

# HOW WE REMEMBER OUR PAST LIVES

by **C.Jinarajadasa**

and OTHER ESSAYS ON REINCARNATION

First Edition 1915

The Theosophical Publishing House, Adyar, Chennai(Madras), India 600 020

TO  
THE CAPTAIN OF OUR SALVATION  
IN FULFILMENT OF A PROMISE

Full moon of Chaitra, 1912

## HOW WE REMEMBER OUR PAST LIVES

Among the many ideas which have lightened the burden of men, one of the most serviceable has been that of Reincarnation. It not only explains why one man is born in the lap of luxury and another in poverty, why one is a genius and another an idiot, but it also holds out the hope that, as men now reap what they have sown in the past, so in future lives the poor and wretched of today shall have what they lack, if so they work for it, and that the idiot may, life after life, build up mentality which in far-off days may flower as genius.

When the idea of reincarnation is heard of for the first time, the student naturally supposes that it is a Hindu doctrine, for it is known to be a fundamental part of both Hinduism and Buddhism. But the strange fact is that reincarnation is found everywhere as a belief, and its origin cannot be traced to Indian sources. We hear of it in far-off Australia ( See *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, by Baldwin Spencer & F.G. Gillen, 1904, page 175, *et seq.*) and there is a story on record of an Australian aborigine who went cheerfully to the gallows, and replied on being questioned as to his levity :”Tumble down black-fellow, jump up white fellow, and have lots of sixpences to spend!” It was taught by the Druids of ancient Gaul, and Julius Caesar tells us how young Gauls were taught reincarnation, and that as a consequence they had no fear of death. Greek philosophers knew of it; we have Pythagoras telling his pupils that in his past lives he had been a warrior at the siege of Troy, and later was the philosopher Hermetimus of Galzomenae. It is not utterly unknown to Christian teaching, if we take the simple statement of Christ, when questioned whether John the Baptist was Elijah or Elias reborn: “If ye will receive it, this is Elias which was for to come,” and He follows up the statement with the significant words: “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” In later Jewish tradition, the idea is known, and the Talmud mentions several cases of reincarnation.

There are many to whom reincarnation appeals forcibly, and Schopenhauer does but little exaggerate when he says: “I have also remarked that it is at once obvious to everyone who hears of it for the first time”. Some believe in the idea immediately; it comes to them like a flash of light in thick darkness, and the problem of life is clearly seen with reincarnation as the solution. Others there are who grow into belief, as each doubt is solved and each question answered

There is one, and only one, objection which can logically be brought against reincarnation, if correctly understood as Theosophy teaches it. It lies in the question: “If, as you say, I have lived on earth in other bodies, why don't I remember the past?”

Now if reincarnation is a fact in Nature, there surely will be enough other facts which will point to its existence.

No one fact in Nature stands isolated, and it is possible in divers ways to discover that fact. Similarly it is with reincarnation; there are indeed enough facts of a psychological kind to prove to a thinker that reincarnation must be a fact of Nature and not a theory.

In answering the question why we do not remember our past lives, surely the first necessary point is to ask ourselves what we mean by "memory". If we have some clear ideas as to the mechanism of memory, perhaps we may be able to understand why we do not (or do) "remember" our past days or lives. Now, briefly speaking, what we usually mean by memory is a summing up. If I remember today the incidents of my cutting my finger yesterday, there will be two elements in my memory: first the series of events which went to produce the pain - the misadventure in handling the knife, the cut, the bleeding, the sensorial reaction in the brain, the gesture and so on; and second, the sense of pain. As days pass, the causes of the pain recede into the periphery of consciousness, while the effects, as pain, still hold the centre. Presently, we shall find that even the memory of the pain itself recedes into the background, leaving behind with us not a direct memory as an event, but an indirect memory as a tendency - a tendency to be careful in the handling of all cutting implements. This process is continually taking place; the cause is forgotten (though recoverable under hypnosis from the subconscious mind), while the effect, transmuted into tendency, remains.

It is here that we are specially aided by the brain. We are apt to think of the brain as a recorder of memory, without realizing that one of its most useful functions is to wipe out memories. The brain plays the dual function of remembering and forgetting. But for our ability to forget, life would be impossible. If each time we tried to move a limb, we were to remember all our infantile efforts at movement, with the hesitation and doubt and perhaps even pain involved, our consciousness would be so overwhelmed by memories that the necessary movement of the limb would certainly be delayed, or not made at all. Similarly, it is with every function now performed automatically, which was once consciously acquired; it is because we do forget the process of acquiring, that we can utilize the faculty resulting therefrom.

This is what is continuously taking place in consciousness with each one of us. There is a process of exchange, similar to copper coins of one denomination being changed to silver coins of smaller bulk representing them, then into gold coins of smaller weight still, and later bank notes representing their value, and last of all to a piece of paper, a cheque, whose intrinsic worth is nil. Yet we have but to write our signature on the cheque, to put into operation the whole medium of exchange. It is a similar process which takes place with all our memories of sensations, feelings and thoughts. These are severally grouped into categories, and transmuted into likes and dislikes, and finally into talents and faculties.

Now we know that as we manifest a like or dislike, or exhibit any capacity, we are remembering our past, though we cannot remember one by one in detail the memories which contributed to originate the emotions or faculty. As I write these words in English on this page, I must be remembering the first time I saw each word in a reading book, and looked up its meaning in a dictionary as I prepared my home lessons; but it is a kind of transmuted memory. Nevertheless, I do remember, and but for those memories being somewhere in my consciousness (whether in touch with some brain cells or not is not now the point) I should not be able to think of the right word to express my thought, nor shape it on this paper so that the printer will recognize the letters to set them up in print. Furthermore, we know as a fact that we do forget these causative memories one by one; it would be foolish if, as I write a particular word, I were to try to call up the memory of the first time I saw it. The brain is a recording instrument of such a kind that, though it registers, it does not obey consciousness when it desires to unroll the record, except in certain abnormal cases. The desire to remember is not necessarily followed by remembrance, and we have to take this fact as it is.

Here it is that Bergson has very luminously pointed out that "we think with only a small part of the past; but it is with our entire past, including the original bent of our soul, that we desire, will, and act." Clearly then it would be useless to try to remember our past lives by the mere exercise of the mind; though thought can remember something of the past, it is only a fraction of the whole. But on the other hand, let us but *feel* or *act*, and then at once our feeling or action is the resultant of all the forces, of the past which have converged on our individuality. If, therefore, we are to trace the memories of our past lives in our present normal consciousness, we must note

how we feel and act, expecting to recover little of such memories in a mere mental effort to remember.

Every feeling and act, then, can be slowly traced to its component parts of impressions from without and reactions from within. So much is this the case with each one of us, that we can construct for ourselves what has been another's past, as we watch that other feel and act, provided he does both in an *average* fashion. But if he manifests a mode that is not the average mode of thought or feeling, then he becomes incomprehensible to us and needs explanation. Since, then, the average feelings and actions can be readily explained as the result of average experiences, unusual feeling and actions must be explained as having an unusual causation. If the present writer were to deliver a lecture in English in India, where so many can speak English, each of his listeners would take for granted that he had been to school and college, without perhaps enquiring further when and where. But were he, instead of speaking English, to speak Italian, than at once each listener would be curious to know how and when that faculty of speaking Italian had been grown. Furthermore, if an Italian were present in the audience, then judging from the speaker's phrasing and intonation, he would know that the speaker must have lived in Italy, or must have spent a considerable time among Italians. Wherever there is any manifestation of feeling or action — as indeed, too, of some expressions of thought — which has something of the quality of the *expert*, then we must postulate for that faculty a slow growth through experiences, which are the result of experiments along that particular line.

Now each one of us has many qualities of an average kind, as also a few of an expert kind. The former we can account for by experiences common to all. Let us examine some of the latter, and see if we can account for them on any other hypothesis than that of reincarnation.

Now one of the principal things which characterizes men is their likes and dislikes. Sometimes these might be called rational, that is, they are such likes and dislikes as an average individual of a particular type might be said normally to possess at his stage in evolution. We can account for these normal likes and dislikes, because they are such as we ourselves manifest under similar conditions. But suppose we take the case of an extraordinary liking, such as is termed "love at first sight." Two people meet in the seeming fortuitous concourse of human events, sometimes, it may be, coming from the ends of the earth. They know nothing of each other, and yet ensues the curious phenomenon that as a matter of fact they do know a great deal of each other. Life would be a happy thing if we could go out with deep affection to all whom we meet; but we know we cannot, for it is not in our nature. Why then should it be in our nature to "fall in love" with a particular individual? Why should we be ready to sacrifice all for this person whom, in this life at least, we have met but a few times? How is it that we seem to know the inner workings of his heart and brain from the little which he reveals at our conventional intercourse at the beginning? "Falling in love" is indeed a mysterious psychological phenomenon, but the process is far better described as being dragged into love, since the individual is forced to obey and may not refrain.

Now there are two logical explanations possible: one is the ribald one of the scoffer, that it is some form of hysteria or incipient insanity, due it may be to "complexes"; the other is that, in this profound going forth of one individual as an expert in feeling towards another, we have not at first meeting but the last of many, many meetings which took place in past lives. Where or when were these meetings is of little consequence to the lovers; indeed Rudyard Kipling has suggested in his "Finest Story in the World" that it is only in order that we might not miss the delicious sensation of falling in love with our beloved, that the kindly Gods have made us drink of the river of forgetfulness before we returned to life on earth again. The principal thing to note, in this emotional mood of being in love, is that the friendship is not as one that begins, but as one that is *continued*; and in that psychological attitude of the two lovers we have the remembrance of past lives, when they met and loved and sacrificed for each other.

Not dissimilar to this unusual liking which constitutes falling in love, is the unusual disliking which is not so very rare in human experience. Certain normal dislikes we can readily account for; but take the case of two individuals meeting for the *first* time, it may be knowing nothing even by hearsay of each other, and then we have sometimes the striking phenomenon of one of the two *drawing back* from the other, not outwardly by gesture, but inwardly by a feeling or an intuition. In all such cases of drawing back, the curious thing is that there

is no personal feeling; it is not a violent feeling of “I do not like you”, but far more an impersonal state of mind where almost no feeling manifests, and which may be paraphrased into “It is wise to have little to do with you.” Sometimes we follow this intuition, but usually we brush it aside as unjust, and then turn to understanding our acquaintance with the mind. Not infrequently, it then follows that we begin to like him, perhaps even love him. We forget our “first impression”, or we put it aside as mere irrational impulse. Now there are many such revulsions that are purely irrational impulses, but there is a residue of cases where after-events show that the dislike was not an impulse but an intuition. For it may happen, after years have passed of intercourse with our friend, that suddenly without any warning he, as it were, stabs us in the back and deals us a mortal blow; and then in our grief and humiliation we remember that first impression of ours, and wish that we had followed it.

