

LOOK AT YOUR KARMA

By ARTHUR ROBSON

“ You can do nothing better than to study the two doctrines—of Karma and Nirvana—as profoundly as you can.”

The Master K. H.

This little book will give you very valuable help in that study.

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LOOK AT YOUR KARMA

BY THE SAME AUTHOR
HUMAN KARMA

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HUMAN NATURE

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The Master K. H.*

THE THEOSOPHICAL PUBLISHING HOUSE
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PREFACE

THE three Essays contained in this book are published together because in all of them emphasis is laid on the necessity for everyone to make a deep study of Karma and, most particularly, of his own karma, his nature, scrutinising his natural impulses and trying to discover from where they originate. It is only in this way that we can hope to develop that insight into Karma which will enable us to free ourselves from its bondage.

The first two Essays are, in the main, reprints of two articles which have appeared, under other titles, in *The Theosophist* of February, 1943, and December, 1941, respectively. The third Essay has not been published hitherto. Its purpose is to give in outline the principles of the philosophy set forth in my book, *Human Nature*, a philosophy which makes no pretence to be new, but is, on the contrary, as ancient as the Aryan race itself.

In an Appendix I have added three interesting examples of cause and effect in Karma which I discovered too late to incorporate in the first Essay, as I might have done. The first example is particularly interesting and merits careful study.

Adyar
May, 1947

A. R.

PREFACE

The first purpose of this book is to provide a general introduction to the study of the history of the United States. It is intended for use by students of history and by those who are interested in the general history of the country. The book is written in a simple and straightforward manner, and it is hoped that it will be found useful and interesting to all who read it.

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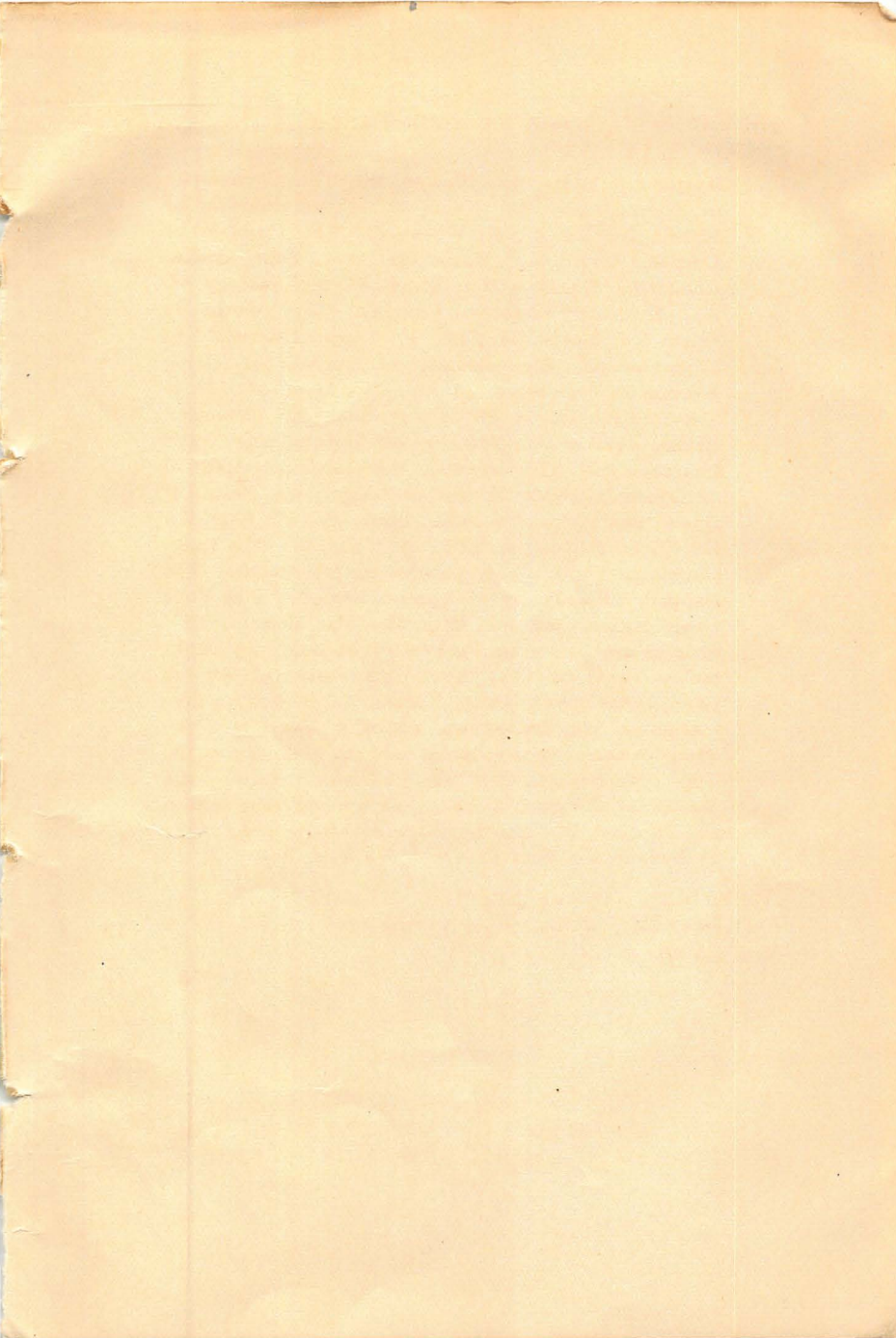
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THE WORD, "KARMA"

The Romance of Words

It is a well-known fact that words go through changes of meaning from one age to another, and often in the history of a word scraps of folk history are found entangled, little records of otherwise forgotten doings of the past, which are generally interesting and sometimes most fascinating. The word "lumber," for instance, is merely a variant of "Lombard" and has a curious story attached to it. In the Middle Ages the Lombards set up as bankers in London—as they had done in other parts of Europe—in the street that still bears their name, and later combined banking with the business of the pawnbroker. In course of time the word "lumber" came to be applied to the contents of a pawnbroker's shop, and then, by an easy step, to any collection of old and ill-assorted things that were out of use, and so to any dump of what is now called "junk". Within the last century the word "lumber" has taken on yet a new meaning, the one we generally associate with the word now—"timber."

Every student of Shakespeare becomes familiar with the changes of meaning which such words as "nice" and "quaint" have undergone. These two words have moved in opposite directions, the first from something discreditable to something commendable ;

the second, the other way about. Often words come in course of time to take on a meaning diametrically opposite to that which they once had. Examples of these are the French words, *jamais*, *rien* and *personne*, as used colloquially.

The Original Meaning of the Word "Karma"

But, whereas other words have caught only fragments of out-of-the-way history, in the life story of the word "Karma" and its changes of meaning the most momentous part of the history of an entire nation is written.

The original and true Vedantic meaning of the word "Karma" is given in the *Niralamba Upanishad*, which is perfectly explicit on the point :

What is Karma ?

Karma is that action alone which is performed by the organs and ascribed to the Atma as "I do."

The *Bhagavad Gita* says,

All Karma is done by the force of nature. The self, deluded by egoism, thinketh, "I am the doer." III, 27.

Karma means "action", "doing", but is used of those things only that we do by natural impulse, from natural inclination or tendency. In other words one's Karma is the sum of one's habits, tendencies, mannerisms and peculiarities of nature, as manifested by what one **does**. A collective unit of any kind—a family, a social class, a sect, a race—has its own collective Karma, that is, a mass of habits and

tendencies common to all members of the unit. But, apart from the collective karma that one shares with other members of any unit to which one happens to belong, there is, of course, one's personal and individual karma, one's own peculiarities of nature, which are an indelible record of one's past. (See p. 78, last para.)

Karma, all Karma, comes from the past, which is plainly seen in it, and from which it derives its dynamic power. You meet a person for the first time and within half-an-hour, without his mentioning a word of his past history, you can by his mannerisms and peculiarities of behaviour often divine quite a fair part of that history.

But it is not only, or even chiefly, with one's past in this life that Karma is concerned. Karma arises from, and is a record of, one's **entire** past. We take our Karma, our particular nature, our character, with us from one life to another. This is the "constant rolling on" of Karma, carried along by its own momentum.

Origin of the Four Castes

Now it was the purpose of the Hindu sages to discover how best we could become masters of our Karma, obtain release from the "bondage of Karma", cease to be slaves of habit and instinct. They made a thorough study of the subject and found that the methods that could be adopted to this end were many, and that the one best suited to a person depended on his nature and special abilities or excellences. The method that was

best suited to one, who was strong on the intellectual side, would be found ill suited to another person, whose outstanding qualities were those of heart, but who was not possessed of an acute brain.

They found that, broadly speaking, mankind could be divided into four groups, the four castes.

The four castes were created by me according to the varied distribution of excellences and karmas.

Bhagavad Gita, IV, 13.

Perhaps one might be inclined to put karmas before excellences, because it is out of one's karma that one's particular excellence grows. One tends, for example, to follow intellectual pursuits, and that naturally develops one's intellect; another's natural bent is for pursuits demanding strength of will and, as a result, he develops a strong will.

But the converse is equally true. If one's excellence lies in intellect, it inclines one to activities of an intellectual nature; if strength of will, to activities in which that excellence serves one best.

Thus Karma and excellence are interdependent.

Castes Originally Selective

Now the primary object of the institution of the four castes was almost certainly cultural, being designed so that each person's development might proceed along lines best suited to him. But it also lent itself to another purpose—vocational, the distribution of vocations according to people's native karmas and

excellences. There is no doubt about it that the system grew from very small beginnings, and during its heyday, which may have been **before** the Aryans descended on to the plains of India, it embraced no larger a proportion of the population than is represented to-day by the university-trained members of any modern civilized state. And it is quite certain that originally, and as long the system was still a healthy and life-giving institution, **the four castes were selective**. That is, each person was allotted to his proper caste after it had been determined what his native karmas and excellences were that he had brought with him from his past. Scattered all over the ancient scriptures are texts declaring that a person's caste was determined by his karma. The *Jain Sutras*, for example, has :

By one's karma one becomes a Brahmana, or a Kshattriya, or a Vaishya, or a Shudra.

Uttaradhyana, XXV, 33.

How People Were Allotted to their Appropriate Castes

The questions naturally arise : If people were allotted to their castes according to their respective karmas, whose business was it to do the allotting ? And what means was there of determining with certainty what caste a person really belonged to ?

Let us take the second question first. The fascinating subject which treats of the principles which guided, or should have guided, those whose business it

was to decide what caste a person belonged to can only be touched upon here. It would require a whole book to deal with it at all adequately. It is sufficient to our present subject to notice its operation with respect to one caste, the Brahmanas, and this will serve as an illustration to indicate its operation with respect to the other three castes. The principle here may be stated quite simply: those whose strong point was intellect were allotted to the Brahmana caste. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, XVIII, 42, are enumerated the Brahmana's karmas, "*born of his own nature*," and the most important of these, the fundamental Brahmana karmas, are the two allied ones of Knowledge and Wisdom, and those who were found to have these as the most prominent features in their make-up were put into the Brahmana caste.

