of wisdom after he had become Sambuddha<sup>19</sup>, at the end of the seventh day having his mind fixed on the chain of causation he spake thus: 'from ignorance spring the Samkharas<sup>20</sup> of threefold nature — productions of body, of speech, of thought. From the samkharas springs consciousness, from consciousness spring name and form, from this spring the six regions (of the six senses the seventh being the property of but the enlightened); from these springs contact from this sensation; from this springs thirst (or desire, Kama, Tanha) from thirst attachment, existence, birth, old age and death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection and despair. Again by the destruction of ignorance, the samkharas are destroyed, and their consciousness name and form, the six regions, contact, sensation, thirst, attachment (selfishness), existence, birth, old age, death, grief, lamentation, suffering, dejection, and despair are destroyed. Such is the cessation of this whole mass of suffering."

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<sup>16</sup> **Mahavagga** is part of the *Khandhaka*, the second book of the Theravadin Vinaya Pitaka, which includes accounts of the Buddha's and his great disciples' awakenings.

<sup>17</sup> **Uruvela** was a small village in northern India on the outskirts of which the Buddha attained enlightenment. The Buddha described the village and its surroundings as 'a beautiful stretch of ground, a lovely woodland grove, a clear flowing river with a beautiful ford, a village nearby for support...a suitable place for making an effort' (<http://www.dhammadownload.com/>)

<sup>18</sup> The **Bodhi Tree** was a large and very old sacred fig tree (*Ficus religiosa*) located in Bodh Gaya, under which Siddhartha Gautama, the spiritual teacher later became known as the Buddha, is said to have attained enlightenment (Bodhi). In religious iconography, the Bodhi Tree is recognizable by its heart-shaped leaves, which are usually prominently displayed.

<sup>19</sup> **Samma-sambuddha** (Pali) *Sammā-sambuddha* Used by mystic Buddhists and raja-yogins to signify the complete or perfected knowledge of the whole series of one's past lives, a phenomenon of memory obtained through the practice of true inner yoga or self-control. More generally, full or complete awaking, in the sense that all the higher nature of the individual is thoroughly awakened and active, thus conferring virtual omniscience as regards our solar system; it likewise brings with it great spiritual and psychic powers. It is the full efflorescence and self-conscious activity of the spiritual monad in and through the one who has attained to this sublime degree in spiritual unfoldment, the becoming at one with the cosmic Logos.

<sup>20</sup> **Samkhara** - Pali: Saṅkhāra Sanskrit: Saṃskāra. Any action, whether meritorious or harmful, and whether of body, speech or mind, creates karmic imprint on a being. See Skandha No. 4

Knowing this the Blessed One uttered this solemn utterance.

"When the real nature of things becomes clear to the meditating Bikshu, then all his doubts fade away since he has learned what is that nature and what its cause. From ignorance spring all the evils. From knowledge comes the cessation of this mass of misery . . . and then the meditating Brahmana stands dispelling the hosts of Mara like the sun that illuminates the sky."

Meditation here means the superhuman (not supernatural) qualities, or arhatship in its highest of spiritual powers. <sup>(ML88, B10)</sup>

## Karma and Devachan

### The Master Writes About Karma

In connection with this, let me tell you before, that since you seem so interested with the subject, you can do nothing better than to study the two doctrines — of *Karma* and Nirvana — as profoundly as you can. Unless you are thoroughly well acquainted with the two tenets — the double key to the metaphysics of Abidharma<sup>21</sup> — you will always find yourself at sea in trying to comprehend the rest. We have several sorts of Karma and Nirvana in their various applications — to the Universe, the world, Devas<sup>22</sup>, Buddhas<sup>23</sup>, Bodhisattvas<sup>24</sup>, men and animals — the second including its seven kingdoms. Karma and Nirvana are but two of the seven great MYSTERIES of Buddhist metaphysics; and but four of the seven are known to the best orientalists, and that very imperfectly.

If you ask a learned Buddhist priest what is Karma? — he will tell you that Karma is what a Christian might call Providence<sup>25</sup> (in a certain sense only) and a Mahomedan<sup>26</sup> — *Kismet*, fate or destiny (again in one sense).

That it is that cardinal<sup>27</sup> 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 reappears in another birth, on the same or another planet, under conditions of his or its own antecedent making.