Whence came this first impression? Reincarnation offers a solution, which is that the injured had suffered in past lives at the hands of his injurer, and that it is the memory of that suffering which flashes into the mind as an intuition.

More striking still are those cases where there exist at the same time both like and dislike, both love and resentment. I well remember a lady describing her attitude to a friend to whom she was profoundly attached in the following words : “I love him, but I despise him!” I wonder how many wives say this daily of their husbands, or husbands of their wives. Why should there be this incomprehensible jumble of contradictory feelings?

The clue is strikingly given by W.E. Henley in his well-known poem:

Or ever the knightly years were gone  
With the old world to the grave,  
I was a king in Babylon,  
And you were a Christian slave.

The poet goes on to tell us how the king “saw and took,” and toyed with the maid and, as is a man’s way, finally cast her aside. Yet she loved him well, but, heart-broken at his treatment, committed suicide. Now it is obvious that the girl dies full of both love and resentment, and since what we sow we reap, each of the two in the rebirth reaps in emotional attitude the result of past causes. For, this time the man loves again, and desires to possess her; she too loves him in return, and yet does not permit him to have his heart’s desire. So the lover cries out :

The pride I trampled on is now my scathe,  
For it tramples me again;  
The old resentment last like death,  
For you love, and yet you refrain;  
I break my heart on your hard unfaith,  
And I break my heart in vain.

Henley sees with his poetic vision that the present situation between the two cannot remain the same throughout eternity; there must be a true loving and understanding of each other at the long last; and so the poem ends with the man’s pride in his past, and resignation in the present, with a hint of some good from a past which need not be “undone” as of no worth at all.

Yet not for an hour do I wish undone  
The deed beyond the grave  
When I was a king in Babylon  
And you were a virgin slave.

There can only be one ending, that of the fairy tale, since it needs must be a universe where there is but One who loves, that,

Journey’s end in lover’s meeting.

Every wise man's son doth know.

We have been so far been considering the manifestations of an individual's emotional nature, and it is obvious that, because of his own experiences, he will be able to understand the emotions of others, so long as such emotions are in the main like what he has known. But what of those individuals who thoroughly understand such experiences as have *not* come to them? Shakespeare understands the working of a woman's heart and mind, and, too, all the intricate mental and emotional processes of the traitor ; Dickens knows how the murderer feels after committing the crime.

Furthermore, some gifted men and women, when experiencing emotions, generalize from them to what is experienced by all, while one not so gifted, though "once bitten" is not "twice shy", nor is made appreciably wiser by the same experience coming to him over and over again. The gifted few, on the other hand, will fathom the universal quality in a single experience, and they will anticipate from it many experiences of like nature; for themselves, and sometimes for others too, they will state their experiences, reducing them as it were to algebraical formulae, and each formula including one general statement all particular cases. Their thoughts and feelings are like aphorisms, with the transmutation of many experiences into one Experience.

Now, to generalize from our individual emotions is as rare a gift as to originate a philosophy from the particular thoughts which we gain about things. Yet it is this generalization from particular emotions that is characteristic of a poet, and the more universal are his generalizations, the greater is he as a poet. Why then should an individual here and there have this wonderful ability of seeing particular men as representatives of types, and particular emotions as expression of universal emotions? We say that such a man is a genius, but the word genius merely describes but does not explain. There are geniuses in every department of life - religion, poetry, art, music, statesmanship, the drama, in war and in commerce, and in many other phases of life. These geniuses are characterized by many abnormal qualities; they are always men of the future and not of their day and each genius is a lawgiver to future generations in his own department of activity; and above all, they live emotionally and mentally in wide generalizations. Whence comes this wonderful ability?

One explanation offered is Heredity. But how far does heredity really explain genius? According to the ordinarily accepted theory of heredity, each generation adds a little to a quality brought from the generation before, and then transmits it to the next; this in turn adds a little, and passes on the total of what it has received, plus its own contribution; and so on generation after generation, till we arrive at a particular generation, and to one individual of it, in whom the special quality in some mysterious way gets concentrated, and that individual is thereby a genius. According to this popular theory, some remote ancestor of Shakespeare had a fraction of Shakespeare's genius, which he transmitted through heredity to his offspring; this offspring then, keeping intact what was given him by his parent, added to the stock from his own experiences, and then passed on both to his child; and so on in successive generations, each generation treasuring what was given to it from all previous generations, and adding something of its own before transmitting it to the next. Shakespeare then is as the torrent from a reservoir which has slowly been dammed up, but bursts its sides when the pressure has passed beyond a certain point.

Such a conception of heredity is based upon the assumption that what an individual acquires of faculty, as a result of adaptability to his environment, is passed on to his offspring. Such indeed is the conclusion that the Darwinian school of biologists came to, from their analysis of what happens in Nature. But biological research during the last twenty-five years, has been largely directed to testing the validity of the theory of the transmission of acquired characteristics. Not only has not one indisputable instance been found, but all experiments in breeding and crossing, on the other hand, accumulate proofs to the contrary.

The new school of biologists known as the Mendelians have therefore come to theories about heredity which are not only novel but startling. According to them, structural characteristics, upon which must depend the mental and moral capacities of an individual, exist, in *every* ancestor in their fulness; and further, they must all have been in the first speck of living matter. Nothing has been *added* by evolution to this original stock of

capacities in protoplasm. Every genius whom the world has known or will know existed potentially in it, though he had to wait millions of years before there arose the appropriate arrangement of the “genetic factors” to enable him to appear as a genius on the evolutionary stage. Nature has not evolved the complex brain structure of Shakespeare out of the rudimentary brains of the mammals; that complexity existed “in a pin-head of protoplasm”. Nature has not evolved the genius; she has merely *released* him from the fetters which bound him in the primordial protoplasm, by eliminating, generation after generation, such genetic factors as inhibited his manifestation. Bateson sums up these modern theories when he says:

“I have confidence that the artistic gifts of mankind will prove to be due not to something added to the makeup of an ordinary man, but to the absence of factors which in the normal person inhibit the development of these gifts. They are almost beyond doubt to be looked upon as – “*releases*” – of powers normally suppressed. The instrument is there, but it is stopped down.” (Presidential Address, British Association, 1914).

Time alone will show how far the Mendelian conception will need to be modified by later discoveries; but it is fairly certain already that the older Darwinian conception of heredity is untenable, and that if a man is a genius he owes very little to the intellectual and emotional achievements of his ancestors. If, however, we admit with the Mendelians that a genius is “released” merely by the removal of the inhibiting factors, and is not the result of slow accumulations, we still leave the original mystery unsolved, and that is to explain the synthetic ability of the genius. We are therefore no nearer really explaining the nature of genius along Mendelian lines than along the Darwinian; the theories of science merely tell us under what conditions genius will or will not manifest, but nothing more.

The only rational theory of genius, which accepts scientific facts as to heredity and also explains what genius is, comes from the conception of reincarnation. If we hold that an individual is a soul, that is an imperishable and evolving Ego, and manifests through a body appropriate to his stage of growth and to a work which he is to do in that body, then we see that his emotional and mental attributes are the results of experiences which he has gained in past lives. But since he can express them only through a suitable body and brain, these must be of such a kind as Nature has by heredity selected for such use. The manifestation of any capacity, then, depends on two indispensable factors; first, an Ego or consciousness who has developed the capacity by repeated experiments in past lives; and second, a suitable instrument, a physical body of such a nature structurally as makes possible the expression of that capacity. When therefore we consider the quality of genius, if on the one hand the genius has not a body fashioned out of such genetic factors as do not inhibit his genius, he is “stopped down”, to use Bateson’s simile, and his genius is unreleased. But on the other hand, if Nature were to produce a thousand bodies that were not “stopped down”, we should not *ipso facto* have a thousand geniuses. Two lines of evolution must therefore converge, before there can manifest any quality that is not purely functional. The first is that of the evolution of an indestructible Consciousness, which continually experiments with life and slowly becomes expert thereby; and the second is the evolution of the physical structure, which is selected by heredity to respond to a given stimulus from within.

If with this is clue as to what is happening in Nature, we examine the various geniuses whom the world has produced, we shall see that they are remembering their past lives as they exhibit their genius. Take for instance, such a genius as the young violinist, Mischa Elman, who a few years ago began his musical career; he was then but a lad, and yet even at that age he manifested marvellous technical ability. Now we may perhaps legitimately account for this technical ability along Mendelian lines, as being due to a rare confluence of genetic factors; but by no theory of physical heredity can we explain what surprised the most exacting of musical critics - Mischa Elman’s *interpretation* of music. For it is just in this interpretation that a music lover can see the soul of the performer, whether that soul is a big one or a little, whether the performer has known of life superficially or has touched life’s core. Now Mischa Elman’s interpretation, absolutely spontaneous as it was, and un-imitated from a teacher, was that of a man and not that of a boy. Little wonder that many a critic was puzzled, or that the musical critic of the London *Daily Telegraph* should write as follows:

“Rain beat noisily upon the roof and thunder roared and rattled, but Mischa Elman went calmly on with his prescribed Paganini and Bach and Wieniawski. Calmly is the word, be it noted, not stolidly. We have had stolid wonder-children on our musical platforms; Mischa is not one of them. Upon his face, as he plies the bow, rests

a great peace, and only now and then, with a more decided expression, does he lower his cheek upon the instrument, as though he would receive from it the impulse of its vibrations and to it communicate his own soul-beats. The marvel of this boy does not lie in his execution of difficult passages. If it did, perhaps we should award it but perfunctory notice, seeing that among the children of our generation there are so many who play with difficult passages much as their predecessors did with marbles. We have gone beyond mere dexterity with bowing and fingering, and can say, in the spirit of one of old time, that from the babe and suckling comes now the perfection of such praise as lies within the compass of a violin.”

Asked to account for this — to explain why Mischa Elman laying cheek to wood, reveals the insight and feeling of a man who has risen to the heights and plumbed the depths of human life — we simply acknowledge that the matter is beyond us. We can do no more than speculate, and, perhaps, hope for a day in which the all-embracing science of an age more advanced than our own shall discover the particular brain formation, or adjustment, to which infants owe the powers that men and women vainly seek. Those powers may be the Wordsworthian “clouds of glory”, brought from another world. If so, what a brilliant birth must that of Mischa Elman have been! The boy was heard in a work by Paganini and another Wieniawski, both good things of their meretricious kind, and both irradiated, as we could not but fancy, by the unconscious genius which shines alike on the evil and the good, making the best of both. Upon the mere execution of these works we do not dwell, preferring the charm of the moments in which the music lent itself to the mysterious emotion of the youthful player, and showed, not the painted visage of a mountebank, but the face of an angel!