Now it is obvious that the sooner it can be determined with certainty what particular group or caste one belongs to, the better. The great Brahmanas, the earliest in the group and those who really deserved the name, and to whose deep wisdom the development of the four-caste system was due, found a means of determining as soon as a child was born along what lines he was likely to develop and what his at present undisclosed karmas and excellences were. They could truly look into the seeds of time and say which grain would grow and which would not. It is possible that they did this by the use of occult powers. But there would be many Brahmanas who had not developed such

powers, and it seems to me probable that the means that these were taught to employ, in determining what caste a new-born child should belong to, was Astrology. To this day every Hindu child's horoscope is cast almost as soon as he is born. But the custom is now followed with the very doubtful object of trying to peer into the future.

It must be admitted that the scientific basis of Astrology has been entirely lost, and what seems to have been once a science is now guess work. It is as if the basis of the logarithmic tables in common use among mathematicians were lost while the tables remained, and those who used them did not know how they had been arrived at and were not altogether sure how they should be used. It would hardly be surprising if the results which followed from their use were found to be unreliable. Astrology will be a science again only when, having re-discovered its scientific basis and having blotted out from human memory all present astrological knowledge, it is possible to build it all up again right from the very foundation, in the same way as it is possible for a mathematician, provided with only a pencil and a supply of blank paper, to calculate the logarithmic tables afresh.

There is no doubt about it that the original purpose of casting a child's horoscope was to determine his karma, the nature that he had brought with him from the past, with the object of determining how his education should be shaped and what vocation he would

be best fitted for. And this is the most useful purpose to which the casting of the horoscope can be put. To use it for trying to divine what one's fortune is to be is a prostitution of the science, which cannot but lead to its decay, a fate which has already overtaken it.

Since the exercise of the true science and art of Astrology called for intellectual powers of the highest order, the casting of horoscopes and the allocation of people to their respective castes naturally fell to the Brahmanas, who were in this and other ways trustees of the great civilization of Aryavarta, having grave responsibilities, but also enjoying considerable privileges and power.

The Castes Become Hereditary

It is easy to see that they would be tempted to secure the same privileges and power to their children by making them Brahmanas even if the karma which they had brought with them from the past did not entitle or qualify them for it. No doubt they withstood the temptation for centuries, being held to a regard for their trust by the public opinion of their own caste. But in course of time lapses began to occur and became more and more general, thus bringing into the Brahmana fold men who were devoid of intellect and wisdom and who had been smuggled into the caste only because of their being the sons of their fathers. With the increase in the numbers of such pseudo-Brahmanas the tendency to make the caste hereditary became more and more general until, in course of time,

its hereditary character become absolutely fixed and rigid. At the same time the other castes, for similar and complementary reasons, also became hereditary.

But the evils which attend a social system which reserves authority in a state to any particular caste by hereditary right, irrespective of whether the members thereof are fitted by nature for the exercise of that authority, soon showed itself in India. India was seen to be definitely on the down grade.

The Lord Buddha Denounces the Hereditary Principle in Caste

When the Lord Buddha came, he pointed out the evils of the existing system and repeatedly declared that it was not a man's birth, but his karma, that determined whether he was a Brahmana or not.

Adhered to for a long time are the views of the ignorant, the ignorant tell us, one is a Brahmana by birth. Not by birth is one a Brahmana, nor is one by birth no Brahmana ; by Karma one is a Brahmana, by Karma is one no Brahmana.

Sutta Nipata (Vasethasutta).

He said in almost those very words that a man is **not** a Brahmana merely because is the son of his father.

A man does not become a Brahmana by his plaited hair, by his family, or by his birth.....I do not call a man a Brahmana because of his origin or of his mother.

Dhammapada, XXVI, 393, 396.

The whole system of hereditary castes, particularly a Brahmana caste enjoying authority solely by right of birth, was anathema to the great Light of Asia, and he constantly endeavoured to have it swept away. And indeed his endeavours seem to have had some success.

Truth Loses against Vested Interests

But the virus of Brahmanism had not been destroyed. The Brahmanas were loath to part with the authority to which they had unlawfully succeeded, and in course of time they re-established their power, and it was Buddhism that was swept out of the land of its birth. The perfect light of that great religion, which, *stripped of its superstitions, is eternal truth*, as the Mahachohan has said,* was snuffed out in the country where it first shone upon the world.

Doctrine of Karma Falsified to Serve the Interests of the Brahmanas

There remained, however, a snag. The Brahmanas might sweep away the teachings of the Buddha, in which it was stated beyond all possibility of doubt that birth and family were no qualification for one's being a Brahmana. But in their very Hindu scriptures, particularly the well-known *Bhagavad Gita*, it was stated that it was one's karma that made one a Brahmana or Kshattriya or Vaishya or Shudra. Nothing, it is true, was said about one's **not** being qualified for a Brahmana's position and authority **by birth**, but that was for the simple reason that at the time those

* *Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom (1st Series), p. 3.*

scriptures were written the hereditary principle had not come into existence. But it **was** stated that it was one's **karma** that determined one's caste. Something had to be done about this. And the Brahmanas, whose ancestors had by their breach of a sacred trust secured their present position to them, did not hesitate to falsify the meaning of the word "Karma" in order to hold on to that position. "Karma", they explained, was what one had earned by one's actions of the past, and one was a Brahmana (or whatever else one was) because one's actions in the past had earned one that particular destiny. This meaning of the word "Karma" could be made to fit into these particular texts and those which stated that Karma was the cause of suffering. But it made nonsense of a large number of other passages in which the word occurred.

Decay of Hinduism

The decay which had set in with the introduction of the hereditary principle into the caste system was aggravated by the distortion of Hindu doctrines and the resulting confusion in the Hindu philosophy, whose exponents were these hereditary trustees of Aryan wisdom.

A way out of the confusion was sought by treating the word "Karma" as being very fluid in meaning, a sort of blank cheque to which any value might be attached which would make some semblance of sense of the particular passage in which it occurred. And it is in this debased form that the doctrine of "Karma"

remains to this day. And it is this debased doctrine of "Karma" that Theosophists have taken over, in all good faith, from Brahmanism and are trying to disseminate all over the world. As Mr. J. Ramsperger has written in *The Canadian Theosophist* (June, 1941, p. 121).

The theory of Karma is one of the most important concepts of the Theosophical doctrine, but it is also the most misunderstood and bungled up part of the teaching. The principal cause of this is that it has been taken over by the Theosophists almost entirely from the Hindus and Brahmanas. That the Hindus and the Brahmanas doctored the theory in such a way as to enable them to defend their own personal and caste interest, is obvious.

Dr. Besant's Treatment of the Word, "Karma," in Her Translation of the *Gita*

It did not escape Dr. Besant's notice that the meaning that was attached to the word "Karma," popularly and by Theosophists, could not be made to fit it in the large majority of passages in the *Gita* in which it is found. It is a significant fact that in her translation of that peerless work, whereas she left other words in their Sanskrit form—words such as *Sankhya*, *Yoga*, *Maya*, *Atma*, *Mahatma*, *Adhyatma*, *Omkara*, *Purusha*, *Pitris*, *Sattva*, *Rajas*, *Tamas*—she found she could not allow the word "Karma" to stand, and has rendered it by one English word or another.

It will be said that these Sanskrit words are familiar to everyone and do not need to be translated;

that, moreover, they have no true English equivalents. But that applies also to " Karma ". In fact, there is no Sanskrit word that is more commonly used by Theosophists than " Karma ". If they truly understood it, there should be no need to substitute an English word for it. But she found that the word could not possibly be made to bear the meaning given to it by Brahmanism and Theosophy, and has rendered it by words such as " duty ", " obligation ", " works ", etc. It was obvious that in the passages in question the word, " Karma ", was being used of what the person **does himself** and not—as " Karma " is made to mean now—the things that happen **to** him. For example, it is said that

Agriculture, cattle-farming and trade are the Vaishya's karma, born of his own nature. XVIII, 44.

The meaning should be clear enough: that anyone whose karma or natural inclination consists of any of these things is a Vaishya by nature and falls into that caste.

Even the use of the word " action " as a rendering of " Karma " generally leaves the meaning of the passage obscure if it does not make nonsense of it. The expressions " bondage to Karma " and " freedom from Karma " are clear enough when one understands that Karma is that action alone which is done by innate impulse, coming from the past, and that bondage to Karma means nothing more or less than being a bond slave to one's impulses and passions, and that

freedom from Karma means emancipation from such bondage. But when the expressions "bondage to action" and "freedom from action" are used instead, one is left puzzling what one is expected to understand by them.

Theories to Describe the *Modus Operandi* of "Karma"

Theories have been propounded which attempt to describe the *modus operandi* of "Karma" (in the falsified sense of the word).

But all such theories are entirely fanciful.* And they perforce **must be**. For the simple reason that the "law" which they are intended to explain has not itself been observed. It is itself only a theory. No single concrete example of a "karmic effect" has yet been traced to its "cause" so as to leave us in no doubt as to the connection between the two.

The history of Science abounds in theories which attempted to account for natural phenomena, and which, accepted for a time, have later proved to be false. But at least the facts themselves, of which they purported to give the *raison d'être*, were certain and indubitable. When astronomers before the time of Newton propounded theories to account for the fact that the planets circled round the sun, and the satellites round their respective planets, at least the fact itself was certain. The movements of the planets and

* I have discussed these theories in *The Theosophist* of February, 1943, pp. 412-415.

their satellites could be observed and their rates and directions calculated. In fact it was from a study of the rate of motion of the Moon and his discovery that the rate at which it "falls towards" the Earth conforms to exactly the same law which governs the rate at which an apple falls to the ground that Newton lighted on the great truth that it is the force of gravitation that holds the Solar System together.

But those who pretend to give the reason why for the "law of Karma" have no such observable facts to work on.

The Distorted Doctrine of "Karma" Is Sterile—

The distorted doctrine of "karma" is like all false doctrines, utterly sterile. Even if it were true, the knowledge of it would still be quite useless until it should be possible to trace each piece of what is called "karma" to its source. Now look at this :

Grady K. was on his way home about 2 a.m. He was riding on air because his girl had just consented to marry him. He knew he was driving too fast, but he felt like driving fast ; in fact, he was flying. He was probably doing 60 miles an hour when he hit the milk waggon. The driver was killed. Grady was unhurt.

The Reader's Digest

It will be said that it was the driver's "karma" that Grady should run into his waggon and kill him. But how in the name of Reason can the fact of Grady's being crazy with joy and driving rashly be the effect of something that the unfortunate victim of his rash-

ness had done in a former life? And of what use is it saying it was the latter's "karma" if it can't be traced to its cause and shown **how** it was the natural effect of that cause? If it were possible to trace "karma" to its cause and so to be able to foresee with certainty and accuracy what the "karmic effect" of any action would be, we should know what actions to avoid and what to do. But that has not been done for a single piece of "karma" in such a way as to be at all convincing.