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<sup>21</sup> **Abhidharma** (Sanskrit) or Abhidhamma (Pāli) are ancient Buddhist texts which contain doctrinal material appearing in the Buddhist Sutras. <sup>(TSWiki)</sup> **Abhidharma** (Sk.). The metaphysical (third) part of *Tripitaka*, a very philosophical Buddhist work by Kātyāyana. <sup>(TG)</sup>

<sup>22</sup> **Deva** - (Sanskrit) A word meaning celestial being, of which there are various classes. <sup>(TG)</sup> servant of the Dhyān-Chohans. <sup>(ML92)</sup>

<sup>23</sup> **Buddha** (Sanskrit.). Lit., "The Enlightened". The highest degree of knowledge. To become a Buddha one has to break through the bondage of sense and personality; to acquire a complete perception of the REAL SELF and learn not to separate it from all other selves; to learn by experience the utter unreality of all phenomena of the visible Kosmos foremost of all; to reach a complete detachment from all that is evanescent and finite, and live while yet on Earth in the immortal and the everlasting alone, in a supreme state of holiness.

<sup>24</sup> **Bodhisattva** (Sk.). Lit., "he, whose essence (*sattva*) has become intelligence (*bodhi*)"; those who need but one more incarnation to become perfect Buddhas, i.e., to be entitled to Nirvāna. This, as applied to *Manushi* (terrestrial) Buddhas. In the metaphysical sense, *Bodhisattva* is a title given to the sons of the celestial *Dhyāni* Buddhas.

<sup>25</sup> **Providence** - The care, guardianship, and control exercised by a deity; divine direction

<sup>26</sup> **Mahomedan** - a follower of the Islamic prophet Muhammad

<sup>27</sup> **Cardinal** - Of foremost importance; paramount:

Or, in other words that *Karma* is the guiding power, and *Trishna* (in Pali *Tanha*) the thirst or desire to sentiently live — the proximate<sup>28</sup> force or energy, the resultant of human (or animal) action, which, out of the old *Skandhas*<sup>29</sup> 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 flesh. And once that you have well mastered the meaning of *Skandhas*<sup>30</sup> you will see what I mean.

It is the group of Skandhas, 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;

*Vedanā* — sensations;

*Sanna* — abstract ideas;

*Sankhārā* — tendencies both physical and mental;

and *Vinnana* — mental powers, an amplification of the fourth — meaning the mental, physical and moral predispositions.

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<sup>28</sup> **Proximate** - Direct or immediate

<sup>29</sup> **KH:** I remark that in the second as well as in the first edition of your *Occult World* the same misprint appears, and that the word *Skandha* is spelt *Shandba* — on page 130. As it now stands I am made to express myself in a very original way for a *supposed* Adept.

<sup>30</sup> See the section in the Appendix called **Skandhas**.

We add to them two more, the nature and names of which you may learn hereafter. Suffice for the present to let you know that they are connected with, and productive of *Sakkāyadiṭṭhi*,<sup>31</sup> the "heresy or delusion of individuality" and of *Attavāda* <sup>32</sup> "the doctrine of Self," both of which (in the case of the fifth principle<sup>33</sup> the soul) lead to the *maya* of heresy and belief in the efficacy of vain rites and ceremonies; in prayers and 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,<sup>34</sup> 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"<sup>35</sup> 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, who is essentially identical with the previous being — since he is its outcome and creation — should feel the consequences of that begetting Self or personality.

Your Western law which punishes the innocent son of a guilty father by depriving him of his parent, rights and property; your civilized Society which brands with infamy the guileless<sup>36</sup> daughter of an immoral, criminal mother; your Christian Church and Scriptures which teach that the "Lord God visits the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation" are not all these far more unjust and cruel than anything done by Karma?

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<sup>31</sup> **Sakkāya-diṭṭhi** (Pāli) is the wrong idea that we are the personality formed by the skandhas. (TSWiki)

<sup>32</sup> **Attavāda** (Pāli) refers to the illusion of the existence one's self as a substantial and permanent entity. (TSWiki)

<sup>33</sup> **The fifth principle** – Manas or the Human Soul

<sup>34</sup> **KH**: See the *Abhidharma Kosha Vyākhyā*, the *Sutta Pitaka*, any Northern Buddhist book, all of which show Gautama Buddha saying that none of these Skandhas is the soul; since the body is constantly changing, and that neither man, animal, nor plant is ever the same for two consecutive days or even minutes. "Mendicants! remember that there is within man *no abiding principle* whatever, and that only the *learned* disciple who acquires wisdom, in saying '*I am*' — knows what he is saying."