If along the lines of reincarnation we suppose that Mischa Elman *is* a soul who in his past lives has in truth “risen to the heights and plumbed the depths of human life”, then we have a reasonable explanation for his genius. There is reflected in each interpretation the summing up of his past experiences, and he can through his music tell us of a man’s sorrow or a man’s joy, because as a man in past lives he has experienced both, and retains their memory in emotional and intellectual generalizations. This explanation further joins hands with science, because the reincarnation theory of genius implies the need by the musical soul of a body with a musical heredity, which has been “selected” by evolution and built up by appropriate genetic factors.

Reincarnation alone explains another genius who must remain a puzzle according to all other theories. Keats is known in English poetry as the most “Greek” of all England's poets; he possessed by nature that unique feeling for life which was the treasure of the Greek temperament. If he had been a Greek scholar and steeped in the traditions of Greek culture, we might account for this *anima naturaliter Graeca* of the Greek-less Keats.” But when we consider that Keats had “little Latin and less Greek,” and began life as a surgeon’s apprentice and a medical student, we may well wonder why he sings not as a Christian poet should, but as some Greek shepherd born on the slopes of Mount Etna. The wonder, however, at once ceases if we presume that Keats is the reincarnation of a Greek poet, and that he is remembering his past lives as he reverts to Greek ways of thought and feeling.

With reincarnation as a clue, it is interesting to see how a little analysis enables us to say where in the past an individual must have lived. In the culture of Europe and America, there are three main types of “reversion,” to Rome, to Greece, and to India. Anyone who has studied Roman institutions and the Roman conception of life finds little difficulty in noting how the English temperament is largely that of ancient Rome in a modern garb; the values, for instance in writing history, of such historians as Gibbon, Macaulay, Hume, are practically the same as those of Roman historians, Sallust, Tacitus, Livy, and the rest; whereas if we take the French historians we shall find them scarcely at all Roman in temperament, and far more akin to Greek. The equation Tennyson = Virgil is certainly not far-fetched to those who know the quality of both poets.

We find the reversion to Greece very clearly in such writers as Goethe, Schiller and Lessing. Why should these writers have proclaimed to Germany with unbounded enthusiasm the message of “back to Greece”, except that they knew from their own experience in past lives what Greek culture had still for men? For what is enthusiasm but the springing forward of the soul to experience a freshness and a delight in life which it has known elsewhere, and whose call it recognizes again? These men of enthusiasm, these pioneers of the future, are otherwise than sports or freaks of Nature; let us but think of them as reincarnated souls remembering in their enthusiasm their past lives, and they become not sports but the first-fruits of a glorious humanity that is to be.

Who that has studied Platonism has not been reminded of Platonic conceptions when reading Emerson? Though Emerson has not the originality nor the daring of Plato, yet he is truly "Greek"; it does not require such a great flight of the imagination to see him as some Alexandrian follower of Plato. How natural then too, that Emerson, after entering the Christian ministry to give his message, should find himself unable to do it as a *Christian* minister, and should strike out a path for himself as an essayist to speak of the World-Soul! And who that has studied Indian philosophies does not recognize old Vedantin philosophers in Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and a Buddhist philosopher in Schopenhauer, all reverting to their philosophic interests of past lives, and uttering their ancient convictions more brilliantly than before?

Wherever the deeper layers of a man's being are offered to the world in some creation through philosophy, literature, art or science, there may we note tendencies started in past lives. For the pageant of the man's life is not planned and achieved in the few brief years which begin with his birth, and he that knows of reincarnation may note readily enough where the parts of the pageant were composed.

Reincarnation, as it affects large groups of individuals, is a fascinating study to one with an historical bent of mind. I have mentioned that the English race as a whole is largely a reincarnation of the ancient Roman; but here and there we find a sprinkling of Greeks in men like Byron, Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, and in those Englishmen and women who have the Greek feel for life, and hemmed in by English tradition are as strangers in a strange land. Let such a return Greek, wherever he be born this life, but go to South Italy or to Greece, and he will begin to remember his past life in the instinctive familiarity which he will feel with the hidden spirit of tree and lake and hill. As none but a Greek can, he will find a joy in the sunshine, in the lemon groves and vineyards and waterfalls, which in a Greek land give the message of Nature as in no other land.

Others there are who, born last life in the Middle Ages somewhere in Europe, perhaps in Italy or Spain or Germany, where they re-visit the land of their former birth, will have a strange familiarity with the things that pass before them. In striking ways, they read into the life of the people, and understand the why of things. To some, this mysterious sense of recollection may be strongest in Egypt, or India, or Japan; but wherever we have the intuitive understanding of foreign people, we have one mode of remembering our past lives.

It is in the characteristic intellectual attitude of the French that we see the reincarnation of much that was developed in later Greece. The French intellectual clarity and dispassionate keenness to see things "as they are" (whether they bring material benefits or not) are typically Greek. And perhaps, could we know more fully of the life of the Phoenicians, we should see them reborn in the Germans of today. Then the commercial rivalry between England and Germany for the capture of the markets of the East would be but the rebirth of the ancient rivalry between Rome and Carthage for the markets of the Mediterranean.

An eruption of Greek egos is fairly evident in the United States of America. On the Pacific Coast especially, there are many men and women of the simple Greek temperament of the pre-Periclean age, and yet their ancestors were not infrequently New England Puritans. It is in America too, that we have the Sophists of Greece in full strength in the "New Thought" writers who spring up in that land month after month. In them we have the same characteristics as had the Sophists of Greece whom Plato denounced — much sound sense and many a useful wrinkle, an independence of landmarks and traditions, an unbounded confidence in their own panacea, and a giving of their message of the Spirit "for a consideration." The lack of distinction in their minds, when in Greece, between Sophism and Wisdom returns in the twentieth century as a confusion between the New Thought ideas of the Divine Life and the real life of the Spirit. Let us hope that as the Sophists helped to bring in the Golden Age of Greece, so the "New Thought-ers" are the forerunners of that True Thought that is to dawn, which is neither old nor new.

Here and there in India we find one who is distinctly not Hindu. For the most part, the modern Hindus seem scarce to have been in other lands in their late incarnations; but now and then a man or woman is met with for whom the sacrosanct institutions of orthodoxy have no meaning, and who takes up western ideas of progress with avidity. Some of these are "England-returned," in this present incarnation, and we can thus account for their



mentality. But when we find a man who has never left India, who was reared in strict orthodoxy, and yet fights with enthusiasm for foreign ways of thought, surely we have here a "Europe-returned" ego, from Greece or Rome or from some other of the many lands of the West.

We must not forget to draw attention to the egos from Greece who have returned to Europe to usher in the age of art. To one familiar with Greek sculpture and architecture, it is not difficult to see the Greek artists reborn in the Italian masters of painting and architecture. The cult is no longer that of Pallas Athene and the Gods; there is now the Virgin Mary and the saints to give them their heavenly crowns. Whence did the Italian masters gain their surety of touch, if not from a past birth in Greece? It is striking, too, how the Romans, who excelled in portraiture, should be reborn in the English school of portrait painters, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Lawrence and the rest.

Nor must we forget the band of Greeks who like an inundation swept over the Elizabethan stage, Marlowe, Beaumont, Fletcher, Peele, Johnson, and the rest - are they not pagans thinly veiled in English garb? They felt life in un-English modes; they felt first and then thought out the feeling. The Greek, is ever the Greek, whatsoever the language which is given him to speak, and his touch in literature and art is not easily veiled.

Strong impressions made on the consciousness in a past life often appear in the present in some curious mood or feeling. Sometimes, fears of creeping things, fires, cutting implements, etc., are thus to be accounted for, though sometimes these "phobias" may only be sub-conscious reminders of this life. In the cases where we have no sub-consciousness of the present body appearing, there is sure to have been some shock, resulting it may be, in a violent death, in a past life. The after effects appear now in some uncontrollable fear, or in discomfort in the presence of the object which caused the shock. More strange is the attitude of one individual towards another which is brought over from a past life. Sometimes one sees the strange sight of a girl of ten or twelve taking care of her mother in a maternal way, as though the positions were reversed, and almost as if she had the onerous duty of bringing up her mother in the way she should go. Of a deeper psychological nature is it when, as sometimes happens, a wife mated to a husband who causes her suffering, finds charity towards him possible only when she looks on him not as her husband but as her son. Here we have a reminiscence of a life when he was indeed her child, and his better nature came out towards her in the relation which he bore to her then.

A rather humorous instance of a past recollection is found when there has been between the last life and this a change of sex of the body. In the West especially, where there is a more marked differentiation temperamentally between the sexes than in the East, not infrequently the girl who dislikes playing with dolls, who delights in boy's games, and is a pronounced tomboy, is really an ego who has just taken up a body of the sex opposite to that with which he has been familiar for many lives. Many a girl has resented her skirts, and it takes such a girl several years before she finally resigns herself to them. Some women there are, on whose face and mode of carriage the last male incarnation seems still fairly visibly portrayed. A similar thing is to be seen in some men, who bring into this life traces of their habits of thought and feeling when last they had women's bodies.

A consideration of the many psychological puzzles I have enumerated will show us that, as a matter of fact, people do remember something of their past lives. Truly the memory is indirect, only as a habit or a mood, but it is nevertheless memory of the past. Now most people who are willing to accept reincarnation as a fact in life naturally ask the question: "But why don't we remember *fully*?" To this there are two answers, the first of which is: "It is best for us not to remember directly or fully, till we are ready for the memories."

We are not ready for remembrance so long as we are influenced by the memories of the past. Where for instance, the memory is of a painful event, up to a certain point the past not only influences our present but also our future, and both in a harmful way; and therefore, so long as we have not gone beyond the sphere of influence of the past, our characters are weakened and not strengthened by remembrance. Let us take an extreme case, but one typical nevertheless. Suppose that in the last life a man has committed suicide as the easiest way out of his difficulties. As he dies, there will be in his mind much mental suffering, and especially he

will lack confidence in his ability to weather the storm. The suicide does not put an end to his suffering, for after death it will continue for some time more acutely still, till it slowly exhausts itself. There will be a purification through his great suffering, and when it ends there will be in him a keener vision and a fuller response to the promptings of his higher nature. When, then, he is reborn, he will be born with a stronger conscience, as the result of his sufferings. But he will still retain the lack of confidence in his ability, because nothing has happened after his death to alter that. Confidence can be gained only by mastering circumstance, and it is for that very purpose that he has returned. Now sooner or later, he will be confronted with a situation similar to that before he failed in the last life. As difficulties crowd around him in the new life, once more there will be the old struggle. The fact of committing suicide will now come as a tendency to suicide once again, as a resignation to suicide as the easiest way. But on the other hand, the memory of the suffering after the last suicide will also return in a stronger urge of conscience that this time the solution must not be through suicide. In this condition of mental strain, when the man is being pulled on one side by his past and on the other by his future, if he were to know, with vivid memory, how he had committed suicide in the past in a like situation, the probabilities are that he would be influenced by his past action, and that his lack of confidence would be intensified, with suicide as a result once again. Forgetfulness of the nerve-racking details of the past enables him to fight now more manfully. We little realize how we are being domineered over by our past. It is indeed a blessing for most of us that the kindly Gods draw a veil over a record which, at our present stage of evolution, cannot be anything but deplorable in many ways.