—and Is Even Fraught with Serious Harm

But the popular doctrine of "karma" is not only useless. It is even worse. It can lead to, and **has** led to, teachings which are positively dangerous. Teachings, be it said, which follow from the main doctrine by a process of reasoning that is perfectly logical.

If it is true that nothing can happen to you which is not the effect "by the operation of natural laws" of something you have done in the past, then, obviously, there is a certain amount, no more, no less, of "bad karma" that can happen to you, and also a certain amount of "good karma." All this "bad karma," then, **must** come to one sooner or later. This belief produces a fatalistic attitude and a sense of helplessness when beset by evils, "flopping." Why try to remedy what **must** be?

It produces not only this sense of helplessness with regard to one's own misfortunes, but indifference

to the misfortunes of others. As Mr. Ramsperger says,

It was a welcome excuse to be indifferent to the conditions of the poorer classes by telling them that it was "their karma to be poor," or "that they deserved it."

There are some who would even be inclined to **welcome** misfortune when it should come to them, in the belief that they were getting it over and done with, "working off their bad karma."

But we have not yet reached the peak of absurdity. The teaching is being given in all seriousness that we should not **wait** for misfortune to come our way, but actually **draw** it down upon ourselves, on the assumption that every piece of "bad karma" that one suffers reduces by one the number on one's tally.

Could there be a teaching more pernicious than that? It is of no use saying that it is too patently absurd for anyone to take seriously. There is no teaching so absurd but there will be found some people, with more fervour than commonsense, who will believe it, and even act upon it. There are, in fact, numbers of men to be found in India, chiefly round about the sacred places, who deliberately court suffering, men who hold up an arm until it withers, or keep a fist clenched until the nails grow into the palm, or submit to pain and disfigurement of some other kind, all in the belief that they are thereby "working off their bad karma".

This "tally of bad karma" idea raises an utterly vain hope in the minds of its adherents, the hope that a time will come when no further misfortune of any kind can befall them. They ignore a most important truth: that Pain does not inhere in the occasion of it but in the person who feels it. Thus, instead of devoting their energies to a schooling of themselves so as to make themselves immune from pain, or at least less subject to it, they waste them in "working off their bad karma". There is only one way of making yourself absolutely secure against the things happening to you in life that you don't want to happen, and that is by getting rid of all karmic urge to enter this life, and keeping out of it—Nirvana.

The Truth about Karma is Beautiful and Wholesome

The truth about Karma is something which is at the same time thoroughly wholesome and full of beauty, as is clear from a passage from a letter from the Master K. H., which Dr. Besant quoted in her manual, *Karma*.

Every thought of man, upon being evolved passes into the inner world and becomes an active entity by associating itself, coalescing, we might term it, with an elemental—that is to say, with one of the semi-intelligent forces of the kingdoms. It survives as an active intelligence—a creature of the mind's begetting—for a longer or shorter period proportional with the original intensity of the cerebral action which generated it. Thus a good

thought is perpetuated as an active, beneficent power, an evil one as a maleficent demon. And so man is continually peopling his current in space with a world of his own, crowded with the offspring of his fancies, desires, impulses and passions; a current which reacts upon any sensitive or nervous organization which comes in contact with it, in proportion to its dynamic intensity. The Buddhist calls it his "*Skandha*"*, the Hindu gives it the name of "*Karma*". The Adept evolves these shapes consciously; other men throw them off unconsciously.

Now let us see from an example or two what this means.

A person, "A", observes the unhappy condition of another and there comes to him a feeling of sympathy and the desire to do something to improve the latter's condition. Although he may do nothing about

* The word "*Skandha*" is from a root meaning "ascend", and is a close and recognisable relative of the latter word. It was applied originally to the trunk—the ascending part—of a tree. The trunk being the basis from which the branches spring and take their particular form and nature, a fairly obvious metaphor likened it to a person's character, from which his thoughts, desires and actions spring and take their particular form and nature. So a secondary meaning of "*Skandha*" is the aggregate of all those things that make up an individual, or, as the Master K. H. puts it, *that form and constitute the physical and mental individuality we call man.* (*The Mahatma Letters*, p. 111.)

Compare this with the root meaning of the word "character", which, in the original Greek, is "a die or seal," something that has a set form or shape, which it gives to all things that emanate from it, the "shapes" that are mentioned in the last sentence of the passage quoted.

it at that time, the thought becomes a force which, reinforced later by other thoughts akin to it, becomes a driving power so insistent that he feels himself carried along by it into doing something to alleviate the unfortunate one's distress.

The same sight of another's distress may produce in "B" a sense of repulsion and thoughts allied to that. These leave their appropriate traces from which there grows a force that drives him to take some action with regard to the other which would hardly be humanitarian.

But, whatever he does, that is his karma, just as it is A's karma to alleviate distress. One's karma is what one is carried along into doing by the force of the current created by one's fancies, desires, impulses and passions of the past. This force is generally likened to a rolling wheel or a revolving potter's wheel, but the Master likens it here to the dynamic current of a river.

The *dynamic intensity* of any such force, good or bad, coming from the past, depends on the strength of the thoughts and feelings from which it springs. It must be understood that it is not only thoughts which are **unaccompanied** by action that set these forces going, but also, and more especially, those which **accompany** action. (See Appendix, p. 73)

It is in this way that all those forces have been generated which we bring with us from the past, and which constitute our Karma in the present. And each of which, according to its *dynamic intensity* (what

I have repeatedly referred to in *Human Nature* as the strength, impetus, power, etc., of Karma) not only governs our own actions in the present, but also reacts on any sensitive or nervous organization which comes in contact with it. I have devoted a whole chapter in *Human Nature* to this aspect of Karma, which I have called *The Infectiousness of Karma*.

Now these forces—tendencies, impulses, etc.,—that we find in our nature are capable of being examined and traced to their sources, as I have shown in the first half of *Human Nature*. From a study of this we are enabled to foresee what influence our thoughts, feelings and actions in the present are going to have on our conduct in the future. We are thus enabled, if we would take the necessary pains, to train ourselves to control these forces coming from the past, and to so shape our thoughts, feelings and actions in the present that the forces which we shall take with us into the future—our Karma in the days to come—will be good and beautiful. It is just this that the Adepts have learnt to do, as indicated in the last part of the quotation given above. How we must set about to achieve this for ourselves is a problem to the study of which the second half of *Human Nature* is devoted.

It will be seen that an indispensable preliminary is for us to be able to look into our Karma and to see from where our natural and characteristic urges and impulses spring, and whither, if they are allowed to express themselves in action, they are likely to lead.

It is only by learning to do this and, further, by watching every step we take, fashioning our every act with the greatest circumspection, that we learn to *evolve these shapes consciously*.

Hence, LOOK AT YOUR KARMA.

NEWTON'S THREE LAWS OF MOTION IN THEIR APPLICATION TO KARMA

The Law—or rather, **Laws**—of Karma are in truth nothing more than the familiar Laws of Newton in their application to the superphysical, in which they are found to be as fully valid as in their purely physical application.

Let us look again at Newton's three Laws of Motion. They are enunciated by him as follows:—

1. If no force acts on a body in motion, it continues to move uniformly in a straight line.
2. If force acts on a body, it produces a change of motion proportional to the force and in the same direction.
3. When one body exerts force on another, that other reacts with equal force upon the one.

Law 1. **Continuity of Motion**

The first law states that anything that is in motion will continue in motion indefinitely if it encounters no interference.

Now this is a statement of the fundamental Law of Karma, the motion in question being that of the spirit. We should rather use the plural, the **motions** of the spirit. All the motions of the spirit, the natural

urges and tendeneies which make up our nature, our Karma, are merely a continuation of the motions which had been generated in our spirit at some earlier time, and these will continue unchanged as long as nothing is done to change them, bringing us back into the same condition of things again and again and again *ad infinitum*. This is the "constant rolling on" of Karma, likened by the ancients to a wheel which goes on turning indefinitely, and symbolised by the Svastika, the wheel which continues turning of its own inherent motion.

Most of us are inclined to allow ourselves to be carried along by our Karma, our impulses, the motions of our spirit which come with us from the past. But many of us at times, and a few very often, apply the force of our will to change one or other of the motions of the spirit, either to accelerate it or to moderate it. And that brings us to the Second Law.

Law 2. 'Change of Motion Proportional to Force Applied

We are too apt to believe that a casual application of the will is going to produce a great change in our nature, that the resolve one makes on one's way home from church will result in a complete change of heart. But the change is always proportional to the will force applied. If we want to make a radical change in our nature, we must go on applying the force of our will, strenuously, repeatedly, and over long stretches of time, to achieve our purpose. This is true whether our

purpose is to speed up the desirable motions of the spirit or moderate those that are undesirable. It must be remembered with regard to the latter that the momentum of Karma has been gathering over an immense past, which explains the strength of our animal propensities and the need for a corresponding effort to bring them under control.

On this depends the whole principle of Yoga—systematic, unremitting, strenuous and wisely directed effort to reform our nature, our Karma.

Law 3. Retroaction

In this we have the penal or Nemesis aspect of Karma, the aspect which is given the greatest attention.

Now let us get the **truth** of this Law in its application to Karma. There is—as always with truth—nothing involved or obscure about it. Roughly stated it is this: The amount of pleasure or pain that is occasioned by anything that occurs to one depends entirely upon one's Karma, one's character. It is not the **occurrence** itself that is the effect of Karma: that is the error of the perverted doctrine of "Karma".

The latter doctrine declares that if, for example, during an earthquake, two houses in a locality are destroyed while the others escape damage, it is because of certain deeds that the owners of those two houses had done in a previous life which bring that **misfortune** on them. It is not shown **how** those deeds operate as a cause to bring about that destruction as an effect. It is absurd to say that those forgotten deeds were the

cause of the earthquake in that particular locality, or of its having that particular destructive effect. Certainly not a shred of evidence has been adduced to prove either of these propositions.

Nor is this the true doctrine of Karma of Aryan philosophy, which, with respect to the example before us, may be put thus. If, of these two men, to whom precisely the same thing has occurred, destruction of property, one suffers intense grief whereas the other feels little or no pain at the loss, it is because of their respective karmas, which they bring with them from the past. Karma is the **cause** of pain, not the **occasion** of pain, in this case loss of property. The two men in question may be likened to two dogs that have been chained up, of which one keeps on pulling at his chain while the other sits quiet. The first, of course, feels the pain of the chain pulling at his neck. What is the cause of the pain? Not the chain, because the other dog also has a chain round his neck, but feels no pain. The chain is only the **occasion** of the pain. The real **cause** of the pain is the retroactive force created by the force of his own pull at the chain.