<sup>35</sup> **Privation** is a term sporadically used by H. P. Blavatsky in her writings to refer to the "abstract ideal", "subtle mould" or "astral prototype" of anything that is to be manifested. She takes this word from the philosophy of Aristotle, but interprets it in a different way than it is normally understood in current scholarship.

<sup>36</sup> **Guileless** - free of deceit; characterized by honesty and fairness

Instead of punishing the innocent together with the culprit, the Karma *avenges and rewards the former*, which neither of your three western potentates<sup>37</sup> above mentioned ever thought of doing.

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?

Now, the causes producing the "new being" and determining the nature of *Karma* are, as already said — *Trishna* (or "Tanha") — thirst, desire for sentient existence and *Upadana*<sup>38</sup> — which is the realization or consummation of *Trishna* or that desire. And both of these the medium helps to awaken and to develop *nec plus ultra*<sup>39</sup> in an Elementary<sup>40</sup>, be he a suicide or a victim. <sup>41</sup>

The 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"; 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* will attract them to mediums, and woe to the latter, who tempt them with such an easy *Upadana*.

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<sup>37</sup> **Potentate** - One who has the power and position to rule over others. The three mentioned earlier in the letter: Beal, Burnouf, or Rhys Davids

<sup>38</sup> **Upādāna** is the Sanskrit and Pāli word for "clinging," "attachment" or "grasping". (TSWiki)

<sup>39</sup> **nec plus ultra** is a French expression meaning the acme or highest point. "nothing further beyond"; state-of-the-art; ultimate.

<sup>40</sup> **Elementary** is a word used in several ways, mainly to designate the souls of deceased people who remain bound to the physical world, unable to move on in the post-mortem processes. HPB calls them: "the disembodied souls of the depraved; these souls having at some time prior to death separated from themselves their divine spirits."

<sup>41</sup> **KH**: Alone the Shells and the Elementals are left unhurt, though the morality of the sensitives can by no means be improved by the intercourse.

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 *Upadana* 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 lavishing their hospitality. <sup>(ML68)</sup>

### Karmic Overload in Kama Loka

*Mediums can have a bad effect on the Karma of the "Suffering Spirits"*

Of course there is a "better sort" of *reliquiae*; 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. But there is another kind of "Spirits," we have lost sight of: the *suicides* and those *killed by accident*. Both kinds can communicate, and both have to pay dearly for such visits. And now I have again to explain what I mean.

Well, this class is the one that the French Spiritists call — "*les Esprits Souffrants*."<sup>42</sup> 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 opened doors, *viz.*, mediums and sensitives, for they will have to pay roundly for every such pleasure. . .

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*. But let me give you a clearer idea of what I mean by *Karma* in this case. <sup>(ML68)</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> **Les Esprits Souffrants** means "the suffering spirits" in French.

[M Comments on the Karma of Spiritualists](#)

Woe to the spiritualists! Their *Karma* is heavy with the ruin of men and women they entice into mediumship, and then throw off to starve like a toothless dog.

- Mahatma Letter No. 118 (B96)

[Karma Accounts for Moral Development](#)

As it is no fault of the former, [The red Indian] 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. . . .

- Mahatma Letter No. 68 (B16) - The Devachan Letter

### The Karma of Evil Temporarily Steps Aside During the Devachanic Interval

(3) Now the question of importance — is who goes to Heaven — or Deva Chan? Is this condition only attained by the few who are very good, or by the many who are not very bad, — after the lapse in their case of a longer unconscious incubation or gestation.

(3) "Who goes to Deva Chan?" The personal Ego<sup>43</sup> of course: but beatified, purified, holy. Every Ego — the combination of the sixth and seventh principles — which, after the period of unconscious gestation<sup>44</sup> is reborn into the Deva-Chan, 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 Deva-Chan. "Bad" is a relative term for us — as you were told more than once before, — 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 Deva Chan. 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. (ML68, B16 - Devachan)

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<sup>43</sup> The **Personal Ego** is given as "a combination of the five lower principles" [1. Physical Body, 2. Linga Sharira, 3. Prana, 4. Kama (Rūpa), 5. Manas] (ML68).