Only so long as we identify ourselves with our past, that past is hidden from us, except in indirect modes as faculties and dispositions. But the direct memory will come, if we learn to dissociate our present selves from our past selves. We are ever the Future, not the past: and when we can look at our past — of this life first, and after, of that of other lives — without heat, impersonally, in perspective as it were, like a judge who has no sense of identity with the facts before him for judgment, then we shall begin to remember, directly, the past in detail— but till then, as Tennyson truly says :

We ranging down this lower track  
The path we came by, thorn and flower,  
Is shadow'd by the growing hour.  
Lest life should fail in looking back.

The second reason for our not directly remembering our past lives is this : – the “ I “ who asks the question, “Why don't I remember?” has *not* lived in the past. It is the Soul who has lived, not this “ I “ with all its limitations. But is not this “ I “ that Soul? With most people not at all, and this fact will be evident if we think over the matter.

The average man or woman is scarcely so much a Soul as a bundle of attributes of sex, creed, and nationality. But the Soul is immortal, that is, it has no sense of diminution or death; it has no idea of time, which deludes it to think that it is young, wastes away, and grows old; it is neither man nor woman, because it is developing in itself the best qualities of both sexes; it is neither Hindu, nor Buddhist, nor Christian, nor Muslim, because it lives in One Divine Life and assimilates that Life according to its temperament; it is not Indian, nor English, nor American, for it belongs to no country, even though its outermost sheath, the physical body, belongs to a particular race; it has no caste nor class, for it knows that all partake of One Life, and that before God there is neither Brahmin nor Shudra, Jew nor Gentile, aristocrat nor plebeian.

It is this Soul which puts out a part of itself, a Personality, for the period of a life, “as a mere subject for grave experiment and experience.” Through a *persona*, a “mask” of a babe, child, youth or maid, man or woman, bachelor, spinster or householder, old man or old woman, it looks out into life, and, as it observes, eliminates the distorting bias which its outer sheath gives. Its personalities in the past have been Lemurian or Atlantean, Hindu or Roman or Greek, and it selects the best out of them all and discards the rest. All literatures, sciences, arts, religions and civilizations are its school and playground, its workshop and study. Its patriotism is for an indivisible Humanity, and its creed is to co-operate with “God's plan, which is Evolution.”

It is this Soul who has had past lives. How much of this Soul are we, the men and women who ask the question, “Why don't we remember our past lives?” The questioner is but the personality. The body of that personality has

a brain on whose cells the memories of a past life have not been impressed ; those memories are in the Divine Man who is of no time, of no creed, and of no land. To remember the Soul's past lives, the brain of the personality must be made a mirror onto which can be reflected the memories of the Soul. But before those memories can come into the brain, one by one the various biases must be removed — of mortality, of time, of sex, of color, of caste.

So long as we are wrapped up in petty thoughts of an exclusive nationalism, and in narrow beliefs of creeds, so long do we retain the barriers which exist between our higher selves and our lower. An intellectual breadth and a larger sympathy, "without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or color," must first be achieved, before there breaks, as through clouds, flashes of our true consciousness as Souls. There is no swifter way to discover what we are as Immortals out of time than by discovering what is our Work in time.

Let but a man or woman find that Work for whose sake sacrifice and immolation are serenest contentment, then slowly the larger consciousness of the Soul descends into the brain of the personality. With that descent begins the direct memory of past lives. As more and more the personality presses forward, desiring no light but what is sufficient for the next step on his path to his goal of work, slowly one bias after another is burnt away in the fire of purification. Like as the sun dissipates more clouds the higher it rises, so it is for the life of the personality; it knows then, with such conviction as the sun has about its own nature when it shines, that "the soul of man is immortal, and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendor have no limit."

Then come back the memories of past lives. How they come those who live the life know. There are many kinds of knowledge useful for man, but none greater than the knowledge "that evolution is a fact, and that the method of evolution is the constant dipping down into matter under the law of adjustment." This knowledge is for all who seek, if they will but seek rightly; and the right way is to be a Brother to all men, "without distinction of race creed, sex, caste or color."

---

## THE VISION OF THE SPIRIT

The history of humanity is the history of ideas, and the stages through which men have risen from savage to civilized are distinguishable one from the other by the influence of certain great doctrines. Among these teachings which have moulded civilizations, the idea of Evolution stands out as heralding a new era in the world of thought. Considered at first as of mere academic interest, soon it was recognized as of practical value, today it is known as necessary in the understanding of every problem in every department of being.

Nevertheless it is a fact that the doctrine of evolution is a theory after all. No one has lived long enough to see sufficient links in the evolutionary chain to attest that the changes postulated as having taken place did so actually occur, and that the chain is not a fancy but a fact. Yet evolution is accepted by all as a dynamic idea, for like a magic wand it performs wonders in the world of thought. It marshals the heterogeneous organisms of nature into orderly groups, and from inanimate atom to protoplasm, from unicellular organism to multi-cellular, from invertebrate to vertebrate, from ape to man, one ascending scale of life is seen; —

And striving to be man, the worm  
Mounts through all the spires of form

Yet none can say that evolution is an agreeable fact to contemplate, for there is a ruthlessness in Nature's methods which is appalling. Utterly cruel and wasteful she seems, creating and perfecting her creatures only to prey on each other, generating more than can live in the fierce struggle for existence. "Red in tooth and claw with ravin", she builds and un-builds and builds again, one-pointed only in this, that a type shall survive, reckless of the pleasure or pain to a single life. Men themselves, proud though they be in a fancied freedom of thought and action, are nothing but pawns in a game she plays. The more fully evolution is understood from such facts as scientists have so far gathered, the more justifiably can men say, with Omar, of their birth, life and death:

Into this Universe, and *Why* not knowing,  
Nor *Whence*, like Water - willy-nilly flowing,  
And out of it, like Wind along the Waste  
I know not *Whither*, willy-nilly blowing.

Of course this attitude does not represent that of the majority of men. Millions of men believe in a Creator, and that "God's in his heaven, All's right with the world!" But it is no exaggeration to say that their optimism continually receives rude shocks. No man or woman of sensibility can look about him and not agree with Tennyson's comparison of life to a play :—

Act first, this Earth, a stage to gloom'd with woe  
You all but sicken at the shifting scenes  
And yet be patient. Our Playwright may show  
In some fifth Act what this wild drama means.

Both the idea of Evolution and the idea of Divine Guidance, as each is at present conceived, fail to satisfy fully the needs of men for an inspiring view of life. The former indeed shows a splendid pageant of Nature, but it has no message to individual man, except to make the most of his brief day of life, and stoically resign himself to extinction when Nature shall have no further use for him. The latter speaks to men's hearts in alluring accents of a power that maketh for righteousness, but it sees God as existing only in the gaps of that pitiless cosmic order which science reveals. It is obvious, therefore, that any philosophy which postulates an inseparable relation, between God and evolution, between Nature and man, is worthy of examination, and this is the view of life which Theosophy propounds, in the light of one great idea.

This idea is that of the Evolution of Life. Just as modern science tells us of a ceaseless change of forms from protoplasm to man, so Theosophy asserts that there is, *pari passu*, a changing, growing life. This life does not originate in the forms, though we see it associated with them; and of it Theosophy says that first, it is indestructible, and second, that it evolves.

It is indestructible, in the sense that when an organism is destroyed, nevertheless all is not destroyed, for there remains a life which is still conscious. If a rose fades and its petals crumble and fall to dust, the *life* of that rose has not therefore ceased to be; that life persists in Nature, retaining in itself all the memories of all the experiences which it gained garbed as a rose. Then in due course of events, following laws which are comprehensible, that life animates another rose of another spring, bringing to its second embodiment the memories of its first. Whenever, therefore, there seems the death of a living thing, crystal or plant, animal or man, there always persists an indestructible life and consciousness, even though to all appearance the object is lifeless, and processes of decay have begun.

Further, this life is evolving, in exactly the same way that the scientist says that an organism evolves. The life is at first amorphous, and responds but little to the stimuli from without; it retains only feeble memories of its experiences which it gains through its successive embodiments. But it passes from stage to stage, through more and more complex organisms, till slowly it becomes more definite, more diverse in its functions. As the outer form evolves from protoplasm to man, so evolves too the life ensouling it. All Nature, visible and invisible, is the field of an evolution of life through successive series of evolving forms. The broad stages of this evolving life are from mineral to vegetable, from vegetable to animal, and from animal to man.

The doctrine of a life that evolves through evolving forms answers some of those questions which puzzle the biologist today. Many a fact hitherto considered outside the domain of science is seen as illustrative of new laws, and existing gaps are bridged over to make the doctrine of evolution more logical than ever. It further shows Nature as not wasteful, and only seemingly cruel, for nothing is lost, since every experience in every form which was destroyed, in the process of natural selection, is treasured by the life today. The past lives in the present, to attest that Nature's purpose is not death crushing life, but life ever triumphant over death to make out of stocks and stones immortal men.

In each human being is seen this same principle of an imperishable evolving life. For man is an individual life and consciousness, an immortal soul capable of living apart from the body which we usually call "the man." In each soul, the process of evolution is at work. At his entrance on existence as a soul, he is feeble and chaotic in his consciousness, vague and indefinite in his understanding of the meaning of life, and capable only of a narrow range of thought and feeling. But he too evolves, from indefinite to definite, from simple to complex, from chaos to order.

Man's evolution is by successive manifestations in bodies of flesh, passing at the death of one body to begin life once more in another new one. In this passage, he carries with him the memory of all experiences which he has gained in the past behind him. This aspect of the evolution of life as it affects men is called Reincarnation.

As all processes of Nature are intelligible on the hypothesis of an evolution of organisms, so all that happens to men becomes comprehensible in the light of reincarnation. As evolution links all forms by species and genus, family and order, class and group, sub-kingdom and kingdom, into one unbreakable chain, so reincarnation binds all human experiences into one consistent philosophy of life. How reincarnation explains the mysteries around us and inspires us, we shall now see.

Imagine with me that existence is symbolized by a mountain, and that millions are climbing to its summit. Let many days be needed before a traveler comes to his goal. Then, as he climbs day after day, the perspective of things below him and above him will change; new sights will greet his eyes, new airs will breathe around him; his eyes will adjust themselves to new horizons, and step by step objects will change shape and proportion. At last, on reaching the summit, a vast panorama will extend before him, and he will see clearly every part of the road which he climbed, and why it dipped into this valley and circled that crag. Let this mountain typify existence, and let the climbers up its sides be men and women who are immortal souls.