This is exactly the principle of Newton's Third Law. If you strike a wall, you will find that the force of the impact which acts back on you is exactly the same as that on the wall.

Now all our karmas are forces generated in the past which continue to act in the present. In so far as a force succeeds in its purpose, we have pleasure ;

in far as it does not, we have pain. If a force is successful, the pleasure it gives tends to make us increase the force. If that too is successful, our pleasure is greater, and that again tends to make us increase the force of that karma still more. But the greater the force of Karma, the greater will be the **pain** when that force is unsuccessful. This is true as much of human groups of any kind—families, classes, nations—as it is of individuals. It is thus that a person's sins are visited on him, and that the sins of the father are visited on the children and children's children.

We have an example of the latter before our eyes at the present moment in the case of Germany. Frederick the Great initiated the policy of wanton and sudden aggression and got away with it, and with Silesia into the bargain. Bismarck continued the policy, and he too found it paying, having acquired Schleswig-Holstein and Alsace-Lorraine as a result. Unprovoked aggression had become part of the karma of German rulers. But when William II pursued that policy in 1914 he came to grief and brought disaster on the country. That, however, didn't prevent Hitler from carrying the policy to a still higher pitch of impudence and faithlessness, bringing still greater suffering to his country.

The man who has accustomed himself to inordinate wealth will find poverty all the more unbearable when he should find himself right in it, whether in this life or in a succeeding one. To be humbled is more insuffer-

ably galling to an overbearing man than to an ordinary person. The inquisitive woman suffers intense torture when another person evades her questions and leaves her entirely in the dark about the things she is burning to know. Nor can she be brought to see that it is she that is the author of her own sufferings, that if she would only set aside her inquisitiveness about things that don't concern her, she would immediately put an end to her own sufferings. The busybody feels as if she had been slapped in the face when she finds that the advice that she had given, gratis and unsolicited, is completely ignored. She too can't be made to see that she would save herself that chagrin if she would curb her meddlesomeness and see that other people have every right to follow their own inclinations in matters which are their own concern.

Thus we see how Karma brings us pain as easily as it does pleasure, and how we can avert that pain by freeing ourselves from the bondage of Karma.

It is these eternal, yet simple, truths that constituted the basis upon which the entire scheme of Hindu and Buddhist philosophy was built, as I have endeavoured to show in my book, *Human Nature*. It is only by getting to understand Karma in general and one's own karma in particular that one can hope to secure freedom from its bonds and so make oneself secure from pain and tribulation.

Hence, LOOK AT YOUR KARMA.

FROM TRIBULATION TO NIRVANA

The Anatomy of Pain

What precisely is the nature of Suffering, of Pain, of Sorrow ? Does Pain subsist in the conditions which occasion the pain, or does it subsist in oneself ?

There are certain phenomena in connection with it that must be kept in view in any study of the nature of Pain :

1. A circumstance that is continuous and unvarying will be found to give intense pain at certain times, and at other times give very little pain or none at all. For example : One has been robbed of something that one had valued greatly. Thinking over one's loss will be found to cause intense irritation at certain times, and at others to occasion only a mild annoyance or leave one altogether unaffected.

2. The same circumstance will be found to cause one person poignant grief and another no pain at all, although both stand in the same relation to that circumstance. If, in the example we have just taken, instead of a single person, we have a husband and wife robbed of something that both made equal use of and valued equally, the circumstance is not likely to cause the same amount of pain to both. It is almost certain that they will suffer to a different degree, and probably to a **very** different degree.

It is even possible for the same thing to cause one person crushing agony, and another, pleasure, although both stand in the same relation to it. The financial crash that prostrates Colonel Newcome gives Clive Newcome almost a thrill of joy. "Good-bye to our fortune and bad luck go with her—I puff the prostitute away."

Mental Pain Is Created by Oneself

From all this it is clear that Pain does not subsist in the occasion of it but in what one does in relation to it. A solid oaken door is not in itself painful. It is hurling oneself against it that makes it so. So is it with mental pain. It is the pressure against the occasion of the pain that causes the pain. The whole of Colonel Newcome's being presses towards providing his son and daughter-in-law with the worldly wealth which would give them a place in that society to which such wealth was a necessary ticket of admission. He never paused to ask himself if such an aim in life was a worthy one; he joined in the pursuits of his associates, treating the direction in which so many were going as naturally the right one. But Clive's will never pressed in the direction of wealth or being accepted into a society of people whom he did not find to be any better or truly happier than those who were outside it. And the obstruction that raised itself between him and these things in no way hurts him who does not thrust himself against it.

So, if one withdraws the volitional push which is

the real cause of the pain, one puts an end to the pain.

So Is Physical Pain

But, it will be argued, how can one end **physical** pain this way—the pain of an aching tooth, of a burn or laceration?

This is a matter that will provide a most interesting field of investigation, and it is probable that it will be found that physical pain too can be ended or suspended in the same way. It is certain that in India yogis who have trained themselves to it can lie on a bed of nails, or walk over live coals, without seeming to feel any pain. The subject, as I have just said, is a most fascinating one, but it is impossible to enter into it in the course of a short essay.

I should like to suggest, however, that our ideas of the sensation of physical pain will need revision, and it is probable that in the light of an understanding of the true *modus operandi* of sensation an explanation of the phenomena above described will be reached.

We regard the nerves of the body as being at rest as long as there is nothing to activate them, no sensation to communicate to the brain, and as being stirred from rest by the sensation which they carry to the brain. But the truth is probably something like this: There are impulses—electric, I should say, or, maybe, impulses of some other kind—going out **unceasingly** from the brain to all the sensory nerve-ends. As long as these impulses encounter nothing foreign, the brain

remains a blank as far as sensations of any kind are concerned. But, as soon as they encounter anything foreign in any particular field of nerve-ends, the sensation is conveyed to the brain.

In short, the process is on the same principle as Radar, only much more perfected in that the nerves convey to the brain information, not merely of the presence of something, but also such things as whether it is hard or soft, warm or cold, wet or dry, light or heavy.

The Suspension of Physical Pain

Now it is obvious that, if, as in Radar, one could suspend the outgoing impulses, the particular sensations which result from those impulses encountering something foreign would never reach one's consciousness. And, maybe, it is in this way that the pain of the nails or live coals is kept from the consciousness. It is certainly not done by any dulling of the brain or of the nerve-ends, because the performers—shall we call them?—are in full possession of their senses, and an examination of the soles of their feet or of their skins show them to be fully capable of sensation.

The subject is certainly a fascinating one in view of the possibilities it opens up. If it is possible to suspend sensation—and there are many other things that Indian yogis can do which seem to suggest this—then a person who has acquired the power could under-

go a surgical operation without being treated with any of the usual anaesthetics.

Akin to the power of suspending sensation is that of suspending organic functions, such as the circulation of the blood, a power which many Indian yogis seem to have acquired. This would be most useful to prevent excessive bleeding if that threatend as a result of, say an accident, or in the course of a surgical operation.

The Suspension of Mental Pain

It will, in any case, be readily accepted that much of the **mental** pain that we experience can be terminated, or at least suspended, by what is usually called a "change of attitude", which, put more precisely, is, suspending one's will-push or will-impulse in the direction in which the source of the pain lies.

It is, in fact, true that **all** mental pain can be terminated in the same way, if only we had the requisite faculties to enable us to take the "correct attitude" in the matter and suspend the impulse which is the real cause of the pain.

Karma

That makes us scrutinise this will-thrust to see where it springs from and what it is that makes us press our will in this direction or that and so suffer pain when it comes up against obstruction. From whence come all these urges, impulses and thrusts of our being that we find within us? Because, when we come to take stock of them in order to withhold

our will-pressure on them, we find them to be multitudinous and the task of neutralising them to be herculean. Nay, the task of holding back and bringing to a state of rest any single natural urge is found to be so difficult that we often find it less trying to let it go its way, and take whatever the consequences may be. It is of no use merely **repressing** the urge. We must take the *indriya*, the inherent strength, the "lust," out of it, or at least reduce it appreciably. When we merely **repress** the urge, we generally find that it **gathers strength** from repression and, when we are forced to let it go, it is often found to be stronger than it was before being repressed.

The truth of the matter is we find that we have undertaken the impossible, that we have undertaken to withstand the weight, not of a year or even a lifetime, but of millions of years, of countless lives spent, not only in humanhood, but also in the animalhood which preceded it. These urges of ours are incalculably old and are survivals of animal habits which we have brought with us into humanhood. They make up our KARMA, habits which we had developed in our immeasurably long struggle for existence in the past, and they derive their present strength from the fact that subconsciously we see ourselves as still engaged in that struggle in its more primitive forms and as having the same dangers to combat.

The Evolution of Form and Spirit

How we come to be governed by our karmas—in fact, as far as most of us are concerned, how we come to be the helpless slaves of those karmas—is a vast subject which is of great importance and at the same time most absorbing. I have dealt with it in my book, *Human Nature*. But I shall briefly recapitulate here the salient facts, a knowledge of which seems to me essential in order to understand what follows in this essay. I shall not attempt to substantiate them. For that and for a better understanding of the facts the reader is referred to *Human Nature*.

Let us first assume as established facts: 1. The Evolution of Form, and 2. The Evolution of Spirit.

1. No living thing that exists or has existed in the world was created—as far as concerns the **visible form** wherein it manifests its existence—out of nothing. Nor, if that form is at all complex, has any single factor of it been created out of nothing. Taking as our example the human body, the most complex of organic forms, every single part of it, the eyes, the brain, the heart, the digestive system, nay, every single muscle and nerve, has evolved gradually from small beginnings, the process of evolution being urged on by the struggle for existence. That is a fact that now has general acceptance among the intelligentsia of all nations.

2. But what has not yet been generally accepted is the equally important fact that the spirit which

animates the visible manifestation of its existence has also evolved very gradually over immeasurable ages, and there is no single factor in its make-up but has evolved from small beginnings under the pressure of the struggle for existence. Taking Man again as our example, every single ego that ensouls a human body has evolved gradually, and every single element of our nature, nay, every single habit, mannerism, and peculiarity of nature of every single individual person has its history—its genesis and gradual evolution. We bring with us from all our countless yesterdays the habits, instincts, urges and impulses that we find to be part of our nature. It is all this that makes up our KARMA, our “doing,” which we bring with us from the past and which, with whatever developments and modifications we make in them during this life, we shall carry with us into the future.

Consider for a moment how highly complex is the character of any human being, even the humblest, and then consider how people quite contentedly accept, and base all their ways of thinking on, the staggering fatuity that our existence in this world or any other, our **entire** existence, goes no further back than our birth in this particular life. No, there can be no doubt whatever that we have been in existence here for measureless ages, and shall in all probability continue our existence here for measureless ages to come. And it behoves us in our quest of happiness to establish the basis of a happiness that will endure, not merely for

this brief span of life, but into the countless to-morrows that lie ahead of us.