The "astral monad" is the "personal Ego," and it never reincarnates . . . the sixth and seventh [Atma, Buddhi] and the fifth [Manas], or the immortal and the astral or personal "Monads — Egos." (ML85b)

<sup>44</sup> **Gestation** - After going through Kāmaloka the personal ego undergoes a period of *gestation* where it is purified from anything that is not fit to be expressed in Devachan. Then "the new spiritual Ego is reborn—like the fabled Phœnix from its ashes—from the old one" (CW4, 121)

**Period of Gestation** According to H. P. Blavatsky the gestation period "lasts from a few days to several years", (CW4, 120-121) while Mahatma K.H. wrote that it can be very long: "longer sometimes than you may even imagine, yet proportionate to the Ego's spiritual stamina". (ML68)

It is usually said that the reviving of consciousness begins at the door of Devachan, once the struggle in Kama-Loka is over, but only after the period of gestation. (ML104, 362)

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. (ML104, 362)

### Karma and The Period in Devachan

*The length of the Ego's stay in Devachan is proportional to the good karma that it generates during an incarnation.*

"Bardo" is the period between death and rebirth — and may last from a few years to a kalpa.<sup>45</sup> It is divided into three sub-periods

(1) when the *Ego* delivered of its mortal coil<sup>46</sup> enters into *Kama-Loka*<sup>47</sup> (the abode of Elementaries<sup>48</sup>);

(2) when it enters into its "Gestation State";

(3) when it is reborn in the *Rupa-Loka* of Deva-Chan.

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"; as you say, longer sometimes than you may even 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.

(9) And for how long? Does this state of spiritual beatitude endure for years? for decades? for centuries?

(9) For years, decades, centuries and milleniums, oftentimes — multiplied by something more. It all depends upon the duration of Karma.

Fill with oil Den's little cup,<sup>49</sup> and a city Reservoir of water, 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*. (ML68)

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<sup>45</sup> **Kalpa:** The exoteric Brahmanical works give 4,320,000,000 years as the duration of a great Kalpa, a "Day of Brahma." This includes all the seven "Rounds" of our Planetary Chain, i.e., the period of human existence on different planets in different Rounds together, with what are called "Obscurations" or the period of rest for humanity between two planets, in its passage from the one to the other, after its seven Races are evolved on that planet. (CW13, 302)

**Kalpa** (*Sk.*). The period of a mundane revolution, generally a cycle of time, but usually, it represents a "day" and "night" of Brahma, a period of 4,320,000,000 years. (TG)

<sup>46</sup> **Coil:** The troubles and activities of the world (in the Shakespearean phrase *this mortal coil*)

<sup>47</sup> **KH:** Tibetan: Yuh-Kai.

<sup>48</sup> **Elementary** is a word used in Theosophy in several ways, mainly to designate the souls of deceased people who remain bound to the physical world, unable to move on in the post-mortem processes. Elementaries should not be confused with elementals.

<sup>49</sup> "Den's little cup" probably refers to the Sinnett's young son Dennis. (TSWiki)

## Time in Devachan Determined by Karma – Francis Bacon

*In the following excerpt, the life of “the great chancellor,” Francis Bacon, is used to illustrate how the time in Devachan lasts until Karma is satisfied in the working out of moral and spiritual energies of the life just lived as well as dispelling the notion that the devachanic state would-be a “less than exciting” condition.*

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 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<sup>50</sup>, for inst: whom a poet called —

"The greatest, wisest, meanest of mankind" <sup>51</sup> —

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 field.

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<sup>50</sup> Francis Bacon, 1st Viscount St Alban, (22 January 1561 – 9 April 1626) was an English philosopher, statesman, scientist, jurist, orator, and author. He served both as Attorney General and as Lord Chancellor of England. After his death, he remained extremely influential through his works, especially as philosophical advocate and practitioner of the scientific method during the scientific revolution.