Let us now think for a moment of travelers at the mountain's base, who are to climb to its summit. We know how limited must be their horizon, and how little they can see of the long path before them. Let such travelers typify the most backward of our humanity, the most savage and least intelligent men and women we can find today. According to reincarnation, these are child-souls, just entering into existence, in order to undergo evolution and to be made into perfect souls. To understand the process of evolution let us watch one of them stage by stage as he climbs the mountain.

The first thing which we shall note is that this child-soul manifests a duality. For he is soul and body; as a soul he is from God, but as a body he is from the brute.

The Lord let the house of a brute to the soul of man  
And man said, "Am I your debtor?"  
And the Lord – "Not yet: but make it as clean as you can,  
And then I will let you a better."

The body which he occupies has ingrained in it a strong instinct of self-preservation stamped upon it by the fierce struggle for existence of its animal progenitors; he himself, as a soul coming from God, has intuitions as to right and wrong, but as yet hardly any will. The body demands for its preservation that he be self-assertive and selfish; lacking the will to direct his evolution, he acts as the body impels.

## **THE VISION OF THE SEPARATED SELF**

Hence at this earliest stage of the soul, his vision of life as he climbs is that of the separated self. "Mine, not yours" is his principle of action; greed rules him, and a thirst for sensation drives him on, and he little heeds that he is unjust and cruel to others as he lives through his nights and days of selfishness and self-assertion. He seems strong-willed, for he is able to crush the weaker before him. But in reality he has no will at all, for he is but the plaything of an animal heredity which he cannot control. He has no more freedom of will than the water-wheel which turns at the bidding of the descending stream. He is but the tool of a "will to live" which accomplishes a purpose not his own.

Millions of men and women around us are at this first stage. Their craftiness, hardly deserving the name of intellect, is that of Falstaff for whom “the world is mine oyster which I with sword will open.” In their least animal phases, comfort is their aim in life: “They dressed, digested, talked, articulated words; other vitality showed they almost none.” The universe around them is meaningless, and they are scarce capable of wonder: “Let but a Rising of the Sun, let but a creation of the world happen *twice*, and it ceases to be marvellous, to be noteworthy or noticeable”. The centre of the circle of the cosmos is in themselves, and they neither know nor care if another truer centre is possible.

Yet when we recognize that each of these souls is immortal, and that his future is “the future of a thing whose growth and splendour have no limit,” we begin to understand why, at this early stage, selfishness plays such a prominent part in his life. For in stages to come, he must be capable of standing alone firm on the basis of a coherent individuality; now is the time for him to develop initiative and strength. He is quick to retaliate, but the germs of swift decision are grown thereby; he is domineering and cruel, but the seeds of intelligent enterprise result from the animal cunning which he displays. Every evil which he does must some time be paid back in laborious service to his victims; yet on the whole the evil which he does at this stage is less in quantity and in force, for all its seeming, than that done in later stages, where intelligence is keener and emotion more powerful. At a certain period in human evolution, selfishness has its place in the economy of things, for selfishness too is a force used to build the battlements of heaven.

These souls, whose youth alone is the cause of their selfishness, are in their essence divine. There is in them no evil of a positive kind; their vices are but the result of the absence of virtues, and their evil “is null, is naught, is silence implying sound”. Each is a “good man” who, deep down within him, has a knowledge of “the one true way” though in his attempts to tread it he seems to retrograde rather than to evolve. Like plants in a garden, they are all tended by Him from whom they come; He knows the perfect souls that He will make out of them by change and growth as the ages pass by.

Though still confused his service is unto Me,  
I soon shall lead him to a clearer morning.  
Sees not the gardener, even while he buds his tree,  
Both flower and fruit the future years adorning?

Life after life, these souls come to birth, now as men and now as women; they live a life of selfishness, and they die, and hardly any change will be noticeable in the character; but slowly there steals into their lives a dissatisfaction. The mind is too dull to grasp the relation of the individual to the whole, and the imagination is too feeble to realize that “man doth not live by bread alone”. Hence it is that “the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to” are duly marshaled and employed to ruffle their self-centered contentment. Old age and death cast over them shadows which have no power to sadden a philosophic mind; disease and accident lie in wait for them to weight down their spirits and make them rebel against a fate they do not understand. Till their hearts shall enshrine a divine purpose, a Hound of Heaven pursues them, and “naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me.”

Thus are they made ready to pass on to the next stage; the foundations of abilities have been laid, and the individual is firm on a basis built through selfishness. Now has come the time to begin the laborious work of “casting out of the self” and so there opens before the soul’s gaze the vision of the next stage. According to the type of soul, this vision is either the Vision of the Mind or the Vision of the Emotions.

There are in life two main types of souls, the one in whom intelligence controls emotion, and the other in whom emotion sways the mind. One type is not more evolved than the other; they are both stages to pass through in order to grow a higher faculty, that of Intuition. The vision of the third stage is the Vision of the Intuition, but to it souls come from the first stage either through intellect or through emotion. Let us first consider those souls whose evolution is by way of intellect.

## THE VISION OF THE MIND

We shall see in the past of these souls that much intelligence has been developed in the first stage ; their selfishness has made them quick and cunning to adapt opportunities to minister to their comfort. This intelligence is now taken up by the unseen Guides of evolution, and the soul is placed in environments that will change mere animal cunning into true intellect. The past good and evil sown by him will be adjusted in its reaping, so as to give him occupations and interests that will force him to think of men and things around him apart from their relation to himself. Instead of weighing experiences in terms of personal comfort, he begins to group them in types and categories ; little by little he begins to see a material and moral order in the cosmos which is more powerful than his will. Each law of Nature, when first seen, is feared by him, for it seems to exist only to thwart him. But later, with more experience of their working, he begins to trust laws and to depend upon them to achieve his aim. A love of learning appears in him, and Nature is no longer a blank page ; he has ceased to be “a pair of spectacles behind which there is no eye”.

At this stage, we shall see that the selfishness still in him will warp the judgments of his mind. He will be a doctrinaire, a pedant, combative and full of prejudice ; for all his intellect, his character will show marked weaknesses, and he will often see and propound principles of conduct which he will not be able to apply to himself. Again and again he will fail to see how little he understands the world, since the world is the embodiment of a life which is more than mind, and whoso understands it with mind alone will always misunderstand. Excess of intellect will become in him defect of intelligence, and he will see all things as through a glass darkly.

Many a life will pass while he slowly gains experiences through the mind, and assimilates them into a truer conception of life. By now he will have begun to take part of the intellectual life of the world and when he is on the threshold of the next stage, we shall find him as a worker of science, philosophy or literature. But his intellect has too great a personal bias still, and it must be made impersonal and pure before the next vision, that of the intuition, can be his. Once again, we shall see that there enters into his life a dissatisfaction. The structure which he builds so laboriously, as the results of years of work, will crumble one by one, because Nature reveals new facts to show the world that his generalizations were only partly true. The world for which he toiled will forget him, and younger workers will receive the honors which are his due. He will be misunderstood by his dearest friends, and “he is now , if not ceasing, yet intermitting to eat his own heart, and clutches round him outwardly on the Not-me for wholesomer food”.

But this suffering, though the reaping of sad sowings of injustice to others through prejudice, brings in its train a high purification sooner or later. At last the soul learns the great lesson of working for work’s sake and not for the fruit of action. Now he knows the joy of altruistic dedication of himself to the search for truth. A student of philosophies but slave of none, he now watches nature “as it is” and in a perfect impersonality of mind solves her mysteries one by one. Of him now can it be said with Sextus the Pythagorean that “a great intellect is the chorus of divinity.” Thus dawns for him the Vision of Intuition.

## THE VISION OF THE EMOTIONS

I mentioned when describing the transition from the first stage to the second, that there were in the world two main types of souls — those who pass from the Vision of the Separated Self to the Vision of the Intuition by way of the mind, and those others who develop along a parallel path and pass from the emotions to the Intuition. We have just seen how souls are trained through the intellect to cast out the self ; we shall now see how the same result is achieved for those in whom emotions sway the mind.

As the intellectual type showed in the first stage a marked development of intelligence of a low kind, so similarly shall we find that the souls whom we are going to consider show during the same stage a great deal of feeling. Not that this feeling will be refined or unselfish ; indeed it will be mostly be lust and jealousy, with perhaps a little crude religious emotion thrown in. But the character will be obviously easily swayed by emotions, and this trait

in the soul is now taken up, and worked upon to enable him to pass to the next stage.

Following his emotional bent, and selfish and oblivious of the feelings of those around him, the soul will compel others weaker than himself to be the slaves of his desires. But the passion and the sense of possession which he has of those who minister to his lusts will link him to them life after life, till slowly he begins to feel that they are necessary to his emotional life, and not dispensable at will. Gradually his impure passions will be transformed into purer affections, and then he will be brought again and again into contact with them, so that his emotions shall go out impulsively towards them. But the evil which he wrought them in the past will now cast a veil over their eyes, and make them indifferent to him. He will be forced to love on, to atone for past evil by service, but despair will be his only reward. When in resentment he tries to break the bond which ties him to them, he will find he cannot. He will curse love, only to return again and again to love's altar with his offerings.

Though life now becomes full of disappointment and despair, in his serener moments he will acknowledge that, in spite of the suffering entailed, his emotional life has slowly opened a new sense in him. He catches now and then glimpses of an undying youth in all things, and the world that seems dreary and aging will reappear under certain emotional stress as he knew it before life became a tragedy. These glimpses are transitory at first, lasting indeed only so long as the love emotion colors his being; but there is for him a time, —`

When all the world is young, lad,  
And all the trees are green,  
And every goose a swan, lad,  
And every lass a queen.

Life after life, fostered by his transitory loves, this sense will grow in him till it blossoms into a sense of wonder. The Nature reveals in all things in life new values, whose significance he can henceforth never wholly forget. While love sways his being, each blade of grass and leaf and flower has to him a new meaning; he sees beauty now where he saw none before. Everything beautiful around him — a face, a flower, a sunset, - will link him in mysterious ways to those he loves; the world ceases to be a blank page.

Love wakes men once each lifetime each.  
They lift their heavy lids and look;  
And lo! What one sweet page can teach.  
They read with joy, then close the book  
And some give thanks, and some blaspheme.  
And most forget. But either way,  
That and the child's unheeded dream  
Is all the light of all their day.