Look at Your Karma

Our purpose must be, not so much to introduce new karma into our nature, as to shape that which we already have so as to ensure that it will be the cause of as little sorrow as possible and will bring us the maximum of true happiness.

In order to be able to do this at all it is of supreme importance to us to be able to see clearly into our Karma, to see from where each impulse springs and wherein lies its strength: we must be able to look into and understand our nature. **LOOK AT YOUR KARMA.** Scrutinise those springs of feeling and volition that seem to well up from nowhere but in truth come by underground channels from your past. Examine them closely, study them, analyse them and see if you can trace them, each to its respective source.

The Potter's Wheel

A study of one's nature discloses the following truth with regard to Karma: All our Karma, our instinctive habits, have developed as a result of constant repetition over measureless ages, and it is the momentum that they have gathered through long and constant use that makes them continue in action. A stock simile used by the sages of ancient India likened Karma to a potter's wheel which goes on revolving after the hand of the potter, which gave it its impetus, has been removed from it.

But what is the hand that actuates Karma, gets it moving with such force that even when it is removed, Karma goes on acting with a momentum which is generally found to be ungovernable? That hand is the will to life. It is the struggle for existence, to hold on to life and hold death off, that makes the lower animals go on repeating the particular actions, whatever they may be: keeping carefully under cover, straining all their senses to observe anything strange in their vicinity, careering off at top speed when discovered, throwing all their powers into the fight for dear life when at bay, or any of the multiplicity of things which an animal does to stave off death and which consequently develop into such strong habits that they are carried by us into humanhood and into conditions in which they are often out of place, but in which, nevertheless, they persist.

You may say: It's all very well to speak of momentum with regard to a physical force, but how can a **habit** be said to gather momentum?

Karma Subsists on Illusion

The answer is this: The oftener one does a particular thing to meet a particular set of conditions, the more readily does one respond with that particular reaction to meet those conditions whenever they arise. That is, the more habitual an action becomes, the more readily does one resort to it as soon as one finds the particular set of conditions present to which it is one's habitual response. This makes one so much the

more prone to respond with that reaction to conditions which are **not** the same as those to which it is one's habitual response, but which one mistakes for them. And when the habit has been in use for untold millennia and has become an ingrained instinct, the tendency to respond with a habitual reaction to a stimulus which is in its essence different to the accustomed one, but which one is deceived into believing to be the same, will be found to have become ungovernable.

And so it comes about that the Karma that we have generated during those long ages spent in animalhood comes into operation in human conditions to which they are often not applicable, but which one is subconsciously deceived into believing to be the same as those with which one had so long been familiar.

This is the **ILLUSION** which is at the root of all Karma—as we are repeatedly told in the ancient scriptures—and which keeps Karma active and gives it its strength. Subconsciously at least, one sees the object of one's karmic urge as vital to one and suffers mortification when frustrated in one's endeavours to attain it.

The Dynamism of Karma Has Its Value

Now the question is : What are we to do about this immense mass of Karma that we bring with us from the past ? Knowing that it all springs from, and subsists on, Illusion, it would seem to be the right thing to do to put an end to all Karma. But that is easier said than done. The Illusion which makes the subconscious

mind see death in the karmic urge not being satisfied gives Karma its immense strength and makes it a herculean labour to stay it, a fact that we discover when we attempt to suspend any one of the vast multiplicity of karmas which throng our being.

Moreover, if we are to apply the principle to Karma at all, then we must apply it to all Karma. But, if we were to suspend all Karma, it would mean suspending life itself. Because life, all life, is maintained by Karma. All the functions of the whole vast complexity of organs of the body—breathing, digestion, the circulation of the blood, and so on—are carried on by Karma which we have acquired in the course of our long evolution from the primordial protoplasm. If it were not so, every function of every single organ of the body would have to be a conscious and deliberate act. So the innate strength of Karma and its tendency to be carried along by its own momentum is not altogether a matter of regret.

Transmutation of Karma

The blind strength of Karma is found to be of the greatest value to us in yet another way. All our karmas, even the basest of them, undergo in the process of evolution a most wonderful transmutation. There can be seen ensconced in the brute karmas which we bring with us from animalhood the germs of sovereign virtues. These develop gradually, transforming in the course of time those base instincts into admirable and valuable attributes. In Greed there is found the insis-

tent drive to all-ness which, when better developed and more distinct in form, becomes the inborn instinct for Thoroughness in all that one strives after; in Inquisitiveness there is the drive to know all about this or that strange thing an animal finds in its vicinity, a tendency which develops into the insistent Know-quest which is the native instinct that goes to make the scientist and philosopher; in the mad Fury with which an animal fights for its life against its foes is that sheer will to survival which develops into the sheer Determination that knows not defeat.

And here is the entrancing wonder of it all: These derived qualities, the virtues which come to enrich our natures, inherit from the brute passions, from which they spring, all their immense strength, and we find ourselves carried along as irresistibly by them as by their baser originals—by the Know-quest which makes the scientist go on trying to penetrate through the obscurity that shrouds the unknown; by the Thoroughness or indomitable Resoluteness or the passion for Cleanliness or whatever else it is that we find to be our good karma.

Tares and Wheat

And so we see that in each of the brute instincts that we bring with us from animalhood a tiny seed (as small and insignificant as *a grain of mustard seed*) of a most valuable quality is to be found, which goes on developing unobserved (*like unto leaven*) in the course of our countless lives down the ages, until a

sovereign quality is found to enrich our character. But during the long ages of its growth, while it is still lacking in maturity and strength, it is found to be inseparable from the animal lust out of which it develops, the two being so interwoven—and, in fact, often indistinguishable—that any attempt to destroy the evil cannot but injure and even destroy the good. Let them grow together, our Lord advises, until the wheat is mature, and then it will be easier to destroy the tares while preserving the good grain.

This, in its figurative application, is found to be extremely difficult and to call for qualities of the highest order. To control our animal urges and instincts is in itself difficult enough, but to do this without injury to the sovereign virtues which derive from them calls for sovereign qualities. And it does not make it any the easier that it is often difficult to distinguish between the tares and the wholesome wheat, between what must be controlled in our natures and what must be fostered. To be domineering may be regarded as a tendency to be deprecated, but the forcefulness of character which enables a strong man to maintain law and order in human society will be regarded as a most valuable asset. But often it is found difficult to tell whether such a man is using this asset in his character for the good of society or whether he is imposing his will imperiously in order either to have his own way or else to maintain his power among his fellows to serve his own ends. The same

sort of difficulty is very often met with in distinguishing between animal Curiosity and that Know-quest which makes one peer into the unknown for information that would be valuable to others besides oneself; between Acquisitiveness and Thoroughness; between Niggardliness and Thrift.

In fact, it is because one does **not** distinguish easily between the original animal karma and its transmuted derivative that the latter takes the strength of the former, that strength subsisting in the subconscious illusion which is at the root of both.

It must not be thought that the transmuted karma supplants its original. The two continue side by side. A person's Acquisitiveness of as much as he can get of the things that make for happiness may have led him to discern the value of moral and spiritual assets in ensuring happiness. But his Acquisitiveness of mere material assets will remain unabated until he himself does something to abate its hold on him. The need to do so will probably be borne in on him when he finds that it gets in the way of the nobler quest.

There comes a period in one's evolution when, the derived virtue having developed a strength of its own, the lusts of the flesh are found to hamper its action and full development, and one considers how one can disencumber oneself of them.

But any attempt to throw off their hold on one soon makes one aware of their irresistible strength and

makes one scrutinise them to see wherein their strength lies. One would get to see, maybe not very clearly at first, that there is something deceptive, something illusory, in their allure.

But it will be found that awareness of the illusion does not by itself remove the fetters of Karma. Although one's conscious reason may see the illusion, subconsciously one sees death in one's karmic urge remaining unfulfilled, and one's efforts to fulfil it only serve to keep the wheel of Karma turning, thus imposing on one the necessity of going on satisfying Karma.

The Problem of Life

That is the great problem of life: We find ourselves impelled forward by forces coming from our past, which are the cause of suffering for us when they come up against obstruction. And yet we find it so difficult to stay those karmic forces. We find that we **must** fulfil Karma. In our attempts to do so we often have to bend all our powers to our purpose and, when we succeed, we tend to be carried by our momentum far past our original purpose and to overdo what we had intended. This results in Karma being given an added force, an *upadhi*, and so given additional power to cause us pain in the future when that karma runs into obstruction.

Overdoing Karma

Most of us have to devote so much of our time and energy to the first side of this problem that we can

give little attention to the Nemesis which awaits every *upadhi* that we add to the karma that we already have. A man who, having struggled desperately for years to reach his goal of an income of so many hundred pounds a year, by an unexpected piece of luck succeeds beyond his expectations and sees his way clear to the making of an income many times greater. He puts no check to his wealth-amassing proclivities and accustoms himself to luxuries such as only the few can afford. But what are his chances of remaining one of those fortunate few? His good fortune may last the whole of this life. But can he be assured of it for the next life, and the one after that, and the countless lives which are to follow? And yet his having accustomed himself to possession of wealth, his having become a spoilt minion of fortune, cannot but make a condition of even average well-being galling to him when he should happen to find himself in it. Why give Karma all-out acceleration because you happen to see the way clear along the short strip of road that lies immediately ahead, this short life? You have no knowledge what's coming round the corner. And unless you have good brakes upon which you can rely to bring Karma to a standstill at short notice, you'll find yourself heading helplessly into disaster.

Even if it were possible to set up a socio-politico-economic system—no country has yet succeeded in setting up one that works at all satisfactorily—which guarantees your Karma a fairly clear run up to a com-

fortable distance—and this is what “security” really is—what guarantee have you of the same security in the countless lives to follow?

Then there's the karma that drives one to get power into one's hands, to obtain control over a political unit, small or great, or of some institution or organisation. One strains all one's abilities to the achievement of this purpose and, after years of endeavour succeeds. But, in doing so, one sees the possibilities opening up before one of extending one's domination over greater and still greater realms. One may allow oneself to be carried forward by the momentum of one's push and may in time have come to accept it as in the established order of creation that one should be the dominating force in one's own part of it. But, even if one can assure oneself of that domination for this life, can one be assured of it for the next life and all the lives that are to come? And yet the greater the authority that one accustoms oneself to, the greater will be one's chagrin when one finds oneself without any authority and yet with the will to it brought over from past lives.

Are Your Brakes Good ?

So you must have Karma completely under control so as to be able to brake it to a standstill at short notice. Have you faculties upon which you can rely to do this, even when you have allowed Karma to get up speed? Do you test yourself occasionally to see if you can reduce the momentum of Karma to any speed

you choose, to see if you can do without all those things that you accustom yourself to ?