A viscount (/ˈvaɪkaʊnt/ for male) or viscountess (/ˈvaɪkaʊntɪs/, for female) is a title used in certain European countries for a noble of varying status, but historically deemed to convey a lower-middling rank. In many countries a "viscount", and its historical equivalents, was a non-hereditary, administrative or judicial position, and did not develop into a hereditary title until much later.

<sup>51</sup> Alexander Pope, in Epistle IV of his *Essay on Man*, refers to Sir Francis Bacon as "the wisest, brightest, meanest of mankind" (281-282). This character reference of Bacon's is referred to in many other essays. Alexander Pope (21 May 1688 – 30 May 1744) was an 18th-century English poet. He is best known for his satirical verse, as well as for his translation of Homer.

Hence — all the great plans of moral reform of intellectual and spiritual research into abstract principles of 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. This, it may find in the same world as before, or another, according to his or her stage of progression through the necessary rings and rounds of human development. <sup>(ML104)</sup>

### Karma Determines what our lives will be in Devachan and on Earth

As in actual earth-life, so there is for the Ego in devachan — the first flutter of psychic life, the attainment of prime, 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.

- Mahatma Letter No. 104 (B25)

## "Your Karma is ours," Sinnett's Karma Affects the Master

*This is the first letter of K.H. to Sinnett after his return from a retreat. Sinnett is evidently drawing himself nearer to the Master who explains that "I can come nearer to you, but you must draw me by a purified heart and a gradually developing will" and that a love for collective humanity is an increasing inspiration if one wants to divert the Master's regard toward himself.*

All this I say, not because its substance has not been told you before, but because I read your heart and detect in it a shade of sadness, not to say disappointment, that hovers there. You have had other correspondents but are not perfectly satisfied. To gratify, I write you therefore with some effort to bid you keep a cheerful frame of mind. Your strivings, perplexities and forebodings are equally noticed, good and faithful friend.

In the imperishable RECORD of the Masters *you have written them all*. There are registered your every deed and thought; for, though not a chela, as you say to my Brother Morya, nor even a "protege" — as you understand the term — still, you have stepped within the circle of our work, you have crossed the mystic line which separates your world from ours, and now whether you persevere or not; whether we become later on, in your sight, still more living *real* entities or vanish out of your mind like so many dream fictions — perchance an ugly night-mare — you are virtually OURS. Your hidden *Self* has mirrored itself in *our Akasa*; your nature is — yours, your essence is — ours.

The flame is distinct from the log of wood which serves it temporarily as fuel; at the end of your apparitional<sup>52</sup> birth — and whether we two, meet face to face in our grosser *rupas* — you cannot avoid meeting us in *Real Existence*.

Yea, verily good friend your *Karma* is ours, for you imprinted it daily and hourly upon the pages of that book where the minutest particulars of the individuals stepping inside our circle — are preserved; and that your *Karma* is your *only* personality to be when you step beyond.

In thought and deed, by day, in soul-struggles by nights, you have been writing the story of your desires and your spiritual development. This, every one does who approaches us with any earnestness of desire to become our co-worker, he himself "precipitates" the written entries by the identical process used by us when we write inside your closed letters and uncut pages of books and pamphlets in transit. (ML47 B45)

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<sup>52</sup> Apparitional - 1. A ghostly figure; a specter; 2. A sudden or unusual sight; 3. The act of appearing; appearance.

## Sinnett Discharges Some of His Karmic Obligation by Defending HPB

M makes an interesting side comment on the matter of karma when he tells Sinnett that the Englishman is discharging some of his own karmic obligations by his defense of HPB. So, says M, “Courage” — a beautiful encouragement when Sinnett may have been feeling some despair. <sup>(M)</sup>

Do not feel despondent. Courage my good friend and remember you are working off by helping her your own law of retribution for more than one cruel fling she receives is due to K.H.'s friendship for you, for his using her as the means of communication. But — Courage. <sup>(ML41)</sup>

(JM) Mills, Joy. Reflections on an Ageless Wisdom: A Commentary on The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett. Quest Books.