It will happen that this sense of wonder is intermittent and that there comes periods when the world is veiled; but the veil is of his own making, and must be torn asunder if he is to possess the Vision of the Intuition. Once more there enters into his life a dissatisfaction — a discontent that love itself is transitory after all. Those whom he loves and who love him in return will be taken from him just when life seems in flower; friends he idealizes will shatter the ideals so lovingly made for them. Cruel as it all seems, it is but the reaping of sad sowings in past lives. But the reaping has a meaning, now as always. He has so far been loving not Love but its shadow, not the Ideal from which nothing can be taken away, but its counterfeit which suffers diminution. He must now see clearer and see truer. The character must be studied, so that it shall not rebound from enthusiasm to depression, nor be satisfied with a vague mysticism, which prefers to revel in its own feelings rather than evaluate what causes them.

Hence the inevitable purification through suffering; the dross of self is burned away till there remains the gold of divine desire. He then discovers that the truest feelings are only those which have in them the spirit of offering. Now for him thus purified in desire, and for that other type of soul made impersonal in intellect, there dawns the Vision of the Intuition.



## THE VISION OF THE INTUITION

“Before the eyes can see, they must be incapable of tears. Before the ear can hear, it must have lost its sensitiveness.” All souls who have come to this stage have learned by now the bitter lesson that “it is only in Renunciation that Life, properly speaking, can be said to begin.” But they have also proved in their own experience that what once seemed death was but a “repentance unto life.” They have now discovered the meaning of life — that man is a child of God come forth to life to be a co-worker with his Father. It matters not that a soul does not state to himself his relation to the whole in these terms ; it only matters that he should have discovered that his part in existence is to be a worker in a Work, and that nothing happening to himself matters, so long as that Work proceeds to its inevitable end. He knows that the end of thought and feeling is action for his fellow-men, and that this action must be either dispassionate and without thought of reward, or full of a spirit of grateful offering.

He possesses now the faculty of intuition, which transcending both reason and emotion, yet can justify its judgments to either. He grows past “common sense,” the criterion for common things, into an *uncommon* sense; for life is full of uncommon things, of whose existence others are not aware. In men and women, he discerns those invisible factors which are inevitable in human relations, and hence his judgment of them is “not of this world.” In all things, he see and feels One Life. Whatever unites attracts him ; if intellectual, he will love to synthesize in science or philosophy; if emotional, he will dedicate himself to art or philanthropy.

Now slowly for him Many become the One. The Unity will be known only in the vision of the next stage ; but, preparing for it, science and art, religion and philosophy, will deduce for him eternal fundamental types from the kaleidoscope of life. Types of forms, types of thought, types of emotions, types of temperament — these he sees everywhere round him, and life in all its phases becomes transformed, because it reflects as in a mirror Archetypes of a realm beyond time and space and mutability.

Everything of mortal birth  
-Is but a type;  
What was of feeble worth  
-Here becomes ripe.

What was a mystery  
-Here meets the eyes;  
The Ever-womanly  
-Draws us on high.

“The Ever-womanly” now shows him everywhere one Wisdom. Science tells him of the oneness of Nature, and philosophy that man is a consciousness creating his world; art reveals in all things youth and beauty, and religion whispers to his heart that Love broods over all. His sympathies go to all, as his will is ever at their service.

Not far now is the time when for him shall dawn the Vision of the Spirit. But to bring him to its portal, a dissatisfaction once more enters his soul. No longer can that dissatisfaction be personal ; the sad reaping of sorrow for evil done is over, and “only the sorrow of others casts its shadow over me.” Nor is it caused by any sense of the mutability of things, for, absolutely, without question, he knows his immortality, and that, though all things change, there is behind them THAT which changes never. Yet he climbs to his appointed goal, dissatisfaction must always be.

It comes to him now, as a creator. For with intuition to guide him, he creates in that field of endeavor in which he has trained himself in past lives. As poet, artist, statesman, saint, or scientist, he is one of the world’s geniuses. But though his creations are a miracle to all, yet to him they are only partly true and only partly beautiful, for he sees the ideal which he would fain bring down to men, and knows his failure as none others can know. Life is teaching him “to attain by shadowing forth the unattainable.”

And thus he grows life after life, scientist, poet, artist and saint now merge into a new type of being who sees with "larger, other eyes than ours." He has regained his integrity of heart and his innocency of hands, and is become "a little child"; "by pity enlightened". He is now Parsifal, the "Pure Fool," who enters upon his heritage.

Then it is that at its threshold there meets him One who has watched him climbing for many a life, and all unseen has encouraged him. This is the Master, one of that "goodliest fellowship of famous knights whereof the world holds record". In Him the soul sees in realization all those ideals which have drawn him onward and upward. Hand in hand with this "Faith in God," he now treads "the Way" while the Vision of the Spirit is shown him by his Master. Who shall describe that Vision but those who have it, and how may one less than a Master here speak with authority? And yet since Masters of the Wisdom have moved among men, since Buddha, Krishna and Christ have shown us, in Their lives something of what that vision is, surely from Their lives we can deduce what the vision must be.

In that Vision of the Spirit, the Many *is* One. "Alone within this universe he comes and goes; it is He who is the fire, the water He pervadeth ; Him and Him only knowing, one crosseth over death; no other path at all is there to go."

Now for the soul who has come to the end of his climbing, each man is only "the spirit he worked in, not what he did but what he became". There is no high nor low in life, for in all he sees a ray from the Divine Flame. As through the highest so through the lowest too, to him "God stooping shows sufficient of His light for us in the dark to rise by." Life is henceforth become a Sacrament, and he is its celebrant ; with loving thoughts and deeds, he celebrates and at-ones man with God and God with man. He discerns, purifies in himself, and offers to God "infinite passion and the pain of finite hearts that yearn". From God on high, he brings to men what alone can satisfy that yearning.

He has renounced "the will to live," and thereby has made its purpose his own; "Foregoing self, the universe grows I." Yet he knows with rapture that, that—"I" is but a tiny lens in a great Light. Henceforth he lives only in order that a Greater than he may live through him, love through him, act through him. Evermore shall his heart whisper, in heaven or in hell, whithersoever his work may take him ; "him know I, the Mighty Man, resplendent like the Sun, beyond the Darkness; Him and Him only knowing one crosseth over death ; no other path at all is there to go."

---

Thus do we, happy few, the precursors of a new age, see life in the light of reincarnation. As the evolutionist sees all nature linked in one ladder of life, and sky and sea testify to him of evolution, so do we all men linked in one common purpose, and their hopes and fears, their self-sacrifice and their selfishness, testify to us of reincarnation. Life and its experiences have ceased to be for us—

An arch wherethro'  
Gleams that untravell'd world, whose margin fades  
For ever and ever when I move.

No longer can the world be for us as the poet sang :

Act first this Earth, a stage so gloom'd with woe,  
You all but sicken at the shifting scenes.  
And yet be patient. Our Playwright may show  
In some fifth Act what this wild Drama means.

The Fifth Act is here before your eyes. It is that Vision of the Spirit which is the heritage of every soul, and thither all men are slowly treading, for "no other path at all is there to go."

# THE LAW OF RENUNCIATION

The joy of life! Is it not everywhere? In plant and animal and man, do we not see an instinct for happiness which impels all creation to rise from good to better, from better to best? Since God said, "Let there be light!" are not all men seeking to step out of darkness into light – blindly, dimly feeling that happiness must be their goal? Yet how few find happiness in life! It is easy to sing:—

God's in his heaven,  
All's right with the world!

But to sing so for long, one must be blind to the facts. Life is a tragedy to many, and far more truly is it described by Tennyson:—

Act first, this Earth, a stage so gloom'd with woe  
You all but sicken at the shifting scenes,  
And yet be patient. Our Playwright may show  
In some fifth Act what this wild Drama means.

Nevertheless all feel that happiness must be the goal of life, and humanity never errs in its deepest feelings. But then why should not the attainment of happiness be easier than it is ?

## MAN AN EVOLVING SOUL

There is a philosophy of life which holds that man is an immortal soul, living not one life on earth but many, growing through the experiences which he gains in them manifold capacities and virtues. This philosophy further postulates that all men are the children of One father, who has created a universe, in order that *working* therein His children may know something of Him, and come to Him in joy. According to this theory, the purpose of life is not to achieve a stable condition of happiness for any individual, but rather to train him to work in a Plan of an Ideal Future, and find in that work an ever-changing and ever-growing contentment.

From the standpoint of the Theosophist, all men are indeed working for a foreordained ideal future ; but they work at different stages, according to their differing capacities. A recognition of these stages, and the laws of life appropriate to each, makes life less the riddle that it is. There are three broad stages on the Path of Bliss which leads to the Highest Good, and they are happiness, renunciation, and transfiguration.

## THE STAGE OF HAPPINESS

God calls upon all His children at this stage to co-operate with Him, by offering them happiness as the aim of life. He has implanted in them a craving for happiness, and He provides work for them which shall make them happy. Love of wife and child and friend, fame and the gratitude of men, success and ease — these are His rewards for them that serve Him. Many are the pleasant paths in life for the young souls at this stage, to reap happinesses as they prove those pleasures.

That hills and valleys, dale and field,  
And all the craggy mountains yield.

Useful up to a point as men are in the Great Work at this stage, yet so long as a man deliberately seeks happiness, his capabilities as a *worker* are soon exhausted. For soon he "settles down in life" ; the precious gift of wonder slowly fades away, and his happiness ceases to be dynamic. Self-centred, he calls on the universe to give. But the Path to Bliss is by work, and if he is to go ever on, he must fit himself for a *larger* work than has so far fallen to his share. He must enter on the next stage, but for that he must change utterly. Hither-to he has measured men and things by the standard of his little self; henceforth the Great Self must be his measure. He must break the sway of himself, and realize that evermore what is important in life is not he, nor his happiness,

but a Work. Before this realization can begin, there must be a *conversion*.

## CONVERSION

In many ways are men converted from the interests of the little self to the work of the Great Self. Some, loving Truth in religious garb, open their hearts to a Personality who dazzles their imagination. Thenceforth they must serve Him, and be like Him, and gone forever is the standpoint of the little self. Some study science and philosophy, and discover a magnificent plan of evolution, with the inevitable result that they know that the individual is but a unit in a great Whole, and not the centre of the cosmos. If they set to study rightly, they see, too, that there is a Will at work, and that, cost what it may, they must co-operate with that Will. A few there are to whom comes some mysterious experience from the hidden side of things, and life speaks to them a transforming message. Out of the invisible comes a "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" and a persecutor of Christians is changed into an Apostle of Christ. Manifold are the ways of conversion, the same in all lands and in all faiths. One factor is common : the old personality is disintegrated, and a new one is reintegrated in the service of a Work.

When, through conversion, the new personality is ready for a larger work, the tools which he uses must be made pure. They are his thoughts and feelings, and slowly a process of purification is begun. Disappointment and pain and grief are his lot – the sad harvest of a sowing of selfishness in the unseen past of many lives, for we reap as we have sown. When the worker is ready, swift is Nature's response to free him from the burden of his past, in order that he may be fit to achieve the great work which she has prepared for him.