Truly, life is a bewildering problem : It calls for all the forces we can command to achieve the purposes we set before ourselves, and yet, when we have them working at full pressure, they can spell terrible disaster for us unless we have them all the time under our control and can, when required, ease off on them to any degree we choose.

Wheels within Wheels

We have been considering things so far as if the problem consisted only of the working out of a purpose in life—a multiple purpose as it generally appears to us—which the karma that we bring with us from all our yesterdays imposes on us. But this problem is made up of a multiplicity of smaller problems which keep arising from day to day, from hour to hour, and from minute to minute, and which are created sometimes as a result of one's having conceived a purpose oneself, but far oftener in aiding or in countering—according as whether one looks on it as good or bad—a purpose conceived by another. And, needless to say, it is the aspiration of all of us to be so equipped, mentally and otherwise, as to be able to deal with each such problem as it arises, and to overcome the difficulties it presents. Now when we come to look into these problems we find that each is a miniature of the basic problem of life. We are impelled by our karma to bend our will towards a particular

purpose in dealing with the problem that has arisen, and while it often happens that we need to strain all our powers to the achievement of that purpose, we need to be on our guard that we are not overcarried by our own push. At any moment something may arise requiring us to rein in our force. Nor must we allow ourselves unthinkingly to employ the method we have habitually employed in dealing with similar problems in the past. There may be in the present that subtle difference which, if not spotted in time, will spell disaster for us if we use the method with which we have overcome similar difficulties in the past.

An Analogy

Life is like a game of cricket: There is the main problem for the Captain of winning the match and, as every cricketer knows, he can easily fail to do that by allowing his side to make too big a score, thus staying in too long when his batsmen have mastered the bowling, leaving insufficient time to his bowlers to get the opposing side out in the allotted time. The Captain has to steer a narrow course between two dangers which threaten him from one side and from the other.

But each change of bowler, each over, nay, each ball that's bowled, presents its own problem. The batsman sees a ball coming up to him that he recognises as of the kind that he has found easy, time and again, to drive through the covers to the boundary, and he braces himself up and begins his swing.

But the moment the ball pitches he sees that it is subtly, but vitally different. He must be able to halt his swing (just when it has gathered momentum) and halt the ball, or it will be his undoing. If his abilities prove unequal to the task, he finds himself beaten.

The bowler too has a narrow course to steer between two dangers: The danger of the balls he sends up being wild and ill-directed as a result of his bowling as fast as he can so as to beat the bat; and the danger of their becoming easy for the batsman to hit as a result of his directing them slowly and carefully.

An Extremely Narrow Path

In order, then, to maintain Beingness—by which I mean a sense of being, a sense of keeping on one's feet in life—we must be able to steer a narrow course between opposed dangers.

This is the Path, the extremely narrow Path* of Beingness. The Lord Buddha likens the Noble Path to a narrow causeway across the troublous waters of life†—could any simile be better than that? Keeping one's feet on it is Dhammapada, literally “poise-footing”,

* Sometimes called the “Razor's Edge”. But surely this expression is itself an exaggeration, an overstepping of one's purpose, and so fails to keep on the “Razor's Edge”. In any case it is somewhat misleading, suggesting something that is painful to walk on. But, when one has the necessary faculties to enable one to keep one's feet on the Path, far from being painful, it is joy supreme.

† *Mahāparinibbānasutta*, I, 34.

maintaining by featness of foot one's poise between perils into which we are constantly in danger of falling on one side and the other.

Now that may sound commonplace. Surely it's a fact that we have all come to understand with regard to life in this world.

This World Is Ours for Keeps

But here's something that Theosophy has to add to our knowledge which makes a vital difference to all this: It is the all-important fact of our continuity in this world. This world is ours forever, and if we want to keep on our feet in it and not go on being flung down this side and that by the multiplicity of currents and cross-currents that swirl in and about us in life, it is only by developing in ourselves the necessary faculties which will enable us to do so. It is of no use looking on the problem as only a temporary one that will vex us only for this short life, or thinking that any faculties that we may develop to meet it will be of no use to us once this life is over. In all our to-morrows we shall find ourselves face to face with exactly the same problem as that which we are up against to-day, as that which we wrestled with in all our yesterdays, and the faculties we shall have at our command to meet it in the days ahead will be those which we take with us from our to-day.

Even in Theosophical circles, where repeated rebirth into this life is accepted as the prospect which lies before us, the hope is held out of ultimate escape

from the cycle of birth and death and so, it is commonly believed, from this world. And this, presumably, by the action of certain Lords of Karma, who apparently have it in their power to decide whether one is to come back into life or not. But this bolstering up of a hope of ultimate escape from this world tends to foster geophobia, repulsion from life on this earth. It must be understood that there will never come a time when any of us shall turn his back on this world as a thing that he has done with, and that it is only by At-one-ness with all life on this earth, identifying oneself completely with it, that the desire for **personal** enjoyment of the things that attract people into incarnation is dissolved.

The more fully one attains to At-one-ness the easier does it become for one to ease up the wheel of birth and death and ultimately to yield up entirely any desire to enter into incarnation.

But those who have attained to such At-one-ness do not turn their backs on life. On the contrary they are more fully immersed in life.

In the meanwhile, as long as this consummation remains only a far-off divine event for us, we shall go on returning again and again into physical life on this earth, and shall find ourselves facing the old problem, with only those faculties to meet it that we shall have developed in earlier lives.

The Faculties Essential to Beingness

So it behoves us to find out what those sovereign faculties are and how they can be developed, and then to do what we can to develop them.

We have to consider on the one hand what faculties we require to enable us to **achieve** any purposes that we conceive. Then we must seek to discover what faculties we must have at our command to insure against our being overcarried by our efforts to achieve that purpose.

The Factors of Success in Doing Karma

Since by far the larger part of the energy and time devoted by men to anything is given to the **achievement** of some purpose or other, and only an insignificant amount to that of guarding against **overstepping** their purposes, we shall find that it is fairly generally known what the faculties are that are required on the first side of our enquiry.

Now if we made this very thing our purpose—the acquisition of the qualities requisite for success in achieving a purpose—we should find them to be:

1. **Knowledge.** Knowledge of what it is we want and of the means we must employ to attain it. In the example we have taken, we should need to know what the qualities are that we must develop, and what we must do to develop them. Knowledge should have clarity, precision, completeness and certainty, and the better it qualifies in each of these respects, the more useful it is.

But even if it were perfect in all these respects, Knowledge by itself would not achieve our purpose for us. Something else is needed, namely—

2. **Desire.** Or call it Keeness, or Enthusiasm. Supposing in our example one knows clearly, exactly, fully and without doubt what the qualities are which constitute the pre-requisites of success in the attainment of a purpose, one would need to have a desire to possess those qualities. The more ardent that desire is, the more certain can one be of success.

Yet, even if one has Knowledge and Desire in perfection, they would not by themselves ensure success. Many a time has one yearned most intensely for something which has been clearly perceived, but one has never attained it, and all for want of—

3. **Will.** Courage to purpose it and Resoluteness in bending one's powers to the achievement of one's purpose. The stronger our Will, that is, the more resolutely we bend all our powers to our purpose, the more certain are we of achieving it. And yet something else is needed besides Knowledge, Desire and Will to ensure success. And this is—

4. **Action,** the actual doing of what is necessary to attain our purpose. The greater our readiness to act, and the more we can go on tirelessly doing what is necessary, the surer can we be of attaining that purpose.

That these are the pre-requisites of success will not be disputed. In fact, as I have already said, they are well-known to be such, and the reader will recognise them as the qualities which he himself has found to be such.

Each of us will, according to his own bent, his personal karma, be inclined to attach more value to one of these qualities than to the others. But we recognise that they are **all** indispensable to success.

A Sense of the Goodwill of Others Transmutes Karma

There is another factor which plays an important part in securing success to us. But it is **not** indispensable to success. It cannot be included among the faculties which make for success, because it is something which is outside oneself and which is, to some extent, outside one's control.

But, although it is not indispensable to success, it **is** indispensable to one's satisfaction with success and to a sense of security in it. That factor is a sense of the goodwill of others towards oneself in one's doing of Karma. It is possible to obtain success, and even to **maintain** it, in the teeth of opposition. But we can never know true satisfaction until we feel that others are consenting to our success, that they even welcome it and are prepared to promote it, because in some way they derive life from it.

The natural instincts which we bring with us from animalhood and primitive humanhood incline us to regard life as something that we maintain **as against** the other creatures that we encounter in life, and all that we do we tend to regard as done against their opposition.

If one's habitual way of maintaining life, one's karma, is the use of power, that power is regarded as exercised as against the opposition of others. This is the instinct of the bully. But however strong he may be, and however complete his ascendancy over his fellows in forcing them to submit to his will, he is never truly happy because he is all the time conscious that, although they submit to his power and acquiesce in it, they do not welcome it.

And yet there will be occasions when it will be welcome to them, when, for example, he uses it to protect them from the violence of strangers or to maintain order and justice, however crude, among themselves.

Now, a taste of the sense of others welcoming his power and deriving life from him will be found by him to have a pleasant flavour, which will tend to make him want to repeat it. In other words, he will have tasted of the delights of using the power and ascendancy which he finds native to him to benefit, not himself, but others. Here we have the beginning of that subtle and wonderful transmutation into a

sovereign virtue of the base karma which he brings from animalhood.

The sense that his native ascendancy can be welcome to others sets him trying to exercise it in such a way as to make it as welcome to them as he can. They value his power and dynamism if he employs those assets to do what others, lacking them, would be unable to do: maintain law and order, and give the members of the body politic a definite purpose in life and keep them to that purpose. In this his karma of exercising power moves forward with a sense, not only of ease, but also of others in general appreciating it and supporting it. And this gives him a happiness that he has never known before, because it combines two things that are essential to happiness: Freedom and Honour, a sense of freedom to do one's will, and a sense that, in doing it, one has the honour of one's fellows.

Advancement in Evolution Brings with it the Necessity of Streamlining One's Character

His natural inclination will be to expand this source of happiness. The transmuted karma will prove to have derived from the primitive animal karma all its *indriya*, its strength. It will not have replaced the original, which will still be found in his nature, side by side with it. That is, while he strives to use his ascendancy for the general benefit, he will not have given up his tendency to use it for personal ends.

But the more the transmuted karma develops, the more will the manifestations of the primitive urge be found to hamper it.

One might find a parallel in this: As long as vehicles moved at a rate of not more than 15 miles an hour, anything in their shape which allowed of air-resistance went unnoticed. But, as they developed higher speeds, the need to eliminate all those parts of the vehicle which, by offering resistance to the air through which it must move, hampered that speed, became more and more insistent, forcing the builders to give it a form which has come to be called streamlined.

In the same way, the more our strong man develops into a statesman—as he would in the course of many lives—the more do his failings come in his way. The use of powers for selfish ends, which would pass unnoticed in an ordinary person, becomes a serious obstruction in a statesman, and the karma of controlling the affairs of a body politic, small or great, has now become so strong, that he is prepared, and in fact feels himself compelled, to sacrifice the primitive karma in order to advance the derived karma.