## Karma and The Daily Performance of Duty

Does it seem to you a small thing that the past year has been spent only in your "family duties"? Nay, but what better cause for reward, what better discipline, than the daily and hourly performance of duty? Believe me my "pupil" the man or woman who is placed by Karma in the midst of small plain duties and sacrifices and loving-kindnesses, will through these faithfully fulfilled rise to the larger measure of Duty, Sacrifice and Charity to all Humanity — what better path towards the enlightenment you are striving after than the daily conquest of Self. <sup>(ML123, B68)</sup>

## Assuming the Karma of the Group

It is but a truism, yet I say it, that in adversity alone can we discover the real man. It is a true manhood when one boldly accepts one's share of the collective Karma of the group one works with, and does not permit oneself to be embittered, and to see others in blacker colours than reality, or to throw all blame upon some one "black sheep," a victim, specially selected. Such a true man as that we will ever protect and despite his shortcomings, assist to develop the good he has in him. Such an one is sublimely *unselfish*; he sinks his personalty in his cause, and takes no heed of discomforts or personal obloquy<sup>53</sup> unjustly fastened upon him. <sup>(ML131, B66)</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> **Obloquy** - Abusively detractive language or utterance; calumny; disgrace brought about by public abuse

## Evolution and Karma

Sinnett is asking if the superior classes of civilized countries are further along in evolutionary progress. Are the Australian aborigines less evolved and by how much? Are the lower/inferior classes in civilized countries less evolved and by how much? Are those who are more spiritually evolved always born into superior classes or can they also be found amongst the poor?

(4) The majority of the superior classes of civilized countries on earth now, I understand to be seventh "ring"<sup>54</sup> people (i.e. of the seventh earthly incarnation) of the fourth round. The Australian aborigines I understand to be of a low ring? which? and are the lower and inferior classes of civilized countries of various rings or of the ring just below the seventh. And are all seventh ring people born in the superior classes or may not some be found among the poor?

(4) Not necessarily. Refinement, polishedness, and brilliant education, in *your* sense of these words have very little to do with the course of higher Nature's Law. Take a seventh ring African or a fifth ring Mongolian<sup>55</sup> and you can educate him — if taken from the cradle — save his physical appearance, and transform him into the most brilliant and accomplished English lord. Yet, he will still remain, but an *outwardly* intellectual parrot. (See Appendix No. II).  
- Mahatma Letter No. 61 (B17)

(II) Nor has wealth nor poverty, high or low birth any influence upon it, for this is all a result of their Karma. Neither has — what you call — civilization much to do with the progress. It is the *inner* man, the spirituality, the illumination of the physical brain by the light of the spiritual or divine intelligence that is *the* test. The Australian, the Esquimaux, the Bushmen, the Veddahs<sup>56</sup>, etc., are all side-shooting branchlets of that Branch which you call "cave-men" — the *third* race (according to your Science — the *second*) that evolved on the globe. They are the remnants of the seventh ring cave-men, remnants "that have ceased to grow and are the arrested forms of life doomed to eventual decay in the struggle of existence" in the words of *your correspondent*?<sup>57</sup>  
- Mahatma Letter No. 62 (B18)

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<sup>54</sup> **Ring** – For further discussion on rings, see section "Rings" in Appendix below.

<sup>55</sup> **African** is a sub-race of the Lemurian or 4<sup>th</sup> Root race. **Mongolian** is a sub-race of the Atlantean or 4<sup>th</sup> Root-race so in this context, a ring would mean an iteration of a sub-race.

<sup>56</sup> **Veddahs** are an indigenous people of Sri Lanka.

<sup>57</sup> The *correspondent* very likely is HPB. For further reading, see section "From Isis" in Appendix below.

## Poverty and Humble Condition in Life Are Less a Cause of Sorrow Than Wealth and High Birth

*Query 7.* The "reward provided by nature for men who are benevolent in a large, systematic way" and who have not focussed 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 *Tribuvana*,<sup>58</sup> 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. The social status of a being is, of course, a result of Karma; the law being that "like attracts like." The renascent<sup>59</sup> being is drawn into the gestative<sup>60</sup> current with which the preponderating attractions coming over from the last birth make him assimilate. Thus one who died a ryot<sup>61</sup> may be reborn a king, and the dead sovereign may next see the light in a coolie's<sup>62</sup> 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 *skandas* 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 a eudæmonistic<sup>63</sup> 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, but of that — later on.