## THE MEANING OF PAIN

With some, sorrow hardens the character, but with those who are ready to enter on the second stage, it ever purifies. Does not the very texture and the flesh of a sufferer, who has in patience and resignation borne his pain, seem luminous and pure, as though through every cell there gleamed the light of a hidden fire? How much more so is it with mental suffering? Are we not irresistibly drawn to reverence one who has suffered much and nobly, and sometimes to love, too?

I saw my lady weep,  
And Sorrow proud to be advanced so  
In those fair eyes where all perfection keep.  
Her face was full of woe: But such a woe (believe me) wins more hearts  
Than Mirth can do with her enticing parts,  
Sorrow was there made fair,  
Passion wise ; tears a delightful thing;  
Silence beyond all speech a wisdom rare.  
She made her sighs to sing,  
And all things with so sweet a sadness move  
As made a heart at once both grieve and love.

## THE STAGE OF RENUNCIATION

Life seems full of evil days to those who come to the end of the first stage, but its lesson is clear. That lesson is, "Thou must go without, go without!" That is the everlasting song, which every hour, all our life through, hoarsely sings to us. Truly does Carlyle voice the wisdom of the ages when he says, "The Fraction of Life can be increased in value not so much by increasing your numerator as by lessening your denominator. Nay, unless my algebra deceive me, unit divided by a zero will give infinity. Make thy claim of wages a zero then ; thou hast the world under thy feet."

## THE LAW OF RENUNCIATION

All great workers know that the Law of renunciation is true, and that “it is only with renunciation that life, properly speaking can be said to begin”. There are no great souls who are completely happy, can ever be! Once more let the great apostle of Work speak to us: “the happy man was never yet created; the virtuous man, tho’ clothed in rags and sinking under pain, is the jewel of the Earth, however I may doubt it, or deny it in bitterness of heart. O never let me forget it! Teach me, tell me, when the Fiend of Suffering and the base Spirit of the World are ready to prevail against me, and drive me from this last stronghold.”

Take whom you will who has done a great work, and he knows that renunciation is the law. In bitterness of heart Ruskin cries out : “I have had my heart broken ages ago, when I was a boy, then mended, cracked, beaten in, kicked about old corridors, and finally, I think, flattened fairly out”. But he persevered in his work all the same. There is no greater name in the world of art than Michael Angelo, “this masterful and stern, life-wearied and labor-hardened man”, whose history “is one of indomitable will and almost superhuman energy, yet of will that had hardly ever had its way, and of energy continually at war with circumstance”. It is the same with all who have been great.

## **THE MEANING OF LIFE**

But through renunciation the soul on the threshold of greatness discover’s life’s meaning. If religious, he will state it, “Thy will be done” ; if scientific or artistic he will say, “Not I, but a Work”. He is now as Faust who sought happiness in knowledge, and failed ; sought it in the love of Marguerite, and reaped a tragedy ; and only as he planned to reclaim waste lands for men, and lost himself in the dream of that *work*, found that long-sought-for happy moment when he could say, “Ah, tarry a while, thou art so fair!”

So, renouncing live the souls of the second stage, lovers of a Work. Sad at heart they are; but if they are loyal to their work, then comes to them in fleeting moments more than happiness ; it is the joy of creation. Such wonders they now body forth that to themselves their masterpieces are enigmas. In fitful gleams they see a Light, and know that now and then it shines through them to the world. Perfect masters of technique they are now, in religion, in art, in science, in every department of life. But alas! Just as they have discovered what it is to live, what it is to create, they are old, and life comes to a close, before it seems hardly begun. Shall the path of renunciation bring nothing but despair?

Despair was never yet so deep.  
In sinking as in seeming;  
Despair is hope just dropp’d asleep  
For better chance of dreaming.

## **THE STAGE OF TRANSFIGURATION**

“Hope just dropp’d asleep for better chance of dreaming” – that, truly, is death. The great worker leaves life but to return again, with every dream old and new nearer realization. He returns, with the inborn mastery of technique of the genius, to achieve now where once he only dreamed. The joy of creation is now his sure and priceless possession, that wondrous joy which only those who know can offer all gifts of heart and mind, and stand apart from them, while a Greater than they creates through them. “Seeking nothing, he gains all ; foregoing self, the universe grows l”. Now has he found that life which he lost in the stage of renunciation ; henceforth, in all places and at all times is he become “a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall no more go out”.

## **THE PATH OF BLISS**

So life gives of its best to all — happiness to some, renunciation to others, and, to a few, transfiguration. What if now most of us, who love Truth, must “do without”? Let us but dedicate heart and mind to a Work, and we shall find that renunciation leads to transfiguration. There is but one road to God , for all to tread. It is the Path of

Bliss. It has steps — happiness, renunciation, and transfiguration. Whoso will offer up all that he is to a Work, though he “lose his life” thereby, yet shall he find it soon, and “come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.”

---

## THE HIDDEN WORK OF NATURE

Never, in the history of mankind, has there been a time as to-day when it could be so truly said that,

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,  
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,  
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

It is true that “the man in the street” knows of no such great change ; life for him moves as of old in its fixed grooves, and if the world’s progress has multiplied for him life’s conveniences, it has also multiplied for him life’s needs. Change to him is largely a matter of a surplus of comforts over pains, and in this regard the old order has changed but little for him. But the man in the library, the laboratory, the studio, the pulpit, is aware of the great change, and he knows that it began with the work of Darwin and his school.

The importance of the work of modern scientists lies in the fact that they have marshaled for us the events of nature into an orderly pageant of evolution. What exoteric religion has not been able to do, science has achieved, and that is to show Life as one. Technological trinities of Creator, Creation, and Creature, or dualities of God and Man, have not unified life for us in the way science has done. Mysticism alone, with its truth of the Immanence, has revealed to men something of that unified existence of all that is, which is the logical deduction from modern evolutionary theories.

When we contemplate the pageant of nature, we see her at a work of building and un-building. From mineral to bacterium and plant, from microbe to animal and man, nature is busy at a visible work, step by step evolving higher and more complex structures. Though she may seem at first sight to work blindly and mechanically, she has in reality a coherent plan of action. Her plan is to evolve structures stage by stage, so that the amount of time needed by a given creature for its self-protection and sustenance may be less and less with each successive generation. The higher the structure is in its organization and adaptability, the more time, and hence more energy, there is free for other purposes of life than sustenance and procreation.

Two elements in life arise from the perfection of the structural mechanism which the higher order of creatures reveals. First, they have time for play, for it is in play that such energy manifests as is not required for gaining food and shelter. The second element manifests itself only when human beings appear in evolution, and men begin to show a desire for adaptability. Adaptability to environment exists in the plant and in the animal, but it is in them purely instinctive or mechanical; with man on the other hand there is an attempt at conscious adaptability.

When this desire for adaptability increases, nature reveals a new principle of evolution. To the principle of the survival of the fittest by a struggle for existence, she adds the new one of evolution by interdependence. Therefore we find human units aggregating themselves into groups, and primitive men organizing themselves into families and tribes.

Once more this means a saving of labor and time in the material struggle for existence. Some of both is now at nature’s disposal, to train men to discover new ways of life and action. To the play of the individual, there is added a communal life which makes civilization possible. For civilization means that some individuals in a community are dissatisfied with what contents all the others, and that therefore they are burning with a zeal for reform, and the spirit of reform sooner or later is inevitable in evolution. The survival of the fittest can only come about by that mysterious arrival of the fittest which no scientist can explain. Nature now ushers in “the fittest” in the few who are planning for reform. For reform means that organisms will consciously adapt themselves more

and more to the exigencies of environment, for to each successive change to greater adaptability nature has something new to give.

Thus individual men and women become nature's tools; she works with their hearts and minds and hands to create social and political activities. Religion and science and art appear among men; the struggle for existence is no longer nature's sole means for bringing to realization her aim ; interdependence of units, and therewith reform, are the means which she uses now.

Then it is that nature proclaims to men that message which she has kept for them through the ages. It is the joy of social service. Strange and unreal, as yet, to most men is the thought of such joy. But evolution has only lately entered on this phase of her work, and ages must yet elapse before social service becomes instinctive in men as are now self-assertion and selfishness. That day must inevitably be the handful of reformers today are as the "missing links" of a chain which stretches forward from man to superman. As, from the isolation and selfishness of the brute, nature has evolved the interdependence of men, so too, is self-sacrifice the next logical step in her evolutionary Self-revelation.

A more inspiring picture there could hardly be than this, of nature at work on her building and un-building. Yet there are not a few dark shadows in the picture. So long as the individual lives only the few brief years of his life, so long as nothing of him remains as an individual after his death, there is a ruthlessness about nature which is appalling. Where is today "the glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome"? Some day there must be an end to nature's work, in this planet at least where we live. There are dead suns in space, and some day our sun will die out, and every satellite of his will be a frozen world. Careful of the type, nature truly builds form after form, and will build for many an age yet to come. There is indeed a far-off event "to which the whole creation moves", but it is to that state when living organisms shall lack the warmth from the sun which they need for life.

So long as we contemplate nature's *visible* work only, not the greatest altruist but must now and then feel the shadow of great despair. That which alone makes life and self-sacrifice real and inspiring to great souls — the thought and the feeling that their work will endure forever — is lacking when we consider nature's work in the light of modern science alone. Yet many an altruist would be content to die, and be nothing thereafter, if he could but feel that nature had some pity for his fate. Well the poet voices the feeling which arises from the conception of nature, or of a deity who is as passionless as nature; -

Life is pleasant, and friends may be nigh,  
Fain would I speak one word and be spared ;  
Yet I could be silent and cheerfully die,  
If I were only sure God cared;  
If I had faith and were only certain  
That light is behind that terrible curtain.

It is here that Theosophy steps in to continue the work of science, and explain the true significance of nature's manifestations. As modern science points to nature's visible work, so Theosophy points to a Hidden Work of Nature.

There is a hidden Light which reveals to men that nature is but one expression of a Consciousness at work ; that this Consciousness is at work with a Plan of evolution; and that this Consciousness carries out its plan through us and through us alone. The moment that we realize the significance of this message of the Hidden Light, that men are immortal souls and not perishable bodies, we begin to see that, while careful of the type, nature is not less careful of the single life too. For then we see that nature's latest phase, a fullness of life through social service, necessarily involves the recognition of men as souls; for it would be useless for nature slowly to fashion a reformer, unless she could utilize his ability and experience for greater reforms in the future. That his specialized abilities shall not be dissipated would surely then be logical, in a nature for which we

postulate an aim which persists from age to age.