The good wheat has now a strength of its own sufficient to allow of the tares being removed without danger to the wheat.

The making of the statesman is but an example of a process which will be found to be active in other karmas. Out of the brute karmas that we bring

with us from animalhood develop the most splendid qualities, which go to make the scientist, the healer, the builder, the artist, and so forth. But the stronger the good karma becomes and the more one's particular high purpose in life takes hold of one, the more will the primitive karma be found to hamper one and the more insistent becomes the necessity for eliminating or at least controlling them.

Their hampering effect is felt in more ways than one. In the first place they get in the way of one's good karma. One has some sort of acceptance as a leader amongst one's fellows and would like to be given a fuller control over their destinies. But one finds that such things as one's high-handedness, deceitfulness, bad temper, personal greed, stand in the way of one's attaining such an object.

The Sense of the Goodwill or Illwill of Others towards Oneself Is Largely the Result of One's Own Conduct towards Them

There is a deeper way in which the Nemesis of such karmas operates. We have seen that it is the aspiration of all of us to have the happiness of having our karmas moving forward with a **sense of** the goodwill of all concerned. Now this sense of having the goodwill of others is created very largely by what one does oneself. Whenever one does anything—however secretly, or however much one may disguise one's secret sentiments in connection with what one does overtly—in the doing of which one has a sense of its

being done against the interests of others and so encountering their opposition, actual or potential, it must of necessity tinge the concept that one has of others in general in their attitude to oneself with a certain amount of hostility. And that concept stays with us and in all that we do we have a sense of this hostility of other people in general. Here again we see Karma operating as Nemesis, in that it is a habit of thinking we ourselves create which later works against us.

We can, of course, undo it—"live it down," as the expression is—by being careful, in all we do, to think of others quite honestly with love and goodwill, and by doing only those things with which we can associate this thought. This will have the effect of our seeing them in an attitude of goodwill to ourselves when that goodwill is vital to us.

We Shall All Be Together to the End of Time

We bring with us from animalhood a karmic sense of our own impermanence in this world, and also of the impermanence of those we meet. Our natural instincts incline us to regard those that we encounter in life as concerning us only for the fleeting period of actual contact. Hence we care little what their attitude is towards us and what sense of that attitude we take away with us from our dealings with them. But if we could only make ourselves realise that all the people we encounter in life are our co-mates down the long ages and into eternity and are all permanent parts

of the one life, we should learn to attach more importance to the karmic relations we set up with them.

The Subconscious Concept of Others in General

Even if things were as we subconsciously regard them, if we were never again to meet the people that we meet with to-day, all the same the subconscious concept that we should have of others in general would be tinged with the particular shade of feeling which we entertain towards those that we have to do with now and which we believe them to entertain towards us.

This subconscious concept of others in general has a very vital effect upon our actions. If one has a concept of goodwill as between oneself and other people, it allows of one's karma moving forward easily to its purpose. If, on the other hand, the concept is one of mutual illwill and suspicion, one's karma moves, if at all, with difficulty.

So Nemesis acts in shaping our subconscious concept of others in general according to what we ourselves have done.

The Dangers of a Policy of Appeasement

Does this mean that in everything that we do we must seek to please others, doing nothing that we feel is not to their liking? This truly is a danger to be guarded against, a pitfall into which many people, pursuing a high and shining ideal, find themselves falling. There is the inescapable fact that, no matter what we do we shall often—and, maybe, quite unexpectedly—find

ourselves up against malice, cunning, unprovoked aggression, deceit, and other unpleasant karmas in others. Even Christ himself met with all these. What is one to do with respect to anything of this kind that one may find oneself treated to?

To decide that the question that one must ask oneself is: What effect is one's action going to have on one's karma? Again, LOOK AT YOUR KARMA. But here it is a scrutiny of what one's karma is likely to be in the future as a result of what one does now that one must look at. Supposing one is cheated or insulted or assaulted, one may counter hostility with hostility, taking what action one deems necessary to get the better of the other party. But that is obviously going to have the effect of giving others in general a hostile appearance in one's concept of them.

One may take no action in the matter, turning a blind eye to the evil in what's done to one and allowing others to do their will, but with a feeling somehow of not having got the better of the situation. One will find oneself later, when one dwells in memory over the event, feeling a sense of frustration, of not having righted oneself then, and will find oneself doing in imagination what one feels was necessary to put one on one's feet. In so doing one is all the time generating a karma of hostility, which again has the same effect as if one had in the first instance taken the necessary action to redress oneself.

In point of fact it is generally found to be even worse, raking up more hatred than if one had at the outset taken the necessary action to right oneself.

The ideal thing, if one has the necessary qualities, is to do as little as possible by way of redress and yet feel at the end that one is on one's feet, without any feeling of hostility towards the other party.

The Four Qualifications for the Path

Now what are the qualities that would enable us to do this ?

1. Surely one is **Wisdom**, Discernment, that Perceptiveness of mind that can see the essential realities of a situation and see **through** the illusory appearance that Karma presents to the mind. It is over and above Knowledge. It is the power to Knowledge, that acuteness of intellect which allows of one discarding stored up knowledge and seeing the essential facts of a situation for oneself.

2. Another such quality would be **At-one-ness**, that deep love and Sympathy which allows of one's identifying oneself with, being completely at-one with, the other person and seeing things through his eyes. We have seen that in evil karma there is the germ of good and that that germ of good is enabled to develop through the karma meeting with the goodwill of others. Love, At-one-ness, Compassion, allows of one's perceiving that germ of good in others' karma and of aiding its development.

3. Many people would say that the quality that would best enable one to overlook an act of hostility towards oneself would be Conscious Power, **Power-unto-Assurance**, which gives one a sense of security in Life which that particular act in no way imperils.

4. Others would maintain that the quality that really enables one to set aside a Karmic urge is **Adeptness**, that psychic adroitness that enables one to stay an impulse immediately it is felt which is likely to lead to regrettable consequences.

This Adeptness serves in another way to reduce Karma to a minimum. We have compared life to a game of cricket in which it is our problem to counter all the moves of the adversary, aimed at undoing one. The unproficient batsman will probably find himself undone by the first or second ball that is bowled to him. But, as he gains proficiency, he learns how to deal with those that threaten his life at the wicket, but in disposing of them he expends considerable physical energy. The skilled batsman can dispose of them with the minimum of effort.

Now in life one learns, when anything has happened to throw one off one's balance, to recover it with less and less effort. The Adept maintains it without any apparent effort.

The Four Qualifications Are the Four Factors of Success in a Sublimated Form

It will be seen that each of these is, as it were, a degree higher than and, in a way, a yielding-up of, the

corresponding faculty which we considered necessary to enable one to **achieve** any purpose which Karma sets before one.

1. **Wisdom**, Discernment, Intellectual Acumen—or call it just Brains—is higher than **Knowledge** and allows of a yielding up of knowledge in that one finds it unnecessary for one's memory to keep a grip on knowledge which one can come at easily when it is needed. A person with a mathematical mind does not trouble to stock his memory with mathematical facts—formulae and proofs and such like—which he can easily think out for himself when the need for them should arise.

2. **At-one-ness**, Divine Love, is a degree higher than, and a yielding-up of Love—that is, that Love which consists chiefly of **Desire**. It is good to love what is good in life in the sense of having that fineness of feeling whereby one's being is set vibrating by what is beautiful, even subtly beautiful, in what one finds around one in life, which results in one's being attracted to it. But the greater one's sense of At-one-ness with all life, the less becomes the Desire to take anything to oneself as an individual.

3. **Power**, again, is a yielding up of **Resoluteness**. After all, Resoluteness is bending one's Will to one's purpose and not relaxing the strain until that purpose is achieved. But the greater one's Moral Power, the less is the Resoluteness, the strain, one needs to exert. Just as: The greater one's

physical power, the less is the **physical** strain one exerts to do anything.

4. **Adeptness** is a yielding-up of **Action**, or say, a reducing of Action—what is called in Applied Mathematics “work”—to a minimum. Coming back to our skilled batsman, his skill enables him to apply his energy just when, where, and how it is most effective, and so he effects with little expenditure of energy what the unskilled batsman can do only by the expenditure of far more energy.

Adeptness, Skill, is a different thing to Power, Strength. A batsman who is physically powerful, but unskilled, would nevertheless do much more “work” in effecting his purpose than a batsman who is skilled.

As each of the Four Qualifications is the corresponding Factor of Success in sublimated form, it can easily be seen that they can supersede the latter in enabling us to fulfil Karma. At the same time they help to give us mastery over Karma and help us to avoid being carried away by it into overstepping the true achievement of a karmic purpose.

They thus enable us to keep our poise on the Path, the Narrow Path between the perils into which we are constantly in danger of falling on one side or the other, the Path on which alone is found Beingness and abiding happiness. They are truly the Four Qualifications for the Path.

The Four Qualifications Help to give Detachment from Karma

As these qualities develop in us, we find that we can attain a purpose with ever less expenditure of effort, and this itself makes it easier to stay one's hand as soon as the necessity should arise.

But they also enable us to eliminate more and more of our Karma, thus reducing possible causes of pain to ourselves.

The Transformation of the Statesman into the Manu

We have watched the transformation of the bully into the statesman, the person who welcomes authority because he feels that he can direct the affairs of a particular political unit better than anyone else. But any such person soon learns that his purpose of having things go the way he has purposed that they should is achieved most satisfactorily by convincing people of the advisability of that course and so having them direct their own wills to the objectives he has conceived. All the political speeches, in and out of Parliament, the broadcast talks, the flood of political literature, in periodicals and in books—all these things, which are so prominent a feature of political life, especially in a democracy, have this end in view.

Now supposing our statesman had some other means of directing the wills of others to a great objective which they themselves would not ordinarily have conceived, a means which he could employ without his subjects knowing from what source the ideas

that had entered their minds were coming, or, for that matter, without them even knowing that the ideas were not their own. After all, the important thing from his point of view is that they bend their wills to the objective which he has conceived, and whether or not they know whose will it was that originally bent towards that objective becomes of ever less importance to him. In fact, it suits his purpose best that they should believe that the purpose aimed at was of their own conception, because they are the more likely in that case to throw their whole being into their will-push towards that purpose.

Having the means of doing this, he would find it unnecessary to take authority into his own hands and so expose himself to all the slings and arrows which a person in authority has to face, especially in a democratic organisation. And he **would** like it to be democratic, because he **does** want the wills of others to be operative and not dragooned by his own or that of anyone else.

Now it is possible to exercise just such a statesmanship, guiding the destinies of a people with an expert, firm and loving hand, and yet a hand that is unseen and unknown, and the existence of which is even unsuspected. And this is made possible by the use of faculties which are at present known as occult. With the development of such faculties our statesman—the bully of a dim and distant past—is on his way to becoming a Manu.