- Mahatma Letter No. 104 (B25)

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<sup>58</sup> **Tribuvana** (three worlds) namely: Kama, Rupa, and Arupa-Lokas. 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.

<sup>59</sup> **Renascent** means being reborn; coming again into being.

<sup>60</sup> **Gestative** refers to the process of development of a fetus from conception until birth.

<sup>61</sup> **Ryot or Raiyat** is an Indian term for a peasant or tenant farmer.

<sup>62</sup> **Coolie**, a person from Asia who was employed by the Europeans as a cheap source of labor during the 19th and early 20th century.

<sup>63</sup> **Eudæmonism** is an ethical doctrine holding that the value of moral action lies in its capacity to produce happiness.

## The Flame Leaves the Wick

### Context

Thus, when man dies, his "Soul" (fifth prin.) 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. His *Mayavi rupa* may be often thrown into objectivity, as in the cases of apparitions after death; but, unless it is projected with the knowledge of (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. (ML70c, 20c)

### Query

(20) A little later on: — "Whether the personal Ego was good, bad or indifferent, his consciousness leaves him as suddenly as the flame leaves the wick — *his perceptive faculties* become extinct for ever." (**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. See notes.**)

Then what is the nature of the remembrance and self-consciousness of the shell? This touches on a matter I have often thought about — wishing for further explanation — the extent of personal identity in elementaries. (ML93a, B23a)

### Answer

(20) 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 Deva Chan, 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 Deva Chan 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.

But in that individual, in the Ego — "good, bad, or indifferent" in the isolated *personality*, — consciousness leaves as suddenly as "the flame leaves the wick." 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 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., that so provoked the wrath of C.C.M<sup>64</sup>., 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. All we can say of the reincarnated "failures" is, that they are the reincarnated *Manas*, the fifth principle of Mr. Smith or Miss Grey, but not certainly that these are the reincarnations of Mr. S. and Miss G. . . . .

#### Self Consciousness in the Shell

But what is then "the nature of the remembrance and self-consciousness of the shell?" you ask. As I said in your note — 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 portion of his *Manas* and his *Buddhi* are paralysed in him, have left him.

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<sup>64</sup> **C.C.M.** - Charles Carleton Massey (December 23, 1838 - March 29, 1905) was an English barrister, keenly interested in Spiritualism. He was one of the Founders of the Theosophical Society in 1875. In 1878 he became a founder and first president of the British Theosophical Society, the first Branch outside the USA. He was also one of the founders of the Society for Psychical Research in 1882. According to Josephine Ransom, "he was one of the ablest metaphysicians in Great Britain, and a lucid and scholarly writer on psychical subjects."

Could an animal — a dog, for instance — speak, he would prove you that his memory in direct relation to his canine personality, is as fresh as yours; nevertheless his memory and instinct cannot be called "perceptive faculties." A dog remembers that his master thrashed him when the latter gets hold of his stick — at all other times he has no remembrance of it.

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 died 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<sup>65</sup> (for even they were made to fall into the trap of mediumistic attraction) said one word more than it knew during its life-time. . . .

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. Hence — (ML93b, B23b)

## Adepts Cannot Alter Karma

We cannot alter Karma my "good friend" or we might lift the present cloud from your path. (ML137)

## Skandhas and Karma

In fact, Mahatma K.H. wrote: "The Buddhist calls this his 'Skandha', the Hindu gives it the name of 'Karma'". (First Letter of KH to AO Hume)

## Karma Works in Unexpected Ways

But, if you would have another look at Karma . . . remember that it ever works in the most unexpected ways. (ML126, B62)

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<sup>65</sup> **Faraday or a Brewster** refers to: Michael Faraday (1791- 1867), an English physicist and chemist who worked on electromagnetism and invented the electric motor; and David Brewster (1781-1868), a Scottish physicist who studied optics and biaxial crystals.

## Is Sex an Accident of Birth?

(3) Is there any essential spiritual difference between a man and a woman, or is sex a mere accident of each birth — the ultimate future of the individual furnishing the same opportunities?