It does not require much profound thought or speculation to deduce from this view of nature's work that men live for ever as souls, and that, through reincarnation, they become fitter tools in nature's hands to achieve her purpose of evolution. Let but reincarnation be considered a part of nature's plan, and at once the tragedy of nature transforms itself into an inspiring and stately pageant. For then the future is ourselves ; it is we who shall make the glorious utopias of dreams; we who painfully toil today to fashion bricks for nature's beautiful edifice in far-off days; we, and not others, shall see that edifice in its splendor, and be its very possessors. Though the spirit of action of the best of us is ever a *sic vos non vobis*, "thus ye work, but not for yourselves", yet in reality, like bread cast upon the waters, our work shall greet us ages hence, and we shall then be glad that we have toiled so well now.

So comes to us the message of the Hidden Light that nature is consciously going from good to better, from better to best, and that she works out her splendid purpose through us, who may become her ministers, or must be her slaves.

The spirit of reform, then, being a part of the evolutionary process, the next point to note is that in all effective reform there are two elements: first the reform is brought about by individuals working as a group, and second, the group has a leader. It is fairly easy to understand the grouping of individuals to co-operate for a common aim as a part of nature's evolutionary plan; their united action but expresses the social instinct. But it is perhaps less easy to see that nature *selects* the leader, and sends him to a particular group to crystallize its dreams and plans into organization and action. Yet this is the message of the Hidden Light — that a leader does not appear by a mere concatenation of chance circumstances, but only because he is selected for a particular work, and is sent to do it. For a leader does not come in evolution as a "sport" — a passing variant produced nobody knows how; he is fashioned by a slow laborious process lasting thousands of years. Life after life, in a process of rebirth, the would-be leader must earn his future position by dedication to works of reform ; by little actions for reform as a savage, by larger actions as a civilized man, he trains himself for the role which nature has written for him.

If we look at reformers in the light of reincarnation, we shall see that their present ability to lead is simply the result of work done in past lives. Since biologists are agreed that acquired characters are not transmissible, we must look for that rare inborn capacity to lead, not in the heredity of the organism, but in a spiritual heredity which is in the life and in the consciousness of the individual. This is exactly what reincarnation says ; the individual acquired his ability to lead today only by endeavors to lead many a past life, and by partial successes at least in so doing.

Furthermore, the Hidden Light reveals to us that each present movement for reform was rehearsed in many a primitive setting long ago, with the present leaders and their coadjutors as actors. We need but look at the reform movements for the amelioration of the lot of the working classes in Europe, to see how the leaders of today in the various countries were tribunes of the Plebs in Rome, or "demagogues" in Athens, or leaders of the masses in Carthage. Nay, furthermore, it is not difficult to note how some of the politicians and statesmen of Greece and Rome and elsewhere, who worked to abolish abuses and to free the oppressed, have changed sex in their present incarnations, and are with us today as leaders of the various suffragist and feminine movements of the world. Where else but in past lives did these women learn the tactical strategy and mastery of leadership which they evince in their campaigns for reform? Why should certain men and women, and not all, labor and toil for their fellow-men, renouncing all and coveting martyrdom, unless they had learnt by past experiences the glory of action for reform? For the born leaders in every reform are geniuses in their way ; they go unerringly to an aim, with the conviction of success ; where did they develop this faith in themselves? They are in reality the "missing links" from men of today to the supermen of the future, and it is nature herself with her Hidden Work who has so fashioned them life after life.

So nature plans and achieves, and the stately pageant moves on. But her purpose is not achieved slowly and leisurely , adding change to change; she does not bring about a new order of things by an accumulation of



small changes. Nature goes by leaps, *per saltum*; and as in the biological world crises appear, and nature makes a leap and ushers in new species, so too is it in the world of human affairs. Though there is a slow steady upward movement for progress through reform, yet now and then there is a crisis in the affairs of men. Then things happen, and after the crisis is over, there is, as it were, a new species of human activity. Reform takes a new trend, and a whole host of new reforms are ushered in to make life fuller and nobler.

One such crisis in human affairs came in Palestine, with the coming of Christ. For though men knew not that it was a crisis, though Greece and Rome dreamed and planned of philosophy and dominion without end, a dawn had begun of a new era, and an age was ushered in, in the heyday of which Greece and Rome should be mere names. Christ ministered in Palestine, spoke to peasant and priest, and gave His sermons “on the Mount”, and a few men knew not then that with his message He gave birth to new species of idealism in action. But after two thousand years have elapsed, we of another generation can see that when Christ lived in Palestine, and the Roman Empire was beginning its day of glory, then indeed was the beginning too of the end of a world of thought and action — of that “glory that was Greece and the grandeur that was Rome” — and that Christ gave His message not so much to the men of His day as to those who were to come.

So too was it in India, six centuries before Christ ; another “dreamer” appeared, Siddhartha, Prince of the Satya clan. Men listened to Him and loved Him and followed Him, but they little dreamed that He was in reality building an Empire of Righteousness, which even after twenty-five centuries should embrace within it five hundred millions of souls. To the critics of His time, he was but another “Teacher”, one of hundreds then living in India pointing out “The Way.” It is only after the lapse of centuries that later generations knew that He was a teacher of teachers, a Flower on our human tree, the like of which had never been.

Every so often, then, there is a climax in human affairs, and always such a climax is preceded by an age when men “dream dreams.” In Palestine, prophet after prophet dreamed of “the great and dreadful day of the Lord,” before Christ came, and proclaimed its coming and worked for it. In India, many a sage and philosopher prepared the way with his solutions for the message of the Buddha.

In every such climax, small or great, the resolution of the crisis comes through the intermediary of a Personality. For as nature weaves the tangled knot of human fate, “nowise moved except unto the working out of doom,” she plans too the Solver of the knot. For every crisis which is of her planning, she has prepared the Man who holds the solution in his heart and brain.

In this out twentieth century, men dream dreams as never heretofore. East and West, North and South, the machinery of human life grates on the ear, and there is not a single man or woman of true imagination who can say, “God’s in his heaven, All’s right with the world!” *De profundis clamari* better describes the wail of every nation. Millions are spent on armies and navies, while the poor are clamouring for bread ; and statesmen themselves are wringing their hands that they cannot give a nation’s wealth back to the nation in hospitals and schools and fair gardens and clean habitations. For there are “wars and rumors of wars.” The spirit of charity grows year by year, but it seems as though charity but added patches to a rotting garment, and the more the patches which are put on the more the rents appear. Strife between capital and labor, race hatred between white and brown and yellow and black, a deadlock between science and religion, and more than all else, the increasing luxury of the few and the increasing misery of the many, these are but a few of the problems facing philanthropists today.

Every reformer realizes, in whatever department he works, that for lasting reform a complete reconstruction is needed of the whole social structure, if poverty, disease and ignorance and misery shall be as a nightmare that has been but shall never be again. All are eager for reform ; thousands are willing to co-operate. But none knows where to begin, in the true reconstruction. Each is indeed terrified, lest in trying to pull one brick out of the social edifice, to replace it by a better, he may pull the whole structure down, and so cause misery instead of joy.

This is the crisis present before our eyes, confronting not one nation, but all. “Out of the depths have I cried unto

Thee, O Lord," is true today as never before.

Everywhere, in every department where men work for reform, men are looking for a Leader. Where is He whom nature has selected, in whose mind is the Plan, in whose is the spirit and in whose hand is the Power? Let him but appear, let him but say, "This is how you shall work," and thousands will flock to Him in joy. And it is this message of the Hidden Light that He is ready, for when from the hearts of men a cry goes forth, from the bosom of God a Son shall come. The world is in the birth throes once again for the coming of the Son of Man, and the young men who see visions today shall in their prime find Him in their midst, the Wonderful, the Councillor, the Prince of Peace.

Never an age, when God has need of him,  
Shall want its man, predestined by that need,  
To pour his life in fiery word and deed,  
The great Archangel of the Elohim.

When He, whom the world waits for, and whom nature has planned to come "unto this hour," shall appear, what will be His work? What but to carry on nature's work one step further? The day is past when men can go forward with competition as their cry of progress ; nothing lasting can now come for men unless it is brought about by interdependence and co-operation. The best of men today see the inevitable coming of this new age, when men shall be sons of God in deed and not merely in name; but their cry for altruism and co-operation is as a voice cast in the teeth of the tempest. They can but gather round them here an enthusiast and there a disciple ; but they accomplish little, for they lack the character which compels the world to listen. Till comes that Personality who is not of one nation but of all, whose message is not for this century alone but for all others to come ; till then the dawn of the new day will drag its slow length along. But when He comes, then indeed what He says and what He does will be the proof to us that it is He and not another, whom nature has planned to be the Shadow of God upon earth to men, the Savior who is born unto them this day.

Then once more shall the Hidden Light be revealed to men, that Light that "shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." Then science shall be our religion, and religion our art ; then shall we cease to be nature's slaves, and enter upon our heritage, and become her councillors and guides. Then shall we know, not merely believe, that behind the seeming pitiless plan of nature there is a most pitiful Mind, careful of the type and careful of the single life too. Nevermore shall our eyes be blinded by passionate tears as we look at the misery of men, and feel the utter hopelessness of its effective diminution ; for we shall know that nature but veils an Eye that sees, a Heart that feels, and a Mind that plans, for One shall be with us to be a *Martyros*, a Witness, of that Light that shineth in darkness, even when the darkness comprehends it not.

He will call on the many to co-operate in all good works "in His name and for the love of mankind"; He will teach them the next lesson which nature has planned for them, the joy of neighbourly service. But to a few He will give the call to follow Him through the ages. For He comes to usher in a new age ; that age must be tended and fostered decade after decade, century by century, till the seed becomes the tree and the tree bears flowers, and by the perfecting of man comes the fulfillment of God. As He is nature's husbandman, so will he need helpers in those fields from whence alone comes the Daily Bread for men.

The many will love Him for the peace and joy which He will bring ; but a few will answer the call to follow Him life after Life, toiling, toiling in a work seemingly without end. To these few alone will be it given to know the inwardness of the message of the Hidden Light. It is that nature keeps her diadems not for those who reap happiness in her pleasant fields and gardens, but for those who co-operate with her in her Hidden Work, and try "to lift a little of the heavy karma of the world." For this is Nature's Hidden Work, to weave a vesture out of the karmas of men which shall reflect the pattern given her from on high ; and the weaving halts, unperfected, till through the actions of all men there shall shine one great Action. When the perfect vesture is woven for him who desires it, and the karmas of all men act in unison, then, and not before, will come "that day" when Nature can say to all men, as now to her God : "I am in my Father, and ye in me and I in you." Unto that hour she toils at her Hidden Work, and it is the Hidden Light which reveals to men her process of evolution as she shapes in moulds of dust immortal Sons of God.