The Transformation of the Teacher into the Bodhisattva

It may be that one's high purpose in life is not so much that which goes to make the statesman as that which inspires the teacher, and the stirrings of one's soul are in the direction of throwing light on the obscure paths of life, imparting knowledge.

But every teacher knows that that knowledge is most useful which one has acquired for oneself, proceeding laboriously from step to step until one has reached the truth one was seeking. So he finds that his purpose of putting knowledge into others' minds is best served by arousing their interest in a problem and inducing them to enter into its obscurities and work their way carefully onwards until they arrive by their own powers of perception at the required truths, the teacher keeping an eye on the steps taken and, maybe, correcting them occasionally when a false step has been taken.

Now the possession of occult powers enables him to do this far, far better than when it is done by a teacher who has to depend on the spoken word to convey ideas from mind to mind. A teacher with occult powers can put an idea into his pupil's mind and can ascertain for himself, without questioning the pupil, if the idea he has conceived is what the teacher had intended. Again, since the pupil has no suspicion that the problem which arises in his mind has been suggested by, and that the solution is known to, someone

else, he is the more likely to concentrate all his mental powers to discern the solution, thus acquiring a far better knowledge of it than if it had been conveyed to him through the medium of language.

The Transformation of the Philanthropist into the Master of Compassion

Or it may be that one finds one's greatest happiness in providing **others** with the means to happiness. A somewhat elementary form of this instinct finds satisfaction in providing others with the material sources of pleasure, such as enticing eatables, attractive garments, and other desirable material possessions.

But one learns that benefits which have only an ephemeral value do not give any more lasting happiness to others than they do to oneself. And so one seeks to provide benefits which have a real enduring value. The difficulty is that such higher values are not always easy to appreciate, and the faculty of appreciation needs to be cultured. Moreover one is somehow not satisfied with merely bestowing benefits. In a love that becomes ever fuller and deeper one would like to have the object of one's love possess not only the means to happiness but the power to those means, the ability to acquire them for himself as and when he should conceive the desire for them.

Now one's own experience, as one progresses in one's quest of happiness, teaches one that a more enduring happiness is to be derived from spiritual assets than from material possessions. And in one's

love for those whom one seeks to benefit one's yearning bends naturally in the direction of awakening in them an appreciation of such spiritual assets, an appreciation strong enough to drive them to seek to acquire them for themselves. Because such possessions, one finds, are not in one's gift, or, for that matter, in the gift of the gods themselves. The most that can be done is to inspire in the mind of the pupil a yearning for these things and, unseen, guide him in his acquisition of them.

So, in this too, with his high purpose in life being that of providing others with the means to happiness he finds that, with experience of trying to bring happiness to others and with his love becoming fuller and deeper, the need for contact in physical life becomes ever less.

Detachment from Life in the Physical

The same sort of thing will be found true, whatever else his high purpose in life may be. The more he throws his being into that purpose and seeks a means of achieving it as effectively as possible, the more is he driven to the cultivation of faculties which allow of his remaining *in obscuro*, inspiring, unseen and unsuspected, those whom he seeks to benefit.

The Four Qualifications Become, in Perfection, the Four Pillars of Nirvana

Thus there comes a stage when the Adept can achieve his high purposes most effectively without

entering into physical life among men. Any desire that he may have to do so can but arise from some karma from which he has not yet completely freed himself. But, as he goes on perfecting the four faculties which constitute the Four Qualifications for the Path, he goes on progressively, life after life, dissolving more and more of whatever remnants of karma still cling to him, and so gradually attaining to Nirvana, the condition in which he finds himself with all his karma dissolved and so without any further urge to enter life among men. Nirvana means literally "dissolution".

Nirvana doesn't mean that he is secured by some power outside himself from incarnation among men, or that freedom to enter into it has been in any way lost to him. But, with the four faculties perfected, any urge to do so dissolves itself immediately.

In Nirvana he is completely withdrawn from life. But at no time does he turn his back upon it as something that no longer concerns him. Paradoxically enough, he is enabled to withdraw more and more from material and physical life only because of a progressively greater At-one-ness with it.

The Master K. H. has written,

*Oh, for the final Rest ! for that Nirvana where—
"to be one with Life, yet—to live not".**

The Mahatma Letters, p. 116.

* It would be interesting to know where the words in inverted commas are taken from.

If the Lord Buddha declines to take a physical body, it is probably because he finds that his Love for all life on this earth finds fuller expression on higher planes than it does in physical life.

And it is the four faculties which sustain the Adept in Nirvana. Thus the Four Qualifications for the Path become, in perfection, the **Four Pillars of Nirvana** :

Wisdom,

Compassion,

Assurance,

Adeptness.

APPENDIX

THREE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF CAUSE AND EFFECT IN KARMA

The three Essays contained in this book have already been set up in type, and things have reached a stage where it would be very inconvenient to make any considerable alterations in the text and introduce fresh matter. But as what follows is of importance, I add it in an Appendix.

I have just chanced upon three specific examples of Karma, in which **both** the cause and the effect are given and are authoritatively declared to be such, and by no less an authority than the Master K. H. It will be noted that in each case the karmic effect is what the person **does himself** and not anything that happens to him or is done to him by another; and that the effect in each case follows naturally from its cause without the intervention of any "Lord of Karma".

All the three passages quoted below are from letters written by the Master K. H. to Mr. A. P. Sinnett, as copied in *The Mahatma Letters* (pp. 352, 189, 175.)

1. *Then why should you complain that powers are not given you, that even proof of our own powers*

begins to fail you, etc.? True you have offered several times to give up meat and drink, and I have refused. Since you cannot become a regular chela why should you? I thought you had understood all this long ago; that you had resigned yourself, satisfied to wait patiently for future developments and for my personal freedom. You know I was the only one to attempt and persevere in my idea of the necessity of, at least, a small reform, of however slight a relaxation from the extreme rigidity of our regulations if we would see European theosophists increase and work for the enlightenment and good of humanity. I failed in my attempt, as you know. All I could obtain was to be allowed to communicate with a few—you, foremost of all, since I had chosen you as the exponent of our doctrine that we had determined to give out to the world—to some extent at least. Unable on account of work to continue my teaching regularly, I was decided to resume it after my work had been done, and I had a few hours of leisure at my disposal. I was tied hand and foot when I made that attempt to let you have a paper of your own. I was not permitted to use any psychical powers in that matter. You know the results. Yet, I would have succeeded even with the small means of action I had at my disposal had it not been for the Ilbert Bill excitement. Have you ever given a thought, or ever suspected the real reason of my failure? No; for you know nothing of the ins and outs of the work of karma—of the “side-blows” of this terrible Law. But you do know that there was a time when you felt the profoundest contempt for us all, of the dark races; and had

regarded the Hindus as an inferior race. I will say no more. If you have any intuition, you will work out cause and effect and perhaps realize whence the failure.

2. *Had I but written,—when answering Mr. Hume's objections, who after statistical calculations made with the evident intention of crushing our teaching, maintained that after all spiritualists were right and the majority of seance spooks were "Spirits"—"In no case then, with the exception of suicides and shells"—and those accidents who die full of some engrossing earthly passion—is there any possibility for any other, etc., etc." I would have been perfectly right and pukka as a "professor"? To think that, eager as you are to accept doctrines that contradict in some most important points physical science from first to last—you should have consented at Mr. Hume's suggestion to split hairs over a simple omission! My dear friend, permit me to remark that simple common sense ought to have whispered you that one who says one day: "in no case then etc.:" and a few days later denies having ever pronounced the word never—is not only no adept but must be either suffering from softening of the brain or some other "accident". "On margin I said rarely but I have not pronounced the word never"—refers to the margin of the proof of your letter N. II; that margin—or rather to avoid a fresh accusation—the piece of paper I had written upon some remarks referring to the subject and glued to the margin of your proof—you have cut out as well as the four lines of poetry. Why you have done so*

is known better to yourself. But the word never refers to that margin.

To one sin though I do, plead "guilty". That sin, was a very acute feeling of irritation against Mr. Hume upon receiving his triumphant statistical letter; the answer to which you found incorporated in yours when I wrote for you the materials for your answer to Mr. Khandallawala's letter that you had sent back to H. P. B. Had I not been irritated I would not have become guilty of the omission, perhaps. This now is my Karma.

3. A. P. Sinnett is not "an absolutely new invention". He is the child and creation of his antecedent personal self; the Karmic progeny for all he knows, of Nonius Asprena, Consul of the Emperor Domitian—(94 A. D.) together with Arricinius Clementus, and friend of the Flamen Dealis of that day (the high priest of Jupiter and chief of the Flamines) or of that Flamen himself—which would account for A. P. Sinnett's suddenly developed love for mysticism.

It is easy to trace the connection between cause and effect in each of these three cases.

1. Sinnett's contempt for Indians as a race prevented him from putting his faith in a particular Indian. With this lack of faith his Will did not bend itself to his objective—the success of the *Phoenix* venture—as it should have done. The result was the lamentable failure of that venture. It might be said with truth that from the beginning he had

subconsciously willed that it would **not** succeed. In his cold reason he was prepared to join hands with an Indian, but in his pride he subconsciously recoiled from a success for which he would have had to be beholden to an Indian. However much he might regret the failure, he had himself willed it, from pride and lack of faith.

2. Sinnett's **subconscious** unwillingness to accept from an Indian is also shown by the way in which—in spite of his avowed readiness to learn from the Master K. H., a readiness which truly **did** exist in his cold reason—he was ready to split hairs in his arguments with the Master, especially, as here, when he had the more sceptical Hume to put his own objection-raising ideas into Sinnett's head. This habit could be very irritating and, in this instance at least, did irritate the Master, who, in his irritation, subconsciously decided to give Hume short shrift. **Too** short, as it turned out, in that he made an omission which Hume pounced upon to “crush” the Master's teaching. Here again the Master's Karma in omitting the words, “and those accidents who die full of some engrossing earthly passion”, may be said to have been subconsciously willed by him in that, in his irritation, he wanted to dispose of Hume with the minimum of words.

3. This is the only example of the three in which a karmic effect in one life is traced to a cause in an earlier life. And the use of the words, “for all he knows,” leaves us in some doubt as to whether the

Master intended the earlier incarnations of Sinnett to be taken as a fact or as a hypothesis. But whether factual or hypothetical, the karmic effect of Sinnett's love of mysticism in this life is readily traceable to his having been in the past a friend of a Roman Flamen, or even the Flamen himself, an office in which mysticism played an important part. Sinnett was merely continuing to do in this life what he had already done in earlier lives.

The Master K. H. has said, *Your acts in the past... are indelibly stamped upon the record of Karma.** In the three examples given here a person with Insight, without any other knowledge of the causes, might be able to read them in their karmic effects.

**Letters from the Masters of the Wisdom, (1st Series), p. 61.*

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