(3) A mere accident — as you say. Generally a chance work yet guided by individual Karma, — moral aptitudes, characteristics and deeds of a previous birth. (ML61, B17)

## Angelhood is the result of Karma

Occultism is certainly not necessary for a good, pure Ego to become an "Angel" or Spirit in, or out of the *Devachan* since Angelhood is the result of Karma. (ML92, B54)

## Lip Profanity Will Not Hurt Your Karma Much

. . . Then see p. 32 remembering the difference between the Manvantaras as therein calculated and the MAHAMANVANTARAS (complete seven round between two Pralayas, — the four Yugs returning seven times,<sup>66</sup> once for each race. Having done so far take your pen and calculate. This will make you swear — but this will not hurt your Karma much: lip-profanity finds it deaf. (ML62, B18)

## Those That Are Incarnating Are Subject to Karma

Through every race then, man has to pass making seven successive entrances and exits and developing intellect to degrees from the lowest to the highest in succession. In short, his earth-cycle with its rings and sub-rings is the exact counterpart of the Great Cycle — only in miniature. Bear in mind again, that the intervals even between these special "race re-incarnations" are enormous, as even the dullest of the African Bushmen has to reap the reward of his Karma, equally with his brother Bushman who may be six times more intelligent. (ML62, B18)

Query no.6 in (ML44, B13) about the evolution of man may be talking about when karma begins to affect the individuality.

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<sup>66</sup> **Yug or Yuga** is a Sanskrit word meaning 'epoch' or 'era' used in Hindu philosophy to refer to a cycle of four ages called Satya-Yuga = 1,728,000 years, Treta-Yuga =1,296,000, Dvapara-Yuga =864,000, and Kali-Yuga =432,000. The total of the said four Yugas is called Maha-Yuga = 4,320,000. 7 Maha-Yugas for 7 races = 30,240,000 years. Manvantara = 308,448,000 years (10.2 times longer.) A planetary manvantara — also called a maha-manvantara or a kalpa — is the period of the lifetime of a planet during its seven rounds. It is also called a Day of Brahma, and its length is 4,320,000,000 years or 14 Manvantaras.

## The Karmic Body

But as a further **(1)** development we admit that there are *some spirits*, i.e. 5th and 4th principles not wholly dissevered from their sixth and seventh which also may be potent in the seance room. These are the spirits of suicides and the victims of accident or violence. Here the doctrine is that each particular wave of life must run on to its appointed shore and with the exception of the *very good*, that all spirits prematurely divorced from the lower principles, must remain on earth, until the foredestined hour of what would have been the natural death strikes. <sup>(ML70a)</sup>

(1) 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 into their Akasic 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 seance room. And it is *clear* that "this teaching is *not* in opposition to our former doctrine" and that while "shells" will be many, — Spirits *very* few. <sup>(ML70c)</sup>

25 You say: — it may happen — "that the spiritual spoil from the fifth will prove too weak to be reborn in Devachan, in which case it's sixth will then and there reclothe itself in a new body\_— and enter upon a new earth existence, whether upon this or any other planet."

26 This seems to want further elucidation. Are these exceptional cases in which two earth lives of the same spiritual monad may occur closer together than the thousand years indicated by some previous letters as the almost inevitable limit of such successive lives? <sup>(ML93a)</sup>

(25 & 26) . . . "in which case it" — the "it" relates to the sixth and seventh principles, not to the fifth, for the manas will have to remain a shell in each case; only in the one in hand it will have no time to visit mediums: for it begins sinking down to the eighth sphere almost immediately. "Then and there" in the eternity may be a mighty long period. It means only that the monad having no Karmic body<sup>67</sup> to guide its rebirth falls into non-being for a certain period and then reincarnates — certainly not earlier than a thousand or two thousand years. No, it is not an "exceptional case." Save a few exceptional cases in the case of the initiated such as our Teshu-Lamas and the Boddhisatwas and a few others, no monad gets ever reincarnated before its appointed cycle. (ML93b)

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<sup>67</sup> HPB writes: The third [body] is the true Ego, called in the East, by a name meaning "causal body" but which in the trans-Himalayan schools is always called the "Karmic body," which is the same. For Karma or action is the cause which produces incessant rebirths or "reincarnations." It is not the Monad, nor is it Manas proper; but is, in a way, indissolubly connected with, and a compound of the Monad and Manas in Devachan.

(CW10, 219)

Karana-sarira is the "causal" body and is sometimes said to be the "personal God." And so it is, in one sense. (CW14, 49fn)